

Restoring God's Church



The Birth of the Church of God

Establishing the Christian Union



Beginning at Barney Creek
1886-1896

The Christian Union



The Christian Union



A Call to be God's Church



“As many Christians as are here present that are desirous to be free from all men made creeds and traditions, and are willing to take the New Testament, or law of Christ, for your only rule of faith and practice; giving each other equal rights and privilege to read and interpret for yourselves as your conscience may dictate, and are willing to sit together as the Church of God to transact business as the same, come forward.”

R. G. Spurling
Barney Creek Meeting House
August 19, 1886

Who Established the Church of God?



- ❧ Richard Spurling
- ❧ Ordained Baptist Elder
- ❧ Earned living as farmer and builder of mills
- ❧ Member of the Holly Springs Baptist Church
- ❧ Purchased property along Barney Creek (Monroe County TN)



Richard Spurling

Who Established the Church of God?



R. G. and Barbara Spurling

- ✧ Richard Green Spurling
- ✧ Commonly called “R.G.”
- ✧ Married Barbara Hamby
- ✧ Member of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church
- ✧ Granted preaching license
- ✧ Purchased property along Barney Creek (Monroe County TN)

Defining the Church



- ❧ Differed with Landmark Baptist movement
 - ❧ Led by James R. Graves
 - ❧ Baptist churches are the only true churches
 - ❧ Prohibited fellowship with other Christians
- ❧ Human creeds and traditions always inferior to New Testament
 - ❧ They create divisions
 - ❧ They justify persecution



James R. Graves

A Search for Reformation



- ❧ Protestant Reformation did not reform from creeds
- ❧ The Great Commandment over creeds and traditions
 - ❧ Love God
 - ❧ Love neighbor
- ❧ His preaching license and membership was revoked
- ❧ Prayed and studied the Bible and Christian history (1884-1886)

The Barney Creek Meeting



“The small company of humble, faithful, conscientious pilgrims met at Barney Creek meeting house, Monroe County, Tennessee. After prayer, a strong discourse was delivered by Richard G. Spurling emphasizing the need of a reformation. The arguments were full of force and proved effective, and were endorsed by the hearers, so that when the time came for action there was free and earnest response.”

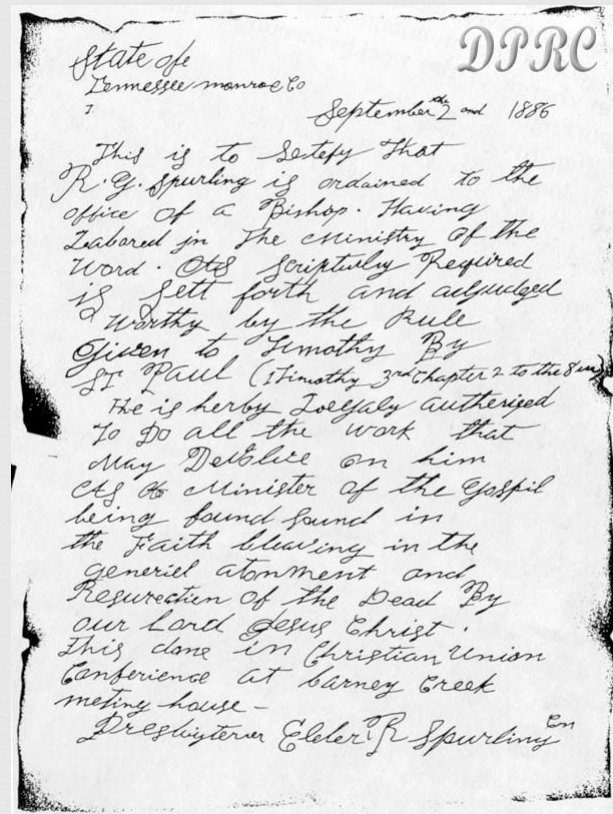
A.J. Tomlinson

The Last Great Conflict

Organizing the Church



- ❧ Chose Christian Union as name
- ❧ Richard Spurling moderated business because he was ordained
- ❧ Received R.G. Spurling as a licensed minister
- ❧ Ordained R.G. Spurling as Bishop on September 2, 1886



Characteristics of the Christian Union

- ❧ They were people of “the book”
- ❧ They valued every member
- ❧ They committed themselves to Christian community
- ❧ They desired to be the “Church of God”
- ❧ They lived out the Great Commission

A Revival of Holiness



Camp Creek, North Carolina (Cherokee County)

1896-1902

The Shearer Schoolhouse Revival



“Almost from the start of the meeting, the altars were filled with repentant sinners and seekers for the experience of sanctification. Many skeptics of holiness were convinced, and many more rough-living sinners were converted.”

Charles W. Conn
Like A Mighty Army

A Personal Experience



- ❧ William F. Bryant Jr.
 - ❧ Attended Liberty Baptist Church
 - ❧ Struggled with sin
 - ❧ Observed the sanctified
 - ❧ Sanctified on his horse
 - ❧ Led services in schoolhouse



Filled with the Spirit



“The people earnestly sought God, and the interest increased until unexpectedly, like a cloud from a clear sky, the Holy Ghost began to fall on the honest, humble, sincere seekers after God. . . . One after another fell under the power of God, and soon quite a number were speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

A.J. Tomlinson

The Last Great Conflict

Experiencing Persecution



Ross Allen Family

- ✧ Forty excluded from churches for heresy
- ✧ Not allowed to use schoolhouse
- ✧ Meeting house destroyed
- ✧ Wells polluted, houses burned, shot at, beaten
- ✧ Threatened

The Need for A Church



Organizing the Church



- ❧ R.G. Spurling and R. Frank Porter officiated
- ❧ May 15, 1902
- ❧ “The Holiness Church”
- ❧ Called Spurling as pastor
- ❧ Continuation of Christian Union



Presumed home of W.F. Bryant

Expanding the Vision



- ❧ Tomlinson joined
 - ❧ Quaker from Indiana
 - ❧ Missionary to mountains
 - ❧ Saw church as God's church
- ❧ Selected as pastor
- ❧ Vision for world harvest



A. J. Tomlinson



The End