

O.I.C. NEWS

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A Publication of Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ

It Could Happen To You "Pastors Beware"

Inside:

Page:

COVER STORY

- 1 *Journey to Justice – Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins and Orlando Florida Church take an unprecedented stand, despite mounting adversity.*

FEATURES

The Constitutional Debate

- 11 *Views on the COGIC Constitution from two perspectives – Bishop C.D. Owens, Presiding Bishop and Bishop Charles Blake, General Board Member.*

The Pastor Responds

- 6 *Pastor Hutchins responds to the Presiding Bishop.*

Membership Support

- 9 *Orlando Institutional's sister church, Family Worship Center, Columbia, S.C., speaks out!*

The Judge's Ruling

- 14 *Recap Judge Belvin Perry's ruling after the two-day court session held in Orlando, Florida.*

Photo ▶

Presiding Bishop comes to remove Pastor Hutchins without any charges brought against him. Left to right: Bishop Owens, Attorney O.T. Wells, Bishop Bell, Attorney Perry and Attorney Enoch Perry.

"Journey to Justice"

On July 22-23, 1999, Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ (COGIC), experienced one of the most painful, life-changing events since its inception some 80 years ago. On this day, Presiding Bishop Chandler Owens of the 5.5 million-member Church of God in Christ challenged the Trustee Board of Orlando Institutional COGIC to the rights of its own church building and pastor.

The flourishing congregation is devastated by Presiding Bishop Owens' attempts to strip Superintendent Derrick Hutchins of his position as pastor, with the intent to replace him with Bishop H. Jenkins Bell of Tennessee. Bishop Chandler Owens' unlawful and unconstitutional acts have led to the publishing of "It Could Happen To You," a true story about one congregation's determination to regain their church property and their beloved pastor.



Journey to Justice

"Injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere", was a statement often made by Pastor Hutchins during a time when Orlando Institutional Church experienced an unconstitutional act. The next two pages outline an unfortunate experience that no church should have to encounter.

Sunday, June 27, 1999

On this day, the Presiding Bishop along with approximately 500 people, arrived unannounced at Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ and were denied entrance by Attorney Herbert McMillan and members of the Orlando Institutional Trustee Board. This unannounced visit came as a result of a letter from Presiding Bishop C.D. Owens, dated June 18, 1999 regarding Pastor Hutchins. The letter was addressed to all COGIC Jurisdictional Bishops and Pastors, and any member of COGIC who wanted to attend this call meeting scheduled for June 27, 1999 at 6:00 p.m. However, Pastor Hutchins or the church members were never notified that the Presiding Bishop was coming. The church was closed. There was no service scheduled for the local congregation that night.

Wednesday, July 6, 1999

Court Hearing - Orange County, Orlando, Florida.

Bishop C. D. Owens, Attorneys O.T. Wells, Jim Perry, Enoch Perry, and other Jurisdictional bishops appeared before an Orange County Circuit Judge to gain access to Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ. Attorney Herbert McMillan, acting on behalf of Malone Memorial, also known as Orlando Institutional COGIC, had no objections to the presiding Bishop visiting the church. However, Attorney McMillan expressed to the Judge, his deep concerns over activities of certain individuals affiliated with the national church wherein they tried to unlawfully gain access to Orlando Institutional COGIC. The Judge granted the following:

- The Presiding Bishop could have reasonable access to church property
- Ordered the parties to mediate

This same day, Attorney O.T. Wells notified Attorney Herbert McMillan of the Presiding Bishop's intent to have a meeting at Orlando Institutional on Saturday, July 10, 1999 at 12:00 noon

Thursday, July 8, 1999

Bishop Owens office was notified by Orlando Institutional church of the need to reschedule his meeting, because a funeral service had already been scheduled for Saturday July 10, 1999. Attorney O.T. Wells and Bishop Owens' secretary, spoke with staff members of Orlando Institutional COGIC regarding the funeral. Attorney Wells stated that the Presiding Bishop would be at Orlando Institutional COGIC Saturday at 12:00 noon, regardless.

Saturday, July 10, 1999

Bishop Owens UNCONSTITUTIONALLY removed Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins as pastor of Orlando Institutional and appointed Bishop H. Jenkins Bell. Bishop Owens instructed the funeral home staff to close the casket while he proceeded to conduct his meeting-with the deceased lying in front at the altar. Grieving family members and friends were unable to pay their last respects when Bishop Owens refused to conduct his meeting in the fellowship hall which accommodates 350 people.

Saturday, July 10, 1999

Saturday evening an attorney representing Bishop Owens and the national church had a hearing before Judge Belvin Perry in an attempt to prevent Orlando Institutional from hindering Bishop Bell, the newly appointed pastor, from conducting his service on that next Sunday. This hearing was conducted behind closed doors without notice to the attorney for Orlando Institutional COGIC. After hearing the arguments of the attorney representing the national church, the judge issued an injunction preventing Pastor Hutchins from entering the pulpit. This order essentially transferred control of Orlando Institutional Church to Bishop Bell.

Sunday, July 11, 1999

As a result of the Judge's ruling on July 10, 1999, Pastor Hutchins, Orlando Institutional Trustee Board, church staff and members were prohibited access to the pulpit and other church facilities. Bishop H. Jenkins Bell was seated in the pulpit as the new pastor. Pastor Hutchins and his supporting members were seated in the sanctuary. During this Sunday morning service, 19 armed police officers stood guard in the sanctuary as the locksmith changed the locks. Bishop Bell presided over the Sunday morning service. When Bishop Bell began to introduce the speaker, Pastor Hutchins walked out along with hundreds of members leaving only seven QIC members remaining. Pastor Hutchins turned to a friend, Rev. Sam Green and the wonderful members of St. Mark AME Church. Rev. Green and the St. Mark Church family gladly allowed Orlando Institutional the privilege of conducting services in their beautiful Life Center facility. Members and guest gathered for worship services at St. Mark AME Life Center that same Sunday morning.

July 11-July 23, 1999

Armed security guards were positioned at all entrances to Orlando Institutional church 24 hours a day. During this period of time, Pastor Hutchins conducted morning and evening services at St. Mark A.M.E. Life Center.

Court Hearing - Orlando, Florida
Thursday, July 22, 1999

The National Church and Orlando Institutional COGIC appeared before Judge Belvin Perry of Orange County. The purpose of this hearing was to determine whether or not the national body had authority to remove Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins from the pulpit of Orlando Institutional COGIC. The National Church argued that the Presiding Bishop has complete autonomy to remove any pastor who was appointed by the Presiding Bishop.

Orlando Institutional COGIC argued to the court that Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins was appointed to the pastorate and, therefore could not be removed by the Presiding Bishop, without formal charges brought against him by his congregation as the constitution requires.

During the proceedings, several witnesses testified on behalf of the national church, including Bishop Owens, who told the court that Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins was only appointed as pastor of Orlando Institutional COGIC on an interim basis. He also told the court that within the Church of God in Christ Inc., he, as the presiding Bishop, can remove any pastor who he appoints without any charges.

During cross-examinations, Bishop Owens said that there were NO CHARGES brought against Pastor Hutchins and that this was a personal matter between he and Pastor Hutchins regarding a promise made August 1996.

Friday, July 23, 1999

Bishop Charles E. Blake, General Board member, was qualified as an expert witness by Judge Belvin Perry, on Church Doctrine and the Constitution of the Church of God in Christ. Bishop Blake informed the court that pursuant to the Constitution, the presiding Bishop does not have the authority to remove an appointed pastor without due process. Bishop Blake explained to the court that this safeguard is needed to protect local pastors from over zealous leadership.

THE VERDICT

Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., Circuit Court Judge, ordered Bishop Bell to return control of the property located at 401 S. Ivey Lane, Orlando, Florida 32811, together with all keys to said premises to Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins no later than 9:00 p.m. on Friday, July 23, 1999. Pastor Hutchins and the Board of Trustees of Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ, Inc. are hereby reinstated to their respective positions.



Bishop Owens proceeded to conduct his meeting to remove Pastor Hutchins from Orlando Institutional COGIC while the deceased was lying in state in front of the altar.

At the podium, Bishop H. Jenkins Bell. Seated ten to right on the pulpit: Bishop Sam Nesbitt, Attorney O. T. Wells, Bishop Chandler Owens, Bishop Jacob Cohens and Pastor Hogan. Not pictured: Bishop P. A. Brooks and Bishop Weaver.

After three years of pastorate at the Orlando church and 18 years of pastorate at the Columbia, South Carolina church, Pastor Hutchins received this letter from Bishop Owens regarding giving up one of the churches or be removed from the Orlando church. The letter directs Pastor Hutchins to meet with the Presidium only to show proof of compliance regarding the pastorate of two churches,

Church Of God In Christ, Inc.

Word Headquarters

Memphis, Tennessee USA

Chambers of the General Board



Bishop C. D. Owens
Presiding Bishop
Chairman

First Assistant Presiding Bishop
First Vice Chairman

Bishop O. T. Jones Jr.
Second Presiding Bishop
Second Vice Chairman

Bishop P. A. Brooks,
Secretary of Board

Bishop C.L. Anderson, Jr.
Emeritus Assistant

Bishop S. L. Green, Jr.
Assistant Secretary

Bishop C. E. Blake

Bishop L. E. Willis, Sr.

Bishop R. L. H. Winbush.

Bishop L. R. Anderson

Bishop I. Clemmons

Bishop G. E. Patterson

June 1, 1999

Elder Derrick Hutchins
Orlando Institutional
Church of God in Christ
401 Ivey Lane
Orlando, Florida 32811-3874

Dear Elder Hutchings:

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

You were appointed by me to the pastorate of Malone Memorial Church of God in Christ", now "Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ," in Orlando, Florida, in 1996, at which time you were specifically directed to resign the pastorate of the "Word Center, Church of God in Christ" in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the "Family Worship Center Church of God in Christ", in Columbia, South Carolina.

At the time of this aforesated appointment you publicly affirmed that you would comply with this directive. Subsequently, this commitment was reaffirmed by you in Atlanta, Georgia.

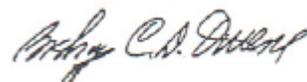
As of this date, May 28, 1999, you have failed to keep this commitment, and accordingly you are in conflict with this specific directive from the Presidium of the Church.

Therefore, you are hereby notified that you must immediately resign the pastorate of the "Family Worship Center" in Columbia, South Carolina, or the "Orlando Institutional Church" in Orlando, Florida

You are further directed to meet with the Presidium of the Church within ten (10) days after receipt of this Notice to present proof of your compliance. You are to call the office of the Presiding Bishop (770) 590-8510 to arrange this meeting.

Your failure to comply with the direct mandate of the Presidium will result in your removal as pastor of the "Orlando Institutional Church", in Orlando, Florida, and your removal from any and all executive positions you may hold in your Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.

Yours in Christ,



C. D. Owens
Presiding Bishop,
Church of God in Christ, Inc.

This letter was delivered to Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins on Saturday, July 10, 1999 when Bishop Owens attempted to UNCONSTITUTIONALLY remove Pastor Hutchins as pastor of Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ.

Church of God in Christ, Inc.

International Headquarters

Memphis, Tennessee



July 9, 1999

Office of the Presiding Bishop

By: Hand Delivery

Elder Derrick Hutchins
Malone Memorial/Orlando Institutional
Church of God in Christ
401 South Ivey Lane
Orlando, FL 32811

Dear Elder Hutchins:

Greetings in the blessed name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This is to inform you that your interim provisional appointment as pastor of Malone Memorial/Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ, 401 South Ivey Lane, Orlando, Florida, is hereby RESCINDED, CANCELLED AND TERMINATED as of this 10th day of July, 1999, effective immediately.

You are directed to remove your personal property only from the Malone Memorial/Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ premises no later than the end of the business day on July 13, 1999.

The removal of your personal property must be done under the supervision of Bishop H. Jenkins Bell, the appointed Jurisdictional Bishop of Western Florida or his designee.

You are hereby further notified that official charges are being filed against you, forthwith, because of your conduct and actions, which charges and specifications will be served personally and/or by certified mail under separate cover.

During the pendency of the aforesaid charges, the final determination of the charges, you are enjoined and precluded from establishing, pastoring, organizing a Church of God in Christ place of worship, or preaching/teaching or conducting revival as a Minister in the Church of God in Christ within the State of Florida.

Yours in Christ,


Chandler D. Owens
Jurisdictional Bishop
Western Florida and
Presiding Bishop, Church of God in Christ, Inc.

THE PASTOR RESPONDS

My Father... see now, understand and recognize that I am not guilty of-wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. May the Lord judge between you and me."

-I Samuel 24:11-12 New International Version

Dear Bishop Owens:

I am writing this letter regarding your letters to me — the first dated June 1, 1999 in which you directed me to give up the pastorate of either Orlando Institutional Church or Family Worship Center in Columbia, SC within 10 days and to contact your office to schedule a meeting to present proof of compliance. Your letter further stated that failure to do so would result in my removal as pastor of the Orlando Institutional Church.

In your second letter you attempted to unconstitutionally remove me from Orlando Institutional Church without due process. Your letter further forbade me from pastoring, preaching, teaching and conducting revivals in the State of Florida with the additional stipulation that if I did, you would revoke my ordination and prevent me from preaching in any Church of God in Christ in the country.

Needless to say, I was overwhelmed by your intentions to remove me without charges being brought against me. I was further distressed by the reason you gave for your actions — that in August 1996, I promised to give up both the Chattanooga and Columbia churches. I was certain this matter had been resolved during our meeting in Atlanta in January of 1997 in which you gave me your approval to continue doing the great work I was doing with both ministries.

You further stated that you reached this decision based on a series of facts brought to your attention by Bishop Neaul Haynes and Bishop W. L. Porter - who directed me to call you. In fact, they informed me prior to your telling me that you had changed your position since the heated exchange we had the night before when you walked out because I would not agree to leave the Columbia church — and would now allow me to continue.

In August 1996 when you decided to change the terms before approximately 1500 people, I hesitantly gave an answer that I thought would suffice until I could talk with you in a non-public forum. I was convinced that matter was resolved. When you questioned me that night, I agreed to do whatever was necessary to make Orlando Institutional a success. I never said I would give up the Columbia church. My intentions were clearly to divest myself of the 400-member congregation, the Chattanooga church and all its holdings — a child development center, two houses, a 700-seat sanctuary and a considerable amount of land which was left debt free.

I am very distraught that three years after you appointed me to the pastorate, you find it necessary to seek my removal — especially after the unquestionable success and undeniable sacrifices that have been made to lead both of these congregations to rank among the largest supporting churches in both jurisdictions — with a combined membership of over 2000 members.

I am also greatly appalled at the misinformation you received from one you trusted, Bishop H. Jenkins

Bishop Bell, like the Apostle Paul declared of Alexander the coppersmith, "has done me much harm." He has succeeded in destroying what once was, at the very least, mutual admiration, but I am certain the Lord will reward him accordingly. The many untruths he conveyed are too numerous to name, but please allow me one example. He told you I never resigned from Word Center, the church in Chattanooga that I founded. However, I relinquished the church to him in April 1997 and I am sending you the video tape on which you will see him appointing and officially installing my brother as the pastor according to the agreement you and I made. These untruths and many others have, in my opinion, led to the present unfavorable conditions between you and I.

The unfortunate incident on June 27, 1999 when you came to Orlando Institutional and the building was closed would not have occurred had Bishop Bell instructed the persons sending the letters to notify me or the church staff of your coming. We were deliberately ignored. I received no information from your office nor Bishop Bell's office regarding your coming. We were simply not in service that Sunday night. A few men of the church gathered after they were informed by trustee members conducting a meeting that afternoon at approximately 3:00 p.m., that members of your security team ignored the locked gates and jumped the fence. They told our trustees they came to seize the property for the Presiding Bishop who would arrive at 6 p.m. They were unaware of your coming and the saints had been dismissed from Sunday morning service at 1 p.m. with directives to enjoy the evening with their families.

Bishop, I have been humbled beyond measure to see the unwavering support I received from both congregations during this entire ordeal, yet at the same time I realize the irreparable harm they have experienced. This local congregation has supported the National Church and its leadership for over 80 years — only to be forced into court and incur about \$50,000 in legal fees and related expenses just to maintain control of its property and keep its pastor. It is my desire to bring closure to this so innocent sheep will not be scattered, and to avoid further humiliation to the office of the Presiding Bishop.

The recent court hearing between us, although unfortunate, may serve a valuable purpose in pointing all of us in this great church to the need for a more clearly-defined ecclesiastical structure — whether we are a hierarchial church as you stated in court or whether we are a hybrid church — consisting of a combination of hierarchial, Episcopal and congregational. There also seems to be a difference between how some of us interpret the role of the General Board and the authority of the Presiding Bishop. Does the Constitution allow you to take action that does not have to meet the approval of the majority of the General Board nor be subject to the will of the General Assembly?

Lastly, I am greatly disturbed after hearing you state under oath in court on July 22 that no matter how the deeds read or the title is printed, local trustees only hold the property in trust for the benefit of the National Church. You further stated that the property is owned by the National Church, who in this case contributed nothing to this facility which is valued at approximately 3 million dollars. Surely the National Church cannot expect to reap where it has not sown and railroad a beloved pastor out of his pulpit without due process against the will of its members. Please believe me, Sir, pastors all over the country are watching the outcome of this to determine whether they should stay in a denomination that would willingly support this kind of injustice.

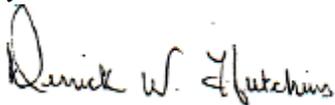
After speaking with Bishop Ellis, Chairman of the General Assembly, and members of the Judiciary Board, I am convinced this may be one of the most important issues to address the floor of the General Assembly in years. Our church seems headed for revolution — "he who makes peaceful revolution impossible makes violent revolution inevitable."

As a devoted son of this church for 42 years, I have spent my entire life in this denomination and have no intentions of leaving to become independent. Unlike others who have allowed themselves to be driven from the church by those who use threats, and exercise intimidation and blatant abuse of authority, I remain committed to the Church, devoted to its doctrine and will hold to my rights as granted by the Constitution.

Bishop Owens, Sir, I did not initiate this confrontation. My desire is to continue to minister to the people in the places God has ordained. I ask you, Sir, is there any way we can lay down the gauntlet and stop spending thousands of ministry dollars on legal fees? Isaiah 55:2 declares "Why spend money for that which is not bread?" As we approach the new millennium, the salvation of souls must be the priority. Time is already far spent — time we can never regain

I sincerely ask for an expeditious resolution. Please allow me to refocus my full attention on kingdom-building, especially as we anticipate the urgency of the end times. Both churches salute you.

May the Consolator be Your Portion



Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins

"Now therefore, I pray you, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let him accept an offering; but if it is men, may they be cursed before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the inheritance ... " "...for the king of Israel is come out to seek one flea, as when one hunts a partridge in-the mountains. "

~I Sam. 26:19-20, Amplified Bible

Pastor Hutchins' Television and Radio Ministry attracts hundreds of new members yearly.



FAMILY WORSHIP CENTER SPEAKS OUT!

Columbia, South Carolina

The first paragraph of the preface to the Official Manual of the Church of God in Christ reads: *"The worldwide chaotic conditions and the blatant defiance of the reality of God are irrefutable testimony of the urgent need for a new dedication to the principles upon which we as true believers of Christ stand,"* This recognition moved our founder, Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, in the face of social and religious adversity, to found this great Church of God in Christ. Only a true prophet of God with such an unwavering faith and a consistent dedication could have been chosen as the instrument through which such heavenly vision could have been realized.

Yet, the recent actions of our Presiding Bishop Chandler D. Owens, Bishop H. Jenkins Bell, Bishop P. A. Brooks and others, against our shepherd - Pastor Derrick W. Hutchins and our sister church, Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ - has cast that rapidly-growing congregation into a chaotic state. (Orlando Institutional^ phenomenal growth is seen in the increase of its membership from approximately 150 to approximately 800 in just three years, and in its outreach ministry to the community.) Our national leaders, who are to protect and lead us, have blatantly ignored the move of God at Orlando Institutional and have defied the requests of the Board of Trustees and the membership to allow this man of God - whom God is using to build an army of bold soldiers determined to do great exploits for Him - to remain as Pastor.

On Saturday, July 10, the Presiding Bishop called a meeting in which he declared the pastorate of Orlando Institutional vacant and appointed Bishop H. Jenkins Bell as the pastor. They obtained a restraining order banning Pastor Hutchins from the pulpit and changed the locks on the doors - locking out those who labored to build the ministry. A growing, thriving ministry -the Higher Dimensions Learning Program offering tutorial services to children in community and the livelihood of the 15 staff persons operating that program, a weekly Seniors' program, and the livelihood of the 10 staff person of Orlando Institutional - was all thrown into a chaotic situation!

These leaders, who claim to be doing what God instructed them to do, have not considered the sheep of this fold - not even the young, tender ones won through recent evangelism efforts. Wise parents/adults seek to shield children from damaging events and information, but these leaders took pleasure in exposing the saints to slanderous accusations designed to destroy our Pastor.

To date, the people have not so much as received a word of comfort or encouragement nor a response to any correspondence submitted - further proof that Presiding Bishop Owens nor Bishop Bell, blinded by their personal vendetta against Pastor Hutchins, have a heart for the ministry at Orlando Institutional nor any concern for the people in the pews. How dare anyone offend one of God's little ones? How dare anyone throw away precious souls that are new to the Kingdom? Jeremiah 23:1-2 (NIV) reads: *Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings, says the Lord,*

We realize that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, the casting down of imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Pray for us as we uphold the arms of our leader in this battle. As we pray, we believe God will do as He promised in Jeremiah 23:3-4, *But I will gather the remnant of them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking, says the Lord.*

THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE

In this article you will find comparative excerpts, taken from the actual court transcripts, of the answers given by Bishop Owens and Bishop Blake to the court. After the excerpts, you will find references from the Official Manual of the Church of God in Christ that address each issue.

ISSUE: THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

BISHOP OWENS

I have the power to make appointments and decisions. The governing board doesn't give me the authority to make the decisions for the church. It's my prerogative to make those decisions.

I have the authority to make all of the decisions within the church without any disruption or confirmation. I have a board, general board, that approves the decisions, but they are still my decisions.

Same as the Catholic Church, same hierarchal deal. The priest (Pope) has the right to send a priest to a Catholic Church, and has the right to remove him. I have the same authority.

Every right I have is not in that Book (official manual).

BISHOP BLAKE:

The Presiding Bishop conducts the affairs of the church and all of his actions are subject to the approval and ratification of the general board.

You asked me if the Church of God in Christ is like the Roman Catholic Church. It is absolutely not. The Pope is in office until he dies. He's not re-elected. To my knowledge, he cannot even be removed.

And there is no appeal from the decision of the Pope. He is the entity of their church. And in that, there is no general assembly, there is no judiciary or judicial board. And procedures outlined in our manual are DIFFERENT from those that are contained in the outline of the Roman Catholic Church. So it's not like the Roman Catholic Church at all.

The Official Manual reference(s): Article III, Section A, page 5. All such actions taken by the Presiding Bishop shall be subject to the approval by a majority of the members of the General Board and subject to the will of the General Assembly.

ISSUE: THE ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

BISHOP OWENS

It was an hierarchal church when I became a member. And when I succeeded to the Presiding Bishop, we carried on a tradition that it is the Presiding Bishop who governs and supervises the Church of God in Christ as it relate to its spiritual and physical health.

We are not congregational, even though we deliver a congregational assembly. We are hierarchal. The

BISHOP BLAKE

Up to the appointment of a bishop or a pastor, it is episcopal or hierarchal. The Presiding Bishop, with the approval of the General Board or General Assembly, has power to appoint bishops. The Presiding or Jurisdictional Bishop has the power to appoint a pastor. To that point, it is hierarchal or episcopal. But subsequent to the appointment of a pastor, after the pastor is appointed, he's appointed for life. It is congregational from that perspective.

episcopal within that congregation cannot do it. It's like the Bishop of the Catholic Church, he sends a priest to the parish, and I send pastors to churches.

The Church of God in Christ is a hybrid, episcopal, congregational structure. There are three basic church structures: episcopal, presbyterian, congregational. In an episcopal church the bishops, collectively, have authority in the church. In a presbyterian church, the elders rule the church. In a congregational church, the members of the church are in charge of the church.

I say that it is a hybrid because in the structure of the denomination, jurisdictionally, locally, the bishop or the pastor is appointed. But once the bishop or the pastor is appointed, the Constitution has very elaborate guidelines and prohibitions regarding the removal of or the discipline of that pastor.

The Official Manual reference(s): Article III, Part II, page 4. The Church of God in Christ shall be composed of (A) General Assembly, (B) General Board, (C) Board of Bishops, (D) General Council, (E) Women's Department (F) Jurisdictional Assembly - Local Churches.

ISSUE: THE DEEDING OF PROPERTY

BISHOP OWENS

The property is held by local trustees for the benefit of the National Church. If there are only two members remaining at the Church of God in Christ's property, I have the responsibility to save that property for the members of the Church of God in Christ.

The Church of God in Christ is our corporate name, and it has been that for a little over 100 years, and anybody who uses it has to be a part of our organization, or we can take actions against them. There might be churches that have done it that we don't know anything about, but if we contest it, the name belongs to us.

BISHOP BLAKE

The pastor and the congregation have the authority, and control of the church at the local level unless, according to the due process and constitutional procedures of the church, the congregation or pastor are found guilty of breaking either the laws of the Bible or the laws-or a doctrinal law of the church or of the Constitution of the Church of God in Christ

The Official Manual reference(s): Article III, Section D, page 16 ..Where real or personal property is acquired by deed, the instrument of conveyance shall contain the following clause, to wit:

"The said property is held in trust for the use and benefit of the members of the Church of God in Christ with National Headquarters in the City of Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee....

ISSUE: THE REMOVAL OF A PASTOR

BISHOP OWENS

The grounds for removal of a pastor is written out in our manual, but a pastor can also be removed if he gets appointed and he is appointed with conditions, and if he is appointed by the bishop with conditions, and he does not meet those conditions, he does not need a trial. I have a right to remove him. That's the way we operate.

This is the way that our church operates. It's been our tradition for over 100 years. Same as the Catholic Church, same hierarchal deal. The priest (Pope) has the right to send a priest to a Catholic Church, and has the right to remove him. I have the same authority.

BISHOP BLAKE

The Constitution is so designed that there is a very strict set of proceedings and procedures that must be enacted before a pastor can be removed.

A majority of the members of the local church must bring charges, and it's in the Constitution — Article 6, page 31, Section B. Once a pastor is appointed, he can be removed only according to the provisions of the Constitution of the Church of God in Christ and due process.

The Official Manual reference(s): Article VIII, Section B, page 31. When a majority of the members of the local church have documented evidence that a pastor has committed any of all of the enumerated offenses, they may file charges

QUESTIONS WE MAY NEED TO ASK

Is the authority of the Presiding Bishop like that of the Roman Catholic Pope?

Is our denominational form of government hierarchal or are we a hybrid consisting of a combination of hierarchal, episcopal and congregational forms?

Is every local church property held by the local trustees for the benefit of the local congregation or is it held for the benefit of the National Church?

Is your local church property owned by the National Church regardless to how your deed and title is written? And, what about Articles of Incorporation? Does it matter?

Is the National Church able to claim ownership of local church property in which they have invested nothing?

Is the local pastor protected by the Constitution from a bishop summarily removing him from a local church without charges.

Is the General Board and the Presiding Bishop elected to carry out the will of the General Assembly?

WHAT COURAGE!

To voluntarily make emergency arrangements to travel from California to Florida to testify for the defense



Our entire congregation thanks Bishop Charles Blake, the only General Board Member who came to Orlando, Florida to defend Pastor Hutchins' constitutional rights. Bishop Blake's eloquent explanation of the church's ecclesiastical structure and the correct interpretation of the authority of the presiding Bishop according to the manual, was a defining moment in the trial that helped produce the victory!

Place
Stamp
Here

A Publication of Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ

Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ
401 S. Ivey Lane • Orlando, FL 32811
Telephone: (407) 295-9190 Fax: (407) 295-9001
Superintendent Derrick W. Hutchins, Pastor



"We are large enough to share, yet small enough to care."