



CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries
People working together to proclaim the Gospel

"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

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CGOM In Perspective

When our habitual life patterns change - whether imposed or self-imposed - it can take years to adjust.

For those of us in the Churches of God Outreach Ministries, those changes began some six years ago.

Since then we have 'evolved' - and matured. It may be helpful - and encouraging - for us to review our current position in the Church of God world. What makes us different? What challenges face us?

It seems natural that when differences arise within a church the 'obvious' course is to 'start a new church'. Hence we have a religious supermarket of competing and conflicting churches within 'Christianity'. In the restricted world of the churches of God a number of mega-churches have resulted. That's not the approach we determined for the *Outreach Ministries*. Careful study of the Scriptures led us to a different perspective. It became clear that the New Testament church was not a monolithic organization, 'ruled from the top down'. The true church of God is made up of all, wherever they are, in whom dwells the Spirit of God. The visible church, i.e. those who bodily associate together, also embraces unbelievers, 'learners' - and its complement of heretics!

Early Church Blue-print

In the mid-first century, brethren met together to worship, fellowship, exercise spiritual gifts, encourage one another, instruct and be instructed, and to plan and execute evangelism. These purposes were enhanced because they met face-to-face in smaller groups - in 'home churches'. Each was autonomous but in harmonious fellowship with other such assemblies. (This harmony seems not to have outlived the first century! *A warning to us!* Only in post-apostolic times was a hierarchical structure introduced, modeled on the secular Roman state.) And each home fellowship, to a greater or lesser degree, was in voluntary submission to mature external guidance - initially by the inspired apostles, later by men schooled by the apostles.

This is the pattern adopted by the *Outreach Ministries*. Each gathering of brethren of whatever size (and indeed each individual Christian) is answerable directly to the Head - to Jesus Christ. Answerable to him for our ethical behavior. Answerable for what we believe. Answerable for how we deal with 'the great commission'. On these we are daily 'weighed in the balance' - an awesome responsibility. But it can be lonely out there! The 'Letters to the Seven Churches' are an example of failure to communicate. Each cluster of fellowships in a city developed its peculiar

doctrinal aberration, while being subject to decay through general worldliness. Jesus told them to tighten up - or lose their status as part of the Body.

The pattern adopted by *CGOM* is for these individual fellowships to voluntarily work together through a non-coercive but supportive association. It's the principle that 'the whole is greater than its parts'. By combining our resources - spiritual gifts, human talent and financial - we can in combination accomplish more than can any single fellowship. An example is our ad in *USA Today* following the September 11 atrocity, and the related special issue of *Fountain of Life*. Another is the distribution of our outreach magazine *New Horizons* and our other literature. Another is making available combined fellowships and festival sites. Such projects are costly, and are made possible only by supportive joint-funding by the brethren. To this end, any project requiring substantial financial support is costed and submitted to the associated fellowships and supporting individuals. Those who wish to get behind the project decide locally how they can support it. This may be financially or in other ways appropriate to it (e.g. distribution of leaflets). In this way, local fellowships and even individual brethren can have worldwide impact!

Because each fellowship associated with *CGOM* is independent in its organization, there is no need for an expensive bureaucratic 'overlord' imposing a host of regulations, salary scales, directives etc. Extensive funding for 'headquarters' buildings and staff are unnecessary. Resources are thus channeled effectively and economically and without wastage. Matters of church discipline or doctrinal dispute are a local concern - though the availability of wise counsel from mature leadership elsewhere is always on tap through the association. The *Outreach Ministries* does not intervene in the internal affairs of individuals or local fellowships. It is solely a service organization the purpose of which is to be supportive of all the brethren.

Oversight

As with any joint effort, a measure of oversight is essential. In *CGOM* this is achieved through several volunteer Committees (all members have secular jobs or are retired) appointed through our annual Conference. They are responsible for *Financial oversight, Outreach, Member Services, Marketing and Research*. Appointments are unpaid, with remuneration for part-time accounting and for Conference-approved expenses (*e.g.* visits in support of local assemblies or scattered individuals.) Accounts are published annually in our *Newsletter*. Delegates to Conference are representatives appointed by each local fellowship (usually elders or stewards). The Conference is open to any brethren who wish to attend and contribute ideas.

Following each Conference, Committee Chairs keep in regular touch through tele-conferences, e-mail, phone *etc.* This ensures Conference decisions are implemented and any problems sorted.

Common Beliefs

The basic criteria for association with *CGOM* are simple. So we can pull together, it's important that we all 'sing from the same hymn-sheet', and we thus have a *Statement of Beliefs* which we believe reflects foundational Bible teachings. Few brethren or churches of God will find objections to it! It is a body of beliefs that have been hammered out over many decades. All brethren (individuals or fellowships) who can live with this Statement are warmly welcomed within *CGOM*. There are no 'inspired apostles' today - but we do have the Scriptures. Culture, language, geography, the filter of translation and the passage of time have, of course, obscured the clarity of some aspects of Bible teaching. But Christian tolerance, love for God and for our Saviour and for our brethren - and our passionate commitment to outreach - enable the various fellowships to work together on agreed projects despite minor disagreements.

You Are Invited!

On the principle that 'a three-fold cord is not quickly broken', *CGOM* openly invites individual brethren and any local assembly to consider association with us. As more brethren work together - without bureaucratic entanglements - much more can be accomplished in the Saviour's service. The function of the church of God is to proclaim worldwide and in every corner God's wonderful good news of salvation through Jesus, and to spiritually nourish the brethren. Everyone who responds to the divine call joins an army in which he or she has a vital combative

role. It's the intention of *CGOM* to thoroughly equip the brethren for that purpose. A library of support material on leadership and personal development is available and being further developed.

If you are 'out there' on your own ('scattered') *CGOM* wants to support you on your spiritual journey. If you are a small fellowship - of two or three or a dozen, vibrant or struggling - we can together accomplish much. Nor do we turn aside larger fellowship who can contribute established expertise and talent.

If any of our readers wish to have further information you are invited to contact us.

The Next Steps

1. It would be helpful if you would *contact us* to let us know of your commitment to *CGOM*
 - as an individual or family
 - as a fellowship: discuss it and if agreed, contact us
2. *Tell us how we can help you*
 - let us know your needs for literature, visits, speakers, resource material etc
 - we can provide guidance on how to make your fellowship more effective
 - our panel of researchers are ready to consider your Bible questions
 - request our 'news for the churches' the quarterly *CGOM Newsletter*
3. *Attend the annual Conference*, or send a delegate from your fellowship
4. *Let us know how you can help CGOM, e.g.:*
 - support *CGOM* and its needs daily in your prayer time
 - be a '*CGOM* point of contact': promote *New Horizons/Fountain of Life* by taking copies of each issue for your contacts, by local advertising etc
 - support *CGOM* with any degree of financial help
 - when a project is announced, consider how you can support it, using your spiritual gifts
 - submit considered plans of ideas for outreach
 - share your faith. Begin an informal home study with your acquaintances
 - send us reports for the *Newsletter* of your fellowship's activities. It encourages others!

[Request the article *Leadership in the Church of God*. An exposition of how a New Testament local assembly was organized]

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