

APOSTOLIC
CHRISTIAN
◆ CHURCH ◆

Welcome

An Introductory Description
of the Church

Second Edition

“I (Jesus) am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

JOHN 14:6

CONTENTS

	Foreword	v
I	Description	1
II	Origin	3
III	Mission of the Church	5
IV	Doctrine	7
V	Lifestyle	9
VI	Worship	10
VII	Brotherhood	13
VIII	Believer's Purpose	15
IX	Administration	16
X	Hope	17

FOREWORD

This booklet is intended to give you a brief description of the Apostolic Christian Church. It tells of the church's origins, presents a short summary of its doctrine and practices, and describes God's marvelous plan of salvation.

The Apostolic Christian Church believes in the infallibility of the Bible, and it is founded on faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The purpose of the church is to teach the Gospel message of salvation, to nurture the believer, to preserve sound doctrine and to serve others in the likeness of Christ.

The church diligently applies New Testament standards to everyday life and worship, and it practices a deep reverence toward God.

It is hoped that those who read this booklet will have many of their questions answered. However, all who are interested are encouraged to attend an Apostolic Christian assembly and learn by observation and by hearing the Word of God.

Salvation through Jesus Christ is man's greatest treasure. The Apostolic Christian Church seeks to share the joy of this marvelous gift from God, and prays diligently that others also will turn to Jesus Christ in true faith and repentance, experience peace with God and man, and receive the gift of eternal life.

A Statement of Faith and other materials are available in each local church as well as from Apostolic Christian Publications, 805 W. Cruger St., Box 52, Eureka, IL 61530. Additional information is available at www.apostolicchristian.org.

I DESCRIPTION

The Apostolic Christian Church earnestly seeks to interpret the Bible literally. The teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles serve as the foundation of the doctrine of the church. It is the sincere intent of its members to believe in and live by the Word of God in all aspects of their lives.

The church consists of approximately 90 congregations in the United States, Japan, Mexico and Canada. The church also conducts worship services on many college campuses in several states in order to teach the Holy Scriptures to persons attending universities.

The church is also engaged in many activities to benefit mankind, all in the name of Christ. An organization called Apostolic Christian World Relief collects both financial and material aid for distribution to persons in need on a worldwide basis. It also makes distributions through a variety of approved organizations.

A national Missionary Committee has oversight of the church's special programs to spread God's Word. Thousands of Bibles are distributed annually. Individuals, sound in faith, are sent on special assignment to support the mission arm of the church. There is growing mission work and there are new churches being established and supported both within and outside of the United States.

The church operates facilities and specialized programs which provide physical, emotional and spiritual support for the elderly, handicapped persons and needy children and their families.

The major intent of the church is to preach, teach and live the gospel of Christ so that others also will hear and respond affirmatively to this message of salvation—and someday, by God’s marvelous grace, enter into the portal of heaven.

II ORIGIN

The church was founded in the early 1830's by Samuel Froehlich, a young seminary student in Switzerland, who had experienced a biblical conversion. Being led of God through a true conversion, he began preaching the simple truths of the Bible. Approximately 110 congregations were formed in 35 years in several European countries. Froehlich's intent was to organize a church based on a literal interpretation of God's Word. He emphasized the scriptural principle, "...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."¹ The church, while recognizing Froehlich's work, gives God the glory for all these accomplishments.

Froehlich's attitudes and biblical understandings were shaped, in part, by the Sixteenth Century Anabaptists, whose doctrinal motto was "Sola Scriptura." This meant that Scriptures alone constituted the true foundation for doctrine and life—and they were to be followed. The church has continued over the years to diligently follow New Testament teachings, and to regard the entire Word as infallible and inerrant.

In Europe, the church was known as Evangelical Baptist. It later became known as Apostolic Christian in America. This name was chosen because the church follows the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

The Apostolic Christian Church took root in America in 1847, when a church was organized in Lewis County, New York. The site was in the Croghan-Naumburg area. Another church was formed a year later at Sardis, Ohio.

¹ Mt. 28:20

From this beginning in America the church grew, primarily in the fertile farming areas of the Midwest. As immigrants came from Europe (mostly from the Froehlich churches) and new converts were added in the United States, the church flourished. The believers were zealous in living and spreading the Word in America.

From the 1920's on, most of the new churches formed in America were founded in metropolitan areas. This was because many of the church's offspring sought occupational opportunities in areas other than farming. Thus, today the Apostolic Christian Church consists of a blend of city and rural churches.

III

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission (purpose) of the church is fourfold: 1) to present to the lost the Gospel message of salvation based on faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and a true repentance and conversion;² 2) to teach and nurture the believers toward a sanctified life and to faithfulness by God's grace and through His Word;³ 3) to preserve sound doctrine by "contending for the faith";⁴ and 4) to offer loving, humble deeds of service to fellow believers and all mankind in the name of Christ.⁵

By teaching and obeying the Word in its simplicity, the church and the individual are guided into living in a Christ-like manner. Giving pre-eminence to God's Word for all instruction enhances the church's efforts to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."⁶

The believer is nurtured through participation in humble worship and is encouraged and strengthened by intimate fellowship with supportive brothers and sisters in Christ. A warm, loving environment in the church provides a sense of security and consolation in the midst of a troubled world. Personal accountability to the church Body⁷ and frequent exhortation to live a sanctified life⁸ help each believer remain faithful.

² Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 3:19; Ep. 2:8

³ Col. 1:28; Ep. 4:12; 5:26-27

⁴ Jude 3; Acts 20:27; 1 Ti. 4:16

⁵ Ga. 5:13, 6:10; Ph. 2:7

⁶ Jude 3

⁷ Rom. 15:14

⁸ Heb. 3:13

Numerous outreach opportunities exist, including material aid for the needy (World Relief) as well as promoting the Gospel message to the lost (Mission). World Relief efforts involve many self-help, material aid and work projects throughout the U.S. and abroad. Missionary efforts have seen the establishment of service opportunities and the opening of new churches in the United States, Japan, Mexico and Canada, together with preaching and teaching sessions among church brethren on university campuses. Church mission work is also active in India, with a gospel and medical mission.

Efforts to witness and exemplify the Gospel message are the responsibility of all believers. This is accomplished by an active Bible distribution program and on an individual basis by sharing one's faith. All are encouraged to invite acquaintances to church and let them hear the Word and observe the Christ-like love and godly order found among the brethren.⁹

⁹ Mt. 5:16; Mt. 28:19-20; 1 Pe. 3:15

IV DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the church is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible, which is recognized as God-inspired, infallible, and inerrant. New Testament teachings are carefully followed, and counsel and advice are sought from examples found in the Old Testament.

It is believed that salvation is obtained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. True faith is evidenced by obedience to God's Word, which instructs a soul to do as the Lord Jesus taught, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."¹⁰ The biblical pattern of repentance is observed, which includes godly sorrow¹¹ for a past sinful life, confession of sins,¹² restitution for past wrongs,¹³ and becoming dead to sin.¹⁴ The wonderful and matchless grace of God is given to those who are humble in heart,¹⁵ along with peace and forgiveness from God.

Following conversion, which is manifested as a new walk of life in Christ, the convert gives a testimony of his or her faith and conversion experience to the congregation. This is followed by water baptism by immersion.¹⁶ Baptism symbolizes the burial of the old sinful nature into the death of Christ, and the subsequent rising of a soul out of the baptismal waters as a new creature in Christ Jesus.¹⁷ This is followed by the laying on of hands whereby a church elder prays over the new member. This prayer acknowl-

¹⁰ Mt. 4:17

¹¹ 2 Cor. 7:10

¹² Mt. 3:6; Acts 19:18; 1 John 1:9

¹³ Mt.5:23-24

¹⁴ 1 Pe. 2:24; Ro. 6:11

¹⁵ Ja. 4:6

¹⁶ Mt. 3:13-17

¹⁷ Ro. 6:3-4

edges and entreats the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart, and consecrates the new child of God into a life of service for Him.¹⁸ The new member is thus formally united with the church, which is Christ's body. Self-denial,¹⁹ separation from sin and unfruitful works,²⁰ and nonconformity to worldliness²¹ are integral parts of the Christian walk of life and they lead to a life of peace and joy.

This new life in Christ is exemplified by sincere effort to reflect His virtuous character in one's thoughts, words and deeds.²² Despite trials, temptation, and potential sorrow, God's grace is sufficient for humble hearts to walk with happiness and contentment in the love of Christ and to rejoice in the hope of heaven—if they are true and faithful until life's end.

¹⁸ Acts 8:17; Ep 1:13

¹⁹ Mt. 16:24

²⁰ 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Ep. 5:11

²¹ Ro. 12:2

²² 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 4:8; 2 Pet. 1:5-7

V

LIFESTYLE

While salvation comes by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, as a new creature in Christ a believer devotes himself to a life of zeal, commitment, and growth in understanding God’s Word. He strives to be not only a “hearer” of the Word, but a “doer” of the Word. He aims to glorify God; to be an example in word, conversation, charity, spirit, faith and purity; and to have and portray the joy of the Lord.²³ His lifestyle follows the patterns found in the Bible.

The Scripture exhorts the believer to walk humbly, modestly and with sobriety²⁴. All of the Bible’s teachings are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.”²⁵ All of its teachings are essential for godly living.

The life of a Christian reflects the light of Christ in everyday discipleship, both inwardly and outwardly.²⁶ The Word instructs to avoid costly and immodest clothing.²⁷ Gender distinction in attire and in general appearance is respectful to God’s order of creation.²⁸ Women are exhorted to portray a chaste appearance²⁹ with long hair gathered in a modest style, without cosmetics and jewelry. Men avoid long hair and are to maintain an outward demeanor that is consistent with the themes of humility, moderation and sobriety³⁰. Unedifying worldly entertainments are avoided, as believers are to be good stewards of all resources including their hearts and time.³¹

²³ Mt. 5:16; 1 Ti. 4:12; John 15:11

²⁴ 1 Pe. 5:5; 1 Ti. 2:9; Titus 2

²⁵ 2 Ti. 3:16

²⁶ 1 Cor. 6:20

²⁷ 1 Ti. 2:9-10; 1 Pe. 3:3-4

²⁸ Mt. 19:4

²⁹ 1 Pe. 3:2

³⁰ 1 Ti. 2:9; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; 1 Pe. 5:5; Titus 2

³¹ Ep. 5:15-16

VI

WORSHIP

The worship service in the Apostolic Christian churches reflects the brethren's special reverence for God and for Christ. A respectful attitude toward the omnipotence³² and holiness³³ of God is demonstrated in many ways.

All aspects of the service are intended to draw worshippers nearer to God and to deepen human appreciation of His ways. Thus, all worship procedures (i.e., reading Scriptures, preaching, singing and praying) are intended to give God, not man, supreme recognition and to glorify His name.

The church seeks to follow the Bible's ideal in sermon presentation. The Apostle Paul was explicit in stating that he did not preach to his churches "with excellency of speech or of wisdom"³⁴ and that "my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."³⁵ Rather, he determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.³⁶ Thus, ministers are not trained at seminaries or Bible colleges. The church believes that one's faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.³⁷ If preaching was done with wisdom of words, "the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."³⁸

Ministers are chosen from among the congregations and serve open-ended terms. They are men of good report, with a good understanding of and devotion to Scriptures, and are loyal in supporting the doctrines of the church. They serve without salaried compensation. More than one minister serves a church, the average being three to five.

³² Rev. 19:6

³⁶ 1 Cor. 2:2

³³ 1 Pe. 1:16

³⁷ 1 Cor. 2:5

³⁴ 1 Cor. 2:1

³⁸ 1 Cor. 1:17

³⁵ 1 Cor. 2:4

Ministers do not ordinarily select scriptural texts or prepare sermon outlines before the worship service. Instead, ministers pray and meditate on the Word during the week. Other than for special occasions, they open the Scriptures randomly as they stand before the congregation and use these texts for their message, recognizing that God knows the needs of the congregation. The minister thus humbly depends on the Holy Spirit for inspiration, praying to be used as an instrument for the benefit and edification of the worshippers.

Singing, too, is simple, joyful and solemn in “a cappella” fashion. All music is intended to focus on God. The intent of worship is not to entertain but to edify and to glorify God. All parishioners sing. In the sanctuary, prayer is offered to God while kneeling. This position symbolizes fallible mankind “bowing” in heart and mind before an all-powerful, merciful, and infallible God and Father. Female members wear a veiling over their head during prayer and worship.³⁹ Male members pray with their heads uncovered.⁴⁰

Men and women sit separately during regular worship services. This is sometimes relaxed, however, during special occasions such as weddings and funerals. Although no Scriptures reflect this practice, both Jewish and Christian tradition do. This practice was universally observed in both faiths beginning with temple worship until the late 1800’s. Separate seating during worship contributes to better “a cappella” singing, and it helps widows, widowers, and single members feel more comfortable by sitting with believers of their own gender.

During the first part of the worship service, prayer is offered by the minister conducting the service. Near the end of the service, however, any brother from the congregation may be asked to pray. It is customary to have two worship services on Sunday. After the morning worship service, a noon lunch is served, and a period of fellowship is enjoyed. Another worship service then follows.

Everyone is welcome to have lunch, and to attend both worship services.

³⁹ 1 Cor. 11:5

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. 11:4, 7

Charitable contributions are not solicited by passing a collection plate. No one is pressured or should ever feel compelled to make financial contributions. Instead, when collections are taken for special purposes they are announced from the pulpit and donations are placed in “charity boxes” which are located in the church hallways. Brethren and friends give on a free will basis, as they feel led by God’s Spirit.

Fellowship, while not a formal part of the worship service, is nonetheless complementary to worship. Members, when they come together for worship, greet with a holy kiss (within their own gender). This is taught five times in the New Testament.⁴¹ It is a blessing for the humble and converted heart as it is an expression of respect, love and kindness toward others in the household of faith.

⁴¹ Ro. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Pe. 5:14

VII

BROTHERHOOD

A deep bond of love and closeness exists among Apostolic Christians, and this esteem for the brethren extends from congregation to congregation within the denomination. There is frequent visiting among the various congregations across the land. When visiting members are present, they are given the opportunity to extend the greetings of their home church following the morning service. The bond of love and fellowship in Christ experienced by Apostolic Christians is unique and striking. Christ taught that genuine love among his people would confirm that they are His true followers.⁴² It is hoped that this atmosphere of love and mutual respect will be welcoming and assuring to all newcomers of this church.

This brotherly love exists because of the common spiritual bond made possible by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The church believes in the biblical teaching of unity in spirit, mind and faith.⁴³ Apostolic Christians believe that the church is Christ's body, and that Christ is the head.⁴⁴ The two are inseparable. Individualism, so prominent in society, is in conflict with the truths of unified brotherhood taught by the Word. The church is a spiritual body with many members and is called to unity.⁴⁵

Brothers and sisters in the church are to love one another as Christ loved us.⁴⁶ They are to submit one to another in the fear of God.⁴⁷ They are to respect each other's conscience.⁴⁸ Further, they

⁴² John 13:34-35

⁴³ Ph. 1:27

⁴⁴ Ep. 5:23; Ep. 2:20

⁴⁵ 1 Cor. 1:10

⁴⁶ John 15:12

⁴⁷ Ep. 5:21

⁴⁸ Acts 24:16; 1 Cor. 8:9-13

are asked via Scriptures to encourage (exhort)⁴⁹ one another and, if ever necessary, to correct (admonish) each other.⁵⁰ This is all done in love and gentleness with the intent of strengthening the individual member and the entire body.

Likewise, believers are to be “perfectly joined together” in a tightly knit church family. They are to keep the same spiritual judgments, and walk according to the same understanding and application of biblical principles.⁵¹

Following this biblical pattern of godly order nurtures a great measure of love and unity. In Christ and His body, the church, the believer finds comfort, contentment, inspiration, and unity of the Spirit.

⁴⁹ 1 Ti. 4:13; He. 3:13; He. 10:25

⁵⁰ Ro. 15:14; 1 Thes. 5:14

⁵¹ 1 Cor. 1:10; Ep. 2:21; Ep. 4:16; Ph. 3:16

VIII

BELIEVER'S PURPOSE

The primary purpose of a believer's life is to glorify God. This occurs by reflecting the character of Christ through obedience to His Word. A true believer lives and walks in the Spirit and has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.⁵²

A believer engages in edifying activities that strengthen him spiritually. He is motivated by love for Christ to contribute to strengthening the church in love,⁵³ to build a strong family unit patterned after the Word, and to be diligent in service and in sharing the Gospel message with others.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”⁵⁴ “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.”⁵⁵

⁵² Ga. 5:22-25

⁵³ Ep. 4:16

⁵⁴ Ro. 8:6

⁵⁵ John 15:8-12

IX

ADMINISTRATION

Christ is the head of the church, as ordained of God.⁵⁶ Ministers preach the Word and help in providing for the spiritual needs of each congregation. An elder has the spiritual oversight of each congregation in the biblical pattern of servant leadership.⁵⁷ An elder performs the rites of baptism, laying on of hands, communion and marriage, and counsels converts and members. All elders (approximately 60 in the entire denomination) comprise a national Council of Elders which seeks to provide Holy Spirit inspired doctrinal guidance and administration for the benefit of the various local congregations. This Council of Elders meets regularly and communicates with all of the churches to enhance unity and to share exhortations for the spiritual welfare of each individual.⁵⁸ The leadership committee of this council serves on a rotating basis so no ongoing authority will be vested in any one person or small group.

⁵⁶ Col. 1:18-19

⁵⁷ 1 Pe. 5:1-5

⁵⁸ Acts 15

X HOPE

The greatest hope of the Christian is to achieve the goal of heaven. The blessed hope of heaven is made possible by the death and shed blood of Jesus Christ. As man experiences a saving faith in Christ Jesus, the fruits of true repentance come forth, and he becomes converted by God's grace. Motivated by love for Christ, he strives to obediently follow the biblical patterns of godly living, and he rejoices in the hope of eternal life in heaven.⁵⁹ The believer's affection is set on things above and not on things of the earth;⁶⁰ however, the love of God and His promise of sufficient grace enables the believer to experience a life of joy and hope already on this earth. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."⁶¹

Because of this joy and hope, which fill the heart of every true believer, there is a strong desire to reach out to anyone who has an interest and invite them to come and learn about Christ, the Redeemer of all mankind.

⁵⁹ 1 John 2:25

⁶⁰ Col. 3:1-2

⁶¹ Ro. 15:13

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

JOHN 3:16

