

**People of the Living God***James Montgomery (1771–1854)*

People of the living God,  
 I have sought the world around,  
 Paths of sin and sorrow trod,  
 Peace and comfort nowhere found.  
 Now to you my spirit turns—  
 Turns, a fugitive unblest;  
 Brethren, where your altar burns,  
 Oh, receive me into rest.

Lonely I no longer roam,  
 Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;  
 Where you dwell shall be my home,  
 Where you die shall be my grave,  
 Mine the God whom you adore,  
 Your Redeemer shall be mine;  
 Earth can fill my heart no more,  
 Every idol I resign.

Tell me not of gain or loss,  
 Ease, enjoyment, pomp and power;  
 Welcome poverty and cross,  
 Shame, reproach, affliction's hour  
 "Follow me!" I know the voice!  
 Jesus, Lord! thy steps I see:  
 Now I take thy yoke by choice;  
 Light thy burden now to me.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***CCGG 2023***Kevin T. Bauder*

This past Monday, the First Baptist Church of Rockford, Illinois hosted its twentieth Conference on the Church for God's Glory. The event is always held on the Monday before Memorial Day. It is a small conference, but one of the most useful that I attend.

The conference was first organized by Scott Williquette, who was the pastor of First Baptist Church. The church had just completed a new building and Williquette had a vision for using it to minister to fellow pastors. The conference has always focused on conservative music and expositional preaching, though it has featured presentations of other sorts. Furthermore, CCGG was organized at a time when Illinois Baptists were being subjected to public diatribes against Calvinism. Pastor Williquette hoped to provide a venue where pastors—Calvinistic and otherwise—could fellowship and listen to preaching without some of the heated exchanges that were taking place elsewhere.

By the time Williquette left for a teaching ministry with Baptist Mid-Missions, the congregation at First Baptist had taken ownership of the conference. The Conference on the Church for God's Glory continued without a hiccup, except for the year when public meetings were banned because of COVID-19. The people of First Baptist have made it their mission to offer a welcoming and encouraging environment to the pastors and others who attend.

While originally a pastors' conference, CCGG has been gaining a more diverse attendance. Educators and missionaries are conspicuous in the crowd. Many pastors have begun to bring men from their congregations. The past few years have seen more women accompanying their husbands to the meeting.

Geographically, most attendees come from Illinois and Wisconsin. There is always a contingent from Minnesota, another from Iowa, and still another from Michigan. Small numbers come from other states, and this year a pastor even drove down from Quebec to enjoy the meeting.



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It is a meeting (singular) and not meetings (plural). The Conference on the Church for God's Glory is a one-day event. It begins at ten o'clock in the morning and goes until after seven in the evening. During that time, attendees sit through six plenary sessions with generous break times between. There is also an extended lunch break, which allows attendees the opportunity to renew personal friendships.

At this conference, friendships abound. The meeting has no political dimension, offers no opportunities for climbers, has no strings to pull and no wheels to turn. It has no business session, hears no motions or seconds, takes no votes, and passes no resolutions. All it offers is simple fellowship, uncluttered by institutional or organizational entanglements.

The non-political nature of the conference allows the host church to invite an unusual spectrum of speakers. Last year, Bob Jones III, retired president of Bob Jones University, delivered two messages. A few years ago, one of the speakers was Michael Barrett, at that time the dean of Puritan Reformed Seminary. This year, Josh Buice was invited to speak twice. Buice is the pastor of Pray's Mill Baptist Church near Atlanta, and he is the founder of G3 Ministries.

If you have never heard of G3, it is an organization of mainly pastors who seem to be feeling their way out of an amorphously conservative evangelicalism and toward a position closer to fundamentalism. It appears to have grasped more of conservatism and separatism than the older "gospel-centered" organizations like T4G and The Gospel Coalition. G3 Ministries is consistently conservative when it comes to political and social issues. Its leaders are reacting against the Woke influence within much of the evangelical world. Buice in particular has led his church to sever its ties with the Southern Baptist Convention. Perhaps some of the separatist influence is being mediated through Scott Aniol, who is executive director of G3 Ministries. As it happens, Aniol was one of the pastors at First Baptist Church in Rockford who helped to organize the first meetings of the Conference on the Church for God's Glory.

At least five institutions of higher education were represented at the conference. These included Central Baptist Theological Seminary (of course!), Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Maranatha Baptist University, Faith Baptist Bible College and Seminary, and Bob Jones University. The faculties of these institutions enjoy a particularly warm relationship, and the CCGG is one of the rare opportunities when they have a chance to visit with each other.

Conferences and seminars are abundant these days. Some of them are sponsored by denominations or quasi-denominations, and they focus on ecclesiastical or para-ecclesiastical business. Others are sponsored by Christian celebrities, and they tend to feature big-name preachers. A pastor with plenty

of time (which is oxymoronic) could probably find a conference to attend during every week of the year. If I could only attend one, however, I believe it would be the Conference on the Church for God's Glory. If fellowship is about what we hold in common, then the conference that holds the most in common with me is CCGG.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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