

WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL!

Whether you learned about us through your family and friends, the Worldwide Web or our weekly television program, *Armor of God*, we are delighted to be able to share the following information about our church and our teachings. We invite you into our “home” and fellowship.

This booklet has been written to tell you about the Church of God International and its activities. We have not tried to explain everything in detail here. We have literature and media resources available to help fill in the blanks. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call or write.

Why Have A Church?

The Bible is the historical record of God's involvement with His creation. He placed man on this earth for a specific and unique reason; a purpose that's revealed in his plan for every man, woman, and child that has ever lived.

From the very beginning God provided instruction to mankind. He communicated His will directly to the patriarchs, judges, and then the prophets. Ultimately, God's Son, Jesus Christ, came to this earth as the “messenger.” Jesus revealed the same plan communicated through the ages. Hebrews 1:1–2 tells us, “*God, who in sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son...*”

Through the Gospels we learn that Jesus began a church. He was the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) upon which the body of believers was (and is) to grow. To help Him serve humanity and promulgate His message, Jesus selected twelve disciples. He taught and trained them to be the foundation for His church. Knowing He would not be with them physically beyond their three and one-half years of training, they were promised His presence through another means. He told them, “*But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you*” (Acts 1:4–8). On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) the disciples, as promised by Jesus, were infused with the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.

Following the manifestation of the Holy Spirit the disciples took Christ's message to the world. Many who listened joined together for worship. These converts made up the body of believers known as the church (Greek. = *ecclesia*) or “called out ones.” What began over two thousand years ago continues today. People of like-mind are still worshipping together, preaching and publishing the gospel.

The disciples were told by Jesus to “*teach all nations, baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*” (Matthew 28:19–20). Responding to these instructions for “discipling,” the Church of God International has, as part of its mission, the goal of seeking the spiritually lost (Luke 19:10). Along with this outreach there is also the privilege of “feeding the flock,” caring for the members as a shepherd cares for the sheep (1 Peter 5:2). The Church of God International serves as a resource for both of those purposes.

Today, thousands of families turn to the CGI for biblical understanding, instruction, education, and training. Their needs are served through an active ministry, fellowship, the *Armor of God* telecast, CD/DVD sermons, free literature—including a Bible Study Course, an online magazine directed to young people (INFUSE Magazine),

and the *International News*, which serves as a window into the activities of local congregations.

Membership in the CGI consists of “called out ones” from around the world practicing Christianity as initiated by Jesus and furthered by the early apostles. The church begun by Jesus, the very one He promised would survive through the centuries, is alive and well. Today, in this twenty-first century there are disciples living the faith “once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). They obey the same message taught by Jesus Christ, the same gospel taken to the world by the disciples. Members value the witness and teachings of Jesus Christ as the work of the church.

The CGI Begins

In July of 1978 the Church of God International incorporated in the state of Texas. A home office was established in the beautiful East Texas community of Tyler. At first, mailings were done out of individual homes with requests for information handled over the phone. Following that humble beginning, it was only a short time until the church acquired facilities to evangelize and serve congregations around the world. To this day the physical plant is the property of the church membership at large, not the possession of a figurehead or a single family.

To serve the membership and share with evangelism, the church has an ordained ministry. The ministry functions as “helpers of their [people’s] joy” rather than a ministry of dominion (2 Corinthians 1:24). Financial obligations and expenditures are overseen by a Board of Directors and the ecclesiastical matters are under the supervision of the Ministerial Council.

Church Services

Unlike the mega-churches, the CGI is relatively small and scattered. On a local level, this may result in a worship service that is a little different from what you have experienced before. However, many find it refreshing and more like the *house churches* mentioned in the New Testament. A few of our congregations have their own building, but some meet in homes, and many in rented rooms or halls. A benefit of these smaller congregations is the family environment and the likelihood of a warm and caring church. Most of these small churches (sometimes called fellowship groups) receive sermon CDs or DVDs from speakers credentialed or recognized by the church. Even when they have a minister, many congregations choose to regularly view these pre-recorded services. This provides them with current announcements and a connection to a work beyond that accomplished locally.

For members who, because of distance or circumstances, do not have access to local fellowship, we provide a service called the Extended Church Program. Available upon request, the sermons available to the congregations on a weekly basis are sent to scattered members. The extended church program is not intended to replace local fellowship. It is designed for those who, for any number of understandable reasons, are unable to meet with the larger body of believers. Many people utilize this program, some representing groups of family and friends, some entirely alone.

As churches grow, they of necessity become more structured and less informal. Once a group becomes large enough to meet the requirements, they may apply for a charter. The requirements for recognition as a CGI church or fellowship group are set forth in *Guidelines for Field Churches*, available from the home office upon request.

Format for Services

The CGI’s worship service usually consists of a few hymns and opening prayer, an occasional sermonette (a 10- to 15-minute message) or special music, announcements, a sermon (45 to 60 minutes long), and then a closing hymn and prayer. There is no altar call or offering taken during the weekly church service. If you have come from a church with a highly formal service, you will find the CGI’s liturgy more relaxed, edifying, and intimate.

The teaching of the Bible and the preaching of the Word are vital to Christian growth and are central to our services. We encourage our members to make every reasonable effort to be in attendance each Sabbath.

In the pattern of 1 Corinthians 14, church liturgy should be uplifting, organized, and edifying. As the apostle Paul wrote, “*How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a language, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*”

Appropriate Dress

Some have asked about the appropriate dress for church services. This question generally refers to whether or

not semi-formal attire (suits and ties for men; dresses for ladies) is expected.

The Church of God International does not have a dress code per se. We recommend that whatever is worn should reflect attention to cleanliness, neatness, and modesty. With young and old meeting together, variety is expected and encouraged. Depending upon where you live, clothing styles might be determined by custom or special occasions. Whatever the circumstance, the way you dress should leave no doubt as to your desire to please God and complement the light set forth in local fellowship.

Many church families do attend services wearing what traditionally are known as “church clothes”—suits and ties for the men and dresses for the women. Others, perhaps influenced by contemporary leanings, prefer to come more casual.

Occasionally some people worry over whether or not their clothes are “nice enough” for church. Although that concern is appreciated, it is more important to attend church in the best that you have rather than not attend at all. Most any article of clothing is nice if it is clean and kempt. God will be pleased if you wear the “best that you have” as you worship the best that you can.

The Sabbath Day

At times, life can feel like a rat race with every waking hour cluttered with unrelenting activities from earning a living to housekeeping chores. Most people would appreciate having one day completely free from all work.

The cares and responsibilities of this world make it extremely difficult to find time for God, family, and one another, let alone prayer and Bible study. But God, in His infinite wisdom, has given us one day of the week to do those very things. He created the seventh day as a Sabbath, a day of rest. It was made for man (Mark 2:27) as the one day out of the week to cease from occupational work. Although we remember God and think about Him every day, this one day is set aside specifically for remembering and worshipping.

The Church of God International observes Saturday as the Sabbath instead of Sunday. There are seven days in the calendar week. The week begins with Sunday (first day) and ends with Saturday (seventh day). A day begins in the evening and ends the following evening. When this knowledge is applied to our calendar we see that the Sabbath actually begins Friday evening and ends Saturday evening. If you need to determine when evening begins on a particular day, you can check your local newspaper in the weather section or go on-line where that information is readily available. Make it a habit to know when the Sabbath begins so you will have your work finished.

Since God commands that all work is to be done in six days and the Sabbath is a day of rest, preparation should be made on Friday to make this possible. The tradition of Friday as “preparation day” traces back to Exodus 16. Two important lessons arise from this chapter. One, the Sabbath is not just any one day in seven, but the day that God designates. Second, the day before the Sabbath is a day to prepare for the Sabbath.

Many things can be done on Friday so that the Sabbath can truly be called a delight. Try to organize your home (cooking and cleaning) so the weekly day of rest will not be like every other day. Modern conveniences make it easy to prepare special meals ahead of time so that a delightful meal is ready when you arrive home from work on Friday evenings. Candles, fresh flowers, your best table linens, and special dishes can help make the Sabbath very special for the family. Your family will come to appreciate the personal traditions which help make the Sabbath special.

Our members have found new freedom and great joy observing the Sabbath. Friday night is welcomed as time to slow down, a chance to be with the family, enjoy a special supper, and catch up on some reading. Saturday brings a chance to sleep in, worship as a family, study, and devote a little extra time to prayer and meditation.

With the freedom to enjoy the Sabbath, it is natural to wonder what can and cannot be done during this time. There are any number of circumstances that inevitably require members to decide what God would have them do on the Sabbath. Differences in Sabbath observance (i.e., some may choose to go to a restaurant, while other wouldn't) are not grounds for disassociation. The church does not legislate do's and don'ts for resting on the Sabbath other than emphasizing the statements in Scripture and the example of Jesus. Of the many scriptures that bear upon the Sabbath, these two offer insight into worship and Sabbath activity:

1. Mark 2:27–28: “...*the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.*”

2. Isaiah 58:13–14: “If you turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing as you please on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: Then shall you delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth...”

Youth Education

The CGI provides educational services available to young people. They are:

- **Sabbath School:** While at church or in fellowship, children can participate in Sabbath School. When there are enough children in a congregation to make it practical, age-specific education is encouraged. With appropriate oversight, children are provided classes to learn about God and the Bible. Congregations organize their Sabbath School program with suggestions from the ministry, parents, and the youth.
- **INFUSE:** This year-round program is directed primarily toward teens and young adults. It includes an on-line magazine that is published quarterly. It can be downloaded through the church’s website: www.cgi.org. The articles discuss topics relevant to a young person’s life. The INFUSE program also organizes church services for teens and young adults at selected Feast of Tabernacles sites. Under the supervision of the ministry, this venue provides worship (songs, sermons, Bible studies, panel discussions) and activities tailor-made for youth of the church. INFUSE also sponsors retreats for fellowship and goal setting. INFUSE is a wonderful way for young adults to work and serve together.

Even though each of these programs is designed for a specific age group, young people may be involved with several programs at a time.

Annual Festivals

By now you probably know that the CGI does not observe most of the customary holidays. You can search your Bible and not find Christians keeping Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc. However, the Almighty hasn’t left mankind without days to celebrate. The biblical festivals (or “appointed times”) are associated with the annual harvests of ancient Israel, one in the spring (the smaller harvest) and one in the fall (the much larger harvest). These harvest seasons are a reminder of God’s blessings and His overall plan which pictures a harvest of disciples (John 4:35–38).

A succinct but descriptive listing of God’s annual festivals is found in Leviticus, chapter 23. Since this knowledge is new to so many people unaccustomed to what the Bible reveals, please study the chart below that offers the name of the holy day along with verses that support its observance from both the Old and New Testaments.

These festivals are clearly identified as “the feasts of the LORD” (Leviticus 23:4, 37). They were observed by ancient Israel (Old Testament) and as well as the first apostles and disciples (New Testament). It’s interesting to see that these feasts will eventually be observed by everyone (Zechariah 14:16). (Write for our free booklet on *God’s Seasonal Plan* for a comprehensive description of the annual festivals.)

Because the annual festivals are determined by a lunar calendar, they don’t occur on the exact same day or sometimes even in the same month every year. To help sort through any possible confusion as to when these days are to be observed, the church publishes a *Holy Day Calendar* which lists the annual festivals as they fall on the Roman Calendar.

Sometimes adults, seeking time off from their employer to keep the holy days, are asked to “give proof” for their request. The same is true of children in school/college. If and when that need arises, a letter of explanation can be provided by a local minister or the home office in Tyler. As a courtesy, it is best to provide some advance notice to an employer or teacher/school.

Observing God’s festivals reminds us of God’s desire for mankind...the very reason human beings were created. These observances point us directly to our Savior, Jesus Christ. The first festival portrays Jesus as our *Passover*. By taking in Christ—the *unleavened Bread* of Life—we put out sin. Christ was the First-fruits, and it was through His resurrection that the Holy Spirit was given to man—*Pentecost*. Christ is going to intervene in world affairs on the *Day of Trumpets* and become King of kings and Lord of lords. Satan, the great deceiver of

FESTIVAL	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
Passover	Leviticus 23:5	Matthew 26:2, 17-19 Mark 14:12-16 Luke 2:41-42; 22:17-20 John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 13:1-30 1 Corinthians 11:23-29
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Leviticus 23:6-8	Matthew 26:17 Mark 14:12 Luke 2:41-42; 22:1, 7 Acts 2:3-4; 20:6 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
Day of Pentecost	Leviticus 23:15-22	Acts 2:1-21; 20:16 1 Corinthians 16:8
Feast of Trumpets	Leviticus 23:23-25	Matthew 24:30-31 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 Revelation 11:15
Day of Atonement	Leviticus 23:26-32	Acts 27:9
Feast of Tabernacles	Leviticus 23:33-43	John 7:1-2, 8, 10, 14 Acts 18:21
Last Great Day	Leviticus 23:36	John 7:37-38

mankind, will be bound and restrained. Those who have accepted Christ will then be at one with Him through repentance, baptism, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, having their sins forgiven—*Atonement*. Christ is going to set up His government in the Millennium and rule this earth. We are now “ambassadors” of that kingdom as we live by Jesus’ teachings—*Feast of Tabernacles*. Finally, salvation will be available to everyone who has not yet had an opportunity to learn of Christ’s way—*Last Great Day*.

As you work your way through a year of observing the festivals, you’ll learn each festival is replete with meaning. Some of the meanings overlap or may be pictured in more than one festival. As the meanings of these days become more apparent to you, God’s plan for mankind will begin to unfold.

Dietary Laws

The CGI observes the dietary laws God gave to His people, as recorded in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. These chapters describe creatures “that you shall eat” and those you shall not eat because they are “unclean.” Among the unclean meats are such items as pork, shrimp, lobster, clams, oysters, and catfish.

The question over the requirement for New Testament Christians to keep these dietary laws has been hotly debated for decades. The arguments against the observance of these laws generally fall within two categories—they are “Jewish” and/or they are “done away.” The CGI does not agree with either of those positions. There is no ev-

idence that God gave these laws out of ethnic preference; nor are there any examples in the New Testament giving permission to eat unclean meats. Although we might question the reason God gave these laws to man (for their health?), the reason given in Leviticus 11:44 is sufficient: “For I am the LORD your God: you shall therefore SANCTIFY YOURSELVES, and you shall BE HOLY; for I am holy....” Verse 47 makes it very clear that God, the One who made all creatures, delineates “a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.” (If you want further clarification on these dietary laws, please contact one of our ministers or write to us for further explanation.)

Offerings and Tithes

Tithing and giving offerings are personal expressions of worship. How one goes about giving is up to the person. No collections (of money) are taken during regular weekly Sabbath services. However, since there are commanded offerings associated with annual festival observance (Deuteronomy 16:16), donations are collected on the high days during the year. Regular tithes and offerings are usually mailed directly to the home office in Tyler.

Church News and Information Services

Keeping everyone informed about church events poses something of a challenge. The primary sources of news about the church are the *International News*, monthly letters, and the church’s website. To be sure you are receiving our monthly and quarterly publications you must be on our mailing list with your current address. One very important bit of information: If our computer program does not see activity on your record (literature requests or donations posted) for six months, it will eventually stop mailing to your address. This procedure is essential to keep from wasting money on mailings to people who may well have moved or are no longer interested. If you think you have stopped receiving mailings from us (and want them continued), just write or call and ask us to update your record.

One other important news source is the CGI News of the Work (NOTW). This weekly update is available on-line by request. This service provides some statistical information (TV responses, income) along with prayer requests, upcoming ministerial visits, and special announcements. If you would like access to NOTW, please let us know.

Another resource for “staying in touch” is the weekly church service available through webcasting. To locate those congregations streaming their Sabbath service, go to the CGI website (www.cgi.org) and click on “Live Webcasts.” If you have a computer equipped with software for video streaming and access to a high-speed Internet connection, then you should be able to view the sermon. “Live Webcasting” is provided as a service to those unable to attend a local congregation and is not intended to replace the injunction to “*forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*” (Hebrews 10:25).

Education and Training

The Church of God International encourages local congregations to initiate training programs for personal growth among its members. These can be in the form of speech training, biblical study, personal improvement, Christian development, song leading, and leadership training. Those teaching the programs should have the support of a credentialed minister and be well received by those seeking education and training. Training programs should be goal oriented and developed around organized outcomes.

Candidates for ministerial training should become involved in the Ministerial Apprentice Program (MAP). This program places an emphasis on recognizing and developing ministerial “gifts.” Those who participate will have the benefit of proving themselves through study, evaluations, and public speaking. Each candidate is required to have a mentor (sponsor) who will oversee the completion of written and verbal challenges. Although there may be occasional adjustments to the length of the program, participation normally lasts from one to three years. Working through MAP helps to validate the person’s qualifications for ordination and pastoral appointment.

Open Church Policy

The Church of God International is an open church. We have people attending who are new in the faith. Some will not always keep each of God’s laws as they should, and some will not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and come to a closer walk with God. We request

that you neither be judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men. Always remember that you will be judged for what *you* do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them and please the Father in all that you do.

Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believes that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eats herbs. Let not him that eats despise him that eats not; and let not him which eats not judge him that eats: for God has received him. Who are you that judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:1–4).

Intercessory Prayer

It is the practice of the ministry at the home office to have intercessory prayer for those who contact us with their requests. This is normally done each week or as circumstances might necessitate. Should you become ill, or if there is an illness in your family, or troubled times that you can't seem to cope with alone, or grief that needs comforting, or any other need of prayer... write, call, or e-mail to let us know. All the prayer requests are read and lifted up to God. We turn to God for His intervention, asking Him to respond to the faith of all those involved. We take the prayer requests seriously, knowing that "*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*" (James 5:16).

Governance

The governance of the Church of God is permanently vested in the ministry. The Church of God International is a Texas corporation, governed by a board of trustees. The board has delegated all ministerial matters to a council of ministers who advise the administrators of the church, grant charters to field churches, credential ministers, and hear all grievances relative to the ministry.

The doctrines of the church are set forth in our *Statement of Beliefs* and are quite stable. Changes in doctrine are rare, and come about, not by executive fiat, but by a consensus of the ministry.

We publish the *Manual for Field Churches* to outline recommended administrative policies and procedures for the churches. They are offered as guidelines, with a measure of flexibility toward special considerations, rather than "written in stone." With the eventuality of special circumstances, this document is updated frequently to meet the needs of a growing church. Any significant variations from the guidelines can be brought to the Ministerial Council for consideration.

Congregations and fellowship groups identified with the CGI work together in preaching the gospel and providing a "sanctuary" for unified and harmonious worship.

Many of our small congregations operate quite loosely, but as they grow, they, out of necessity, will become more organized. As Paul said, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*"

The basis of all that we do is the law of God, but no code of laws could ever be written to cover every possibility of human conduct. Even within the life of Moses, circumstances arose that were not directly covered by commandments and statutes. So, Moses asked God what to do, and a third category of law came into existence called "judgments." In addition to God's own judgments, He established a judiciary to decide difficult matters and placed as much authority behind their judgments as He did His own (Deuteronomy 17:8–13).

In the New Testament, this same authority was granted to the ministry (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23). This is not an authority to change the law of God, but to render judgments on how that law should be obeyed. The accumulated judgments of the church over time form the traditions of the church. So when we say that something is a tradition of the church, we mean that this is a judgment (based upon the best information available at that time) as to what God would have us do as a church.

Baptism and Membership

Through biblical example and teachings, we learn about baptism. Paul symbolically compared baptism to being "buried with Him [Christ] unto death." Christ, bearing the sins of mankind, was buried in a physical grave; we, bearing our own sins, are buried (completely immersed) in a watery grave. And then, as Christ rose out of the grave in newness of life, we too rise out of the watery grave as a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our sins are buried and passed way; "all things are become new."

The need for baptism emerges through self-awareness, conviction, and then repentance. We come to see ourselves as imperfect human beings who have transgressed God's laws. We sincerely regret our rejection of His ways. We are truly sorry for all the mistakes we've made. We repent. We turn from our evil ways and seek God's forgiveness.

Two questions are asked the candidate for baptism:

1. Have you repented of your sins, of the transgression of God's holy and righteous law?
2. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

An affirmative answer, from the heart, is the only requirement for baptism. Following baptism is the ceremony of the laying-on-of-hands for the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:16–18). Following the example of the apostles, hands are placed on the head of the newly baptized person and a prayer is offered, asking God to beget the person with his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not discernable by the senses, so no external manifestation of the Spirit is expected. (The events described in the second chapter of Acts are exceptional.)

Where do we baptize? Members have been baptized in rivers, lakes, ponds, pools, bath tubs, baptismal tanks, and, in one place that comes to mind, a canoe filled up to the gunnels with water. There should be enough water to allow for complete immersion.

What age should you be when you're baptized? While the Bible doesn't give a specific age it does give examples reflecting awareness and accountability. The obvious conclusion is that a person should be baptized when he or she is ready—when he/she understands what sin is and the consequences for his/her actions.

What do you wear when you are baptized? Clothes that are not "see-through" or immodest.

Rebaptism

It is not infrequent that we are asked whether or not it is necessary for a person who has been previously baptized to be "rebaptized." Although the Scripture provides a biblical example of such ceremony, it may not be necessary. In Acts 19:1–6, there is an account of certain disciples at Ephesus. When Paul encountered them, he asked, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" It is important to understand that the one and only criterion Paul raised was whether or not they had received the Holy Spirit. It did not matter who had done the baptizing. All Paul wanted to know was whether the fruits of the Spirit were manifest in their lives since baptism.

In this case, the people knew nothing of the Holy Spirit. When Paul asked them, "Unto what then were you baptized?" they replied that they had been baptized with John's baptism, which was a baptism of repentance. When Paul had explained everything to them, they were baptized again, and received the laying-on-of-hands for the Holy Spirit.

One word of caution: Sometimes a person feels he or she should be rebaptized because there had not been some overt manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us that the fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" (Galatians 5:22). These are the fruits you should look for in deciding whether a former baptism was valid. Also remember the promise of God. If you have repented of your sins and been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, then you are *promised* the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes a person wants to be rebaptized because he has repented more deeply since he was first baptized. That is as it should be. A deeper repentance is evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in your life. It does not mean you need to be baptized again.

The final decision about rebaptism belongs solely to the person concerned. That decision should be taken prayerfully, and with counsel, if necessary. If a person feels he did not repent prior to baptism, and that the fruits of the Spirit are absent in his life, then it may be that he should be baptized again. If a person did repent prior to an earlier baptism and has since backslidden, rebaptism is not necessary. A renewal of repentance and rededication to God should turn his life around.

Conclusion

As you may sense from what you've read, the Church of God International is a family of like-minded disciples who seek to be inclusive rather than exclusive. We are part of the body of Christ. People who turn to us for help

are not expected to be perfect before coming to church. They join our number for encouragement and understanding, as well as the opportunity to hear good news about living in this world so they can live in the one to come.

It is a distinguishing characteristic of the CGI that we do not seek to control our members nor “rule over” them. We seek to serve each other through our natural and spiritual gifts. In the absence of a spiritual hook (i.e., “we’re the only church,” “we’re Philadelphians,” “we’re God’s one true church,” “we’re special,” etc.), our discipleship is modeled after servant leadership. Jesus, after asking, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward?” answered, “Blessed is that servant, who his lord when he comes shall find so doing” (Luke 12:42–43). We can do no better than to serve God by serving our fellow man. If you feel the same you will be “at home” in the Church of God International.

To paraphrase Paul in 2 Timothy 4:6–8, we pray that you will fight the good fight, finish the course you have begun, and keep the faith so that you will receive a crown of righteousness.

Thank you for taking time to learn about our church and our culture for worship. Welcome to our family! May God richly bless you and bring you into His kingdom. It is our privilege to help you to that end.

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