



WEEKLY COLUMN in TORONTO
CANADA

Melvin University with Me



Parachurch Ministry

There are generally three paths for seminary graduates. These are pastoring a local church, teaching, and being a missionary. Para-church ministries are those that exist to help the local church, such as overseas missions, seminary professors, training centres, institutes, etc. They are not the local church itself, but are very closely associated with it, and their goal is to help the local church mature and grow, and most para-church ministries are fundamentally about helping the church grow.

That's why Parachurch works differently than the local church. There are many pastoral paradigms for churches out there. In fact, I owe it to Pastor Melvin that I was able to open my eyes and heart to the concept of Parachurch early on. I followed Melvin into parachurch ministry from the beginning, and then I became more interested in parachurch, so I bought a book called *The Prospering Parachurch* by Wesley K. Wilmer, vice president of Viola University, and read it a couple of times. He was in the world evangelisation movement with Billy Graham for a long time, so I think he was interested in that. There were some unusual things in the book, one of which was that people give more money to parachurch ministries and organisations than they do to local churches. Why? Because they think parachurch ministries are meaningful, and they think they are more focused on expanding the kingdom of God than local churches. They seem to think that the local church is less concerned with the expansion of God's kingdom because it is more concerned with its own operations and maintenance.

In fact, Parachurch leaders have a unique characteristic. They feel strongly about what they are doing and what their philosophy of ministry is. For example, Billy Graham's World Evangelistic Association is a prominent example of a parachurch ministry. He travelled around the world with John 3:16 and came to Korea with

the '74 Expo.' I also feel very strongly about our ministry. Since our institute existed to help the local church, it was important to be clear about who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

I think I got this mindset from two sources: first, from Pastor Melvin, and second, from a book called *The Prospering Parachurch* by Vice President Wilmer, which I've already mentioned. I learned a lot about the ministry philosophy of Dr Melvin Steinbrunn, founder of LPMI USA. I think he's a really great example of parachurch in terms of supporting local churches. The idea of helping the church has always been the same from the beginning to the end, and I think that's why the ministry has had such longevity (35 years). For some reason, a lot of pastors and churches wanted to help him because they saw the consistency in his ministry [purpose], and they followed his philosophy. Furthermore, it was a natural response because their churches had benefited from those resources. I have learnt that philosophy from him over the years.

Second, I learned more theoretical, academic, and how-to stuff from *The Prospering Parachurch*, which I already mentioned. Pastor Melvin's work in parachurch ministry was wonderful, and Vice President Wilmer's book gave me a systematic theory, so I felt more confident in our ministry because I had both.

These resources made it easier to stay true to the spirit of 'helping the local church' and the main goal of the ministry. I have not changed my mind about this philosophy since then, or about the very existence of Melvin College today. So I had no problem being confident in my thoughts, spirit, philosophy, and even my attitude. I think my whole lifestyle, my whole philosophy of life, has been transformed into adapting to this ministry. This basic philosophy of Parachurch made it easy for me to accept Pastor Melvin's ministry philosophy, and there was no conflict with it. With this philosophy of ministry, I have no problem helping any church, any pastor, or any denomination. I hope to continue to help African churches, especially those of our alumni, in the future.