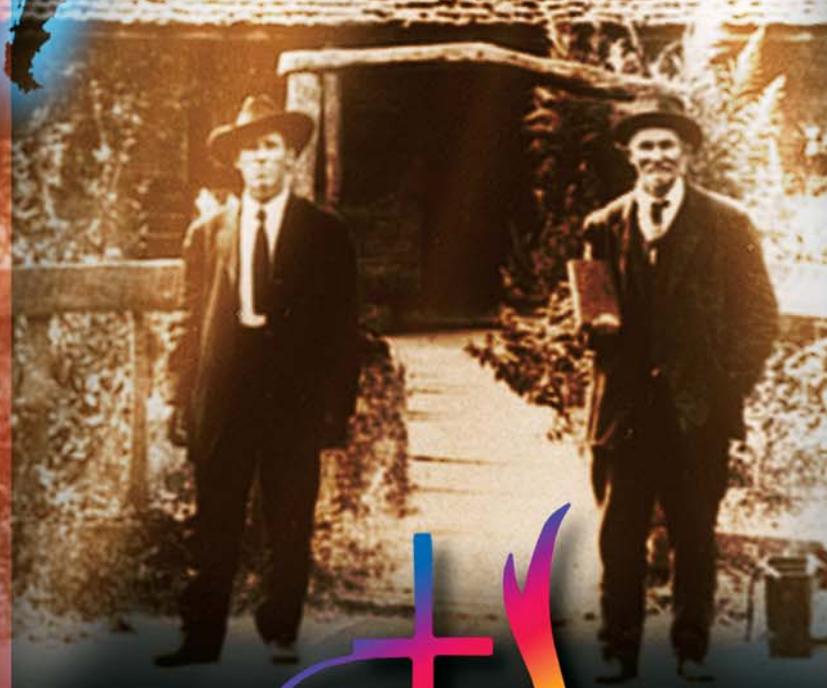
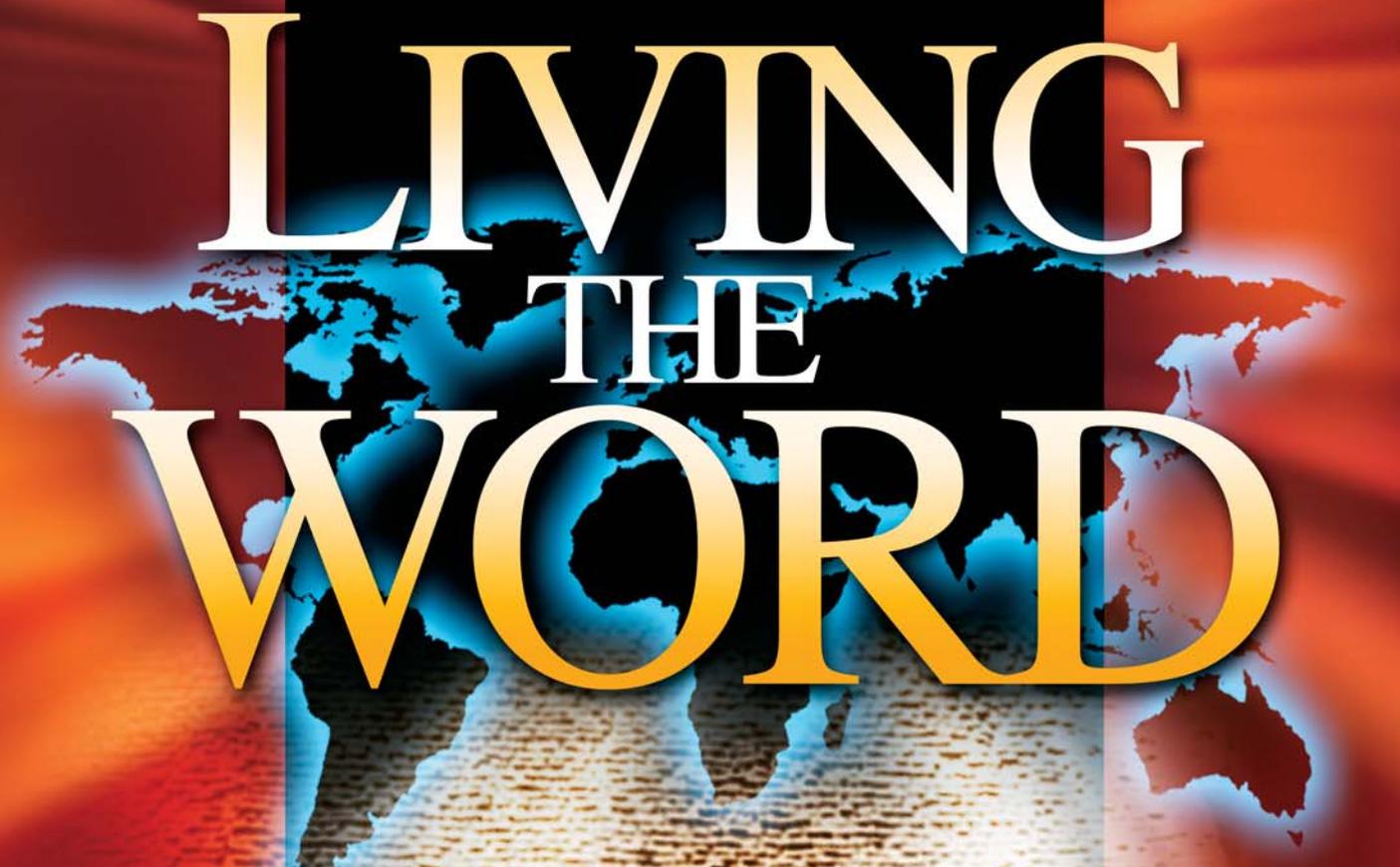
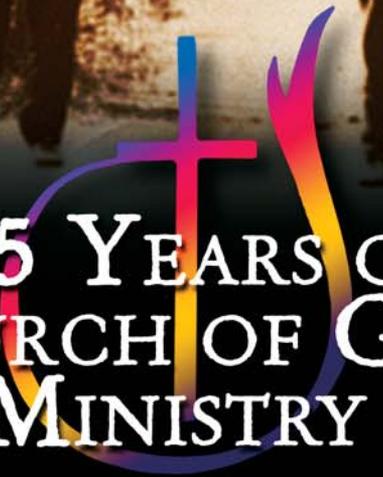


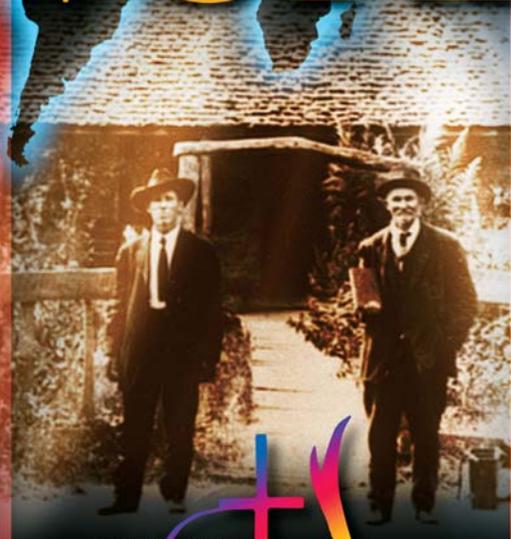
# LIVING THE WORD



125 YEARS OF  
CHURCH OF GOD  
MINISTRY



# LIVING THE WORD



125 YEARS OF  
CHURCH OF GOD  
MINISTRY

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## SPECIAL APPRECIATION

The following states and Pathway Press made a significant financial contribution in making this publication possible:

### FLORIDA

J. David Stephens, Overseer

### GEORGIA, NORTH

Michael L. Baker, Overseer

### GEORGIA, SOUTH

A. Ray Garner, Overseer

### KENTUCKY

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### VIRGINIA

Mitchell E. Corder, Overseer

### PATHYWAY PRESS

Terry Hart, Director

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# Like a Mighty Army Moves the Church of God

*“Celebrating 125 Years of Scriptural Ministry”*

**F**OR THE PAST 125 YEARS, the Church of God has moved forward like a mighty army under the command of our heavenly Father proclaiming the good news of freedom in Jesus Christ and victorious living through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

What has been the force that has enabled the Church of God to move forward like a mighty army? The words of the song, “Onward Christian Soldiers,” embrace the virtues that have characterized our advancement: “Like a mighty army moves the Church of God . . . we are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity.”<sup>1</sup> These lyrics form four foundational facts about our history:

1. **UNITY—Together in Mission.** Our vision and resources have been wrapped around fulfilling the Great Commission with love, authority, and confidence.

2. **HOPE—Together in Assurance.** Our unwavering stance has been anchored in the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. **DOCTRINE—Together in Belief.** Our authority has been that we accept the whole Bible rightly divided, and the New Testament as our guide for discipline and devotion.

4. **CHARITY—Together in Love.** Our actions have demonstrated God’s love to the world by sharing the message of new life in Christ, serving to meet life’s needs, and worshiping in spirit and in truth.

In this 125-year historical tribute, you will find a brief overview of the Church of God marching forward like a mighty army; going into the entire world with the grace-based message of liberty and abundant life in Jesus Christ. Pictures depicting progress and events are also included.

There are three central benefits of rejoicing in our journey as we review our heritage as a denomination:

1. **CELEBRATE:** A time to **reflect** on our heritage—how the Lord of glory has blessed and led the Church of God in a worldwide harvest.

2. **EVALUATE:** A time to **review** our loyalty—how we have responded to God’s leadership and our obedience to holy mandates.

3. **ANTICIPATE:** A time to **respond** to the possibilities of the future—God’s plan for church growth and scriptural methods of developing disciples in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

We have been divinely blessed by Jehovah God over the past 125 years. We have been guided by the Holy Spirit in living the Word in our worship, in our work of servant-leadership, and in our witnessing lifestyle. May your life be spiritually enriched and fortified for the future as you read the glorious accounts of how God is “building His Church” and advancing His purposes through the Church of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Sabine Baring-Gould and Arthur S. Sullivan, “Onward Christian Soldiers,” Public Domain.



R. G. and  
Barbara  
Spurling



# RESTORING GOD’S CHURCH

**“As many Christians as are here present that are desirous to be free from all men-made [sic] creeds and traditions, and are willing to take the New Testament, or law of Christ, as your only rule of faith and practice; giving each other equal rights and privilege to read and interpret for yourselves as your conscience may dictate, and are willing to set [sic] together as the Church of God to transact business [as] the same, come forward.”—R.G. Spurling**

**W**ITH THESE WORDS Richard Green Spurling (1857–1935) concluded his sermon and invited those gathered on Thursday, August 19, 1886, to sit “together as the Church of God.” The small congregation met in the Spurling

family’s grist mill on the banks of Barney Creek in Monroe County, Tennessee. Eight of his hearers responded and together they established a congregation they named “Christian Union.” Since that day, Church of God ministries have expanded to include more than seven million members

in 178 nations and territories. While those who responded to Spurling’s call in 1886 might not have imagined the tremendous growth of Church of God ministries, they knew that their actions were significant; in fact, they were confident they were inaugurating a new chapter in the restoration of God’s church.

Now more than 125 years later, some 36,000 Church of God congregations serve around the world, while regional and international ministries provide resources and support through our divisions of World Evangelization, Care, Discipleship, Education, and Support Services. The founding of the Church of God and

**1810**  
Richard Spurling  
born in North  
Carolina



**1853**  
Clear Creek Baptist  
Church ordained  
Richard Spurling

**1857**  
R.G. Spurling  
born

**1859**  
Holly Springs  
Baptist Church  
organized



**1869**  
R.G. Spurling  
converted

**1876**  
R.G. Spurling  
married  
Barbara Hamby



the development of these ministries is a story worth remembering and passing on to future generations.

## Obeying the Great Commandment; Fulfilling Christ's Prayer

The Christian Union was born with a commitment to obey the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor and with a desire to fulfill Christ's prayer that His disciples might be one (John 17:20).

As a licensed Baptist minister, R.G. Spurling recognized the limitations his particular Baptist tradition created for the Christian church. The Landmark Baptist Movement taught that only certain Baptists were in God's church, and his local congregation insisted that Spurling break fellowship with other Christians. Knowing that God's church was greater than the Landmark Movement, Spurling surrendered his preaching license and began to study and pray for restoration of a New Testament church.

Supported by his friend John Plemons and his father Richard Spurling, they concluded that many churches valued creeds and traditions above the New Testament. According to R.G. Spurling, restoring God's church would require a return to the New Testament and an emphasis on biblical love. Using railroad terminology of that day, he described the New Testament church as traveling on the two rails of "love of God" and "love of neighbor." But through the centuries, churches had replaced the "golden rails" of love with narrow rails of human creeds and traditions. His 1886 sermon and invitation called for a return to the New Testament and the gold-

en rails of love as the only means of bringing about Christian unity and restoration.

## The Christian Union

The eight people who responded to R.G. Spurling's invitation in 1886 immediately organized a local congregation that they named the Christian Union. Because R.G. had given up his ministerial credentials, it was necessary for his father, Richard, to moderate the organizational meeting. Once they had set the

church in order, they agreed to receive members and to recognize ministers. With these agreements in place, the newly established church received R.G. Spurling as a member, and his father ordained him as pastor the next month.

R.G. Spurling soon established other congregations in Monroe and Polk Counties. When Richard Spurling sold the

mill at Barney Creek, R.G. moved near the Hiwassee River and continued to pastor a Christian Union congregation there. Later he purchased a farm at Turtletown, Tennessee, where he also planted a church.

Relocating to Turtletown put Spurling only four miles from the Camp Creek community in Cherokee County, North Carolina. It was in Camp Creek that God brought an extraordinary revival of holiness to the mountains.

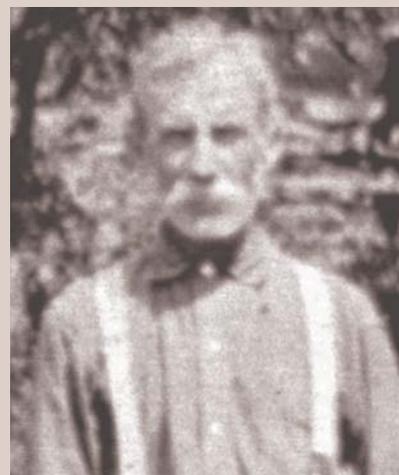
## A Revival of Holiness

In 1896, four evangelists preached a ten-day revival at the Shearer Schoolhouse in Camp Creek, North Carolina. The evangelists were William Martin, Billy Hamby, Joe Tipton, and Milton McNabb. Although we do not know the

### Charter Members

Eight people responded to R.G. Spurling's invitation to sit "together as the Church of God":

- Adeline Loftis
- Margaret Plemons Loftis
- John James Plemons
- John Paul Plemons
- Malinda Plemons
- Mary "Polly" Plemons
- Barbara Spurling
- Richard Spurling



### RICHARD SPURLING

R.G. Spurling's father, Richard Spurling (1810–1891), was born in North Carolina where he lived until his family moved to Tennessee in 1822. The Clear Creek Baptist Church in Morgan County, Tennessee, ordained him in 1853. He was active in several Baptist congregations, including establishing the Holly Springs Baptist Church in Monroe County in 1859. His son Richard Green (R.G.) was born while he was serving as a missionary near Williamsburg, Kentucky. In 1882, Richard purchased property on Barney Creek and operated both a grist mill and sawmill until he sold the property in 1889.

Although Richard assisted his son, R.G., by setting the Christian Union in order, his familial and ministerial connections with the Holly Springs Church made it unlikely that he intended to stay with the infant congregation. The Holly Springs Church excluded him for joining the Christian Union, but dropped his case two months later. Richard remained active at Holly Springs until his death of unknown causes at the age of 81. He died in Anderson County, Tennessee, but there is no record of where he is buried. (See Beaty and Phillips.)

**1876**  
R.G. Spurling  
credentialed  
as minister

**1881**  
Barney Creek  
mill built



**1882**  
Richard Spurling  
purchased Barney  
Creek property

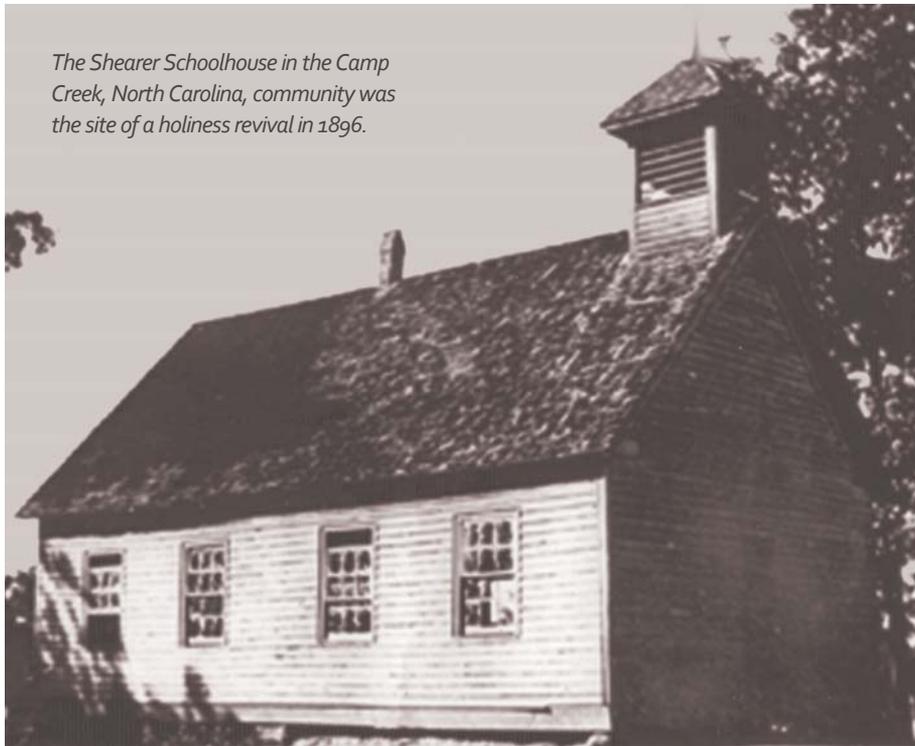
**1884**  
R.G. Spurling  
surrendered  
Baptist credentials



**1884**  
R.G. Spurling  
initiated prayer  
and study

**1886**  
Christian Union  
organized

*The Shearer Schoolhouse in the Camp Creek, North Carolina, community was the site of a holiness revival in 1896.*



extent of R.G. Spurling’s involvement in the revival, Billy Hamby was his brother-in-law. Milton McNabb was the cousin of a local farmer, William Franklin Bryant Jr. (1863–1949).

The evangelists proclaimed the necessity of holiness and challenged their hearers to seek the experience of sanctification. They were “given to much prayer and fasting,” preached earnestly, and throngs of people responded. Church of God Historian Charles W. Conn wrote, “Almost from the start of the meeting, the altars were filled with repentant sinners and seekers for the experience of sanctification. Many skeptics of holiness were convinced, and many more rough-living sinners were converted” (Conn, 24).

At the time of the revival, Bryant attended the Liberty Baptist Church, where his father was a deacon. He was married to Brunetty (Nettie) Anderson,

and they had nine children. Although Bryant was saved at age fourteen, he found himself continuing to struggle with sin. As an adult, he earned his living as a farmer and a bootlegger. Bryant hungered for God to do a cleansing work in his life, and during the revival, he was amazed when those claiming sanctification went to people they had wronged and made their relationships right. He sought God for the same kind of experience in his own life. After much struggling, dying to his “selfish nature,” and forsaking everything, Bryant was sanctified one morning while riding his horse.

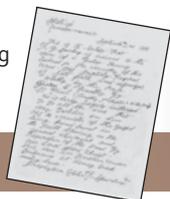
Following the revival, Bryant and others continued to have services and Sunday school under Bryant’s leadership. According to our earliest history, “The people earnestly sought God, and the interest increased until unexpectedly, like a cloud from a clear sky, the Holy Ghost began to fall on the honest, humble, sincere seekers after God. . . . [O]ne

after another fell under the power of God, and soon quite a number were speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Tomlinson, 189). The Lord had done an extraordinary work in their lives, but they did not yet have a Pentecostal understanding of their experience. Conn wrote that it would be some time later before they “would understand the doctrine, person, and nature of the Holy Spirit” (Conn, 31).

The leadership of the Baptist churches did not respond positively to claims of sanctification, and they persecuted the holiness believers. The Liberty and Pleasant Hill Baptist Churches excluded forty of their members for the “modern theory” of sanctification. When the community barred the holiness believers from the Shearer Schoolhouse, Dickson Kilpatrick gave them property to build a meeting house. Attempts to destroy the building with fire and dynamite failed, so 106 leading members of the community dismantled and burned the log church. Bryant responded by asking the court to forgive them.

The persecution was often violent. Their enemies polluted their wells, burned several of their homes, shot at them, and beat them. One day about 25 armed and masked “night riders” surrounded the home of Ross and Emelyne Allen where the holiness believers were worshiping. The mob demanded that the services stop, or more people would be beaten and more homes burned. When Emelyne kindly offered an invitation to come inside, they refused. In the face of their anger, she replied with firmness that the worshipers would not stop the meetings until God was finished with them. She exhorted the would-be assailants, “Why don’t you take off that garb and let me fix a meal for you. There’s no cause to hide behind masks when I know everyone of you. You are our neighbors. . . . If you take off your garb, I’ll fix you a good dinner.” The mob slowly dispersed (Conn, 43).

**1886**  
Richard Spurling  
ordained R.G.  
Spurling



**1886**  
R.G. Spurling  
became pastor

**circa 1887**  
R.G. Spurling  
established second  
Christian Union



**1889**  
Barney Creek  
property sold



**1891**  
Richard  
Spurling died

On another occasion, Nettie Bryant and her children were stopped at a creek by an armed man who barked, “Yo’all go back! Old Sankey aint never gonna cross this crick” (Conn, 41). The mother and children had no choice but to turn back, so they prayed and returned home. One of those children was Julius Bryant, who years later commented about the growth of the Church of God with teary eyes, saying, “I guess we crossed the creek after all” (Conn, 45).

Having suffered the pain of rejection by their churches, the holiness believers were reluctant to become part of another church. Continuing persecution, the lack of pastoral leadership, and doctrinal distortions scattered many of those who had experienced God’s grace. Their numbers continued to dwindle until Spurling convinced Bryant to organize the Camp Creek believers into a local church.

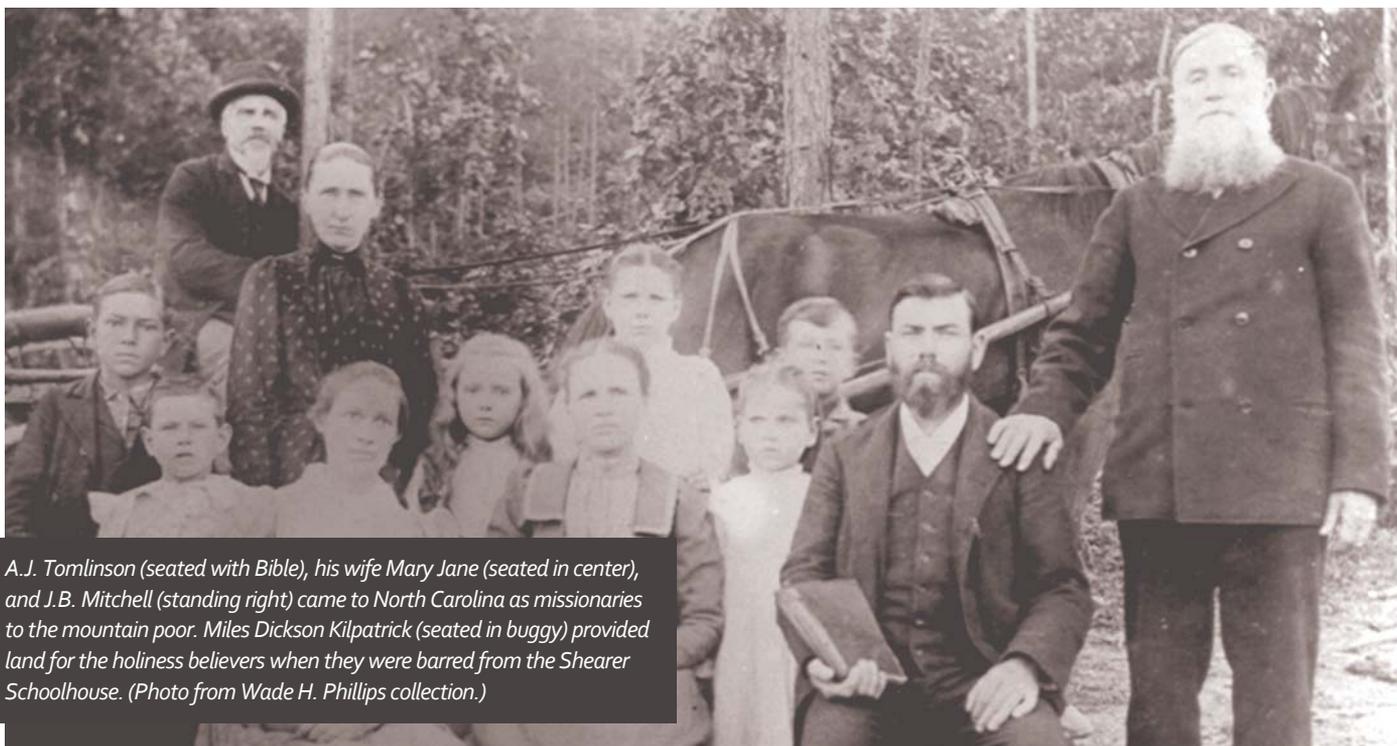
R.G. Spurling and R. Frank Porter set a church in order in Bryant’s home on May 15, 1902, with sixteen charter members. They had experienced both the power of revival and the ravages of persecution. Convinced of the necessity of sanctification, they named themselves the Holiness Church. The new congregation called R.G. Spurling as their pastor, which brought them into the movement he had begun in 1886.

### A New Leader

Spurling served as pastor of the Camp Creek congregation until June 13, 1903, when the church received several new additions, including A.J. Tomlinson. A native of Indiana, Tomlinson had a Quaker background but had deeply imbibed holiness doctrine. In 1899, he settled in nearby Culberson, North Carolina, as a missionary to the mountains of eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, and

northern Georgia. At Culberson, he established a school, an orphanage, and a clothing distribution center to care for and evangelize the mountain poor. Although he had fellowshiped with the Camp Creek believers for some time, he was initially fearful of organized churches. On June 13, 1903, following morning prayer on the mountain behind Bryant’s home, Tomlinson became convinced that the holiness congregation was “the Church of God of the Bible.” They had confidence in his ministry and immediately selected him as pastor.

Tomlinson’s vision to spread the gospel around the world soon led to the establishment of other Holiness Church congregations, the first General Assembly in 1906, and a change of name to “Church of God” in 1907. What began as a trickling mountain stream at Barney Creek became a surging river of global ministry. ■



A.J. Tomlinson (seated with Bible), his wife Mary Jane (seated in center), and J.B. Mitchell (standing right) came to North Carolina as missionaries to the mountain poor. Miles Dickson Kilpatrick (seated in buggy) provided land for the holiness believers when they were barred from the Shearer Schoolhouse. (Photo from Wade H. Phillips collection.)

**1893**  
R.G. Spurling relocated to Turtletown, Tennessee



**1896**  
Shearer Schoolhouse revival

**1899**  
A.J. Tomlinson settled in North Carolina

**1902**  
Holiness Church established



**1903**  
A.J. Tomlinson joined the Holiness Church

**1920**  
R.G. Spurling published *The Lost Link*





General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson at his home in Cleveland about 1908. He may have moved his desk outdoors for this photograph.

# ‘IT SEEMETH GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST AND US’

**M**UCH OF the global ministry of the Church of God happens through local congregations. Along with providing opportunities for worship, local churches are launching stations for evangelism and primary venues of disciple making. Yet, there are vital functions of ministry that work best when local churches covenant together with shared vision, discernment, and resources. Examples include setting global goals,

interpreting doctrine, sending missionaries, providing advanced education, and preserving our heritage. The general ministries of the church both serve local congregations and enable these shared responsibilities.

When A.J. Tomlinson accepted pastoral responsibilities of the Holiness Church at Camp Creek in 1903, he quickly recognized the importance of reaching beyond that small community. Along with numerous preaching engagements, he

added pastoral duties of two Tennessee congregations in 1904.

Tomlinson’s success can be attributed to several dynamics. In December 1904, he moved his family to Cleveland, Tennessee, because he could enroll his children in good schools and Cleveland had excellent railroad connections. Additionally, he desired to plant a church in the growing town. Early efforts included a series of lengthy tent meetings, a mission in rented facilities, and worship in local homes. Then

**1904**  
Tomlinson moves to Cleveland



**1906**  
First General Assembly



**1907**  
Name "Church of God" adopted



**1909**  
Office of general overseer approved



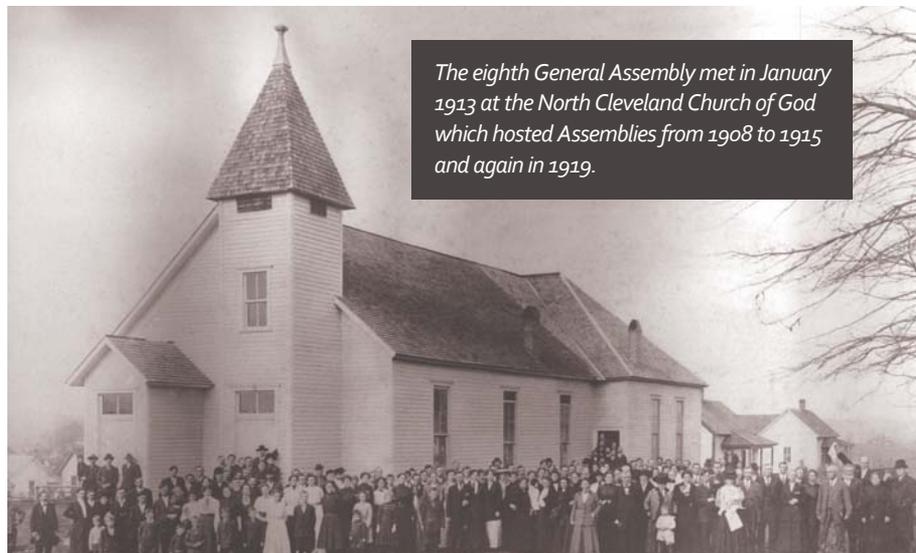
**1911**  
State overseers appointed

on October 10, 1906, he set in order the church that became known as the North Cleveland Church of God. In many ways, the North Cleveland congregation became a “mother church” as the local saints and the growing Church of God Movement shared strength, resources, and leadership.

## The International General Assembly

Growth offered new possibilities and new challenges. According to Tomlinson, the success of their labors led to a need for a general meeting “to consider questions of importance and to search the Bible for additional light and knowledge” (Tomlinson, 192). They recognized the Old Testament gatherings of Israel and the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as scriptural examples of such a meeting.

The first Assembly of the “Churches



The eighth General Assembly met in January 1913 at the North Cleveland Church of God which hosted Assemblies from 1908 to 1915 and again in 1919.

of East Tennessee, North Georgia, and Western North Carolina” met January 26-27, 1906. Twenty-one people braved

the winter weather to gather in the home of Melissa and J.C. Murphy at Camp Creek, North Carolina. They prayed, studied the Scriptures, and sought answers to their questions.

The delegates viewed themselves as restoring New Testament Christianity rather than perpetuating a “man-made” denomination. Their first action acknowledged, “We do not consider ourselves a legislative or executive body, but judicial only” (*Assembly Minutes*). This proclamation reflected their intention to search the Scriptures for the laws of God and then recommend a course of action to local churches. Their polity depended on local churches to execute God’s laws as revealed in the New Testament. This assertion did not prohibit the Assembly from having executive offices or the general church from developing administrative structures. Indeed, at that first Assembly, Tomlinson served as moderator and clerk, and in 1909, the Assembly created the office of general moderator. Yet, their first action remains a continuing commitment of the Church of God.

The topics discussed at that first Assembly reveal issues with which those

## GENERAL MINISTRIES

Today most Church of God ministries at the international level are organized into five divisions. Some general ministries essential to the life of the church but not included in a division include:

- The **General Board of Trustees** was first appointed in 1916 and holds titles and manages properties on behalf of the General Assembly.
- **Church of God Communications** was established in 1996 with R. Lamar Vest as executive director. It incorporates Internet Ministry (including Faith News Network), media and production (Faith Productions), Forward in Faith radio broadcast, public and community relations, and conference management, including the biennial International General Assembly. Earl Paulk Jr. was the first Forward in Faith radio preacher in 1958, and Charles W. Conn was the first Public Relations director in 1960.
- The **Historical Commission** serves “to preserve and perpetuate the history and

heritage of the Church of God and its global Pentecostal mission.” Its predecessor was the Centennial Commission, appointed in 1981 to recognize our 100th anniversary in 1986. Church Historian Charles W. Conn chaired the Centennial Commission. The commission partners with the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center to provide a heritage exhibit at the International General Assembly and referees the Charles W. Conn Historical Writing Award.

- The **Prayer Commission** began in 1986 under the leadership of Al Taylor in order to enlist retired ministers to pray for the church and our many ministries.
- **Legal Services** began in 1994 with the appointment of Dennis Watkins, who serves as legal advisor to the general church.
- The **Church of God Foundation, Inc.**, offers financial services such as planned giving, investments, and church loan financing to members, ministers, and local congregations. Proceeds are directed into endeavors designed to provide funds for future church extension services. It was incorporated in 2001 with Al Taylor as the first president.

1911  
Church  
Teachings  
approved



1916  
Elders  
Council  
instituted



1921  
Dedication  
of Assembly  
Auditorium



1922  
Executive  
Committee  
established

1928  
General Overseer  
F.J. Lee died  
during Assembly



early congregations wrestled: keeping local church records, having family worship, building Sunday schools, practicing Communion and footwashing, holding weekly prayer meetings, opposing the use of tobacco, transferring church membership, and evangelism. They recommended an annual Assembly for “closer union and fellowship” among the churches and concluded with the affirmation “It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and us, being assembled with one accord, with the Spirit of Christ in the midst, and after much prayer, discussion, searching the Scriptures and counsel, to recommend these necessary things” (*Assembly Minutes*).

This relationship between the General Assembly and local churches has come to be called centralized government. Local churches agree to become part of the International General Assembly, which is comprised of members in covenant with local churches and ministers set forth by local churches. Local churches grant the General Assembly “full power and authority to designate the teaching, government, principles, and practices of all the local churches composing said Assembly.”

delegates were convinced that when New Testament order was established, the contemporary Church would reap the same supernatural growth and success the Apostles experienced following the Day of Pentecost. Tomlinson wrote, “So when the Church gets in perfect order as it was in apostolic days, the gospel will go forth

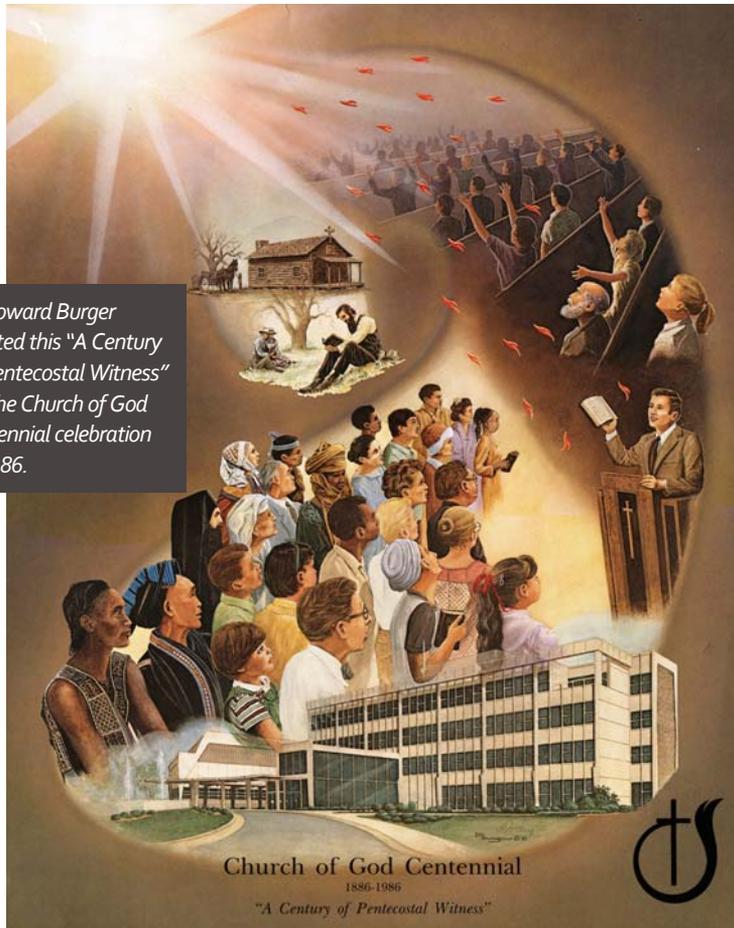
mines the agenda for the General Assembly business meeting, nominates certain officers, and elects the Council of Eighteen.

The second Assembly also adopted the name “Church of God,” based on Paul’s references to the Church of God in First and Second Corinthians. This adoption of the name “Church of God” was another

step toward their understanding that they were restoring God’s church.

Finally, the second Assembly instituted the office of evangelist. They had previously recognized bishops (sometimes called elders), deacons, and licensed ministers. In later years, the Assembly abandoned the office of deacon as a credentialed minister and instituted the office of exhorter. Today, we credential the ministerial ranks of ordained bishop, ordained minister, and exhorter, as well as licensed minister of Christian education and licensed minister of music. There is also a lay minister certification for specialized areas of local church ministry, and local churches may choose to institute the offices of deacons and elders.

Some important matters of polity discussed at succeeding Assemblies include



*E. Howard Burger created this "A Century of Pentecostal Witness" for the Church of God centennial celebration in 1986.*

## A Developing Movement

Through subsequent Assemblies, we have sought God and searched the Scriptures to develop and define our doctrine and practice. We have possessed a deep conviction that the models and truths of the Bible are for our day as well as for the first century. Early Assembly

and souls by the multitudes will be gathered in” (Tomlinson, 34).

Three events at the second Assembly in 1907 significantly shaped our movement. First, the ministers met separately in a “Preacher’s Conference.” This practice evolved into what is now the International General Council by 1930. This council is composed of Ordained Bishops and deter-

the 1909 selection of a general overseer to serve year-round and the appointment of state overseers (also called administrative bishops) in 1911. Delegates adopted an Elders Council in 1916 to conduct necessary business between Assemblies, which has become the Council of Eighteen.

Because of the heavy responsibilities of the general overseer, the 1922 Assembly

**1930**  
General Council established

**1946**  
Last annual Assembly



**1948**  
Declaration of Faith adopted



**1958**  
First Forward in Faith Radio Broadcast



**1960**  
Resolution on Holiness adopted

**1972**  
General Overseer R. Leonard Carroll died



selected a three-person committee comprised of the general overseer, the superintendent of education, and the editor and publisher. The composition of this leadership team has varied at times and today includes the general overseer, three assistants, and the secretary general. Now known as the International Executive Committee, they oversee the ongoing ministry of the international church. Together with the Council of Eighteen, they form the International Executive Council. The Executive Committee oversees specific portfolios of responsibility and appoints designated officers, boards, and committees. The Executive Council considers matters related to the general interest of the Church of God, recommends the agenda for the General Council, and allocates tithes sent to the International Offices.

### Sound Biblical Doctrine

Although Spurling and other early leaders rejected Christianity based on human creeds, they were not libertine in their theology. They believed the New Testament holds all that is necessary to know and serve Christ and that Spirit-led individuals in Christian community can interpret and understand biblical truth. Yet, they remained convinced that any creedal statement of that truth is fallible and might lead to division rather than Christian union.

Our earliest covenant accentuated the New Testament as our “only rule of faith and practice” and guided the theological life of the Church of God. Occasionally, needs for further statements have arisen, however. In 1910, the Assembly appointed a committee to prepare examination questions and biblical references for ministerial candidates. That committee’s report noted that the church stood for “the whole Bible rightly divided” with the New Testament as our only rule for government and discipline. They then

## DECLARATION OF FAITH

### WE BELIEVE:

1. In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
2. In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
3. That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.
4. That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.
5. That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
6. In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.
7. Holiness to be God’s standard of living for His people.
8. In the baptism of the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.
9. In speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost.
10. In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
11. Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.
12. In the Lord’s Supper and washing of the saints’ feet.
13. In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.
14. In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.

listed “some of the teaching that is made prominent.” Their list of twenty-five items included basic statements and scriptural

references. Some focused on doctrine such as “Repentance: Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19.” Other statements highlighted practices such as “Total abstinence from all liquor or strong drinks: Prov. 20:1, Prov. 23:29-32, Isa. 28:7, 1 Cor. 5:11, 1 Cor. 6:10, Gal. 5:21.”

These statements were not intended to serve as a creed or to be an exhaustive list of all that Church of God people believe. The 1911 Assembly discussed these statements at length and recommended that the “teachings” be reprinted with minor changes. These teachings have remained an important statement of doctrine and practice for the Church of God with occasional amendments as weighty issues emerged in the life of the denomination. In 1988, the Assembly highlighted the importance of Christian practices by adopting proactive declarations regarding spiritual example, moral purity, personal integrity, family responsibility, behavioral temperance, modest appearance, and social obligation.

The historic anti-creedal approach of the Church of God has allowed for some diversity on theological matters. One of these areas is the doctrine of sanctification. Early leaders of the movement were Wesleyan-Holiness in belief and practice and taught a subsequent work of grace that cleanses from the roots of sin. Yet, these leaders preached about a holy lifestyle more than they articulated the definitions of their theology.

In the 1940s, deep division emerged due to differing views about sanctification. Charles W. Conn characterized the ensuing debate as “centered not so much on the reality of sanctification as on the time and process of its inception in the human heart. Some held vigorously that it is an instantaneous or ‘definite’ work of grace, and others believed it to be continual and progressive” (Conn, 330). As a result of this debate, the Assembly adopted our Declaration of Faith in 1948. ■

**1992**  
Women  
granted vote  
in General  
Assembly



**2000**  
Ministerial  
offices  
renamed

**2000**  
Divisional  
structure  
introduced

**2004**  
Commitments  
to Mission and  
Vision adopted



**2010**  
Women  
allowed on  
Church and  
Pastor’s Council





Tents and music have been key tools of evangelism. Here the Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band is preparing to travel to the Bahamas in 1911. A.J. Tomlinson (left) was the leader and J.W. Buckalew (second from right) was the music instructor.

# THE GREAT COMMISSION

**F**ULFILLING JESUS' Great Commission to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15 NKJV) is a vital imperative for the Church of God in every place and at every level of ministry. Local churches train and encourage members to share the good news; pastors and evangelists preach the gospel; state and regional offices facilitate church planting, assist struggling churches, and support evangelists; national and international offices appoint missionaries and provide resources; and other agencies partner to reach and care for the lost. The Division of World Evangelization provides support

for these ministries and is organized into World Missions and U.S.A. Missions. Our belief that the Holy Spirit has been poured out to reach the harvest is essential to our commitment to the Great Commission. The Feast of Pentecost was the Feast of Harvest, and early Pentecostals recognized that their fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a supernatural enablement to reach the harvest in the last days. The conviction that these are the last days has been a guiding motivation to fulfill the Great Commission. General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson wrote in the inaugural issue of the *Church of God Evangel*, "The command to go, the command to evangelize

is just as forcible today upon us upon whom the ends of the world have come as it was when first uttered by our Lord and great Head of the Church." Tomlinson continued, "The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples in the morning to give them power to accomplish just what they did accomplish. He is given to us today for the same purpose. We dare not falter. . . . The time is short. The harvest is ripe. The sickle must be furbished and put into use" (*Evangel*, March 1, 1910, 1).

### Every Person a Witness

Evangelism was a dominant theme at the first Assembly in 1906. Delegates

**circa 1887**  
R.G. Spurling planted second Christian Union

**1899**  
A.J. Tomlinson to North Carolina as missionary

**1904**  
Tomlinson planted churches in Tennessee

**1906**  
First General Assembly consecrated to the harvest

**1909**  
Edmond and Rebecca Barr to Bahamas

**1910**  
R.M. and Ida Evans to Bahamas

shared reports and consecrated themselves to the harvest. According to the minutes, “After the consideration of the ripened fields and open doors for evangelism this year, strong men wept and said they were not only willing but really anxious to go.” The minutes recorded, “It is therefore the sense of this meeting that we do our best to press into every open door this year and work with greater zeal and energy for the spread of the glorious gospel of the Son of God than ever before” (*Assembly Minutes*).

Establishing a community presence is an essential element to planting a new congregation. The first Assembly recommended Sunday schools as an effective means to do this. They noted, “We believe a Sunday school may sometimes be organized and run successfully where a church could not be established at once, thereby opening and paving the way for a more permanent work in the future” (*Assembly Minutes*).

The Church of God encouraged all Christians to put their sickles into the harvest. Insisting that evangelism is not just the responsibility of preachers, Tomlinson challenged the Assembly in 1911, “We have a number of workers who are not able to preach, but are willing to work at anything they can do. They are able to do personal work, hold cottage prayer meetings, distribute literature, and give ringing testimonies” (*Assembly Minutes*). Tomlinson especially believed that such workers could be crucial in establishing missions in cities that did not yet have a church.

This did not negate the importance of effective leadership. The 1911 General Assembly created the office of state overseer, whose first duty was to “conduct or order a general evangelistic campaign over his state during the year.” This office became an important means of establishing churches.

Tent campaigns and revivals also proved to be effective tools of evangelism. Few communities had facilities sufficient to plant a church or to hold a revival, so tents were a practical and portable way to provide inexpensive shelter for evangelistic services. Tents allowed for people to be receptive to the Holy Spirit. It was easier to attend a meeting outside one’s own tradition if the setting was not in a church building, and the uniqueness of a tent service held the audience’s attention in ways that the familiarity of a church building could not. The excitement of the tent meeting allowed worshipers to expect and be open to the new and unusual. The same could be said for brush arbors, which also were used in many places.

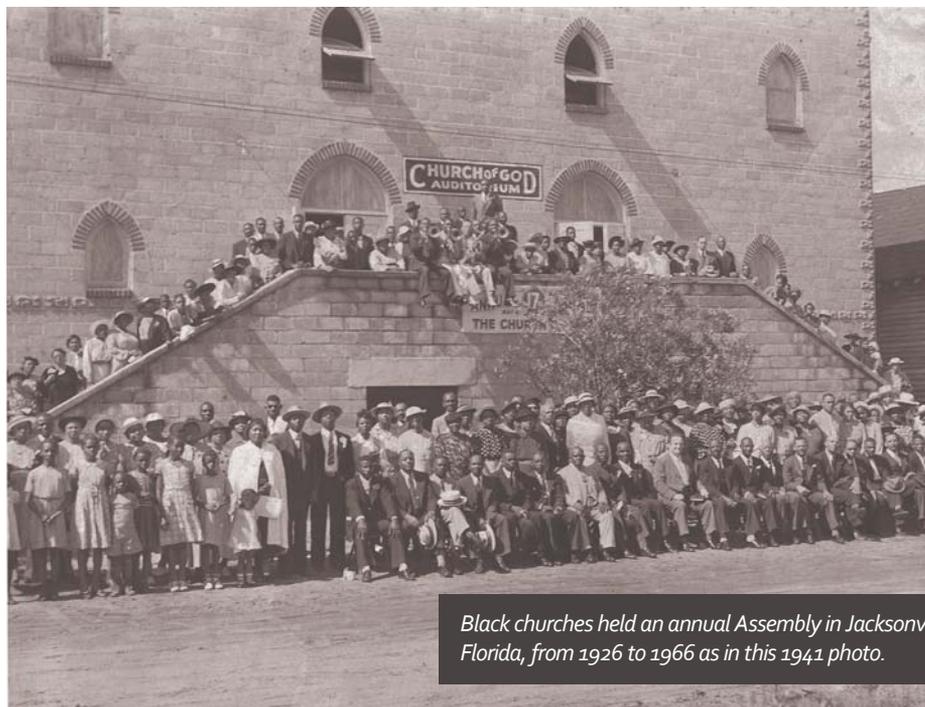
Passionate ministers of the gospel, Sunday schools, state overseers, tents, brush arbors, rented meeting halls, and dedicated workers all contributed to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

When General Overseer John C. Jernigan addressed the General Assembly in 1948, he reminded the delegates:

The Church of God has come to where it is today through toil and sacrifices. In the early days, when the brethren went out to hold revivals, there were no choirs, no church houses, and no money to sponsor them. They either went singly or in small groups of workers, mostly inexperienced but full of fire and victory.

Jernigan continued:

One great method of advancing the work . . . was that members who received the baptism of the Holy Ghost in one community or town would move into another and begin a prayer meeting or Sunday School in a home, schoolhouse, union church house, or any place they could get a little group assembled. Then one of the few preachers they knew was invited over for a revival. The minister usually stayed in the home of



Black churches held an annual Assembly in Jacksonville, Florida, from 1926 to 1966 as in this 1941 photo.

**1910**  
Inaugural *Evangel* proclaimed “harvest is ripe”



**1910**  
Lillian Trasher to Egypt

**1910**  
Arcadia, Florida, gave first missions offering



**1911**  
First General Assembly missions offering

**1911**  
First Spanish-language church was Raton, New Mexico

**1914**  
Roy and Jennie Rushin to China



a Church of God member who had recently moved into the community, fasted, prayed, and preached until the power fell.

Jernigan concluded:

Then when that stronghold was established, it became a bridgehead for further advancement, and members from that church usually took the light into other communities (*Assembly Minutes*).

### Providing National Leadership

Leadership of the Church of God began to recognize a need for more structure in our evangelistic thrust in the early 1950s. The 1956 General Assembly created a National Evangelism Committee to support evangelists and create programs to assist churches in revival. Then in 1963, the Executive Council created the Evangelism and Home Missions Department to coordinate and direct the numerous evangelism efforts of the church. The church appointed Walter R. Pettitt to serve as the first director of what is now called USA Missions.

Ministries of the department have varied widely as the Church of God has looked for opportunities to share the love of Christ. The department has published materials to assist in planning, promoting, and funding revivals, as well as specialty areas such as jail and prison ministries. It has encouraged the appointment of state and national evangelists, and provided numerous training conferences and workshops to enhance evangelism ministries in local churches. In recent years, it has encouraged retired ministers with an annual Jubilee and has established an office to facilitate local church amalgamations. In 2005, the Executive Committee established a National Church Planting Office under the leadership of Michael Knight to provide assessments and training for church planters.



Carl M. Padgett, standing center with Bible, set in order the Green Turtle Cay church in the Bahamas in 1913. It is the oldest continuing Church of God outside the United States.

### Lay Evangelism

Soon after its establishment, the Evangelism and Home Missions Department began an emphasis on lay evangelism. A committee appointed in 1964 became the National Laymen's Board by 1966 with J.D. Silver as chair. A Lay Affairs Office began in 1972 that developed into the Lay Ministries Department. Charles R. Beach served as its first executive director, and Leonard Albert became a field representative in 1974.

Beach and Albert brought extensive evangelism experience to their respective offices. While a faculty member at Lee College, Beach had developed the Pioneers for Christ Club, which provided evangelism training for students and served as a model that the denomination later adopted. Lay Ministries included Schools of Lay Evangelism, Lay Literature for the Lost, International Lay Witness Week, Resur-

rection Breakfasts, International Laymen's Day, and Pastor Appreciation Day. Along with other structural changes in 2010, Albert's leadership in personal evangelism was retained in the Division of World Evangelization while men's ministries shifted to the Division of Discipleship.

### Multi-Cultural, African-American, and Hispanic Ministries

With an increasingly diverse population in North America, the Church of God has sought opportunities to minister to various cultures. Ministry to Native Americans in the Dakotas and North Carolina expanded to include tribes of the American Southwest. Starting in 1980, J.D. Golden inaugurated a variety of ministries in New York's metropolitan area. Then in 1982, Billy J. Rayburn became a full-time director of Cross-Cultural Ministries. Later renamed Multi-Cultural Ministries,

1915  
Barr appointed  
overseer of  
Black churches

1917  
Lucy M.  
Leatherman  
to Chile



1922  
Apostolic Pentecostal Church  
of God established in Romania



1926  
World Missions  
Standing Board  
appointed

1932  
Maria Adkinson  
united Mexican  
churches with  
Church of God



1936  
Ingram took  
"Golden  
Jubilee Tour"



this office includes oversight and evangelism among Romanian, Indonesian, Portuguese, Filipino, and First Nations people groups.

Black Americans have been members of the Church of God since at least 1909 when Bahamian Edmond Barr and his Florida-born wife, Rebecca, joined in Durant, Florida. Reflecting the challenges of segregated America in 1915, General Overseer Tomlinson appointed Bishop Barr as overseer of the Black churches. Beginning with Thomas J. Richardson in 1922, the church appointed black overseers at a national level until 1958. Black churches held a national "Colored" Assembly from 1926 until 1966. While black and white churches have served under the same overseers in most states since 1966, black leaders in Florida requested to continue a separate office.

As the Church of God advanced beyond the vestiges of segregation, we began to appoint black leaders to regional and national posts leading to establishing our current office of Black Ministries. Among those leaders were Black Liaison H.G. Poitier and Southeastern Regional Evangelism Director Wallace Sibley Sr. In 1992, Joseph E. Jackson became director of Black Ministries. Then in 2008, Bishop Sibley was elected for the first of two terms as secretary general, making him the first non-Caucasian elected to the Executive Committee.

Our first Spanish-language congregation came into the Church of God in Raton, New Mexico, in 1911 under the leadership of Evangelist R.M. Singleton and Pastor T.F. Chavez. In 1945, we created a Latin American Department to give oversight to Latin American ministries at home and abroad. The department published *El Evangelio de la Iglesia de Dios* and established the International Preparatory Institute in San Antonio. Texas native

and missionary to Mexico, Vessie D. Hargrave, served as the first director. The first National Hispanic Conference was in 1985 with the theme, "That They All May Be One." The Church of God established the Office of Hispanic Ministries in 1992 and appointed Esdras Betancourt to oversee this flourishing ministry. In 2012, Hispanic ministry in the United States is divided into eight regions and maintains the Editorial Evangelica publishing ministry.

### Ministry to the Military

In addition to the Chaplains Commission, the Church of God ministers to men and women in uniform through Ministry to the Military. Early efforts to minister to soldiers during World War II included the commissioning of U.D. Tidwell to send letters and phonograph recordings to those in uniform; Frank W. Lemons traveling from base to base for worship and personal ministry; publishing and distributing *Strength for Service*; and sending *The Lighted Pathway*

to armed forces. Additionally, there were countless efforts by congregations located near military personnel.

A dream of organized ministry to military personnel was born in the heart of J. Don Amison. Having served in Germany as pastor of a congregation that ministered to soldiers, Amison recognized this need. By 1961, he had established an office and began publishing *On Guard*. Meanwhile, the Church of God appointed Assistant General Overseer H.D. Williams as the first director of the Servicemen's Department. Renamed Ministry to the Military in 1982, this office serves under the auspices of USA Missions. It operates Ministry Centers around the world and encourages congregations located near military installations to embrace service personnel.

### Reaching a World Harvest

As the Church of God became firmly established in Cleveland, Tennessee, the Holy Spirit compelled us to look toward a



Jennie Brinson Rushin and her husband Roy, seated in the center of this 1920 photo of their Chinese mission, entered China in 1914.

1936  
Herman  
Lauster  
to Germany



1936  
Robert F. Cook brought  
India Mission into church



1937  
Paul C. Pitt  
brought China  
Mission into  
church



1938  
Edmond  
and Pearl  
Stark to  
Angola



1942  
Full-time  
World Missions  
director

1945  
Latin American  
Department  
created

world harvest. When Edmond and Rebecca Barr came into the Church of God in 1909, they felt an urgency to return to his homeland in the Bahamas and set sail in November. Retired minister R.M. Evans and his wife Ida also felt the call. After selling their own possessions to finance the trip, the Evanses joined the Barrs in Nassau in January 1910, accompanied by Carl M. Padgett.

Church of God missions efforts remained largely unorganized for several years. Missionaries went on their own and sometimes represented the Pentecostal message rather than any one organization. The Church of God supported several such missionaries, including Lillian Trasher in Assiout, Egypt, in 1910.

Many other missionary endeavors followed. Jennie Brinson Rushin traveled to China in 1914. F.L. Ryder sailed to the Virgin Islands where he established a church before traveling on to South America in 1917. Lucy M. Leatherman was the first Church of God missionary to

Chile in 1917. Strategic efforts included Maria Atkinson to Mexico in 1931, and Herman Lauster to his home in Germany in 1936. Robert F. Cook brought his India mission into the Church of God in 1936, and Paul C. Pitt's China mission came into our movement in 1937. When Edmond and Pearl Stark went to Angola in 1938, he became stricken with malaria and died. Yet, the burden for Angola was not buried with him. Pearl Stark returned alone in 1947 to minister the gospel.

Both fundraising and organizational structure gradually developed so that the Church of God could expand our missions ministries. The first recorded local church missions offering was \$7.00 received by the Arcadia, Florida, church in April 1910. The first Assembly offering for missions was \$21.05 received in 1911 to send to the Evanses in the Bahamas. General Assemblies in 1913 and 1914 approved systematic plans to raise support for missionaries. The 1914 plan for congregations to collect monthly offerings

was modified in 1927 when local churches covenanted to raise offerings equal to 5 percent of their tithes to be divided between home and world missions. This financial strategy remained in effect until the reallocation of resources in 2010. While support for missionaries and special projects most often comes directly from local congregations, monies churches send to sustain the International Offices provide for administrative oversight.

Beginning in 1911, each Assembly appointed a Missions Committee to make recommendations. A standing board replaced this committee in 1926. Then in 1936, the Church of God appointed J.H. Ingram as a foreign missions field representative. That year, Ingram embarked on a "Golden Jubilee Tour" to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Church of God and traveled 44,000 miles visiting thirty-one countries and colonies. M.P. Cross became the first full-time World Missions executive secretary (director) in 1942, and then area superintendents were appointed beginning in 1945 with Carl J. Hughes as superintendent of Bermuda and the West Indies and Vessie D. Hargrave as superintendent of Latin America. Today, field directors oversee major regions outside the United States.

Since 1966, Church of God membership in missions areas has surpassed that of the United States and Canada, due in part to affiliation and amalgamation with national churches. For example, the Apostolic Pentecostal Church of God in Romania began in 1922 when Sida Bradin was miraculously healed. She and her husband, George, had read a tract on divine healing and established a church in their home based on the doctrines of the Church of God. Although political and religious circumstances made communication between Romania and the United States difficult, with the fall of communism, ties



*Maria Atkinson, standing front left in white, was serving as pastor of four congregations in Mexico when she brought them into the Church of God in 1932.*

**1951**  
South Africa Amalgamation



**1961**  
Don Amison published *On Guard* for military



**1961**  
H.D. Williams appointed director of Servicemen's Department



**1963**  
Walter Pettit was first director of Evangelism and Home Missions



**1966**  
World Missions membership surpassed USA and Canada

**1972**  
Charles Beach appointed Director of Lay Affairs Office





*Men and Women of Action teams have traveled to six continents to assist in the construction of churches, schools, medical clinics, parsonages, and other missions projects.*

were reestablished in 1980. Other partnerships include amalgamation with the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa in 1951 and the Bethel Full Gospel Church in Indonesia in 1967.

The vision for world harvest has long been more than just a vision of North Americans; countries that were mission fields are now becoming mission forces. Among innumerable illustrations, Korean missionaries have established the Church of God in Nepal; South Americans have sent missionaries to Russia; Church of God members in Indonesia have planted churches in China; and Word for the World in the Philippines has established congregations among Filipinos in many nations, including the United States.

A crucial strategy for reaching the whole world in the twenty-first century is our commitment to unreached people groups. Defined as a group of people among whom few, if any, have ever heard the gospel, the Church of God has focused

its efforts on seventy-five of these groups. Eight years after setting this goal in 2004, we have planted congregations among thirty-six unreached people groups.

As of April 2012, Church of God ministries were in 178 countries and territories, including more than 7,087,000 members; 37,000 ministers; 36,000 churches; and 128 Bible schools, colleges, and universities. May we continue to have the passion and dedication of those who have gone before us. May our prayers join with that of A.J. Tomlinson who cried:

Oh, for a million men [and women] who would fear nothing but God, filled with such holy zeal and Godly courage, that we could all together burst forth under the power of this mighty baptismal fire and rush to every quarter of the globe like mad men, declaring the gospel of the Son of God, until every tribe, kindred, tongue and people could hear, and thus end this Last Great Conflict! (Tomlinson, 219). ■

## MISSIONS PARTNERS

Numerous other Church of God ministries work alongside the Division of World Evangelization as we “go into all the world.” Among these are:

**Youth and Discipleship** established Youth World Evangelism Action (YWEA) in 1957. Each year youth tackle a project such as building training centers, local churches, or educational institutions.

**Men and Women of Action** sponsor teams of volunteers for construction, disaster relief, short-term missions, and personal evangelism. Inaugurated under the leadership of Robert D. Pace, the first project remodeled England’s Overstone College in 1984.

**Children of the World Ministries**, located in Bristol, Tennessee, formally began in 2010 as “a Christian charity that provides program guidelines and financial support to orphanages, orphans, and children’s ministries.” This vision was birthed in the hearts of Gene D. Rice and John D. Nichols in 1998. Due to their efforts, the General Assembly raised an offering of \$2.7 million, and John Gregory’s Lazarus Foundation contributed an additional \$2.3 million. These initial funds assisted sixty orphanages.



*Grace Children's Home in Uganda*

**1980**  
J.D. Golden began ministries in New York

**1982**  
Billy J. Rayburn appointed director of Cross-Cultural Ministries



**1985**  
First National Hispanic Conference

**1984**  
First Men/Women of Action project was England’s Overstone College



**1992**  
Esdras Betancourt first director of Hispanic Ministries



**2005**  
National Church Planting Office created



After A.J. Tomlinson relocated to Culberson, North Carolina, in 1899, his ministry included a school for children, orphanage, and clothing distribution center. Tomlinson is standing on back row with beard.

# CARING FOR THE WHOLE PERSON

**W**E CARE FOR the whole person. This has been the Church of God's message since our formative years. Those before us in this movement recognized that true Christianity is transformational. This, in essence, means becoming more like Christ and seeking to fulfill the greatest commandments given to us by Jesus: "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself" (paraphrase of Matt. 22:37-39). Scripture clearly emphasizes service to others, especially those who are hurting and in need, as an act of service to Christ himself (Matt. 25:31-40).

## Early Ministries of Care

Our spiritual fathers and mothers sought to attain to this level of godly love and desired to help others grow spiritually, which often first required meeting others' physical needs. At the turn of the twentieth century, Church of God beliefs were aligned with those of the broader, socially-conscious Holiness Movement, and we offered several social programs, including caring for orphans, feeding the needy, and providing shelter to troubled youth and women.

When A.J. Tomlinson traveled throughout Appalachia selling Bibles in the 1890s, he was captivated by the spiri-

tual, educational, and physical needs along the Tennessee-North Carolina border. Moved with compassion for the impoverished mountaineers, he and his family relocated to Culberson, North Carolina, where, in April 1900, they started a school and began an orphanage.

When Tomlinson and his family temporarily returned to Indiana in November 1902, he left the children of his school and orphanage in the care of his friends W.F. and Nettie Bryant. Later, Bryant recalled, "The whole number in the school was thirty-five, eight of whom were orphan children that I kept in my home." Thereafter, Bryant traveled the

**1900**  
A.J. Tomlinson began Culberson, NC orphanage



**1910**  
Lillian Trasher began Egypt orphanage

**1911**  
Bryants opened Cleveland, TN, orphanage



**1917**  
Pentecostal Rescue Home opened in Sapulpa, OK

**1920**  
Home for Children opened in Cleveland, TN



mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia in missionary work for the poor and was keenly aware of the number of orphaned children within the region. “I have met so many orphan children who need attention, instruction, food and clothing,” wrote Bryant. “As I meet them my heart is broken and I have wept and cried before God about their condition, until I have now taken some into my own home.” In 1911, W.F. and Nettie Bryant began operating an orphanage and clothes distribution center in Cleveland, Tennessee, known as “The Faith Orphanage and Children’s Home.”

Our early ministry of care was not limited to the United States. As Church of God missionaries reached other countries, they shared Christ’s love by caring for those whom they encountered. One such person was Lillian Trasher of Dahlonga, Georgia, who in 1910 became a Church of God missionary to Egypt and started an orphanage upon seeing the number of homeless children needing care. The *Church of God Evangel* published reports of her work that gained financial and prayerful support from members in the United States. Later, Trasher earned the title “The Nile Mother” because of her ministry of care to Egyptian orphans, and it was Church of God members who first supported her work there.

Orphans were not the only recipients of care in those early days. Throughout Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas, Ida Lopez Haddock helped prostitutes and the homeless find a new way of life while the Pentecostal Rescue Home offered safe shelter for women in the West. By 1917, Roy L. Cotnam, then state overseer of Oklahoma, his wife, Ara, and Blanche Darner, a nurse, were managing the Pentecostal Rescue Home, a benevolent mission for “female outcasts, fallen and homeless adults.” Although the ministry

was small, its impact on the lives of dozens of women was eternal, including a woman who died from tuberculosis. As a result of the home, she was saved, sanctified, baptized with the Holy Ghost, and “went to glory rejoicing.”

Through the years, local churches have ministered to their communities by creating care programs, which often were adopted for our national and international programs. An early example is the Narragansett Church in Chicago. Successful church planter Amelia Shumaker sensed the Holy Spirit guiding her to Chicago and, accompanied by her ministry coworker, Martha Zimmerlin, moved to the Windy City. By October 14, 1929, the Narragansett Church was organized from their efforts. Fifteen days later the stock market’s crash caused the economic crisis known as the Great Depression. Chicago was especially devastated and unemployment, starvation, and hopelessness abounded. Amelia then understood God’s providence in leading her to Illinois as she began to reach out to Chicago’s hurting families.

Narragansett Church members began meeting physical needs of community residents by serving meals, providing clothing, and distributing groceries—giving them an opportunity to share the message of salvation. As a result, the church grew. A Sunday school was organized to provide biblical training, and Amelia continued to preach with power as the Holy Spirit transformed lives. In time, the local church expanded into other areas of Chicago as additional centers of compassionate ministry.

## Current Ministries of Care

### *City of Refuge*

The City of Refuge is a current ministry reaching individuals and families living in poverty through its programs of pro-

viding food, clothing, shelter, job training and placement, housing, healthcare, and education. It traces its beginning to Mission Possible, a ministry started in 1970 when the Land family, including Jack and Mary Land, Steven and Peggy Land, and Rosemary Land Lester, purchased a house in Atlanta for the purpose of showing Christ’s compassion to those in need. The 20-room house, a former bordello and dinner club, served as an urban residential, discipleship, and rehabilitation center. Mission Possible intentionally sought out individuals involved in prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse, and with behavioral problems and saw dramatic and miraculous deliverances and conversions. Through Bible studies, a coffee house, the Midtown Mission Church, and numerous social and training programs, Mission Possible ministered to tens of thousands of people during its existence.

In 1997, Mission Possible’s ministries were integrated into the City of Refuge, a nonprofit organization directed by Bruce Deel that helps Atlanta’s neediest residents transition out of poverty. Six years later, eight-acres in one of Atlanta’s most challenging neighborhoods was donated to the City of Refuge, which now has two warehouses and 210,000 square feet of space for ministry. Recent outreaches include other ministry centers in California, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, and an outreach directed by Jeff Deel in Jamaica.

City of Refuge partners with other organizations and churches to help people pull themselves out of poverty through a process of meeting basic life needs (food, housing, clothing, etc.), helping them identify causes of their crisis and receive treatment and developing life skills for continued development and growth physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. The Atlanta ministry center serves more than 4,000 people weekly.

**1924**  
J.S. Llewellyn  
first orphanage  
committee  
chairman



**1926**  
Work began for  
black orphanage  
and school in  
Eustis, FL



**1929**  
Mother Jessie L.  
Hayward appointed  
matron of  
Eustis orphanage



**1929**  
Narragansett Church  
began assisting  
Chicago’s needy

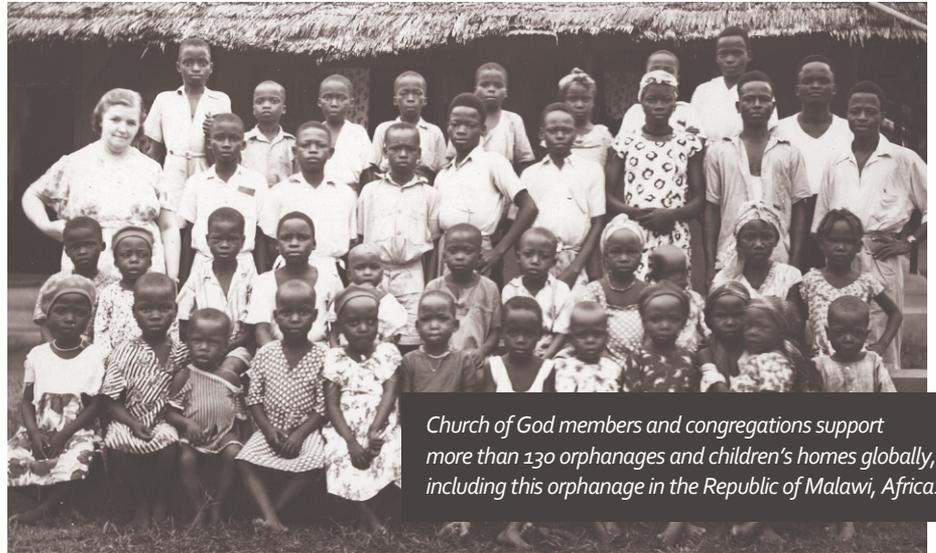


**Lee University Leonard Center/  
Service Learning Program**

Another current ministry of care is Lee University's Leonard Center, which facilitates reflective community interactions for students while teaching them about service, benevolence, and social justice. A gift from the Lazarus Foundation of Bristol, Tennessee, funds this program, placing students in service opportunities both in the United States and globally. Since its inception in 2003, each Lee student is required to complete eighty hours of service before graduation, which provides them with hands-on instruction in recognizing service as part of God's purpose for us and how vocation can be used in service to God and others. In 2009, Lee's program was one of six universities recognized for top placement on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll—the highest federal recognition a university can receive for volunteerism, service-learning, and civic engagement. Lee students volunteer more than 65,000 hours of service annually in social ministry projects.

**Peniel Residential Drug/Alcohol  
Treatment Center**

Established in 1980, Peniel has ministered to thousands of people and has one of the highest success rates in the nation for recovery from substance abuse. For forty years, Marion Spellman, who directs Peniel with her husband, Harold, has desired to minister to hurting individuals, partially from viewing first-hand in her own family and community the brokenness and problems connected with substance abuse. Her previous ministry work with incarcerated ladies at a correctional facility and then working with females at Teen Challenge allowed Spellman to see the benefits a structured program brings to substance abuse treatment. She founded



*Church of God members and congregations support more than 130 orphanages and children's homes globally, including this orphanage in the Republic of Malawi, Africa.*

Peniel in Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, to minister to individuals requiring long-term inpatient treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, as well as mild emotional problems. Now based in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Peniel has two expanded dormitories, a gymnasium, and a sanctuary. Its intensive inpatient treatment approach includes residential life, spiritual emphasis, counseling and therapy, life-skills classes, vocational therapy, and recreation. Key to Peniel's mission is its commitment to transforming the whole person and its integrated spiritual emphasis.

**Caring for Children**

For decades, the flagship center of care for children in the Church of God has been the Smoky Mountain Children's Home. Desiring to live according to New Testament teachings, early in our existence the Church of God was compelled to exemplify "pure and undefiled religion" by caring for orphans (James 1:27). Although previous orphanage ministries had proven short-lived, by 1920, we had a renewed zeal to care for orphans, many of whom were left alone following the death of

their parents during the Influenza Epidemic of 1918.

When General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson gave an emotional appeal at the 1919 Assembly, many delegates began to weep upon hearing his plea to assist homeless children. One delegate spontaneously gave \$100 during the service and was followed with donations from other delegates. Local churches responded by collecting offerings also.

On December 17, 1920, an orphanage was established in Cleveland, and Lillian Kinsey was appointed as matron. Four homeless children were the first residents assigned to her care. By the close of 1920, the Church of God was fully committed to benevolence ministry.

As the number of children at the orphanage increased, leadership realized the growing financial responsibility and encouraged local churches to participate. Answering the call, many congregations enthusiastically collected offerings. On March 12, 1921, the *Church of God Evangel* published a letter from Bertha Bloomingtondale of Calhoun, Georgia, noting one method for receiving the offering that

**1944**  
North Carolina  
Children's  
Home opened



**1949**  
Cleveland  
Children's Home  
relocated to  
Sevierville



**1956**  
South Carolina  
Home for  
Children opened



**1970**  
Mission  
Possible  
started in  
Atlanta



**1974**  
Department of  
Benevolence  
created

quickly became a Church of God tradition—the “penny march.”

Bloomington lived in a community where no local church existed, but the nearby Deal family provided a room in

their house for a congregation to meet. In that simple setting, the earliest-known “penny march” for the Church of God orphanage began. Although not unique to the Church of God, the practice spread

quickly after Bloomington’s letter was published, and it has been continued by subsequent generations as a means for local members to actively participate in James 1:27 by their sacrificial giving.

Between 1922 and 1947, the increasing demand for this ministry resulted in the purchase or construction of several homes located throughout Cleveland and nearby communities, including Baugh Springs at McDonald, Benton Pike, and South Lee Highway. By 1949, the orphanage relocated from Cleveland to the property previously housing the Bible Training School in Sevierville, Tennessee. The spacious campus allowed all children to be served in one location.

In the late 1920s, work began on an orphanage for the church’s black membership, as Jim Crow laws forced separation of races in many places during that time. Ultimately, property was purchased in Eustis, Florida, for an orphanage and school, and Mother Jessie L. Hayward was appointed as its first matron in 1929. It was not until 1966 that the Smoky Mountain Children’s Home was integrated.

In time, children’s needs began to change, and the Church of God expanded its ministry to include victims of neglect and abuse. Foster family care, residential treatment centers, social work, counseling services, educational opportunities, and structured group living services were incorporated. Homes for children also have been established in other locations, including Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia (see sidebar). And, Church of God members and churches support more than 130 orphanages and children’s homes globally.

## CHURCH OF GOD CHILDREN’S HOMES IN THE U.S.

■ **CHURCH OF GOD CHILDREN’S HOME OF NORTH CAROLINA**—Located in Concord, North Carolina, the Church of God Children’s Home of North Carolina began in a mill village in 1944 when two small girls were brought to the home of Reverend A.V. Childers, then pastor of Elm Street Church in Kannapolis. Childers won favor with local businessman Charles A. Cannon, who owned Cannon Mills and donated seven acres of land and a farmhouse for an orphanage. Elm Street members then received a special offering to finance the orphanage. Since then, hundreds of hurting children have been ministered to and their lives changed by the love they have received at the home.

■ **SOUTH CAROLINA CHURCH OF GOD HOME FOR CHILDREN**—South Carolina Church of God Home for Children opened in Gaffney on January 13, 1956, with four children. J.B. Camp served as the first Superintendent. Now located in Simpson-

ville, South Carolina, it is supported primarily by Church of God congregations throughout South Carolina.

■ **NEW RIVER RANCH**—New River Ranch is located in Fayetteville, West Virginia, on 266-acres of farmland previously used as a “show” horse ranch. Donated by Joe and Sandi Lewis, the ranch opened in January 1988 and provides residential and group home care and behavioral health services to homeless and at-risk youth ages 10 to 18.

■ **HEART OF FLORIDA YOUTH RANCH**—Heart of Florida Youth Ranch, located near Ocala, Florida, began in November 1990 and is a residential home to dependent, neglected, abused, and troubled youth. Providing a safe, nurturing, family lifestyle environment, this horse ranch also serves as an outpatient community, mental-health facility providing counseling and specialized services for boys and girls from infancy through 17 years of age.



*The Cleveland Orphanage relocated to Sevierville, Tennessee, in 1949.*

## Caring for Widows: Iris B. Vest Widows Ministry Center

Dedicated in 2003, the Iris B. Vest Widows Ministry Center is one way the

1978  
Chaplain’s  
Commission  
began



1980  
Marion  
Spellman  
started Peniel in  
Pennsylvania



1988  
New River Ranch  
opened in West Virginia



1988  
Ministry  
to Israel  
created



1990  
Heart of Florida  
Youth Ranch  
opened

Church of God seeks to fulfill the biblical mandate to care for widows (James 1:27). This nonprofit, independent living, residential facility is funded through donations and provides 41 living suites, several spacious lounges and patio areas, a dining room, and a chapel. The Widows Center is located in Sevierville, Tennessee, adjacent to the Smoky Mountain Children's Home, providing a mutually beneficial atmosphere for the widows and children and youth.

**Caring for the Community**

**Chaplains Commission**

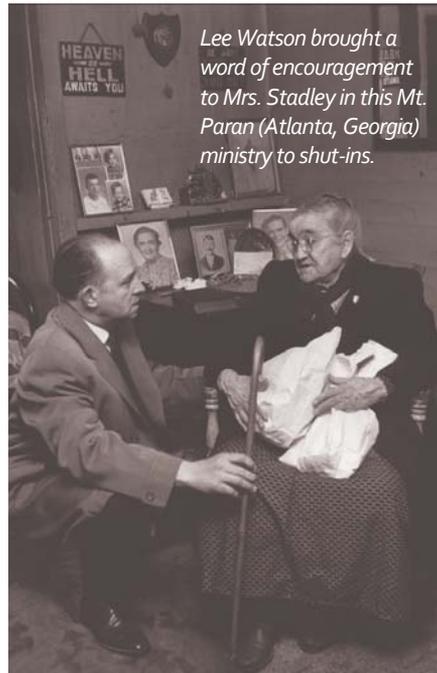
Church of God members have served as chaplains since 1958. However, the Church of God began endorsing vocational chaplains in 1978 to military, hospital, correctional, and clinical settings, due largely to the vision of Robert Crick and his wife, Jeanette, who directed the chaplaincy ministry for 32 years.

By 1986, the Chaplains Commission developed the Community Service Chaplaincy program with certification and training in various disciplines, including crisis counseling, disaster response, domestic violence, and substance abuse.

Beginning with eleven chaplains, the Church of God now has almost 100 military Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve chaplains, more than 250 institutional chaplains, and more than 3,000 part-time and volunteer chaplains ministering in their local communities in hospitals, correctional facilities, nursing homes and hospice associations, counseling centers, mental health clinics, rehabilitation centers, and businesses. In recent years, chaplaincy training centers have been established globally, and Church of God chaplains have received national and international recognition for their excellence in service.

**Fulfilling Prophecy Through Care: Ministry to Israel**

Beginning in 1988 in a room not much larger than a broom closet, Ministry to Israel was initiated as a result of the burden of John Nichols and Michael Utterback. In 1985, the Lord spoke clearly to Utterback that the Church of God was to be involved in the return of the Jews to the nation of Israel and in helping them once they immigrated. Two years later while in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit



*Lee Watson brought a word of encouragement to Mrs. Stadley in this Mt. Paran (Atlanta, Georgia) ministry to shut-ins.*

reminded Nichols of God's love for Israel; as a result, the Executive Committee created Ministry to Israel.

In 1997, the Jerusalem Support Center was established in the heart of Jerusalem, where today between 250 and 300 Jewish families are helped monthly. Across the land of Israel more than 20 churches have joined the Israel Support Network established by Utterback and his partners to help the thousands of returning immigrants. Also, since 1991,

the Church of God has assisted more than 120,000 Jews return to their homeland. According to Utterback, our denomination is at the forefront, helping to fulfill biblical prophecy and serving as a witness of God's love for His chosen people.

**Operation Compassion**

Operation Compassion began in 1999 and is a nonprofit, international, disaster-relief charity that mobilizes churches, individuals, and community groups to provide food and basic necessities to the poor and needy. David B. Lorency directs this ministry, which is noted for its high standard of record keeping, fundraising, product procurement, and product distribution—more than 99 percent of funding goes directly to ministry projects. The *Chronicle of Philanthropy Top 400* lists Operation Compassion as the 65th largest charity, and *Forbes* recognizes it and four other charities as the most efficient charity in America—quite an accomplishment with over 1.4 million charities in the United States. It is the 17th largest international relief organization.

Operation Compassion now utilizes more than 3,000 semis in its distribution efforts during times of disaster, and moves more than 30 million pounds annually. It offers various specialized ministries for national and international projects, including Hope America, Compassion America, Relief America, Dream America, Global Compassion, and Global Child (see sidebar).

**People for Care and Learning**

The Church of God partners with People for Care and Learning (PCL), a nonprofit humanitarian organization envisioned by Bob Pace in 2002. Throughout Southeast Asia and the United States, PCL serves more than 6,000 meals monthly, provides medical care to hundreds of

**1994**  
Steve Wright began "Hot Dog Church" in San Francisco

**1994**  
Center for Ministerial Care established



**1994**  
Operation Compassion established



**1997**  
City of Refuge began in Atlanta

**2000**  
Gloria Tyner Bun became first COG female military chaplain



patients across eight medical clinics, digs clean water wells, builds homes, provides leadership training and English classes for hundreds of students across nine locations, and operates two barges on the Tonle Sap to provide refugees access to clean water, food, medical care, and education.

Common Grounds Coffee House and Training Center in Siem Reap, Cambodia, is its primary ministry base—creating jobs, providing income to sustain the local children’s home, and serving as a vocational training center for teaching English and computer skills. PCL is building an entire city in Andong, Cambodia, and it is partnering with Lee University students to launch an integrated farm to teach locals to provide for themselves and their communities. The organization operates completely on offerings and grants, with 100 percent of donations going to designated ministry projects.

## Caring for the Ministry

### Center for Ministerial Care

The Church of God values its men and women who serve on the frontlines of ministry week after week. In an era where ministry burnout is increasing, the Center for Ministerial Care serves our clergy to help curtail potential burnout and offer encouragement during times of personal difficulty. Resources available to ministers include confidential telephone counseling, ministerial enrichment programs (such as marriage and family enrichment seminars, pastoral sabbatical programs, and ministerial placement services), professional consultation for church counseling ministries, pastoral crisis intervention, and ministerial advocacy. In addition, our church honors the sacrifice and dedication of our retired ministers for their years of service in fulfilling God’s call through **SpiritCare**, which offers support to our retired ministers,

## CORE PROGRAMS OF OPERATION COMPASSION

■ **HOPE AMERICA**—Based out of the Appalachian Dream Center in Holden, West Virginia, Hope America has served the Appalachian region through food distribution, hot-meal programs, senior-adult day care, vision and medical assessments, and computer and job skills training since 2002.

■ **COMPASSIONAMERICA**—This ministry arm of Operation Compassion specializes in urban benevolence programs to meet various needs of the poor, underprivileged, and disenfranchised living within America’s largest cities. These urban ministry centers are located throughout the United States.

■ **RELIEF AMERICA**—When disaster strikes, the Church of God seeks to be there with a helping hand. This disaster response network specializes in providing relief from national and international natural disasters. Giving bottled water, food, cleaning supplies, and building materials is a means of ministering to the physical needs of individuals, which often opens the door to minister to their spiritual needs. Through an established network of churches and agencies, this ministry is able to provide quick response to those affected by disaster.

■ **DREAM AMERICA**—Dream America ministers to Native Americans living on reservations in the western United States by

supplying them with many necessities difficult to obtain, such as food, water, educational material, and building supplies.

■ **GLOBAL COMPASSION**—Global Compassion is the international arm of Operation Compassion. Its mission is to provide countries of the developing world with medical supplies, medical equipment, textbooks, clothing, and food and toys.

■ **GLOBAL CHILD**—Another international arm of Operation Compassion is Global Child, which responds to needs of children around the globe through feeding programs, medical clinics, clothing distribution, educational materials, disaster rescue, child AIDS relief, and Bible distribution.



spouses, and minister’s widows and creates a network of contact where they can remain involved in the life of the church. The **Helping Hands** program reimburses pharmaceutical medications for retired ministers. And, in collaboration with World Missions, Ministerial Care has an international ministry program for missionaries and their families.

Now beyond our 125th anniversary as a movement, the Church of God has

entered the twenty-first century with a profoundly compassionate witness to those in need—in communities where we are located and even across the globe to others experiencing brokenness and disaster. We are concerned about the development of the whole person—spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual—and offer various ministries of care to accomplish this goal. It is, after all, our scriptural mandate and the Jesus way. ■

**2002**  
Appalachian Dream Center started in West Virginia

**2002**  
Bob Pace initiated People for Care and Learning



**2003**  
Iris B. Vest Widows Ministry Center opened



**2003**  
Lee University began service learning program



**2012**  
Travis Johnson traveled 610 miles on bicycle across three Asian countries to raise money for People for Care and Learning



*E.L. Simmons (left) and S.W. Latimer (right) led Publishing House staff in weekly prayer for the Evangel and other printed literature.*

# MAKING DISCIPLES

**J**ESUS INSTRUCTED His followers to “Go...and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19 NIV). The Great Commission is at the heart of Church of God ministry as we reach people for Christ and lead them to experience His transforming power. Through the years, our members have developed creative ways of obeying Christ’s mandate to make disciples.

Since our formation, we have valued God’s Word and interdependence, each of

which is vital to effective discipleship. The bold step taken by R.G. Spurling in 1886 to assemble together his Christian neighbors was as purposeful as it was revolutionary. Spurling desired for individuals to embrace their faith and understand why they held certain beliefs, not simply follow creeds or traditions. Spurling believed true discipleship is accomplished when Christians study the New Testament together and discuss how to apply its teachings to their lives. His mission was for his neigh-

bors to know God’s Word and then live according to it, and it was this emphasis that gave birth to our movement.

Our first General Assembly in 1906 emphasized family worship and Sunday school as means of discipleship. The importance of spiritual guidance in both the church and home were seen as integral to spiritual development. As the church expanded into new locations, equipped ministers became essential. By 1910, R.G. Spurling, A.J. Tomlinson, and

**1904**  
The Way first published with A.J. Tomlinson and M.S. Lemons as editors



**1906**  
First Assembly discussed need for Sunday schools

**1910**  
Church of God Evangel published



**1919**  
First church songbook published



**1924**  
Lettie Cross preached first youth service at Assembly



**1926**  
Michigan held first state youth convention

T.L. McLain were compiling examination questions and Bible references for interviewing potential ministers. Consequently, their work produced the church's core teachings used to disciple members. The teachings, which were revised in 1988, and the doctrinal statements issued in 1948 in our Declaration of Faith serve as the biblical foundation of our movement.

## Discipleship Through Publications

At the turn of the twentieth century, publications were a popular medium for communicating the gospel. Prior to joining the church, A.J. Tomlinson had published *Samson's Foxes* (1901–1902) to encourage his mountain readers and to inform those outside the region of his missionary work. When Tomlinson was called to pastor, he wanted a publication to connect the local churches. In January 1904, he began *The Way*, and he and M.S. Lemons served as editors until it was discontinued the following year. Church members also read and contributed to various Holiness and Pentecostal publications, such as *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, a periodical started by G.B. Cashwell and for which Tomlinson was an early corresponding editor.

On March 1, 1910, the inaugural issue of the *Church of God Evangel* (first titled *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*) was published with 125 subscribers. Referred to as the “white-winged messenger,” the paper lived up to its title by proclaiming Christ and introducing the Church of God into communities across the globe. Upon reading the testimonies and doctrinal articles, individuals often were intrigued about sanctification, the Holy Spirit baptism, and the Church of God.

When the *Evangel* announced a Church of God preacher was needed in Texas in 1914, J.T. Priest answered the call and

soon the *Evangel* reported he was preaching the “red-hot gospel.” Three years later, an *Evangel* was tossed from a train and picked up by a Holiness minister, who also requested a Church of God preacher come to his community—resulting in a church being organized in Strawn, Texas.

Similarly, when Katie Free saw her first *Evangel* in 1919 near Vardaman, Mississippi, she shouted with joy after reading the line: “People are receiving the Holy Ghost and speaking in other tongues.” Having received the Holy Spirit baptism while praying at home, it wasn't until reading the *Evangel* that she discovered others also shared her experience.

The *Evangel* even found its way into Romania after George Bradin read a Church of God publication about healing and the Holy Spirit baptism and contacted the church requesting literature. As a result, Bradin started a Pentecostal church in his home in 1922 with Church of God

literature providing guidance for its doctrine. Today, the Apostolic Church of God in Romania has over 500,000 members.

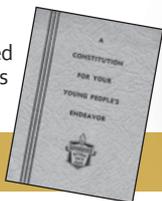
As the church grew, so did our need to own a printing operation to publish literature from a Pentecostal perspective. By 1917, we had purchased a publishing house, hired members to write literature, and began publishing our own Sunday school curriculum.

In 1945, the church adopted the broader evangelical curriculum promoted by the National Sunday School Association, which eventually included the *Evangelical Sunday School Lesson Commentary*. According to Lance Colkmire, this commentary is our best-selling nonmusical book. Started in 1953, it has been published by Pathway Press since 1963 with Church of God members serving as editors and Pentecostals as its main writers since 1974. Realizing the need for more relevant literature for youth and children,



The Latin American Department in San Antonio published *El Evangelio* and other Spanish-language literature.

**1929**  
Church adopted Young People's Endeavor



**1929**  
Alda B. Harrison began *The Lighted Pathway*



**1929**  
Johnnie Belle Wood began Ladies Willing Workers Band in Texas



**1931**  
Tennessee Music and Printing Company started

**1932**  
First YPE convention held for Black ministries

**1934**  
Otis McCoy became first music editor



Pathway Press introduced New Life curriculum in 1975 with assistance from Atlanta's Mount Paran Church of God.

In the 1930s, Peter C. Hickson led the Young People's Endeavor for our Black congregations when we were divided into black and white governmental structures. Burdened for more literature for youth, he asked for a monthly publication, which the Black Assembly authorized. In 1936, Hickson published the inaugural issue of the *Church of God Gospel Herald*. Although its original purpose was to facilitate youth ministry, the *Gospel Herald* soon developed into the primary voice for Black ministries.

As we have grown, our publications have increased, with many departments printing specialty magazines. Other countries also publish literature in their native languages. As early as 1944, a Spanish version of the *Evangel* was published in Mexico. Three years later, San Antonio, Texas, became the publication base for *El Evangelio* until its editorial offices relocated to Tennessee. Other widely-circulated international publications have included *Moving Waters* (South Africa), *InSpirit*, formerly *Stimme der Wahrheit* (Germany), *Cuvântul Adevărului* (Romania), *Suwishesha Nadam* (India), and *Risveglio* (Italy).

### Youth and Discipleship

By the 1920s, local churches were conducting youth-centered discipleship programs, such as "Children's Day" services and weekly youth services. Beginning in 1923, M.P. Cross and Houston R. Morehead established Young Harvesters Clubs throughout Michigan, and in 1926, E.L. Simmons of Florida organized a Young People's Missionary Association. In Tennessee, Alda B. Harrison organized a Young People's Mission Band in 1923 and encouraged the Church of God to start a national youth society.



*The Young Harvesters Club in Detroit, Michigan, was one of the earliest youth groups in the Church of God.*

Sensing the growing importance to connect with youth, General Overseer F.J. Lee asked Lettie Cross to preach the first General Assembly sermon for youth in 1924. With continued encouragement from youth leaders, we began a general youth program in 1929, adopting the name "Church of God Young People's Endeavor." That same year Harrison began publishing *The Lighted Pathway* as a youth magazine, which the church officially adopted in 1937, and she continued serving as editor until 1948. By 1932 the first national Y.P.E. convention for Black ministries was held in Jacksonville, Florida.

The Youth Program Committee, appointed in 1945, sponsored a Youth Congress prior to the 1946 Assembly, at which meeting a National Youth Department (now the International Youth and Discipleship Department) was established with Ralph E. Williams as first director. In 1950, the church developed standards to assist congregations in improving local discipleship programs, and by 1953, it began "steering toward better youth programs" for the Y.P.E. with the publication of *The Pilot*.

Today, local churches utilize a variety of discipleship models. Some maintain the traditional Sunday school, while others

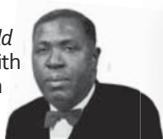
have adopted cell groups. Many churches conduct midweek classes for all ages, known as the Family Training Hour since 1966. Modeled after the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts organizations, the Church of God utilizes effective kids clubs. Boys ministries include Pioneers for Christ or Royal Rangers. Girls clubs first began in 1969 when the Women's Ministries Department initiated Young Ladies Ministries (grades 7-12), obeying the scriptural admonition for older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-5). Eventually, clubs for younger girls were created—Joy Belles (grades 4-6) in 1974, Bluebelles (grades 1-3) in 1984, and Little Sweethearts (preschool) in 2002. Both boys and girls clubs complete workbook activities and service, by which they are awarded patches and advance in rank.

### Youth Camps

One of our most successful youth discipleship programs is youth camp. Louisiana conducted the first camp in 1948 with Cecil B. Knight as speaker, and Washington followed in 1949. Most states conduct camps annually for various ages. The structured Bible study, worship services, and recreation help young people focus on Christ and connect to the broader church.

**1934**  
Eustis, Florida, Industrial School started

**1936**  
*Gospel Herald* published with P.C. Hickson as editor



**1944**  
*El Evangelio* published with Vessie Hargraves as editor



**1946**  
Ralph E. Williams appointed first national youth director



**1948**  
Louisiana conducted first state youth camp

**1951**  
*Church Hymnal* ("Red-back Hymnal") published



Since its inception, countless young people have accepted Christ or the call to ministry during youth camp.

### YWEA

In 1957, O.W. Polen envisioned youth becoming more missions-minded and participating in world missions projects. He initiated Youth World Evangelism Appeal (now Youth World Evangelism Action, or YWEA), and young people were encouraged to pray for missionaries and help raise money for needed supplies. When Cecil Knight became the director of the National Sunday School and Youth (now Youth and Discipleship) Department in 1960, he created a more structured fundraising campaign focusing on a single project each year, beginning with building a church in Brasilia, Brazil. Since 1961, youth have raised more than \$31 million for YWEA projects, which have helped build or fund churches, schools, seminaries, orphanages, and servicemen's centers in more than 30 countries. Each year our

youth find creative ways to help fulfill the Great Commission by raising funds for the designated YWEA project.

### Teen Talent

Seeking to highlight and nurture the giftedness of our youth, the Church of God offers a talent showcase and competition every two years. Started in 1962, Teen Talent originally included divisions for music and Bible, and has expanded to include art, creative writing, drama, and multimedia. Initially coinciding with the General Assembly, Teen Talent has been held independently from the Assembly since 2011. The week-long competition and awards ceremony is hosted at Lee University and attracts almost 4,000 participants and guests internationally.

### Winterfest

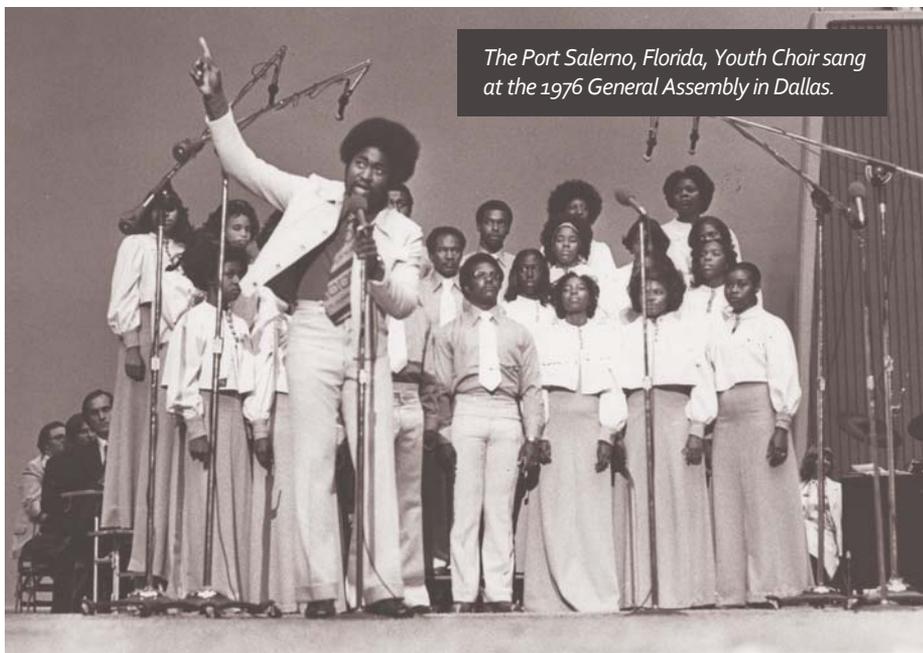
A breakfast conversation between two Tennessee youth pastors in October 1981 initiated one of the most energizing youth events in the Church of God. When Tom

Madden (North Cleveland Church) and Randy Steele (Westmore Church) decided to combine their youth retreats, they invited other churches to participate. In February 1982, John Barrett (East Ridge, Tenn.), Bill Pratt (East Chattanooga, Tenn.), and Ray Looney (Roswell, Ga.) joined their youth groups with Madden's and Steele's for the first Winterfest. Some 279 individuals worshiped together in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, as W.A. "Dickie" Davis preached and James Ward performed. The combined retreat was an immediate success and has become an annual event, where exciting speakers and musical groups share the Word of God relevantly to youth.

In 2000, the original Winterfest venue outgrew facilities in Gatlinburg and relocated to the 20,000-seat Thompson-Boling Arena in Knoxville, where at-capacity crowds gather each year. Other venues include: Indiana (Midwest), Texas (Frontier), Maryland (Premier), Alaska (Arcticfest), Missouri (Ozark), New York (Northeast), South Dakota (Wildwest), Oregon (Pacific Northwest), Colorado (Rocky Mountain), and Florida (Sonfest). Other countries host similar events, such as the Philippines (AsiaFest), Germany (EuroFest and WakeUP conferences), Africa, and the Caribbean. Winterfest is a major force for ministering to this generation, with an annual combined attendance of more than 40,000. Hundreds of youth are saved, healed, filled with the Holy Spirit, and called into ministry each year.

### KidFest

Similarly, KidFest is a much anticipated children's event. When Stephen Darnell was Youth and Discipleship director for Texas, he realized the need for a corporate worship experience for children like teenagers enjoy at Winterfest. His vision resulted in the first KidFest held



*The Port Salerno, Florida, Youth Choir sang at the 1976 General Assembly in Dallas.*

**1952**  
Shirley Wallace organized National Black Women's Ministries



**1953**  
*The Pilot* published

**1955**  
Church Training Course program instituted

**1957**  
O.W. Polen began YWEA



**1962**  
Teen Talent started



**1964**  
Women's Ministries Department created; Ellen French appointed executive secretary



in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in 2002. Since then, additional venues have been added throughout the country, including Texas (Frontier), Ohio (Midwest), North Carolina (Carolina), Florida (Emerald Coast), and Maryland. Internationally, KidFest is held annually in the Philippines and Ecuador. Each year, children are saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit through this ministry.

**Children’s Leaders Association**

The Children’s Leaders Association helps equip and connect children’s ministry leaders. Formed in September 1994 when 27 children’s leaders met near Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, its first national conference was held the following May in Asheville, North Carolina, with 300 in attendance. The annual FOCUS Children’s Ministries Conference, which now includes middle school leaders, features workshops, training sessions, and worship services.

**Music and Discipleship Resources**

Music is an integral component of Church of God ministry. Our founding pastor, R.G. Spurling, wrote and sang

poems as a means of sharing the gospel. Other notable musicians were the Pentecostal World-wide Mission Band formed by A.J. Tomlinson in 1910, Eldorado Church Band organized in Illinois, D.R. Moreland family of Pennsylvania, and Atlanta orchestra leader D.N. Baldwin, who joined what is now Mount Paran in 1917 and began its first band. Baldwin’s daughter, Annie Heath, was a popular pianist at General Assemblies.

In our formative years, we used songbooks from other Holiness and Pentecostal groups, particularly those published by R.E. Winsett. In 1919, Efford Haynes and M.S. Lemons published the church’s first songbook, *Church of God Songs: Tears With Joy*, which used the shape-note tradition popular in the South. To teach songs in this and similar books, local churches held singing schools, where individuals learned music by singing the shape of the note (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti). Many Church of God members were prominent shape-note singing school teachers throughout the South.

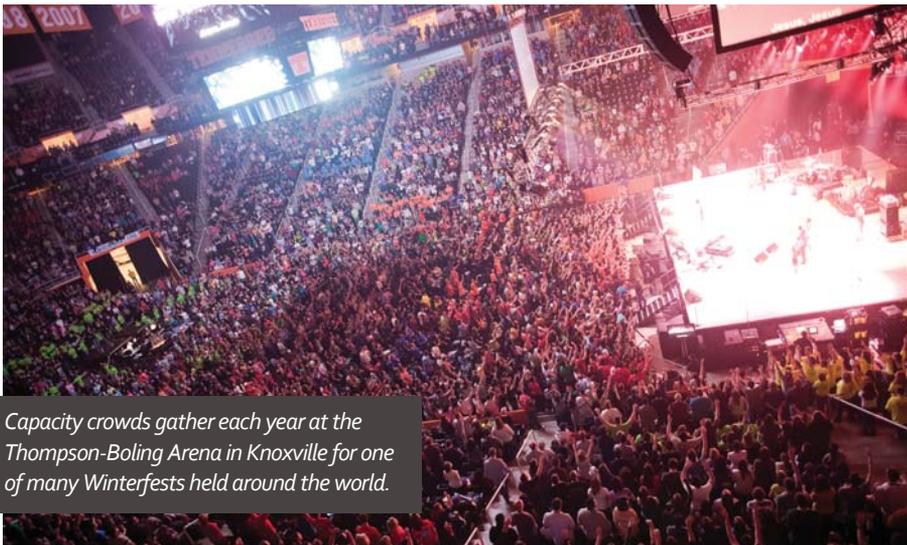
Musicians brought whatever instruments they owned into the local church

to play while singing, which often erupted into spontaneous praise as worshipers rejoiced while singing heartfelt lyrics about heaven, Christ’s love, and victory over sin. Such energetic music and sincere worship often attracted people to our services and continues to be a hallmark of the Church of God.

In 1931, Tennessee Music and Printing Company was created through the efforts of Otis L. McCoy, the music teacher at Bible Training School (now Lee University). Three years later, McCoy was named as the church’s first music editor and was followed by esteemed musicians Vep Ellis, Alonzo Burroughs, Connor Hall, Delton Alford, and Charles Towler. Convention songs became popular during this era. Beginning with *Radiant Gems* in 1931, each year a new songbook was introduced at camp meetings or conventions, from which members sang and then purchased to use in their local churches.

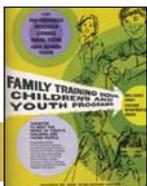
Desiring a printed collection of the most popular convention songs and other favorites, the *Church Hymnal* was published in 1951. Best known as the “Red-back Hymnal” because its original cover was maroon, the *Church Hymnal* continues to be the church’s best-selling book with more than 7 million copies sold. In 1969, we published *Hymns of the Spirit* to include additional genres of music, and our churches in other countries have published songbooks in their own languages.

In 1976, the church formed a music committee which, in 1994, became the Music Ministries Department. Since 1992, SpiritSound serves as the publishing imprint for all music publications, recordings, and copyright acquisitions for the Church of God, while also administering more than 15,000 music copyrights, including one of largest existing catalogs of gospel music. It offers gospel, choral, and worship music through recordings, soundtracks,

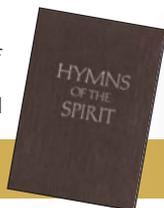


Capacity crowds gather each year at the Thompson-Boling Arena in Knoxville for one of many Winterfests held around the world.

1966  
Family Training Hour instituted



1969  
*Hymns of the Spirit* published



1977  
*Youth and Christian Education Leadership* magazine began

1979  
Global Expedition youth missions trips began as S.T.E.P.



1981  
*The Pentecostal Minister* published



1982  
Winterfest began with five youth groups



Known as the Ladies Willing Workers Band, the earliest women's discipleship program began in Electra, Texas, in 1929.

split tracks, choral books, songbooks, sheet music, and digital files. Music Ministries hosts a Music Explosion Conference each spring, and it facilitates resources for state music boards, ministers of music, and local church musicians. The Church of God is widely known for its musical contributions, is at the forefront of contemporary music, and many of our musicians have earned international acclaim.

### Men's Discipleship

Although there was no formal men's ministry for much of our history, male members sometimes enjoyed fellowship through church breakfasts, fishing trips, or other activities. In 1985, the church initiated "Manpower for the Hour" to help train men to be better husbands, fathers, and followers of Christ. By 1995, more than 2,200 local churches reported active men's ministries, which have since evolved into LifeBuilders men's ministries, providing men with local and state events for fellowship, spiritual development, and evangelism.

### Women's Discipleship

The International Women's Discipleship program first began as a local church ministry in Electra, Texas, in November 1929, when Johnnie Belle Wood organized a "Ladies Willing Workers Band" with 16 women. In 1952, Shirley Wallace organized the National Black Ladies Ministries program, and the International Women's Ministries Department was created in 1964 with Ellen French as executive secretary.

Throughout our history, our women's ministries has funded many projects—local church buildings, missionary efforts, and church ministries—by selling doughnuts, peanut brittle, fried pies, and other merchandise. One successful campaign is "Women With A Mission," an offering collected among women's ministries from local churches to sponsor missions projects. Spiritually and financially, Church of God women have contributed much to the success and effectiveness of our churches through their prayers and faithfulness.

### Bible Study and Christian Community

Bible study as a means of discipleship has become enriched through a recent Inductive Bible Study initiative led by David and Lorna Gosnell and the partnership of men's and women's discipleship. This initiative encourages individuals to become more engaged in Bible study as a regular part of their lives. In July 2011, the first conference was held in Tennessee to train participants how to study the Bible using a book-by-book inductive approach and how to develop skills in leading small group Bible study.

Since 1998, "The Mission" has provided a full-time, residential, collegiate ministry to students willing to devote a year of their lives living within an authentic Christian community. This discipleship program equips students as ministry leaders through character formation and practical application of biblical principles. Through a partnership with Lee University's online program, students can earn college credit while experiencing hands-on ministry. Initiated by W.A. "Dickie" Davis, Tom Madden, and Stephen Lester, "The Mission" began in California, and Mark Swank was its first director. Current programs are in Baltimore, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Uruguay, and Mexico.

Since our beginning, the Church of God has been a movement of people dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by seeking to live the Word in Christian community. Our general programs often have been the result of effective ministries created in local churches as men and women obeyed the Holy Spirit's guidance. God has blessed our efforts and continues to reveal among us innovative ways to obey Christ's mandate in each generation. Together, our Church of God family continues to live out the mission of making disciples. ■

1994  
Children's  
Leaders  
Association  
started



1995  
LifeBuilders men's  
ministry began

1998  
THE MISSION  
youth training  
program  
established

2002  
First  
KidFest  
held



2009  
Engage journal  
first published for  
church leaders



2011  
Inductive Bible  
Study program  
initiated





*Patty Silverman (right), associate professor of Public Relations at Lee University, advises a student.*

# PREPARING FOR SERVICE

**S**CRIPTURE ADMONISHES us to study so we may correctly explain God’s truth and not be ashamed before Him (2 Timothy 2:15, paraphrased). Paul emphasized teaching in his instructions to Timothy: “[T]he things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2 NIV 2011). The Church of God is committed to fulfilling this biblical mandate by training 36,000 students in 128 institutions and programs throughout the world.

Our founding pastor, R.G. Spurling, was self-taught, but well-studied, especially for his time and place. His understanding of church history and Scripture is evident through his writings. When A.J. Tomlinson joined our church and became a prominent leader, he emphasized the importance of education. “I see the need of...a preparatory school where workers could be trained for the field,” announced Tomlinson at the 1911 Assembly. “It is and should be the business of the Church of God to send the gospel to every creature during our

lifetime. A few months’ training would be of great value to workers who have just enlisted in the service.”

The year before, Memphis-pastor L.P. Adams addressed the Assembly on the importance of education, and, following Tomlinson’s appeal in 1911, a committee was formed to determine a school location. With little progress made, Tomlinson gave another plea at the 1917 Assembly, where M.S. Lemons reported the beginning of a school “for the training of young men and women for efficient service on the field.”

**1910**  
L.P. Adams spoke on education at Assembly



**1918**  
Bible Training School began with 12 students and Nora Chambers as teacher



**1919**  
BTS Correspondence course started; Pearl Ables was first to finish



**1933**  
R.R. Walker joined church in Mississippi as first minister with college degree



**1934**  
BTS began a high school division (later Lee Academy)

**1934**  
Northwest Bible College opened

## A Bible School Begins (Lee University)

On January 1, 1918, the Bible Training School (BTS, now Lee University) began in an upper room of the church's publishing house. Nora Chambers, a minister since 1910 who had studied at Holmes Bible School in South Carolina, served as teacher to 12 students. The Bible served as the principal textbook, but students also studied geography, spelling, English, and Hurlburt's Teacher Training Course. Reflecting upon that first term, J.B. Ellis later noted, "[A]s we listened to the beautiful flow of language and beheld the grace with which [students] accomplished their task, we were made to exclaim in our hearts, 'Behold what great things God hath wrought'" (*Evangel*, April 13, 1918, 2).

With increased enrollment and development of new programs, additional well-trained teachers were needed. A few ministers, such as L.P. Adams, M.S. Lemons, Nora Chambers, and Sam C. Perry, had attended school, but it was not until 1933 that the church received its first minister who had completed college. R.R. Walker, a graduate of Mississippi College, was a Baptist pastor and school principal in Morgantown, Mississippi, where he was baptized in the Holy Spirit and joined the Church of God. Impressed with his credentials of having a bachelor's degree, the church secured him as principal of the high school division at BTS in 1934. (Later known as Lee Academy, the high school division operated until 1965.)

Understanding that God gifts people for service in various vocations, BTS began to expand its programs. In 1930, a commercial/business department was added to serve students wanting Bible training in addition to preparing for their vocation outside the church. A junior college was added in 1941. Having relocated from Cleveland to Sevierville, Tennessee,

in 1938, the school returned to Cleveland in 1947 after purchasing the former Bob Jones College campus.

Adopting the name Lee College, the school continued to develop new majors and academic programs. In 1968, Lee became an accredited four-year Christian liberal arts college, while maintaining its commitment to biblical training. Since 1986, Paul Conn's leadership has helped transform Lee into one of America's leading Christian universities. In 1995, Lee began its first of several graduate programs and was designated a university in 1997. More than 4,000 students from most states and more than 50 countries enroll annually, where they choose from more than 140 majors. Lee's mission continues to focus on developing men and women for Christian service in various fields of study.

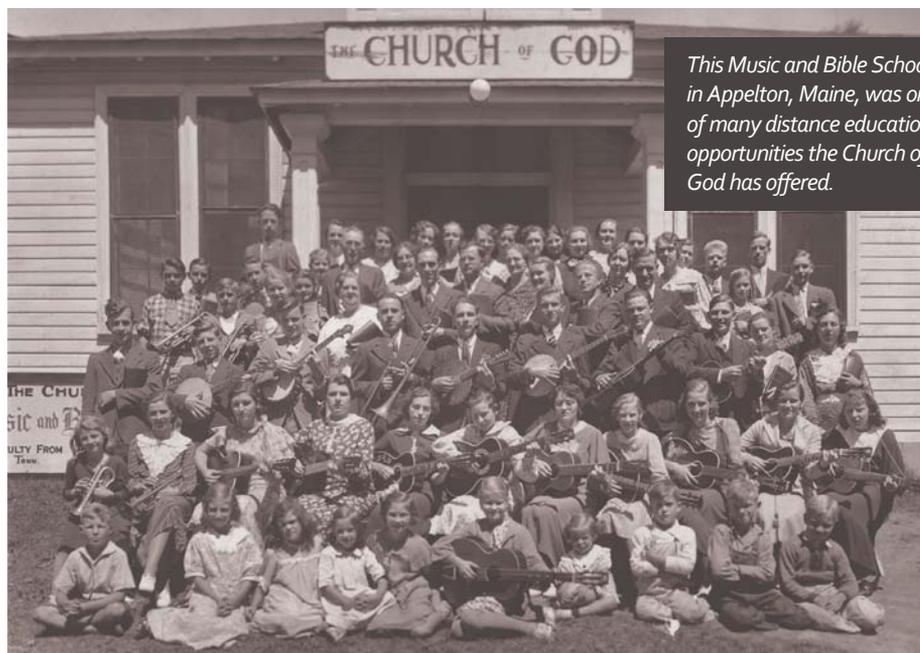
## Distance Education

To assist students unable to leave homes, families, and jobs for on-campus study, the church established a corre-

spondence course in 1919, with hundreds participating. In the 1930s and 40s, BTS conducted regional Bible and music schools in various states during the summer months. Later, the church established a more structured external studies program in 1976 at Lee College. In recent years, the need for distance learning has increased, and the church has established learning centers and extension campuses globally. With a growing trend for online learning, the church began an Internet Degree Program in partnership with Pat-ten University in 2006, and this program was incorporated into Lee University's online distance program in 2011.

## Ministerial Training

Committed to the initial vision of training ministers, the church created ministerial development programs in the 1970s as part of its Project '70 initiative. Bible Institutes for Ministerial and Lay Enrichment were started in 1971, and a Department of General Education was established in 1974 with Robert White as director.

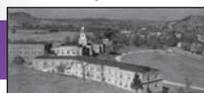


*This Music and Bible School in Appellton, Maine, was one of many distance education opportunities the Church of God has offered.*

**1936**  
International Bible College in Canada opened



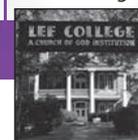
**1938**  
BTS moved to Sevierville, Tennessee



**1947**  
International Preparatory Institute opened in San Antonio, Texas



**1947**  
BTS returned to Cleveland as Lee College



**1949**  
West Coast Bible College started

**1959**  
Pathway Christian School in California; first Christian day school

The Division of Education was established in 1999 to supervise ministerial development and the advancement of postsecondary education. The General Education Board, appointed by the Executive Committee and led by the executive director of the division, coordinates these educational policies and programs. It seeks to advance postsecondary education by evaluating our educational institutions and assigning them levels of certification. Through Ministerial Development and the School of Ministry, the church offers specialized resources and training for ministry:

- **Calling And Ministry Studies (CAMS)**—Started in 2006, this four-month program utilizes seminars, coursework, and personal reflection to assist ministerial candidates in identifying their call to ministry and its meaning and purposes. In the United States, it is required before applying for the exhorter ministerial rank.

- **Certificate In Ministerial Studies (CIMS)**—First introduced in 1999, this ministerial training curriculum consists of DVD video lessons—taught by leading Church of God pastors and professors—textbooks, and study guides. Hundreds of

learning centers are located both nationally and internationally as meeting sites for these classes.

- **Ministerial Internship Program (MIP)**—Developed in 1970 by Robert Fisher and implemented as a national program in 1978, this nine-month ministerial training includes an internship with a pastor at a local church, seminars, and group study. In the United States, it has been required for advancement from exhorter to ordained minister since 1982. State boards were created in 1992 to assist with ministerial development, and more than 14,000 interns have completed MIP since its inception.

- **Lay Leadership Development (LLD)**—This local church program began in 1994 to motivate and train congregational leaders through mentoring by the local pastor. It offers two levels of certification—one for personal enrichment and one for studying a specific ministry area.

Beginning with International Bible College in Canada in 1936, Bible schools have been established outside the United States through efforts of missionaries and amalgamations. Some early locations

were Canada (1936), El Salvador (1941), South Africa (1951), Chile (1953), Nigeria (1955), the Philippines (1956), Namibia (1956), Costa Rica (1957), Paraguay (1957), Brazil (1961), England (1963), Israel (1965), Mexico (1966), Peru (1966), Ghana (1967), and Panama (1969).

Some noted schools in the United States which have closed or been incorporated into other institutions include Northwest Bible College in the Dakotas (1934–1987), Pacific Northwest Bible School in Washington (1944–1947), West Coast Christian College in California (1949–1992), and East Coast Bible College in North Carolina (1976–1999). East Coast was incorporated into Lee University as its Charlotte Center campus for ministerial training. Also, there were two training centers in Texas for Hispanic missionaries and leaders—International Preparatory Institute in San Antonio (1947–1954) and Spanish Institute of Ministries (1975–2006) in Houston and Dallas. That training is now provided through USA Hispanic Educational Ministries.

In addition to Lee University, other recognized educational institutions are:

- **Mt. Zion Bible College**—Located in Kerala, India, this school was first started in 1927 by Missionary Robert F. Cook, prior to his joining the Church of God. It was reopened in 1951 through the efforts of Dora P. Myers, a Lee College professor who sensed God calling her to India, with assistance from missionaries C.E. and Ellen French and native worker T.M. Varughese. It serves as a key ministerial school in India.

- **Bethel Theological Seminary**—Tracing its beginning to the Bethel School of Evangelism established in Jakarata, Indonesia, by Ho L. Senduk in 1956, this school evolved into Bethel Seminary and began a teacher education division and other degrees recognized by the government. As the 1968 YWEA project, new



General Overseer Raymond Culpepper took time to pray for every intern at the 2012 MIP Commissioning service.

**1966**  
Bible school started in Hermosillo, Mexico

**1968**  
Lee College accredited as a four-year liberal arts college

**1970**  
Robert E. Fisher developed and implemented MIP in Hawaii



**1974**  
Dept. of General Education established with Robert White as director



**1975**  
Pentecostal Theological Seminary started as church's first graduate school



**1976**  
East Coast Bible College opened





Missionary Teacher Dora P. Myers (sitting front center) and the Mt. Zion Bible College at Kerala, India

seminary facilities provided a more stable location and contributed to growth and continued development.

• **European Theological Seminary (ETS)**—Founded in 1958, ETS has been located in the Black Forest area of Kniebis, Germany, since 2002. With a mission to serve all of Europe, ETS began extension schools of Christian ministry in 1982, has offered courses for a graduate degree since 1999, and provides instruction in German and English.

• **Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries (ASCM)**—Founded by Arthur Pettyjohn in 1973 in Pasay City, Philippines, ASCM expanded its degree program in 1980. Robert R. Seyda became the school's first full-time president in 1986 and led in relocating it into a YWEA-funded facility in Makati City. Hubert Black assisted with the addition of a graduate program, and advancements during Miguel Álvarez's tenure included an external studies program, additional graduate degrees, and accreditation for many of its programs. Through Scott Rains's leadership, a doctoral program was initiated in 2008 and an extension program has been established in India.

• **Pentecostal Theological Seminary (PTS)**—Beginning with 18 students in 1975 in Cleveland, Tennessee, as the Church of God Graduate School of Christian Ministries (and later Church of God School of Theology), it was one of the first graduate schools

in the Pentecostal Movement. In addition to offering several master-level programs, a doctoral program has been added. Also, PTS offers short-term sessions to help full-time ministers and working students pursue graduate education. PTS serves hundreds of students from across the globe.

• **Seminario Ministerial Sudamericano (SEMISUD, South American Seminary)**—Through the leadership of James M. Beaty, William Alton, and Bill Watson, SEMISUD began as a Bible Institute in 1982 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Osvaldo Pupillo and Máxima Saavedra supervised its first 38 students, and by 1984, it was a residential seminary. During David Ramirez's 20-year presidency, SEMISUD added undergraduate and graduate programs, relocated to Quito, Ecuador, and began the Intensive Ministerial Development Program. It also initiated a distance education program, which now serves students throughout Ecuador and Central and South America. In 2011, Miguel Álvarez established a partnership with Lee University to cosponsor multiple graduate programs, and a doctoral program began in partnership with the Free University of Amsterdam.

• **Patten University**—Located in Oakland, California, Patten was founded in 1944 by Bebe Patten as Oakland Bible Institute. It received accreditation in 1980 and was renamed Patten College. Offering under-

graduate and graduate courses, Patten affiliated with the Church of God in 1997.

• **Eurasian Theological Seminary**—Located in Moscow, Russia, this fully accredited, four-year Bible college serves Russian-speaking countries. Founded in 1998 by Rodolfo and Alma Girón, the school now includes undergraduate degrees in theology and ministry and diplomas/certificates in church ministry and counseling. It also has extension campuses in Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

### Christian Day Schools

Beginning in 1959, Christian day schools became popular in the Church of God. Our earliest church-sponsored schools were Pathway Christian School (Ponoma, California), Azalea Garden Christian School (Norfolk, Virginia), and Parkview Christian Academy (Newport News, Virginia). David Tilley and Hubert Black provided structure, networking, and academic uniformity to this endeavor, which at its peak, had almost 200 schools operating in North America.

It is evident the Church of God values education. Roland Vaughn, former World Missions director, emphasizing the importance of educational institutions to the overall health of our ministries, has noted, "Where ministerial education flourishes, the church flourishes; where education ceases, evangelism ceases. Where the Church of God starts a Bible school or training program, like ripples in a pond, the church grows in circles from that base" (Stone, 124). To this end, the Church of God affirms the value of an educated clergy and membership, as well as its commitment to providing opportunities for its accomplishment. Today, as we see the ministry force trained in our schools, we can echo the sentiments J.B. Ellis voiced in 1918, "Behold what great things God hath wrought." ■

1991  
Discipleship  
College started  
in Kenya



1994  
Lay Leadership  
Program and  
Lay Minister's  
Certification initiated

1997  
Lee College became  
Lee University



1999  
First Certificate  
In Ministerial  
Studies (CIMS)  
course introduced

2008  
Asian Seminary  
of Christian Ministries  
began D.Min. program



2011  
SEMISUD  
began Ph.D.  
program





In 1924, Secretary General E.J. Boehmer (standing left) observes as the mail truck prepares to take a new issue of the Church of God Evangel to the post office.

# BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP OF RECORDS AND RESOURCES

**K**EEPING RECORDS of ministry, assuring financial accountability, and planning for a secure future are vital but often unacknowledged responsibilities that must be performed well if the church is to reach the whole world for Christ. In the process of inspiring the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit guided some authors to include long genealogical lists and others to note specific numbers of people. Woven within the generations recorded in the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel are significant aspects

Jesus' heritage, and Luke recognized the importance of recording the number added to the Church following Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41).

Led by Deacon J.C. Murphy, delegates to our first General Assembly also acknowledged the value of proper records. One of their first actions was a decision to keep records of that and future Assemblies. Today the handwritten minutes of our early Assemblies are preserved at the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center. Regarding local church records, delegates

concluded: "Consider it in harmony with New Testament teaching, and advise each local church to make and preserve records of all church proceedings. The Acts of the Apostles as example" (*Assembly Minutes*). They also recommended that local church deacons bring reports back to the Assembly the next year regarding the use of tobacco and the practice of family worship.

Today, proper records continue to be vital to the ministry of the Church of God and are maintained by the Office of Business and Records. This office, along

**1906**  
J.C. Murphy recommended recordkeeping at first Assembly



**1913**  
Tomlinson included first history of Church of God in *The Last Great Conflict*

**1921**  
E.J. Boehmer hired as general secretary



**1924**  
Office of Secretary General created

**1929**  
General Assembly appointed Committee for Aged Ministers



**1938**  
E.L. Simmons wrote *History of the Church of God*



with the Church of God Benefits Board, is administered by the secretary general as part of the Division of Support Services.

## Secretary General

The General Assembly formally established the office of general secretary, now secretary general, in 1924 and elected E.J. Boehmer. Boehmer had been serving as clerk of the General Assembly since 1913, and had been appointed as a full-time general secretary in 1921. The 1926 Assembly added the duties of treasurer, and the office was elevated to an Executive Committee position in 1932. The church held Boehmer in such esteem that he continued to serve until 1946. Over the years, the growth of the Church of God necessitated the development of a specialized staff to assist the secretary general in fulfilling his duties. In addition to his clerical assistance, the Office of Business and Records maintains official records of ministers and congregations, collects and accounts for funds sent to the International Offices, and distributes funds as directed by the Executive Council.

## Providing for Retirement

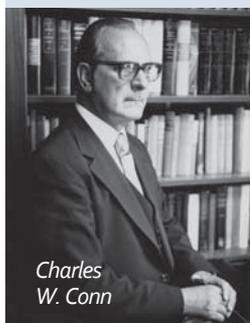
The 1929 General Assembly appointed a committee to look after and provide for the interest and comfort of aged ministers. The next year the Assembly agreed to create a fund to care for aged ministers and encouraged members to place this fund in their wills. This program became the Aged Ministers Pension Plan into which ministers contributed and from which they could withdraw upon retirement, as funds were available. In 1982, the General Assembly created a Church of God Minister's Retirement Plan to replace the Aged Ministers Retirement Plan, and enrollments in the former plan ceased. Then in 1994, the Executive Council approved a recommendation to separate retirement funds from the general funds of the

denomination. They accomplished this by creating the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc. O. Wayne Chambers was instrumental

in bringing this need to the attention of the church and served as founder and first president of the Benefits Board. ■

# HERITAGE RESOURCES

**A**LTHOUGH earlier histories of the Church of God had been written, it was Charles W. Conn who best communicated the value of knowing and preserving our heritage. First published in 1955, his *Like a Mighty Army* became the standard source for Church of God history. As president of Lee College, he saw the



Charles W. Conn

need to preserve the larger Pentecostal heritage and led the development of the Pentecostal Research Center in 1971. Also while serving as president of Lee, he encouraged

the General Assembly to authorize the Pentecostal Resource Center in 1980. Completed in 1985, the Pentecostal Resource Center houses Squires Library and the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center, which is the designated archive of the Church of God.

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1955  
Charles W. Conn wrote *Like a Mighty Army*



1971  
Pentecostal Research Center established at Lee College

1977  
Executive Council designated Charles W. Conn Church of God historian

1985  
Dixon Pentecostal Research Center designated Church of God archives



1994  
O. Wayne Chambers first president of Benefits Board

2008  
Secretary General Wallace Sibley elected as first person of color on Executive Committee





CHURCH OF GOD  
INTERNATIONAL OFFICES  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION