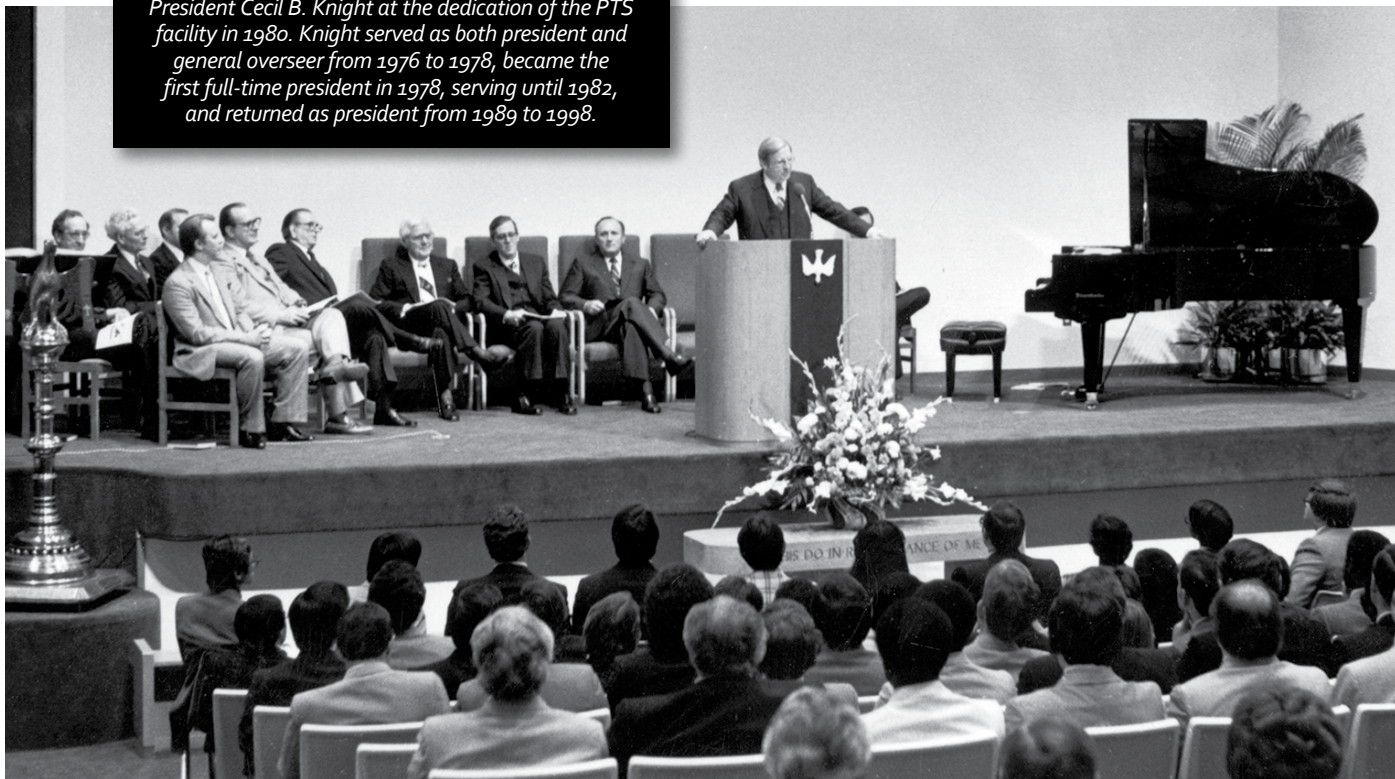


President Cecil B. Knight at the dedication of the PTS facility in 1980. Knight served as both president and general overseer from 1976 to 1978, became the first full-time president in 1978, serving until 1982, and returned as president from 1989 to 1998.



“COMPETENT TO STAND”: THE PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

by Daniel Tomberlin

WHEN GOD EXILED the people of Israel to Babylon, God instructed them to “seek the welfare of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7 ESV). The children of Abraham were to be a blessing to Babylon. The Babylonians sought Israel’s youth for kingdom service. These young people were to be “. . . skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning, and *competent to stand in the king’s palace*. . .” (Daniel 1:4 ESV). Throughout history, men and women of exceptional competence have

been chosen to serve in the highest offices of government and church.

From its inception, the mission of the Pentecostal Theological Seminary has been to seek out and train men and women to stand in the king’s palace—to serve the church and the world with outstanding competence.

Concluding his tenure as general overseer in 1970, Charles W. Conn issued a call for the church to establish “a proper Pentecostal seminary.” As the Church of God expanded its mission and ministry throughout the world and looked toward

a second century, the church needed a school of higher education. Conn declared,

The need is clear and unmistakable: we must go forward in Christ-centered education or be buried in Christ-denying or Christ-ignoring secular education. The question is not whether the youth of our church will pursue learning—they will; but the question is, Shall the church satisfy their need or shall they turn elsewhere? (*General Assembly Minutes*, 26).

The General Assembly answered Conn’s challenge and authorized the Executive Council to proceed with the establishment

1980
J. D. Golden emphasizes ethnic ministries in New York

1980–1984
Jim O. McClain serves as World Missions director



1981
Brian Barnett establishes first Anglo-British Church of God in Hitchin, England

1982
Billy J. Rayburn becomes director of Cross-Cultural Ministries



1982
SEMISUD begins as Southern Cone Seminary in Argentina

of a seminary. Heinrich Scherz summarized the rationale for a seminary as: (1) To safeguard our holiness-Pentecostal heritage; (2) To ensure continued opportunity for ministry in a highly educated society; (3) To guard against the pitfalls of a shallow, feeling-only approach to Christian life; (4) To better equip pastors and leaders; (5) To assist in the specialized training of military chaplains and counselors; and (6) So that believers may become as knowledgeable, competent, and authoritative in the things of God as others are in medicine, jurisprudence, or business (*Evangel*, February 12, 1973, p. 7).

Classes Begin

The November 25, 1974, *Church of God Evangel* announced the first seminary officials who would work alongside General Overseer and President Wade H. Horton: R. Hollis Gause would serve as director and dean, and F.J. May as associate professor. Gause and May devoted the rest of their professional lives to the ministry of the seminary. May served until his retirement in 2000; Gause served until his death in 2015.

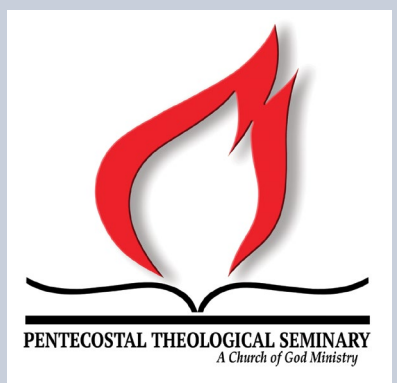
On September 1, 1975, the Church of God Graduate School of Christian Ministries began classes offering a master's degree with 42 semester hours. The first class consisted of 15 men and two women. Offices and classrooms were at the College Arms Apartments across from the Lee College Administration Building. One of the first students, Dwain Pyeatt, remembers, "There was a friendly warm atmosphere. Even the austere Gause let his hair down occasionally. Brother May was pastoral in his relationships. Everyone shared with homework and study. There was no competition between students or pressure from teachers. They were committed to helping us make it."

The school's first commencement was on July 27, 1976, in the chapel of the Church of God International Headquarters. Ralph S. Douglas, Darrell B. Kilpatrick, Lukie L. Magee, Dwain M. Pyeatt, and Marvin E. Woods earned degrees. This historic event hosted a special guest—the Reverend R.E. Hamilton, a member of the first graduating class of the Bible Training School.

What's in a Name?

MANY IN THE Church of God held reservations about sponsoring a "seminary," which they associated with mainline churches. So, the school's first name was *Church of God Graduate School of Christian Ministries* (1975). This was changed to *Church of God School of Theology* (1979), and then *Church of God Theological Seminary* (1997) as accreditation levels changed and new degree programs were offered.

Although the primary purpose of the seminary is to train ministers and leaders for the Church of God, it has always been open to students from all churches. Furthermore, the seminary developed a reputation of excellent scholarship, which benefited the entire Pentecostal movement. So, in 2010, the name became *Pentecostal Theological Seminary*.



Building a World-Class Institution

With two faculty members, 17 students, and temporary facilities, the seminary had an inauspicious beginning. Church leaders knew that much had to be done to establish a world-class educational institution. The seminary needed a permanent home. Early considerations included Nashville, Atlanta, and Indianapolis; but Cleveland, Tennessee, was the home of the Church of God, so Cleveland became the seminary's home. The school secured property in a historic district surrounded by Lee College, the North Cleveland Church of God, and Pathway Press (former General Headquarters building). Church and civic leaders broke ground in November 1979, and the next September the seminary held classes in new facilities at 900 Walker Street, now known as the R. Hollis Gause Administration Building. As the seminary grew, the original building became inadequate. In 1995, twenty years after the first classes met in rented rooms, the seminary dedicated the Thurman J. Curt-singer Ministry Center, a 27,000 square-foot complex, housing new classrooms, a conference center, and office suites.

A growing seminary needs a competent faculty, but from where does an upstart Pentecostal seminary recruit Pentecostal faculty? This became the mission of James M. Beaty, the seminary's second dean. Beaty already had developed a communication network through a newsletter called *Seminarinews*, and he knew there were Church of God scholars pursuing doctoral studies. These men and women had been disciplined in Church of God congregations; many had attended Lee College; some had even been among the first graduates of the seminary. Although they received their doctoral training in non-Pentecostal institutions, they were committed to

1984
First Men/Women of Action project is England's Overstone College



1984–1988
J. H. Walker Jr. serves as World Missions director



1985
First USA National Hispanic Conference convenes

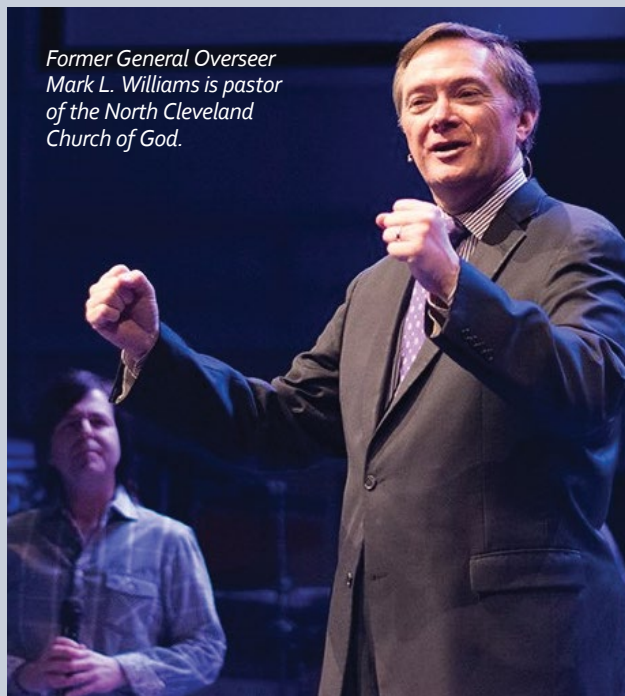
1985
In China, Hong Yang becomes a Christian while reading a Bible to learn English



From Scholar to General Overseer

ONE OF THE MOST distinguished graduates of the seminary is Dr. Mark Williams, former general overseer of the Church of God and present pastor of North Cleveland Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee. As Williams completed his undergraduate degree at Lee College, he was praying about his future ministry. He secured an appointment with R. Lamar Vest, then president of Lee, to discuss his future. Vest advised him, “You’re not running a sprint, you’re running a marathon. You should plan for the long haul.” So, Williams, a native of Texas, began considering Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Even so, he made an appointment to discuss this decision with Ray H. Hughes, then president of the seminary. After his time with Hughes, Williams developed an “inner conviction” that God was calling him to complete the Master of Divinity at the seminary. Today, Williams says,

The first day, I knew I made the right decision. The faculty “imparted incredible knowledge” and helped me to develop leadership skills. They exposed me to the global perspective of the church and challenged many of my preconceived assumptions. I’ve kept my notes from classes, and I still refer to them. I came away with the conviction that there is a distinctive model of Pentecostal leadership. The faculty has been lifelong mentors. My studies at the seminary prepared me for serving as general overseer by imparting to me a passion for the Scripture and right doctrine.



Former General Overseer Mark L. Williams is pastor of the North Cleveland Church of God.

Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns is the Robert E. Fisher Professor of Spiritual Renewal and Christian Formation.



Pentecostal theology and spirituality. This first-generation Pentecostal faculty would form the foundation of much of the future Pentecostal scholarship.

A world-class seminary needs peer review and accreditation. The administration applied to the Southern Association of Colleges and School (SACS), which granted candidate status in 1982 and full accreditation in 1986. Full accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) came in 1989.

As the student community grew, the administration and faculty recognized the need to offer more degree programs. The Master of Divinity degree was first offered in 1979, and Donald M. Walker became the first graduate with that degree. He later served as president of the seminary. The Doctor of Ministry program began in 2001, and the seminary graduated 10

1986
International membership surpasses 1 million

1988
Ministry to Israel begins

1988–1992
Lovell R. Cary serves as World Missions director



1991
Discipleship College starts in Kenya

1992
Church appoints Esdras Betancourt first director of USA Hispanic Ministries



doctoral candidates in 2004. The seminary presently offers six master's degree programs and the Doctor of Ministry.

Women Scholars

Following the Pentecostal tradition of embracing women in ministry, the seminary's earliest classes included women scholars, and more than 400 women have graduated. Sharon Harris and Joyce Miles were the first women graduates as members of the second graduating class in 1977. Harris was serving in inner-city evangelism and public school education in New York City. Miles served as the minister of music at the Calhoun, Georgia, Church of God.

In 1986, Cheryl Bridges Johns became the first female faculty member. Johns grew up in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, received her first degree from Emmanuel College, and graduated with the Ph.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. During her decades of service, she has become highly regarded for her work in Pentecostal formation and spirituality.

Having enrolled in 1997, Gloria Tyner became the first female commissioned military chaplain from the Church of God. She has served with distinction and risen through the Air Force ranks to Lieutenant Colonel.

International Students

From the beginning, church leaders envisioned a training center for global leaders. Students from India, Indonesia, and South Africa were among the first "nonresident aliens" to study at the seminary. Since 1978, almost 400 international students have graduated, and the seminary has educated many who lead in Church of God World Missions today. Also, the seminary has partnerships with educational institutions

Historia del Seminario Teológico Pentecostal

En el 1970, el supervisor general Charles Conn pidió que la Iglesia de Dios inaugurara una escuela graduada de ministerios cristianos, lo que se materializó el 1º de septiembre de 1975. Esa primera clase estuvo compuesta por diecisiete estudiantes, cinco de los cuales obtuvieron sus maestrías el verano siguiente.

En el 1980, el Seminario se mudó a su propio edificio, al cual le fue añadida otra estructura en el 1995. El Seminario Teológico Pentecostal está totalmente acreditado y ofrece seis programas de maestría y un doctorado en ministerio.

Como era de esperarse de un seminario pentecostal, dos mujeres fueron parte de la primera clase graduada de 1977. Cheryl Bridges Johns fue la primera profesora en unirse a la Facultad, mientras que Gloria Tyner se convirtió en nuestra primera capellana militar. En total, más de cuatrocientas mujeres se han graduado del PTS (por sus siglas en inglés).

Este centro de formación para líderes, ha preparado a más de mil novecientos líderes, de los cuales más de cuatrocientos no estadounidenses ministran con la Iglesia de Dios alrededor del mundo. El seminario continúa su visión ofreciendo cursos en línea para estudiantes de todo el mundo.

outside the United States. With the advent of the digital age, a Web-based learning platform makes degree programs available anywhere in the world. A single class may be comprised of students from every populated continent. The seminary's



PTS graduate, Dr. Hong Yang, is special assignment missions representative and coordinator of Global Chinese Ministries for Church of God World Missions.

faculty and graduates have passionately embraced the Great Commission—to go into all the world teaching and making disciples (see Matthew 28:19-20).

Into the Harvest

Since the first seminary class in 1975, the Pentecostal Theological Seminary has graduated almost 1,900 students. They are serving as pastors, administrative bishops, missionaries, chaplains, counselors, administrators, and educators throughout the world. These men and women were called by God and trained by teachers of the church. Their calling and training have made them competent to serve. "In the final analysis," Robert White said, the seminary "will not be judged by its buildings, its administration, its faculty, or its curricula, but by its products—the men and women it sends into the harvest." ■

Daniel Tomberlin, D.Min., is director of Student Placement and instructor in Pastoral Ministry at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary.

1992–1996
Roland Vaughan serves as World Missions director



1993
SEMISUD relocates to Ecuador

1994
Operation Compassion begins



1996
Romanian Pentecostal Seminary, Institutul Teologic Pentecostal, begins

