



OUR ECCLESIOLOGY

The Holy Christian Church

We identify with the Scriptural account of “the people of God,” confessing ourselves to be part of “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” Baptism into Christ’s church is a personal and corporate witness to God’s prevenient and saving grace. Our ministers are ordained “in the Church of God,”¹ and our congregations are concrete expressions of the church universal. We affirm the scriptural account of the holiness of God and God’s church, elected as an instrument of divine grace and called it into being by the Holy Spirit, its life-force, who renders it into Christ’s living body in the world. The Christian church witnesses to the truth that the worship of God is the one true focus of human life.

Therefore, it calls sinners to repentance and the amendment of their lives, nurtures holy living in believers through rich congregational life, and calls believers to the sanctified life. In its holiness and faithfulness, the church exhibits God’s kingdom to the world, so that the church is, in a true sense, the measure of its own message.

Aligned with God’s Mission

God’s mission in the world is primary, and we derive our mission from God, who formed a universe of vast proportions and, within nature and history, created a people to bear the divine image so

that divine love might flourish. When sin marred the creation, the mission's redemptive nature was revealed, namely "the restoration of all creation to God's creation purposes." Humanity's restoration is fundamental.

John Wesley defined this as sanctification, or "the renewal of our soul in the image of God," characterized as "righteousness and true holiness." God's mission was reflected in the call of Abraham, chosen for blessing that his seed could "be a blessing to all nations" (Genesis 12:1-2), and manifested in the history of the Hebrews, who bore witness to the One God, whose name they proclaimed to the nations of earth.

Christians experience God as a Holy Trinity, in whom God is revealed most fully in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Holy Spirit invites and empowers our participation in God's mission. The church enters that covenant and continues the blessing and healing of the nations as part of its sanctified life. We join other Christians in God's mission but embrace a vision that orders our denominational life as an *international* church in which national boundaries do not define ecclesiastical ones, since Christ opens the church to all nations and races.

Ministering as Christ in the World

The basis of Christian ministry is the biblical mandate to bear witness to God's love in Christ. Believers affirm their ministry at baptism, which announces their intention to bear a public witness as Christ's disciples. Faithful discipleship is an outward sign of God's inward grace in us; likewise, it is the sign of divine grace at work in the world that "God so loved." All members of Christ's body are equipped for service, and those called to specialized leadership in the church are ordained as apostolic ministers. Their call is rooted in deep personal conviction.

Clergy and laity of the local and district church discern and affirm the presence of the requisite gifts and graces, and, in district assembly, elect those who are to be ordained as ministers. Deacons are ordained to vocational service in a ministry in which Word and Table are not primary responsibilities. Elders are ordained to shape the body of Christ through preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, nurturing the people in worship, and ordering congregational life.

Superintendents are elected for district or general office by assemblies of laity and clergy. District superintendents direct their pastoral and spiritual leadership toward the churches, members, and clergy of a defined area. General superintendents exercise an apostolic and pastoral ministry toward the whole denomination, maintaining the church's unity in doctrine and holiness, modeling Christ's life through collegiality, and casting a vision that the whole church can embrace.

Their vantage point must be international in scope. It falls on them to articulate the vision and need for resources for different parts of the church body, participate in the allocation of resources to the needy areas of our world ministry, and unify the church in mission and message. Through the ordination of ministers at the various district assemblies, and in other ways, they are to maintain the unity of a denomination of immense national, economic, racial, and linguistic diversity.