

# WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF GOD

## CHURCH OF GOD IS...

The Church of God was founded in 1886 upon the principles of Christ as they are revealed in the Bible, the Word of God. It has its foundation of faith and practice in the Scriptures and the vital experience of its constituents is scripturally oriented.

## CHRISTIAN

First and foremost, the Church of God is a determinedly Christian church. It is built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The doctrines and practices of the church are based upon His teachings.

## PROTESTANT

The Church of God is founded upon the principles of Protestantism, although it is not a traditional follower of any specific leader of the Protestant Reformation. The denomination stands firmly for justification by faith, the priesthood of believers, the authority of the Bible, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state. It stands against abuses and extravagance of ecclesiastical ritualism and dogmatism.

## FOUNDATIONAL

The Church of God subscribes to the following five foundational Christian doctrines:

1. The inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible.
2. The virgin birth and complete deity of Christ.
3. The atoning sacrifice of Christ's death for the sins of the world.
4. The literal resurrection of the body.
5. Christ's second coming in bodily form to earth.

## EVANGELICAL

Evangelical is the term used to describe those who affirm the primary doctrines revealed in the Scriptures. These doctrines include the inspiration and authority of the Word of God; the Trinity; the deity and virgin birth of Jesus Christ; salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ; His bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father; the ministry of the Holy Spirit; the second coming of Christ; and the spiritual unity of believers in Jesus Christ.

The Church of God has aligned itself with the basic statement of faith of NAE (National Association of Evangelicals) the largest association of Evangelicals in the USA. Members of NAE subscribe to a common statement of faith. The Church of God can be described as positioned in the mainstream of Evangelical Protestantism.

# PENTECOSTAL

In 1896, many members of the Church of God experienced a spiritual outpouring they identified as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because it was so similar to the experience of the early Christians on the day of Pentecost, it came to be called a Pentecostal experience, an enrichment of the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit that empowered believers to be effective witnesses of Christ. The principle distinctive of the Church of God as a Pentecostal organization is its belief in speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance and that this is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

# CHARISMATIC

The charismata (Gk.) or gifts of the Spirit appeared early in the life and ministry of the Church of God. The gifts can be divided into three categories: the gifts of revelation, the gifts of power and the gifts of utterance or inspiration. The gifts of revelation are the gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits. The gifts of power are faith, miracles, and gifts of healing. The gifts of utterance and inspiration are prophecy, tongues and interpretation. The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts and those who accept the validity of these gifts are called charismatic.

# EVANGELISTIC

From its inception the Church of God has been a revival movement. Evangelism has been in the forefront of all its activities. The church has maintained an aggressive effort to take the message of Christ throughout the world by all means and methods. Every program of the church reflects an evangelistic attitude: revivalism, conferences, worship services, teaching, preaching and its missionary efforts.

# ORGANIZED

The magnitude of the Great Commission requires a united effort. This united endeavor is efficiently served by guidance, support, resources and leadership from a common center. The Church of God is centrally organized. Centralized church government is administration from the international, state or territorial and local levels. It helps facilitate the fulfillment of the mission of the church.

The control of the Church of God rests with the laity and ministers, who jointly form a governing body called the General Assembly which meets biennially. Benefits of centralized government include the following: uniformity of doctrine and practice; principles that bind together local churches in the same manner; membership commitments in all churches; expansion and extension of fellowship; accountability; cooperative decision-making; and united efforts in evangelism and world outreach.

# MINISTERS AND LAITY

Ministers in the Church of God are ranked as ordained bishops, ordained ministers, exhorters, ministers of music and ministers of Christian education. They achieve these levels of ministry through a profession of faith, commitment to the church, training, internship and fulfillment of credential requirements. The Church of God emphasizes the doctrinal position of the priest-hood of all believers and encourages laity to assume a Biblical role in local church ministry.

# EDUCATION

Emphasis upon education and training is a priority of the Church of God. Educational opportunities are provided from local congregations through institutions of higher learning at the international level of the church.

## UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND SCHOOLS

Lee University, located in Cleveland, Tennessee, is the Church of God's oldest and largest educational institution at over 3,500 students. Founded in 1918, it offers graduate and under-graduate degrees in more than 55 areas of study. Other institutions include Lee University Charlotte Center (Charlotte, North Carolina), European Bible Seminary (Rudersburg, Germany), Han Young Theological University (Seoul, Korea), International Bible College (Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada), Puerto Rico Bible College, School of Ministry (Cleveland, Tennessee) and Western School of Christian Ministry (Fresno, California). In addition, World Missions maintains 80 Bible Schools around the world. Founded in 1975 and one of only six Pentecostal seminaries in the U.S., the Pentecostal Theological Seminary (Cleveland, Tennessee) is the denomination's largest graduate institution. It offers masters and doctoral programs. Lee University and Han Young Theological University also offer graduate studies.

## A CARING CHURCH

From its beginnings, the Church of God has felt its responsibility to benevolence ministries. The church operates a number of specialized programs and institutions.

- **Homes For Children**

The Church of God operates three homes for children in the United States. These include the Smoky Mountain Children's Home, Sevierville, Tennessee, North Carolina Home for Children, Kannapolis, N.C., and the South Carolina Home for Children, Mauldin, S.C. There are also many children's homes and mission works around the world.

- **Widows / Retired Ministerial Couples / Widowers**

The Iris B. Vest Widows Center recently changed its name to The Iris B. Vest SpiritCare Center so that widows, widowers, and retired ministerial couples can have a place for retirement living. Please view the website for an application or call Shane Smith 865.365.0225 to receive an application. The Center is located on the campus of the Smoky Mountain Children's Home, Sevierville, Tennessee.

- **Youth and Unwed Mothers**

Heart of Florida Youth Ranch, Citra, Florida, and New River Ranch, Fayetteville, West Virginia, offer help and counseling for troubled boys and teens.

- **Operation Compassion**

Several benevolence ministries including Helping Hands (providing medical assistance), Children of the World (children's needs worldwide) and Caravan of Compassion (inner city ministry) operate under the umbrella of Church of God Operation Compassion.

- **Chaplaincy Ministries**

Hundreds of Church of God chaplains serve a worldwide ministry in full-time and voluntary positions. They are chaplains and counselors in hospitals, jails, prisons and countless other agencies and institutions.

# MINISTRY TO THE MILITARY

Due to the vast number of U.S. servicemen and women worldwide, the Church of God maintains ministry centers around the world. Listed below are the two areas that are involved in our ministry to the military.

- **Servicemen's Centers**  
There are more than two dozen Church of God sponsored servicemen's centers operating in twelve countries around the globe. These centers offer fellowship, counseling and worship opportunities for servicemen and women on the field.
- **Military Chaplaincy**  
The Chaplains Commission is vitally active in ministering to military personnel and their families. Ordained military Chaplains now serve in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard as well as the National Guard and Reserves. More than 100 Church of God ministers are active as military, reserve, institutional, correctional/law enforcement or specialized chaplains.

## RESOURCES

- **Publishing House**  
Through the Church of God Publishing House and Pathway Press located in Cleveland, Tennessee, individuals can have access to a variety of printed materials including Sunday School literature, music and a variety of inspirational and religious books. The Publishing House produces denominational publications, such as the Evangel magazine, and offers an avenue for churches and ministries to obtain resources.
- **Pathway Bookstore**  
Pathway Bookstore offers a full line of inspirational materials and resources for the local church.

## SOCIAL CONCERNS

The Church of God states its position on many issues of importance and global events through resolutions adopted at the biennial General Assembly. More than 40 resolutions adopted since 1968 are available for viewing on the Web site under the "Beliefs" tab and clicking "Resolutions."

## WORLD MISSIONS

The heart of World Missions ministry is the implementation of a global strategy of evangelism, church planting and training. Its scriptural purpose is to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ; share Christ's love for the world; minister to the totality of human need; bring men and women to the knowledge of God and His redeeming grace; and obey Christ by confessing Him to the world. Today, Church of God missions is carried out in 157 countries organized in eight geographical regions.

- **Missionaries**  
World Missions provides missionary services through the following: teaching or administering in educational institutions and programs; serving in medical ministries; planting new churches; working in relief and development efforts; and many other areas. Men and Women of Action exists as a humanitarian program. It organizes relief efforts following natural disasters and assists in church building projects around the globe. Volunteers in Medical Missions (VIMM) provides medical care and supplies to needy areas around the world. The Church of God provides avenues of outreach for the organization and supplies are provided through private donations.