



Discipleship 101 New Believer Lesson #8 Foundations for Membership

By Andy Madonio
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Introduction:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. "Selah"

[Psalm 84:1-4](#)

The Psalmist found a church he loved, that is obvious. He loved it because his Heavenly Father's presence was all over the place, so much so that even wildlife recognized it. Belonging to God's Church is a vital part of your life, and each individual Christian church has a unique style and history. In the book of Acts, we see the beginning of the Christian Church. From its origin in Jerusalem, the Church spread to the surrounding regions – Samaria, Ceaserea, Damascus, Syria, Galatia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Achaia, Illyricum, Rome, Spain, Alexandria, Cyrene, and eventually Europe and the world. In each town, village and hamlet where believers gathered, churches sprang up. Each of these churches established guidelines for participation, for leadership, laity, worship, etc. Lesson #8 tells the story of the roots of Rochester First and the Assemblies of God, along with brief facts about their governing structure, general statistics, key ministries, fundamental truths, and strategic vision.

[Note: The majority of material in lessons #7 through 9 on membership I gleaned almost entirely from Pastor Kelvin Lott. It is with great appreciation and thankfulness that I utilize his hard work to add to these three membership-specific lessons in the discipleship course material – Andy Madonio]

Who We Are & What We Believe:

The Assemblies of God began as an outgrowth of the early 20th century revival in Los Angeles, California on a road called Azusa Street. This revival was the culmination of many "mini" revivals that began in Topeka, KS and in Texas. The driving force of this revival was a hunger for more of God and a return to the Biblical pattern of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost as recorded in [Acts 2](#). This Biblical account occurred during the Jewish feast of Pentecost, thus the participants of this revival were called "Pentecostals". As this revival spread across the country and around the world, the need arose for formal training and recognition of ministers, pooling of resources for sending and supporting missionaries, legal recognition for purchasing property, and doctrinal unity.

In 1914, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, some 300 delegates from across the country came together and formed the Assemblies of God. This was not to be a denomination, but a full Gospel "cooperative fellowship." In 1916, due to some doctrinal "flakiness", the need arose to have a documented statement of foundational doctrine (Bible truths) called the [16 Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God](#).

[For more reading, visit the A/G History page at this link.](#)

Assembly of God Recent Statistics:

- * Over 63,000,000 members and adherents worldwide (2009 figure)
- * The fastest growing Pentecostal/Charismatic group in the world
- * Missionary outreaches & national churches in more 213 countries (2009 figure)
- * Over 12,000 churches in the US (2009 figure)
- * Over 250 Bible/Ministry training schools in foreign nations

Sixteen Fundamental Truths:

The following 16 nonnegotiable tenets of faith are followed by all Assemblies of God churches. This link - [A/G Sixteen Fundamental Truths](#) - gives all the details, or you can click on specific individual tenets below for a deeper dive into the statement.

1. WE BELIEVE...[The Scriptures are Inspired by God](#) and declare His design and plan for mankind.
2. WE BELIEVE...[There is only One True God](#)—revealed in three persons...Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (commonly known as the Trinity).
3. WE BELIEVE...[In the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ](#). As God's son Jesus was both human and divine.
4. WE BELIEVE...though originally good, [Man Willingly Fell to Sin](#)—ushering evil and death, both physical and spiritual, into the world.
5. WE BELIEVE...[Every Person Can Have Restored Fellowship with God Through 'Salvation'](#) (trusting Christ, through faith and repentance, to be our personal Savior). [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
6. WE BELIEVE...and practice two ordinances—(1) [Water Baptism by Immersion](#) after repenting of one's sins and receiving Christ's gift of salvation, and (2) [Holy Communion](#) (the Lord's Supper) as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.
7. WE BELIEVE...[the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Special Experience Following Salvation](#) that empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times. [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
8. WE BELIEVE... [The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is 'Speaking in Tongues.'](#) as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles.
9. WE BELIEVE...[Sanctification Initially Occurs at Salvation](#) and is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive lifelong process of separating from evil as believers continually draw closer to God and become more Christlike.
10. WE BELIEVE...[The Church has a Mission](#) to seek and save all who are lost in sin. We believe 'the Church' is the Body of Christ and consists of the people who, throughout time, have accepted God's offer of redemption (regardless of religious denomination) through the sacrificial death of His son Jesus Christ.
11. WE BELIEVE...[A Divinely Called and Scripturally Ordained Leadership Ministry Serves the Church](#). The Bible teaches that each of us under leadership must commit ourselves to

- reach others for Christ, to worship Him with other believers, to build up or edify the body of believers—the Church and to meet human need with ministries of love and compassion.
12. WE BELIEVE...[Divine Healing of the Sick is a Privilege for Christians Today](#) and is provided for in Christ's atonement (His sacrificial death on the cross for our sins). [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
 13. WE BELIEVE...in [The Blessed Hope—When Jesus Raptures His Church Prior to His Return to Earth](#) (the second coming). At this future moment in time all believers who have died will rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air, and Christians who are alive will be caught up with them, to be with the Lord forever. [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
 14. WE BELIEVE...in [The Millennial Reign of Christ](#) when Jesus returns with His saints at His second coming and begins His benevolent rule over earth for 1,000 years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace.
 15. WE BELIEVE...[A Final Judgment Will Take Place](#) for those who have rejected Christ. They will be judged for their sin and consigned to eternal punishment in a punishing lake of fire.
 16. WE BELIEVE...and look forward to the perfect [New Heavens and a New Earth](#) that Christ is preparing for all people, of all time, who have accepted Him. We will live and dwell with Him there forever following His millennial reign on Earth. 'And so shall we forever be with the Lord!'

The Vision and Mission of Rochester First A/G:

First and foremost, Rochester First strives to *love God & love people*. We do this by offering worship, teaching and preaching that aims for a life-changing encounter with:

- The Presence of God
- The practical application of God's Word
- God's people, our local church body.

Our Core Values are as follows:

1. **Excellence** - [“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it for the glory of God.”](#) - The Apostle Paul.

2. **Integrity** – Complete honesty; being whole

- With God
- With each other
- With ourselves
- *“A shoe that walks as good as it looks”* - Arthur Parsons (You’ll have to ask Pastor Kelvin about this one!)

3. **Family**

- The family is the central piece of our society.
- We are here to strengthen families.
- We are here to see healing brought to hurting homes.
- Our church will only be as strong as the families that fill the seats each week.

4. **Worship & Prayer**

- The freedom of worship
- The power of prayer

5. **Servanthood** – [Mark 10:42-45](#)

- Every person is a minister and has a ministry. [Ephesians 4:11-12](#)
- Richard Crisco - *“Until you have gone the 2nd mile, you haven't fulfilled your Christian duty.”*
- The smallest act, done in the quietest way, with the right motive, becomes a shout in the ears that reverberates in the heart.

6. **Outreach & Missions** – Only a healthy Church Body can provide so richly, and strong members are the key.

- Over \$ 100,000 given to home and foreign missions each year
- Short term missions teams / trips
- Monthly Outpouring services
- Support of local outreach ministries (Crisis Pregnancy Center, Grace Centers of Hope, Teen Challenge, Detroit Outreach, etc)
- An “open” altar each service
- Benevolence ministries

Governmental Structure:

- We are an autonomous church; that means self-governing and self-sustaining
- Christ is the Head, the Head of Church universal; a gift from the Father to the world
- Senior Pastor is the Under Shepherd, the Head of local church, a gift from Jesus to the church
- Elders are gifts from the church to the pastor
- A/G Governmental Structure – Section, District, General Council

Hopefully, this has been instructive. Use this lesson as a reference for the future, or if you have specific questions for the author (Andy), or the pastors (Pastor Richard, Pastor Kelvin), contact the church offices at 248-652-3353.

See you in Lesson #9!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]