

ON THE ROAD...



Pursuing God's call to encourage, exhort, and equip leaders and congregations
A newsletter from Henry and Millie Buckwalter to family, friends, and prayer partners

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

I am pleased to announce **Pastor Joshua Miller and his wife Lauren of Gospel Light Community Church, Bridgeport, CT**, as the next lead bishop couple for Harvest Fellowship of Churches (HFC), effective October 1, 2021.



Succession of Leadership

A plan for the succession of leadership in HFC began over five years ago. Four years ago, three regional overseers were appointed to carry more responsibility in their respective regions. Two years later, an administrator was appointed to assume the administrative work I was carrying. Because of these changes in my workload, the new lead bishop position only needs to be half-time. This means Pastor Joshua will be available to serve as the senior pastor of Gospel Light (on a half-time basis) and as the lead bishop in HFC.

In December of 2017, I informed the HFC Oversight Team of my sense from the Lord that Pastor Joshua should be my successor. All the members affirmed this direction but felt the timing was premature.

Meanwhile, I began mentoring Pastor Joshua, which I greatly enjoy to this day!

Pastor Joshua and Lauren spent a couple of days at our home in late July. It was at this time Millie and I shared our vision with them. While it came as a surprise, they agreed to pray about this for the following month. Toward the end of August, Joshua called to inform us of their sense from the Lord to accept the invitation, but on the condition that the Gospel Light leaders and congregation would release them for this role. They also wanted the HFC pastors' approval.

Unanimous Affirmation

During the month of September, we met with Gospel Light elders, and then with the elders and additional leaders (*both sessions by Zoom*). We later met with the congregational members in person. Initially, the leaders expressed some apprehension, wondering how this decision would affect their congregation, because even during COVID-19, the congregation was growing, and the financial giving was increasing. I could understand the leaders' concerns that having the Millers change their relationship might hinder this growth. In the end, however, affirmation was given by both the leaders and members for the Millers to pursue this call.

During this process, many shared expressions of appreciation for the leadership gifts of the Millers. When the HFC pastors and leaders were asked for their support for this decision, there was unanimous affirmation.

Resumé

Joshua's qualifications for this role, which Millie and I have seen and appreciate, include his humble and teachable spirit, his vision, his godly character (meeting the Biblical requirements of an overseer), and his ability to build relationships with other

pastors in the city of Bridgeport. Lauren manifests godly and humble character, is a team player with her husband, is perceptive and has expertise in finance and social media.

Pastor Joshua is a 2003 graduate of Nyack College, where he studied history and pastoral ministry. He met Lauren (who is from NYC) there; they were married in 2005. Lauren studied computer science and currently works as an operations manager at an insurance brokerage firm. Joshua and Lauren have two active boys: Caleb and Andrew.

Joshua served as a community group leader, worship leader, teacher, elder and associate pastor prior to becoming the lead pastor of Gospel Light in January 2017.

Since joining Gospel Light, Lauren has served as chairperson of the stewardship council (financial team) and as kids ministry leader. She currently serves as property overseer.

A Response from Pastor Joshua

When Lauren and I were asked to visit with Bishop Henry and sister Millie at the end of July, we were happy to take advantage of this “seeming getaway,” as our two boys were away with their grandparents. While enjoying beautiful Lancaster, PA, we were certainly surprised when asked to transition as HFC overseers in a little over a year. Suddenly, we felt the swirl of emotions we felt prior to stepping into the lead pastorate at GLCC, only at a more magnified level. The very next morning I woke up with a verse on my heart from Psalms 32:8, *“I will (A) instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will (B) counsel you with my eye upon you.”* We took a few weeks of prayer and had numerous discussions and questions before officially accepting. The Psalm 32 verse gave me great courage and reminded me that none of us are ready to become even Christians if not for the grace of God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, prayer, and the support and encouragement of faithful men and women of God. I am excited to begin this journey with all of you. While some of you I have known since I was a child, I look forward to getting to know all of you better. I am confident that despite the challenges we have faced this year, God has great things planned for HFC. May we believe God together and respond to Jesus’ prayer in

Matthew 9:38 and John 4:35 – i.e., to be the workers in His field, for the fields are white unto harvest. Christ is worthy! Your prayers are greatly appreciated as we prepare for this new role.

An Answer to Our Prayer

Millie and I are thrilled to see this answer to our many years of prayer regarding this change of leadership! We will continue mentoring both Joshua and Lauren.

Going Forward

Bishop James Miller, regional overseer, was also involved throughout this process. He and I plan to continue serving the Gospel Light congregation during this period of transition through the coming year. We will be available to assist the congregation as they discern the leadership structures necessary to facilitate the transition of Pastor Joshua’s and Lauren’s role in HFC oversight.

Gospel Light Community Church has a history of reaching out beyond their own congregation. They’ve been directly involved in releasing leaders to start two new churches. Currently, they are actively involved in a significant mission outreach to Haiti. Therefore, by releasing Pastor Joshua and Lauren into this HFC ministry, they are further expressing their apostolic vision! I have full confidence that God will bless them as a congregation and meet their every need.

SOME ADDITIONAL INVOLVEMENTS BY US (HENRY & MILLIE)

- Working with a team to launch a School of Ministry in Haiti. More information will come soon.
- September 24 – Led HFC Pastor/Spouse Fellowship meeting via Zoom.
- September 30 – Led a Zoom and Facebook live session on issues related to racism.
- October 2-3 – Participated in a church planting clinic sponsored by HarvestNet, KLN, and others.
- October 17 (3-5 p.m.)** – HFC’s 18th Annual Celebration will be held via Zoom for the participants in the program and via Facebook live for all that care to join in the celebration. All are welcome!

THANKS FOR YOUR PRAYERS!