



WE ARE THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

| Our History, Beliefs, and Practices





CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY
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Note: To adhere to current scholastic guidelines, where the word “church” represents the universal body of believers or a local place of worship, the word is not capitalized in this document. Where the word church “stands in” for the longer designation, Church of God of Prophecy, it is capitalized.

Introduction

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, Christian movement grounded in Scripture, firm in the Faith, and resolved in its passion for people. This is a world-wide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the broken-hearted.

The impact of the Church of God of Prophecy is far-reaching. It is estimated that every 24 hours around the globe, 300 people receive salvation, nearly 100 people are baptized in water, and over 14,000 preaching venues are actively declaring the gospel. At least one new church opens its doors every day to touch a local community through the efforts of this movement.

The Church is ethnically and culturally diverse, with 90 percent of its membership residing outside of North America. Presently, the Church is ministering in 133 countries, with more than 1,400 people becoming members every month. An estimated 14,000 men and women are currently licensed to present the gospel in pastoral and evangelistic efforts.

Through the pages of this booklet, you will learn more about the Church of God of Prophecy, our mission, our history, and our teachings. But many people have found that in order to understand this Church, you simply must experience it. The Church of God of Prophecy invites you to join us as we seek to fulfill God's mission to reconcile the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How to Know God

Have you ever wondered how to know God and experience the peace that comes from Him? It is an exciting, life-changing journey that can start today. As you read, begin to open your heart to Him.

God Wants to Have a Personal Relationship with You

God loves you. He made the way for you to know Him. When you know Him, you can truly experience his peace and abundant life. The Bible says: “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). It also says, “I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). And another powerful verse of Scripture tells us, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus), that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The Problem—Sin

There is a huge gap that separates us all from God and from each other. It’s called sin. Sin is an inherited condition. All human beings sin—logic tells you this is so. The world is full of sin’s effects, and we feel the separation it causes. A restored relationship with God is not automatic. You are separated from Him by sin. The Bible says: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The Answer—The Cross

God’s love bridges the gap of separation between God and you. When Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, it was to pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says: “He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross” (1 Peter 2:24).

What Must I Do to Bridge the Gap?

The good news is this: God already did everything needed to bridge

the gap! He is calling you to cross that bridge into his family! He had a plan long before he created the world. It was fulfilled by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is the bridge! The separation between you and God is repaired when you receive Christ. He is personally inviting you to do that. The Bible says: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). And there is more good news! God can help you repair other relationships, too. He is a great bridge builder!

The Starting Place

To begin a personal relationship with God and to experience his peace, here is the starting place:

1. Acknowledge you need forgiveness. Be honest enough to say, "I have done wrong things, and I need God's forgiveness."
2. Repent of your sins. That means turn around and go the other way. God's way.
3. Believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that God raised him to life again.
4. Give control of your life to Jesus. That's how you make him "Lord." You can do that with a heartfelt prayer. Jesus is saying to you, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). The Bible says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Here is a suggested prayer. Read it first and then pray it out loud from your heart. Remember, it is not the prayer that saves you from your sin, but rather your faith in Jesus.

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I need forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I invite you, right now, to come into the very heart of me and make me new. I want to trust and follow You as my own Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, let us know. We want to celebrate with you and help you grow as a believer in Jesus! You may contact the church listed on the back of this booklet or e-mail info@cogop.org.

Our Vision

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Mission

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with a passion for Christian union.

Our Core Values

Our mission flows directly from our core values and affirms them in its callings. The core values of the Church of God of Prophecy are:

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service



Mission Components

Christ-Exalting – In all that we do may Jesus Christ be seen. He is the Head of the Body and therefore must be preeminent in all things. We affirm our desire for Christ to be seen more perfectly through this family of ministry.

Holiness People – This Church was a part of the “holiness movement” before it was Pentecostal. We were born out of the sweeping holiness camp meeting revival of North America. The call to holiness is deep in our roots and intended to be a component of our destiny. We renew our surrender to God’s grace and the cleansing of His blood, so that we may be like Him.

Spirit-Filled – The prophetic promise of God that “in the last days He would pour out His Spirit over all the earth” has been and continues to be a central part of the DNA of this global family, the Church of God of Prophecy. We declare our entire dependence on the Holy Spirit who has been given to lead and empower the Church.

All-Nations – By God’s design this international ministry has, from its early days, held to the ideal that God’s Church would be composed of every “kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” We have, to the best of our limited ability, attempted to fashion this Church along those lines, even before being multi-cultural was acceptable. We celebrate diversity in every level of leadership in this international body and covenant to continue such a rich heritage.

Disciple-Making – Through more than one century of ministry this family network has been committed to the biblical call to make disciples in accordance with the Great Commission. We understand the strength of making disciples will determine our strength in evangelization.

Church-Planting Movement – Healthy churches planting new churches contributes greatly to the spread of the gospel around the world. This ministry has reflected this ideal consistently in practice all through her existence. We aim to multiply our efforts to invest in planting churches in every place we find opportunity.

Christian Union – Our forebears believed that there could be a unity greater than the religious creeds of the day, which God would use to glorify His name in the earth. We intend to cooperate with all that exalt the name of Christ and His great gospel.

Our Covenant Relationship

We have joined ourselves together in Christ as a fellowship of believers by covenanting to accept the Bible as the Word of God, promising to believe and practice its teachings rightly divided with the New Testament as our rule of faith and practice, government, and discipline, and agreeing to walk in the light to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Our Statement of Faith

We believe in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in one God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father.

All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of

believers. He is the empowering Presence of God in the life of the Christian and the Church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross; and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages.

We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

History

From its beginnings, the Church of God Movement consisted of people who were characterized by a deep hunger for God. This hunger pushed them beyond common Christian relationship and into a union of believers, committed to the doctrines of the whole Bible.

In August 1886, Richard Spurling (1810–1891), an ordained Baptist minister, and his youngest son, R. G. Spurling, reacted against the prevailing creedalism among many Baptists of the day. The “Landmark Movement” had permeated Baptist congregations in the southern United States with an exclusivist view of the church, which the Spurlings rejected. Consequently, Richard Spurling and seven other individuals came out of the Holly Springs and Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Churches in Monroe County, Tennessee, and Cherokee County, North Carolina, and organized what they believed to be a true restoration of the Apostolic Church.

They called it “Christian Union.” The group agreed to free themselves “from all (man) made creeds and traditions . . . to take the New Testament, or law of Christ” as their “only rule of faith and practice, giving each other equal rights and privileges to read and interpret for yourselves as your conscience may dictate,” and to “sit together as the Church of God to transact business. . . .” In September of that same year, Spurling ordained his son, R. G., to be the pastor with the consent of the congregation. In 1891, the elder Spurling died, leaving the younger alone to carry on his father’s vision for the Christian Union.

Richard Green Spurling (1857–1935) succeeded in establishing at least two more Christian Union congregations, even though the initial congregation at Barney Creek in Monroe County ceased to function. Some of the charter members from the original congregation helped to form the two succeeding congregations, and thus, the original organization was perpetuated.

In 1895, portions of western North and South Carolina, northern Georgia, and southeastern Tennessee were agitated by the radical wing of the Holiness movement. Benjamin Harding Irwin had come south from the Midwest and greatly affected the region with his “fire-baptized” message. Spurling’s congregations were swept into this movement, thus moving away from the typical characteristics of Baptists to the tenets of the Holiness movement. R. G. Spurling himself accepted holiness but endeavored to modify the fanaticism that tended to characterize Irwin’s movement. Those who experienced “fire-baptisms” were often difficult to manage, and thus, Spurling struggled to maintain control of his followers.

In the summer of 1896, in Cherokee County, North Carolina, about 12 miles from Spurling’s congregations in Monroe and Polk Counties in Tennessee, an Irwin-influenced revival broke out. During these meetings, held in Shearer Schoolhouse, some 130 people were baptized with the Holy Ghost and spoke in unknown tongues. The principal leaders of this revival were William Martin, a Methodist; Joseph M. Tipton; Milton McNabb; and Billy Hamby, all Baptists. Each of these men was acquainted with Spurling and had been influenced by him.

W. F. Bryant, a Baptist lay preacher, was drawn into the Holiness movement during this revival in Cherokee County. Eventually, he became the leader of the group in the area of Camp Creek, North Carolina. Great persecution followed Bryant’s group in the succeeding years. The Baptist churches in the area disfellowshipped all those “harboring the modern theory of sanctification,” maintaining it to be “a dangerous heresy.” Persecution, violent at times, continued with the opponents of holiness taking special advantage of Bryant’s loosely formed fellowship. Oppression from the outside, coupled with an internal lack of order and discipline, nearly devastated Bryant’s group. By 1902, the little band had dwindled to no more than 20 people.

Indeed, had it not been for the wise counsel and influence of R. G. Spurling, Bryant and his company of believers may have vanished from history. But on May 15, 1902, Spurling persuaded Bryant to organize it in order for the work to survive. Consequently, the Holiness Church at Camp Creek was born. Spurling was selected by the congregation as pastor, and Bryant was ordained as a deacon. In this manner, Spurling’s vision for the restoration of God’s Church was perpetuated.

The following year a dynamic and cheerful new leader was attracted to the Holiness Church at Camp Creek. His name was A. J. Tomlinson. Tomlinson (1865–1943), a Quaker, had experienced salvation and holiness in his personal life and had come to the Appalachian Mountains in 1899 as a missionary under the auspices of the American Bible and Tract Societies. Tomlinson befriended Spurling, Bryant, and the Holiness Church at Camp Creek. Elder Spurling greatly impressed Tomlinson as he explained to him his vision of the Church.

On June 13, 1903, after a period of agonizing travail and a personal revelation from God, Tomlinson united with the group. Spurling administered to him a covenant and extended the “right hand of fellowship,” which Tomlinson accepted with the understanding that this was the Church of God of the Bible. This event was held sacred by Tomlinson for the rest of his life. After years of religious wandering, he had finally found his niche in which to work for God.

Tomlinson’s leadership potential was readily recognized by Spurling and the others, and he was immediately selected as pastor of the Camp Creek congregation. The former Quaker was now driven by a sense of mission as never before. Under his dynamic leadership, the Church rapidly organized several congregations in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia, and grew in the next 20 years to a membership of more than 20,000, concentrated mainly in the American South.

By 1906, a need was felt to hold an annual Assembly to promote closer union and fellowship among the churches. The first such meeting was held January 26 and 27, in the home of J. C. Murphy in Cherokee County, North Carolina. It was during a subsequent Assembly in 1907 that the name Church of God was officially adopted. In the Assembly of 1909, A. J. Tomlinson was selected to serve as the general overseer of all the Church of God, a position he continued to fill until his death.

A. J. Tomlinson, like many in the Camp Creek congregation, leaned toward Pentecostalism, even before the turn of the twentieth century. However, it was only after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Charles F. Parham’s Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901, and the great interracial revival at Azusa Street in Los Angeles,

led by W. J. Seymour, which began in 1906, that the Church of God fully embraced the Pentecostal movement.

On January 12, 1908, G. B. Cashwell, the “apostle of Pentecost in the South,” who had been at Azusa Street, preached a sermon in the local church in Cleveland, Tennessee, at the invitation of A. J. Tomlinson. Following Cashwell’s sermon, Tomlinson fell to the floor and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He professed to having spoken in at least 10 different languages while in the ecstasy and envisioned a world-wide harvest for the Church through missionary outreach. Since that time, the Church has remained in the classical Pentecostal tradition.

The phenomenal early growth of the Church was disrupted in 1923, when it divided over several issues that had been fermenting for some years. These issues ranged from financial matters to the form of government the Church should adopt to serve its ever-growing constituency. Following the division, both factions grew and continued to build God’s kingdom, but the anguish of the awful schism remained heavy on both groups. In recent years, spiritual reconciliation has been sought as the two movements have cooperated in united ministry initiatives.

The group led by A. J. Tomlinson, after the disruption of 1923, gradually gained new strength. During the 1930s, the Church experienced a tremendous period of revival, and its growth was considerable. Mission outreach flourished as the Church’s ministry began to spread to other countries.

In the years since, the Church has grown as it continued to search Scripture for biblical truth and understanding, and also sought the leading of the Holy Spirit for its direction. From its humble beginnings in the mountains of Appalachia, the Church has now expanded to more than 130 nations of the world with a worldwide membership nearing one million members.

The final chapters of the Church’s history remain to be written. It is our fervent desire to fulfill our God-ordained role in taking the gospel-message of Jesus Christ to a lost world and to be an agent of reconciliation, through which our heavenly Father will one day answer the prayer of Jesus that we may all be made one in Him.

Doctrinal Commitments

From its beginning, the Church of God of Prophecy has based its beliefs on “the whole Bible rightly divided.” We accept the Bible as God’s holy Word, inspired, inerrant, and infallible. We believe the Bible to be God’s written revelation of Himself to humanity and our guide in all matters of faith; therefore, we look to the Bible as our highest authority for doctrine, practice, organization, and discipline.

It was a strong desire to rely solely on the Bible that led the early pioneers of the Church to declare their willingness to be free from all man-made creeds and traditions, to take the New Testament as their only rule of faith and practice, and to give each other equal rights and privileges to read and interpret the Bible as their consciences might dictate. These basic tenets remain intact today; however, as the Church grew and spread throughout the world, it was seen that there was safety in a “multitude of counselors” when making doctrinal decisions. Thus, today, all doctrinal matters are agreed upon in one accord by the International Assembly.

The Church of God of Prophecy is firm in its commitment to orthodox Christian belief. We affirm that there is one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, the physical miracles He performed, His atoning death upon the Cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal return in power and glory at His second coming. We profess that regeneration by



the Holy Spirit is essential for the salvation of sinful humanity. We believe the sinner is brought to an awareness of the need for salvation through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that in sanctification by the blood of Christ, one is made holy. We affirm the present, active ministry of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church and by whose indwelling and empowerment we are able to live godly lives and render effective service to God and others. We believe in the oneness and ultimate unity of believers for which our Lord prayed, and that this should be visibly displayed “that the world may know, see, and believe” God’s glory, the coming of His Son, and the great love He has for His people (John 17:20–23). We are committed to the sanctity of the marriage bond and the importance of strong, loving Christian families. These beliefs are not only found in the Church’s doctrines as outlined below, but also in the Church’s Statement of Faith.

The Church makes prominent many other biblical doctrines that have clear New Testament support but are not always espoused by modern Christianity. These “Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices” constitute the doctrinal distinctives that help make the Church of God of Prophecy unique among the many other organizations that preach the fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These truths, which, along with selected scriptural references, are listed below, are an indication of our continuing commitment to walk in the light to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices

- REPENTANCE—Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 2 Corinthians 7:10.
- JUSTIFICATION—Romans 3:23–26; 5:1; Titus 3:7
- REGENERATION—John 5:24; Ephesians 2:1, 4–5; Titus 3:5.
- BORN AGAIN—John 3:8; 1 Peter 1:23.
- SANCTIFICATION—subsequent to justification—Romans 5:2; 6:6–7; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4, 7; Hebrews 13:12–13; 1 John 1:9.
- HOLINESS—Luke 1:74–75; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15–16.
- WATER BAPTISM—Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8–10; 16:15–16; John 3:22–23; Acts 10:47–48; 16:33; Romans 6:3–5; 1 Peter 3:21.
- BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY GHOST—subsequent to cleansing, the enduement of power for service—Matthew 3:11; Luke 11:13; Acts 1:4–8; 19:2.
- SPEAKING IN TONGUES—the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost—Acts 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10–11; 14:2, 4, 15.
- FULL RESTORATION OF THE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH—Romans 12:6–9; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 28–31; Ephesians 4:8–13.
- SIGNS FOLLOWING BELIEVERS—Mark 16:17–20; Romans 15:18–19; Hebrews 2:4.
- FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 5:9.
- DIVINE HEALING—provided for all in the atonement—Psalm 103:2–3; Isaiah 53:4–5; Matthew 8:17; James 5:14–16; 1 Peter 2:24.
- THE LORD’S SUPPER—Luke 22:17–20; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 11:23–30.
- WASHING THE SAINTS’ FEET—John 13:4–17; 1 Timothy 5:10.
- TITHING AND GIVING—Genesis 14:18–20; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 9:13–14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6–9; Hebrews 7:1–10.

- **RESTITUTION WHERE POSSIBLE**—Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8–9; Romans 13:8.
- **PRE-MILLENNIAL SECOND COMING OF JESUS**—first, to resurrect the dead saints and to catch away the living saints to meet Him in the air—1 Corinthians 15:51–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. Second, to reign on earth a thousand years—Zechariah 14:4–9; Revelation 19:11–16; 20:4–6.
- **RESURRECTION**—Daniel 12:2; John 5:28–29; 1 Corinthians 15:12–23, 41–58; Revelation 20:5–6.
- **ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS**—Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:27–28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11–13.
- **ETERNAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED**—no liberation or annihilation—Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9; Revelation 2:8; 20:10–15.
- **TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM ALL LIQUOR OR STRONG DRINKS**—Proverbs 20:1; Isaiah 28:7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:18.
- **AGAINST THE USE OF TOBACCO IN ANY FORM: OPIUM, MORPHINE, ETC.**—Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 10:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:3–8; James 1:21.
- **ON MEATS AND DRINKS**—“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17)—Romans 14:2–17; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1–5.
- **ON THE SABBATH**—Romans 14:5–6; Colossians 2:16–17; Hebrews 4:1–11.
- **ADORNMENT**—the Christian’s use of adornment should be guided by the biblical principles of sobriety, modesty, submission, and self-discipline—Matthew 16:24; 1 Timothy 2:1–10; 1 Peter 3:17; 1 John 2:16. The Scripture explicitly teaches that the use of adornment for occultic, lascivious, and idolatrous practices is prohibited—Isaiah 3:18–22; Acts 8:9; 13:6; 19:19; 1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:9; Galatians 5:19–21.
- **AGAINST BELONGING TO LODGES**—John 18:20; 2 Corinthians 6:14–17; Ephesians 5:12–13.
- **AGAINST SWEARING**—Exodus 20:7; Matthew 5:12–13; James 5:12.
- **MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE**—Genesis 1:26–27; 2:18–25; Deuteronomy 6:7; Matthew 5:32; 14:3–4; 19:3–12; Mark 10:12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2–3; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5, 6:9–18; 7:2, 11; Colossians 3:18–21.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the Church of God of Prophecy exists and operates at three inter-dependent levels: international, national/regional/state, and local. The international level of the Church organization functions on a worldwide basis and provides a global network of support and interaction for the Church's ministries in all 50 United States and more than 130 nations.

The national/regional/state level provides more focused leadership and support directly within the context of the nations and states where the Church is at work. The local level is the heartbeat of the Church. It is at that level that caring congregations are formed in thousands of cities, towns, and communities around the world where the Church's mission is ministered on a daily basis. These local bodies of believers form the framework within which the Church primarily fulfills its mission of reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

At all levels of organization in the Church, efforts are being made to be dynamic and flexible in order to avoid stagnation. In increasingly complex and ever-changing societies, we are aware that the ability to remain relevant to the needs of the people is dependent upon the ability to positively respond to societal changes without compromising the truth. We recognize that our God is dynamic, not static; He is a God who moves and acts in the affairs of humanity. We are committed to being a mobile and pilgrim people who move when He moves and who stop when He stops. Thus, the organizational structures described below are currently serving our mission, but they are subject to review and revision as the Holy Spirit may direct.

The International Level

The International Assembly, a meeting open to all members, is the highest decision-making body in the Church of God of Prophecy. It currently convenes every two years. The presiding bishop, in consultation with the general presbyters of the Church, establishes and moderates the Assembly program. During discussions of doctrinal and business matters, every adult member has an equal voice. Doctrinal decisions are made by “one accord,” and business decisions are made by “overwhelming consensus.” The Assembly also provides times of inspirational worship, preaching, teaching, and fellowship. It is during the International Assembly that the presiding bishop provides vision for the direction in which he believes God is leading the Church.

At the international level of organization, the presiding bishop is selected by one accord in the International Assembly to serve for a term of six years. Along with the general presbyters, who are selected by the International Presbytery, he has a broad range of spiritual and administrative leadership responsibilities. The presiding bishop and general presbyters make the final selection of all international leaders, including the national/regional/state bishops, International Offices ministry leaders, and the standing Assembly committees. Furthermore, they constantly seek God for spiritual direction and cast vision for the worldwide outreach efforts of the Church.

The International Presbytery consists of all national/regional/state bishops and bishops who are serving on the International Offices staff. Ministerial licensure and discipline rest in the hands of the International Presbytery.

The New Testament principle of plural leadership was adopted in 1994 by the International Assembly. Plurality of leadership extends around the globe through seven general presbyters who serve in various geographical areas of the world. According to their gifting by God, the general presbyters are selected by the International Presbytery to give direction to the worldwide

Church in accomplishing its mission. They work directly with the presiding bishop to provide shared leadership in carrying out the functions of that office on a global basis.

The Church of God of Prophecy International Offices seeks to encourage inspirational leadership and to deliver essential support services that significantly increase the Church's gospel witness and promote its mission. The presiding bishop selects executive ministry directors of the International Offices, in consultation with the general presbyters. Ministry directors are selected by their respective executive ministry director and work together to carry out the worldwide mandate of ministry as given by God to the Church.

The National/Regional/State Level

National/regional/state bishops are selected by their respective general presbyter and each one function as the presiding bishop in his territory.

It is the responsibility of each national/regional/state bishop to select, equip, and appoint an administrative staff, as well as a pastor for each local church in his area. The national/regional/state bishop plans and moderates periodic conventions in and for his particular territory. The meetings are open to all members and consist of a time of worship, fellowship, and business. They also provide an opportunity for the bishop to give direction for the many outreach programs operating in his area.

The Local Level

The Great Commission, as given by Christ to the church, is carried out most directly through the various local-level ministries. The local church is where people are won to Christ, baptized, covenanted into church fellowship, and disciplined in victorious Christian living. The pastor, who, in consultation with the local

church, is appointed by the respective area bishop, serves as the spiritual and administrative leader. As he/she prays and seeks God's direction for shepherding the flock and sharing the gospel with the local community, he/she selects and equips numerous lay leaders to share in those endeavors.

Normally, the local church offers specialized ministries for the spiritual development of children, youth, women, and men. The Church of God of Prophecy recognizes the unique needs of its people and the urgency to develop them to full maturity in Christ.

Each local church should conduct a quarterly business conference for the purpose of providing information to the membership and making spiritual and business decisions. The conference may also exercise church discipline in matters of wayward members; however, this should always be done with one goal in mind—restoring and reconciling the fallen brother or sister. All adult members, who are in good standing with the local church, have an equal voice in matters brought before the local conference.

Questions and Answers

After reading this brief introduction to the Church of God of Prophecy, perhaps you still have some unanswered questions in your mind. Listed below are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about the Church of God of Prophecy.

Q. What are the requirements for membership in the Church of God of Prophecy?

- A. Membership in the Church of God of Prophecy is open to anyone who is a Born-Again Christian. Eligible candidates for membership are traditionally welcomed into the Church in a special ceremony where they are asked, “Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses that you will accept the Bible as the Word of God—believe and practice its teachings rightly divided—the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and walk in the light to the best of your knowledge and ability?” Those wishing to join simply reply “I will.”

Q. What is the meaning and function of the Church Covenant?

- A. The Church Covenant is the means by which individuals fulfill their desire to become a member of the Church of God of Prophecy. It is a public affirmation of one’s willingness to follow all of the teachings of Christ. Jesus instructed His disciples that they were to fulfill His Great Commission by “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .” (Matthew 28:20). The Covenant is the means by which individuals acknowledge their personal commitment to the entire Word of God. This obligation, or covenant, is the basis upon which a local church accepts an individual into its fellowship.

Q. What is represented by the Church flag?

- A. The flag of the Church of God of Prophecy came into use in 1933 as an ensign to “. . . be displayed because of the truth” (Psalm 60:4). Because the Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is “the Truth” (John 14:6), the designs and colors on the flag represent His character and work: red, His blood; blue, His truth; and white, His purity. The purple scepter, star, and crown all represent His royalty or kingship. As was stated when the flag was first introduced, its components “all point to our Christ.”

Q. Do you hold any other writings to be equal to the Bible?

- A. No. The Church of God of Prophecy believes the Bible, alone, is the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God. Because it is God's Word, it is the highest authority for belief and practice in matters of faith.

Q. Do you consider membership in the Church of God of Prophecy necessary to salvation?

- A. No. Salvation comes only by grace through faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Membership in the Church of God of Prophecy is extended to those who have already experienced salvation, but becoming a member of the Church will not save an individual.

Q. How did you get the name "Church of God of Prophecy"?

- A. The International Assembly of 1907 officially adopted the name Church of God. During the years that followed the disruption within the Church in 1923, much controversy ensued over which group had the legal right to that name. Several protracted legal proceedings failed to resolve the issue satisfactorily. For several years, we used the name "Church of God, over which A. J. Tomlinson is Overseer," but that did not fully settle the matter. Finally, in 1952, the issue was decided in the Chancery Court of Bradley County, Tennessee, when the judge decreed that the suffix "of Prophecy" should be added to our name for use only in secular and business affairs to distinguish us from other organizations with similar names. We agreed to the ruling, in order to be in legal compliance, and we continue to use the name in conducting our external affairs. In our internal affairs, government, and worship we often use our original name, Church of God.

If you have further questions or would like more information, please contact the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy at P. O. Box 2910, Cleveland, Tennessee 37320-2910, or contact the local church listed on the back of this booklet. You may also visit the Church's website at cogop.org for the latest news and to view our monthly digital magazine, *The White Wing Messenger*.



CONTACT A LOCAL CHURCH NEAR YOU: