

# Unity With a Heartbeat *of* Holiness

Final Report *of the* Church of God Justice & Equity Task Force



CHURCH  
OF GOD  
MINISTRIES

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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	7
<b>Part I: Our Task</b> .....	11
Motion One of the 2021 General Assembly .....	12
Our Church of God Legacy .....	13
Task Force Members .....	16
Task Force Work .....	18
<b>Part II: Our Findings</b> .....	23
Women and Men in the Church of God .....	24
Race and Ethnicity in the Church of God .....	38
Credentials and Leadership.....	51
Key Survey Results at a Glance .....	55
<b>Part III: Where Do We Go from Here?</b> .....	57
Recommendations .....	58
Our Future Together in the Spirit.....	65
Words of Thanks from the Task Force .....	68
Suggestions for Further Reading .....	69
<b>Appendix A: Glossary of Terms</b> .....	70
<b>Appendix B: Overview of Related General Assembly Motions</b> .....	71
<b>Appendix C: A Few Previous General Assembly Resolutions</b> .....	72



## FOREWORD

### A WORD FROM THE CHAIR OF OUR TASK FORCE

I spent years worshipping in predominantly white churches in both rural and suburban communities. I also spent years worshipping in predominantly African American churches. I even served as an associate pastor at a multi-racial/multi-ethnic church with a German Canadian pastor for a congregation that grew more diverse as a reflection of its community. The privilege of all these environments has come in the opportunity to see the greatness of the diversity God created and to see the church with a vision of unity to show the world Jesus' love.

Unfortunately, I have experienced the challenges to holiness and unity in our churches and in the world. On occasion, people have told me that women cannot lead in the church and that God would never call me because of that. The hurts due to my darker skin color from my multicultural background are met with disregard and disdain. I usually do not even say these things out loud because people can be, at best, dismissive and, at worst, defensive, rather than caring and loving in the world and even in the church. God has been my refuge during these challenges, and my equipper during the opportunities to serve and make a difference. Racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in the church has been my ministry passion for many years, and the opportunity for women (just like men) to serve in ministry leadership has been inherited through the things I have been given the opportunity to do. These have been matters of service and sacrifice with the desire for the church to be better in reaching the world.

I have appreciated serving on this team of very different individuals with very different points of view as we worked to get to know one another and to understand the heart behind our different perspectives. This team is an example of what the church needs to be. This report is developed by a group of people with different writing styles and tones who love Jesus and want to see God's church be better in the practice for the holiness and unity we preach. We want to show the world Jesus.

I pray that our practices will continually grow and improve to match our beliefs from the Bible. God bless this glorious church.

**Rev. Carron Odokara, PhD**  
**Chair of the Justice and Equity Task Force**



## INTRODUCTION

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# THE 2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY MOTION

*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn  
with those who mourn. Live in  
harmony with one another.*

Romans 12:15–16a NIV

## THE CONTEXT

In May 2020, the killing of George Floyd exposed the painful reality that people of color and Black men, in particular, were being treated in unthinkable and unjust ways. We all watched the 21st-century version of a lynching in the street as we watched Floyd take his last breath. However, Floyd was just one in a long line of events that were deeply disturbing. The killing of Treyvon Martin, Ahmaud Arbery, Brianna Taylor, and so many others were pushing us to take a hard look at the role that race plays in our nation. The increasing rhetoric surrounding immigration was growing increasingly dehumanizing and hostile in our society and the rise of Asian hate crimes during the pandemic were (and are) another point of concern.

I (Dan Turner) pastor a diverse church in Washington, D.C., where more than half of our members are men and women of color and where we host both a Hispanic congregation and a Haitian congregation. My members were hurting. Black men in my church shared with me the dozens of times they had been stopped for no other reason than looking suspicious to law enforcement. For comparison, I am not exactly known as a great or safe driver but I've never been stopped by police in the D.C. metro area. Mothers in our congregation were languishing in a state of anger and hurt, worried over the future of their Black sons and daughters.

This has also been a very anxious time for our brothers and sisters who have immigrated to the United States. The pastor of the Hispanic congregation we host shared the fear and anxiety present within his congregation, especially for those with an undocumented status.

My own family was reeling, as well, with the thought that our African American son would be facing these same issues. Our son is on the autism spectrum and doesn't always respond in neurotypical ways, so my wife installed "Child with Autism" stickers on our car as an extra precaution. I asked our teenage daughter to be prepared to speak for her brother if police ever engaged him. These were issues I never dreamed we would have to face.

The conversations I was having with my African American colleagues opened up countless stories of discrimination and bias and hurt. One of my African American colleagues revealed that she was completely drained from trying to explain to our white colleagues the level of pain and mistrust she felt.



I was thankful that Church of God Ministries was responding and hosting town halls to talk about the pain our African American brothers and sisters are experiencing. But, for those that participated, we all remember there were many comments in the open chats that were less than sympathetic.

## The Development of the Motion

With the 2021 Convention coming up, I knew that we would likely have another statement read and approved in the General Assembly expressing our concern and offering our prayers to the African American community. This time something had to be different. Everyone I spoke with said they were tired of statements that never resulted in change.

That spring, Dr. Cheryl Sanders and I joined forces to write a motion for the General Assembly that would move beyond words and into action. We hadn't gotten far into our conversation when Dr. Sanders suggested that, if we were going to address issues of equality, then we also needed to include the issue of women in leadership. We both were concerned about the continual stream of stories that our female colleagues were being denied access to leadership positions within our congregations.

Although racial unrest was the initial impetus for the motion, the issue of discrimination against our female colleagues was long overdue to receive some attention. As you will see in this report, we are losing ground when it comes to seeing women in lead pastor positions in our congregations. There has been much conversation, but very little action to improve the leadership environment for women in our Movement. In Appendix C of this report, you can see several resolutions dating back decades that attest to many good intentions, yet we do not have a history of bold action.

And so the motion to the General Assembly was born in that moment with this simple premise—can we study the Church of God to see if we are actually living out what we say we believe in both the areas of racial equality and the priesthood of all believers? The Business, Leadership, and Resource Committee (BLRC) worked diligently to take the motion and make it as sharp and focused as possible.

## A Holy Spirit Moment

When it came time to present the motion, Dr. Sanders insisted that I present the motion and yielded her time to me. It was an emotional moment and the Assembly was gracious in stretching my allotted time so that I could share. I shared about my family and my congregation. I attempted to convey the hurt and frustration that I was hearing from my African American colleagues.

There were lots of tears that evening. I sensed, as did many others, a holy moment of unity among our leaders gathered there in Denver. I had no idea what was happening around the dimly lit room where the GA met, but I heard later from friends who saw the frustration of those around them turn to tears during the introduction to the motion. Several Black pastors stopped me to say how thankful they were to hear that there were others who shared their concerns. On my way back to my hotel room, a Black brother stopped me with tears in his eyes to say how thankful he was to hear what was shared about the challenges of raising young Black boys in the current environment. The motion was approved with 90 percent approval of the General Assembly. I truly believe the Holy Spirit was guiding us to have a much-needed conversation about race and women in leadership in our Movement.

PART I

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# OUR TASK

## MOTION ONE of the 2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### **2021 General Assembly of the Church of God in the United States and Canada**

“Be it moved and seconded that the General Assembly establish a Justice and Equity Task Force, to discover the composition, beliefs, and practice of Church of God agencies and congregations with regard to racial justice and the equality of men and women across the Movement in the United States and Canada and to ascertain the impact of such composition, beliefs, and practice on the global mission of the Church of God.

“The Task Force will consist of five-seven persons appointed by the Ministries Council, representing the diversity of the Church of God. The Ministries Council will consider appointing persons to the Task Force who possess expertise in survey and analysis (or consulting with those who do). The Task Force will report biannually to the Ministries Council, regarding its process, progress, and necessary funding, beginning in September 2021. The Task Force will make recommendations to the Ministries Council within two years (on or before 30 September 2023) for improving the understanding and practice of racial justice and the equality of men and women across the Church of God.

“Furthermore, we move that the General Assembly direct the Committee on Credentials to consider additional measures to ensure that candidates for ordination have rigorously explored the topic of diversity, including racial justice and the equality of men and women. The Committee on Credentials, in consultation with the Justice and Equity Task Force, shall specifically address these issues in the Credentials Manual of the Church of God and within the curriculum of Leadership Focus.”

*This motion was submitted by Cheryl Sanders (Washington, D.C.) and Dan Turner (Takoma Park, MD); this motion has been reviewed by the Business, Leadership, and Resource Committee, and forwarded to the floor of the General Assembly, 17 JUNE 2021.*

## OUR CHURCH OF GOD LEGACY

*I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.*

John 17:17–21 CEB

Since its inception in the late 1800s, two distinctive doctrines have marked the identity of the Church of God reformation movement—holiness and unity. Both are biblical concepts, and many references can be found to holiness and unity in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. But there is one passage of Scripture that is frequently cited in support of these doctrines because it records a prayer that Jesus prayed shortly before his arrest and crucifixion, revealing his desire for his followers to be holy and unified:

Make them holy in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. I made myself holy on their behalf so that they also would be made holy in the truth. I'm not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word. I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. John 17:17–21 CEB

D. S. Warner and the 19th-century pioneers of our Movement were advocates of holiness and unity. In 1888, an appeal was published in the *Gospel Trumpet* by a Black woman, Jane Williams, asking Warner to come to Augusta, Georgia, to preach. The next year Williams established a Church of God congregation in Charleston, South Carolina. Her work in the South became the launching pad for the Augusta Camp Meeting and for Church of God ministries throughout the South, where Blacks and whites worshiped together as equals.<sup>1</sup>

The early acceptance and prominence of women preachers in the Movement is attested by the fact that the “News from the Field” column in the *Gospel Trumpet* records information for eighty-eight women who were active in ministry in 1891 and 1892. Sarah Smith, Mary Cole, Nora Hunter, and Lena Schoffner Mattheson are named by Church of God historians as notable women preachers who were acquainted with D. S. Warner and whose evangelistic efforts supported the early advance of the Movement. Some of the same women who took a stand for their right to preach also challenged the barriers of racial prejudice and segregation. Here is an illuminating example of the witness of women preachers against racism:

Lena is best known for the sermon she preached to an integrated congregation at the 1897 camp meeting held near Hartselle, Alabama. The group met the legal requirement for segregation of Blacks and whites by placing a rope down the middle of the tent, with Blacks sitting on one side and whites on the other. Taking as her text Ephesians 2:14 (“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...” KJV), Lena preached [on] the evils of racial prejudice. Her sermon found its mark: someone took down the rope and both races prayed together at the altar.<sup>2</sup>

By and large the first generation of Church of God leaders welcomed the full and equal participation of women and Black Americans in the body of Christ during a time when racial discrimination and gender inequality were legally sanctioned and widely practiced in the society. The vision that the Spirit calls and equips the saints without respect to racial, sexual, or sectarian boundaries empowered the Movement to reject racial segregation and subordination of women as inappropriate practices for God’s church. Black women and men were especially drawn to the Church of God by the message of holiness and unity.<sup>3</sup>

Things changed in the Church of God reformation movement at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1912, there was an infamous confrontation at the Anderson Camp Meeting when white leaders asked Black participants to find another place to worship because their presence was hindering white people from coming to the meetings and being saved. In 1917, a camp meeting was started in West Middlesex, Pennsylvania, to welcome people of all races, in fulfillment of the vision of Elisha Wimbish, whose wife Priscilla organized the Brothers and Sisters of Love in Sharon, Pennsylvania, after being expelled from the Baptist church for preaching and practicing holiness. The West Middlesex camp meeting was not established in response to the 1912 confrontation in Anderson, Indiana. However, because of the faithful perseverance of Elijah Wimbish and the Black saints of Sharon, worshippers who had been told they were no longer welcome at Anderson now had a place to go.<sup>4</sup> The National Association of the Church of God continues to sponsor annual camp meetings at West Middlesex and other conventions and gatherings focused on the nurture of African American ministers and congregations. The Association is recognized by Church of God Ministries, Inc. as a Partner in Ministry.

The Justice and Equity Task Force has been intentional about including the experiences and opinions of Spanish-speaking pastors and congregations in our report. The evangelistic outreach to Hispanics was pioneered in Texas by Mariano Tafolla in the 1920s, and the first Hispanic Church of God congregation was established in San Antonio in 1921.<sup>5</sup> The Hispanic Council of the Church of God (*Concilio Hispano de la Iglesia de Dios*) sponsors annual conventions of particular interest to Spanish-speaking participants, and is recognized by Church of God Ministries, Inc. as a Partner in Ministry.

Where does the Church of God stand today on the issue of racial justice and gender equality? This report responds to this question. It was compiled by the Justice and Equity Task Force, whose work was authorized by a resolution approved by the 2021 General Assembly in Denver. Our assigned task was to examine the “composition, beliefs, and practices” of the Church of God concerning race and the equality of men and women and to give a report at the 2023 General Assembly in Tampa. These findings and recommendations are intended to guide our Movement toward visible and intentional fulfillment of the holiness and unity for which Jesus prayed. We invite a careful reading of this report. And we pray for our Church of God agencies, pastors, and congregations to have the wisdom and the courage to change.

*He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.*

Proverbs 2:8–9 NKJV

<sup>1</sup>James Earl Massey, *African Americans and the Church of God: Aspects of a Social History* (Anderson: Anderson University Press, 2005):25–34.

<sup>2</sup>Susie Stanley, “Women Evangelists in the Church of God at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” in *Called to Minister, Empowered to Serve*, Second Edition, MaryAnn Hawkins, ed. (Anderson: Warner Press, 2013):81–82.

<sup>3</sup>Massey, *African Americans and the Church of God*, 18.

<sup>4</sup>Massey, *African Americans and the Church of God*, 88–89.

<sup>5</sup>See Nilah Meier-Youngman and Cindy Mansfield, “Hispanic Women in Ministry in the Church of God,” in *Called to Ministry* (109) and Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Making Good the Claim* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016):159.

## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The name and member selection for the task force was defined in the 2021 motion. The people below were chosen by the Ministries Council to serve on the Justice and Equity Task Force.



CHAIR

**CARRON ODOKARA**

Inkster, MI

Carron Odokara, PhD was a corporate IT manager and associate pastor in southeast Michigan who has served in multiple state and national leadership positions for the Church of God.

Dan Turner, DMin, is lead pastor of Northwest Community Church in Washington, D.C., founder of Dying to Restart Consulting, and co-author of *“Dying to Restart.”*



VICE-CHAIR

**DAN TURNER**

Washington, DC



SECRETARY

**OLIVIA DIXON**

Lexington, KY

Olivia Dixon is a graduate of Mid-America Christian University, former kids pastor at Salem Church of God in Dayton, Ohio, and recently completed her Leadership Focus journey.



Cheryl Sanders is senior pastor of Third Street Church of God in Washington, D.C., professor of Christian ethics at Howard University, vice presiding elder of the National Association of the Church of God, and former vice chair of the CHOG General Assembly and Ministries Council, and former president of the American Theological Society.



**CHERYL SANDERS**  
Washington, DC



**GARY AGEE**  
Middletown, OH

Gary Agee, PhD, is the lead pastor of the Beechwood Church of God, an engagement and recruiting specialist for Anderson University, and the author of *That We May Be One: Practicing Unity in a Divided Church*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2022.

Efrain Cirilo currently serves as vice chair of the General Assembly. He is also the state administrator for Texas Ministries of the Church of God and serves as lead pastor of ministry and multiplication at Wake Church in Conroe.



**EFRAIN CIRILO**  
Conroe, TX



**BRANDON SAPP**  
Seattle, WA

Brandon Sapp is a member of the Church of God and a researcher specializing in human-centered design for Blink UX, a leading research and design consultancy in Seattle, Washington.

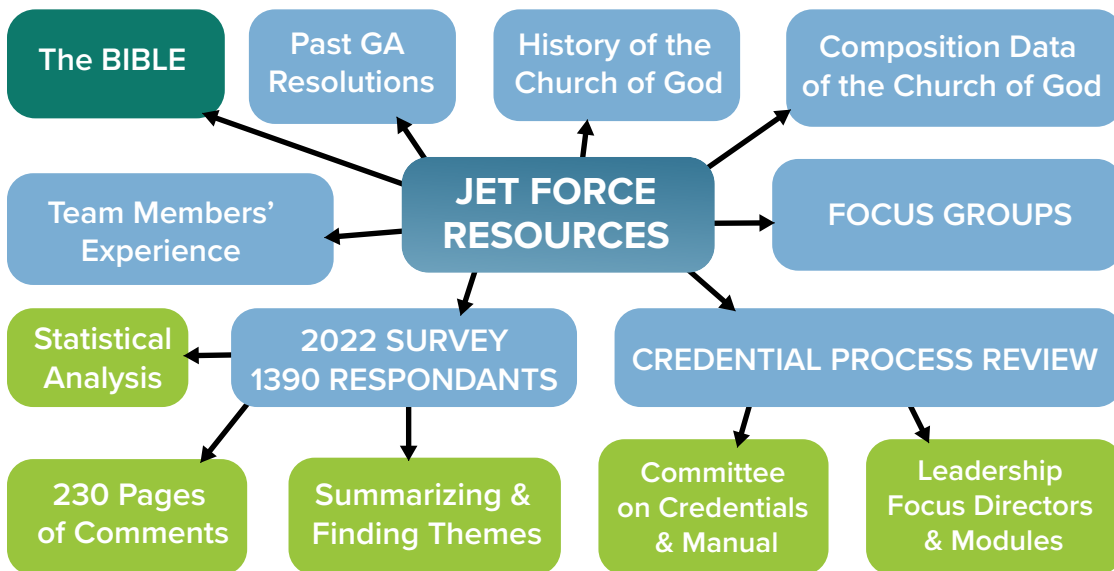
# TASK FORCE WORK

*I asked, “Where are you going?” He answered me, “To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is.”*

Zechariah 2:2 NIV

Over the last twenty months, the Justice and Equity Task Force has undertaken a Herculean effort to answer the question of whether we are living out what we say we believe. Our team has not sought to shift our theological positions in any way. That was not our task.

Within this report you will read the results of one of the largest surveys ever conducted within the Church of God. You will also read the results of multiple focus groups and hundreds of pages of written comments. You will get a snapshot of our current leadership data and hear about the results of a review of our credentialing process. The diagram below will give you a quick snapshot of the scope of our work.



## Composition Data

The composition data that you will see in this report was drawn from the Church of God Atlas database system. The data includes detailed information about our ordained clergy, but the congregational data is more limited.

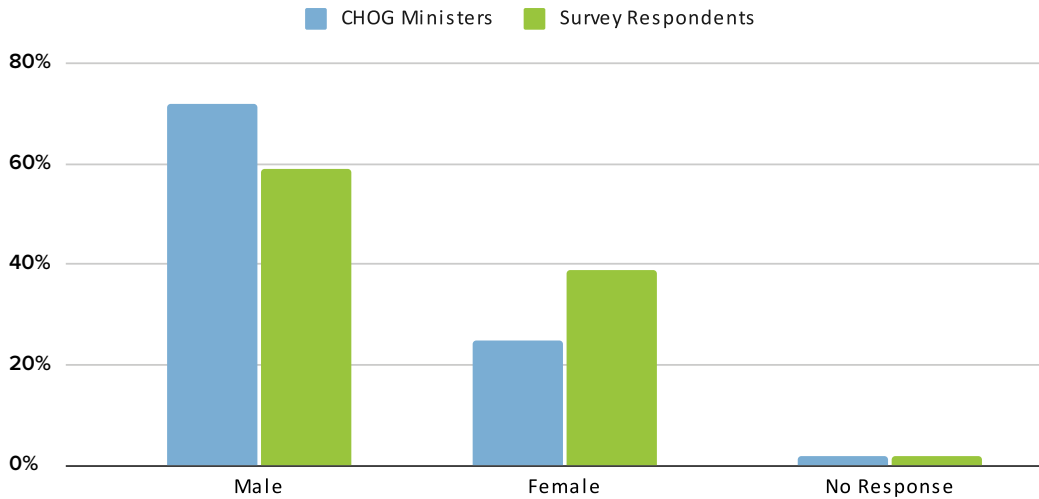
## 2022 Survey

The Task Force engaged the services of Renew Partnerships to help with the development of a survey tool. Renew Partnerships has been closely involved with Barna, and brought a wealth of experience both in conducting surveys and in surveying denominations and universities on the topic of race. Renew Partnerships did not have experience in conducting surveys on the topic of women in ministry, so we leaned on members of our Task Force and other trusted voices to guide the development of those survey questions.

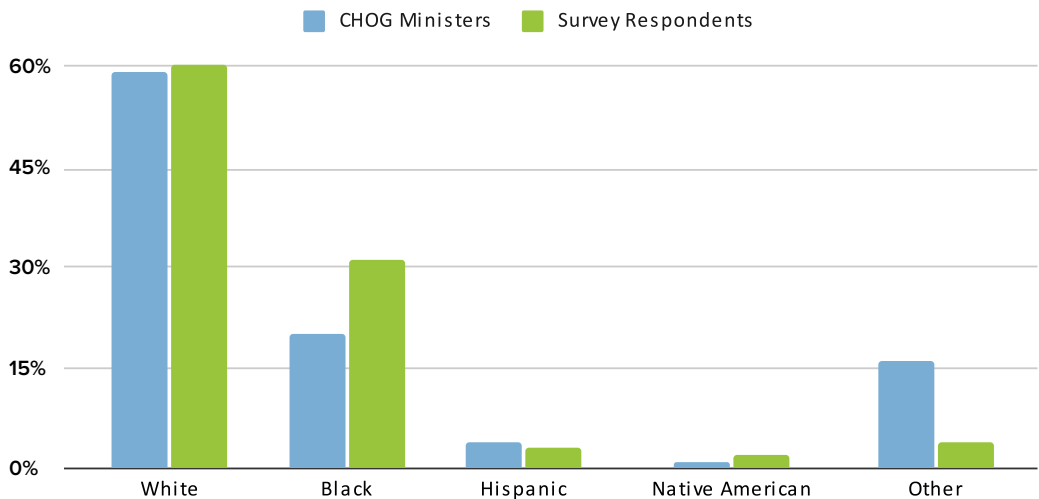
A version of the survey was translated and made available in Spanish. We had members of the Canadian Church of God review the survey to ensure that it was relevant in Canada, as well. We also used a diverse beta test group to help us refine many of the questions.

Out of the 8,300 requests sent out, 1,390 people completed the survey. There were 362 lead pastors who completed the survey, as well as 201 associate pastors. We attempted to capture both pastors and those in the pews, and we were fairly successful. Fifty-seven percent of our respondents were ordained and 43 percent were lay people. Because we used the Church of God Ministries mailing list as the primary source of participants, even the lay people tended to be leaders within their congregations. Sixty-three percent of all participants said that they had “significant influence in determining the vision, strategy, and budget” in their churches. The charts below illustrate the male/female and racial distribution of the survey respondents. The respondents were spread across the United States and Canada in a frequency that coincided closely with the location and density of our churches.

## CHOG Ministers and Survey Respondents



## CHOG Ministers and Survey Respondents



## Racial and Ethnic Terms

You will notice throughout the document that we try to be consistent in how we refer to different races and ethnic groups. We had a lot of conversations within our diverse Task Force about how we should refer to different races. We decided to use the term Hispanic for our Spanish-speaking constituents. We decided to use the terms Black and African American interchangeably, though we realize that not all people with darker skin are African American (Caribbeans, for example). We decided to use the term white to refer to Anglo or Caucasians. Although in the U.S. the term Native American is acceptable, we realize that, for our Canadian constituents, the preferred term is “First Nations.” Any time “Native American” is used, it will refer only to the U.S. context. This intentionality might feel extraneous to some, but the Task Force felt strongly that the terms we use for each other matter and communicate a level of care and respect.



## Part II

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# OUR FINDINGS

## WOMEN AND MEN IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

*So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1:27 NLT

God created males and females, and both bear God’s image. Throughout our history, the Church of God has believed in the equality of women and men, with women included in the service to the church as leaders of all capacities. Based on this established stance in the Church of God, this section addresses the strengths and hindrances for kingdom progress involving women and men in the church.

### Strengths in Involving Women and Men for Kingdom Progress

- 1. The Church of God historically established our theological stance for women and men leading in the Church.**

The Church of God website has published statements on our beliefs at [jesusisthesubject.org/our-beliefs/](http://jesusisthesubject.org/our-beliefs/) with the statement below regarding women in ministry.

## OUR BELIEFS

**“Women in Ministry.** The distribution of gifts by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the body of Christ is not determined by gender. God has poured out his Spirit on all people, and both sons and daughters will prophesy—and teach, and shepherd the flock. In Christ, in the kingdom of God, that which once divided us—Jew, Gentile; slave, free; male, female—no longer separate. From the earliest days of the Church of God Movement, we’ve celebrated the ministry leadership of outstanding women clergy and continue to do so (Acts 2:17; Gal 3:28).”



Salvation is not limited to men only, based on Galatians 3:28. Gifts are allocated by the Holy Spirit for the body of Christ without restriction by gender. Additional Church of God writings have addressed women in ministry and mission to support the egalitarian view in the Movement.

In 1974, the General Assembly reaffirmed the Church of God's commitment to women's equality in the church. At a time when the church was seeing fewer women involved in the ministry leadership of the church, the 1974 resolution on the Role of Women in the Church of God (in Appendix C) restated the Movement's support for women serving in ministry leadership positions locally, regionally, and nationally. Ministry leadership in the Movement has been exemplified by gifted women including Lena Shoffner, Jane Williams, Lillie McCutcheon, and Diana Swoope.

## **2. The majority of survey respondents were motivated to work toward the equality of women and men.**

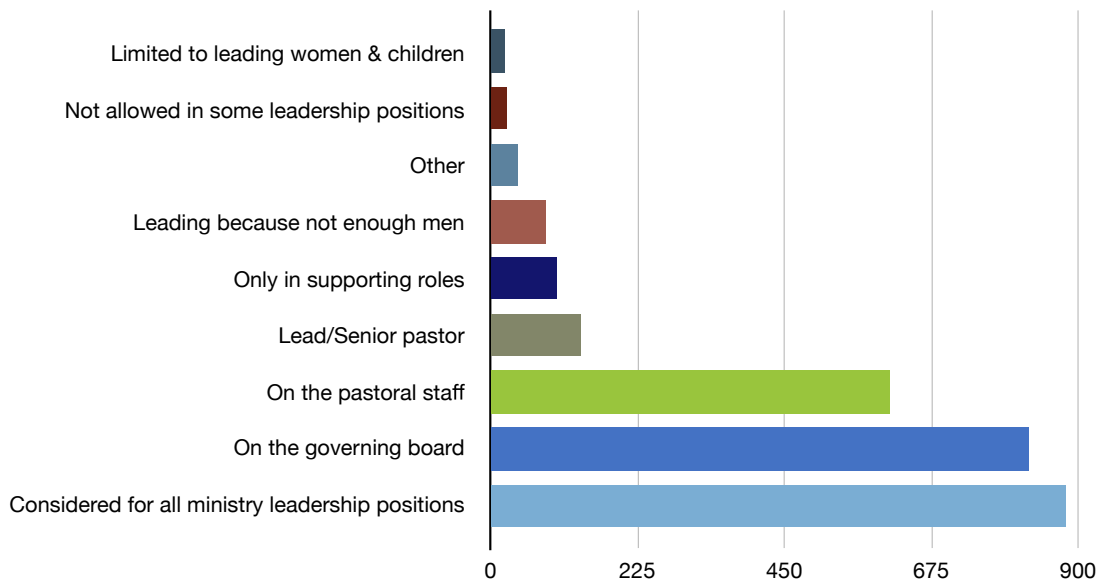
In the survey conducted to address the resolution requirements, a number of the questions were asked to determine the level of support for the belief in the equality of women and men. The following results were reported:

- 74 percent of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they are motivated to work toward the equality of women and men (Q38)
- 87 percent of respondents strongly disagree or disagree that men are superior to women (Q35)
- 86 percent of respondents indicated that the equality of women and men should be a high or medium priority for Christians (Q32)
- 78 percent of respondents said in the last five years their church sometimes/often/very often demonstrated commitment to promoting the equality of women and men (Q49)

In addition, the survey sought more data about gender equality by framing questions about opportunities for women to serve. In some church settings, women’s participation is limited to working with women and children or supporting roles. However, hundreds of respondents indicated widespread opportunities in their churches for women in leadership as lead/senior pastors, pastoral staff, governing board members, and all church leadership positions. The chart below shows the distribution of answers regarding the opportunities for women to be involved in the church ministry.

## CHART 2: Opportunities to Serve

What opportunities to serve are given to women in your church?



### 3. Leadership Focus provides the opportunity in the credentials process to teach the Church of God stance on the equality of women and men.

The Church of God’s theological perspectives are taught to their respective congregations predominantly by a lead or teaching pastor. As a result, the

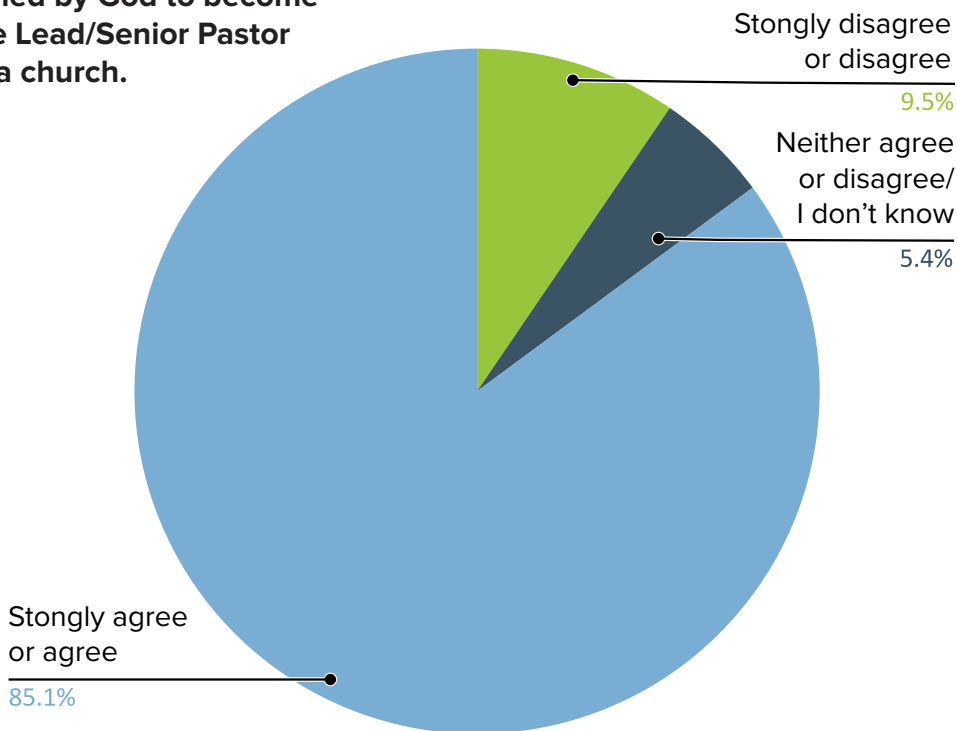
credentialing process has established ways to assess the theological views of ordination candidates on the question of women in church leadership. In the Church of God Credentials Manual, Doctrinal Statement 12 of the 16 statements required by ordination candidates asks them to write about “The status of women in ministry and leadership” and about how those beliefs on the subject are practiced in their lives and ministries. In addition, Leadership Focus addresses Doctrinal Statement 12 on women in ministry within the third course. This allows ordination candidates to explore and learn more about the Church of God beliefs on the equality of women and men in the church.

#### **4. The majority of survey respondents agreed that women and men can be called by God as lead pastors.**

The Church of God has a large number of women in ministry, with 1,394 listed as ministers. Thus according to the Atlas data, 25.4 percent of the ministers in the Movement are women. In the survey, 85 percent of the respondents agreed that women and men could be called by God to be a lead/senior pastor, as shown in the chart below. The large percentage is an encouragement, showing just how many are in agreement with the historic stance of the Church of God. However, that leaves a group of 15 percent that disagree or do not know where they stand on this Church of God belief. In a deeper analysis of the data on those who did not support this belief, it is interesting to note that the disagreements on women and men as lead/support pastors was 15 percent, plus or minus a couple percentage points. This percentage held steady no matter which sub-group of people was examined, including men only, women only, different racial groups, credentialed ministers (ordained and licensed), lead pastors, and regional pastors. The disagreement or “not knowing” for 15 percent of the respondents indicates the need for education on this Church of God theological stance.

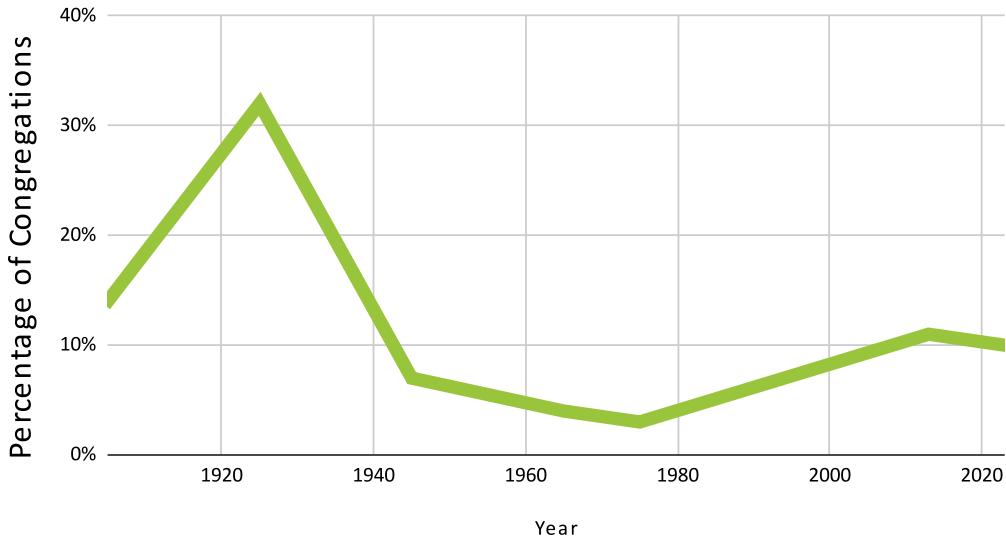
### CHART 3: Opinions About Women Leading

**Both women and men can be called by God to become the Lead/Senior Pastor in a church.**



The count of women pastors leading congregations was a large number for many years early in the Movement's history. The numbers declined from the 1920s through the 1980s, but have started to show an increase in more recent years. While the numbers of women leading congregations has recently returned to the numbers that existed in the 1920s, the number of congregations has increased significantly during that time to show a decrease in the percentage of congregations with women leading them, from a high of 32 percent in 1925 to the current level of 11 percent of women leading congregations, as shown in the chart on page 29.

## CHART 4: Historical Trend of Women Pastors Leading Congregations



## Survey & Focus Group Quotes on Strengths Regarding the Equality of Women & Men

The survey and focus group provided a large volume of qualitative data. Below are just a few quotes to sample the perspectives shared.

*“If we truly believe that God has created men and women, as a unit together, both individually and communally in the image of himself, then when we are only elevating men, to the mainstage platforms, to the pulpit, we are missing half of the perspective of the image of God.”*

*“I am proactive in reaching out to women in ministry to encourage them. In our marriage, we practice mutuality by deferring to one another in love as taught in Scripture.”*

*“Having women preach when I’m gone from my church. Watching language of bylaws. Supporting/sponsoring women candidates for ordination. Teaching equality of God’s gifting and using women to lead the church.”*

*“The best person for the position should be chosen. Women should not get a position on the mere fact it’s a woman, and a man should not get a position because he is a man.”*

## Hindrances to Involving Women and Men for Kingdom Progress

### **1. The complementarian view promoting the inequality of women and men influences our Movement as pastors and members of other denominations speak to, and attend, our congregations.**

The Church of God beliefs about the equality of women and men, and the opportunities for both women and men to serve in ministry leadership, is countered by the outside influences of people and leaders from denominations that have differing beliefs. Although lay people in congregations may have a variety of beliefs adopted from attending other churches, the experience in a Church of God congregation can help make them embrace a more equitable belief with respect to the role of women in church leadership. However, when a pastor from a denomination comes with differing beliefs, the concern is heightened as that person preaches and teaches doctrine out of harmony with the Church of God movement. In addition, teaching and resources taken from people with a complementarian perspective promote the inequality of women and men. These complementarian views also hinder women from being fully included in various congregational and ministry opportunities across the Church of God. Here are a few of the quotes from the survey respondents as examples of this troubling paradigm.

*“I know of churches who continue on in the Church of God with pastors who would hold complementarian theology, or even one church that had in their bylaws that women could not serve as elders or pastors. Not sure what the state’s role or CHOG Ministries’ role is there, but there is a theological disagreement between such pastors and churches with the Church of God.”*

*“I think part of the reason that we’re seeing that vision leak is because people are being drawn to the Church of God from these other backgrounds and these other denominations and beliefs that don’t support women in ministry. And that’s been happening for however many decades now.”*

*“We talk a good talk, but don’t walk a good walk. Local congregations have refused to place qualified female candidates for lead pastor positions. Contributing to this is our dependence on teaching from a reformed/complementarian perspective in radio and TV ministries and other resources.”*

The belief in the inequality of women and men manifested in the survey in additional ways. While 73.7 percent of respondents believe the teaching of the equality of women and men comes from the Bible, there are many who either think that society is the source of believing that women and men are equal, or they are not sure from where that belief comes.

## **2. A concerning amount of bias and discrimination was indicated by survey respondents.**

Women reported significantly more experiences of bias or discrimination in their church experience than men. These concerns occurred in the Church of God, including the credentialing process.

- 51 percent of women respondents said they had felt discriminated against in the Church of God (and 11 percent of men) - Q43
- 27 percent of women respondents said they had experienced bias while pursuing credentials (and 2 percent of men) - Q47

**3. Too often Credentials Committees operate from a male ministry model without consideration for diverse ministry contexts and people in the ordination process.**

The survey and focus group data shows that the bias experienced by women in the credentialing process came in a variety of forms. Women reported concerns with the types of questions and comments in credentials committee meetings, additional requirements to enter the credentialing process, delays, and other discouragements. A few example quotes from the survey data are below.

*“Women are accepted well into Leadership Focus, but individual cohorts are often discouraging, as are some credentials committees.”*

*“I have seen women go through additional requirements for credentials committees (prior to Leadership Focus).”*

*“They have been looked over for jobs they are qualified for because they aren’t men. Churches have told them they can’t be senior pastors or churches have had unspoken policies of not hiring women. Their voices haven’t been heard at the national level. They have been slowed down in the ordination process.”*

**4. Congregations and leaders with male bias in their teaching, staffing, and bylaws exist in opposition to our theological stance for the equality of women and men.**

Sometimes, the male bias for positions is explicit. For example, see the senior pastor position on page 33 that was published in Atlas at the beginning of 2023. The clear references to seeking a man for the position is obvious and further emphasized in the additional job information on the church’s website.





# ATLAS

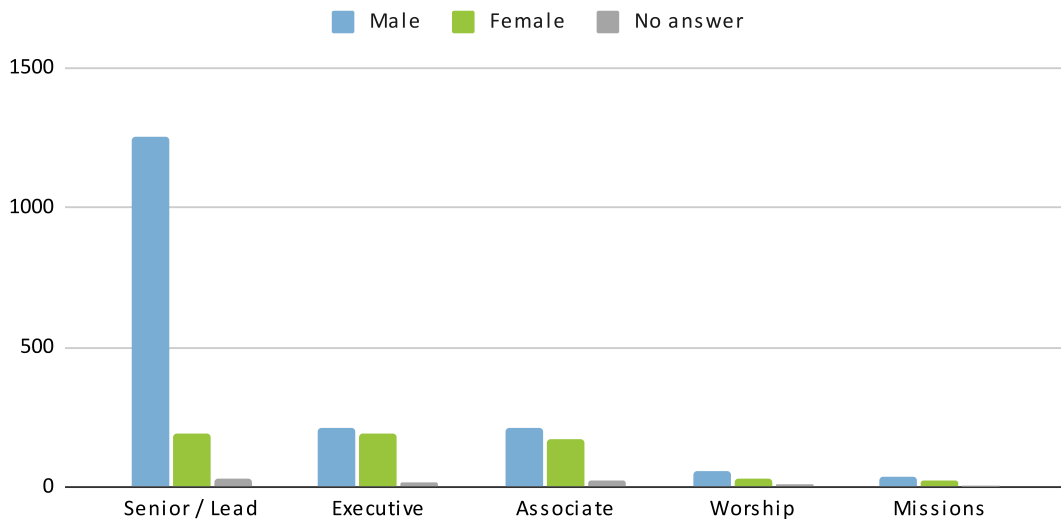
## 2023 POSITION POSTING

**“Pastor Job Description Qualifications:** The Senior Pastor will be a man of good character, qualified as an elder, and able to preach and teach the Word of God, as described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The Senior Pastor must be willing to perform his duties in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of this church.”

While this position posting above clearly does not align with the Church of God belief in the equality of women and men, other congregations hide the male bias for pastoral applicants. In these congregations, the search committees receive the résumés of women who apply for pastoral positions and discard them without consideration.

In examining the composition data on women and men in pastoral leadership roles, the chart below shows the five most reported pastoral positions, and the breakdown of men and women in those roles. While the various types of associate pastor positions show numbers relatively close for women and men, the lead/senior pastor position is heavily populated by men and not women. There is no way to know just how close those lead/senior pastor bars should or should not be. There is not necessarily any assumption that the bars should be equal for men and women in lead/senior pastor positions. However, the desire is equity/fairness in the treatment of women applying for lead/senior pastor roles.

**CHART 5: Five Most Reported CHOG Pastoral Positions**



**5. Key national and regional leadership positions have limited female presence visible.**

The history of the Church of God has not seen many women in key leadership positions until more recently. The regional/state pastor positions are heavily male-dominated. The first female to chair the General Assembly occurred only a few years ago, and of course we have not yet seen a female General Director. The key visible national leaders were a point of commentary in the survey data.

*“If we look at the history of the National Association, we have for the first time, as executive director, a woman, and we have yet to have a presiding elder of the National Association.”*

*“I don’t know when the General Director’s time is up, but will a woman be considered, or even with regional pastors? Are we really serious about considering more women?”*

*“When one sees men in all the important positions, it is obvious what is taking place.”*

## **6. Women struggle to be considered for leadership positions that are filled by the “good ol’ boy” network.**

The survey in Q66 asked if there are ways that the Church of God has discouraged women in ministry and leadership. One of the repeated answers on discouraging women in ministry was the “good ol’ boy” network.

*“Maintaining in some circles and pockets of the church that ‘good ol’ boy’ network, which discriminates against women and holds them back; churches passing over qualified women for senior and lead pastor positions.”*

*“It has been an unclear (emotional, lack of support) method of discouragement, like an ‘ol’ boys’ club.”*

*“There’s still a good ol’ boy system, despite goodwill towards women in ministry. Actions speak just as loud as words.”*

*“Even in the most progressive of Church of God churches, there is still the ‘boys’ club’ going on.”*

## **7. Male pastors may limit women’s development and opportunities in ministry.**

Women are limited by some practices of male pastors to focus development and job opportunities on other men. One of the examples of this limitation has been formalized with a name, the “Billy Graham” rule. While the intent of this rule is to address concerning situations between women and men, the outcome restricts women from having equal access to mentoring and other less formal development opportunities. In addition, some male pastors have focused their hiring practices on other men. Women and men can and do work together in all types of environments. If men are the majority of pastoral leaders and the majority of the regional and national leaders, what opportunities do women have to grow in ministry leadership if men

restrict their interactions and hiring to only working with other men? A few questions from the survey regarding this issue are below.

*“There’s just less of that networking, less of that propelling women into those kinds of positions because of the Billy Graham rule.”*

*“Though the Church of God has long claimed they are pro-female pastors, they have done little to support or back their female pastors, and many churches won’t even look at a woman to [lead as] pastor.”*

*“Separating women pastors from men pastors in conferences, as if pastoral and congregational issues do not pertain to all pastors.”*

## Survey & Focus Group Quotes on Hindrances Regarding the Equality of Women & Men

The survey and focus group provided a large volume of qualitative data. Below are just a few quotes to sample the perspectives shared regarding hindrances to practicing our belief in the equality of women and men.

*“The inequality of women is horrible in the church setting, because the subtleties of attitudes by males in the church dominate language and approach in ways that are demeaning to women.”*

*“I think allowing churches to actively say they won’t hire female senior pastors without follow-up from state or global leadership is incredibly discouraging. Also allowing those same churches to hire complementarian pastors without a conversation by state or global leadership is discouraging.”*

*“Associations with ministries that do not believe in equality. Guest speakers, lectures, and teachers that do not believe in equality are hired to lead pastoral retreats.”*

*“The general ‘shoulder shrug’ when blatant gender discrimination is present.”*

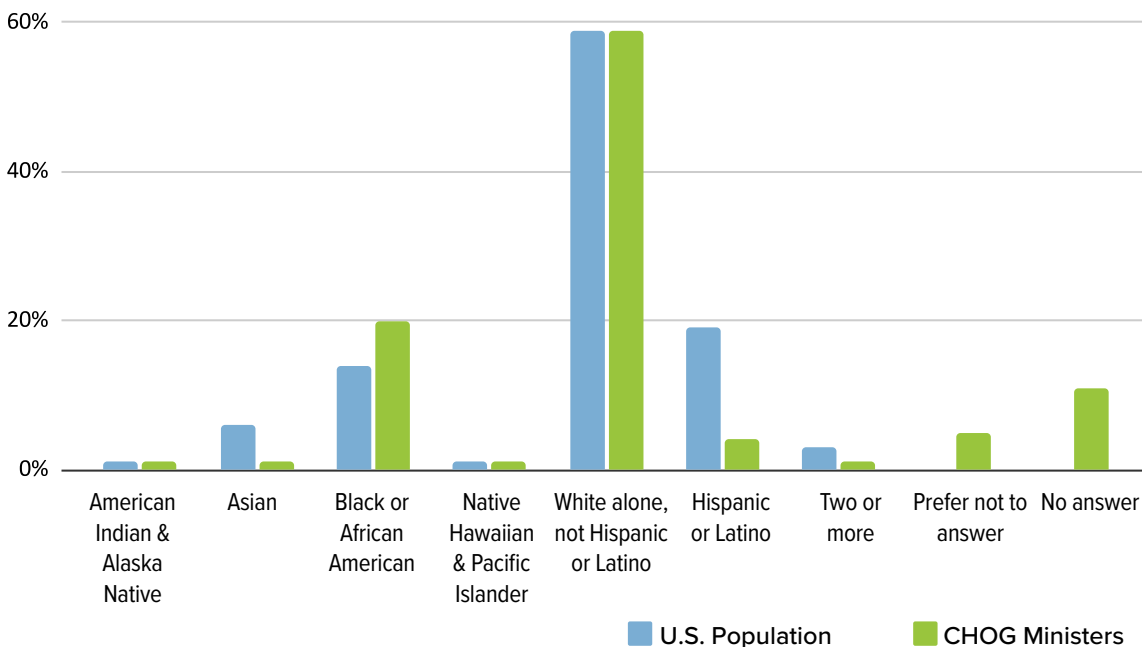
## RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*

Revelation 7:9 NIV

John gives us a beautiful image of what God’s kingdom will look like when it comes to complete fruition. However, we know that most of the church remains very segregated. Compared to a study completed in 2014 by Pew Research, the Church of God (Anderson) is exceptional in being able to bring together a diverse constituency. (See <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>) As you can see in the table below, the race and ethnicity of our clergy aligns closely to the distribution in the United States.

**CHART 6: Diversity of CHOG Ministers Compared to U.S. Census**



With the growth of racial and ethnic diversity in the United States, our Movement is at a distinct advantage in being able to reach a wide diversity of people. However, the Church of God has shown a reluctance in embracing our racially diverse identity. Our reluctance to acknowledge our racial differences has created a situation where we don't have the common language or even the vocabulary to discuss our differences. Throughout our focus groups, survey, and correspondence from Church of God constituents, we heard very different and conflicting understandings of terms such as racial justice, equality, equity, and diversity.

In fact, many respondents insisted that the best path forward was to ignore our differences and simply not have this conversation. However, it is the firm belief of the Justice and Equity Task Force that there is strength in our racial diversity. That strength does not come from uniformity. It comes from unity in spite of our differences.

While preaching at the Anderson Camp Meeting in 1991, Dr. Samuel G. Hines made the following statement:

*“God has a new world order. It is not racial; it is not national; it is not Jewish; it is not Gentile; it is not east or west. The Church of God is either going to demonstrate, dramatize, or display this solidarity, or become a contemporary scandal, bringing blame and shame to the gospel by virtue of blatant contradiction between what we preach and what we practice.”*

That is the focus of the work of the Task Force—to determine if we are practicing what we preach when it comes to unity. We believe the more effective we are at practicing this unity that our effectiveness in reaching the world for Christ will increase. Many respondents insisted that the work of the Task Force was a distraction from the gospel. However, Jesus tied the work of unity closely to the gospel when he prayed in John 17 that the world would see our unity and be drawn to him.

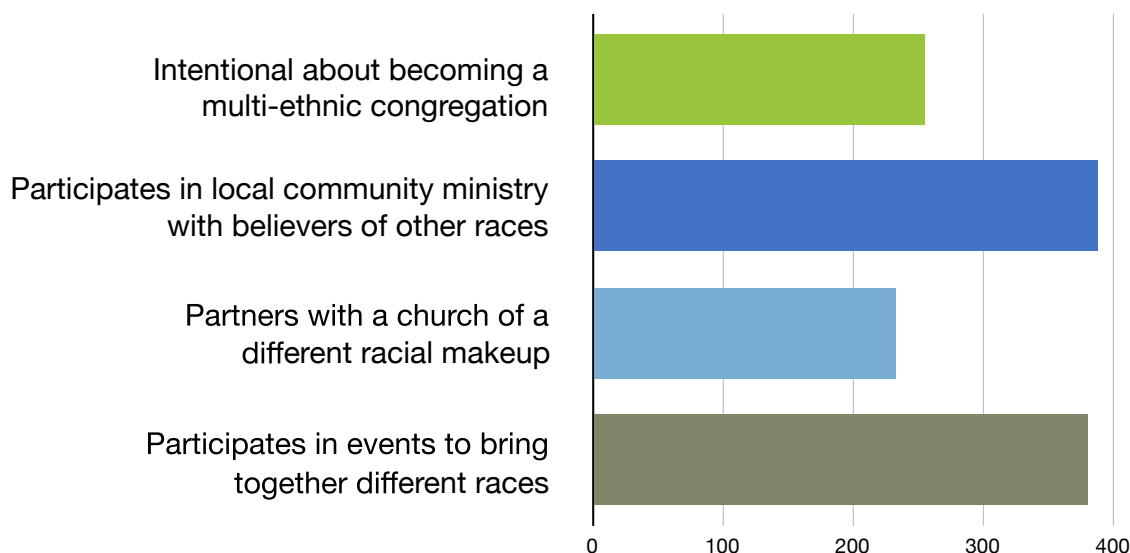
## The Church of God is Ready to Talk and Act

Most of the Church of God does seem to recognize that we have a problem. Fifty-nine percent of our survey respondents believe that there are racial tensions within our Movement. Looking only at our African American respondents, 72 percent believe there are racial tensions within our Movement. The encouraging news, however, was that there seems to be a strong motivation to do something about these tensions.

A considerable majority (76 percent) are somewhat or very interested in “opportunities to dialogue and grow in [our] efforts to promote racial justice.” We found a strong opinion among the respondents that “racial justice” is a biblical call (74 percent) that we should work towards (76 percent).

A considerable majority of respondents (81 percent) see “racial justice” as a medium to high priority in their church. In fact, a majority (66 percent) say they are motivated to work towards “racial justice.” When we asked survey respondents if their churches were working to promote “racial justice,” 64 percent said they had done something in that regard over the last five years. Some of the efforts they indicated being involved in can be seen in the table below.

### CHART 7: Ways Churches Practice Racial Unity





Survey respondents were given the chance to tell us about their involvement in promoting racial justice. Here are some of their responses.

*“I seek out relationships with and participation in groups with racially diverse leadership. I actively advocate for those who I see experiencing discrimination. I actively listen to those who are different from me.”*

*“I call out racial injustice when I see it. I try to listen to and understand other points of view.”*

*“I try to make sure all people are received and treated equally in all settings I am part of.”*

*“Leading the state of [intentionally omitted] in ‘Be the Bridge’ opportunities. Participated in Living Undivided workshops. Seek to bring a diversified leadership within the state ministries.”*

*“Participating for over a year in a small group of diverse Christian women specifically to speak about ways racial injustice shows up in the world and how as Christians we can handle that within our spheres of influence.”*

## Conversations Within the National Association of the Church of God

As the Justice and Equity Task Force was being assembled in late 2021, we learned about an effort within the National Association of the Church of God (NACOG) that further confirmed the need to address issues of race. An open letter was circulated within NACOG that advocated for our African American churches to partially withdraw from participation within the Church of God (Anderson). In regard to ordination, the letter cited a “cultural disconnect within most Church of God districts.” The letter went on to critique a unity that seemed to always flow in one direction. African Americans have historically shown up for predominantly white events, but very few white believers have made the effort to be involved in historically Black congregations or the NACOG camp meeting. Most notably, the letter calls out white believers within the Church of God for being opposed to efforts by the Black community to make “forward progress in America.”

The open letter was eventually crafted into a motion which required a vote. Nearly a third of the National Association members voted to affirm the proposals included in the letter. Although the motion failed, the effort should serve as a wake-up call for us to pay attention to the grievances that were expressed.

Our Task Force has heard many times over the last eighteen months that we don't have a problem of race within the Church of God. Our African American brothers and sisters clearly have a different opinion on the state of our unity. Obviously, we have a disconnect. We received many comments similar to the ones below that agreed that we have ongoing racial issues that are eroding our unity.

*“The Church of God has not held accountable pastors and churches that promote racial disunity and injustice.”*

*“Silence has played a large role in preventing racial reconciliation. That and denial that tension exists. Making statements consistently and regularly on our commitment to racial equity would help all churches catch the vision.”*

*“From my experience, the Church of God, while not generally espousing blatantly racist policies, has actually appeared to be content with the status quo. Instead of leading the world as an example of true Christian brotherhood/fellowship regardless of racial or ethnic background, there has been a complacent acceptance of de facto separation of the races—much like American society at-large in such places as California.”*

To reiterate, our Task Force sees this effort within the National Association and the data that we have collected in the 2022 survey as a wake-up call to our Movement. It is time for our unity to come off the proverbial bookshelf and do some heavy lifting.

## Bias and Discrimination

In the 2022 survey, we asked respondents directly about their experience of discrimination and bias in the Church of God. Unfortunately, our findings reinforced the views expressed in the open letter within NACOG.

53 percent of African American respondents said they had felt “discriminated against because of their race” in the Church of God. Twenty-two percent of African American respondents said they had experienced “negative bias” while pursuing credentials.

We also found a similar trend when looking at our Hispanic respondents. Forty-five percent of Hispanic respondents said they had felt “discriminated against because of their race” in the Church of God. Thirteen percent of Hispanic respondents said they had experienced “negative bias” while pursuing credentials. One respondent took the time to share this experience:

*“I got to hear in some cases, just flat-out, blatant racial comments. Mostly from, from white clergy, toward people in the churches.... The Concilio and the Hispanic churches that were represented in Anderson with the Leadership Council were ignored and talked down to at meetings in the building and Anderson. And these are things that I experienced, personally.”*

The statistical analysis of these questions dealing with discrimination and bias indicated the highest levels of statistical difference of any of the data that we collected.

## Are We Walking Beside Each Other or With Each Other?

Although the majority of our survey respondents said they wanted to talk about issues of racial injustice, we saw a significant gap between races on their willingness to work on it. African Americans seemed most motivated and, particularly, African Americans in urban areas. Overall, the white respondents were about 20 percent less likely to feel motivated to work toward racial justice.

One of our focus group participants shared the following perspective about the state of relationships in their state.

*“We have an unwritten agreement in [intentionally omitted] that everybody gets to retain their culture. So we have separate meetings, because we realize that cultures are different so we can’t get together in one meeting, because one culture is going to dominate the other culture. And so the Blacks have their own meetings, Hispanics have theirs. The whites really don’t meet, but when they do, they do [it] their own way. So it’s kind of like separate but together, if you know what I mean. But we still feel like there’s something more missing. You know there is something that’s not 100 percent. We have an unwritten agreement, but you know we’re walking beside each other, not with each other.”*

We encountered dozens of written comments that indicated they saw the work of racial justice as a distraction rather than an avenue for holiness and unity. Many in our Movement seem content to continue “walking beside each other, not with each other.”

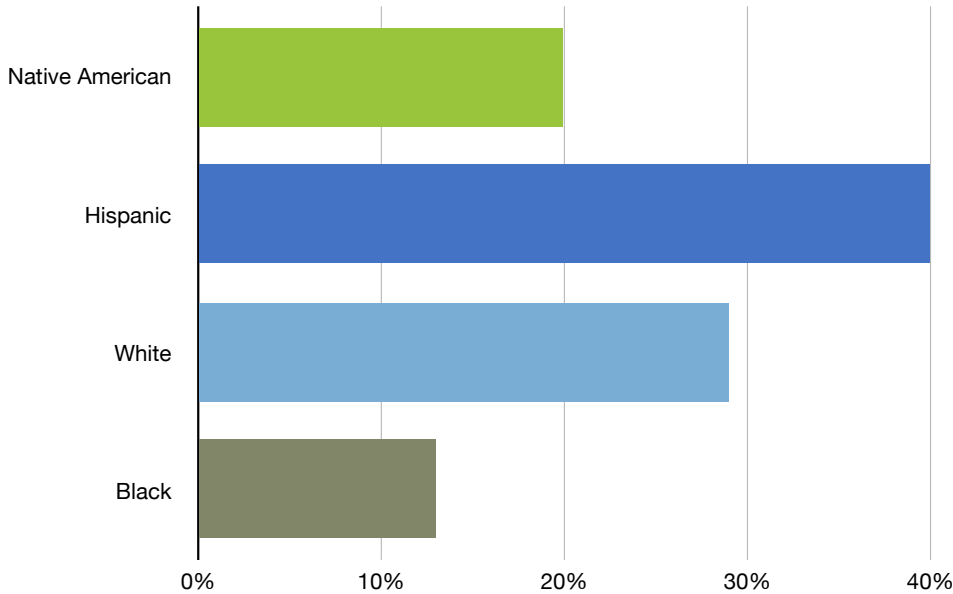
## What Hinders Our Ability to Grow in Unity?

We also discovered some of the perspectives that seem to limit our ability to come together and work on our racial differences.

### *Colorblindness*

Overall 25 percent of survey respondents indicated that they don’t see others’ race or ethnic identity. Many believe this to be a noble approach, but it can also be a way to avoid the things that divide us. It was very telling in a closer look at the data to see how the different races responded to the colorblind ideology. The graph on page 45 shows the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they don’t see others’ race. The mindset was much more common with the white and Hispanic respondents. A conversation is needed to discuss how a colorblind mindset does little to bring unity.

## CHART 8: I Don't See Color



The following comments were received in the survey concerning this issue of being colorblind.

*“I teach all races and see them as equal to each other. No favoritism.”*

*“...All of our congregation were brothers and sisters, we never saw a need for any form of justice, we were all created equal.”*

*“I don't see color, I see people who need Jesus.”*

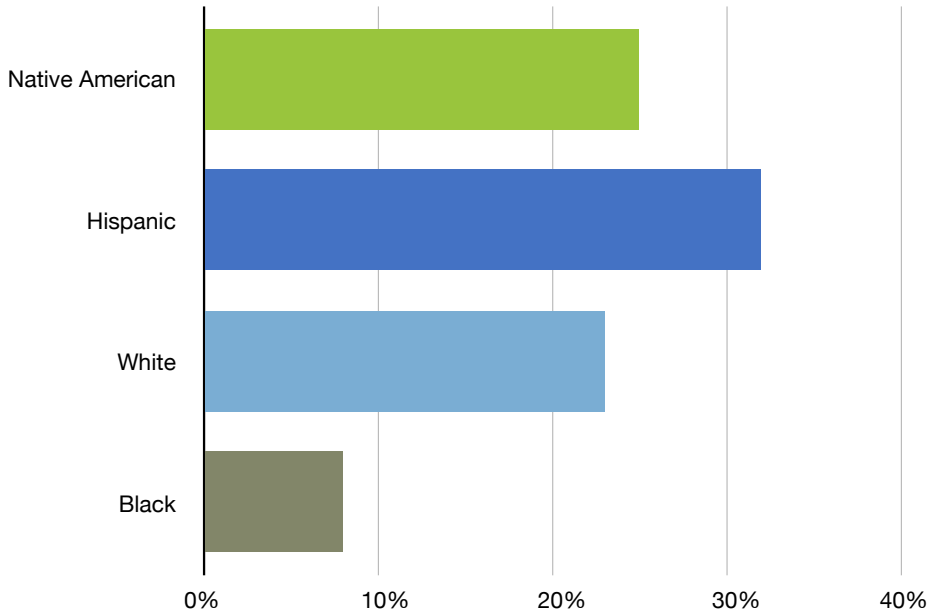
*“It depends on the definition of racial justice. I believe that when we treat people as human beings, we are working toward racial justice. If we do not discriminate on the basis of race or other categories, then we are all working toward racial justice.”*

The potentially noble intent of ignoring color limits our capability to get to know another person. Congregations appreciate their heritages, such as their German and Greek backgrounds. We also need to recognize the backgrounds and experiences across all racial and ethnic groups, and learn to show God's love as we minister to individuals and communities.

### *Should We Talk about Racial Justice?*

A large number of survey respondents and focus group participants told us that they believed attempting to talk about racial justice does more harm than good. We also saw this attitude confirmed in a survey question where 20 percent of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it does more harm than good. When we look closer at the data, we see that for African Americans, 79 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this idea. With 23 percent of whites and 32 percent of Hispanics agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement, there is obviously a large difference in our understanding and motivation to confront issues of racial justice. We need to convince a good portion of our Movement that we can and should have a conversation about racial justice.

## CHART 9: Talking About Racial Justice Does More Harm than Good



The following comments were received in the survey concerning the idea that talking about racial justice is problematic.

*“Racial justice is racist, by definition, and includes no actual justice. It is divisive, unbiblical, and anti-Christian.”*

*“If you want to encourage racial unity within the Church of God, stop emphasizing the ‘racial’ part...once you emphasize the racial part, you elevate it over other parts that need to be unified.”*

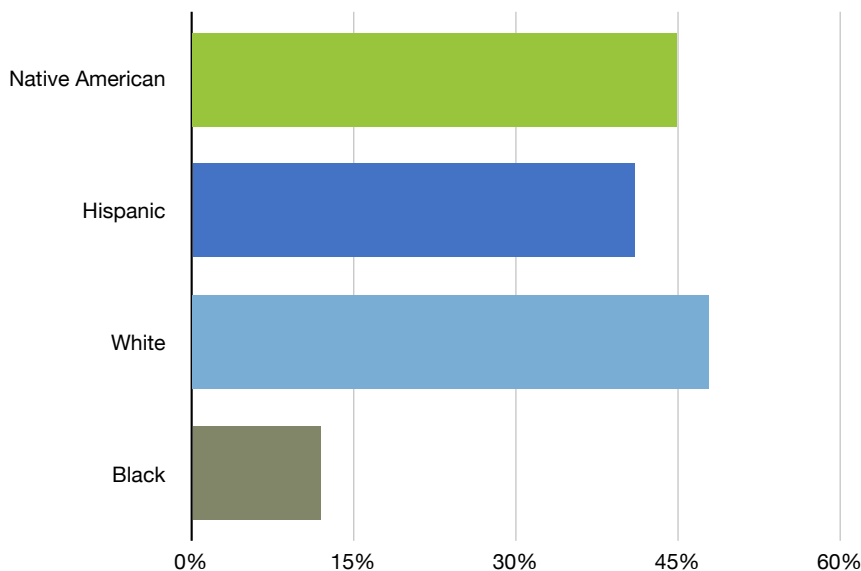
*“Too much emphasis is being placed on racial and social injustice!!! This was not the ministry of Jesus the Christ. He wasn’t concerned about the color of your skin. This promotes division in the body and not unity in the Spirit, as well as racial harmony!!!”*

The Church of God has a history of General Assembly resolutions that recognize the need to address racial justice. Unfortunately, our current practices do not necessarily fulfill the call to listen, understand, and “work toward the realization of a reconciled church, nation, and world” (General Assembly Resolution on Race 2015). See Appendix C for a few of the related General Assembly Resolutions.

### *Who is to Blame?*

Finally, there is another significant hurdle to discovering a stronger racial unity. It involves the issue of who is to blame. Overall, 37 percent of the survey respondents agreed that there is “too much blame put on white people for racial injustice.” As you might have guessed, there were also substantial differences between how the different races responded to this question. African Americans see this issue much differently than the other races, as you can see in the chart below of those that agreed or strongly agreed. This issue has the capacity to hijack the conversation unless our white constituents are willing to humbly approach this topic and hear more of the perspectives of our African American brothers and sisters.

**CHART 10: Too Much Blame on White People**





The following comments were received in the survey concerning the idea that too much blame is placed on white people.

*“I do not support DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). I believe the racial problems are overblown. White people have been blamed for problems they didn’t create.”*

*“Yes, in an attempt to bring equity, if anything, now the pendulum has swung toward discrimination against white people, especially white males in leadership.”*

Our discussion needs to address the pain, hurt, and anger that was evident in the survey responses. If we love our brothers and sisters, we need to address our wounds so we can heal and move forward together.

## Are We Modeling Unity?

One of the most common comments we received in the survey dealt with the existence of the different structures within the Church of God—i.e., the National Association, Hispanic Council, and American Indian Council. Respondents had different motivations for mentioning the need to combine structures, but clearly our siloed structures are concerning to many in our Movement.

Survey and focus group responses noted that our national and regional gatherings have not always done a great job at modeling unity. Many times, diverse representation has been lacking or fallen into the trap of tokenism. Our Task Force has included recommendations addressing this concern in the planning of major events.

Our Task Force discussed the racial diversity of Church of God Ministries. Our General Director acknowledged that it has been a challenge to maintain racial diversity given the location of our offices. However, the staff have grown in its racial diversity. It is also notable that approximately half of our Ministries Council are African American or Hispanic.

Finally, the Task Force did not find a clearly defined and communicated diversity statement or strategic plan in regard to racial unity that emanated from Church of God Ministries. Without a clear vision of who we are and who we want to become, a lot of disparate views and opinions have filled in the gaps.

We continue to have a lack of diversity among our regional pastors. This is a difficult dynamic to manage, since they are all autonomous and make leadership decisions completely independent of each other. However, the Task Force would like to encourage more racially diverse representation among our regional pastors and assembly leadership.

## Conclusions

Pew Research reports that there is a growing frustration among Black Americans in our society over a lack of change in dealing with issues of racism and discrimination. They warn that organizations unwilling to deal with it will face internal upheaval.<sup>2</sup> The Church of God has been living with an uneasy, racial relationship for decades. Our history is littered with statements and reports outlining the problems. However, the cost of our silence and inaction is too great to ignore. God has gifted us with the privilege of a racially diverse group. That gift is far too precious to take for granted. Without diligent work on racial unity, we are at risk of losing our diversity.

There does seem to be a fairly high level of interest in engaging in conversation about racial unity, but we will have to deal with the differing perspectives that could derail the conversation. The white segment of our Movement is significantly less motivated to deal with racial issues, but we are hopeful that the information presented in this report will serve to motivate us to increase our racial unity.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/race-ethnicity/2022/08/30/black-americans-have-a-clear-vision-for-reducing-racism-but-little-hope-it-will-happen/>

## CREDENTIALS AND LEADERSHIP

*Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.*

Titus 1:7 NIV

The women and men who are called by God to lead the church into the future play a vital role in helping the faithful to become more just and equitable as they reach out to the world. It is, therefore, critical that a healthy biblical perspective with regard to how we love one another and practice holiness and unity be inculcated. The prospective candidates should not only be competent in Bible knowledge and theology, but also on how bias, prejudice, socialization, and polarized culture impact communities and individuals. Such knowledge will aid the church in carrying forward its mission.

Upon listening to the respondents to the survey, some matters should be addressed in order to ensure future leaders have been instructed and held accountable for embodying and teaching the best of our tradition. The following section of the resolution, approved by the General Assembly in 2021, calls for these important improvements in the credentialing process and the Leadership Focus program.

*“Furthermore, we move that the General Assembly direct the Committee on Credentials to consider additional measures to ensure that candidates for ordination have rigorously explored the topic of diversity, including racial justice and the equality of men and women. The Committee on Credentials, in consultation with the Justice and Equity Task Force, shall specifically address these issues in the Credentials Manual of the Church of God and within the curriculum of Leadership Focus.”*

In seeking to fulfill its mandate, the Task Force engaged in an extensive review of the credentials manual, the Leadership Focus modules, the recommended reading materials as well as the overall process. Our team interviewed those tasked with leading our Committee on Credentials and Leadership Focus to hear more about their own vision to implement a more inclusive process.

Our survey results suggest that some members of our faith family have felt the divisive impact of prejudice. For example, consider the following data points. Fifty-one percent of women survey respondents, 45 percent of our Hispanic respondents, and 53 percent of our African American respondents said they had felt discriminated against in the Church of God.

Some who answer the calling to ministry and begin the credentialing process also give witness to the fact that they have felt discrimination along their journey toward ordination. Survey results indicated troubling levels of bias in our credentialing process perceived by the following groups:

27 percent of women  
22 percent of African Americans  
13 percent of Hispanics

These findings should give all God's people pause. Such a state of affairs requires action on two fronts; first, that the ordination process itself be examined in order that those who take leadership roles in our fellowship can testify that we are indeed a family of faith committed to the holiness and unity, justice, and equity that we preach. Secondly, we need to create a process that produces leaders, women and men, who are well-versed in appreciating, loving, embracing, and serving every person who comes to the church, recognizing each individual as created in the image of God. We need to show this God-love without the taint of the dogged and persistent biases and prejudices that place one before another. Intentionality around biblical mandates to receive folks without being a respecter of persons, to make room for the traditionally marginalized in society, are necessary foci for coaching and training. Training is important, as is the need for accountability to ensure that a commitment to justice and equity be maintained throughout one's ministry.

It has been heartening that a number of proposed improvements have already been undertaken by Leadership Focus on those responsible for the credentialing process. These will likely yield fruit with regard to the promotion of justice and equity, holiness and unity among our family of faith. The following recommendations

are meant to bolster and encourage the kind of work already underway. With a commitment to addressing issues of race, ethnicity, and gender, as they relate to leadership, the following recommendations are presented:

## Recommendations

1. The content and sourcing of materials used in Leadership Focus, as well as the overall credentialing process, should be broadened extensively to include published and yet-to-be-published sources penned by women and traditionally marginalized persons. This change would not only demonstrate the inherent diversity of the Church of God, but also broaden and deepen the candidates' understanding of our biblical faith, our theology, as well as our collective history as a Movement.
2. Training for individuals involved in the credentialing process is a must. Issues related to bias, implicit bias, prejudice, stereotyping, socialization, as well as how these pernicious and divisive forces impact how we read Scripture, our tradition, and diverse people groups should be thoroughly explored. Adjustments as to how we relate to people and do ministry should be encouraged as a result of this vital work.
3. A commitment to justice and equity, holiness and unity should be present throughout the entire ordination process, whether addressing competencies, one's spiritual formation, or how we in the church build communities. Indeed, some components of justice, equity, holiness, and unity relate to all of the sixteen doctrinal statements.
4. Throughout the process, candidates should expect to receive input from across our diverse fellowship. Women should be able to call on women in leadership roles in addition to men in leadership when the need arises. The same should be true of other traditionally marginalized groups who need to have confidence that the Church of God indeed lives out its biblical mandate to live in holiness and unity, justice, and equity.

5. Those who have committed to growth in the area of the practice of unity will readily testify that it is a lifelong commitment. To ensure that our clergy persons continue to grow, accountability with regard to a commitment to equity and justice, unity and holiness, should be instituted. In so doing, this issue is afforded the same level of commitment as other ethics matters. Such a commitment to the continued growth with regard to the practice of holiness and unity, justice and equity, should likely be demonstrated in the five-year review process.
6. Finally, a commitment to justice and equity, holiness, and unity requires some kind of reporting system that allows individuals who have suffered from the pain of discrimination to safely and confidentially report their concerns without the fear of reprisal. The clear communication of such an opportunity is a must.

## Conclusion

We in the church today live in polarized times. But they are not unlike the period of history when Church of God pioneers, like Jane Williams and D. S. Warner, faced class, racial, regional, and gender divisions. We today have the opportunity to live out the truths we proclaim by becoming a family of faith, characterized by holiness, unity, justice, and equity. Our thriving lies along this fruitful path to wholeness.

## KEY SURVEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

RACIAL JUSTICE IS A BIBLICAL CALL



**74%**  
SAID YES

CHRISTIANS SHOULD WORK TOWARDS RACIAL JUSTICE



**76%**  
SAID YES

BLACK

**20%**



LESS INTERESTED IN ADDRESSING RACIAL ISSUES



**8.5**  
**OF 10**

Agree that women and men can serve as lead pastors



**8 OF 10 PEOPLE**

say their church has demonstrated a commitment to equality between women and men

### BIAS IN CREDENTIALING

WOMEN  
27% Felt Bias



HISPANIC  
13% Felt Bias



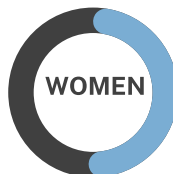
AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
22% Felt Bias



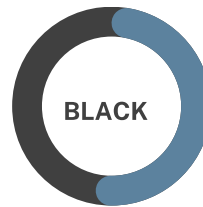
### FELT DISCRIMINATION IN THE CHURCH OF GOD



**45%**



**51%**



**53%**





**PART III**

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**WHERE DO WE GO  
FROM HERE?**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*

Isaiah 43:19 NIV

The vision of Revelation 7:9 motivates us to bring these recommendations to develop expressions of unity in the church body. Church leaders can learn and understand the fact that ministry is enhanced when we are able to minister to all people, including men and women, as well as people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Our Justice and Equity Task Force presents the following recommendations for us to consider as a church body in the following six areas.

1. **Celebrate** by intentionally recognizing, measuring, and displaying our diversity on an ongoing basis to show the world our unity.
2. **Communicate** clearly our value of racial diversity and egalitarian leadership through inclusive language and translations.
3. **Create** new resources to strengthen our theological understanding of visible unity.
4. **Catalyze** the improvements in these areas by providing opportunities for development, dialogue, and discovery.
5. **Coach** our leaders to better understand matters of race and egalitarian leadership in our credentialing and approval process.
6. **Champion** racial diversity and egalitarian leadership through a strategic implementation approach.

From these six areas, ideas came from seeing and hearing people's experiences in congregations across the Church of God. These recommendations for things to do are presented on pages 59-63 by the application context in the local church community, the regional context, or national initiatives across the church.

# Recommendations to Address AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

	Women and Men	Race and Ethnicity
<b>Celebrate</b>	Celebrate progress on the equality of women and men annually in the U.S.-Canada Impact Report	Celebrate our racial diversity annually in the U.S.-Canada Impact Report
	Communicate an annual “PreachER” Sunday to encourage congregations to have a woman preach and to help their congregation learn about God’s gifting of women for ministry	Facilitate an annual celebration of our diversity on Pentecost Sunday
<b>Communicate</b>	Communicate our commitment to the equality of women and men	Communicate more clearly our stance of unity in diversity
	Verify Atlas position postings and work with Regional Pastors to educate churches with male bias	Translate core resources into Spanish
	Avoid exclusive language terms across all platforms of communication	Publish a page on our websites to celebrate our identity and attract diverse leaders
<b>Create Resources</b>	Provide resources on the biblical basis for being egalitarian and the associated practices for all aspects of life	Provide a curriculum based on the evangelism strategy in John 17
	Provide resources to help inform our Movement on the role justice plays in our practice of holiness	

## Recommendations to Address AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL *...continued*

	Women and Men	Race and Ethnicity
<b>Create Resources</b>	Design resources for different contexts	
	Include diverse voices in future theological work especially those used to train leaders	
	Invite diverse voices to explore our understanding of unity across the Movement in the 21st century	
<b>Catalyze Action</b>	Provide diversity training for all Church of God officers and staff, and associated organizations	
	Provide training and dialogue opportunities at workshops at regional and national events for the next six years	
	Explore conversations about race and women in ministry at youth conventions	
	Ministries Council and Church of God Ministries define goals support recommendations for racial justice and the equality of women and men in our beliefs and practices	
	Create Acts 6 (A6) teams to help oversee implementation of Task Force recommendations (1 on A6 on race/ethnicity, 1 on A6 on women/men) with status review in six years	
		Form a team to align ministries and opportunities for a unified structure across our racial/ethnic groups (American Indian Council, Hispanic Council, NACOG)

*...continued*

	Women and Men	Race and Ethnicity
<b>Coach Leaders</b>	Update coaching materials and credentials manual to include multiple exposures to issues of race and egalitarian leadership	
	Require training for Credential Committees members and Leadership Focus coaches in addressing different candidates from various ministry contexts	
	Ensure that the required/recommended resources in Leadership Focus and the Credentials Manual include more than white male authors	
	Ensure every candidate experiences input from a diverse group of decision-makers in the process	
	Require currently ordained ministers to continue developing their understanding and practice of racial justice and egalitarian leadership	
	Establish a safe process for candidates to share concerns about treatment in the credentialing process	
<b>Champion</b>	Establish the “Minister of Unity” position to oversee progress on recommendations and continue efforts for greater unity in our diversity	

# Recommendations to Address AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

	Women and Men	Race and Ethnicity
<b>Celebrate</b>	Ensure that pulpit-supply lists include female preachers and share those names with congregations to help normalize the roles of women as leaders for congregations	Develop a national sister congregation program to pair geographically limited congregations who want to celebrate the racial diversity of the Movement
<b>Communicate</b>	Communicate our commitment to the equality of women and men for people to learn and appreciate the opportunity for outreach and ministry	Communicate more clearly our stance of unity in diversity so that outreach and ministry opportunities engage racial and ethnic groups
<b>Coach Leaders</b>	Educate pastors and congregations not in harmony with Church of God beliefs on the equality of women and men	
	Provide training for credential committee members	
	Ensure every candidate experiences input from a diverse group of decision-makers in the process	
	Require currently ordained ministers to continue developing their understanding and practice of racial justice and egalitarian leadership	
	Establish a safe process for candidates to share concerns about treatment in the credentialing process	

# Recommendations to Address IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

	Women and Men	Race and Ethnicity
<b>Celebrate</b>	Recognize God’s gifting of women in ministry leadership by helping the congregation to see visible examples such as a woman preaching on Sunday	Develop a relationship with a pastor of another racial or ethnic background and find potential opportunities for congregations to minister
	Provide opportunities for someone different than the lead pastor to preach to the congregation (e.g. male pastor brings female to preach, African American pastor brings Anglo pastor to preach)	
<b>Communicate</b>	Communicate our commitment to the equality of women and men for people to learn and appreciate the opportunity for outreach and ministry in our local communities	Communicate more clearly our stance of unity in diversity so that outreach and ministry opportunities engage racial and ethnic groups in our local communities
	Avoid exclusive language terms discriminatory and stereotypical language across communication (e.g., websites, social media posts, illustrations)	
<b>Catalyze Action</b>	Minister to the individual and community needs (e.g., school supplies, food distribution, housing, employment)	
	Work with other congregations to serve communities and show Christ’s love through the unity across congregations and in the desire to reach meet people’s needs	
<b>Coach Leaders</b>	Educate the congregation on the Church of God beliefs on the equality of women and men for ministry leadership	Learn about the ethnicities of people in your local community in order to build relationships and connections for ministry
<b>Champion</b>	Include qualified leadership from women and men and people of various races and ethnicities in all church ministry positions	

These are just some of the ideas that were seen and heard in the process of examining the composition, beliefs, and practices of the Church of God. These recommendations are a starting point for us to practice what we say we believe in our different ministry contexts.

This work reminds us of our history and the uniqueness of this Movement to have an opportunity to share Jesus with others. The questions in our churches about what we should do comes to life in these words of Dr. Gil Stafford in the book, *Church of God at the Crossroads*.

“Many people in our churches are attuned to social issues that escape the attention of people in churches that do not have such issues staring them in the face at every turn. To be sure, this diversity leads to strain and stress in our relational life. But strain and stress, if not abandoned, leads to resolution as to how we will live redemptively together. And such resolution, in the course of time, leads to maturity. Maturity leads to mutual understanding; mutual understanding leads to mutual enrichment; and mutual enrichment leads to being a sign of the kingdom of God.”

As we come to the end of this process, the key question is this: What kind of church do you want to be? We see the church as the body of Christ that includes women and men and people of all races and ethnicities that can show the world a vision of God’s kingdom through the holiness and unity of our Movement.



## OUR FUTURE TOGETHER IN THE SPIRIT

*How sweet this bond of perfectness, The wondrous love of Jesus! A pure foretaste of heaven's bliss, O fellowship so precious! Beloved, how this perfect love Unites us all in Jesus! One heart, and soul, and mind: we prove the union heaven gave us.*

“The Bond of Perfectness”

by Daniel S Warner and Barney E. Warren

The Divine Trinity is both the source and inspiration for the work of unity, justice, holiness and equity. Our Lord intended his followers to thrive in perfect love and holiness. Living in such a state brings a winsome unity to the fellowship of the faithful. We must be a people willing to open ourselves to all God has for us. For the Church of God to become such a family of faith and a light and witness to the world, women and men must embody this commitment to holiness and unity, and to the justice and equity that such a loyalty embraces.

To live in this countercultural way, we must minister and serve shoulder to shoulder in discernment, possessing a godly determination in the face of the polarizing forces that would otherwise pit us against one another. We must also be committed to “grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord,” and in our love for one another. It is only by working together and cooperating with the Holy Spirit that the hierarchies, and biases of a broken world that infect us all, can be overcome.

As we seek to chart a path forward as a Movement, it is important to address head-on some of the temptations that beset us in this polarized season. The first is the temptation to close our hearts and minds to what our sisters and brothers have communicated to us in this survey. Some of what has been reported may have come as a surprise. The fact is, our experience of the world may be quite different from another's. This insight may make us uncomfortable, but it allows us to work cooperatively for growth and change. Indeed, such disconcerting realization is a gift that makes it possible to better promote holiness, unity, equity, and justice among us. In our strategic and Spirit-led listening, we may hear not only the insight

and wisdom of a different perspective, but also the whispers of the Divine who desires to speak his reconciling and healing truth to all God's children.

Another temptation that besets us is the “blame game.” What is broken in the church, what has yet to be healed in our family of faith, is not the fault of a few, those who are different, those who come from a particular part of the country, or who embrace a political ideology different than our own. No, the challenge of injustice and inequity within our ranks we together own. It is not for us to blame conservatives, progressives, bigots, communists, socialists, etc. In fact, these diminishing, dastardly labels are extra-kingdom imports from a divisive world system. They are as nonsensical in the body of Christ as “Jew, Gentile, Slave, Free, Male, and Female” were to the community of the baptized in the infant years of the church's development. We are sisters; we are brothers. Blaming is no longer an option, as there is enough blame to be shouldered by all. Our thriving future depends on us, working side by side to become better. This we will do.

As we consider our level of commitment to embodying the practices called forth in this report, another temptation must be avoided. In short, we must not yield to the cynicism and divisiveness that characterizes a world too often bereft of faith and trust. We are resurrection witnesses. We live our faith in such a way that others see our works, our relationships characterized by love, justice, and equity. We not only have begun to trust God; but we also have learned to lean on and trust one another.

Another temptation we face at this critical juncture is the temptation to embrace a sloppy biblicalism that justifies the same kind of fighting and needless divisiveness that is on display all across our polarized public spaces. The Bible is too often used to justify the bigotries and hierarchies Jesus quite clearly came to dismantle through his teachings and lived relationships. It is equally important to avoid the habit of some to use the Bible to squelch dialogue, as if some verse could rightly be used to silence a community seeking to understand how to live together in justice, equity, and harmony.

A final challenge, which too often works against our attempts at partnering with a God who calls us to love, justice, equity, and unity is a spirituality that emphasizes

a focus on God and Jesus, but only tangentially is concerned with loving the traditionally marginalized, disenfranchised, and vulnerable. In the biblical record, Jesus, over and over again, turned his disciples to a focus on people, on the “least of these,” on the last, on the unreconciled and undervalued. An authentic faith is one that calls us to redirect our gaze out of the starry heavens in order to look on one another as our neighbor. The “here and now” are indeed important to God. Only when a proper focus on issues that concern those living in the present will we find the abundant life that has no end.

Experience tells us that living justice and equity, living in holiness and unity, is not an easy task. Too long we have been led to believe that a sinner’s prayer, a claim of salvation, takes care of the deep-rooted forces that shape how we view others and the world. The biblical record seems to suggest otherwise. Take, for example, the disciple Peter. According to various passages spread across the New Testament, he was the first to confess our Lord’s true identity; he walked on water; he preached on the Day of Pentecost, and thousands were converted. Peter endowed with an awesome deposit of God’s power, healed the lame; he even raised the dead. Yet, after all of these great demonstrations, after God’s use of this disciple, he nonetheless retained his bias and prejudice toward the Gentiles. It was only with great difficulty that Peter opened himself to holiness, justice, equity, and unity, when he was directed by the Spirit to go against his previous indoctrination in order to embrace non-Jewish people.

We should understand as we take the step to live our truth that we are mere humans, no more virtuous than Peter. We have been influenced by a world that places one above another, values the wealthy, the well-positioned, those of a dominant race, class, or gender. If we are like our biblical counterpart in the New Testament, the Spirit has an uphill climb in getting us where we should be with regard to the practice of true holiness, justice, unity, and equity. But our fruitfulness, our thriving, revival, and renewal depend on us taking this path together.

## WORDS OF THANKS FROM THE TASK FORCE

Thank you first and foremost to Jesus Christ who prayed earnestly that we would be one and then laid down his life to make it possible.

Thank you to the General Assembly for endorsing the resolution and for having the resolve to address this important topic on behalf of our entire Movement.

Thank you to the General Assembly chairs, Dr. Timothy Clarke and Dr. Esther Cottrell, and the Ministries Council for entrusting us with the important task of examining how we go about practicing two of our most deeply held doctrines, unity and holiness. Thank you for serving as our beta test group and for your feedback throughout this process.

Thank you to our General Director and the staff of Church of God Ministries for their support and encouragement in this work. A special thanks to Rev. Jim Lyon for being an advocate for this work, even in the most difficult moments. A special thanks to Alecia Swoope, Ra'Lynn Kelley, and Carl Stagner for their hard work in providing communications support.

Thank you to the 2021 BLRC committee who worked tirelessly to strengthen Motion One. Special thanks to Rev. Suzanne Haley who championed this work and insisted that it be thorough in its approach. Thank you to Chad Brennan and the staff at Renew Partnerships for bringing their expertise to this work and for the encouragement to stay faithful to our calling. Thank you Chad for your grace in dealing with our absolutely insane timeline for this project!

Thank you to all of our constituents who took the time to take our very long survey. Thank you to the dozens of focus group participants who gave us your honesty and transparency. Thank you to Carol Ruiz who did a wonderful job translating the survey and went above and beyond to meet our timelines.

Finally, a BIG THANK YOU to the family, friends and congregations of our Task Force Team members who sacrificed time and resources to allow us to do this work.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**The following are simple and concise definitions of some terms used for the survey and for a common frame of reference for this work.**

**Bias:** Conscious or unconscious preference for or against a person or a group of people

**Equality of men and women:** Women and men are treated equally by being given status, rights, and opportunities for the purpose of building up the body of Christ

**Racial justice:** An environment in which people are not given advantages or disadvantages based on their racial identity

**Unity:** An environment where individuals combine into one holy Church as the central belief of the Church of God

## APPENDIX B: OVERVIEW OF RELATED GENERAL ASSEMBLY MOTIONS

1960s	1970s	1990s	2000s to Present
<p><b>1965</b> – General Agency Initiatives for Equal Rights on Social Concerns</p> <p><b>1965</b> – Committee on Christian Unity Established</p> <p><b>1968</b> – Open Door – All are welcome to come to the church</p> <p><b>1968</b> – Spiritual Priority of Racial Justice</p> <p><b>1969</b> – Committee on Christian Unity Continuance</p>	<p><b>1970</b> – Employment of a Black Associate Director of World Service</p> <p><b>1970</b> – Inclusion in the Church – All are welcome to come to the church</p> <p><b>1974</b> – Role of Women in Ministry</p>	<p><b>1998</b> – Racial Reconciliation Task Force Established</p> <p><b>1998</b> – Reaffirmation of Racial Reconciliation</p>	<p><b>2007</b> – Nondiscrimination in Ministry based on race, gender, ethnicity, or immigration status</p> <p><b>2014</b> – Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery</p> <p><b>2015</b> – Resolution on Race and Vision of Reconciliation</p> <p><b>2021</b> – Justice and Equity Task Force Established</p>

## APPENDIX C: A FEW PREVIOUS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

### Item 1: **RESOLUTION ON RACE (2015)**

Church of God General Assembly  
Oklahoma City, OK

Whereas the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 12:15 that we should rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, and as we acknowledge the fact that we are one body and that there should be no division in the body, so that if one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and

Whereas in the wake of the fatal shooting last week of a pastor and eight church members during a prayer meeting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015 by a gunman motivated by his specific hatred of Black people, and in the broadest of terms people of color, and desire to start a race war, and

Whereas recognizing tensions created by several highly publicized incidents involving police shootings, and

Whereas in observance of the 20th anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995, a racially-motivated act of terrorism resulting in the death of 168 persons, as the General Assembly of the Church of God we resolve to express our compassion and concern in the following six ways:

Leadership--we call on pastors and leaders to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to live out a countercultural lifestyle that works to expose and repent of the sin of racial division and acknowledges the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer--we pray for healing, repentance, unity and peace, and we plead for God's mercy on our nation and on those who are compliant with the racial violence and racial disparities being manifested in the church and in the systems of this world;

Lament--we mourn in solidarity and sympathy with the people of Emanuel AME Church and the families, congregations and communities affected by the traumatic impact of these incidents, and we confess our past and present failure to walk



faithfully and consistently in the light of our belief in a God who has no respect of persons;

Forgiveness--we affirm radical forgiveness of the persons whose motivation for doing harm to others is racial hatred and discrimination, acknowledging what Jesus taught and showed us by His death on the cross, that love is stronger than hate;

Justice--we acknowledge that ministers in our own General Assembly and fellow congregants have been victims of racial profiling, we stand for justice to be administered on their behalf in a fair and impartial manner, we urgently call for justice in all cases of racially-motivated violence, and we support those agencies and officials who enforce the law and administer justice equitably to ensure the safety and security of all of our citizens, congregations and communities;

Vision of reconciliation--we commit ourselves as people of Christian faith to envision, strategize and work toward the realization of a reconciled church, nation and world.

Let it be further resolved that we, the people of the Church of God Reformation Movement, come to a thorough awareness that there is a disparity between our vision for reconciliation and the actual experience of many of our brothers and sisters; And, let us learn to listen to the stories our brothers and sisters share, express in word and deed our feelings of empathy, and commit to walk together as we boldly stand against every form of racism.

*2023 Task Force Note: During discussion of this resolution, several prominent African American leaders shared their own experiences of being stopped by police for no apparent reason. One Black leader said he was pulled over while transporting white people from the airport to the convention site in Oklahoma that week. Their transparency provided a poignant moment of reflection for the General Assembly.*

## **Item 2: RESOLUTION ON NON-DISCRIMINATION IN MINISTRY (2007)**

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has gone on record as being against discrimination based on racial, gender, or ethnic origins and,

WHEREAS, the issue of illegal immigration may be fueled in some cases by racial or ethnic prejudice and,

WHEREAS, the Church has a responsibility to minister to all persons,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the General Assembly go on record as affirming the following:

1. We believe the Bible calls us to minister to all persons and makes no discrimination based on gender, race, ethnic origin, or legal status.
2. The Bible affirms that we are to minister to the stranger in our midst, the alien within our gates, the poor, the widows and orphans, those in prison, and to any who are in need.
3. We affirm that while local churches, national organizations, and ministry groups have a responsibility to follow the employment laws of both the state and national government, such laws do not excuse believers and congregations from reaching out with a helping hand to those who are in need, regardless of their resident status.
4. We further affirm that ministry in the name of Jesus Christ always involves risk and that risk must never be the factor that determines our faithfulness to the call of God.
5. Finally, we commend all those in the Church of God Movement who, under the direction and motivation of the Holy Spirit, are reaching out with a cup of cool water to those who are in need and are doing so without concern for the status of those to whom they minister.

Submitted Saturday, March 31, 2007 By the Reconciliation Committee

### Item 3: RESOLUTION ON RACIAL RECONCILIATION (1998)

Whereas we believe that God has given us his design for the church in Gal 3:28 [NRSV] – “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”; and

Whereas we recognize that, as in Eph 2:14-15 [NRSV], “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one, and has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us...that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, that by Himself he might make the two into one”; and

Whereas we recognize that we, the Church of God, have fallen short of practicing visibly the unity we proclaim by permitting racial division among us; therefore,

Be it resolved that the Church of God Reformation Movement re-affirm its commitment to demonstrating visibly the racial and ethnic unity we proclaim; and

Be it resolved that we admit that racial reconciliation is needed among us; and

Be it resolved that we call upon the church to confess the sins of racism and racial prejudice and to take responsibility for seeking and receiving forgiveness and finding healing; and

Be it resolved that we urge individuals and congregations to create new ways of relating across racial and ethnic lines by becoming ambassadors of reconciliation.

Supported by:

Committee on Long Range Planning  
Commission on Social Concerns  
Commission on Christian Unity  
Board of Christian Education  
Hispanic Council  
American Indian Council  
National Association of the Church of God  
Leadership Council of the Church of God

#### **Item 4: RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE ON RACIAL RECONCILIATION (1998)**

Whereas the Committee on Long Range Planning, the Commission on Social Concerns, and the Commission on Christian Unity, meeting together in Anderson, Indiana, on November 20, 1997, recognize and affirm the Church of God Reformation Movement’s historical commitment to racial harmony; and

Whereas the Hispanic Council, the American Indian Council, the National Association of the Church of God, and the Leadership Council of the Church of God recognize and affirm the Church of God Reformation Movement’s historical commitment to racial harmony; and

Whereas these bodies also recognize and deplore the current reality of racial division resulting from our failure to live up to this commitment; and

Whereas these bodies further recognize the need for systematic, long-term effort to heal the racial divisions and realize the harmony we desire;

Be it resolved that the Ministries Council be requested to establish a task force on racial reconciliation that will 1) lead the church to recognize and confess the actions in our history that broke the racial harmony and led to both structural and spiritual division, and 2) develop strategies for dealing with our history and moving to reconciliation; and

Be it resolved that this task force be charged with leading the church into the “Next Steps in Racial Reconciliation” suggested in the Dialogue on Racial Reconciliation:

1. Taking Responsibility
2. Seeking Forgiveness
3. Repairing the Wrong
4. Healing the Soul
5. Creating a New Way of Relating

Be it resolved that this task force report annually on its progress to the Ministries Council and the General Assembly; and

Be it resolved that the task force on racial reconciliation remain in existence until such time as the Ministries Council decides that its assignment is completed.

Supported by: Committee on Long Range Planning Commission on Social Concerns Commission on Christian Unity Board of Christian Education Hispanic Council American Indian Council National Association of the Church of God Leadership Council of the Church of God

## **Item 5: RESOLUTION ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH OF GOD (1974)**

The Church of God in its beginning and through its early history included both men and women in its ministry. Little or no thought was given as to whether one who went forth to serve in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was masculine or feminine. The emphasis was on spreading the gospel of truth as proclaimed by the Reformation Movement. Women served in many capacities, as evangelists, teachers, musicians, pastors. And they served well along with men down through the years.

A recent survey by the Division of Church Service, through a questionnaire, revealed that while women make up around 55 percent of the membership of the congregations of the Church of God, the percentage of women in leadership roles has steadily declined.

Therefore, in light of the statistics which document the diminishing use of women's abilities in the life and work of the church, we present the following resolution:

WHEREAS women are equipped by their Creator to serve in a variety of roles including that of homemaker, employment in jobs and professions, volunteer work, and full or part-time Christian service, and

WHEREAS women have demonstrated their ability and their commitment to the church, and

WHEREAS God calls women to use their gifts and skills to their fullest potential,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that more women be given opportunity and consideration for positions of leadership in the total program of the Church of God, locally, state-wide, and nationally.

Mr. Chairman

This resolution is brought to the General Assembly by the National Woman's Missionary Society, the Commission on Social Concerns, and the Executive Council of the Church of God. I move its adoption by the General Assembly and that after its adoption it be disseminated to local congregations, state organizations, and general agencies for consideration and implementation.

### **Item 6: RESOLUTION (1970)**

Whereas we live in a day of constant financial pressure which regularly causes choices to be made concerning funding of various projects within the church;

And whereas one of the major areas of human need today is found in the Black community:

And whereas those needs are best known by the members of that community, we commend the Division of World Service in their efforts to develop resource materials for urban churches; therefore, be it resolved that the Division of World Service be instructed to employ by June, 1971, a black Associate Director with insight into those areas of need, one who can understand the needs of the black community as well as that of the urban crisis that faces the total church.

By Columbus Ohio Group  
And Tri State Ministers Assembly

H. Richard Harp  
John Stanley  
Bruce Kelly



### **Item 7: RESOLUTION (June 19, 1968)**

WHEREAS our Assembly has received various resolutions across recent years concerned about race relations in the Church of God; and

WHEREAS the abundant supply of resolutions on the matter of race relations continue to call attention to our need to correct evident deficiencies and solve evident problems; and

WHEREAS the 1964 Report from this Assembly's Commission on Race Relations stated our deficiencies and recommended appropriate steps for correcting our needs; and

WHEREAS it is the work of this Assembly to authorize, mobilize, and direct the interests common to our life and work as a Church - - and has effectively done so more recently solving problems of finance (appropriations for college needs, building of Warner Auditorium); and

WHEREAS the Church looks to the Assembly to advise and give direction on the particularly spiritual concerns of Church life and work; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Assembly declare that its previous resolutions on the matter of race relations remain as issues of spiritual priority; and be it further

RESOLVED, That our national boards and agencies be directed to make deliberate moves to secure Negro leaders for executive and/or administrative roles wherever and whenever possible, this being a way to show a more truly inclusive pattern for ourselves on the national level; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Assembly direct the Commission on Social Concerns to serve the Assembly by preparing such aids and guides for congregational use in resolving differences that keep some of our churches racially separate; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this Assembly call upon the Church to repent for the deficiencies and failures as a people on the point of race relations, turning to God for renewal and grace during this International Convention.

The Business Committee

### **Item 8: RESOLUTION ON RACE (1968)**

In 1957, the Executive Council of the Church of God and General Ministerial Assembly named a study commission on race relations to serve for a period of five years. In 1961, this study commission reported to the Executive Council and recommended positive strategy for reaching desirable goals in better race relations. These were:

1. Proceed with all deliberate speed to integrate ratification procedures in all states immediately.
2. Let ministers in all states arrange for fellowship meetings together and pave the way for integrated assemblies, beginning, also, to synchronize meetings, and procedures, adopt similar standards, etc. Breakfast meetings or one-day prayer retreats might be employed.
3. National leaders should enter into serious discussions toward the integration of national agencies, it being understood that leadership opportunity representation, and expression would be on the basis of qualification, regardless of race.
4. That recognition and support be given to certain experiences and developments which our national boards are carrying out. That encouragement be given to local churches that are able to move ahead with courage in this field, and that these churches on the frontier of exploration be supported with the prayer and the concern of the church, and to the churches of the community, whatever the racial situation may be.
5. Let the Executive Council and the General Ministerial Assembly pass resolutions directed to our own churches, urging interracial fellowship within the local church and among local churches, asking our people to press forward toward integration on a truly Christian basis.
6. To take a positive stance, by resolution and through publication, on the matter of integration and the employing of our rich traditions and spiritual resources toward the demonstration of Christian principles at this point of need.

7. That our ministers and churches be encouraged to cooperate in inter-church and community endeavors toward overcoming the racial cleavages.

In 1964, the Council offered, and this Assembly adopted a further major statement on race, declaring that the urgency for action was growing in society and the need for the church to begin within its own fellowship to make corrections was imperative. Action was called for on the local, the state, and the national levels of our work.

Much progress has been made since these recommendations were adopted. On the local level, a large number of our congregations are now, to some degree, integrated with families of other races. The call for an open door policy for all races was made, but has never been followed up.

On the state level, several assemblies have been merged and others are in process of merging.

**Item 8: RESOLUTION II  
SOCIAL CONCERNS (1965)**

WHEREAS the General Ministerial Assembly in its 1964 June meeting affirmed that we should boldly stand on the principles of basic human rights because they are Christian; and that the right to choose a place of residence, to enter school, to secure employment, to vote, or attend church should in no way be limited by a person's race of culture, and

WHEREAS the essence of integrity is to demonstrate ideals, not merely talk about them,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the General Ministerial Assembly of the Church of God in session at Anderson, Indiana, urge its members to take direct action as a religious duty to do their part in their local communities to see that voting, jobs, housing, education, public and worship facilities are available to all citizens, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Assembly urge each pastor to encourage greater personal involvement on the part of individual Christians in the struggle for racial justice.







# That they all may be one.

JOHN 17:21

This report documents nearly 2 years of work by the volunteer Justice and Equity Task Force to answer the simple question of whether we are practicing what we say we believe. Using a large survey, focus groups, current minister data and many other sources of information, it tells a story that needs to be heard. We have much to celebrate but we also have many challenges ahead.

Through data, info graphics and commentary, this report offers:

- New data revealing the opinions of our Church of God constituents about the role that race plays in our practice of unity.
- Information about the status of women in ministry and the challenges we face in living out our doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.
- Recommendations from the Justice and Equity Task Force on where we go from here.



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