

The **ICOF** (International Circle of Faith) is a group of Pentecostal, Charismatic or quasi Pentecostal churches, ministers and para church ministries. See Christian Protestant or Pentecostal. While the International Circle of Faith world headquarters is on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC, a large part of their organized effort is African with representation in every country in Africa. While the ICOF has some very large congregations (especially in the Congo) the rank and file of the ICOF is made up of small churches (those with less than 100 members), but lots of small churches have contributed to making a fairly large group. According to ICOF sources the ICOF now has 39,085 ministers. Total worldwide constituents in 2005 were listed at 10,936,349.

Representatives of the International Circle of Faith are actively involved at the highest levels in many countries, especially in Africa where ICOF officials work closely with government in countries such as Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, etc. While the ICOF has been consistent in not endorsing political candidates, their leadership in the USA has been 'favored' by conservative candidates. In recent years, the Presiding Bishop, Bernie L. Wade, has been a guest at the White House (2004) under the Presidency of George W. Bush and aligned with conservative evangelical groups such as the National Religious Broadcasters Apostolic coalition, a pro-Israel conservative messianic political action committee. In recent years, promoters of the "Roadmap for Peace" have sought the endorsement of the leadership of the ICOF.

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## Distinction

Pentecostals are people who have undergone a "baptism of the Holy Spirit", which is usually accompanied by speaking in tongues and sometimes by dancing or "holy laughter." While there is no official count of Pentecostals, the movement is spreading quickly in America and even faster worldwide, where they may account for a quarter of all Christians. Pentecostalism began with a local revival on Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906. Now there are at least 60 Pentecostal denominations, though many Pentecostal churches are nondenominational as well. Charismatics are related but distinct from the Pentecostal tradition. The ICOF claims that they represent nearly 11 million constituents which would make them among the largest Pentecostal/Charismatic movements in the world.

Like most Pentecostals they promote lively style of worship, which can include running church aisles, jumping, dancing, shouting, and clapping. The church services are also punctuated at times with acts of speaking in tongues (glossalalia), interpretations of tongues, prophetic messages, and the laying of hands for the purposes of healing. These events can sometimes happen spontaneously during normal services.

Unlike many Pentecostal denominations the ICOF ordains women ministers and even have ordained women into the office of Bishop, a move unprecedented in most of Christianity. ICOF believes that in Christ there is

neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, but all that have been filled with the Holy Spirit have equal opportunity. Ministers at all levels are allowed to marry and have children. As a result the first Black Bishop in the history of Ireland, Dr. Marcus Benson, was ordained in 2004 in the United Kingdom.

Unlike many Pentecostal denominations the ICOF puts emphasis on social gospel. The ICOF Humanitarian and Social Initiative is involved throughout the world in humanitarian projects; from HIV/AIDS education and awareness in Zambia to bore holes (water wells) in Nigeria.

## History

The group finds its origins in the American Pentecostal movement in general and in the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ (PAJC) in particular. In the Pentecostal movement, the PAJC is recognized as one of the unity efforts that took place among Pentecostals in the 1930s and one of the oldest Pentecostal groups in the world citing its origins in 1913 or before. The ICOF emerged out of the Pentecostal movement that commenced in Topeka, Kansas under Charles Parham on January 1, 1901. This movement gained strength while spreading through Missouri, Texas and California, culminating in the Azusa Street Revival in 1906. Rejected by mainline Christian denominations, Pentecostals began to form churches of their own, one of which was the Assemblies of God, formed in 1914.

In 1927 steps were taken toward reunifying these organizations. Meeting in a joint convention in Guthrie, Oklahoma, Emmanuel's Church in Jesus Christ and The Apostolic Churches of Jesus Christ merged, taking the name **The Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ**. This merger united about 400 Pentecostal ministers. In 1931, a unity conference with representatives from four Pentecostal organizations met in Columbus, Ohio, in an endeavor to bring all Pentecostals together. The Pentecostal Ministerial Alliance ministers voted to merge with The Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, but the terms of the proposed merger were rejected by that body. Nevertheless, a union between The Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World was consummated in November 1931. The new body adopted the name of **The Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ**.

1932 was a pivotal year for the Pentecostal movement in the United States. Pentecostal historians generally agree that "*in 1932, The Pentecostal Ministerial Alliance changed its name to The Pentecostal Church, Incorporated (PCI), reflecting its organizational structure. In 1936, the PCI ministers voted to work toward an amalgamation with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ (PAJC)*" Final union, however, proved elusive until 1945, when these two Pentecostal organizations combined to form the United Pentecostal Church. In 1955, citing dissatisfaction with the treatment of black ministers, some members of the PAJC reorganized under the direction of a key group of ministers which included Bishop Ray Oscar Cornell (Apostolic Faith Church of God, 2050 W. 55th Street, Cleveland, Ohio), Bishop Charles Bernard Gillespie (Fairmont, WV), and Bishop Carl Angle (Niles, OH). In 2001, ministers from the PAJC and ministers from a number of other organizations met in Cleveland Ohio. Their focus was to bring greater unity to the Pentecostal movement and to other similarly minded groups. With this in mind they reorganized under the International Circle of Faith. The key contributors to this effort were Dr. Bernie L. Wade, Dr. Jerome Campher and Dr. Frank Repper.

## Publications

The ICOF has its own publishing arm. The official organ of the International Circle of Faith is *ICOF Perspectives*, a weekly publication from the group's New Zealand office. The editor is David Tait.

## Leadership

Presiding Bishop, Dr. Bernie L. Wade 2000 - present

## International Bishopric

- Oswaldo Arroyo – (deceased) 2000 - 2001
- Dr. Tino Smith – 2001 - 2002
- Dr. Hans Brandt – 2002-2003
- Dr. Jerome Campher – 2003 - 2004
- Dr. Harold McFarland – 2003 – 2005
- Dr. John Ekwonike - 2007 to present
- Dr. Hans Brandt - 2002-2003
- Dr. H. C. McFarlane - 2003-2005
- Bishop Juan Nuevo - 2002-to present
- Bishop Gilsen Levi -2004-to present
- Bishop Sanford L. Wade - 2004 to present
- Dr. Marcus Benson

## Education

International Circle of Faith has a network of Colleges and Seminaries.

## ICOF Affiliated Educational Institutions

- Antoch Evangelical Seminary
- Apostolic Institute for Ministries - Nigeria
- Berea Bible Institute - USA
- Betty International School - Nigeria
- Restored Covenant Churches of God
- Carmel Bible College - India
- Central Christian University - USA
- Christian Workers Training Institute (CWTI) – USA
- Cypress Christian College
- Destiny School of Ministry
- Daisy R. Wade Primary School - Nigeria
- Dr. Bernie L. Wade Academy - Liberia
- Elohim Bible Academy - India
- Evangel Bible Institute - India
- Evangel School of Ministry - India
- Faith School of Theology
- Global Evangelical Christian College - USA
- Glofam Bible Institute - London
- Goye Bible Institute - Nigeria
- Grace College - USA
- Harvard High School - USA
- Higher Evangelical Theological Institute - Bulgaria
- International Circle of Faith College - USA
- Lighthouse Academy - USA
- Living Word Bible Seminary - Netherlands
- New Life School of Missions - India
- New Stars Bible College (5 campus) - Nigeria
- Renaissance University - Congo
- Royal Priesthood College - Togo
- RTW School of Theology

- Spanish Christian Embassy - SPAIN
- St. Thomas University
- United American Free Will Baptist College - Kingston, NC
- Zarephath Bible College - India
- Zarephath Christian College - India

## Notable Graduates

Notable graduates of ICOF Colleges and Seminaries

- Mathieu Kerekou, President of Benin
- Dr. Orji Uzor Kal, Former Executive Governor - Abia State, Nigeria
- Dr. Joel Phillip Church - President - Freedom Bible College
- Dr. Frank T. Bozeman - President - Global Evangelical Christian College
- Dr. Victoria Aguiyi-Ronsi, wife of the first President of Nigeria
- Dr. Cindy Coates - Pastor Solomon's Porch - Atlanta, GA
- Dr. Ronald Mayo - Bishop. United American Freewill Baptist Bible College
- Dr. E. J. McKenzie – Pastor - Panorama Christian Center.
- Dr. Paul S. Morton - Presiding Bishop - Full Gospel Baptist Association. Pastor - St. Stephen Baptist Church - New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Leo Lewis – Presiding Prelate, Prophetic Miracles Ministries Worldwide
- Dr. Barney Phillips - International Circle of Faith Chaplaincy Ministries
- Daisy R. Wade, Principal - Harvard High School
- Bishop Noel Jones, Pastor - City of Refuge Church
- Dr. James P. Gould - President - Christian World Network (CWN)

## Notable people within the ICOF

- Rev. Edward Lai Who's Who in Young Asian Americans
- Dr. Bernie L. Wade
- Dr. Frank T. Bozeman – President – Global Evangelical Christian College.
- Dr. Jerome Campher – Founder - Insight Christian Television Network.
- Dr. John Ekwonike – Presider - International Circle of Faith - Africa
- Dr. Gilson Levi – President - TelYeshuavision Television Network - France
- Dr. Harold McFarlane - Built on the Rock International Ministries
- Bruce Hawthorn – Founder – Christian Brotherhood Newsletter
- Bishop Yaotse Prince Badjene - International Circle of Faith - TOGO
- Bernie L. Wade II - Pastor of Life Church, Bedford, KY 40006

## External links

- International Circle of Faith
- Website of Apostolic results
- Pentecostales del Nombre de Jesucristo page in Spanish
- Spanish Web Site Apostolic Studies in Spanish
- Articles of Study By Oneness Theologian Mike Blume

## Other

- Apostolic Archives International Web Site dedicated to preserve the history of organizational leaders of various Pentecostal Denominations

## Notes and references

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