



CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY
LOCAL CHURCH
FACILITY USE GUIDELINES

PRODUCED BY:
THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL OVERSEER

APPROVED BY:
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

WITH ASSISTANCE BY:
THE ALLIANCE FOR DEFENDING FREEDOM

Introduction

The Church of God of Prophecy has been established in over 134 nations of the world. Today, over 12,000 facilities serve as houses of worship, fellowship, ministry, and outreach for more than 1.5 million members around the world.

The church's facilities were provided by God's benevolence and the sacrificial generosity of church members. The Church of God of Prophecy desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the body of Christ and always to God's glory.

Although most of our facilities are not generally open to the public, many churches make their facilities available to approved non-member persons and groups as a witness to their faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

A facility use policy is critical for any church that permits its facilities to be used outside of normal business operations. A policy is clear evidence of the organization's beliefs and practice regarding use of its property and why certain practices or activities are never permitted.

Use of Church of God of Prophecy facilities should not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs, or advancing, advocating, or engaging in practices that conflict with the Church's teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the church's policy manual. Nor may facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed by the pastor as inconsistent with, or contrary to the church's teachings. The pastor, or his official designee, is the final decision-maker on whether a person or group is allowed to use church facilities.

A restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons:

First, the church should not in good conscience cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to our teachings. Allowing our facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice. See 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

Second, it is very important to the church that it presents a consistent message to the community, which the church staff and members conscientiously maintain as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To allow facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith would have a severe negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also be a source of confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church is in agreement with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using church facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church sees all of its property as holy and set apart to worship God. See Colossians 3:17.

Church use policies should be established first using church doctrine as guidelines for what activities are acceptable within the facility, then church polity. To produce guidelines that would universally serve all churches and address specific legal needs would be impossible. However, within this document we have attempted to succinctly assist local ministries in developing policies and guidelines that will legally protect their facilities while insuring ministry can still continue effectively.

Biblical Principles, Beliefs and Practices

Below you will find both broad statements concerning the beliefs of the Church of God of Prophecy, as well as more focused statements concerning issues relevant to our current cultural climate.

Important Bible Truths

From its beginnings, the Church of God of Prophecy has based its beliefs on “the whole Bible rightly divided.” We accept the Bible as God’s Holy Word, inspired, inerrant, and infallible. We believe the Bible to be God’s written revelation of Himself to mankind and our guide in all matters of faith; therefore, we look to the Bible as our highest authority for doctrine, practice, organization, and discipline.

The Church of God of Prophecy is firm in its commitment to orthodox Christian belief.

- We affirm that there is one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, the physical miracles He performed, His atoning death upon the Cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal return in power and glory at His second coming.
- We profess that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential for the salvation of sinful mankind.
- We believe the sinner is brought to an awareness of the need for salvation through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that in sanctification by the blood of Christ, one is made holy.
- We affirm the present, active ministry of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church and by whose indwelling and empowerment we are able to live godly lives and render effective service to God and others.
- We believe in the oneness and ultimate unity of believers for which our Lord prayed, and that this should be visibly displayed “that the world may know, see, and believe” God’s glory, the coming of His Son, and the great love He has for His people (John 17:20–23).
- We are committed to the sanctity of the marriage bond and the importance of strong, loving Christian families.
- The Church embraces all biblical doctrines as taught in the New Testament and are outlined in the church’s 29 Biblical truths.¹

Statement on Marriage, Sexuality, and Human Life

The Church of God of Prophecy affirms the biblical teaching that marriage is sacred and should not be entered into lightly without proper preparation. Marriage was originally instituted by God as a properly recognized covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. The Church affirms the biblical family as a father and mother in wedlock who may procreate children. The Church further asserts that the home, including the extended family, is to be guided by love, discipline, and other nurturing aspects as taught in God’s Word. Because the Church is committed to the sanctity of marriage and human life, we diligently stand against abortion, incest, abuse, euthanasia, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, and lesbianism, which we believe are contrary to God’s original design as expressed in His Word. All biblically unlawful unions such as same-sex, incestuous, or polygamous marriages are renounced by the Church even if they are recognized as legal by civil governments.

Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139.)

Final Authority for Matters of Faith and Conduct

The International Assembly, a meeting open to all members of the Church of God of Prophecy, is the highest decision-making body. It serves as an interpretative and decision-making body that deals with pressing universal truths requiring definitive decisions for translocal matters in expediting the proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 1:21–23; Ephesians 2:13–16, 19, 20; Acts 15:6–9). It is the place at which members of the Church and their official representatives assemble together under the headship of Christ to search the Scriptures. As the Bible is illuminated by the Spirit, understanding and resolution of differences of interpretations, which tend to be divisive among the churches, will be received. The International Assembly accepts the Bible as its highest authority.

¹ See: *Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices* Booklet

Sample Church Facility Use Policy

This sample "Church Facility Use Policy and Form" is provided as a template for local churches to develop their own policy and form. Certain portions of the form may be unnecessary for your situation.

Church of God of Prophecy Church Facility Use Policy

Purpose Statement

Our church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of our church members. We desire that our facilities be used for the fellowship of the body of Christ and to bring God glory. Although our facilities are not generally open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

But use of our facility will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with, the church's faith or moral teachings. The pastor, or pastor's official designee, is the final decision-maker concerning use of church facilities.

This restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons. First, the church may not in good conscience materially cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice. (2 Cor 6:14; 1 Thess 5:22.)

Second, it is very important that the church present a consistent message to the community, and that the church staff and members conscientiously maintain that message as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Allowing facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith would have a severe, negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also cause confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church agrees with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using its facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church sees all of its property as holy and set apart to worship God (Col 3:17).

Approved Users and Priority of Use

The pastor or official designee must approve all uses of church facilities. Generally, priority shall be given to church members, their immediate families, and organized groups that are part of the ministry, organization, or sponsored activities of the church. Church facilities and equipment will be made available to non-members or outside groups meeting the following qualifications:

1. Groups or persons requesting facility use must affirm that their beliefs and practices and planned uses of the facilities are consistent with the church's faith and practice.
2. The group or person seeking facility use must submit a signed "Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form.
3. The group or person seeking facility use must be willing to take responsibility for the facilities and equipment used and must agree to abide by the church's rules of conduct for facility use, as stated below and as described in any additional instructions by church staff.

Facility Use Hours

Facilities are available between the hours of _____ a.m. and _____ p.m. Use outside these hours may be approved by the pastor or official designee.

Scheduling Events

Facility use requests shall be made to _____ [e.g., pastor, secretary, events coordinator] by submitting the "Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form. The event will be reserved and placed on the church calendar only when the pastor or official designee approves the use.

Fees

Use of our church facilities is subject to a use and maintenance fee of \$_____ to pay for the upkeep of church facilities. Church members are not required to pay a fee for usage because maintenance of the facilities are derived from member tithes and offerings. [Note: Whether a church charges a fee for facility use is up to its discretion. But charging below-market rates, or no fee at all, helps churches avoid being considered a public accommodation under local or state law. Public accommodations are generally subject to a variety of laws, including laws regarding nondiscrimination. Because there is greater risk of being subject to these laws when a church charges market rates for facility use, we advise either charging no fee (except for perhaps a cleaning or other incidental fee) or charging a below-market fee. In any event, the church may also wish to require a refundable security deposit to pay for any damages to the facilities].

Facility Use Guidelines

- No alcohol may be served in church facilities.
- Smoking in any indoor church facilities is strictly prohibited.
- Groups are restricted to only those areas of the facility that the group has reserved.
- Food and beverages in classrooms, worship space.... [e.g., not allowed, not allowed without lid, restricted to certain areas, etc].
- Church equipment, such as tables and chairs, must be returned to original placement, unless arranged otherwise prior to the event.
- All lights must be turned off and doors locked upon departure.
- Clean-up [address whether it is the responsibility of the group using the facility, and if so, what constitutes satisfactory clean-up. The church may also wish to include a clean-up fee].
- Abusive or foul language, violent behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse are strictly prohibited on church premises. Any person exhibiting such behavior will be required to leave the premises immediately.
- Any person or group must sign the "Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form prior to reservation of church facilities.

Insurance

For all non-church-sponsored events, the group or person using the facilities must obtain liability insurance coverage in the amount of at least \$_____. The user must also agree to the "Facility Use Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement."

Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement

Name of person or organization requesting use of facilities: _____

Please state whether you are a:

- Church Member Church-Sponsored Ministry Non-Member Non-Member Group/Organization

Contact Information:

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

If the requested use is by an organization not affiliated with the church, please briefly state the organization's purpose and mission:

Please list the organization's website, if any: _____

Please list the names of the organization's office-holders and leaders (if applicable):

Regardless of type of user, please describe which church facilities you are requesting use of and the purpose for which you intend to use the facilities:

What date(s) and time(s) are you requesting to use the facilities:

If you are requesting use of the church's facilities for a wedding and/or wedding reception, please list the names and contact information of the bride and groom:

Bride:

Groom:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Please list the name, contact information, and religious affiliation of the person officiating the wedding:

Please describe the marriage preparation counseling or training undertaken by the bride and groom:

I affirm that:

1. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be used in a way that contradicts its faith or by persons or groups holding beliefs that contradict the church's faith.
2. To the best of my knowledge, the purpose for which I am requesting use of church facilities will not contradict the church's faith and I commit to promptly disclose any potential conflict of which I am aware or become aware to church staff.
3. I am not aware of any beliefs that are professed by me or the organization I represent and which is requesting use of the church's facilities that contradict the beliefs of the church. I agree to promptly disclose any potential conflicts in belief to church staff.
4. I understand that upon approval of my facilities use request, I will need to provide a security deposit in the amount of \$_____, a certificate of insurance for at least \$_____ of coverage, and any other fees required by the church.
5. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be generally available to the public and that my use of these facilities is subject to the pastor's approval, which is conditioned in part on my agreement to the requirements in the "Church Facility Use Policy," a copy of which I have read and understood.
6. I understand that I will be responsible for any damages to the church facilities resulting from this proposed use of facilities.
7. The church believes disputes are to be worked out between parties without recourse to the courts. See, generally, Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6. Accordingly, users of the facility agree to attempt resolution of any disputes through Christian mediation.

Facility Use Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement:

_____ agrees to the following.

1. The facilities will be used according to the policies of Church of God of Prophecy as set forth in the Biblical Principles, Beliefs and Practices that is part of this Agreement.
2. _____ will be responsible for the conduct of those coming to or participating in the activity for which the facilities are reserved and will be used.
3. _____ will be responsible for any damage beyond normal wear and tear that may occur as a result of the activity or _____'s use of the facilities.
4. _____ will indemnify and hold harmless Church of God of Prophecy from all liability and each demand, cause of action, loss, cost, damage, and expense (including without limitation mediation fees, reasonable attorney fees, and costs of litigation) incurred by Church of God of Prophecy from a default or any other action by _____, in connection with, or growing out of, this Agreement or _____'s use of the facilities.

_____ Name

_____ Date

_____ On Behalf of Organization (where applicable)