

Written and Compiled by

Louis F. Morgan, Ph.D.

Jim Crotty Photography

THE MISSION

to reach mississippi

The New Testament illustrates the transformational results accomplished by people with a mission. The early apostles "turned the world upside down" as they were enabled by the Holy Spirit to continue the work Christ began. We, too, have this same commission today. And, we have a rich heritage in the Church of God in Mississippi of men and women dedicated to the mission of transforming their communities for Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This first volume highlights the missional focus of consecrated apostolic followers of Christ during the formation and development of the Church of God in Mississippi from 1909 through the mid-1940s. It examines briefly the diverse movements within Pentecostalism impacting the Church of God in Mississippi, followed by reflections of how the movement spread throughout the state prior to 1945. The story culminates with accounts of men and women from various locations who proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ and the full gospel in their local communities.

Emphasized throughout is the theme "streams of living water." During the initial Church of God revival in Mississippi in 1909 Clara Allison preached a sermon referencing living water (Rev. 22:17) and nearby there was a small stream that circled around the Stonefield tabernacle. In addition, water often is used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it seems only fitting that water, and living water in particular, should guide us through our journey into Mississippi Church of God history.

This work is a culmination of more than 20 years of personal research and interviews. However, it is not comprehensive, nor is it definitive. My goal is to preserve the story of how the Church of God began in Mississippi and to encourage discussion about its continued development. I acknowledge there are ministers (clergy and laity) and congregations not included in this inaugural edition. However, your contribution of information is requested for future revisions and updates. In an effort to preserve additional stories and photographs, a companion website has been created and will be updated routinely. Pastor Lamar Davis and the Morgantown congregation generously provided access to their church website to house this continuing project. (Please forward any correspondence to my email or post office address in the right column).

It is my sincere prayer for this history to inform and inspire readers. May we

gain courage from the revolutionary acts exemplified by our forebears who charted a new course for their era as they focused on the mission of reaching their communities for Jesus Christ. And, may we be filled with passion to do the same in this current generation through the power of God's Holy Spirit. May God continue to bless us in our mission to reach Mississippi.

Dr. Louis F. MorganAssistant Professor and Librarian
Lee University
Cleveland, Tennessee



Streams of Living Water: 100 Years of the Church of God in Mississippi, 1909-2009 Volume 1

Written, Compiled, & Layout Design by Dr. Louis F. Morgan

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This booklet is available online in PDF format for free download: www.morgantowncog.org/mshistory.htm

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For more information concerning the Church of God, please visit their website: www.churchofgod.org "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

- John 7:37-38 (KJV)

"The Spirit and the Bride say come and let him that heareth say come and let him athirst, come and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

~ Revelation 22:17 (KJV)



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he year 1909 was one of innovation and change, both globally and in Mississippi. Although news traveled at a slower pace than in the 21st century, the most informed households were abuzz with the news filling pages of newspapers and magazines.

It was in 1909 that the South Pole was discovered by Ernest Shackleton's expedition, synthetic plastic was patented, and the Metropolitan Life Tower in New York City became the tallest building in the world at 700 feet high with 52 floors. The Lincoln penny was first minted, and the Pittsburgh Pirates

won the World Series by defeating the Detroit Tigers.⁵

Mississippi in 1909

In Mississippi, seemingly insignificant events occurred that would prove to have great impact even a century later. Eudora Welty, the Mississippi-born writer who earned international fame, was born in April. It was the birth year of famous film actor of the 1940s and Collins-native Dana Andrews and noted musicians Papa Charlie McCoy of Jackson and Bukka White of Houston (both blues) and Lester Young of Woodville (jazz).

It was also one year before the birth of Cascilla-native Jamie L. Whitten, who was the second-longest serving member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1909 Mississippi had recently passed a prohibition law outlawing alcohol, and Bessie Lackey Stapleton organized the Mississippi chapter of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) at Crystal Springs.

In addition, George, Humphreys, Stone, and Walthall counties had yet to be organized.¹² In population Mississippi ranked twenty-first among the nation.¹³ There were few foreign-born residents, but Mississippi had a larger percentage

of African-Americans than any other state. 14 African-Americans, totaling more than 1 million in population, outnumbered whites by as much as five times in some areas, particularly the Mississippi River valley areas. 15 There were 1,250 Native Americans of the Choctaw tribe, although many had already been removed to Oklahoma to become part of the Choctaw nation there. 16

Income was primarily from agricultural production. Totton was king in Mississippi, and the state was fourth in the nation in the production of turpentine and rosin. Mississippi was one of most important sugar-cane producing states as well. In 1909 the state produced 1,665 pounds of sugar and almost 3 million gallons of syrup. The leading crops in order were cotton, corn, cottonseed, hay and forage, and sweet potatoes and yams. The leading crops and sweet potatoes and yams.

Of almost 30 million acres of land area in 1909, more than 19 million acres were farms.²¹ The average farm size was 67.6 acres.²² The total value of crops in Mississippi in 1909 was more than \$147 million.²³ By 1910 there were 274,382 farm operators, of which only 92,891 were farm owners and 181,491 were tenants (or share-croppers).²⁴

There were 50,384 wage earners (of which 47,898 were male) and nearly half of them worked 60 hours per week.²⁵ 37,118 of these wage earners were in the

lumber and timber industry, followed by 3,014 in oil and cottonseed industry.²⁶

Voting rights were limited to male citizens 21 years of age or older who had resided in Mississippi for at least two years and in his voting district for at least one year.²⁷ He must have registered and paid taxes for two preceding years, been able to read or interpret the Constitution of the United States to the satisfaction of the voter registration officer, and paid the required poll tax of \$2.²⁸ This limited most voting privileges to wealthy land owners, as sharecroppers (both white and black) often traveled from farm to farm and were unable to afford the poll tax.

Education was seen as a luxury to many Mississippi families, as children were often needed to assist in harvesting crops. As a result, 22 percent of the state's population was illiterate in 1909.²⁹

Over half the population of the state belonged to the Baptist faith and the majority of the remainder to the Methodist faith.³⁰ Other significant denominations were Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Christian, and Protestant Episcopal.³¹

Tallahatchie County in 1909

On a local level, Tallahatchie County newspapers reported usual community happenings, such as picnics at a local lake, church and school events, and even local political news. Other reports in 1909 quickly became local gossip, such the City of Charleston receiving new electric lights,32 a new courthouse erected at Sumner,33 and the purchase of the first automobile in the community of Cascilla.34 In addition to reports of exciting innovation were more somber accounts, such as the death of an African-American at the hands of the local sheriff,35 depicting racial tension typical of many Mississippi communities during that time. Nonetheless, the pages of The Herald Progress and The Tallahatchie Herald highlighted the societal tension experienced among most Mississippians in 1909— a time of transitioning into a new era of innovation while struggling to separate from the deeply ingrained ideologies of the Old South.

Sociologically, individuals were grasping for power and identity in this time of progress. In the midst of this apprehension of the future, several sincere men and women who were seeking deeper consecration to God received spiritual renewal. It was in 1909 that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred as the Church of God was first introduced into Mississippi in rural Tallahatchie County. Although unnoticed by the local press, this spiritual awakening transformed local residents. Much like the benefits of that year's innovation, the positive impact of the Church of God in Mississippi ultimately swept across the state. 100 years later the Church of God continues to have strong spiritual influence in Mississippi. This is the story of its beginning. †





Tracing the Streams
of Living Water

s springtime made its arrival in Mississippi in 1909, no one could Lhave imagined the impact events of this season would have on the state and, ultimately, even the world. Magnolias blossomed while songbirds broke the silence of winter, which brought renewed energy and zeal to the farmers eager to prepare the soil for planting. In the Cascilla community of rural Tallahatchie County the last of the rolling hills from the mighty Appalachian Mountains emptied into the vast delta flatland and the streams were filled from refreshing rains that kissed the earth. It was there, in Cascilla, tucked away in those rolling hills, that the hearts of men, women, and children were stirred to surrender more completely to Christ and the first spiritual seeds were planted from which the Church of God in Mississippi would ultimately reap an abundant harvest.

A Hunger for Holiness

It was Baptist ministers who first cultivated the spiritual soil among Cas-

cilla residents, as many belonged to the nearby Cascilla Baptist Church.³⁶ Then, in 1898, a Reverend Williams brought the message of holiness to the area and captivated the community.³⁷ Williams preached sanctification as a second work of grace, emphasizing that Christians could live above sin as the bondage to sin would no longer have a stronghold on a believer who was sanctified.³⁸ This message pierced the conscience of local farmers. As Williams explained the necessity for individuals to deepen their Christian experience through sanctification, the altars filled with men and women seeking this "second blessing." As a result, a Free Methodist congregation was established and referred to as Stonefield Holiness Church.³⁹ Among those early residents who embraced sanctification and testified of receiving the experience were J.W. Mullen, D.W. Dollahite, Billy Baker, William and Idelia Hyde McHann, Effie McHann Crosthwait, and Clara McHann Allison, most of whom would later serve prominent roles in the establishment of

the Church of God in Mississippi.⁴⁰

As the message of sanctification and personal holiness was heralded throughout Cascilla and neighboring communities, the Stonefield Holiness Church increased in membership and soon constructed a covered tabernacle in which to conduct annual protracted meetings, known as the Stonefield Holiness Campground.⁴¹ The message of holiness soon extended beyond the rolling hills of Cascilla to preaching stations in nearby communities, such as Tippo and Holcomb. 42 Holiness became a common expression and form of religious practice in the southern region of Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.⁴³

A Movement in Memphis

While Cascilla residents were deepening their faith in their newfound understanding of personal holiness, African-Americans about 85 miles away in Memphis, Tennessee, were on the brink of a Pentecostal revival. Under the

leadership of Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, the Church of God in Christ was energizing the spiritual experience among Memphis' black population.44 Spiritual renewal was occurring among Memphis' white residents as well, particularly at a house church located at 736 Richmond Street (one block southwest of the East McLemore/Mississippi Boulevard. intersection). These services were led by L.P. Adams, a lawyer and former minister with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. 45 Soon Adams' church would intersect with Cascilla residents with such intensity that the impact would continue more than a century later.

Pentecostal Outpourings

Meanwhile, spiritual outpourings similar to that recorded in the New Testament Book of Acts, particularly the manifestations of healing and speaking in unlearned languages, were reported in various locations in the United States and other parts of the world. Daniel Awrey was given supernatural ability to speak in a language he did not know at Delaware, Ohio in 1891, and his wife, Ella, had a similar experience in 1899 at Beniah (Bradley County), Tennessee. 46 In the late 1890s the forebears of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) experienced tongues-speech during a holiness revival at the Shearer School House at Camp Creek, North Carolina (near Murphy).⁴⁷ Students at Bethel Bible School, under the tutelage of Charles Fox Parham, experienced tongues-speech in 1901, and they coined the phrase that tongues-speech was the "Bible evidence" of the baptism with the Holy Ghost after searching the scriptures concerning this spiritual manifestation.48

While there was an influx of this spiritual expression at the turn of the 20th Century, historians would later note its practice by individuals throughout the history of the Christian Church, beginning with the early apostles and including such personalities as St. Francis of Assisi in the 13th Century and Edward Irving of Scotland in 1830. 49 Some theologians would later surmise such spiritual expressions were a continuation of the fulfillment of Joel's prophesy ("And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my



spirit," Joel 2:28-29, KJV), which the apostle Peter also referenced in his sermon following the early apostles' receiving the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them the ability to do so (Acts 2:14-21).50

Azusa Street Revival

Perhaps the most celebrated of these outpourings occurred in April 1906 in Los Angeles, California-- first at the home of Richard Asbury at 214 North Bonnie Brae Street and then on Azusa Street.⁵¹ It was there that holiness pastor William J. Seymour, a native of Louisiana and the son of former slaves, led a multi-ethnic team of men and women who conducted services in a former livery stable.⁵² Because of the newspaper coverage of the unique spiritual manifestations occurring at the revival, the spiritually hungry from across America and various parts of the world flocked to Los Angeles to the small mission located at 312 Azusa Street. There, thousands of people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and supernaturally spoke in languages they did not know. They testified of receiving greater power and love for others. Missionaries, evangelists, and pastors who were full of zeal and the power of the Holy Spirit left the Azusa Street meetings and took the message of Jesus to numerous cities and villages across the globe. These radical trailblazers for the Gospel, compelled by the mission of Jesus, left the comforts of their former occupations and communities and saw their work as a restoration of New Testament Christianity. They believed that, just like Christ's early apostles, they were empowered to continue the work established by Christ and recorded in the New Testament. And, just like those early apostles, many of these Pentecostal pioneers suffered extreme persecution, even death, for preaching the



message of salvation, sanctification, and the Holy Spirit baptism.⁵³

Mississippi Holiness Camps Embrace Pentecostalism

Scattered throughout Mississippi were a number of Holiness churches, including the Church of the Nazarene, the Free Methodist Church, and several independent congregations. These churches held in common the doctrinal belief of sanctification as a second definite work of grace.⁵⁴ In addition, many were loosely connected through various holiness camp meetings conducted annually at various campgrounds throughout the state, including the Van Ness Campground in DeSoto (Clarke County) and the Magnolia Springs Campground in Hurley (Jackson County).⁵⁵

According to Gary Don McElhaney, a historian for the Mississippi Assemblies of God, the Van Ness Campground, founded by E. A. Van Ness, was the location of a Pentecostal meeting in September 1907 conducted by evangelists M.M. Pinson and H.G. Rodgers.⁵⁶ At this meeting was Will G. Mizelle, owner of a sawmill and founder of the Magnolia Springs Holiness Campground at Hurley. Mizelle was in DeSoto logging for his sawmill business when he learned about the meeting at the Van Ness Campground.57 He attended the meeting, excited to meet individuals who were baptized with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Mizelle had read about this experience in reports of the Azusa Street Revival, and he was convinced it was biblical after having searched the scriptures.⁵⁸ During this meeting, Mizelle received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on September 7, 1907, and eagerly returned to Hurley, where he testified of his experience.⁵⁹ Both the Van Ness and Magnolia Springs annual camp meetings embraced the Pentecostal experience, becoming centers of early Pentecostal activity in Mississippi.⁶⁰

In September 1908 G.B. Cashwell conducted a meeting at the Magnolia Springs Campground in Hurley.⁶¹ The following year D.C.O. Opperman conducted Pentecostal meetings in Gulfport, Moss Point, and Hurley before traveling to Hattiesburg for the "School of the Prophets" Bible school in September 1909.62 In addition to Opperman, other Pentecostal leaders assisted with this school, including Hugh Cadwalder, Joseph Roselli, William Bert McCafferty, and Howard A. Goss.⁶³ The school was held at a local holiness church, which was ushered into the emerging Pentecostal movement as a result of the Bible school.64 Opperman reported 60 individuals receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit during the school, including 30 people who received the experience in the same week.65

In 1913 Pentecostal healing evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter conducted a meeting at Meridian. 66 Numerous individuals testified of receiving physical healings and being baptized with the Holy Spirit. 67

The Church of God in Christ led by Charles Harrison Mason was originally started as a holiness organization in Lexington, Mississippi in 1897.⁶⁸ Mason later moved the headquarters to Memphis, Tennessee, after which he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1907 at Azusa Street.⁶⁹ As a result, a number of African-American congregations in Mississippi affiliated with the Church of God in Christ were among the first to spread the Pentecostal message throughout the state, particularly within the African-American community.

A Pentecostal tabernacle was erected in Carmichael, Mississippi, in 1909, a successful revival was conducted in Quitman in 1913, and Pentecostal services were conducted in Laurel as early as 1914.⁷⁰ Other Mississippi towns with strong Pentecostal activity prior to 1915 were Sturgis, Neshoba, and West Point.⁷¹ While many of these Pentecostal believers most likely had little or no interaction with one another, it was from these early "streams of the Spirit" that the Pentecostal movement in Mississippi traces its beginning.

Memphis Ablaze with Pentecost

When Charles Harrison Mason, the Memphis leader of the Church of God in Christ, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the mission on Azusa Street, his experience ushered the Church of God in Christ into the Pentecostal movement in 1907.72 Gaston Barnabus Cashwell from Dunn, North Carolina, was another minister who was baptized with the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street.⁷³ He then took the Pentecostal message to numerous locations and was referred to as "the apostle of Pentecost to the South."74 In May 1907 Cashwell, along with Mack M. Pinson and H.G. Rodgers, visited Memphis, where L.P. Adams embraced the Pentecostal message and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ Empowered by his Pentecostal baptism, Adams sought fellowship with like-minded believers and soon found his way into the Church of God (Cleveland).76 Adams' Memphis congregation was organized as a Church of God by A.J. Tomlinson in November 1908.77

Memphis Newspaper Report Intrigues Cascilla Resident

Miraculous healings began to occur at Adams' church, which by the summer

of 1908 was located in a storefront building at 129 Jefferson Avenue and North 2nd Street in Memphis.⁷⁸ These healings captured the attention of local reporters. The Commercial Appeal, a Memphis newspaper, published reports of some of these healings, which caught the attention of Ephram Keeton "E.K." Simpson, a Cascilla resident who subscribed to the Memphis newspaper.⁷⁹ Simpson was intrigued by Adams' claims to have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and special power from God by which he could speak in unknown languages, cast out devils, and heal the sick. The language referring to tongues-speech as "the baptism of the Holy Ghost" appealed to Simpson, as early holiness adherents (pre-Pentecostalism) believed sanctification was the baptism of the Holy Ghost.80 Desiring to know more, Simpson decided to locate Adams' church while on a business trip to Memphis in early 1909.81 During Simpson's visit, he was overcome with the strong presence of God's power in the service and the love and sincerity exhibited among the members of Adams' congregation. The testimonies of those claiming to have been healed by God's power rekindled Simpson's own zeal for spiritual renewal.

Returning to Cascilla, Simpson revealed his findings to the local congregation. The men of the church, including pastor J.W. Mullen, Billy Baker, and E.K. Simpson, held a meeting and decided to invite Adams to visit Cascilla for their annual protracted meeting. 82 Adams agreed to conduct a meeting in Cascilla, but interest increased to such a degree that local residents could not wait

until the cotton

had been planted

to begin the services. So

Mullen, Baker and Simpson supplied 40 dollars and sent to Adams in advance.⁸³

L.P. Adams Arrives at Cascilla

During cotton-planting season, Adams arrived in Cascilla, accompanied by local church workers from his Memphis congregation, including his wife, daughter, and Winnie Minks. Stonefield church member Clara Allison later noted, "Sister Minks was a wonderful worker. She had been healed of tuberculosis. She couldn't speak above a whisper, she said, and when the Lord healed her, He gave her a voice almost like a trumpet." On Sunday, April 25, 1909, Adams began preaching under the

preaching under th outdoor tabernacle of the Stonefield Holiness Church. 85 His first sermon text was from Acts 2:1-4:

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one

accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (KJV).⁸⁶

Adams testified of his personal experience and referenced it with scripture. As he preached the Holy Spirit began to reveal the truth of his message to the congregation. Convinced that Adams' message and experience were indeed biblical, the people began to desire the "blessing" of the Holy Ghost baptism. Clara Allison Priest would later remember, "We would pray and tarry and seek the Holy Ghost. Oh, how hungry my soul was for the blessing! It seemed I couldn't live if I didn't get the Holy Ghost." 87

Desiring to have everything the Bible

individuals attending the revival ser-

vices began to seek this same

experience and gathered

promised to followers of Christ, many

to pray before the services. They often fasted for days while seeking what they understood to be a promise for all Christians that would help them live for Christ and empower them to witness of His power to others. 88 The men would meet

Memphis pastor L.P. Adams who introduced the Church of God into Mississippi in 1909 at Cascilla.

Dixon Pentecostal Research Center



on one side of the tabernacle for prayer, and the women would gather on the other side of the tabernacle.⁸⁹ As they scattered through the hillside in places of prayer, their voices echoed through the hills and hollows around the tabernacle.⁹⁰

Clara Allison Receives the Pentecostal Blessing

The revival continued for a couple of weeks. As the service began on Monday, May 10, 1909, the tabernacle was crowded with individuals earnestly seeking the Holy Ghost baptism, as well as those simply investigating the reports spreading throughout the community about a Memphis preacher who could speak in other languages while praying for the sick.⁹¹

As the service began Clara McHann Allison, who was a member of the Stonefield Holiness Church, entered the service with her husband, Monroe, and their three daughters, Audrey, Bessie and Gladys. ⁹² A large crowd had assembled on this morning and all the benches were filled. Finding no place in which to sit, the Allison family made their way to the front of the tabernacle and sat down on the altar. ⁹³

Clara Allison later remembered that during the service, while listening to Adams preach, "a peculiar, yet wonderful, feeling" came over her. 94 About midway into Adams' message as Clara was worshipping the Lord, she began to speak in a language unknown to her. It was then that she realized what was taking place. In her willingness to yield to the Lord and her deep desire to receive the Holy Ghost, He came in and spoke for Himself as

she listened to the Word and yielded her tongue to Him.⁹⁵

Since the local people had never before seen anyone receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, initially they were concerned by Clara's actions. They called for the area doctor, who quickly arrived at the tabernacle and examined Clara. When

physi- cian asked her how she felt, Clara replied, "Doctor Franklin, I never have been so happy in my life!" She then began speaking in tongues, shouting and dancing throughout the tabernacle as she praised the Lord. The doctor explained there was no visible cause for concern, and that day the Lord ministered to and through Clara for about 4 hours. 96

Maggie McHann Speaks Spanish Fluently by Holy Spirit's Power

Thereafter, Maggie Simpson
McHann, who was the daughter of E.K.
Simpson and married to Clara Allison's brother, John, ran to the altar in expectation. She too wanted to receive this Pentecostal blessing. As Adams laid his hands on her and prayed, Maggie McHann began speaking in a language as the Holy Spirit gave her the words.
After she had spoken in tongues for a few minutes, a Hispanic gentlemen and former soldier known in the community as Johnny Jack stood to his feet.

Knowing Maggie personally, he knew that she did not know the Spanish language, which she did not. However, he reported to the congregation that Maggie's experience convinced him the Holy Spirit baptism was real, for Maggie was speaking fluently in Spanish. ⁹⁷ This excited the congregation and others rushed to the altar for prayer.

Interestingly, Nancy Elizabeth Simpson, the wife of E.K.
Simpson and mother of Maggie
McHann, wrote to her son, Sidney,
concerning the revival. Sidney later
reflected, "My mother wrote to me and
said she didn't want any of that Goose
Chatter, but she was under conviction
at the time." Soon, Nancy Simpson received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She
is remembered for her intense prayer life,
which was often accompanied by shouting while on her knees as she yielded to
the Holy Spirit.

Louis F. Morgan Collection

^{*} Center image is of Clara Allison Priest, circa 1950

Clara Allison Beckons All to the Living Water

A few days later Adams had to return to Memphis to resume responsibilities as pastor of his congregation there. However, local residents continued to meet for prayer and preaching of the Word. During the first service after Adams returned to Memphis, the meeting at Stonefield Tabernacle began as usual with prayer, singing and testifying. However, when it came time for the message, J.W. Mullen, the local pastor, informed the congregation that he felt he could no longer preach until he, too, had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was then the congregation called upon Clara Allison to preach.¹⁰⁰

Although unprepared, Clara Allison agreed and made her way to the pulpit. She chose for her text Revelation 22:17: "The Spirit and the Bride say come and let him that heareth say come and let him athirst, come and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Clara began by testifying of her personal experience and the transformation she felt taking-place in her life. She quickly began to preach, and an intense power, which she later explained as the anointing of the

They often fasted for days while seeking what they understood to be a promise for all Christians that would help them live for Christ and empower them to witness of His power to others.

Holy Spirit, seemed to rest upon her. It was as if she could literally feel God's presence inside her being as she preached, and she spoke boldly to the congregation. Soon Clara was lost in this wonderful feeling. When she came to herself, almost everyone in the house was experiencing some manifestation as a result of the presence of God. People were laying prostrate on the floor as in a spiritual trance (typically referred to in Pentecostal churches as being "slain in the Spirit"), some were shouting, running, dancing in the Holy Spirit, and several had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and were speaking in other tongues. Among those

who received the Holy Spirit baptism were Clara's husband, Monroe, and her close friends Etta and Hal Pressgrove. The service did not conclude until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon as the congregation rejoiced throughout the tabernacle. Their love for God and one another compelled them to continue worshipping together into the afternoon.¹⁰¹ In addition to church services, individuals were receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit at different times and places throughout the community. Clara Allison later noted, "Revival really broke out all over the country. Folks received the Holy Ghost at home, in the field, almost anywhere."102

Church of God is Firmly Established in Mississippi

Not only had the Church of God message been introduced into Mississippi, it had won a place in the heart of many individuals who would soon take its message of holiness, divine healing, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit to their neighbors, family and friends. The refreshing rain of God's Spirit that fell at Stonefield formed a stream of living water that soon would quench the spiritual thirst of men, women and children throughout Mississippi and beyond. †

Dixon Pentecostal Research Center

The Research Center collects, preserves and makes available for research Church of God, Pentecostal and Charismatic documents, records and other media. As the official archives of the Church of God we advance the knowledge and use of the movement's history and heritage through research, teaching, publications, and exhibitions.



Do you have information about Mississippi? Please consider donating materials to:

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www.cogheritage.org



organized yet):

– E.K. Simpson set forth as a Deacon

Church of God message to Arkansas

- D.W. Dollahite set forth as an Evangelist; later assists others in taking the

Timeline

Formative Years of the Church of God in Misissippi, 1908 - 1915

1908 - L.P. Adams is licensed as a Church of God minister - Memphis newspaper reports local revival; Mississippi subscriber E.K. Simpson is intrigued and visits church – L.P. Adams arrives in Cascilla, Mississippi to begin revival at Stonefield Holiness 1909 (April 25) Church and Tabernacle (a Free Methodist church) - Clara Allison [Priest] receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Adams' revival at 1909 (May 10) Stonefield - Maggie Simpson McHann, daughter of E.K. Simpson and sister-in-law of Clara Allison, receives the Holy Spirit baptism; supernaturally speaks in Spanish 1909 (May) - Following the revival, Clara Allison [Priest] is called upon to preach as the local pastor does not have baptism of the Holy Spirit; many receive the Holy Spirit baptism during her first sermon - Hyde family (relatives of Clara Allison and Maggie McHann) living near Charleston, 1909 (Summer) Mississippi request A.J. Tomlinson to come preach; he is unable to do so at that time – M.S. Lemons preaches at Stonefield Tabernacle 1910 (Summer) - A.J. Tomlinson visits Hyde family near Charleston (Friendship Church area) to conduct 1910 (October) a service; some Cascilla residents are present; Tomlinson departs to attend Adams' Memphis Camp Meeting - Annual Church of God revival held at Stonefield and also near Friendship community 1911 (August) - First Mississippi ministers are set forth at Stonefield (although no church is officially 1911 (August 28)

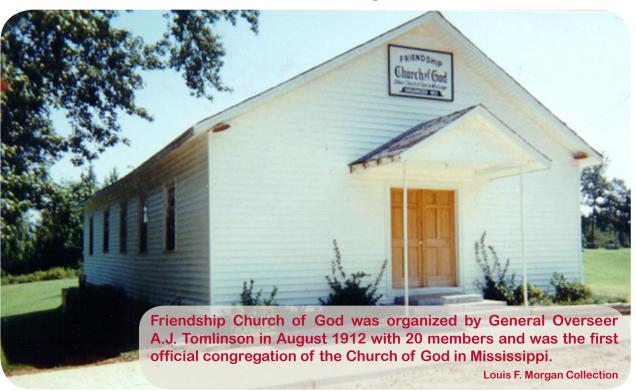
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1912 (August)	 Friendship Church of God organizes with 20 members; first official congregation in Mississippi
1913 (January)	 By this time Z.D. Simpson has organized Pilgrim's Rest Church of God in Artesia (near Mississippi / Alabama border) and three deacons have received license: C.L. Blankenship, W.H. Thompson, and Tildon Turner
1913 (Summer)	 M.S. Lemons preaches at Stonefield and Friendship; accompanied by Homer Tomlinson, son of General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson
	 Some Stonefield congregation participants wish to unite with Church of God, others are unsettled
	 Lemons and Tomlinson establish Turkey Foot Fork Church of God with some Stonefield participants
	 Turkey Foot Fork and Stonefield congregations share pastor, J.W. Mullen, and continue to worship together
1913 (October)	 Following Stonefield revival, Lemons and Haynes conduct meeting at Friendship and license two deacons, Jim Allen Bell and Tom Morgan
1913 (December 25)	- M.S. Lemons and M.S. Haynes arrive at Stonefield to begin revival
1914 (January 5)	 Stonefield Church of God organizes and Turkey Foot Fork members merge with Stonefield members
	– J.W. Mullen is licensed as an Evangelist and continues to serve as pastor
1914 (January)	 M.S. Lemons visits Hardy, Mississippi, where he baptizes Lillie Tilghman and her 10 children in water and receives them into the Church of God
1915 (August)	 Warren Evans Sr. returns to Marion County from Florida as Church of God evangelist; conducts first Church of God service in southern Mississippi under a brush arbor at Morgantown



Emerging Springs

Formation of Early Local Churches



nergized with a sense of mission to share God's love and power, the men and women of Tallahatchie County who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit began taking this living water to other communities. True to the mission of the early apostles, they were compelled to share their newfound joy and spiritual understanding with their neighbors, family, and friends. Many forebears of the Church of God referred to their uniting with the movement as "catching a vision of the Church," which resulted in a transformation in their concept of what it meant to be part of

the Church, or Christ's Body on earth. ¹⁰³ Although views have relaxed with the passing of time, many early pioneers perceived the Church of God as more than another denomination. It was, they felt, the restoration of New Testament Christianity and proper Bible government. ¹⁰⁴ Sermons, testimonies, and even songs reflected the image of the Church of God as a movement of people on a mission to restore God's Church in proper order. ¹⁰⁵ This is why individuals often testified in worship services of being "saved, sanctified, baptized with the Holy Ghost, a member of the great Church of God, and

on [their] way to heaven." ¹⁰⁶ Being ambassadors of God's Church on earth was a tremendously powerful sentiment that gave impetus to the need for evangelization, especially when accompanied by the spiritual boldness and power of the Holy Spirit baptism. Thus, in the early days of the Church of God in Mississippi its members were revolutionaries ablaze with the fire of the Holy Ghost, spreading the flames of Pentecost and pointing others to Christ in the "highways and hedges" of rural Mississippi.

It was as if the waters of renewal

flowed from the Cascilla hills into Mississippi's desert places to quench the spiritually thirsty with the refreshing Spirit of God. It was not enough for men and women to enjoy the Pentecostal blessing for their self only, but, according to God's plan, they were motivated by the Holy Spirit's energy to lead others to Jesus Christ, that One who remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). As a result, the stream of the Church of God began to overflow from the Cascilla hills into other communities.

Friendship Church of God

Members of the Hyde family were among those attending the revival when L.P. Adams preached at Stonefield Tabernacle. It was there they first learned about the Pentecostal baptism and the Church of God. In fact, the first two individuals to receive the Holy Spirit baptism at Stonefield, Clara Allison and her sisterin-law Maggie McHann, 107 were related

to the Hyde family from the Charleston and Teasdale communities, located about 20 miles from Cascilla. ¹⁰⁸ As a result, the news of the Holy Spirit outpouring and the Church of God quickly spread among this family and their neighbors.

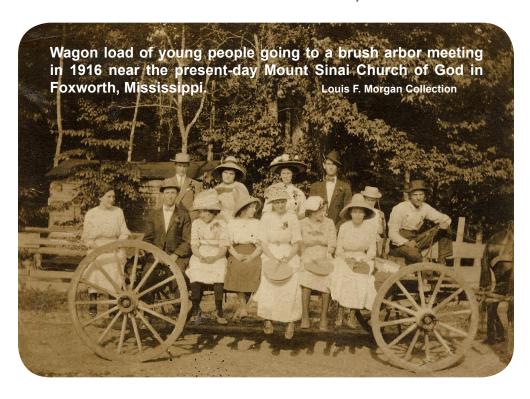
Following the Cascilla revival, members of the Hyde family living near Charleston wrote to Reverend A.J. Tomlinson, then general overseer of the Church of God, and asked him to conduct a revival in northern Mississippi. To their dismay and for reasons uncertain, he was unable to grant their request in 1909. However, by October 1910 Tomlinson accepted a second invitation of the Hyde family. While on his way to Reverend L.P. Adams' Memphis Camp Meeting, Brother Tomlinson visited northern Mississippi and stayed in the home of Tom Morgan-on whose property Tomlinson conducted a few services. 109

Assisted by "some of the saints from

Cascilla" whose "prayers and testimonies were a great stimulant to the work," Brother Tomlinson reported that some professions were made, others sanctified, quite a number of seekers of the Holy Ghost, and six baptized in water as a result of the brief revival held at what would become known as the Friendship Tabernacle.¹¹⁰ Communion and feet washing, which some had never before practiced, were also observed during this meeting with a special move of the Holy Spirit during that service. When Tomlinson closed the revival and boarded the train for Memphis, he was satisfied that the church had "made many warm friends, and [was] sure that good seed fell in some true and honest hearts."111

Following this revival, The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel began to be more widely circulated throughout the area. It served as a link to the Pentecostal movement for some of the Spirit-filled believers--encouraging them in their new lifestyle. This is evident by a letter published in the Evangel on December 15, 1910, and written by Virgie Pritchard of Holcomb. 112 It is said that Virgie's husband, John, was plowing in the field, praying and praising the Lord as he worked, when suddenly the power of God came upon him and he fell to the ground. He then received the Holy Ghost baptism and began speaking in other tongues. When he "came to himself" he found his mule grazing along the fence row. 113 And the joy of his infilling was just as real to him more than a year later when his wife corresponded with the Church of God periodical. She wrote,

...Since the Comforter has come He has taken the place of loved ones [four children who had passed away], dried the falling tears away, turned my sorrow into laughter, turned my nighttime







Early evangelists ofen lived in tents while conducting evangelistic campaigns, including M.S. Haynes when he was first appointed as state overseer for the Church of God in Mississippi in 1915. Pictured here is V.W. Kennedy and family, along with members of the Haynes family.

Dixon Pentecostal Research Center

into day. O how I praise Him for the blessed Holy Ghost. How the dove of peace sings in my soul this morning as we read of the wonderful works of God that are being manifested in different places, and the wonderful testimonies in the last 'Evening Light' as we read them the power fell upon us and we were made to rejoice. O how I praise the Lord for what He has done at this place....¹¹⁴

Indeed God was moving mightily by His Spirit throughout the world. And for a

group of Spirit-filled believers in northern Mississippi, they were one step closer to uniting with the Church of God.

Church of God Issues Ministers' Credentials

Beginning in 1911, Church of God ministers began holding protracted meetings, which they termed camp meetings, at both Stonefield and Friendship tabernacles. The first meeting usually was held at Stonefield, followed immediately by a meeting at Friendship. 116

During a meeting at Stonefield in

1911, the first Church of God ministers in Mississippi were set forth into ministry. Interestingly, this was before a local Church of God congregation was officially organized. On Monday, August 28, 1911, D.W. Dollahite was commissioned as an Evangelist and E.K. Simpson was set forth as a Deacon. 117 Consequently, these two men played a vital role in establishing the Church of God in Mississippi-- Dollahite at Friendship and Simpson at Cascilla. And, Dollahite would be instrumental in establishing the Church of God in Arkansas.

Friendship: Mississippi's First Official Congregation

In August 1912 A.J. Tomlinson traveled to Mississippi personally and received the Friendship church into the Church of God.¹¹⁸ Assisting him during this revival were J.W. Buckalew and the Pentecostal Mission Band, a group of musicians and evangelists who traveled the Southeast assisting Tomlinson in his evangelistic campaigns. 119 The 20-member congregation at Friendship became the first Mississippi church to officially unite with the Church of God.¹²⁰ By 1914 the congregation had grown to almost 60 members, and D.W. Dollahite organized a Sunday School averaging 40 in attendance. 121 During this same time Dollahite wrote to the Church of God Evangel in which he shared from his heart and the Word,

Praise God. How we should praise Him for everything, and not mention others' faults, but get the beams out of our own eyes. Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. Praise God, this way just suits me. I will lift up mine eyes to the hills whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth. Praise God for these last days when things long hidden from the wise and prudent are being revealed to babes in Christ. 122

An earlier correspondence by D.W. Dollahite expressed his zeal for the Lord,

...Thank God for these last days when He is pouring out the Spirit on the children of men. This way is just like heaven to me. When the battle is fought and the smoke clears away I will be found on the battle field. We are looking for the gifts

to be given to the church here at Friendship. Pray that we may come to the Bible standard. We are looking for the coming of the King.¹²³

Pilgrim's Rest Church near Artesia

By January 1913 a second Church of God congregation was organized in Mississippi.124 The Pilgrim's Rest Church of God in Mayhew, located near the Alabama border town of Artesia in northern Mississippi, was established by Z.D. Simpson, who pastored several Church of God congregations simultaneously. 125 Simpson lived in Ethelsville, Alabama, located about 5 miles east of the Mississippi state line, and he traveled to Artesia once a month to conduct a service for the Pilgrim's Rest congregation. 126 In addition, three deacons were also licensed: C.L. Blankenship, W.H. Thompson, and Tildon Turner.

With the Church of God officially organized in Mississippi, Roy Miller was appointed to serve as state overseer in 1912, but he became ill a few months later and died within the year. ¹²⁷ Z.D. Simpson followed as the next overseer, and he served from January to November 1913. ¹²⁸

On August 28, 1911 D.W. Dollahite and E.K. Simpson were the first Church of God ministers licensed in Mississippi.

Turkey Foot Fork Church at Holcomb

The summer of 1913 brought the anticipated annual camp meeting at the Stonefield campground, where those

attending the camp meeting set up tents around the tabernacle. There they would cook their meals and actually camp for the duration of the one or two week meeting, thus the term "camp meeting." A small stream circled around the sides and back of the tabernacle, providing water for those assembled for the services.¹²⁹

M.S. Lemons, a prominent Church of God evangelist, conducted the 1913 camp meeting at Stonefield. He was accompanied by Homer Tomlinson, an emerging evangelist who was the son of General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson. 130 As Lemons preached, several participants "caught a vision" of the Church of God and were finally ready to unite with the movement.¹³¹ Many of these individuals had traveled to the camp meeting from the nearby Holcomb community. However, not everyone at Stonefield was prepared to make such a commitment to unite with the Church of God. While the Stonefield congregation was no longer affiliated with the Free Methodist Church¹³² and participants considered themselves connected with the Church of God, there was some disagreement among the congregation concerning teachings of the Church of God that had been circulated in 1910.¹³³ In addition, by this time L.P. Adams had since withdrawn from the Church of God and was leading a group of white ministers in the predominantly African-American Church of God in Christ.¹³⁴ J.W. Mullen, pastor of the Stonefield congregation, desired for complete unity within the congregation regarding the Church of God teachings before entering into a covenant with the church. 135

However, individuals from Holcomb were ready to enter into covenant with the Church of God and, along with some members of the Stonefield congregation



who lived near Holcomb, were received into the movement by M.S. Lemons at the end the Stonefield camp meeting in 1913. 136 The congregation was known as the Turkey Foot Fork Church of God. 137 J.W. Mullen served as pastor for the Turkey Foot Fork congregation while continuing to pastor the Stonefield congregation.¹³⁸ The two congregations met on alternating Sundays and often attended each others' services. 139

Among the charter members of the Turkey Foot Fork congregation were John and Virgie Pritchard, Effie Crosthwait, E.K. and Nancy Simpson, Hal and Etta Pressgrove, Maggie Simpson McHann, and the recently widowed Clara Allison, each of whom had been active participants during the initial Stonefield outpouring in the Spring of 1909.140

During the year, J.W. Mullen focused on explaining the scriptural basis for the teachings of the Church of God and their application for Christian living.141

Meanwhile, following the annual camp meeting at Stonefield in 1913, M.S. Lemons conducted a camp meeting at Friendship church, where two deacons were set forth into ministry by the congregation. Jim Allen Bell and Tom Morgan were licensed as deacons on Saturday, October 4, 1913.142

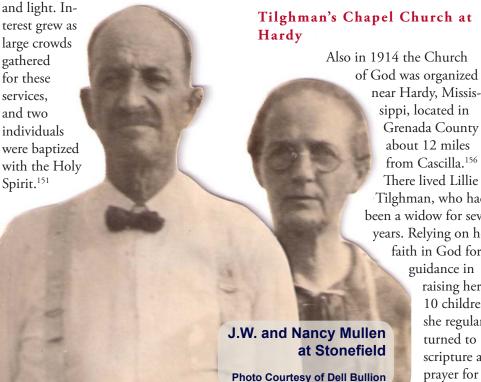
Stonefield Congregation Unites with the Church of God

On Christmas morning 1913, as the snow was falling, M.S. Lemons arrived by train in Cascilla, where he was scheduled to conduct a meeting. 143 By this time Lemons had been appointed as overseer for the Church of God congregations in Mississippi. 144 M.S. Haynes, another Church of God evangelist, was also present.145 Haynes

and Lemons stayed in the home of E.K. Simpson. 146

The first service began on Christmas night and the meeting continued into the new year. 147 Then, on Monday, January 5, 1914, M.S. Lemons set in order the Stonefield Church of God, including reuniting the Stonefield and Turkey Foot Fork congregations. 148 The 30-member congregation then commissioned their pastor, J.W. Mullen, who also received his credential as an Evangelist in the Church of God that same day. 149 Among the individuals to join the Stonefield church that day were two children who were also first-cousins, Audrey Allison and Myrtle Crosthwait. 150

The group then traveled to the City of Charleston, where they found favor with the Sheriff who allowed them to conduct services at the Courthouse, even furnishing the fuel



North Shady Grove Church Organized

Soon the revival fires swept through Tallahatchie and surrounding counties. Beginning on September 1, 1914, a series of meetings were conducted near Cascilla at what would become known as the North Shady Grove congregation. 152 For 15 days the Word of God was preached with numerous spiritual manifestations occurring, including tongues-speech and miraculous healings. At the conclusion of the meeting 80 people had accepted the grace of God in salvation, 59 were baptized in water, 40 were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and 81 were received into the Church of God.¹⁵³ This was also a defining moment in the life of Harmon Spencer "H.S." Harris, who had received the Holy Spirit baptism during the 1909 outpouring at Stonefield.¹⁵⁴ During this meeting Harris was licensed as a deacon at North Shady Grove. 155

Tilghman's Chapel Church at

Tilghman, who had been a widow for seven years. Relying on her faith in God for guidance in raising her 10 children, she regularly turned to scripture and prayer for direction in

leading her family, sometimes praying for hours at a time. She also found consolation and support as a devout member of Wayside Baptist Church near her home.¹⁵⁷

One day while praying in her home, Lillie began to speak in a language she did not know. Although somewhat surprised as she was not seeking a spiritual gift, her experience filled her with renewed joy and

zeal. Lillie knew about the baptism of the Holy Spirit from her relatives living near Cascilla who had received this same experience previously. However, until her own Holy Spirit baptism, and even after, she was happy with her own church.¹⁵⁸

When Lillie testified of her newfound experience in her local church, she was instructed to remain silent and reject the tongues experience. Yet, Lillie could hardly contain the intensity of God's Spirit at work in her life. She continued to worship with vibrant emotion and speak in tongues, for which she was eventually dismissed from the fellowship of her local church. 159

Undeterred, Lillie was adamant that her family attend church. At first the family traveled by wagon to Cascilla for the services at Stonefield. Yet, this soon became too much for the family. It was then that Lillie began constructing a small building next to her home and secured J.W. Mullen, the pastor at Stonefield, to conduct services once a month. In between Mullen's pastoral visits, Lillie and her children sustained their faith through daily Bible study, singing, and prayers. 160

God's provision was evident among the Tilghman family. Once two of the children were injured in a wagon accident. It left one unable to move and the other had been trampled in the head and chest by the startled horse. Lillie and the family began to pray and both children were healed instantly. When another child contracted typhoid fever, Lillie prayed and this child was healed instantly as well.¹⁶¹

Lillie Tilghman, far right, and her 10 children and their families constructed the Tilghman's Chapel Church of God near Hardy, Mississippi in 1914.

Freddie Tilghman Collection

Lillie's spiritual example and guidance of her children helped them develop deep personal relationships with Christ. Years later, her son Horace was living in Arkansas when he dreamed one night that he was walking in water inside his home. Reflecting on the dream the next day, he was troubled and prayed for God to reveal to him the meaning of the dream. He then felt God instructing him to return to Mississippi. He obeyed the leading of God's Spirit, leaving his crops in the field and returned to Mississippi. Miraculously, he safely escaped the 1927 Mississippi River flood that took the lives of many of his neighbors shortly after his departure. Horace Tilghman later became a founding member of the Grenada Church of God. 162

M.S. Lemons had seen this intense faith and devotion when he visited the Tilghman family home in September 1914. He noted, "Lillie Tilghman is the mother of ten children, all of whom are devoted Christians. It is truly delightful to hear them sing and pray. One can't help but feel he is near heaven's gate to be in her house." Lemons also commended Lillie's determination to provide her

family a place for worship.

"This sister dressed a part of the lumber with her own hands and helped in many ways on this building," wrote Lemons. "She just owes \$35 on this nice little church house." During that same visit, Lemons baptized Tilghman and her 10 children and received them into the Church of God. 164 Tilghman's Chapel Church of God served as a place of worship for area residents until 1925,165 when most of the Tilghman children

moved to other communities.

Members Take the Church of God to Arkansas

Not only did Mississippi members travel to locations within the state as missionaries of the Church of God, but they also assisted with the establishment of the Church of God in Arkansas, due mainly to the efforts of members from the Friendship and Stonefield congregations. ¹⁶⁶ When crop failures and boll weevils devastated the Mississippi Delta, many local farmers moved to Arkansas. ¹⁶⁷ Among them were local church members, including Reverend D.W. Dollahite and John and Virgie Pritchard, who helped establish the Church of God in Arkansas in 1914. ¹⁶⁸ †



Digging New Wells

The Miracle of Warren Evans and the Church of God in Southern Mississippi

nother well of spiritual water sprang forth in 1915 in southern Mississippi in the small village of Morgantown. Although local residents of Morgantown knew nothing of the Church of God or the revival occurring as a result of the meetings at Stonefield, Friendship and beyond, they would soon share a kindred bond with individuals in those communities and play a vital role in the development of the Church of God in Mississippi.

Warren Evans Moves from Mississippi to Florida

Warren Evans Sr. returned to Morgantown in July 1915 after spending several years in Florida, where he relocated with his wife and children in 1912 to live near his brother and to escape the condemnation of his wife's family because of his keen affection for corn whiskey.¹⁶⁹ Little did Warren know when he left Marion County, Mississippi, the life transformation that awaited him in Florida. It was there he first learned about the Church of God and eventually became an evangelist in the movement. It was his desire to share about his spiritual experience with family members that compelled him to return to Mississippi in 1915 and establish the Church of God in southern Mississippi.

Despite Persecution



Warren Evans was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 170 and he participated in Mormon services until his marriage to Nancy Beard in 1896. 171 Nancy's family were prominent residents of Marion County,

Mississippi, and members of Holly Springs Baptist Church there. Warren attended church with Nancy, although he grew weary of the control and constant correction from his wife's relatives because of his drinking habit and dreadful temper. By 1912 the Evans family had relocated near Branford, Florida to be near Warren's brother, June.¹⁷²

Nancy Evans is Drawn to the Church of God

In Florida the Evans family continued to increase and Warren was content without having others interfere with his drinking addiction. One evening, as the Evans family sat on their porch, they heard singing more lovely than any

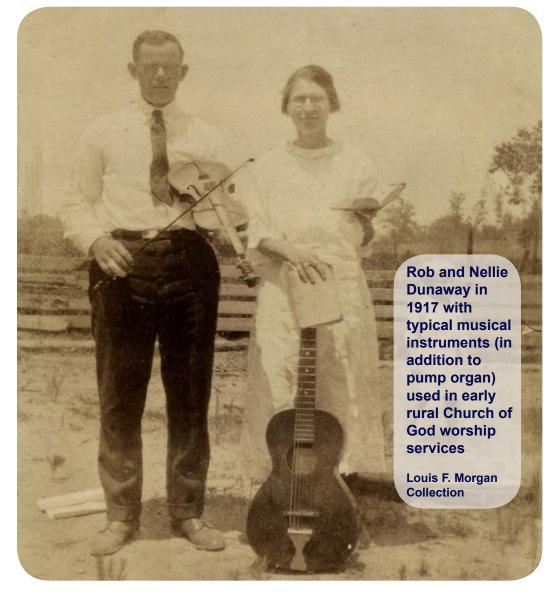
they could remember hearing prior. This happened for several nights, and then word reached the Evans household that a "protracted meeting" (revival) was being conducted under a tent nearby. Nancy, longing for spiritual nourishment both personally and for her children, attended the meeting and was captivated not only by the beautiful singing, but also by the love the people seemed to have for one another and the joy that seemed to radiate from their faces. A tremendous conviction

overcame Nancy concerning her spiritual condition, and she desired to share the joy of these people who referred to themselves as Holiness and Church of God.¹⁷³

Nancy began attending each service, and as the preacher explained the scripture it seemed to tug at her from somewhere deep within. Soon, Nancy responded to the call to receive sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. She followed others to the front of the tent, where women gathered around her and began

to lay their hands on her and pray. It was full of emotion and charged with energy. Suddenly, without warning, Nancy fell to the ground as her body became heavy under the power of the Holy Spirit. As she stood up, Nancy was convinced that the worship of the Church of God people was real. And, she knew what she felt was indeed the power of God on her body. Soon thereafter, Nancy received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. It filled her with a deeper joy than she had ever known. She began praying for her children and husband, that they, too, would receive this same experience.174

Although Warren refused to attend the Church of God services initially, he noticed a remarkable difference in Nancy. The Holy Spirit began dealing with Warren concerning his sinful habits. At first Warren stood outside the tent and listened to the preaching, sometimes even making fun of the way the people worshipped, as they would tremble, shout, and dance under the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, God began dealing with Warren's soul. Eventually he attended the service with Nancy and the children. 175





Warren Evans Responds to the Holy Spirit's Convicting Power

One evening, while listening to the preacher proclaim the need for individuals to live consecrated lifestyles of holiness before the Lord and others, Warren felt spiritual conviction with such intensity that he could hardly wait for the call to be given for individuals to come forward in repentance. When the call was given, Warren literally ran to the altar at the front of the tabernacle and fell on his face as tears streamed from his eyes. Nancy and several Spirit-filled men gathered around Warren, laying their hands on him and praying aloud.¹⁷⁶

Suddenly, Warren jumped to his feet and ran outside the meeting. At first individuals thought perhaps he was leaving the service. However, as he reached the outside of the tent, he took a small bottle of whiskey from his coat pocket and threw it against a nearby tree. The bottle shattered, and so did his resistance to the things of God. Warren returned to the altar area of the tent and rejoiced with Nancy and the others. 177

Warren Becomes a Church of God Evangelist

It was not long until Warren had received the deeper experiences of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He and Nancy then united with the Church of God at Providence, Florida.¹⁷⁸ He soon felt called into the ministry to share with others the good news of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Warren was licensed as a Church of God evangelist on February 19, 1914.¹⁷⁹ He conducted his first revival at Branford, Florida, where he reported great results and requested someone to come and set a church in order.¹⁸⁰

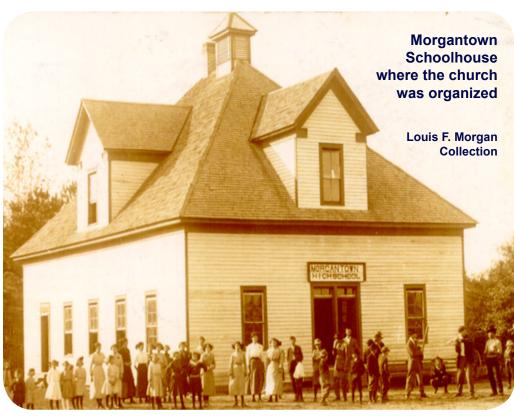
Less than 6 months after receiving ministerial license in the Church of God, Warren Evans faced his first major trial. It was a moment that forever shaped his ministry. According to a letter written by Warren Evans and published on August 1, 1914 in the Church of God Evangel, his daughter had taken ill and died.¹⁸¹ Nineyear-old Laura Holly Evans had shown a keen sensitivity to spiritual things and had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost only 26 days before her death. 182 Warren noted his daughter was heard "singing the praises of God" shortly before drawing her final breath.¹⁸³ Yet, Warren and Nancy preached and practiced divine healing, or the belief that God was the source of healing. As with many early Pentecostals, the often shunned the use of medicine but trusted in God to heal them instead.184 Thus, the death of their daughter caused them to evaluate their faith, their ministry calling, and their future. Warren found a

place of solitude, where he prayed until he settled his doubts and questions. ¹⁸⁵ Then he moved forward with greater determination to tell others of God's power to redeem, baptize, deliver, and even heal.

Evans Family Returns to Mississippi

Following the death of their daughter, Warren and Nancy were eager to return to Mississippi. They desired to share their new experience with relatives and friends in Marion County. Nancy wrote to her father, Joe Beard, in Morgantown. ¹⁸⁶ Joe borrowed \$60 from his brother, C. Nelson Beard, and traveled to Florida to bring Warren and Nancy back to Mississippi. ¹⁸⁷

Initially Warren Evans conducted a few prayer meetings in the homes of his wife's relatives. ¹⁸⁸ Then, in July 1915, he held his first service in Mississippi under a brush arbor along the Joe Beard Creek in



Morgantown, where the nearest established churches were about seven miles away. This was the introduction of the Church of God into southern Mississippi.

Brush Arbor Meeting at Morgantown

At first a large crowd attended the service, perhaps out of curiosity or skepticism of Warren Evans' spiritual conversion. However, ministers and members of the area's established churches soon instructed their members against participating in the services, as they were unfamiliar with the Pentecostal doctrine and manifestation of speaking in tongues.¹⁹⁰

Nonetheless, God blessed Warren's efforts. He and Nancy spent much time in prayer and fasted their meals. Slowly men and women began to attend the services and respond to the call to holiness. Many individuals noted the change in Warren's lifestyle and were drawn to the simplicity and sincerity of his preaching. And, just as with Warren, the Holy Spirit was convicting men and women of their sin with such intensity that they could hardly rest until they surrendered more completely to God.¹⁹¹ At the close of his first meeting in Morgantown, Warren reported to the Church of God Evangel on August 7, 1915, "Just closed a meeting here. The Lord sure did bless. A few were saved and an altar full of seekers. I feel that there have been some gospel seeds sown that will spring up into everlasting life."192

Church of God is Organized

In addition to Morgantown, Warren conducted home prayer meetings and brush arbor services at various locations in the adjoining Foxworth Community. However, as the crowd increased the Morgantown Schoolhouse was secured to house the services. ¹⁹³ It was there in August 1916 that State Overseer M.S.

Haynes conducted a revival in which more than 35 persons were baptized and 51 individuals were received into the Church of God.¹⁹⁴ Known locally as "the schoolhouse church," it was listed with the denomination as the Darbun church, as this was the address for both the pastor (Warren Evans) and clerk (Leon Thornhill).¹⁹⁵ Membership also included individuals from the White Bluff, Pickwick, and Richland Creek communities of Foxworth.¹⁹⁶

Mount Sinai and Morgantown Reorganize

The congregation continued to meet in the Morgantown Schoolhouse and various homes for Bible study and prayer meetings. Then, in January 1917, the members living near Holly Springs Baptist Church, about 7 miles from Morgantown, organized the Mount Sinai Church of God. 197 The group at Morgantown continued to meet in the schoolhouse and reorganized with 17 charter members on Saturday, February 17, 1917. On the same day the Morgantown congregation set forth 20-year-old Robert C. Price as an Evangelist, and he assumed the role of pastor for both Morgantown and Mount Sinai congregations. 198 Services were held at Morgantown on the first and third Saturday and Sunday each month, and services were held at Mount Sinai on the second and fourth Saturday and Sunday. 199 This continued until 1942, when separate pastors were appointed for the two churches.200

Meanwhile, Warren Evans shifted his focus from pastoring the local churches to evangelizing other communities in the area by conducting home Bible studies and prayer meetings.²⁰¹ As a result, other Church of God congregations were established in 1917, including Richland Creek, Pickwick, and Mount Carmel (not the

present-day congregation by this name).²⁰² It was during one of these home Bible studies just outside of Morgantown that Warren Evans suffered much persecution for his efforts to bring spiritual renewal to Marion County.

Evans Evangelizes Marion County Amid Persecution

Persecution was common for early Pentecostals, and there was no exception for those living in Marion County. Often they were ridiculed by others who did not understand the Pentecostals' experience. Even relatives and former friends shunned the early holiness adherents.²⁰³ Sometimes raw eggs were thrown at Church of God members as they traveled to and from services, and gun shots were even fired around the brush arbor as they gathered for worship.²⁰⁴ The local newspaper in Marion County printed unfavorable articles about the Church of God, referring to them as "the Holy Roller cult."205 One article was titled "Holy Rollers Are A Menace To Society."206

Yet, these early Church of God members desired to receive the deeper experiences of a full salvation and Christian lifestyle. By remaining faithful to their mission and relying upon the sustaining grace of Jesus Christ, the men, women and children endured and overcame. In time their efforts would become applauded by the local communities that once proposed they be forced out of the county.

In fact, persecution has been a trademark of the Christian Church since the time of Christ. Martyrs have suffered for the name of Christ for thousands of years.²⁰⁷ The persecution endured by Warren Evans almost made him a 20th-century martyr.

Evans' preaching stirred the com-



mon life of rural Marion County, and it became headline news in the county seat of Columbia. A key component of his message was the Church of God teaching on making restitution when possible for one's past wrongs. ²⁰⁸ Converts to the growing Pentecostal movement began to pay old debts and apologize to neighbors and relatives for their previous actions that were contrary to Christ's example. ²⁰⁹ Yet, when Warren's father-in-law, Joe Beard, made a confession, it unleashed the fury of local White Caps, which was the Marion County equivalent of the Ku Klux Klan. ²¹⁰

A Confession of Murder Creates Excitement

Joe Beard was seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Warren Evans told him he must confess his past sins if the Holy Ghost were to abide within.²¹¹ Therefore, Beard made a confession to a select few that revealed his participation in the White Cap organization, as well as his connection to the 1892 murder of Will Buckley.²¹² Beard acknowledged the innocence of Will

had been framed for the murder, survived public hanging on the courthouse square, and then sentenced to prison. However, it was not Will Purvis who had killed Will Buckley. Instead, when the White Caps met to discuss punishment of Will Buckley for his maltreatment of a local widow, Beard and another man had drawn the shortest straws to carry out the murder. 214

Joe Beard and Louis Thornhill hid in a brush near Buckley's home. As Buckley rode by on his horse, Beard was supposed to shoot him. However, Beard confessed in 1917 that his heart failed him and he could not pull the trigger. It was then that Louis Thornhill took the gun and killed Buckley. Because of a previous argument between Buckley and Purvis, local law officials charged Purvis with the murder.²¹⁵

Shortly before Joe Beard's death on

March 4, 1917, he made plans to publicly confess of the evil he and others had accomplished 25 years earlier. News quickly spread throughout the community concerning Beard's confession. This angered the remaining members of the area White Caps, who, following the death of Beard, focused their vengeance on Warren Evans.²¹⁶

Warren Evans is Beaten by a Mob of White Caps

On Wednesday, June 27, 1917, Evans led a prayer meeting at the home of a widow Davis just outside of Morgantown. During the meeting two men came to the door and asked to speak with Evans, claiming to seek salvation. Evans invited them into the house, yet the men insisted on praying outside. Thinking only of their soul's condition, Evans followed them beyond a group of small bushes, where the moonlight revealed the images of others wearing white hoods. The men overtook Evans and one exclaimed, "If you believe

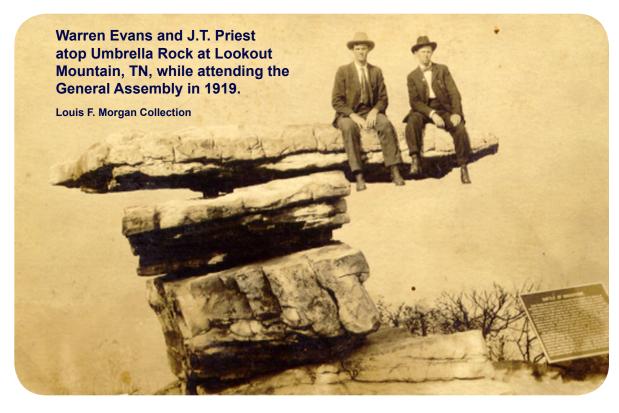


in miracles, then you better ask God to give you one now." With that, the men began to beat Evans with a buggy trace and one man gave him a blow to the head with a revolver. Evans fell to the ground, where he was kicked in his side until two ribs were broken. The men demanded Evans get up and run toward nearby railroad tracks, which he did. However, when his energy failed and he could run no farther, Evans was tied to the back of a buggy with a rope and pulled for almost a mile. His beaten and almost lifeless body was left in front of the home of R.W.

"Bob" and Rosa Hammond, two of his followers who cared for him in their home for several weeks.²¹⁷

The persecution made headlines and editorial discussion in the June 29, 1917 issue of a local newspaper, *The Marion County Progress*. The newspaper editor noted,

It has been commonly conceded that only one unmentionable crime justified the attentions of a mob, and certainly the religious activities of no man, however of small account, would not justify the maiming and bruising of one such as was the case of 'Rev.' Warren Evans....It appears the man had been repeatedly warned to cut short his activities in that section....Be this as it may, and the Lord knows they have caused trouble enough, there is never a good excuse for law-



less acts, and a better plan could have been carried out than was adopted, and we are afraid of the dragon's teeth that are being sown.²¹⁸

Yet, the reaction by Church of God members was not one of vengeance, but of prayer and intercession for their beloved leader and even those whose hardened hearts had compelled them to commit such a violent act.²¹⁹

Evans remained in a coma for several days, but church members gathered by his side and held prayer meetings in the house where his wounds were being treated. Soon God answered those prayers and Evans awoke from the coma. Although bedridden for several more days, he was eventually able to minister again, which excited the community and sparked interest in the Church of God. Some of those who had been the staunchest persecutors

of the holiness group soon were among its most dedicated members. ²²⁰

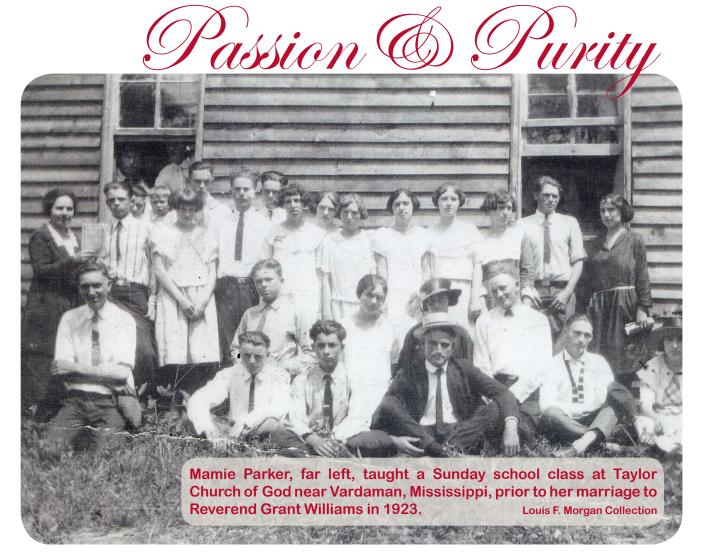
By the end of the year church participation and membership had doubled in Marion County. In 1918 the Mount Sinai congregation constructed a building in which to worship, followed by Morgantown members constructing a church building that same year.²²¹

Marion County Evangelists Preach God's Power Throughout Southern Mississippi

Evangelistic campaigns reached into other communities and counties as local Church of God members began to travel by buggy, train, and even on foot to share the testimony of God's power and saving grace. By the end of 1917 there were 184 members of the Church of God in 6 churches in Marion County.²²² The entire state membership was 743 members in 18 churches.²²³ †



profiles of people with



With the Church of God established in northern and southern Mississippi, evangelistic efforts began to strengthen throughout the state. Men and women were passionate about sharing their newfound faith, and they proclaimed a message of holiness and purity of lifestyle that both convicted and inspired those around them. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, these men and women took the Pentecostal message

to their neighbors and friends.

Initially, the evangelistic efforts were encouraged by the appointed state overseers. ²²⁴ However, as the number of churches increased the responsibilities of the state overseer shifted from evangelism to more administrative duties, such as appointing pastors to local churches and resolving local church problems. Seeing the need for continued evangelistic efforts,

the general church established the office of district overseer, in which a pastor would oversee the evangelistic outreach of a designated region. Seasoned men proven to be effective pastors and who were committed to the Church of God and its biblical doctrine were appointed to these positions. This provided greater opportunity for the discipleship of new converts in areas where the Church of God would be established.

First District Overseers in Mississippi

State Overseer E.B. Culpepper appointed the first district overseers in Mississippi in March of 1919.²²⁷ Six districts were created initially. The six ministers appointed to oversee these districts were commissioned to preach in and expand the Church of God into all 82 counties in the state. The appointed overseers and their districts were:

District 1 - Eupora

Overseer: E.C. Rider (Red Bay, Alabama) Counties: Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo, Tippah, and Webster.

District 2 - Forest

Overseer: Robert C. Price (Morgantown) Counties: Attala, Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Newton, Neshoba, Noxubee, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, and Winston.

District 3 - Grenada

Overseer: P.F. Fritz (Cascilla) Counties: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Desoto, Grenada, Leflore, Panola, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Tate, Quitman, Washington, and Yalobusha.

District 4 - Hattiesburg

Overseer: J.T. Priest (Morgantown)
Counties: Covington, Forrest, Greene, George,
Hancock, Harrison,
Jackson,

Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, and Perry.

District 5 - Meadville

Overseer: James R. Smith (Morgantown) Counties: Adams, Amite, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Meadville, Pike, Walthall, and Wilkinson.

District 6 - Raymond

of God congre-

were estab-

near

Overseer: George T. Cook (Catchings) Counties: Claiborne, Copiah, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Madison, Sharkey, Warren, and Yazoo.²²⁸

Compelled by the mission of Jesus and reaching others with the message of the full gospel, these district overseers began traveling throughout their designated regions. Often traveling by train, the ministers would stop at each train depot and determine the feasibility of conducting a meeting. Typically they would preach at the depot and distribute copies of the *Church of God Evangel* and various tracts before boarding the train for the next stop. If individuals accepted Christ or seemed interested, the minister typically located a place to conduct services. As a result, many

early Church gations lished the railroad line. Many of these overseers were also pastoring local churches. During the week they would travel throughout their designated region and then return to their appointed congregation. Many local churches had deacons licensed by the Church of God who moderated services in the event the pastor was absent due a revival meeting on the assigned district. And, most churches had capable laity who often preached and led local services.²²⁹

The evangelistic efforts of the district overseers proved effective, as 18 congregations were organized in 1919 and 1920 (compared to 23 churches organized during the years 1912 to 1917).²³⁰

Breaking the Racial Barrier in Mississippi

It was during the fervor of such evangelism that the Mount Sinai congregation became the first in the Church of God in Mississippi to break through the racial barrier so prevalent in the South at that time. The first known African-American convert to the Church of God in Mississippi occurred under the ministry of J.T. Priest when C.A. "Tot" Magee received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.²³¹ Magee wrote to the Church of God Evangel and shared that his "whole desire is to hold on to God till victory comes. We have no colored church here, but I go hear the white preacher at Mt. Sinai."232 Although Magee later united with the Church of

God in Christ, his intro-

duction

Many Church of God congregations in Mississippi were established as a result of brush arbor and tent meetings, similar to this meeting at Shooting Creek, North Carolina in 1924.

Dixon Pentecostal Research Center



and foundation in the Pentecostal faith occurred as a result of the unifying love and acceptance of J.T. Priest.²³³

Interestingly, J.T. Priest had been the first Church of God evangelist in Texas from 1914 to 1916.²³⁴ He was then appointed as pastor of the Stonefield and Shady Grove congregations in Mississippi, where he met the widowed Clara Allison. Priest and Allison were married in 1917, only seven months prior to their accepting the pastorate at Morgantown and Mt. Sinai.²³⁵

Vital Role of Women Ministers

Numerous early Church of God congregations were established through the evangelistic ministry of female preachers, ²³⁶ and Mississippi was no exception. Among some of the early women evangelists and pastors in Mississippi were Pearl Adams, Annie Belle Alexander, Mildred Biggers, Sallie Clegg, Nellie Beard Dunaway, Ima Edwards, Lou Etta Lamb, Nell Lovette, Mava Morgan McCoy, and Clara Allison Priest. ²³⁷

Lou Etta Lamb at Artesia

One early minister was Lou Etta Lamb, the wife of prominent physician Dr. Daniel Lamb of Artesia. 238 Following her Spirit-baptism in 1916 she began leading Bible studies in her home, which resulted in the organization of another Church of God congregation in Artesia.²³⁹ With an increasing desire to enter fulltime ministry, Mrs. Lamb began evangelizing throughout Mississippi and other states. Her efforts led to the organization of numerous local congregations for the Church of God and her commitment to training other female ministers in Mississippi provided them with a much needed mentoring and an inspirational model to follow.240

In addition, Lou Etta Lamb's ministry reflected the image of Christ through her compassion. During a time of clearly-defined racial division in Mississippi, Mrs. Lamb violated the social norms of her community by pastoring the Black Free Spirit Church, an African-American congregation located in Artesia. When the pastor resigned this black congregation, the members asked Mrs. Lamb to preach for them, which she did each Sunday afternoon for two years until the congregation secured a permanent pastor. 242

"The whole world took on a different meaning to me.... I had been looking up sincerely, expecting God to move-- now He had reached down and saturated my soul with grace. It seemed as though heaven and earth had met together and I was in the middle. I was caught by the downflow of God's mercy, grace, and power."

- Luther Moxley on receiving sanctification

Mrs. Lamb often preached at the local train depot in Artesia, where numerous individuals were convicted of their sinfulness by her message and accepted Christ. Individuals were also filled with the Holy Spirit baptism and even accepted the call to full-time ministry as a result of Mrs. Lamb's ministry, including her daughter Mary Graves, who also became a noted pastor in the Church of God. 44 Lou Etta Lamb is remembered for

her boldness in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and her ability to effectively demonstrate God's love,²⁴⁵ traits typical of many early female ministers in Mississippi.

Youth Lead The Way

Young people also served an important role in the early development of the Church of God in Mississippi.

When the Church of God was first organized in the Richland Creek community of Foxworth, 11-year-old Rosa Mae Dunaway [Conerly] testified through the pages of the Church of God Evangel, "I am a little girl eleven years old. I am saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost, and want to become a member of the dear old Church of God. I want all the saints to pray for me that I may stand true. Yours for Jesus, Rosa Mae Dunaway."246 Soon young Rosa Mae joined the Church of God and was a member throughout her life. Her legacy continues through her descendants, who are members of the current Richland Creek and Life (Columbia) congregations.247

In June 1920 the 18-year-old Mamie Parker, who later married Reverend Grant Williams, wrote to the *Church of God Evangel* and expressed her desire for the Pentecostal blessing. She wrote:

Since I began reading the *Evangel* I have seen more of the light of God. I want the saints one and all to pray earnestly for me that the Holy Ghost may abide and speak in other tongues. As the Spirit gives the utterance. My heart's desire is to be a true and shining light for my Savior and lead lost souls to Him. I realize that the coming of Christ will not be long and Oh! how my heart aches for those that are lost. I want the power of God

so that I can tell the lost world more about our precious Savior. Oh! friends, pray for me that I may have this blessed experience that leads our souls to know more about Christ.²⁴⁸

Later that summer Mamie received the Holy Spirit baptism during a two-week revival conducted by E.C. Rider at the Taylor School House near Vardaman. Mamie was the first young person in her community to receive the Pentecostal blessing. Desiring for other young people to share in this experience, she began teaching a Sunday school class at church, as well as playing the organ for services. Soon she had a class of 20 to 30 young people from the Free, Parker, Tallent, Taylor, Vanlandingham, and Willis families, among others.²⁴⁹

The following year Mamie felt led to go into ministerial work to assist in revivals. When leaving home in the summer of 1921 to assist with her first revival meeting, she was stopped by her father, who did not understand the Pentecostal experience. He told Mamie, "If you go, you need not come back." Disappointed, Mamie knew that God had called her and she could not afford to disobey the Lord. She made her way to the local train station and boarded the train for Thorn, Mississippi. There she met three other women ministers, Nell Lovette, Mildred Biggers, and Lou Lamb. Together they assisted G.C. Dunn in the revival from which the Thorn church was organized.²⁵⁰

When the summer revival meetings had concluded, Mamie made her way back home near Vardaman, uncertain if her father would receive her. She later remembered,

I prayed and asked the Lord to be with me and to help my fam-

ily understand. I knew I was doing what God wanted and I had to trust Him to work it out.... When [Papa] caught a glimpse of me, he quickly ran to meet me in the front yard. Papa had never been a very affectionate man. I was certain of his love while growing up, but affection was a rarity. However, on this day he kissed my face and tightly embraced me as he welcomed me home. From then on Papa never objected to me going and helping in revivals.²⁵¹

Mamie continued to teach a Sunday school class at Taylor Church and assist in revival meetings until her marriage to Reverend Grant Williams in 1923. Together they pastored in six states and raised a family of eight children, all of whom grew up to serve the Lord.²⁵²

Similarly, Mary Grace Comans of the Rocky Hill Church near Sebastopol had an early encounter with the Holy Spirit that drew her to seek a close relationship with Christ. As a child she often spent her school recess time praying under a shade tree on the school campus. Her classmates often heard her speaking in tongues during her prayers. In adulthood she traveled to Japan, where she taught U.S. military dependents stationed in Tokyo. She also opened her home to Japanese youth, whom she taught English by using the Bible as her text. In time her Bible study emerged into a local church, which today is the largest Church of God congregation in Japan.²⁵³

When 19-year-old Opal Morgan returned to Morgantown after receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit while visiting relatives in South Carolina in December 1944, her testimony and zeal excited the local community. A revival swept the

town and services were conducted for nine weeks, resulting in more than 80 individuals accepting Christ and more than 60 receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.²⁵⁴ Effie Morgan, a charter member of the church and wife of Reverend B.J. Morgan, had been crippled for seven years. However, she was instantly healed during a service of this revival as a trio sang the song "Have Faith In God." 255 Soon after the close of this revival a new church building was constructed, the first brick sanctuary for the Church of God in Mississippi. 256 Opal later served as a teacher and administrator of the Church of God International Preparatory Institute in San Antonio, Texas, which trained missionaries.257

Other noted Mississippi evangelists who began preaching during their youth were F.J. May at Union, A.D. Gammill at Meadville, Ralph Boyles at Morgantown, Cecil Knight at Hattiesburg, and Julius Roberts at Moorhead.²⁵⁸ Following the Second World War other youth would expand the Church of God in Mississippi as evangelists and local church laity.

Thorn Church Established Amid Dynamic Healings

During the summer of 1921 a revival was conducted by G.C. Dunn and his wife, Mirtie, in the Thorn community near Houston, Mississippi. Other workers assisting with the meeting were Lou Lamb from Artesia, Nell Lovette from Sapa, Mildred Biggers from near Ackerman, and Mamie Parker from Vardaman. Mamie played the pump organ and prayed with individuals in the altar service, while all of the others took turns preaching. A teenage girl named Mary Wimberley received healing in her eyes during this revival and no longer needed to wear glasses. Other healings were reported, as well as remarkable conversions to Christ among



individuals who had been known for riotous living. Mamie Parker Williams later remembered, "About 30 were saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. Brother Dunn baptized about 25 in water and set the church in order with 39 members just before the summer revival season ended. We spent the entire summer there working in the revival and witnessing throughout the community."259

The Battle for Oak Grove and Pate's Temple Churches

The refreshing waters of the Pen-

tecostal blessing began to spread across Mississippi and quench the spiritual thirst of men, women, and children seeking a closer relationship with the Lord. During the winter of 1917-18, a meeting was conducted near the northern Mississippi community of Rara Avis (located near the state line community of Red Bay, Alabama).260 Among the first individuals in the area to receive

sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a result of the Church of God services were J.F. and Florence Williams, Joe and Emily Holley, J.R. and Maudie Moxley, and Luther and Alice Moxley.²⁶¹ Soon this experience was received by other members of this family and community residents. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and full of zeal to share their newfound experience, everyone seemed to become a

ful blessing they received. Prayer meetings and Bible studies were conducted in homes, spreading from community to community.²⁶² Preaching stations (unorganized churches) were set up in various communities. Dozens of individuals were being filled with the Holy Spirit in these communities. B.O. Funderburk (known as a great Bible teacher), A.L. Funderburk and wife Dora, Elmer Wiggington (known for his wisdom, visionary leadership, and as "the preachingest man in the country"), John Irving "Kosciusko" Ken-

preacher as they testified of the wonder-

J.T. Priest and Luther Moxley (L-R, holding Bibles) with Elmer and Alice Moxley beside the Moxley family's "Gospel Car." **Church of God of Prophecy archives**

> nedy and wife, and Joe Collier and wife were among these early Church of God members.²⁶³ Some of these preaching stations were organized into local churches following the protracted meetings, such as Oak Grove and Pate's Temple congregations. Others simply served to bring the message of the full gospel to communities and individuals who later joined the Church of God in other areas or other

Pentecostal denominations.

Persecution was intense for these recently Spirit-baptized believers. They were labeled with the derogatory term "Sankies" because of their strong belief in sanctification as a second definite work of grace.264 And, because of fearful skepticism as a result of the First World War, local residents even contacted government authorities in Washington, D.C., who visited the Church of God members in Rara Avis to determine if they were German spies because of their unique worship

> style and speaking in a language other than English.²⁶⁵

Threats of physical harm against the early Pentecostals turned to violence, as a mob disrupted a service at Mount Zion Church and physically attacked J.R. Moxley and Wesley Abbott as they were conducting the meeting.²⁶⁶ Local law officials disregarded the plea of local church members to assist them in keeping the peace and provid-

ing them with protection.²⁶⁷ As a result, A.L. Funderburk rushed a petition to the Governor's Office requesting assistance, resulting in the arrival of peace officers in less than three days who provided protection for the remainder of the meeting.²⁶⁸

During this same time the Oak Grove congregation near Red Bay, Alabama (although located in Mississippi) was torched by an arsonist who first encircled

the building with gasoline.²⁶⁹ The building collapsed inward as a result of the fire that destroyed the place of worship local Church of God members had sacrificed to build.²⁷⁰ The arsonist, who had been paid \$90 to burn the building by those opposing the Church of God, confessed of his merciless act shortly thereafter, while

on his deathbed prior to succumbing to double-pneumonia.²⁷¹

Grant Williams Arrested at Bude

When 19-year-old Grant Williams was establishing the Church of God near the mill village of Bude, he encountered much opposition. He preached divine

Mississippi evangelists Leon Thornhill and Hal Pressgrove Louis F. Morgan Collection healing, resulting in many people testifying of receiving physical healing in their body. Others were laying down their medicine and trusting the Lord with the healing of their bodies. This angered local physicians, including the local mayor/physician who forced the mill owner to stop Grant from preaching in the local company houses. Thereafter, a local resident allowed Grant to preach in his home on the outskirts of town near a theater. As the crowd grew, the services were moved outside. Grant was preaching on the front porch of this home with the congregation scattered throughout the yard. Soon Grant's preaching disrupted the theater, which resulted in local law officials arresting Grant and charging him with disturbing the peace. Appearing before the judge, a local resident sympathetic to Grant instructed him to plead guilty to disturbing "their" peace. This Grant did and was ordered by the judge to pay a fine. However, realizing Grant did not have money to pay the fine and would go to jail, the judge passed around a hat in the courtroom and collected more than enough money to pay the fine. Grant continued preaching at Bude and soon a tabernacle was erected for the services. By the fall of 1921 a dedicated congregation was assembled at Bude and Grant organized the local church.272

Grant also assisted J.R. Smith in "preaching out" the McCall Creek congregation, which was organized in April 1921 with about 15 members.²⁷³ Even earlier Grant had established the Jacobs Tabernacle congregation near Liberty and the Causey's Chapel Church (first called Union) near Gloster.²⁷⁴

Numerous healings occurred in these meetings, which was typical of God's confirmation on the preached



Word in Grant's ministry. In addition to demons being cast out of individuals, other persons were healed of near-death experiences from fevers and chills (which often resulted in death in the early part of the 20th century). And all these blessings occurred despite the persecution of people who did not understand holiness or the Pentecostal experience. Grant was threatened to be whipped on numerous occasions. When establishing the Rock Hill congregation, Grant's meetings were often disrupted by rough boys from the community. Eventually they physically attacked visiting-preacher Robert Blackwood as he exited the church building. And yet, God gave Grant wisdom to know how to speak to those causing trouble to calm them from exhibiting additional violence.²⁷⁵ The work of the Lord continued to increase as the Church of God ministers and members remained sweet in spirit and focused on their mission to reach Mississippi for Jesus.

Luther Moxley and Tithing

Evangelist Robert Price of Morgantown conducted a service at the Pate's Temple Church of God near Red Bay, Alabama in 1919 and preached about the biblical requirement of tithing, ²⁷⁶ or returning to the Lord one-tenth of income. During Price's sermon on tithing, Luther Moxley was convicted about the importance of tithing. ²⁷⁷ James J. Steward later noted,

So completely convinced was Brother Moxley of the tithe-paying requirement of the Scriptures that he did a then-unheard of thing. Very carefully he inventoried everything he possessedhis eighty fertile acres, all the livestock, farming equipment, buildings, their clothing and furniture. 'Right down to my pocket knife,' he later testified. To each item they assigned a fair price as though preparing to auction off the entire lot. Then, upon the total amount—the gross assessed value—he paid into the treasury of the Church of God one tenth. He felt then, and only then, that he could begin tithe-paying with a clean slate.²⁷⁸

Splintering Pentecostalism Impacts Church of God in Mississippi

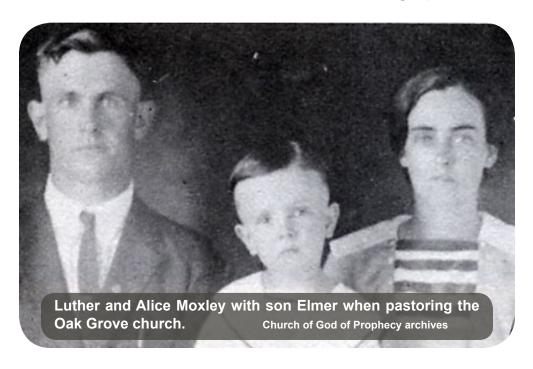
It was during this time of evangelistic fervor that Pentecostalism began to experience increasing division. A movement founded on unity was influenced by fallen humanity, as power struggles and differences in doctrinal interpretation caused brothers and sisters to break fellowship with one another. New denominations were being formed and legalistic codes seemed to replace the communal aspect of biblical interpretation for one's faith

and practice. Mississippi was not spared, neither was the Church of God.

In 1922 the Church of God movement found itself divided over various issues related to finances and leadership authority, most centering around General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson.²⁷⁹ Some believed Tomlinson had misappropriated some of the Church's general funds; others believed the accusations were the result of an inner power struggle among the leadership.²⁸⁰ Divisive thinking was soon increasing among supporters of both sides, even amid calls for unity-- which were ultimately drowned out in the uproar of accusations and defensive pleas.

Ultimately, A.J. Tomlinson was removed as General Overseer of the Church of God, after which his supporters aligned with him in what would become known as the Church of God of Prophecy.²⁸¹

Several Church of God ministers and members in Mississippi aligned with the Church of God of Prophecy after 1923.



Some entire congregations left the Church of God, while others experienced splits creating separate congregations within the same community. Among the Mississippi congregations that remained with A.J. Tomlinson include Chapel Hill (Dennis), Causey's Chapel (Gloster), Jacobs Tabernacle (Liberty), Union Grove (Mooreville), Spanish Fort, and the Rock Hill mission.²⁸²

Hal Pressgrove, who received the Holy Spirit baptism in the 1909 Stone-field outpouring and later served as state overseer for the Church of God in Mississippi, was among the ministers who aligned with former Church of God General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson for a brief period.²⁸³ Pressgrove, living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at the time of the division, provided his home for the reorganization meeting of the Church of God of Prophecy denomination in 1924.²⁸⁴ In time, Pressgrove returned to the Church of God and to Mississippi.²⁸⁵

In addition, the Oneness Pentecostal movement began to increase in Mississippi during this same time. Doctrinal differences over the understanding of the nature of God and water baptism caused some congregations to divide as early as 1920, such as Mount Sinai and Morgantown.²⁸⁶ However, at least two entire congregations left the Church of God for the Oneness doctrine, including Jayess and Mount Carmel in Foxworth (both of which are now United Pentecostal Church congregations).²⁸⁷ While some ministers returned to the Church of God from both the Church of God of Prophecy and Oneness churches, the period between 1920 and 1927 was filled with uncertainty and indecision for the Church of God in Mississippi until individuals settled on their denominational preference.

Supporting Local Pastors and Churches

Finances were scarce during the early days of the Church of God. Often pastors' income, which came from church tithes and various forms of personal secular work, was extremely limited as many early Pentecostals were farmers and mill workers with low incomes. 288 Cash tithes were almost a novelty when members gave the tenth to the Lord and, particularly, to the shepherd He had sent to lead their flock. 289 Generally, tithes came in the form of hens, eggs, milk, meat, flour, corn and other items that could be consumed or bartered. 290

J.C. Lentz, an evangelist and pastor from Clay, Mississippi, recorded his early ministerial travels, including his train fare expenses and offerings and tithes received.²⁹¹ In September 1923 he received \$2 tithes and a total offering of \$13. His expenses were \$2.75 for oil and gas, 50 cents for postage, and \$6.10 for railroad fare.²⁹² Similarly, in 1925 he noted tithes received from Oak Grove, Mount Sinai, Morgantown, and Pickwick, including 3/4 bushel of potatoes valued at \$1.15, 2 hens valued at \$1.50, 1 gallon of syrup valued at \$1.50, and less than \$20 in cash.²⁹³ He traveled to his appointments by train.294

When Grant Williams served as state overseer of Mississippi in 1931 there was no salary or benefits, just as local pastors had no set salary or benefits.²⁹⁵ The local churches were supposed to send offerings to assist with the state overseer's expenses.²⁹⁶ However, the economic depression in the United States created additional financial struggles for pastors and churches. Cotton crops in Mississippi were not paying as much as in previous years, and most Church of God members were farmers or sharecroppers depending on successful

harvesting of crops for their livelihood.²⁹⁷ There was little money in local churches prior to the ending of the Second World War.²⁹⁸ Mamie Williams, widow of state overseer Grant Williams, later remembered that most church members were struggling financially.²⁹⁹ Instead of cash offerings, many times the reports from local churches included a dollar or maybe even some postage stamps.300 Yet, the financial strain did not hinder the Christian love expressed to one another and the power of the Holy Spirit that operated in the midst of those early Church of God members. Although most members had little to offer in worldly possessions, it was their zeal for the Lord and the Spirit of God possessing them that attracted others to their services. In the midst of difficulty, their joy in following Jesus helped the Church of God to increase tremendously during the 1920s and 1930s.

Moving Forward and Digging New Wells

Following a period of uncertainty in the Church of God during the early 1920s, which lasted for several years in some locations, the movement reaffirmed its mission and realigned its focus. The Church of God moved forward as a denomination, and the ministry in Mississippi experienced a paradigm shift that resulted in healthy growth. The black ministry increased in the state, churches were organized in cities, and Mississippians made positive impacts on the Church of God denomination in music and education.

St. Mary's Church of God: Mississippi's First African-American Congregation

St. Mary's Church of God in Eupora was set in order in 1926, becoming the first African-American congregation



established in the Church of God in Mississippi.³⁰¹ Other African-American congregations soon began to spring up in Mississippi, including Baltzar (Tutwiler) and Darnell (Crowder) in 1928, Bingham's Chapel (Eupora) in 1933, and New Albany in 1935.³⁰²

Because of societal norms and "Jim Crow laws" in the South, integrated worship was often impossible, and difficult at best. Since the Church of God membership was predominantly Caucasian, it was difficult for African-Americans to serve in leadership roles other than as a local church pastor. As a result, the Church of God segregated many of its state offices in 1926 with the creation of the "Church of God Colored Work". 303

During this time the black work in Mississippi experienced cyclical periods of growth and decline.³⁰⁴

In 1936 and 1937 there was a concentrated effort to establish African-American congregations in Mississippi, resulting in churches being set in order at Ecru, Hattiesburg (Martha's Chapel), Sumrall (Davis Chapel), Carson (Katie's Chapel),

McLaurin, Richton (Oak Grove), Georgetown (Pearl River), and Eupora.305 The African-American constituency of the Church of God in Mississippi increased until 1941, when all but three congregations had disbanded for reasons which today are uncertain.306 St. Mary's, Eupora, and New Albany continued as strong congregations until other African-American churches were set in order in later years.³⁰⁷

Several African-American ministers worked tirelessly to increase the black ministry of the Church of God in Mississippi. Among those leading personalities in the state were Ida Armstrong, A.J. Bell, Bud and Nettie Daniels, U.B. Daniels, Ima Edwards, Ethel Mae Hill, Ed Johnson, Frank Lane, Alex Richards, W.M. Stewart, and Dewey Wilson. Eventually, in 1957, Mississippi-native Calvin C. Daniels was appointed as state overseer of the African-American ministry in Mississippi. It was during this time that the black ministries in the state began to increase. In the state began to increase.

While the racial segregation provided greater opportunity for leadership among black ministers in the denomination, it also became difficult for the races to fellowship with one another and resulted in a lack of communication and integration of ministry models. It would take decades for the Church of God to once again integrate in 1966,³¹¹ and Mississippi was among the last states to unify the state offices in 1970.³¹² (Florida continues to have segregated state offices).³¹³

Itinerant Evangelists and Traveling Pastors

In the early days of the Church of God in Mississippi many congregations did not have full-time pastors but relied on local deacons licensed by the denomination to conduct services in the absence of a pastor. Sometimes a Church of God evangelist might visit the church and be asked to speak or a specific minister would serve as pastor for multiple congregations at the same time and alternate the weekends he or she was at a given church.

Some of the early "traveling pastors" were Dewey Bozeman, Mack Cockerell, U.B. Daniels, Ima Edwards, Jim Evans, J.C. Lentz, Allen McNemar, B.J. Morgan, B.L. Roberts, Leon Thornhill, and Dewey Wilson.³¹⁴

Mack Cockerell lived near Shaw but often traveled to Isola to conduct the services for the Church of God there. During his early evangelistic ministry he did not have a car. However, many days he would begin walking down the road, believing God would provide transportation so he could fill his appointment at one of the churches he served as pastor. This was

not uncommon among Mississippi's early preachers.³¹⁵

Moving to the City

Prior to 1931, all Church of God congregations in Mississippi had been organized in rural areas. The Earl Brewer and Grant Williams were the first ministers to establish churches within a cities, rather than villages or rural locations.



In 1931 Earl Brewer was serving as a state evangelist and conducted numerous revivals throughout Mississippi, often lasting weeks at a time and resulting in dozens of conversions.³¹⁷ It was in 1931 that the Mississippi capital city of Jackson as the result of a tent meeting conducted by J.T. Roberts.³²³ Jackson's Bailey Avenue Church of God would later become the largest congregation in Mississippi during

the pastorate of M.H. Kennedy.³²⁴
Singing with Spirit

Music also served a vital role in drawing people to the Church of God, as well as teaching them basic church doctrine through song lyrics.

In the early days of the Church of God in Mississippi services were not as sophisticated as today. Music is one way in which this is evident. Accord-

ing to Mamie Williams, in the early days most everyone in the congregation assembled in the choir after the service began.

Sometimes only one or two people remained seated in the congregation as

all others were in the choir. In the very earliest of days, everyone gathered around the pump organ and sang various hymns and convention songs (which were published

annually in a songbook produced by the Church of God). If

anyone had a selection they

Thelma Massengill Neal circa 1950 waited until a song had ended and then simply announced the page number they would like the choir to sing. If the organist did not know how to play a song, the choir usually sang it without music using Shaped-note syllables of "Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti-Do" until everyone had learned how to sing their specific part of the song (i.e., soprano, alto, tenor or bass).³²⁵

Often people would be overcome with joy during the singing and begin to shout, dance under the power of God, and speak in tongues. It was not uncommon for individuals to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit while singing and rejoicing.³²⁶

As the years progressed, church members often brought their musical instruments to the services. There were guitars, tambourines, drums, trumpets and other brass instruments. Pianos were the main instrument in most churches, however. Everyone used what talent they had to help in the work of the Lord.³²⁷

Adams Family Band

One of the earliest musical groups in the Church of God in Mississippi was the Adams Family Band. Archibald and Pearl Adams united with the Gatewood congregation in 1915 and were set forth as ministers.³²⁸ Archibald was the first bishop licensed in the Church of God in Mississippi, and he also served as an early state overseer of Louisiana.329 Following his death in 1916, Pearl Adams and children moved into the upstairs loft of the Stonefield church.³³⁰ There Pearl Adams, a talented musician, provided music lessons for area children.³³¹ Each of her children played a musical instrument as well, and she organized a family band that became a favorite in the Church of God movement.332 They traveled throughout the Southeast singing and preaching. The Ad-

nized within the city limits.321 When Grant Williams ended his tenure as Mississippi State Overseer following the 1932 General Assembly, he and his family returned to pastoral ministry. They moved to the Mississippi Delta and began planting a church inside the city limits of Greenville. Initially, they conducted services in a ball field. Since they were planting a church and no parsonage existed, they lived with another couple while the Williams children were divided into the homes of church parishioners. Upon establishing the church, Grant Williams remained as pastor for about one year before accepting the pastorate of the Friendship congregation near Charleston. Soon other congregations were established within the city limits of other major cities in Mississippi. 322

Brewer conducted a four-week meeting

als were saved and 25 baptized with the

Holy Ghost.³¹⁸ A church was organized

with 52 charter members, and Edward W.

Breland was appointed as the local church

clerk.319 At the close of the revival, Brewer

congregation.³²⁰ This was the first Church

of God congregation in Mississippi orga-

was appointed pastor of the Hattiesburg

at Hattiesburg during which 64 individu-

In 1943 the first Church of God congregation was organized in



ams Family Band were special favorites at camp meetings, state conventions and the annual international general assembly.³³³

Blackwood Brothers Quartet

Another early musical group was the Blackwood Brothers' Quartet from the Mount Olive Church of God near Ackerman.

When Carrie Blackwood came into the Church of God in 1916,³³⁴ it is doubtful she comprehended God's wonderful plan for her and the Blackwood family. Carrie led the way for her family in Christian service. She was instrumental in organizing the Mount Olive congregation, of which she served as clerk, and trained her children to seek the Lord and share His love with others.³³⁵

In 1925 Carrie's son Doyle testified

through the pages of the Church of God Evangel, "I praise the Lord for saving, sanctifying and after about four years seeking baptized me with the Holy Ghost.... I am a little boy 13 years old and it seems that I can't do much for Jesus but I want to have a star in my crown."336

Another son, Roy, served the

Church of God as an evangelist, pastored leading congregations in Alabama and Mississippi, and even served as an early state overseer of North Carolina.³³⁷ Carrie planted and nurtured spiritual seed into her children that ultimately blossomed

into one of Gospel music's most beloved families.

In 1934 the Blackwood Brothers Quartet organized in Mississippi as one of the premier Southern Gospel quartets. Brothers Roy, James and Doyle, along with Roy's son R.W., formed the group that became destined for international fame.³³⁸

Initially singing for local churches, state conventions and many Church of God General Assembly services, the group was first broadcast on radio in 1936.³³⁹ They quickly became noted throughout the world and inspired countless numbers to enjoy a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The Blackwood Brothers Quartet sold over 40 million records and won 5 All-American Music Awards, 8 Grammy Awards and 7 Dove Awards.³⁴⁰

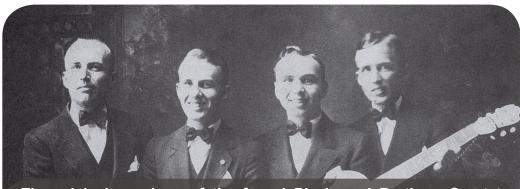
Annie Heath: Pianist for the General Assembly

Another noted musician in Mississippi was Annie Baldwin Heath, wife of State Overseer S.J. Heath. Originally from Georgia, the Heaths were charter members of what is now the Mount Paran-Central Church of God in Atlanta in 1917³⁴¹ and soon both were licensed as ministers.³⁴² In addition to preaching, Annie Heath was also a gifted musician and frequent pianist at the annual General Assembly of the Church of God.³⁴³ She also addressed Assembly delegates on numerous occasions regarding support for evangelism, the orphanage, and missions.³⁴⁴

In 1929 the Heaths moved to Mississippi upon S.J. Heath's appointment as state overseer and also as pastor at Morgantown and Mt. Sinai.³⁴⁵ The

couple resided at Morgantown, where a new state overseer's parsonage had been constructed (which still stands today).346 When S.J. Heath passed away in 1931, Annie Heath was appointed as Mississippi's first state youth director, known then as the State Superintendent

of the Sunday School and Young People's Endeavor.³⁴⁷ She also organized the first statewide women's ministry and youth activities for the Church of God in Mississippi.³⁴⁸ She was a mentor to numerous young people and several young girls,



The original members of the famed Blackwood Brothers Quartet were (L-R, Roy, James, Roy's son R.W., and Doyle). Raised in the Mount Olive Church of God near Ackerman, Roy also served as a state overseer in the Church of God.

Used by permission of the Family of James Blackwood

Carrie Blackwood could not have imagined that her descendents would travel the world as singing evangelists. Yet, the Lord honored her consecrated example and blessed her family (and through them the world) in immeasurable ways.

who later became noted evangelists and pastors, received personal training under Annie Heath's guidance.³⁴⁹ In 1931, she pastored at Morgantown and Mount Sinai in Mississippi, and in nearby Bogalusa, Louisiana in 1932.³⁵⁰ She then served as an evangelist throughout the southeast.

In 1933 Annie Heath was selected to teach piano at the Bible Training School (now Lee University).351 While on her way to BTS, she passed away unexpectedly while conducting a camp meeting in Montgomery, Alabama.352 At the 1934 General Assembly, "Professor Walker" noted, "I know you who have been here before must miss [Sister Heath] greatly this year. I have seen her sitting at the piano so many times, making music that I am sure Heaven is filled with.... Now, even as the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha so must Sister Heath's mantle fall on someone. If it falls your lot to take up the banner she laid down, please don't shirk, but let us all be faithful...."353

Despite her many accomplishments, Annie Heath is best remembered for her musical ability and playing the piano at the General Assembly. One of her most requested songs was "Heaven's Bells Are Ringing," which was co-written with M.S. Lemons in 1919 and published in the first Church of God songbook. ³⁵⁴ More than 75 years after Annie Heath's death, that song remains as a testimony of her ministry passion:

"The heaven's bells are ringing,
so be sure your heart is right.
The angels now are singing,
'Hold out the heav'nly light.'
Our Lord will come in glory
with a host of angels bright;
O, keep telling out the story,
He may come tonight." 355

Click on bottom left corner of the audio box to hear Cindy Stringfield Smith play and sing "Heaven's Bells Are Ringing."



(online viewers only)

Williams and Hamilton First Mississippi Students at Bible Training School





Mississippians have served a vital role in the educational development of the Church of God. When the denomination began a Bible Training School (now Lee University) in 1918 for the training of ministers,356 two Mississippians enrolled in November 1918 for the school's second term.357 17-year-old Grant Williams and 24-year-old J. Oscar Hamilton, both young evangelists from the Mount Moriah church in Eupora, studied under Nora Chambers, a Church of God minister and teacher at the Bible Training School.³⁵⁸ Over the next 90 years, numerous church members in Mississippi have prepared for a variety of ministry paths at institutions of higher education, including those sponsored by the Church of God, such as Lee University and the Theological Seminary.

Moxley Receives Training Through Correspondence

In addition to students relocating to Tennessee for ministerial training, some Mississippians received training by correspondence, including Luther Moxley.³⁵⁹ A school teacher since 1910,³⁶⁰ Moxley valued education and desired to have more Biblical training after becoming a Church of God minister. Unable to attend the church school in Tennessee, Moxley enrolled in its correspondence courses. It is believed he was one of the first Mississippians to complete the correspondence courses at what is now Lee University.³⁶¹

On campus and correspondence training opened a door of educational opportunity for many Church of God members in Mississippi who most likely would not have attended Bible school or college. It provided an incentive and access for ministry preparation among clergy and laity, and many Mississippians took advantage of the educational opportunities at church-sponsored schools. Years later the Church of God would expand its educational efforts by providing Church Training Courses and Lay Leadership Courses at the local level. Aspiring clergy would participate in a Ministerial Internship Program as part of the licensing process.

In addition to preparing for ministry through formal education, several members of the Church of God in Mississippi also served as teachers at the denomination's schools. One of the earliest professors in the Church of God in Mississippi was R.R. Walker, who is believed to be the first Church of God minister with an earned degree.³⁶²

R.R. Walker: Mississippi's Premier Educator

A native of Taylorsville, Rufus Royd Walker (1895-1976) became a Baptist minister in 1919 and enrolled in Mississippi College. 363 Alternating school teaching with summer coursework, Walker earned an A.B. degree in 1927 and continued his studies at the State



Teachers' College in Hattiesburg (now the University of Southern Mississippi).³⁶⁴

In 1930 Walker moved to Morgantown to serve as coach and school superintendent. He also pastored two nearby Baptist churches, each conducting one service monthly. This allowed Walker to visit the Church of God near his home. There, he was asked often to preach, teach, and lead testimony service.³⁶⁵

In April 1933 local pastor, Fount Sharp (who was a 1929 graduate of the Bible Training School³⁶⁶), began a series of meetings in which several students were saved, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Spirit.³⁶⁷ Walker remembered, "I pondered in my heart the reaction of this experience in the lives of people I came in contact with from day to day and noticed it had a great influence in their everyday conduct."368

Walker and his wife, Leedie, were intrigued and began searching the Scripture. Soon Walker was convinced that "the same God that saves could sanctify and baptize with the Holy Ghost, and the experience was real, but would only come to those who had faith to accept His promises."369

Six weeks into the revival, Walker testified to the Morgantown congregation of his newfound understanding and announced he was "going to be the first one in the altar."370 Walker remembered his experience, "There came an indwelling joy and a power into my very being that took complete charge of my mind, body, and soul.... I knew of a certainty I had received the wonderful blessing of sanctification."371 He noted, "I cried out, 'Oh, Lord, here I am, take me; I am completely Thine, my heart, my soul, my body,

my tongue, my all.' It was then that the mighty power of the Holy Ghost came in and began to speak in a language that I had never heard before.... Oh, the joy! Oh, the love!"372

On May 13, 1933, Walker resigned his pastorates and united with the Church of God,³⁷³ where he became esteemed as "Professor Walker" because of his academic credentials.³⁷⁴ Due to his education and reputation for integrity, Walker

quickly emerged as a leader in the Church of God. He was appointed Principal of the high school division at Bible Training School (now Lee University), followed by pastorates in Tennessee (North Cleveland) and South Carolina (Charleston, Anderson, and Greenwood).375 In 1946 Walker was elected Secretary General and unanimously re-elected in 1948.376 He served as Administrative Bishop of Kentucky, sixteen years on the Executive Council. and as Superintendent of the Home for Children.377

Through the love, joy, and authentic transformation exhibited among Church of God members, Walker was motivated to

seek sanctification and the Holy Spirit baptism. As a result, his efforts impacted positively the Church of God and helped lead the movement into a new era of ministry enhanced by education.

Since R.R. Walker joined the faculty of the Bible Training School in 1934, numerous Mississippians have served as faculty members at Church of God schools training students for a variety of careers and ministries.



with an earned college degree.

Louis F. Morgan Collection

Everyone is a Minister in the Church of God

The Church of God has held to the idea of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). In the early days of the Church of God this was encouraged at all levels of local church ministry, from church clerks, singing, teaching, and even preaching. Numerous men and women and even children were encouraged to use their spiritual giftings and talents to advance the Kingdom of God. This included those with and without ministerial license who relied upon the Holy Spirit's gifts [words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:8-13)] and the Holy

Spirit's fruit [love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)] to perform the work of God through them.

The Church of God has embraced the five-fold ministry gifts Christ gave to the Church: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher (Ephesians 4:11). Although apostles and prophets were not generally labelled in the early Church of God in Mississippi, numerous individuals operated in these roles by supervising the planting of numerous congregations and being used of God to supernaturally reveal future events. The ministry roles of evangelist, pastor and teacher were more frequently noted by early Church of God members. Nonetheless, individuals have

continued to operate in these special gifts throughout the history of the Church of God in Mississippi for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry and to edify of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

One hundred years after its introduction into Mississippi, the Church of God continues to embrace the vision and mission of its forebears-- emphasizing the need for all individuals to be empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to be consecrated in all holiness and godliness and to witness to others of the transforming message of Jesus Christ. As God has led us in the past, may He continue to guide our steps as we yield to His will, His Word, and His Holy Spirit. †

- 11. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
- 12. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
- 13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
- 14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
- 15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:
- 16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.
- 17. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
- 18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:
- 19. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
- 20. But ye have not so learned Christ;
- 21. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:
- 22. That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
- 23. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
- 24. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
- 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.
- 26. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
- 27. Neither give place to the devil.
- 28. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.
- 29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.
- 30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.
- 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:
- 32. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.



Mississippians
On Mississippians
FreeFoto.c*m

contemporary Christian circles. Conferences, seminars, books, and online forums offer a variety of definitions concerning what it means to be "missional." Yet, this approach is not new. It was the focus on mission that compelled the early apostles to boldly proclaim Jesus Christ amid much persecution. It was the focus on mission that ultimately brought the message of Jesus to you and me.

Continuing Christ's Mission

Christ's instructions about His mis-

sion for His followers are recorded in the Great Commandment: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV) and in the Great Commission: "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).

While maintaining essential Bible truths and practices, the early followers of Christ entered into different cultures and shared the Gospel in a variety of contexts. Without compromising the essential message of Jesus Christ, they adapted their models of ministry. We see this with their acceptance of Gentiles into the Christian faith without requiring circumcision.

Methods and styles change, but the

Word of the Lord endures forever. The goal must always be about personal and communal transformation, which can ultimately transform an entire culture. Finding the most effective ways to communicate the teachings of Jesus, the message of the cross, and the power of God to redeem— all performed by the Holy Spirit— will once again, just as with the early apostles, "turn the world upside

down" (Acts 17:6).

Noted author and pastor Ed Stetzer admonishes the Church to stay focused on mission, which he suggests is simply continuing the mission established by Christ.³⁷⁸ This, according to Stetzer, requires being culturally relevant without conforming to unbiblical practices.³⁷⁹ Being missional requires a commitment to living out what Christ has instructed in our motives, actions, and interactions with others. It also requires an understanding of one's location—the culture, people, and setting. This does not mean one model will work in all settings and for all time. It is specific for each community or given ministry context.380

Appreciating the Pioneers' Example

Reflecting on Stetzer's explanation of missional, it is easy to see the revolutionary and missional approach lived out among the early pioneers of the Church of God in Mississippi. While some may have exploited their ministry roles for personal gain, those individuals who were true to the mission of Jesus were less concerned with their own popularity and more focused with seeing God's plan fulfilled and their communities transformed. They desired to be in submission to Jesus and the principles of His spiritual kingdom in their lifestyle and spiritual practice. They moved beyond their comfort zones and relied upon the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them into all Truth as confirmed in scripture and with miraculous signs and wonders following. As these individuals entered communities, living among and befriending local residents, they did so out of a radical commitment to the mission of Jesus. They confronted sin, called for integrity, and sacrificed willingly. They were noted as people full of joy and love—the evidence of God's Spirit motivating and comforting them.

Moving Forward 'On Mission'

While we respect, honor, and learn from the past, we cannot reside there. Today's world requires no less of us than it did of our forebears. We still have a mission. In our time and our setting, we must move forward with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must know the One whom we serve and understand the message He has called us to deliver— the same message that echoes through the ages of time. We also must understand the culture of those to whom we are sent to serve. Love. Passion. Purity. Holiness.

Discipline. Integrity. Accountability. Boldness. Mercy. Grace. Faithfulness. These are timeless and changeless values and virtues. The gifts, fruit, and power of the Holy Spirit will enable us to do the work of ministry in the context to which God has called us to serve Him and others. Drawing inspiration from the example of those who have paved the way before us, we must now accept our responsibility to become the revolutionaries of our time and place.

Until the Lord returns again to receive His followers unto Himself, we are instructed to continue doing the work to which He has called us. Simply, we are to be "on mission." What actions are we doing today to ensure the message of Jesus is being proclaimed in our communities? Years from now, if we have the opportunity to look back on this moment, what will the pages of history record about how we embrace our role in serving God and others?

May we continue to move forward with the transforming message of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit empowers us to continue the work Christ started more than 2,000 years ago. The Holy Spirit is still available to enable us to live as Christ commanded and to witness to the world around us. Let us be "on mission." We have the living water, and many spiritually thirsty Mississippians are waiting on us to share it with them. †





Photographs



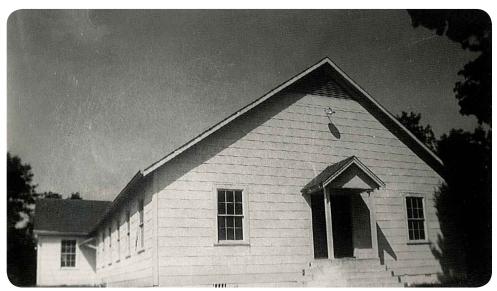
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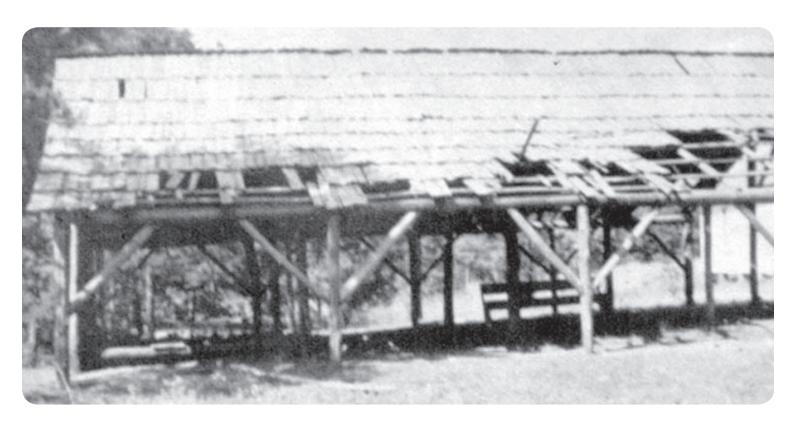
Members of the World-Wide Pentecostal Mission Band helped organize the Friendship congregation in 1912. J.W. Buckalew (4th from left) and A.J. Tomlinson (5th from left) were present.

(Dixon Pentecostal Research Center)

(right): Stonefield Church of God in Cascilla.

(Mississippi COG State Office)







(above): Friendship Tabernacle near Charleston (Dixon Pentecostal Research Center)

(left):
Marion County members
Nellie Dunaway (far left)
and her sister Julia
Hammond (far right)
assisted in planting the
Bogalusa, Louisiana
Church in 1919.
(Louis F. Morgan Collection)





(above): G.G. and Mamie Williams and their children in 1943

(right): Melissa Merritt, charter member of Pickwick Church

(Louis F. Morgan Collection)

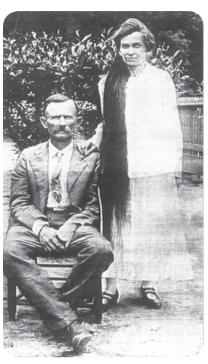
To listen to a brief excerpt from a sermon by G.G. Williams, click on the bottom left corner of the audio box below.







James Blackwood and Bill Boyles at Morgantown, 1936 (Louis F. Morgan Collection)



Julia Hammond, first musician in southern Mississippi
(Louis F. Morgan Collection)



A.J. Gardner and wife, early pastor in Mississippi (Dixon Pentecostal Research Center)







(above):
J.T. Roberts conducted a
tent meeting in
Jackson in 1943, from
which the Bailey
Avenue congregation was
organized.

(Dixon Pentecostal Research Center)

(right):

The original building used for Bailey Avenue Church of God in Jackson had two rooms behind the sanctuary that served as the living quarters for the pastor and family.

(Louis F. Morgan Collection)









(above):

Brick sanctuary of Bailey Avenue Church constructed during the pastorate of M.H. Kennedy.

(Mississippi COG State Office)

(far left):

Early image of Reverend M.H. Kennedy

(Mississippi COG State Office)

(left):

The Kennedy family during the time they served the Bailey Avenue church.

(Louis F. Morgan Collection)





(above): Grenada District Rally in the 1940s

(Dixon Pentecostal Research Center)

(right): Timmie Whittington and family

(Dixon Pentecostal Research Center)



CHURCH OF GOD



(above): Early image of the Grenada Church

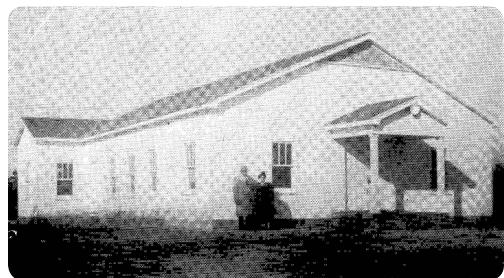
(left):
Grenada Church radio
ministry includes (l-r,
standing): Mae Brasher,
Rev. J.L. Brasher, Grace
Bloodworth, Greek
Mullen, Yvonne Taylor
Mullen, the radio announcer and (seated)
Bessie Wolfe (at piano)
and Rev. A.D. Gammill
and Maudie Gammill.
This photo was taken
inside Grenada's WNAG
studio.

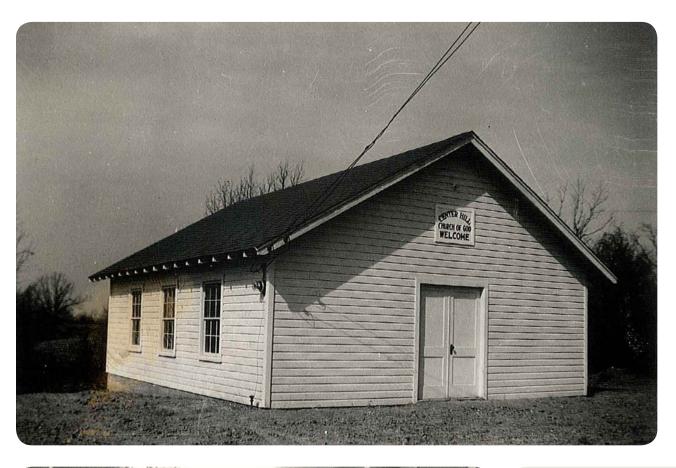




(above): Early members of the Goodwill Church (Mississippi COG State Office)

(right):
Oak Ridge Church of
God
(Mississippi COG State Office)







(above): Center Hill Church (Mississippi COG State Office)

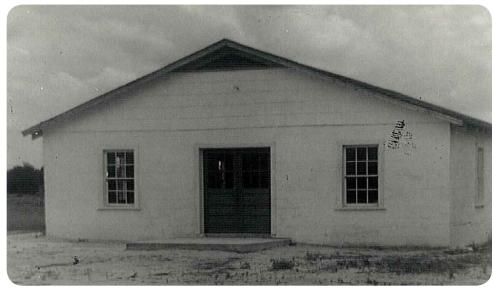
(left): Early African-American members attend Sunday School on the porch of the parsonage (Mississippi COG State Office)





(above):
Byrd's Chapel Church
(now Praise Cathedral)
near Meadville
(Mississippi COG State Office)

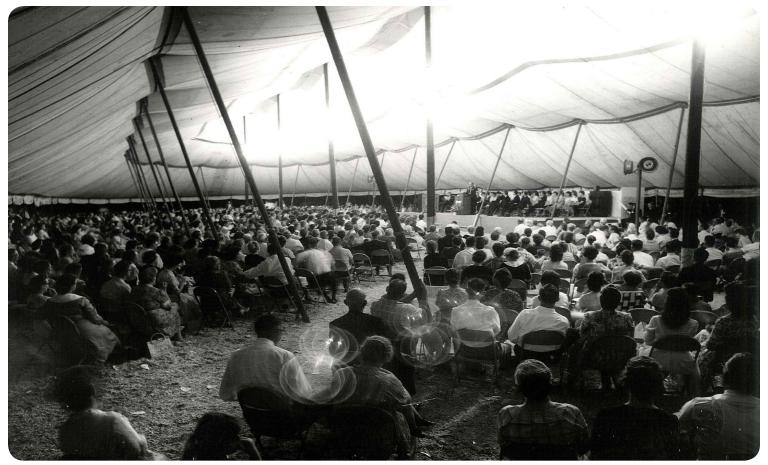
(right):
Hudson Chapel Church
near Union
(Mississippi COG State Office)





(left): Natchez Church (Mississippi COG State Office)

(below):
Mississippi Camp
Meeting in Jackson in
1961
(Mississippi COG State Office)



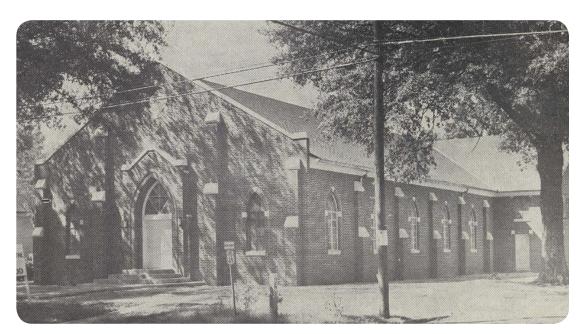


(above):
Hattiesburg Church,
after relocating to
Edwards Street,
hosted many state
conventions and camp
meetings.

(Dixon Pentecostal Res. Ctr)

(right): Laurel Church of God choir when Cecil Knight (second from right) served as pastor.

(Dixon Pentecostal Res. Ctr)







Help Preserve Mississippi's Heritage... **Donate Materials**

The Dixon Pentecostal Research Center

I know first-hand the importance of the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center. As a student at Lee University, I began working in the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center in August 1995. I served there in some capacity until August 2003, when I joined the faculty at Lee University. As the archivist of the Research Center from 1999 to 2003, I worked diligently to preserve materials related to the history of the Church of God and the

Pentecostal movement. I also had the opportunity to become a student of Pentecostal history under the mentorship of Dr. David Roebuck, director of the Research Center and official Church of God historian. I know first-hand Dr. Roebuck's passion for Church of God history, and I know the commitment of Research Center personnel to preserve our heritage.

Today I am most grateful for the service the Research Center provides to the Church of God. It would have been impossible to compile this history without the collection of materials housed at the Research Center. Beginning with the vision of the Dr. Charles W. Conn and Lee University librarian LeMoyne Swiger, the first collection began on a bookshelf in the Lee University library in 1971. Through the generousity of Church of God members throughout the world and a special contribution of Hal Bernard and Starr Dixon, the current Dixon Pentecostal Research Center facilities were provided in 1984. Since then the collection has continued to expand and scholars from across the globe spend time viewing the materials for their research projects. In addition, local churches and various offices within the Church of God utilize the collection regularly.

But the mission has not ended. Now, perhaps even more than ever, there is a need for individuals to know how God has blessed us, the miracles He has performed, and the consecration and devotion of men and women to the Word of God and fulfilling the mission of Jesus. I have compiled this history free-of-charge as a means to do my part in preserving this wonderful legacy. I encourage you to consider joining me in the preservation of our heritage by donating materials pertaining to the history of your local church.

In addition, the Research Center has products available that inspire and educate, including an extended video interview with Dr. Cecil Knight filmed shortly before his death. Also available are sermons by Dr. Ray H. Hughes and other noted evangelists.

Please consider assisting the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center by donating your historical materials. It will not only preserve the past, but also make available to future generations the stories of God's power and faithfulness to Church of God members in Mississippi.

www.cogheritage.org

God bless you, Louis F. Morgan



The Testimony of Mrs. Verdie Rider, Wife of State Overseer E.C. Rider

(As Written by Verdie Rider)

In the year of 1916 we heard of some holiness folks in our neighborhood by the name of Smedley from Arkansas. In August 1916 they came to our church. My husband and I carried our two children and went to see them. We had heard that they got down on the floor and rolled, but to our surprise they did not roll but sang the prettiest songs I had ever heard. We got interested in the wonderful singing and preaching, so we attended most every night. We looked up our Bible and all we had was from "Luke to Hebrews." The rest of it was torn out. We began to read what we had and we found plenty of holiness in that much of the Bible.

My husband had some boils on his hands and could not work, so he would read the part of the Bible every day and we would go to church at night. I soon began going to the altar and got saved and sanctified. I received the Holy Ghost on Christmas night in 1916. My husband was going to the altar at the same time, so when I received the Holy Ghost he became desperate about it and prayed harder. In a few nights he got the Holy Ghost, and the Lord called him to preach. He preached his first sermon the next night.

We began to sell and give away what we had, and went to work for the Lord. In a very short time we had the whole community stirred up about the Lord, some happy, some mad. We conducted a revival at a little town called Jacinto not far away and 30 received the Holy Ghost. We next went to Belmont, about 35 miles south, then to a little church called Walker [School] House. This little church was in such a backwoods place that most everybody walked to church. Some got saved, others got mad and tried to take their folks out of the altar. One seeker had such a spell as they carried him home that they had to bring him back to the church and let him get saved. When we left there we went to old Liberty church, about 12 miles west of Red Bay, Alabama. A great many received the Holy Ghost there.

Christmas week of 1917, Brother Rider conducted a revival at old Mt. Zion and 12 received the Holy Ghost in one week. The weather was bitter cold which added to the complications. Three preachers from other denominations came to break up the meeting. They took advantage of the testimony services to preach against the doctrine. While they were persecuting us some would receive the Holy Ghost right at their feet and talk in tongues. One preacher brought a Greek testament, so when a member gave a message in tongues and Mary Wallace interpreted it, he offered her the Testament to read. He failed to understand that her interpreting came by the power of God.

The meeting was successful and the influence spread to surrounding communities, and many calls came from these communities. Persecutions seemed to wonderfully advertise for us. About this time Joe Lentz moved us from near Jacinto (the place where our first meeting was held) to about 8 miles west of Red Bay, Alabama, into a two-room house. My husband continued to go preach and pray for the sick, and left me with a 2-weeks-old baby. Many times he left me without hardly enough to eat.

We had sold out everything, including dishes, cooking utensils and most of our furniture. We ate our meager food out of tin bucket lids and drank water out of tin cups. We had gotten to the place where all our food was gone, but we were praying and asking God to take care of us. Soon we heard the sound of a wagon in the distance and it seemed to turn in the piney woods. Soon it stopped in front of our door and to our surprise it was Joe Lentz with a wagon loaded with provisions, containing a barrel of meal, a 2-gallon bucket of lard, a 40-pound shoulder of meat, a bushel of sweet potatoes, a 3-gallon churn of sorghum molasses, collards and many jars of canned fruits and vegetables. When all this was unloaded in our cabin, we sang, we prayed, we thanked God, we shouted, we danced, we talked in tongues and thanked Brother Lentz, too! After he left, my husband said, "Verdie, we haven't half thanked God for this." Then we gathered the children around and got on our knees in front of the little fireplace and thanked God to our hearts' content.

In this community we met A.L. Funderburk, B.O. Funderburk's oldest brother. A.L. Funderburk was an educated man, a music teacher and a historian. My husband learned many things from him. In this community is also where we found L.A. Moxley and he got the Holy Ghost. We also found the Church of God for A.L. Funderburk wrote to A.J. Tomlinson and asked about the church. He sent State Overseer J.A. Davis, and he brought R.C. Price of Morgantown, Mississippi, with him.

They preached about a week and my husband, Brother and Sister Funderburk, I, and many others fasted and prayed. We didn't know what else to do. We had no government in our group but the more we prayed the better they preached. Since my husband was the preacher, everybody wanted to know what he had to say about it. One night he told the crowd that he endorsed every word. Brother Davis organized the church that night, May 12, 1918, with 12 members. The next night a mob of near 200 men (with a soldier carrying the U.S. Flag) came in on us and broke up the meeting. They were men of that community and adjoining communities. They were armed with guns, knives and clubs. J.A. Davis noticed a man pointing a gun at him, and he replied, "I will die for Jesus," but the man did not shoot. God stayed his hand.

Brother Davis left later on, but he told my husband to preach the Word, including tithes. After he preached tithes the people took care of us well, and the work of God spread to adjoining counties. During this time A.L. Funderburk helped greatly in taking care of us. He was a school teacher and was away from home a lot, but he told my husband that his wife, Dora, was at home and for him to bring his family and stay at his house as much as he wanted to. Many times he would send us meal, meat, lard and other provisions.

My husband, E.C. Rider, was appointed state overseer of Mississippi at the 17th Annual Assembly in November 1922. Trouble in the church came that year and he had to resort to saw-milling for a living. [E.C. Rider then remained with A.J. Tomlinson in what would become known as the Church of God of Prophecy, where he was appointed state overseer of Mississippi from 1927 to 1935. -LFM]

This testimony was provided by Brenda Sterling, granddaughter of E.C. and Verdie Rider, and Virginia Bivens, both of whom attend Bude Church of God near Meadville.



"How Pentecost Came to Vardaman, Mississippi"

(As Remembered by Mamie Parker Williams)

I grew up in a Christian home. My parents were of the Baptist tradition. Although Mama attended church regularly, Papa typically attended only during protracted meetings and special services. But I was taught to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to honor His Word as recorded in the Bible, and to love my neighbors. I was also taught that the church sanctuary was a sacred place for reflection, fellowship and worship.

When I was 16 years old I realized that I was a sinner. This was during a revival at the Baptist church and I felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I asked the Lord Jesus to forgive me of my sin and save my soul. His Word teaches us that if we repent He will forgive us. I then accepted His grace and love and committed my life to Him. This was in the Lloyd Missionary Baptist Church, located near the school our family attended near Vardaman, Mississippi. I joined this church during that revival. There was also a Methodist church in this community.

I was happy in my Christian experience and also lived a good life before my family and friends. I tried to be faithful in my childish ways. Later I was happy that I had earned a good witness before others, especially when I experienced a deeper measure of God that was quite unfamiliar to most of the people in our community.

The first time I heard about the baptism of the Holy Ghost was in 1919, although at that time I did not understand exactly what it was all about. It was during a revival at the Lloyd Missionary Baptist Church. Katie Free was the first to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit, but she (nor anyone else) did not understand what she had experienced. She received the Spirit-baptism while praying at home with her sister-in-law (who was also my sister-in-law), Vera Parker. While praying, Katie began to speak fluently in a language that she had never heard before. The words just began to flow through her. It was quite odd, but Katie knew that she had received something from the Lord. Soon afterward Vera Parker also received the Holy Ghost. They began telling everyone what had happened to them and would get together to pray, rejoice, and speak in tongues. But neither really understood what they had experienced except that they were certain it was from the Lord.

Then, an old Brother Alexander received a copy of the *Church of God Evangel* from some of his relatives. After he finished reading it he brought it to the Baptist revival service and gave it to Katie Free following the meeting one evening. I was there that night. She read the headline out loud, "People are receiving the Holy Ghost and speaking in other tongues." Then she read aloud the scripture that was printed under the headline, "'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' - Acts 2:4." She began shouting and cried out, "Oh, I know now what I have! I know now what I have!" That was all the light she had on being baptized with the Holy Ghost, but she shouted and praised God that night in the church house. Then she began speaking in tongues and even gave an interpretation to what the Holy Spirit had spoken through her in the other language. That caused the people to believe that she really had something from God, including me. We had sanctified people in our community, but Katie was the first holiness [or Pentecostal] person that I ever knew about.

I got a chance to look at that issue of the *Church of God Evangel* and read all the testimonies of other people who had this same experience. I began to hunger in my soul to also receive this "baptism of the Holy Ghost." We wanted to know more, but there were no Pentecostal churches nearby. Our only source for learning more about

the truth was the Bible and the *Church of God Evangel*. How we loved to get copies of the *Evangel*! I remember

that we were all so hungry for more of God and to learn more about His power. We wanted to be closer to Christ.

Eventually we got in touch with Brother E.C. Rider, a Church of God preacher. He came to our community during the summer of 1920 and conducted a two-week meeting at the Taylor School House. The Baptist church would not let us hold service in the church house because the pastor was skeptical of speaking in tongues. Later our little band of believers faced much persecution and criticism from both the Baptist and Methodist churches nearby. We did not want to cause trouble for the established churches, nor were we against them. We just knew from reading the *Evangel* and from the two experiences within our own community that God was blessing in a

powerful way in accordance with the Bible. We had to know more about the Pentecostal blessing.

Different preachers visited us at first for several days' meeting. Sometimes it was a male evangelist and sometimes a female evangelist. Crowds gathered when they heard we were going to have services. Usually most all sermons dealt with what it meant to be "holiness," which is what we called ourselves for believing in salvation, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, divine healing, and the Church of God. Back then we were taught that the Church of God was the restoration of the Bible Church like the early apostles had experienced. Members generally believed that all Christians would ultimately come to understand the Pentecostal blessing and unite together with the Church of God. But even then I did not believe that Church of God people were the only Christians, I just felt that others had not seen the light on the baptism of the Holy Ghost and all God has for His children.

About a week after my birthday in 1920, Brother Rider returned to our community and conducted another 10 days' meeting, after which he set the Church of God in order with 10 members. Five of us had the Holy Ghost by that time, and Brother Rider baptized six of us in water. Then we shared in the Lord's Supper and feet washing before Brother Rider left our community. Oh, we had a time! We shouted and danced and praised the Lord. For so long we had depended solely upon the *Evangel* to gain light into the way of Pentecost, but finally we had a church of our own in which to worship. We were so happy.

Click on the bottom left corner of the audio box to hear Mamie Williams tell about her early ministry (online viewers only).

We had just a taste of His presence and we longed for more.



~ Mamie Parker Williams from her autobiography My Journey Home: 100 Years of Walking with the Lord





Mississippi's Early Ministers

(Prior to 1945)

Please note these brief biographies are not a complete listing of all Church of God ministers in Mississippi. In addition, the ministers highlighted were involved in ministry prior to the Second World War. As additional information is provided concerning other early ministers in the Church of God in Mississippi, it will be available in an updated edition in the future.



Archibald and Pearl Adams

Initially opposing the Pentecostal message, Pearl Adams received a vision of the Church of God that convinced her to unite with the movement in 1915 and seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She and her husband, Archibald, were licensed as Church of God ministers that same year, and Archibald was the first bishop licensed in Mississippi. Following her husband's death, Pearl and her children lived in the loft of the Stonefield church, where she also taught music lessons to area children. The family formed a brass band, known as the Adams Family Band, and traveled throughout the southeast singing and preaching. They also ministered each year at the Church of God General Assembly and numerous state conventions. The Adams Arbor Church of God of Prophecy in Tallahatchie County is named for this family.



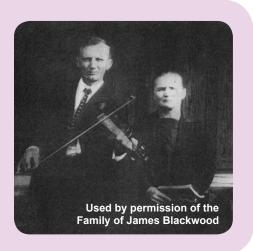
Annie Belle Alexander

A noted female pastor and evangelist in Mississippi and Louisiana, Annie Belle Alexander is remembered for her strong devotion to prayer and commitment to God's Word. Once she even was jailed for her Pentecostal beliefs. She was an energetic speaker who saw many receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit during her meetings. She pastored numerous congregations, including Richland Creek and Friendship, as well as conducting revivals in most of the Church of God congregations in Mississippi during the 1940s and 1950s. Her husband, Freddie, was a licensed deacon in the Church of God and served many years as a local church clerk.

Carrie Prewhit Blackwood

(not licensed)

In 1916 Carrie Prewitt Blackwood became one of the first Church of God members in Choctaw County, Mississippi. She was first drawn to the Church of God during an open-air meeting conducted by Z.D. Simpson in Johnny Coleman's grove at Fentress, Mississippi. Shortly thereafter she received the Holy Spirit baptism during a service conducted at New Bethel Church of God in Sapa and was instrumental in organizing the Mount Olive Church of God near her home at Weir (near Ackerman). She served as clerk for this church for many years and is remembered for joy, prayerfulness, and consecration to God. She was also the mother and grandmother of the original members of the world-renowned Blackwood Brothers' Quartet.



Robert & Arena Blackwood

While hospitalized in an Atlanta hospital during the First World War, Robert was visited by Church of God ministers S.J. and Annie Heath at the request of his sister-in-law, Carrie Blackwood. Robert attended church with the Heaths at what is now Mt. Paran Central Church of God, where he received the Holy Spirit baptism. Upon arriving home to Ackerman, Mississippi, Robert married Arena Blackwood and entered the ministry. Both Robert and Arena were dynamic speakers and effective ministers. Their boldness and determination benefited them in planting churches and in leading others to Christ. They pastored leading congregations in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia, and Robert served as a state overseer. In addition, their children (Robert, Mary Elsie, and Kate) were noted educators in the Church of God and taught at Lee University.

Roy E. Blackwood

Influenced by his mother's Christian witness and devotion, Roy Blackwood began to seek a deeper experience with God. He received the Holy Spirit baptism while singing in the choir during a revival at the William Springs Church of God. Thereafter he became a member of the Mount Olive Church and later served as an evangelist. He also pastored leading congregations in Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, and North Carolina, as well as serving as State Overseer for North Carolina. In 1934 he organized the internationally famous Blackwood Brothers Quartet, along with his brothers, James and Doyle, and his son, R.W. In his later life he was a minister with the Assemblies of God in Memphis and had an early spiritual influence on the legendary Elvis Presley.







Ralph A. Boyles

A native of Morgantown, Ralph Boyles was the son of a Baptist father and Church of God mother. His grandfather, Reverend B.J. Morgan, donated the land for the first Morgantown church. Ralph graduated from the Church of God Bible Training School (now Lee University) in 1935, then married Helen Herrington, also of Morgantown, and began to evangelize throughout Mississippi. He later pastored some of Mississippi's leading congregations and served as

state evangelist for many years. He had tremendous insight and understanding of end-time prophecy and was an energetic speaker. Numerous individuals accepted Christ, were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and joined the Church of God under his ministry before his death in 1986.

To listen to a sermon preached by Ralph Boyles at the Natchez, McNeely Road, Church of God, click on the bottom left corner of the audio box to the right (online viewers only).





Dewey Bozeman

From Neshoba, Mississippi, Dewey Bozeman was ordained in 1940 and his home church was the Philadelphia congregation. He served as a pastor and evangelist in Mississippi, Alabama, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Michigan. In addition, he served as state evangelist in most of these locations. He conducted many successful revivals throughout Mississippi in which it was common for dozens of individuals to receive Christ and unite with the Church of God.



Earl Brewer

One of the most requested evangelists in Mississippi during the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Earl Brewer conducted lengthy revivals throughout the state in which it was common to have more than 50 conversions. Under his ministry hundreds prayed through to the Holy Spirit baptism in the 1930s alone. In 1931 he conducted a four-week revival at Hattiesburg, resulting in 64 conversions, and he set in order the local church (now Trinity Heights) with 52 charter members. This was the first Mississippi Church of God congregation organized in a city, as prior churches had been established in rural areas. Brewer also organized the Benndale church.

Maggie Free Chesser

Maggie Free and her family were among the early Church of God members at the Taylor Church near Vardaman. She was actively involved in the Sunday School class taught by Mamie Parker [Williams], and was given opportunity to teach the class occasionally. During her youth in Mississippi, Maggie was instrumental in leading other young people into the Pentecostal experience, and she often spoke at district meetings and regional camp meetings. Following her marriage to Reverend P.W. Chesser, she continued her ministry in other states.



C.A. Churchill

An early minister in the Church of God in Mississippi, C.A. Churchill was a popular evangelist, pastor, and gifted musician. He was noted for conducting street services in which he would sing songs he had composed and then preach to the crowd assembled to hear him sing. His songs were also sung by Church of God members in their local churches.

Dovie Coats

Dovie Coats was born in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi in 1893, and she was licensed as a Church of God evangelist in 1922 while living near Parchman, Mississippi. Her husband, Charlie, was also a licensed minister in the Church of God. Dovie served as an evangelist in 28 states and she also pastored churches in West Virginia and Louisiana (Epps and Forrest). Much of her later ministry was spent in Louisiana and Texas.



Mack C. Cockrell

Mack Cockrell was from the Mendenhall and Magee area and was instrumental in starting the South Shady Grove church near Magee. He helped build the blocks used in building the South Shady Grove church, which were made from sand in an old branch near the church building. After moving to the Mississippi Delta for work, he homesteaded a 1,040-acre farm near Shaw. There he traveled to his pastoral appointments. He served as pastor 11 years at Isola, where he walked to church for many years before he was able to purchase an automobile. He also pastored the Fairview church. During this time he supported his family by his farm work and did not receive money from the local churches. Mack Cockrell also gave the first \$500 toward the purchase of the Church of God campground, which continues to serve church members throughout Mississippi for annual camp meetings, youth camps, and other ministry activities.



Mary Grace Comans

As a child Mary Grace Comans was sensitive to spiritual things and desired to follow Jesus. She received spiritual training at the Rocky Hill Church of God near Sebastopol, where her family attended. During recess at school, her classmates often saw her praying under a tree as they played in the schoolyard. Sometimes they even heard her speak in tongues. Eventually Mary Grace became a teacher and traveled to Japan, where she taught dependents of U.S. military stationed in Tokyo in the 1950s and 1960s. There Mary Grace opened up her home to teach English to Japanese youth, using the Bible as her textbook. Many Japanese youth accepted Christ, and today the largest Church of God congregation in Japan exists because of those initial Bible studies started by Mary Grace Comans.

Vianna Free Daniel (not licensed, but a lay preacher in her youth)

In 1920 the Free family helped organize the Taylor Church of God near Vardaman, Mississippi. Vianna Free Daniel was among those early Pentecostals in the area. She later moved to Tennessee and worked for the international offices of the Church of God. During the annual general assemblies she recorded the *Minutes* and text from the sermons. Taking notes each day, she then stayed up late each evening to type out the *Minutes* and have them prepared for the next day's session. Her work allowed Church of God members to have individual copies of the *Minutes of the General Assembly* of the Church of God each year. Vianna was also the mother of The Daniel Sisters, a Southern Gospel trio well-known during the 1940s through 1960s who sang with Otis McCoy, editor of the famed "red-back" *Church Hymnal*.

U.B. Daniels

Born in 1891, U. B. Daniels was an early African-American evangelist and pastor in Mississippi. He was first licensed with the Church of God in 1932. Among his early pastoral appointments included St. Mary's (Eupora), Bingham's Chapel, and New Albany. He was a true pioneer and stabilizing force in the early black work in Mississippi.

Calvin C. Daniels

The son of Bud and Nettie Daniels, C.C. Daniels was raised in the home of a devoted Church of God family. His father was a deacon, his mother a church clerk, and his uncle a pastor. Following his service in the Korean War, C.C. Daniels accepted the call into full-time ministry and started a Church of God congregation, one of only 5 African-American congregations in the Church of God in Mississippi at that time. He served Mississippi as state overseer of the black ministries from 1957-1970, when the state offices were separated according to race. He was instrumental in providing strong leadership that increased the black ministries within the Church of God in Mississippi and provided a solid foundation for its continued growth. Bishop Daniels was recognized by the denomination in 1999 for his capable leadership and devotion to the Church of God. The Daniels Temple congregation is named for him.



D.W. Dollahite

In 1911 D.W. Dollahite was one of the first two ministers to receive license with the Church of God in Mississippi. Prior to the introduction of the Church of God in Mississippi in 1909, Dollahite was a member of the Stonefield Holiness Church (a Free Methodist congregation) at Cascilla. After receiving the Holy Spirit baptism in 1909 and affiliating with the Church of God, he was instrumental in establishing the Friendship congregation, where he also served as an early pastor. When boll weevils began to make cotton production in the Mississippi Delta difficult, Dollahite was one of the early Tallahatchie County residents who moved to Arkansas, where he also helped to establish local Church of God congregations.

Nellie Beard Dunaway (not licensed)

Nellie Dunaway was among the first members of the Church of God in southern Mississippi. Her father, Nelson Beard, supplied the needed \$60 for Warren Evans and his family to return to Morgantown from Florida in 1915, bringing with them the Church of God message. Nellie and her sister, Julia Hammond, assisted in those early services by singing and playing musical instruments. Nellie received the Holy Spirit baptism while churning butter and praying. Thereafter she became an unlicensed evangelist, often conducting services in local churches and preaching at the local train depot. She was a charter member of the Mount Sinai church, and she served as a church clerk, Sunday school teacher, and youth minister in several congregations, including Mount Sinai, Hattiesburg, and Morgantown. She and her sister, Julia, also assisted Warren Evans in establishing the church at Bogalusa, Louisiana in 1919. At her death in 1979, her home was sold and the money given to the Home for Children according to her wishes.

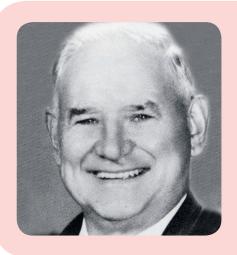






Quinnie C. Dunaway

A member of the Mount Sinai congregation, Quinnie Dunaway devoted himself to the Church of God. He received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during a brush arbor meeting held near Morgantown in 1916 and was licensed as an evangelist in 1919 at age 19. Quinnie never married and died at age 33 as a result of a fever he contracted while conducting a revival in the Mississippi Delta. He was an early district overseer and a popular evangelist throughout the state. He was one of the earliest "refined" evangelists in Mississippi, promoting the need for education and for ministers to consider how their behavior and attire represented Christ and the church in the local community.



Grover C. Dunn

G.C. Dunn was one of the most noted pastors to emerge from the Church of God in Mississippi. He united with the Church of God in 1918 at Liberty, Mississippi, and established several congregations within the state, including the Thorn Church of God. Dunn also served as a mentor and encourager to younger ministers, both male and female. He pastored leading congregations in Mississippi and other states, as well as serving as a state overseer (including Mississippi from 1925 to 1926) and a respected leader in the Church of God.

lma Edwards

Ima Edwards was an early state evangelist among the African-American constituency of the Church of God in Mississippi. She traveled throughout the state to minister at various "preaching stations" and early African-American mission churches within the state. In addition, she served as an interim pastor and church clerk, including at the Eupora congregation.

Jim Evans

Jim Evans was born in Lincoln County, Mississippi in 1900 and was first licensed in the Church of God in 1936. Among his pastorates in Mississippi include McCall Creek, Wesley Chapel, Natchez, Laurel, Hattiesburg, West Point, Greenville, Pilgrim's Rest (Shaw). He also pastored the Sharp's Chapel Church in Covington, Louisiana. Often preaching in brush arbors and storefronts, he was instrumental in establishing churches, including the first Church of God in Brookhaven, Mississippi.

Warren Evans Sr.

Escaping correction from his wife's relatives because of his sinful habits, Warren Evans moved with his family to Florida. There he attended a Church of God revival and was converted, delivered from alcohol, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Ghost. In 1915 he eagerly returned to his wife's family in Morgantown, Mississippi and began conducting services under a brush arbor. One night he was lured away from a service by men claiming to seek salvation, only to be beaten mercilessly by White Caps and left for dead in front of a church member's house. Evans survived and established churches in Mississippi and Louisiana. He united with the Oneness Pentecostal movement in 1920, where he established several churches in Louisiana before returning to the Church of God. However, he conducted revivals in both groups until his death.



Charles C. Floyd

Reverend Floyd accepted Christ in 1921 and united with the Church of God in 1924. He served as a licensed deacon in the Church of God until 1938, when he was licensed as an evangelist. He pastored congregations in Mississippi and Louisiana, as well as serving as a district overseer and evangelizing extensively in both states.







J.D. Free

J.D. Free first united with the Church of God at the Taylor Church near Vardaman, where his family was active in all church activities and local ministry. Moving to Tennessee, he served the Church of God denomination in various roles, including as an accountant at Lee University. Several members of the Free family continue to serve active roles in the Church of God and are involved in ministry.



A.D. Gammill

From the Meadville area, A.D. Gammill was born in 1915 and was first licensed as a minister in the Church of God in 1940. Three years later he was promoted to an ordained minister by the church. He evangelized extensively throughout Mississippi and served as pastor for some of the leading congregations. He also served several years as a member of the state council. A.D. Gammill passed away in 1998, but his children and grandchildren continue to serve as ministers of the Gospel in various locations throughout the country. A son, A.D. Jr., currently pastors the Lakeview Church in Columbia with his wife, Diane.

Mary Lamb Graves

The daughter of Dr. Daniel Lamb and Reverend Lou Etta Lamb of Artesia, Mary Graves followed in her mother's footsteps and became a Church of God pastor. Although most her ministry was not in Mississippi, Mary served as a church planter and pastor in the West and established Church of God congregations in Wyoming. She was assisted by her devoted husband, Lowell Graves, whose family was from Centerville, Mississippi. Mary's daughter, Elizabeth Graves, continues the family legacy as the senior pastor of a United Methodist congregation in North Carolina.

J. Oscar Hamilton

J. Oscar Hamilton was licensed as a minister in the Church of God in 1919 at the Mount Moriah Church of God in Eupora, Mississippi. Along with Grant Williams, he was one of the first Mississippi students enrolled at the Church of God Bible Training School (now Lee University) in Tennessee. He served as pastor at Oak Grove, Morgantown, and Mount Sinai churches and the first Starkville congregation. Following the division in the Church of God 1922-23, Oscar Hamilton continued under the leadership of A.J. Tomlinson and served several years as a state overseer for what would become Church of God of Prophecy congregations in Mississippi.



William Wesley Hammond

Bill Hammond was born in Marion County and raised in the Morgantown Community. His mother, Rosa, was a charter member of the Church of God in southern Mississippi and also at the Morgantown Church. She had also nursed minister Warren Evans back to health when White Caps beat him and left him for dead in front of the Hammond family home. Bill Hammond married Johnnie Williamson and raised a large family. Then, in the early 1930s he committed his life to Christ and soon became a licensed minister with the Church of God. He evangelized extensively in southern Mississippi and often served as an interim pastor for local churches. He was known for his spiritual discernment and Bible preaching.



Harmon Spencer Harris

H.S. Harris was among the first individuals attending the Stonefield revival in 1909 when the Church of God was introduced into Mississippi. He received the baptism of the Holy Spirit that same year and was an active member of the Stonefield Church. He was instrumental in the establishment of the North Shady Grove congregation in 1915, when he was licensed as a deacon.





S. J. and Annie Heath

Natives of Georgia, S.J. and Annie Baldwin Heath were charter members of what is now Atlanta's Mount Paran Central church. Both were licensed as evangelists in 1918 and began evangelizing, planting churches, and pastoring throughout Georgia. Annie was a gifted musician, often playing the piano for the General Assembly. Her father, D.N. Baldwin, organized the first orchestra at the Mount Paran church. S.J. Heath became a bishop in 1920 and served on the Council of Seventy from 1921-27, as a Supreme Judge of the Court of Judges from 1927-28, a member of the Executive Committee and Supreme Council from 1927-29. He also served as state overseer of Alabama and Mississippi while also pastoring local churches. He was serving as state overseer of Mississippi and pastor of the Morgantown and Mount Sinai churches at the

time of his death in 1931. Annie then pastored the local churches before pastoring the church at Bogalusa, Louisiana in 1932. She was also appointed as Mississippi's first State Superintendent of the Sunday School and YPE (an early version of the state youth director). She also organized Mississippi's first statewide youth and women's ministries activities. Annie was on her way to begin teaching piano at the Bible Training School (now Lee University) when she passed away while preaching a camp meeting in Montgomery, Alabama in 1933. In addition, Earl Paulk Sr. received the Holy Spirit baptism under their ministry in Georgia, and they were instrumental in leading R.R. and Leedie Walker into the Church of God in Mississippi. The Heaths are buried at Morgantown.



Maude Ellen Height

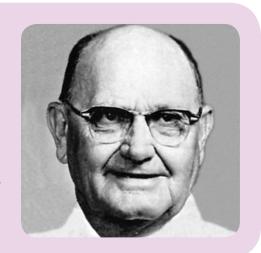
Maude Ellen Height organized a Sunday school in Walthall, Mississippi. Originally the services were conducted in the local school house. As interest grew, Reverend Height began preaching and conducting regular services in addition to the Sunday school. As a result, she established the Gatewood Church of God. (A congregation previously existed in this area but had disbanded more than 20 years earlier). She later pastored the Allen's Chapel congregation near Batesville and the Center Hill mission.

George W. Hemphill

Brookhaven native George W. Hemphill was born in 1899 and accepted Christ at age 32. After uniting with the Church of God he began preaching in 1934 and was licensed as a minister the following year. He had an active ministry from 1935 until 1948 and pastored 17 congregations in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Hemphill was unable to remain active in ministry following an illness in 1948. However, he was a faithful member of the Church of God until his death in 1961.

C.H. sbell

Reverend Isbell first began preaching in the Church of the Nazarene, where he preached for seven years until receiving the Holy Spirit baptism and uniting with the Church of God. Among his pastoral assignments in Mississippi was Pilgrim Rest (Doddsville), Friendship, Goodwill, Greenville, Mount Olive, Cleveland, Bradley, William Springs. Charleston, and Wrays Chapel. He later served as assistant pastor of the Greenville, New Life congregation. During his ministry he often pastored two congregations at the same time, and once served as pastor for three congregations at the same time. He also served as a district overseer.



Marion H. Kennedy

At the age of 19 M.H. Kennedy began preaching. One of his earliest services was near the courthouse in Winona, Mississippi. He pastored and built churches in Starkville and West Point in his early ministry. However, he is most remembered for his service at the Bailey Avenue Church in Jackson, where he was appointed pastor of the 15-member church in June 1944. During his more than 20 years pastoring the Bailey Avenue congregation, it grew to become the largest Church of God congregation in Mississippi at that time. Ordained in 1943, Brother Kennedy also served as a state overseer, state youth director, state evangelist, state trustee, state council member, district pastor, and on numerous denominational boards and pastor of leading congregations.



Lou Etta Lamb

The wife of Dr. Daniel Lamb of Artesia, Mississippi, Lou Etta Lamb was an early evangelist and pastor in the Church of God in the state. She began her ministry by organizing a church in her home. After learning about another Church of God congregation nearby, this house church merged with the Pilgrim's Rest congregation, where she also served as church clerk for several years. She is remembered for her boldness in proclaiming the Gospel, as well as her love for people. She often preached at the local train depot in Artesia, where numerous individuals accepted Christ. She served as a mentor to young female ministers and saw many people converted and filled with the Holy Spirit as a result of the ministry God entrusted to her. In addition, when an African-American congregation was without a pastor, she accepted their invitation and served as their pastor. Following the division in the Church of God, Lou Etta ministered for many years in what would become known as the Church of God of Prophecy.



H.E. Lambert

H.E. Lambert was serving as pastor of an independent Pentecostal church in Laurel, Mississippi when he learned about the Church of God in 1938. That year Lambert and his 38-member congregation united with the denomination and eventually became known as the West Laurel Church of God. Lambert served as an evangelist and pastor for numerous Church of God congregations in Mississippi, during which time many of the churches experienced tremendous growth.



Joseph C. Lentz

J.C. Lentz was licensed as an evangelist in the Church of God in 1919 while living at Clay, Mississippi. He was instrumental in establishing the Church of God in northeastern Mississippi before moving to Foxworth, Mississippi in 1922. He served as a state evangelist and also pastored the Cleveland, Oak Grove, Thorn, Morgantown, Mount Sinai, and Pickwick churches. His family provided the land for the present-day location of the Mount Sinai Church of God.



Joe R. Little

Known to many as "Papa Joe," at first Joe Little was skeptical of the Church of God. Intrigued by reports of a revival at North Shady Grove just prior to 1920, he traveled on horseback to the meeting. Upon his arrival he saw "everyone preaching one after the other" and became scared they would call on him. He jumped on his horse and raced away, only to discover the people were testifying. Joe soon returned and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He entered the ministry and then enrolled at the Bible Training School (now Lee University), where he worked in the publishing house and lit a fire each morning so the General Overseer could be warm when he arrived to pray. In time, the General Overseer invited Little to join him in his morning prayers. Little later served a state youth director of Georgia and then worked behind the scenes at the Church of God Publishing House. After retirement, he served faithfully at Stonefield Church of God, where he taught Sunday School and was known as a man of prayer.

Nell Lovette

Licensed as a Church of God evangelist in 1919, Nell Lovette devoted herself to full-time ministry. G.C. Dunn and his wife often requested Nell Lovette to assist them when "preaching out" a new church in Mississippi. She served as a mentor to other young female ministers, including Mamie Parker Williams, Mildred and Thelma Biggers, and Maggie Free Chesser. She was also known for her ability to effectively match young couples throughout the state, many of whom later married and served in ministry in their local churches as pastors, teachers, altar workers, and musicians. She later ministered in what would become known as the Church of God of Prophecy.

Thelma Massengill (Neal)

Noted for her singing and playing the guitar, Thelma Massengill Neal was a favorite at Mississippi Camp Meeting, where she was often requested to sing "Over There" and other songs about Heaven. She was also a popular evangelist and served as a local pastor, including at Pearl City and Holcomb when new buildings were constructed. Too, she conducted street services, where many individuals were drawn to her singing and then convicted of sin by her preaching. She was a faithful member and minister in the Church of God until her death. (See an image of her on page 35 from circa 1950 while singing at the Alcorn County Courthouse in Corinth. For online viewers, click on the video below where Thelma Neal sings at a 1993 Mississippi camp meeting service.)



"Over There"

There's a land of pure delight, over there Where our faith is lost in sight, over there.

I'll be there, I mean to be there.

And the glory of His kingdom I will share.

When the golden harps are played,

And the saints rewards are paid,

In a spotless robe arrayed,

I'll be there.





Flavius Joseph "F.J." May

Dr. F.J. May was born in Neshoba County, Mississippi in 1927. Converted in 1944, he was licensed as a Church of God minister in 1945. The following year he married Lavelle Carpenter. Dr. May pastored in Alabama, Missouri, Illinois, North Dakota, Kentucky, and Mississippi (Marks and Hattiesburg). He also served as a member of the Lee University Board of Directors, a member of the International Executive Council of the Church of God, and as a professor at the Church of God Theological Seminary since its establishment in 1975. In addition, he has become distinguished as a camp meeting Bible teacher and for teaching the Unity Sunday School Class at the North Cleveland Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee.



Grady N. May

A native of Philadelphia, Mississippi, Grady May began preaching in 1927 and ministered in seven states. He was responsible for establishing five Church of God congregations in Mississippi. Persecution was common for Brother May, including receiving numerous threats of beating and even death by those opposing the Pentecostal message.



Mava Morgan McCoy

Under the supervision of Reverend Annie Heath during the 1930s, two teenage sisters, Mava and Geneva Morgan, of Morgantown pioneered the Young People's Endeavor (Y.P.E.) for Mississippi. After Reverend Heath, Mava became the second State Sunday School and YPE Director for Mississippi (similar to the contemporary State Youth and Christian Education Director). Mava traveled to various churches preaching and establishing local Y.P.E. organizations. She then served as the first Y.P.E. Director for Louisiana while pastoring the West Monroe Church of God. She later married Reverend Joe McCoy and assisted him in church planting and state overseer work while maintaining a significant ministry of her own through preaching, home Bible studies, media ministry and publishing. Several ministers received their call during her meetings.

Paris L. McLain

Originally from Mobile, Alabama, Paris McLain began preaching in 1943 and was licensed with the Church of God in 1945. Among his early pastorates in Mississippi were Murray Hill, Pleasant Home, and Ward Valley. Along with his sister, Lettie Meadows, Reverend McLain established the Church of God in Columbia in 1946, which was officially set in order in 1948. He also built several church structures in Mississippi, including Mount Carmel, Pascagoula and Benndale. It was during his 10-year pastorate at Pascagoula that the church experienced tremendous growth. Numerous individuals accepted Christ as a result of Reverend McLain's influence in the communities where he ministered.



Walter McNabb

Walter McNabb was among the first individuals to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit in southern Mississippi. He was among the 51 charter members of the Church of God established in the Morgantown School House in August 1916, although he lived 15 miles away at Pickwick. It was upon his request that Warren Evans and J.R. Smith conducted services at Pickwick, resulting in the establishment of the Church of God there (from which the present-day Mount Carmel congregation traces its beginning). McNabb also pastored a small congregation at the nearby railroad depot community of Suer. McNabb died on July 4, 1923 while preaching at the Suer church. He had just read his sermon text, Isaiah 55:6 and Luke 15:11, and was exhorting sinners to accept Christ when he collapsed lifeless.



Lettie Meadows (notlicensed)

Lettie Meadows and husband, Clarence, moved to Columbia, Mississippi, in the 1940s. During this time the only Pentecostal church in the area was the Assembly of God congregation. Several Church of God families attended the local Assembly of God and, along with Lettie, desired to have a local Church of God congregation. Although unlicensed, Lettie had an active preaching ministry. She began conducting prayer meetings and Bible studies in her home in 1946 that led to the establishment of a Church of God, which Lettie's brother, Paris McLain, set in order. While living in Columbia, Lettie and Flora Cooper, another unlicensed evangelist, often conducted revivals and regular services at the Ward Valley congregation near Silver Creek in the absence of a pastor. Lettie also served other Church of God congregations when living in communities other than Columbia, including Richton and McComb.







William R. Messer

W.R. Messer united with the Church of God in North Carolina, where he first pastored before being appointed to pastor in Mississippi. He served numerous congregations in the Church of God in Mississippi, including Mount Sinai, Morgantown, Hattiesburg, and Byrd's Chapel (now Praise Cathedral) at Meadville. During his pastorate at Morgantown, the local church experienced a tremendous revival lasting nine weeks. More than 80 individuals made a profession of faith in Christ, numerous physical healings were reported, and more than 60 new members united with the Church of God. When a storm damaged the local church building in 1945, Messer led the Morgantown congregation in constructing the first brick church building for the Church of God in Mississippi. He is remembered for his energetic preaching, sound Bible teaching, and discipleship of new believers.

Horatio Mitchell

A key minister in the organization of the Mitchell Chapel Church of God near Poplarville, Horatio Mitchell began his ministry under the guidance of Warren Evans and O.L. McManus in Bogalusa, Louisiana. Determined in his efforts and led by the Holy Spirit, Mitchell was successful in deeply rooting the Church of God message into an area once known for its fierce "holiness fighters" (or those who objected to the Pentecostal message).



Tulane D. Mooneyham

T.D. Mooneyham had relatives who were ushered into the Pentecostal movement when the Church of God was established at Thorn, Mississippi in 1921. It was the Church of God that provided Mooneyham with his Christian discipleship and training. Eventually he was called into the ministry as a missionary. He served the Church of God in Angola, Africa and taught at the Berea Bible Seminary in Africa during the 1950s. In addition, the Church of God experienced much growth in Nigeria under his leadership and missionary service.

Gene W. Morgan

A licensed deacon in the Church of God, Gene W. Morgan was a charter member of the Church of God in southern Mississippi in August 1916 and was also a charter member of the Mount Sinai congregation in January 1917. He often conducted services in the absence of a pastor and performed other ministerial duties throughout the community. He frequently reported to the *Church of God Evangel* the church activities in southern Mississippi. His family has been active in the Church of God for more than 90 years, including his daughter Gladys Beard (wife of Reverend Irone Beard).



Tom Morgan

In 1910 A.J. Tomlinson conducted a meeting on the property of Tom Morgan, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Friendship Church of God near Charleston. Morgan was among the 20 charter members of the Friendship Church in August 1912 and was licensed as a deacon there in 1913. In addition to his work in Tallahatchie County, Tom Morgan assisted many struggling churches by filling pulpits across the Mississippi Delta when a regular pastor was unavailable.

Joseph Washington Mullen

J.W. Mullen was a Free Methodist minister and pastor at the Stonefield Holiness Church in Cascilla when the Church of God was first introduced there in 1909. Following his Holy Spirit baptism he was instrumental in guiding the Stonefield congregation into the Church of God. He is remembered as a compassionate minister committed to discipleship and consecrated holiness. Years later, when a division occurred within the denomination in 1922-23, Mullen again was instrumental in guiding the Stonefield Church to remain with the Church of God. His descendents continue to serve an active role at the Stonefield Church.







Bob Murray

Bob Murray was an early member of the Alabama City Church of God (now Cathedral of Praise in Gadsden, Alabama). Later he was instrumental in organizing the Murray Chapel Church in Alabama and the Murray Hill Church of God near Poplarville, Mississippi.



Hettie I. Pearson

After moving to Marion County in the 1920s, Hettie Pearson became acquainted with the Church of God and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She then accepted the call into ministry and served as an evangelist in various locations in Mississippi, including Rocky Hill, Stonefield, and Cleveland. She also served several years as a Sunday school teacher and as clerk of the Morgantown congregation. Hettie is best remembered for her ability to explain the Word of God and her ministry of praying for the sick. Although she never married, she was instrumental in the early Christian training of children.



Hal Pressgrove

Hal Pressgrove received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during the 1909 Stonefield outpouring. First licensed as an evangelist in 1915, he was later promoted to the office of bishop in 1920. He served as a prominent pastor, evangelist, and state overseer in the Church of God. His tenure as state overseer of Mississippi was from 1920 to 1922. Following the division in the Church of God in 1923, the Church of God of Prophecy was restructured in his home in Chattanooga, Tennessee. However, he later remained active in the Church of God and was a member of the Stonefield congregation. Following the death of his wife, Etta, he married Louise Allison.

Robert C. Price

Originally from present-day Lawrence County, Robert Price traveled throughout the southern states before arriving by train at Morgantown in 1916. There a Church of God revival was in progress. Having attended similar services in another state during his travels, Robert was drawn immediately to the Church of God and became a charter member of the movement in southern Mississippi. He also became a charter member of the Morgantown congregation on February 17, 1917, the same day he received ministerial license and was appointed to pastor the Morgantown church. He was an early district overseer and evangelized extensively throughout the state. And, he was instrumental in establishing the Jayess congregation near his home.



James Thomas and Clara Priest

Georgia-native Tommy Priest began traveling in adultdhood, which led to much ungodly living and troublesome situations in Texas. Fleeing Texas, he soon found himself in Cleveland, Tennessee at a holiness revival. Convicted of his sinfulness, Tommy repented and accepted Christ. By 1910 he had been sanctified, baptized with the Holy Ghost, baptized in water by pastor A.J. Tomlinson, and united with the Church of God. In 1914 he was licensed as an evangelist. Desiring to make restitution for his wrongs, Tommy returned to Texas. He began preaching and was the first Church of God evangelist in Texas. In 1916 he was appointed to pastor the Stonefield church in Cascilla, Mississippi, where he met the widow Clara Allison, who had received the Holy Spirit baptism during the 1909 Stonefield outpouring. They were married in



1917. In December 1917 Priest was appointed pastor of the Mount Sinai and Morgantown congregations, where he was ordained a bishop in 1919. The Priests remained with A.J. Tomlinson in what would become known as the Church of God of Prophecy, where they served as evangelists, pastors and church planters in Mississippi and Louisiana. Tommy Priest also served as state overseer of Louisiana for the Church of God of Prophecy.

E.C. Rider

E.C. Rider worked at a sawmill near his home on the outskirts of Corinth, Mississippi, when he first learned of the Church of God during a holiness meeting conducted by Frank Smedley and family. During this revival Mrs. Rider received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as did E.C. Rider soon afterward. The night following his Holy Spirit baptism, E.C. preached his first sermon and began evangelizing in nearby communities. He was instrumental in leading numerous individuals into deeper experiences with God and uniting with the Church of God. He also served as a mentor to younger ministers. Rider was serving as state overseer of Mississippi when the division occurred in the Church of God in 1923. He continued his ministry under the leadership of A.J. Tomlinson in what would become known as the Church of God of Prophecy, where he later served as state overseer of Mississippi.



B.L. Roberts

Born in Lumberton, Mississippi, B.L. Roberts moved with his family to the Mississippi Delta to work. There he was saved during a Baptist meeting conducted under a cotton gin canopy. Sometime afterward, Roberts went to the cotton field behind his home to pray. While in prayer he received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and began shouting and speaking on tongues in the field. An African-American man working on the farm ran to the house and told B.L.'s father, "Mr. Rueben, come quick. Mr. Lamar has gone stone crazy!" Thereafter B.L. Roberts began preaching. His first pastorate was at Moorhead. Among the other churches he served as pastor were Winona, Mt. Zion at Indianola, Marie, Beasley Bayou and Bethel at Isola, Greenville (New Life), and Walton Chapel. He pastored South Shady Grove church at Magee three times, and he also built the Magee church. B.L. was a respected leader in the Church of God in Mississippi, as was his son, Julius, who served Mississippi as a pastor (including 30 years at Natchez) and also as State Evangelism Director.



William Fount Sharp

Originally from Louisiana, Fount Sharp's family was instrumental in establishing the Sharp's Chapel Church of God near Covington. He attended Bible school (now Lee University) and pastored the Mount Olive Church of God in Tennessee before graduating in 1929. Then he was appointed to pastor in Mississippi, including such churches as Meadville (Praise Cathedral), Greenville (New Life), Mount Sinai, Morgantown, and Rocky Hill. In addition, Reverend Sharp was instrumental in leading into the Church of God the Reverend R.R. Walker, who was the first minister in the movement with an earned college degree (A.B.).

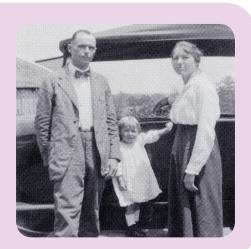


Ephram Keeton Simpson

A member of the Stonefield Holiness Church (a Free Methodist congregation) at Cascilla, E.K. Simpson was intrigued after reading in a Memphis newspaper about a Pentecostal pastor named L.P. Adams. After visiting Adams' church in Memphis, Simpson returned to Cascilla and convinced the local pastor to invite Adams, who was a Church of God minister, to conduct a meeting. It was during this revival in 1909 that the Church of God was first introduced into Mississippi. In 1911 E.K. Simpson was one of the first ministers to receive license with the Church of God in Mississippi, and he was instrumental in the organization of the Church of God in Tallahatchie County. He was a charter member of the Turkey Foot Fork church in 1913 and then the Stonefield church in 1914.

Z.D. Simpson

In 1912 Z.D. Simpson organized Mississippi's second Church of God congregation (Pilgrim's Rest near Artesia). At the time Simpson was living at Ethelsville, Alabama and serving as pastor of several congregations. He made regular visits to the Pilgrim's Rest congregation before another pastor was appointed there. Simpson pastored some of the leading congregations in Alabama and served as an early state overseer for Mississippi.



James Roman "Jim" Smith

A charter member of the Mount Sinai congregation, J.R. Smith was licensed as an evangelist in 1917. He organized numerous churches in Mississippi, most notably at McCall Creek and Pickwick (from which the current Mount Carmel Church of God traces its foundation). He was one of the first ministers in the Church of God in Mississippi to be noted for operating in the spiritual gifts of discernment and prophecy, and he was well-versed in scripture and had a keen understanding of eschatology. He served as a pastor and district overseer in much of southern Mississippi and evangelized frequently throughout the state. During the division in the Church of God in 1923 he served as pastor at Morgantown and Mount Sinai, where the only cash payment he received the entire year was \$1, as all other funds were being sent to assist with the financial woes of the church.



1.C. Smith

L.C. Smith was licensed as a minister in the Church of God in the early 1940s. Assisted by his wife, Betty, his ministry was focused in Mississippi and his pastorates included Philadelphia, Hollandale, Houlka, Runnelstown, Richland Creek (twice), Bradley, Mitchell Chapel, Ackerman, Purvis, Goodwill, Mount Carmel (twice), Sumner, Fame, Eupora, and Mathiston. He also started the Ackerman and Purvis churches. His descendants continue to serve in active ministry with the Church of God, including son Jimmy Smith, who has served as a state overseer and Director of Evangelism and Home Missions.







James Leon Thornhill

Leon Thornhill was a charter member of the Church of God in southern Mississippi and at the Mount Sinai Church. He was mentored by Reverend Warren Evans, who sensed Leon's keen understanding of the Bible. He was a prolific writer, having sermons published in the *Church of God Evangel* from 1916 through the 1950s. He was a capable pastor, serving numerous congregations throughout Mississippi. He also served as an early district overseer and was frequently in demand as an evangelist. He is remembered for his great leadership, convincing public speaking, and compassion.



Mary Tidwell

Mary Tidwell was born in Tomnolen, Mississippi, where she married the local postmaster William M. Tidwell. She received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1923 and began her ministry in 1926 after she and her husband moved to Richie, Mississippi. There, she began raising funds to construct a building for a local Church of God and she pastored the congregation every other week in the absence of the appointed pastor, C. H. Isbell. (Reverend Isbell was pastoring two congregations and alternated weekend services at each location). Mary Tidwell was licensed as an evangelist in 1927 and traveled extensively throughout the state conducting revivals and assisting churches in need of a pastor, including Isola, Cleveland, Greenville, and Pilgrims Rest (Doddsville). In the 1940s the Tidwells moved to Greenville, Mississippi, where she was active in the local congregation there.

Lillie Musselwhite Tilghman

Lillie Tilghman began speaking in tongues while in prayer at her home near Hardy. When she testified of her experience at her local church, she was ultimately dismissed from the local church fellowship. Undaunted, she began holding services in her home. Soon afterward she and her 10 children assisted in the construction of a small church building across the road from their house. In 1914 M.S. Lemons visited the family, baptized them in water, and received them into the Church of God. Tilghman's Chapel Church of God continued until 1925, when it merged with another Church of God congregation nearby. Members of the Tilghman family continue to be vital members of the Church of God in Mississippi.

R.R. Walker

A Baptist pastor and school superintendent living in Morgantown, R.R. Walker was inspired to seek the deeper experiences of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit because of the Christian witness of his students. He and his wife, Leedie, received these spiritual experiences in May 1933 and then united with the Church of God. A 1927 graduate of Mississippi College, Walker became the first minister in the Church of God with an earned bachelor's degree (A.B.). In 1934 he was requested to serve as principal of the high school division at the Bible Training School (now Lee University) in Tennessee, where he was esteemed as "Professor Walker" because of his academic credentials. He later served as pastor (including the North Cleveland, Tennessee church), state overseer, superintendent of the orphanage, and as Secretary-General (one of the top administrative positions in the Church of God).



Timmie Whittington

As a young man, Timmie Whittington pioneered the Grenada Church of God and sacrificed to see the church organized in that city. He later attended Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee and pastored a local congregation there. However, most of his ministry occurred in Mississippi, where he earned the love and respect of Church of God members throughout the state. He led numerous congregations in building churches and parsonages during his time as pastor. Known as a compassionate man with a heart for God and people, Timmie Whittington left a unique mark on the lives he blessed in communities throughout Mississippi.



General Grant "G.G." Williams

At age 15 Grant Williams accepted Christ, was sanctified, and received the Holy Spirit baptism at Eupora in 1916. In the fall of 1918 he attended the second term of Bible Training School (now Lee University) under the tutelage of Nora Chambers, who often referred to Grant as one of her best students. Licensed as an evangelist on March 29, 1919, Grant was one of the youngest, but also one of the best trained, ministers in the Church of God in Mississippi at that time. He planted numerous congregations in Mississippi, including Bude, Jacobs Tabernacle (Liberty), Causey's Chapel (Gloster), Rock Hill, and Greenville (New Life). Three of these congregations were organized prior to Grant's 1923 marriage to Mamie Parker. Together, they pastored in six states and raised a family of eight children. Grant also served as state overseer of Mississippi from 1931 to 1932. Grant Williams is remembered for his wisdom in dealing with local church problems effectively and the many physical healings that took place in his services and during his times of prayer for people.





Other Early Ministers

(Prior to 1945)

A.J. Allen

J.T. Brooks

A.L. Easterling

Clarence G. Edwards

William Russell Fowler

P.F. Fritz

A.J. Gardner

C.W. Kendall

Lester Lay

B.H. Lott

H. Bynum Magee

Allen McNemar

D.W. Mills

S.S. Monroe

B.J. Morgan

E.L. Newton

If you have photos or biographical information concerning these or other Mississippi ministers, please send that information to:

Dr. Louis F. Morgan
P.O. Box 5968
Cleveland, TN 37320
morganonmission@yahoo.com

W.E. Rogers

Hal B. Rushing

Bessie Scruggs

William Scruggs

DeWitt Sharp

A.O. Stewart

C.C. Stewart

Horace Taylor

Ethan M. Washam

R.F. Watkins

S.B. Webb

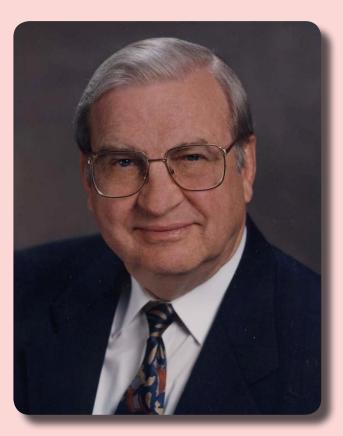
B.M. Woolwine

(and others)



Mississippi's

GENERAL



DR. CECIL B. KNIGHT

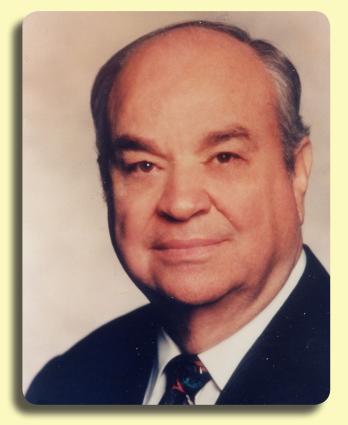
Dr. Cecil B. Knight served as General Overseer of the Church of God from 1976 to 1978. one of only two Mississippians to serve in this leadership role. Born in Alabama, Dr. Knight's family moved to Mississippi when he was a child. He began his ministry at the Hattiesburg Church (Trinity Heights) in 1940 as an evangelist. Following his graduation from Lee University, he began pastoring at Laurel, Mississippi. Other pastorates included the Pike Avenue Church in Birmingham, Alabama and the Buffalo Avenue (Riverhills) Church in Tampa, Florida. He was assisted in ministry by his wife, Evelyn Morris of Alabama. Dr. Knight served the denomination as Assistant Director of Youth and Christian Education. Director of Youth and Christian Education, state overseer of Indiana, Director of Evangelism and Home Missions, Assistant General Overseer, and

General Overseer. He provided 23 and one-half years of unbroken service as a member of the International Executive Council and was President of the Church of God Theological Seminary.

OVERSERS

DR. ROBERT WHITE

Dr. Robert White was the second Mississippian to serve as General Overseer of the Church of God from 1994 to 1996. Born near Richton, Mississippi, Dr. White began his ministry in the early 1950s as an evangelist and new field worker. He pastored his first congregation at Petal in 1954, followed by other pastorates in Texas (Cottonwood, Dallas, and Bonham). Dr. White married Texas native Kathryn Shires, who has assisted him in his ministry. He also served as state youth director in Louisiana and Texas and was state overseer of Montana and Wyoming, Arizona, West Virginia, and Alabama. Dr. White received academic degrees from Rocky Mountain College (B.A.), Arizona State University (M.A.), and the Hamma School of Theology (D.Min.) and served on the Board of Directors for Northwest Bible College, West Coast Bible College Board of Directors, the General Board of Education,



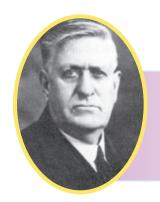
and as President of the Church of God Theological Seminary. Other appointments include Assistant Director of World Missions, Director of World Missions, Executive Council member, an Assistant General Overseer, General Overseer, and currently as an international evangelist.



Mississippi State Overseers / Administrative Bishops 1912 - 2009



Roy C. Miller 1912-1913



M.S. Lemons





M.S. Haynes



J.A. Davis



Hal A. Pressgrove





Efford Haynes

E.C. Rider 1922-1923







C.G. Edwards



G.G. Williams 1931-1932

S.J. Heath
1929-1931



T.M. McClendon 1932-1936



M.J. Headley

T.W.Godwin
1937-1939



J.L. Dorman 1939 - 1941



William M. Stallings 1944-1948

Clyde C. Cox 1941-1944



John L. Byrd 1948 - 1950







G.C. Hamby 1950-1954



Wade H. Horton 1958-1960



T.L. Forester 1964-1968





John D. Smith 1960-1964





H.D. Sustar 1970-1974



W.C. Ratchford

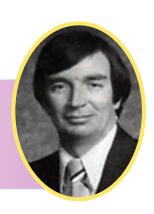




B.G. Hamon 1974 - 1976



Walter P. Atkinson 1980-1984







Wade A. Bell 1984-1986

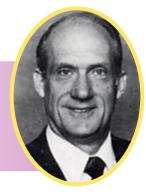


James D. Jenkins 1988-1992

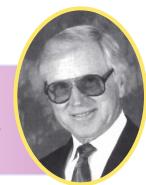


Gary D. Tygart

B.L. Kelley



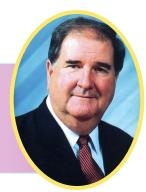
Carl E. Allen 1992-1996





H. Melvin Massey 2006-2008









These photographs are housed at the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center, either in a photograph collection or in various issues of the *Church of God Evangel* and *Mississippi Messenger*.



Mississippi State Overseers / Administrative Bishops and State Office Locations

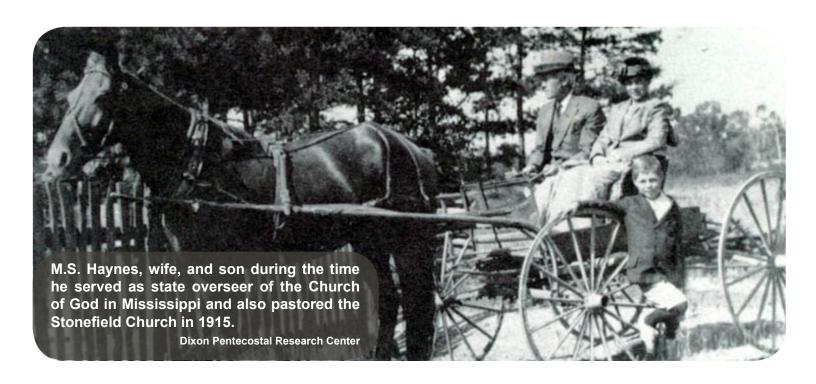
1912 ~ 2009 (List is based upon General Assembly appointments)

General Assembly Term	State Overseer / Administrative Bishop	State Office Location
1912 - 1913	Roy C. Smith (Did not live in Mississippi)	Official church business base was Tallahatchie County
1913 (Jan Nov.)	Z.D. Simpson (Did not live in Mississippi)	Official church business base was Tallahatchie County
1913 - 1914	M.S. Lemons (Did not live in Mississippi)	Official church business base was Tallahatchie County
1914 - 1915	M.S. Lemons (Did not live in Mississippi)	Official church business base was Tallahatchie County
1915 - 1916	M.S. Haynes	Cascilla
1916 - 1917	J.A. Davis	Cascilla
1917 - 1918	E.B. Culpepper (Did not live in Mississippi)	Cascilla / Morgantown (moved when J.T. Priest moved)
1918 - 1919	E.B. Culpepper (Did not live in Mississippi)	Morgantown (but overseer lived at Lake Park, Georgia)
1919 - 1920	E.B. Culpepper (Did not live in Mississippi)	Morgantown (but overseer lived at Lake Park, Georgia)
1920 - 1921	Hal A. Pressgrove	Cascilla
1921 - 1922	Hal A. Pressgrove	Cascilla
1922 - 1923	E.C. Rider	Morgantown
1923	Efford Haynes (Did not live in Mississippi)	(no official designation)
1923	Z.D. Simpson (Did not live in Mississippi)	(no official designation)
1923 - 1924	E.B. Culpepper	Morgantown (but overseer lived at Lake Park, Georgia)
1924 - 1925	E.B. Culpepper	Morgantown (but overseer lived at Lake Park, Georgia)
1925 - 1926	Grover C. Dunn	Thorn
1926 - 1927	C.G. Edwards	Thorn
1927 - 1928	C.G. Edwards	Thorn
1928 - 1929	E.B. Culpepper	Morgantown
1929 - 1930	S.J. Heath	Morgantown (State Overseer's parsonage built in 1930)
1930 - 1931	S.J. Heath (died in office) / G.G. Williams	Morgantown
1931 - 1932	G.G. Williams	Union (Rocky Hill) / Morgantown
1932 - 1933	T.M. McClendon	Morgantown / Hattiesburg
1933 - 1934	T.M. McClendon	Hattiesburg
1934 - 1935	T.M. McClendon	Hattiesburg
1935 - 1936	T.M. McClendon	Hattiesburg
1936 - 1937	M.J. Headley	Hattiesburg
1937 - 1938	T.W. Godwin	Hattiesburg / Morgantown
1938 - 1939	T.W. Godwin	Morgantown
1939 - 1940	J.L. Dorman	Morgantown / Hattiesburg

General Assembly Term	State Overseer / Administrative Bishop	State Office Location
1940 - 1941	J.L. Dorman	Hattiesburg
1941 - 1942	Clyde C. Cox	Hattiesburg
1942 - 1943	Clyde C. Cox	Hattiesburg / Jackson
1943 - 1944	Clyde C. Cox	Jackson
1944 - 1945	William M. Stallings	Jackson
1945 - 1946	William M. Stallings	Jackson
1946 - 1948	William M. Stallings	Jackson
1948 - 1950	John L. Byrd	Jackson
1950 - 1952	G.C. Hamby	Jackson
1952 - 1954	G.C. Hamby	Jackson
1954 - 1956	H.T. Statum	Jackson
1956 - 1958	H.T. Statum	Jackson
1958 - 1960	Wade H. Horton	Jackson
1960 - 1962	John D. Smith	Jackson
1962 - 1964	John D. Smith	Jackson
1964 - 1966	T.L. Forester	Jackson
1966 - 1968	T.L. Forester	Jackson
1968 - 1970	J. Frank Culpepper	Jackson
1970 - 1972	H.D. Sustar	Jackson
1972 - 1974	H.D. Sustar	Jackson
1974 - 1976	B.G. Hamon	Jackson
1976 - 1978	W.C. Ratchford	Jackson
1978 - 1980	W.C. Ratchford	Jackson
1980 - 1982	Walter P. Atkinson	Jackson
1982 - 1984	Walter P. Atkinson	Jackson
1984 - 1986	Wade A. Bell	Jackson
1986 - 1988	B.L. Kelley	Jackson
1988 - 1990	James D. Jenkins	Jackson
1990 - 1992	James D. Jenkins	Jackson
1992 - 1994	Carl E. Allen	Jackson
1994 - 1996	Carl E. Allen	Jackson



General Assembly Term	State Overseer / Administrative Bishop	State Office Location
1996 - 1998	Gary D. Tygart	Jackson
1998 - 2000	Gary D. Tygart	Jackson
2000 - 2002	A. Ray Garner	Jackson
2002 - 2004	A. Ray Garner	Jackson
2004 - 2006	A. Ray Garner	Jackson
2006 - 2008	H. Melvin Massey	Jackson
2008 - Present	Terrance Hart	Jackson



Mississippi State Overseers for the Church of God Black Ministries

1926 - 1970 (List is based upon General Assembly appointments)

General Assembly Term	State Overseer	State Office Location
1927 - 1928	T.W. Wimberly	Eupora
1928 - 1929	T.W. Wimberly	Eupora
1929 - 1930	W.M. Stewart	Eupora
1930 - 1931	Alex Richards	Eupora
1931 - 1932	Alex Richards	Eupora
1932 - 1933	Alex Richards	Eupora
1933 - 1934	Alex Richards	Eupora
1934 - 1935	G.C. Sapp	
1935 - 1936	G.C. Sapp	
1936 - 1937	G.C. Sapp	
1937 - 1938	George A. Wallace	
1938 - 1939	George A. Wallace	
1939 - 1940	W.L. Ford	
1940 - 1941	W.L. Ford	
1941 - 1942	W.L. Ford	
1942 - 1943	W.L. Ford	
1943 - 1944	David LaFleur	
1944 - 1945	David LaFleur	
1945 - 1946	L.R. Collins	New Albany
1946 - 1948	L.R. Collins	New Albany
1948 - 1950	L.R. Collins	New Albany
1950 - 1952	F.J. Lane	
1952 - 1954	F.B. Bell	
1954 - 1956	F.B. Bell	
1956 - 1958	F.J. Lane / Calvin C. Daniels (appointed in 1957)	West Point
1958 - 1960	Calvin C. Daniels	West Point
1960 - 1962	Calvin C. Daniels	West Point
1962 - 1964	Calvin C. Daniels	West Point
1964 - 1966	Calvin C. Daniels	West Point
1966 - 1970	Calvin C. Daniels	West Point



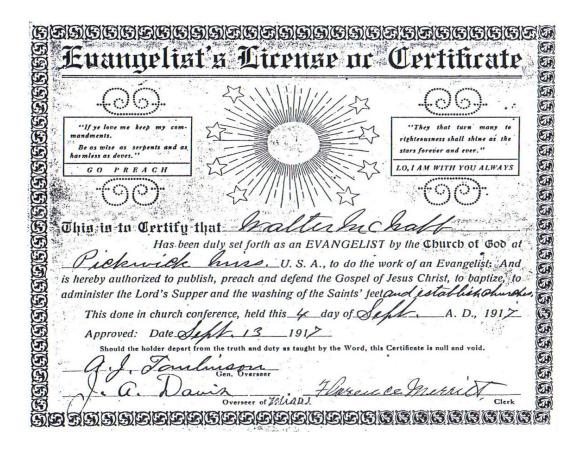
Mississippi Ministers Receiving Credentials 1911-1923

Date Licensed	Minister Name	Ministerial License Rank	Gender	Church Membership	Age
1911 - August 28	Dollahite, D.W.	Evangelist	М	Stonefield (Cascilla)	44
1911 - August 28	Simpson, E.K.	Deacon	M	Stonefield (Cascilla)	52
1912	Blankenship, C.L.	Deacon	M	Artesia (Mayhew)	
1912	Turner, Tildon	Deacon	M	Artesia (Mayhew)	
1912	Thompson, W.H.	Deacon	M	Artesia (Mayhew)	
1913 - October 4	Bell, Jim Allen	Deacon	M	Friendship (Charleston)	41
1913 - October 4	Morgan, Tom	Deacon	M	Friendship (Charleston)	66
1914 - January 5	Mullen, Joe W.	Deacon	М	Stonefield (Cascilla)	49
1914 - September 1	Harris, Harmon Spencer	Evangelist	М	N. Shady Grove (Cascilla)	41
1914 - September 1	Adams, Archibald	Deacon	М	Gatewood (Coffeeville)	
1915 - September 1	Adams, Pearl	Bishop	М	Gatewood (Coffeeville)	35
1915 - September 4	Warbington, Andy H.	Evangelist	F	Stonefield (Cascilla)	28
1915 - September 24	Pressgrove, Hal A.	Evangelist	М	Stonefield (Cascilla)	31
1915 - September 28	Mullen, Robert C.	Evangelist	М	N. Shady Grove (Cascilla)	23
1915 - October 2	Lacy, Annie B.	Evangelist	М	N. Shady Grove (Cascilla)	28
1916 - January 11	Jefferies, Mrs. Willie	Evangelist	F	Sumner	35
1916 - January 1	Partridge, Olive Bowie	Evangelist	F	Mount Olive (Weir)	26
1917 - February 17	Price, Robert C.	Evangelist	F	Morgantown	20
1917 - March 8	Evans, Warren Edward	Evangelist	M	Mount Sinai (Foxworth)	43
1917 - March 8	Thornhill, James Leon	Promoted to Bishop	М	Mount Sinai (Foxworth)	27
1917 - July 21	Dunaway, Marshall C.	Evangelist	M	Morgantown	23
1917 - July 21	Raney, W.E.	Evangelist	М	Friendship (Charleston)	23
1917 - August 20	Smith, James Roman "Jim"	Deacon	М	Morgantown	31
1917 - August 25	Nelson, James C.	Evangelist	М	Deep Slough (Tallahatchie County)	45
1917 - September 4	McNabb, Walter	Evangelist	М	Pickwick	43
1918 - February 1	Tucker, Annie W.	Evangelist	М	Coloho (Catchings)	50
1918 - May 12	Dunn, Grover C.	Evangelist	F	Liberty	28
1918 - May 12	Lucus, Henry C,	Evangelist	М	Liberty	32
1918 - May 12	Rider, E.C.	Evangelist	М	Liberty	25
1918 - May 12	Smedley, Sidney	Evangelist	М	Liberty	32
1918 - June 4	Churchill, C.A.	Evangelist	М	Mount Pisgah	23
1918 - November 3	McMickle, W.A.	Evangelist	М	Cagle Cross Roads (Marks)	29
1918 - December 1	Moxley, J.R.	Evangelist	М	Pate's Temple (Red Bay, Alabama)	27
1919 - March 29	Williams, General Grant "G.G."	Evangelist	М	Mount Moriah (Eupora)	17

Gender Ministerial Date **Minister Name** License **Church Membership** Age Licensed Rank 1919 - April 11 Dunaway, Jesse C. Evangelist M 44 Mount Sinai (Foxworth) 1919 - April 11 Dunaway, Quinnie C. Evangelist M Mount Sinai (Foxworth) 19 1919 - April 11 Morgan, G.W. M Mount Sinai (Foxworth) Deacon 36 1919 - April 26 Holley, J.H. Pate's Temple (Red Bay, Alabama) Evangelist M 42 1919 - July 18 Hamilton, J. Oscar Evangelist M Mount Moriah (Eupora) 25 1919 - July 25 Rushing, Joe Evangelist M **Jayess** 30 Coats, Charles (Address listed as Parchman, MS) 24 1919 - July 31 Evangelist M 1919 - July 31 F 30 Pressgrove, Etta Evangelist Stonefield (Cascilla) Priest, James Thomas "J.T." 1919 - August 9 Promoted to Bishop M Morgantown 34 1920 - August19 DuBois, Ollie A. M Stonefield (Cascilla) Deacon 37 M 1919 - September 9 Cox, Thomas Deacon Friendship (Charletson) 39 1919 - September 30 Smith, J.C. Evangelist M Byrd's Chapel (Meadville) 46 1919 - October 2 Lentz, Joseph C. Evangelist Walker School House (Clay address) 45 1919 - November 15 Clark, J.T. Evangelist M Louisville (Chester address) 42 1919 - November 25 Baker, L.O. Deacon M Stonefield (Cascilla) 29 1919 - November 26 Rienzi Allen, S.W. Evangelist M 32 1919 Lay, Lester Evangelist M (Address listed as Parchman, MS) 1920 - August 4 Pate's Temple (Red Bay, Alabama) 26 Wiggington, J.E. Evangelist M F 1920 - September 10 Clegg, Sallie Evangelist New Bethel (Sapa) 41 F 25 1920 - September 10 Lovette, Nellie V. Evangelist New Bethel (Sapa) 1920 - September 10 Sims, Cecil M. Evangelist M New Bethel (Sapa) 26 1920 - September 10 Washam, Eathon 22 Evangelist M New Bethel (Sapa) 1920 - November 21 Raney, W.E. Promoted to Bishop M Stonefield (Cascilla) 27 1920 - November 27 Funderburk, B.O. 28 Deacon M Oak Grove (Red Bay, Alabama) 1920 - November 27 Pressgrove, Hal A. Promoted to Bishop 36 M Stonefield (Cascilla) 1920 - November 27 Pate's Temple (Red Bay, Alabama) Rider, E.C. Promoted to Bishop M 28 1920 - December 27 Churchill, C.A. Promoted to Bishop M New Bethel (Sapa) 26 1921 - May 21 F Priest, Clara McHann Allison Evangelist Stonefield (Cascilla) 39 1921 - May 23 Oswalt, Jesse J. 40 Evangelist M Chapel Hill (Dennis) 1921 Byrd, Eula Mae Evangelist F New Bethel (Sapa) 1921 Musselwhite, Jefferson B. Evangelist M Stonefield (Cascilla) 1922 Mullen, J.W. 56 Promoted to Bishop M Stonefield (Cascilla) 1922 Grissom, L.S. Oak Grove (Red Bay, Alabama) Deacon M 1922 Blackwood, Roy E. M Mount Olive (Weir) Evangelist



Date Licensed	Minister Name	Ministerial License Rank	Gender	Church Membership	Age
1922	Coats, Dovie	Evangelist	F	(Address listed as Parchman, MS)	
1922	Gord, Whiten	Evangelist	М	Thorn (Houston)	
1922	Kimbrough, John C.	Evangelist	М	Thorn (Houston)	
1922	Miller, Houston T.	Evangelist	М	Red Bay, Alabama	
1923	Moxley, Luther A.	Evangelist	М	Red Bay, Alabama	
1922	Nabors, Jake U.	Evangelist	М	Thorn (Houston)	
1922	Stewart, C.C.	Evangelist	М	Richburg (Hattiesburg)	
1922	Abbott, J.W.	Evangelist	М	Chapel Hill (Dennis)	
1922	Burgess, G.L.	Evangelist	М	Sunflower River (Farrell)	
1923	Edwards, C.G.	Evangelist	М	Starkville	
1923	Smallwood, Dona	Evangelist	F	(Moved to Missouri after licensed)	



Churches and Ministers Listed in the 1920 Minutes of the General Assembly

MINUETS OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

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Mississippi
                                                                       E. B. Culpepper, Overseer.
                                                   Members
                                                                                                              Clerks
  1 Byrd's Chapel 29 Prentiss Garmill Little Springs
2 Cagle's Cross Roads 26 Mand Medlin Dublin
                                                              20 M. C. Collier
11 T. A. Wigginton
24 R. D. Morgan
              Chapel Hill
                                                                                                                                                          R. 2, Dennis
  5 Coffeeville
                                                                                                                                                          Dakland
                                                                              20 - Ruby Lay:
              Delta-
                                                                                                                                                           Defta: -
                                                                        97 J. A. Bell
27 Myrtis Jacobs
    T Friendship
                                                                                                                                                            Charteston
     8: Jacobs Tabernaele
                                                                                                                                                          Liberty
9 Jayess 8 S. V. Reeves R. I. Jayess
10 Jones Chapel 31 B. B. Ingram Lodi
11 Magee 11 C. Fortenberry Magee, Miss.
12 Morgantown 71 F. W. Alexander Morgantown
13 Mt. Olive 58 Huddleston Chester
14 Mt. Sinai 57 J. B. Beard Foxworth
15 Nettleton 11 Elsie Montgomery Plantersville
16 New Bethel 66 Modena Holland Sapa
17. Oak Grove 32 L. S. Grisson R. 2 Red Bay
                                                                                                                                                      Magee, Miss.
                                                                                                                                                     R. 2, Red Bay, Ala.
R. 2; Red Bay; Ala.
Cheraw
                                                          66 Modena Holland
32 L. S. Grisson R. 2. Red
62 L. A. Moxley R. 2. Red
42 H. E. Lee
63 Joe Williams
64 Lou Dubois Cascilla
65 W. B. Simpson R. 1. Hold
66 J. H. Tallent Vardamar
66 Modena Holland
67 R. 28 Cora Tilghman Hardy St
68 J. R. Moxley R. 1. Moo
69 R. J. Stockton Eastman
68 Modena Holland
69 R. 2. Red
69 R. 2. Red
69 R. 2. Red
69 R. 2. Red
60 R. 2. Red
60 R. 2. Red
60 R. 2. Red
61 R. 2. Red
62 L. A. Moxley R. 1. Moo
61 R. 2. Moo
62 R. 2. Moo
63 R. 2. Moo
64 R. 2. Red
65 R. 2. Red
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67 R. 2. Red
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65 R. 2. Red
65 R. 2. Red
65 R. 2. Red
66 R. 2. Red
66 R. 2. Red
67 R. 2. Red
67 R. 2. Red
68 R. 2
17. Oak Grove
18 Pates Temple
19 Pickwick
20 Pilgrim's Rest
   21. Rienzi
              Shady Grove
                                                                                                                                                           R. 1, Holcomb
               Stonefield
  24 Taylor School H.
25 Tilghman Chapel
                                                                                                                                                         Vardaman
Hardy Sta
   26: Union Grove-
                                                                                                                                                           R. 1, Mooreville
Eastman
               Walker School H.
               Williams Springs
                                                                      22 1 085
149
                    Churches,
                                                                                                    Members,
                                                                                                                                                Sun. school, Property Value
    Last Report
                                                                                                                                                        . 13 - .
                                                                                                                                                                                                            $ 2 000 00
      Decrease
                                                                                                                                                            11 ....
      Halance
                                                                                                                 836 ....
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    4 270 00
      Grand Total
                                                                        28
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    6 270:00
                                                                                                         BISHOPS
                                                                                                                          4 Raney, W. E.,
5 Rider, E. C.,
   1: Churchill, C. A.,
2: Pressgrove, H. A.
3: Priest, J. T., M
                                                                  Sapa
                                                                                                                                                                                      Stonefield:
                                                                                                                                                                                  Red Bay, Ala.
                                                           Morgantown
                                                                                                       DEACONS
1 Bell, J. A., Charleston
2 Baker, L. O., Cascilla
3 Dubois, O. A., Cascilla
4 Funderburk, B. O., Oak Grove
                                                                                                                          5 Harris, S. H., Shady
6 Morgan, G. W., Mor
7 Rushin, Joe, – Jayess
8 Simpson, E. K., Cas
                                                                                                                                                                                  Shady Grove
                                                                                                                                                                                          Morgantown
                                                                                                EVANGELISTS
     1. Clegg, Sallier Sapa:
2. Dollahite, D. W., Poplar G, Ark. 12
3. Dunn, Grover, Liberty 13
                                                                                                                     11 Walter, McNabb., Sand

1, 12 McMickle, W. A., Hayr

13 Partridge, Olive, Weir
                                                                                                                                                                                                  Sandy Hook
                                                                                                                                                                                                Haynes, Ark:
    2 Dunn, Grover,
    5 Holley, J. H., Red Bay, Ala.
6 Hamiliton, J. O., Sapa
7 Lents, E.C., Clay
8 Lovette, Nellie, Sapa
9 Mullen, J. W., Holcomb
                                                                                                                       14 Smith, J. R.,
                                                                                                                                                                                 Morgantown
                                                                                                                     15 Smedley, Sidney,
16 Sims, C. M., Sap
17. Thornhill, J. L.,
18 Williams, Grant,
19 Washam, Eathon,
                                                                                                                                                                                                 Liberty:
                                                                                                                                                                                              Morgantown
                                                                                                                                                                                        Eupora.
  10 Moxley, J. R.,
                                                                  Red Bay, Ala.

    Wiggington, J. E., Red Bay, Ala.
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Local Congregation Organization Dates 1912 - 2009

Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1912	Friendship	Charleston							
1912	Artesia, Pilgrim's Rest	Mayhew		1929 (w	ent with	Church of	of God of	Prophed	cy)
1913	Turkey Foot Fork	Holcomb		1914 (re	ejoined S	Stonefield	l on Janu	ary 5, 19	914)
1914	Stonefield	Cascilla							
1914	North Shady Grove	Cascilla		1926	1939				
1914	Tilghman Chapel	Hardy		1925					
1915	Gatewood	Coffeeville		1919	1942				
1915	Sumner	Sumner		1915	1964				
1916	Artesia	Artesia		1917 (m	1917 (merged with Artesia, Pilgrim's Rest)				
1916	Deep Slough	Tallahatchie County		1916					
1916	Marks	Marks	Cagle Cross Road / Dublin	1934	1952	2004			
1916	Morgantown School House	Darbun (address of c	lerk)	1917					
1916	Mt. Olive	Weir		1976					
1917	Mt. Sinai								
1917	Morgantown								
1917	Coloho	Catchings		1929					
1917	Fentress	Weir		1917					
1917	Jayess	Jayess		1924 (w	ent with	Onenes	s)		
1917	Mt. Moriah	Eupora		1919					
1917	Pickwick	Cheraw		1924	1929	1929			
1917	Richland Creek	Foxworth		1919	1949				
1917	William Springs	Stewart							
1919	James Chapel	Stewart		1919					
1919	Louisville	Louisville		1919	1973	1988			
1919	Praise Cathedral	Meadville	Byrd's Chapel	1924	1929				
1919	Mt. Carmel	Morgantown		1923					
1919	New Bethel	Sapa	Murray School House	1924 (w	ent with	Church	of God of	Prophed	cy)
1919	Pate's Temple	Red Bay, Alabama		(began	reporting	g to Alaba	ama after	1934)	
1919	Rienzi	Rienzi		1923 (w	ent COC	GOP)	1954	1954	

^{* =} African-American congregation

These dates were determined using the lists of churches published in the *Minutes of the General Assembly* (annually through 1946 and biennially thereafter). It is possible some churches may have been organized or disbanded in different years than listed in the Assembly *Minutes* and noted in this record.

Please forward any corrections to morganonmission@yahoo.com.

Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1919	Walker School House	Eastman		1924 (w	ent COC	GOP)	1929	1929	
1920	Chapel Hill	Dennis		1924 (w	ent COC	SOP)			
1920	Coffeeville	Coffeeville		1929					
1920	Delta	Delta City		1920					
1920	Jacobs Tabernacle			1924 (w	ent COC	GOP)			
1920	Jones Chapel			1929					
1920	Magee	Magee		1923	1928-2	9 / 1940	0-40 / 19	944-50	1970
1920	Nettleton	Plantersville		1924					
1920	Oak Grove	Red Bay, Alabama							
1920	Taylor	Vardaman	Taylor School House	1938					
1920	Union Grove			1921					
1921	Bude	Bude		1924	1942				
1921	Davis Chapel	Merigold		1922					
1921	Fame	Fame							
1921	Johnson Grove	Summit		1924					
1921	Marie			1921					
1921	McCall Creek	McCall Creek	McCall	1924	1929				
1921	Moorhead	Moorhead		1927	1931				
1921	Norfield			1923					
1921	Old Field			1921					
1921	Pisgah Springs	Eupora		1922	1925	1944			
1921	Richburg	Hattiesburg	Sandy Run	1998					
1921	Smyrna			1921					
1921	Cotton Mill	Starkville		1923 (w	ent COC	GOP)			
1921	Summer Set School			1921					
1921	Thorn	Houston							
1921	Winona	Winona		1924 (w	ent COC	GOP)	1933	1940	1958
1922	Causey's Chapel	Gloster		1924 (w	ent COC	GOP)			
1922	Cleveland	Cleveland	Joseph Chapel						

^{* =} African-American congregation



	I	I	I						
Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1922	Dry Creek	Columbia		1924					
1922	Hebron	Hebron		1929 (v	vent COC	SOP)			
1922	Liberty	Liberty	Busy Corner	1924	1934	1937	1976	1978	
1922	Mt. Zion	Indianola							
1922	Pelahatchie	Pelahatchie		1923					
1922	Pine Grove (Hattiesburg)	Hattiesburg		1928					
1922	Tipps	Tipps		1926					
1922	Welcome Home	Saltillo		1924					
1922	Young Creek	Cascilla		1929					
1923	Booneville	Booneville		1940	1948				
1923	Calvary	Star		1924					
1923	Kimball Lake	Cleveland		1927					
1923	Pleasant Grove	Embry		1928					
1923	Spanish Fort	Holly Ridge		1924 (w	vent COC	SOP)			
1923	Sunflower River	Clarksdale		1925					
1923	Whittington Chapel	O'Neal		1924					
1923	Zion	Sturgis		1924 (w	vent COC	GOP)			
1924	Riverview	Farrell		1927					
1925	Dolly Lake	Webb		1934					
1925	The Community Church	Gulfport	Promise Land	1934	1954				
1925	McHaun's Chapel			1929					
1925	Oak Ridge	Philadelphia	Watkins Tabernacle						
1926	Hillhouse			1927					
1926	Isola	Isola	Bethel						
1926	St. Mary*	Eupora		(merge	d with Eu	pora, Gi	bson Stre	eet)	
1926	Wheeler	Wheeler	Wheeler Chapel	1934	1942				
1927	Cohay	Cohay		1929					
1927	West Eupora	Eupora		1928	1956				
1927	Magee (Louise)	Magee		1929					

 $^{^*}$ = African-American congregation

Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1927	Pleasant Hill	Carthage							
1927	Rocky Hill	Sebastopol							
1927	South Shady Grove	Magee							
1927	Waco	Mize							
1928	Baltzar*	Rome / Tutwiler		1937	1940	1941			
1928	Darnell*			1930					
1929	Corinth	Corinth		1934	1952				
1929	Crowder			1930	1936	1938			
1929	Lambert	Lambert	Lambert's Chapel	1929	1946	1948	1972	1980	
1929	Magnolia	Magnolia		1929	1992				
1929	Mars Hill	Longview		1945					
1929	Rome*	Tutwiler		1940					
1930	Bellview			1933					
1930	Benndale	Benndale / McLain							
1930	Bethany	Poplar Creek		1937	1942				
1930	Verndale	Eden		1931					
1930	Wesley's Chapel	Meadville		1988					
1931	Cagles Cross Roads	Clarksdale		1932					
1931	Trinity Heights	Hattiesburg							
1931	King's Chapel	Perkinston		1934					
1931	Leakesville	Leakesville		1934	1943	1945	1982		
1931	Winborn	Winborn	Good Hope	1937					
1932	Belzoni	Belzoni		1934	1976	1998			
1932	Hickspur			1934					
1932	Neely	Neely	Old Washington	1937					
1932	New Life	Greenville							
1932	Red Hill	New Augusta		1940					
1932	Strait Bayou			1934					
1932	Walker House (Golden)	Golden		1937					

^{* =} African-American congregation



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Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1933	Avera	Avera							
1933	Bingham's Chapel*	Eupora		1935					
1933	Hudson Chapel	Union	Union						
1933	Mitchell Chapel	Poplarville							
1933	New Bethel			1934					
1933	Pilgrim Rest	Shaw / Doddsville							
1933	Sardis			1940					
1933	Yazoo City	Yazoo City							
1934	Eupora*	Eupora	Gibson Street	1935	1938				
1934	Mt. Nebo			1934					
1934	Pleasant Home	Purvis	Busha Chapel						
1934	Ruleville	Ruleville							
1934	Shiloh	Shaw		1986					
1935	Brookhaven	Brookhaven							
1935	Golden	Golden		1940	1972	1974			
1935	Smithdale	Smithdale		1938					
1935	Unity	Baldwyn		1937					
1936	Donna	Grenada		1936					
1936	Ecru*	Blue Springs		1940					
1936	Flag Lake	Sarah		1942					
1936	Martha Chapel*	Hattiesburg		1944					
1936	Holy Temple*	New Albany	Reeves Street						
1936	Purvis	Purvis		1936	1970				
1937	Allens Chapel	Batesville		1946					
1937	Henchcliff	Lambert		1944					
1937	Katie Chapel*	Carson		1941					
1937	McLauren	McLauren		1939					
1937	Oak Grove*	Richton		1940					
1937	Pearl River*	Georgetown		1940					

^{* =} African-American congregation

Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1938	Bruce	Bruce	Wonders Rest	1942	1954	1962	1976	1997	
1938	West Laurel	Laurel							
1938	Satartia			1944					
1938	Starkville	Starkville							
1939	Clay Hill	Liberty							
1939	Flemmings Chapel	Star		1956					
1939	Grenada	Grenada		1940	1947				
1939	McLain	McLain	Buffalo						
1939	Natchez, McNeely	Natchez	McNeely Road						
1939	Runnelstown	Runnelstown / Petal	Tallahala						
1939	Union Chapel								
1940	Alpine	Alpine		1941					
1940	Yorkville Heights	Columbus							
1940	Ellisville	Ellisville	Oak Bowers	1944	1948	1950	1982		
1940	Goodwill Worship Center	Marks							
1940	Murray HIII	Poplarville							
1940	Richey	Richey		1946					
1942	Mahned	New Augusta		2002					
1942	Cornerstone	Meridian		1943	1950				
1942	Picayune	Picayune		1944	1962				
1942	West Point	West Point							
1943	Hollandale	Hollandale	Antioch						
1943	Cobblestone	Madison	Jackson, Bailey Avenue	/ Jacks	on, Metr	opolitan	/ Jack	son, Lake	eover
1943	Pascagoula	Pascagoula	Chico Street	1948	1954				
1943	Riverside			1944					
1943	Rome	Tutwiler		1988					
1945	Center Hill	Sarah		1946	1952				
1945	County Line	State Line							
1945	Crystal Springs	Crystal Springs		1946	1970				

^{* =} African-American congregation



Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1945	Eastview	Lucedale	Rocky Creek						
1945	New Hope	Kilmichael		1970					
1945	Richton	Richton							
1945	Victory	Flora		1946					
1946	Bradley*	Starkville							
1946	Holly Grove	West		1946					
1946	New Albany #2*	New Albany		1954					
1946	Ward Valley	Silver Creek	Arm Road						
1948	Bethany Ridge	Tunica		1949					
1948	Life Church	Columbia	North Columbia						
1948	New Albany	New Albany	Rains Chapel						
1948	Reid Chapel	Conehatta							
1948	Walnut Grove			1948					
1949	Mt. Carmel	Foxworth							
1950	South Mt. Zion	Columbia		1950					
1950	Douglas Chapel	Bucatunna		1960					
1950	Faith Chapel	Laurel		1950					
1950	Gattman Mission	Gattman	Redeemed	1960	1994				
1950	Hoods Chapel	Holcomb		1968					
1950	Jericho*	Myrtle		1954					
1950	Leaf	Leaf	Avent						
1950	Temple of Praise	Little Rock / Duffie	Duffie						
1950	Lucedale	Lucedale	Smith's Chapel						
1950	Word of Life	Maben		1950	1992				
1950	Morton	Morton							
1950	Oloh	Sumrall		1952					
1950	Wrays Chapel	Pope							
1952	Beaumont	Beaumont							
1952	Bexley			1953					

 $^{^*}$ = African-American congregation

Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1952	Charleston	Charleston							
1952	Greenwood	Greenwood							
1952	Houlka	Houston		1966					
1952	Houlka*	Houston		1954					
1952	God's Harvest	Indianola	Breath of Life						
1952	Mays Creek	Foxworth							
1952	McComb	McComb		2006					
1952	Mendenhall	Mendenhall							
1952	Philadelphia	Philadelphia							
1952	Walton Chapel	Minter City							
1954	Clarksdale	Clarksdale							
1954	Eupora #2 *	Eupora		(merged	d with Eu	pora, Gil	oson Stre	eet)	
1954	Gloster	Gloster		1990					
1954	Lighthouse	Biloxi							
1954	Spiritual Life Center	Petal							
1954	Steven's Chapel	Hollandale		1958					
1954	Water Valley	Water Valley		1954	1970				
1956	Silver Ridge	Starkville		1958					
1956	Skene	Boyle		1956					
1956	Refuge Church	Vicksburg							
1958	Family Worship Center	Greenville	East Greenville						
1958	Pearl City	Pearl	Jackson, Crest Park and	Pearl Fa	mily Chu	ırch			
1958	Sledge	Dundee		1960					
1958	Tutwiler	Tutwiler		1962					
1958	West Point, Progress Street*	West Point							
1960	All Seasons Worship Center	Forest							
1960	Bay St. Louis	Bay St. Louis							
1960	Caldonia	Caldonia		1960					
1960	Daniels Temple*	Calhoun City	Eupora / Goff Chapel						

^{* =} African-American congregation



Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1960	Leavel Woods	Jackson		1974					
1960	McCool*	McCool							
1960	South Natchez	Natchez		1962					
1962	Lurkine	State Line		1962					
1962	Mathiston	Mathiston							
1962	Moss Point	Moss Point		1970					
1964	Clara	Waynesboro							
1964	Newton	Newton		1966					
1964	Open Door Worship Center	Hamilton							
1966	Franklin Creek	Pascagoula		1992					
1966	Pine Grove	Eupora		2006					
1966	Family Life	Southaven							
1968	Houston Revival Center	Houston							
1968	Westhaven Boulevard	Jackson							
1968	Abundant Life	Kosciusko							
1968	Tupelo	Tupelo							
1969	New Hope	Batesville							
1970	Ackerman	Ackerman							
1970	Enterprise	Enterprise		1974					
1970	Leland	Leland		1972					
1970	Poplarville	Poplarville		1972	1982	1988			
1970	Quitman	Quitman		1982	1984	1988	1992		
1970	Tylertown	Tylertown		1970					
1971	Amory	Amory							
1971	Elton Woods	Jackson	Jackson, Southside						
1972	West Columbia	Foxworth							
1972	Crenshaw	Crenshaw							
1972	North Jackson	Jackson		1978					
1972	Church of God Worship Ctr	Wiggins							

^{* =} African-American congregation

Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1973	Lakeview	Columbia	East Columbia / Wood	lawn					
1973	luka	luka							
1973	Ripley	Ripley		1974	1984				
1974	ChristWay	Flowood	Brandon / Trinity Life						
1974	Oakland	Oakland		1976					
1974	Union	Union							
1975	Ocean Springs	Ocean Springs		1990					
1976	Byhalia	Byhalia		1982					
1976	Colonial Hills	Horn Lake	Horn Lake						
1976	Harvest Worship Center	Gautier							
1976	Quest Community Church	Florence							
1976	Senatobia	Senatobia		1978	1996				
1976	Shelby	Shelby		1976					
1978	Coldwater	Coldwater		1995					
1978	Crossroads	Foxworth							
1978	Hattiesburg, Tipton Street	Hattiesburg		1978					
1978	New Horizon Worship Center	Hernando							
1978	Mid-South Family Worship	Olive Branch	Faith Fellowship						
1978	Raleigh	Raleigh							
1978	State Line	Southaven		1988					
1980	Aberdeen	Aberdeen							
1980	Baldwyn								
1980	Centerville	Centerville		1988					
1980	River of Life	Gulfport	Gulfport, Northside						
1980	Long Beach	Long Beach		1994					
1980	Macedonia	Indianola		1996					
1980	Liberty Temple*	Moss Point	Maranatha / Rhema W	/ord					
1980	Parkview	Natchez							
1980	Pearl	Pearl		1992					

^{* =} African-American congregation



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Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
1980	Tunica	Tunica		1988					
1980	Highway 61 (Tunica)	Tunica		1988					
1980	Living Waters	Walls		1999					
1982	Macon	Macon		1986					
1982	Pontotoc	Pontotoc		1986					
1982	Prentiss	Prentiss		1986					
1982	Stonewall	Stonewall		1982					
1984	Miracle Temple*	Okolona							
1984	Oxford	Oxford		1988					
1984	Rolling Fork	Rolling Fork		1986					
1984	Shaw	Shaw		1995					
1984	Sumrall	Sumrall		1986					
1986	Southside Columbus	Columbus		1990					
1990	Calvary's Cross	Columbia		1990					
1990	Church of the Harvest*	Laurel	Hoy Road						
1991	Freetrade	Carthage							
1992	Baxterville	Baxterville							
1992	Tabernacle of Faith/Deliverance*	Columbus	Latter Rain Tabernacle						
1992	Faith Chapel	Picayune	Ozona						
1993	Richland (Mission)	Richland		1995					
1994	North Columbus	Columbus	Hephzibah						
1994	Vixtory Temple	Poplarville							
1995	Springdale Family Worship	Water Valley							
1995	Cable Bridge Road	Saucier							
1996	Lighthouse	Grenada	Wayside						
1996	New Vision	Moss Point	Escatawpa						
1997	Bruce	Bruce	Dayspring	1999					
1997	Piney Woods	Richton / Petal							
1997	Fuente de Vida	Pearl							

 $^{^*}$ = African-American congregation

Also Known As Organization Year Reorganized Reorganized Reorganized **Disbanded** Disbanded Disbanded Church Name 1998 Vidalia Road / Ark of the Covenant Amazing Love Ministry Ctr Pass Christian 1999 **New Bethel Holiness** Cascilla 1999 New Beginnings Walls 2000 New Beginnings* Belzoni Coldwater 2000 2000 Church of Deliverance 2000 Open Door Worship Center **Fulton** 2000 Prayer & Praise Fellowship Lumberton 2000 Magee Hispanic Magee 2001 **End Time Harvest*** Byram / Canton 2001 Harvest Time Pontotoc 2002 Iglesia Nueva Vida Houston 2002 **New Horizon** Charleston 2002 Fuente de Agua Viva Forest 2003 Harvest Temple Waynesboro 2004 True Vine* Bruce / Calhoun City 2004 New Covenant Fellowship New Augusta 2004 New Beginnings, Gospel Hr* Leland Diamondhead 2004 Diamondhead 2005 Immanuel Durant 2005 New Life* Marks Ambassadors for Christ* 2005 Picayune 2005 Rivers of Living Water* Gulfport 2005 Bethel Fellowship* Gulfport 2006 Anointed Dove* McComb 2007 Bread of Life Family Worship Kiln 2007 del Dios Vivo Tupelo 2008 Open Door* Columbus 2008 New Vision Worship Center Nettleton People Mission* Gulfport

^{* =} African-American congregation



Organization Year	Church Name	Church Location	Also Known As	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized	Disbanded	Reorganized
	Tabernaculo de Adoracion	Meridian							

^{* =} African-American congregation

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Morgantown Church of God Stonefield Church of God

Grenada Church of God

Lee University

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- ¹²⁶ Z.D. Simpson, "Ethelsville, Ala." *Church of God Evangel* 5, no, 23 (1914): 5.
- ¹²⁷ Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God*, 1886-1976. Revised ed. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1977). Specifically, the state overseer table in Appendices provides this information.
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- ¹³⁰ Priest, My Life Story as a Christian.
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- ¹³⁴ A letter written by L.P. Adams to A.J. Tomlinson, which is in the possession of Wade H. Phillips, a historian of the Church of God movements, indicates Adams has experienced some frustration concerning a disciplinary matter of an individual for whom he signed credentials. Adams indicates he likely has signed his last credentials in the Church of God.

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- Lemons, Church of God Evangel 5, no. 39 (1914): 5.
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 3. Freddie Tilghman, member of the Grenada Church of God, interview by Louis F. Morgan, 29 May 2009, Grenada, Mississippi.
- ¹⁵⁸ Costilow interview, July 1997.
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- ¹⁶⁰ Costilow interview, July 1997.
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- 162 Costilow interview, July 1997.2. Freddie Tilghman interview, 29 May 2009.
- ¹⁶³ Lemons, *Church of God Evangel* 5, no. 39 (1914): 5.
- ¹⁶⁴ Lemons, *Church of God Evangel*5, no. 39 (1914): 5.
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Evangel between 1914 and 1920 provide details concerning this relocation of church members.

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¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Digging New Wells Despite Persecution (pages 20-25)

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- ¹⁷⁰ Ministerial application of Warren Edward Evans on file at the Church of God International Offices, Cleveland, TN.
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Profiles of People with Purity and Passion (pages 26-39)

²²⁴ Mamie Parker Williams, early member of the Church of

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Mississippians On Mission (pages 40-41)

- These notes were taken during a seminar at the Tennessee Church of God Camp Meeting on Thursday, June 25, 2009 in which Ed Stetzer presented "Innovations... Growing a Missional Church." For more information concerning his ministry and helpful resources, go to www.EdStetzer.com.
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This book is dedicated to my grandfather

Feldon "Bud" Morgan

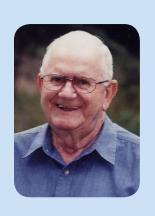
who has exemplified redemption, forgiveness, compassion, humility, unconditional love, and self-sacrifice

and to my great aunt

Opal V. Morgan

who has always encouraged me to write, study, and serve the Lord.

Both have shown me the way to heaven.



"My Spiritual Journey"

Please record your own spiritual journey here as a testimony to the faithfulness of God so that you (and those you love) will remember your story.