

# Praise Assembly Policy Manual & Handbook

## Our Handbook

Why a Church Handbook? First, this handbook was compiled to serve as a communication and instructional tool. The household of faith must be informed. Misinformation, or lack of information leads to speculation, which always leads to disorder and confusion. Our God is a God of order. He moves beautifully and powerfully when His house is set in order.

In this booklet we have endeavored to answer your questions concerning Praise Assembly's ministries, policies, and procedures as they relate to our congregational members and adherents.

Please take time to carefully read through this manual and familiarize yourself with the operations of your church family. Keep it in a handy place, consult it often. We present this handbook in love.

## Our Schedule

SUNDAYS:	Sunday School	9:00am
	Morning Worship	10:00am
	Evening Service	5:30pm
WEDNESDAYS:	Family Night Bible Study	7:00pm
	Rainbows	7:00pm
	Missionettes	7:00pm
	Royal Rangers	7:00pm

Nursery care is available at all services and Childrens Church is available each Sunday morning.

## Our Pastor

Pastor Michael Petrucci came to Praise Assembly in September, 1998. Pastor Petrucci formerly pastored Beckett Assembly of God in Swedesboro, New Jersey. Prior to that pastorate he founded and pastored New Life Assembly of God in Barre, Massachusetts. He has served as the New Jersey District Stewardship Director and has served as the New Jersey District Men's Director. Brother Petrucci is a graduate of Oral Roberts University and has also earned a Master's Degree from Rowan University. He is a native of Massachusetts, his wife Cathy is from St. Louis Missouri. They have 3 children, Ana, Michael, and Nicholas.

## Our History

Praise Assembly was officially organized in September 1985. The first meeting was in Carolyn Gonce's yard and then the church moved to a small chapel on the Governor Bacon Health Center property in Delaware City. As the congregation grew they found larger facilities thanks to the gracious offer of Rev. Wayne Dippold who permitted the church to use the former Turning Point Ranch for Boys on Old Baltimore Pike. In August 1987 the church purchased an 11 acre parcel of land which is now our current location. The congregation moved into our present facilities on January 1990 and affiliated with the Assemblies of God in 1991. A dedication celebration was held October 8-10, 1993. An additional structure was completed and dedicated in June 1998 and is used for Royal Rangers and Sunday School. Pastor Paul H. Walters was invited to serve as the church's first pastor. Following 13 years of exemplary service Brother Walters was honored with "Pastor Emeritus". Pastor Petrucci became the church's second pastor in September 1998.

## Our Distinctives

Praise Assembly is a Pentecostal Church and practices a pentecostal style of worship. Our services are exuberant and lively and provide opportunity for prayer, praise, preaching of the Word, and an altar time for deeper commitment.

## Our Missions Program

Currently Praise Assembly supports over 50 missionaries world-wide with a total missionary budget of over \$300,000. In addition to assisting missionaries financially the church also sends out members of the church on short-term missionary assignments.

Missionaries that are supported by the church are featured in the hallway of the church. Framed photos display the missionary, their field of ministry, and our monthly commitment to them.

We also provide missions opportunities for our Women's Ministries, Light for the Lost is the Men's Ministries mission, Speed the Light is the Youth outreach, and Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade is the missions program for our younger children. As you can see, missions is a family affair at Praise Assembly.

## Our Membership

Membership at Praise Assembly is a serious consideration. All prospective members are required to attend the pastor's Membership Orientation Class. Upon completion of the class all candidates are presented to the Official Board for approval. On a designated Sunday these individuals are extended the "right hand of fellowship" before the entire congregation. The membership class includes a look at our fundamental doctrines, philosophies of ministry, church policies and procedures, stewardship, pastor's autobiography, constitution and bylaws, and the personal spiritual background of the candidate. Preferably, no one is considered for membership until he/she has attended the church faithfully for at least three months. One of the requirements is a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

## Our Ministries

Praise Assembly offers a wide variety of ministries to our community. The church endeavors to provide opportunities for personal growth and ministry, and our ministries are geared toward families. We desire to build strong families. This is seen as a mandate in a day when the home is under such violent attack. All age groups are targeted for outreach and ministry. Currently the church is reaching out to approximately 300 families in the Newark/Elkton area and communities in the Tri-state area.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**—On Sunday mornings classes are held for everyone, infants through adults. We offer a graded Sunday School for children and youth. We use curriculum from Radiant Life, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri. Our adult constituency also meets for instruction in the Bible during this 9:00am time slot.

**NURSERY**—The church provides a nursery for infants and mothers. The nursery is equipped with a speaker system connected to the sound system so that caregivers may listen to the service.

**CHILDRENS CHURCH**—Praise Assembly offers one of the finest Children's ministries anywhere. Every Sunday morning while the adults are involved in the morning message children's church is taking place at the same time. Currently we are ministering to children up through 10 years of age.

**PRAYER PARTNER MINISTRY**—Every Sunday at 8:45am the altars of the church are open for anyone who wishes to pray. Another prayer opportunity is held on Saturdays, 7:00am.

**WORSHIP TEAM**—Our services are characterized by lively, Spirit-filled praise and worship. Music plays an integral role in our church and God has given us some fine committed musicians and singers who minister under the anointing. Anyone interested in participating should contact the pastor's office.

**FAMILY/INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING**—The Pastor is available to assist you through counseling opportunities. All counseling provided by our pastor attempts to bring the principles of God's Word into focus that will minister to the individual's needs. Pastor attempts to move individuals and/or couples from their present scenario to a preferred scenario to workable strategies. On occasion, individual circumstances arise which indicate a need for more pro-

professional Christian help and specialized assistance. We are most happy to provide referral information for these cases. Pastor is a member in good standing with the American Association of Christian Counselors, (AACC). Appointments for counseling may be scheduled by calling the church office.

**POWERLINE Youth Ministry**—Every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday night at 7:00pm youth from across the area meet for their own time of spiritual growth and fellowship. This youth service highlights the spiritual side of life. In addition, our young people frequently engage in outside activities. These activities include a wide variety of events, all appealing to the high energy level of youth. Youth, ages 12 through single young adult are invited to participate.

**FAMILY NIGHT**—Wednesday evening is “Family Night” at Praise Assembly. Our children are involved in three great programs that instill the character of God within them.

Rainbows-Boys and Girls ages 3&4 participate in our Rainbow club. This class is a preparatory class for children who will advance into Royal Rangers and Missionettes.

Girls Ministries-For girls, age 5- high school. Girls Ministries is a club ministry that provides Bible learning, social interaction and ministry opportunities for girls. The climax of being a member is the successful completion of the “Stairway to the Stars”. Once a girl achieves this wonderful goal she is crowned as an Honor Star. In Girls Ministries the various clubs include Daisies (K-1);Prims (Gr 2-3); Stars (Gr4-6);Friends (Gr7-8); and For Girls Only (high school age).

Royal Rangers- Royal Rangers is a ministry that strives to “Reach, teach, and keep boys for Christ”. Through a variety of activities including weekly meetings, advancement programs, campouts, other outings, and of course, Bible study, boys are taught to put Christ first in their lives. Royal Rangers includes Straight Arrows (K-1); Buckaroos (Gr 2-3); Pioneers (Gr 4-6); Trailblazers (Gr 7-9) and Challengers (Gr 10-12). All Family Night activities begin at 7:00pm.

Adult Bible Study-Pastor strives to offer relevant, interesting Bible studies on Wednesday evenings. The Youth also have their own Mid-week Bible Study at this time.

**WOMEN’S MINISTRIES**—This wonderful group of women meet on the second Saturday of every month. At these meetings they are challenged from the Word of God. They also take time to plan ways to minister as a group.

**MEN’S MINISTRIES**—Known as HonorBound, the men of our church meet monthly, the third Saturday of each month. This is an opportunity for fellowship and instruction in God’s Word. They also meet weekly for prayer on Saturdays at 7:00 am.

## Our Office Hours

The church office is open five days a week, Monday through Friday from 9:00am-4:00pm. However, before you make a trip to the church please be sure to call ahead to make sure that someone is on duty. The pastor may be out of the office for meetings, visitation, errands or hospital ministry. The office is usually closed during holidays.

## Our Policies and Procedures

Many times questions arise concerning the policies and procedures regarding ministries, programs, facility use, etc. In order to help you understand what is normal procedure concerning these things, we have stated them here for you. Please understand that these are normal procedures, not all are hard and fast rules. There are times when the Official Board may feel that circumstances dictate a different approach other than what is stated in this manual. We want to remain flexible enough in some areas in order to minister to individual circumstances and needs. Following are policies concerning areas where we have had questions, or where we feel clarification needs to be made.

I. Sanctuary decor- Because the decor of the sanctuary changes according to seasonal themes, persons wishing to place flowers in the sanctuary need to make arrangements through the church office first. Flowers are usually designated for the platform area.

II. Announcements- Because we are an active, busy fellowship, and because of the limited space in our weekly bulletin and other newsletters, we can only make announcements that concern the ministries of Praise Assembly. **THOSE IN CHARGE OF A PARTICULAR MINISTRY, PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

-For items to be placed in the weekly Sunday bulletin, please notify the church office before Wednesday.

-Dates for events should be cleared with the pastor before announcing or scheduling them.

-Items will be included in all bulletins as time and space permit

III. USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES- Church facilities are intended to be used for the glory and up-building of the Lord's kingdom. No activities which are of a questionable nature or which hinder the purpose of our being will be allowed in Praise Assembly's facilities. Any request for use of the building by groups outside the church would have to be cleared by the Official Board. Any other activities and requests for use of the building by groups within the church would also need to be cleared by the pastor. This prevents scheduling conflicts. **ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING IS PERMITTED IN THE BUILDING OR ON THE GROUNDS AT ANY TIME.**

IV. FUNDRAISING- Praise Assembly does not depend upon fundraising to support its ministries. It depends upon the Lord's people, through the giving of tithes and offerings, to meet its financial obligations. We do recognize, however, from time to time, that groups within the church need a source of income for special projects on which they may be working. Therefore, we permit these groups to conduct fundraising events each year. **THESE EVENTS SHOULD HAVE PASTORAL APPROVAL AND SHOULD NOT BE CARRIED OUT PRIOR TO THAT APPROVAL.** Also, we ask that neither children nor adults buy and sell anything within the sanctuary of the church. Exception: Guest evangelists, speakers and musicians.

## V. CHURCH LIABILITY CONCERNING PERSONAL ITEMS

Sometimes people who attend Praise Assembly leave personal items, sometimes of great value, in the building or on the property. We make every attempt to keep our building and property secure, but we cannot and do not assume responsibility for these items. Liability for loss or theft is assumed by the owner.

VI. HOSPITAL VISITATION- Those going to the hospital, having surgery or outpatient care should inform the pastor or church office beforehand (as much as possible). Every attempt will be made for a member of the pastoral staff to be present for these times. Of course, emergencies should be “called-in” as soon as possible. As a rule, the pastor and deacons visit church members, adherents and regular attendees of Praise Assembly who are in the hospital.

VII. WEDDING POLICIES-We are delighted to make Praise Assembly’s facilities available to you for this significant event. Please note the following:

-Reserve the building

-Premarital counseling is required of all couples (no charge to members)

-Individuals who have been previously married, and who have a former spouse who is still living, are asked to consult privately with the pastor prior to scheduling these counseling sessions.

-Pastor will not perform wedding ceremonies for (1) those who do not agree to participate in the premarital counseling sessions; (2) those who refuse to give serious consideration to God’s plan of salvation and base their lives on Biblical principles; (3) those who simply want to “tie the knot,” instead of seal their commitment.

-Pastor will not perform “drop-in” wedding ceremonies.

-Music- Consult the pastor concerning your choice of music played and sung for the wedding and reception. Please keep in mind that some music played and sung at weddings is not acceptable in our church.

Decorations- Be certain that decorations that are used will not damage walls, carpets, or furnishings. Carpet must be protected with plastic when using dripping candles. The florist chosen by the bride is responsible for all decorations and will be required to remove them.

-Photographs-When the reception is to follow, the photographer is to be instructed by the bride or her parents that everything possible should be done to expedite the taking of pictures after the ceremony in order not to delay the reception or unnecessarily infringe upon the time of the participants and guests.

-Cleaning-It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to make arrangements for the church to be cleaned following the event.

-Reception and Cake cutting services-If an outside caterer is chosen he must clear all arrangements in advance with the pastor, who is responsible for use of the facilities.

MISCELLANEOUS—**Smoking is not permitted** anywhere in our church buildings. It is our desire to make all who enter this building conscious of the Lord we serve. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to see that their guests observe this policy. No wedding or reception will be conducted at Praise Assembly if alcoholic beverages are being served. No rice is to be given or thrown anywhere in the church building.

There may be a charge if the church facilities need an additional cleaning prior to next day services.

Should the officiating minister be requested to wear formal wedding attire, the bridal couple will

bear the expense. All weddings at Praise Assembly will be performed by the senior pastor, associate pastors, or an outside minister upon approval.

Only those who regularly attend the church may use the facilities for a wedding, please no exceptions.

VIII. FUNERAL POLICY– The death of a church member or adherent always provides the local assembly with a great opportunity to minister to survivors in a tangible way. Praise Assembly is happy to assist the bereaved family in any way possible. As a rule, the church ministers in the following manner:

- Church members and friends are notified of the death
- Viewing hours are noted and funeral details are released through the church office

IX. LEADERSHIP SELECTION AND PLACEMENT– The pastor is responsible for selecting and placing leaders in the Assembly. No department head or other leader should take it upon himself to name a leader for a given area of ministry. Pastor's prerequisites for ministry positions are as follows;

- The person should love Jesus with all his/her heart
- The person should love and understand the New Testament implications of the local church (not a new believer or un-disciplined believer)
- The person should support the pastor's vision for Praise Assembly
- The person's homelife should be above the reproach of unbelievers. An individual whose personal and /or homelife is out of line with the Word of God does not have a ministry
- The person should be faithful to the church in terms of attendance, finances, and participation
- The person should have or desire to have the Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- The person must be a member in good standing
- Children's workers must complete an application and complete the child abuse training course

X. BORROWING CHURCH FURNISHINGS– From time to time, individuals ask to borrow folding chairs and/or tables from the church. This is perfectly acceptable as long as these items are not in use for a church function. All items should be signed out with the church office staff and returned clean and placed in their proper storage area following use.

XI. CHURCH NURSERY-Praise Assembly is happy to provide nursery facilities for our little ones. Newborns and children up to three years of age are invited to use the nursery. In other words, when a child turns three, he or she is ready to participate in all of our pre-school ministries. Parents are asked to familiarize themselves with the following policies:

- Parents are responsible to give baby necessities to workers
- Please sign each baby in and out
- Please do not leave a child in the nursery who has a fever/sick
- Please pick up all children immediately following each service
- All bottles need to be marked with baby's name
- Please bring an extra change of clothes
- Please do not bring toys from home

Individuals desiring to help in the church nursery should call the church office and we will pass volunteer names on to the nursery coordinator.

## XII. BENEVOLENCE POLICY-

The benevolence ministry of Praise Assembly is designed to provide temporary financial assistance for members and regular attendees of the church during times of serious need and especially after other options for assistance have been explored and are found to be unavailable. Such causes stemming from serious or long-term illnesses, unemployment or short-term underemployment, and acts of nature are deemed as reasons to provide assistance. Those requesting assistance will be asked to reveal to the Benevolence Committee other potential sources of financial help (i.e. family members, community and/or government resources, etc.) and will typically be asked to seek such assistance whenever possible. Those requiring longer-term help including, but not limited to, widows, single parents and orphans, may also be considered as candidates for benevolence.

### **Please consider the following:**

-Only those who are members and adherents of Praise Assembly are deemed as candidates for benevolence. Others will be referred to social and/or government agencies in the local community. Adherents must have previously attended Praise Assembly consistently for a 3 month period. At no time should the benevolence ministry be viewed by members and adherents as “insurance” for future, untoward financial circumstances.

-Praise Assembly may offer assistance for necessities such as food and utilities, but will not assist with nonessentials such as cable and telephone. In most cases, the church can only assist with partial payments. Payments are made directly to agencies, not to the individuals requesting assistance. Under special, needful circumstances, non-financial assistance may also be provided through resources coordinated by the benevolence committee (i.e. plumbers, carpenters, roofers, electricians, appliance repair, mechanics, and other services or skills).

-Praise Assembly is not a lending institution, and therefore, will at no time “loan” money to anyone.

-All requests for benevolence will first require the completion of a Benevolence Request Form. Each request for financial benevolence is then handled as being in one of the following three categories:

1) Under \$100.00: All first-time requests of under \$100.00 during a calendar year are handled by the Senior Pastor. If a second request is made during a calendar year, it will be handled by the Benevolence Committee. If an additional request is made, it will be brought to the Church Board since this circumstance may represent the need for longer-term help.

2) Under \$1000.00: All first-time requests for amounts over \$100.00 and under \$1000.00 during a calendar year are handled by the Benevolence Committee. If a second request for this amount is made during a calendar year, the request will be brought to the Church Board for

evaluation and action.

3) Over \$1000.00: All requests for amounts over \$1000.00 are offered to church members and adherents only upon official, Church Board action. The congregation shall also be made aware of such need so that they may actively share the burden through an offering and through prayer for the one in need.

Benevolence requests requiring the involvement of the Benevolence Committee and/or the Church Board cannot be granted immediately, and therefore, applicants must give sufficient advance notice to allow time for Benevolence Committee or Church Board evaluation and action.

-Families who request assistance more than once and those who continue to experience financial difficulties will be asked to meet with the benevolence committee for financial counseling. We desire that individuals learn “how to plant their own wheat, rather than just receive bread.”

-Individuals within the church body may not take it upon themselves to organize benevolent fund drives or to solicit funds for benevolent needs within the church. This leads only to confusion and division.

#### **PROCEDURAL ITEMS FOR THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE**

1) Persons requesting assistance must reveal to the Benevolence Committee other potential sources of financial help (i.e. family members, community and/or government resources, etc.) Please refer to the Benevolence application form also located on this website.

2) The Benevolence Committee should compile a list of other benevolence organizations as well as governmental agencies for referral.

3) The Benevolence Committee shall compile a folder of printed resource materials whereby persons in need may learn how to budget themselves through their crisis

4) The Benevolence Committee shall submit a proposed budget for each approaching year

5) The Benevolence Committee and Pastor shall report to the Official Church Board monthly concerning all benevolence requests and also whether or not they were granted.

#### **Van Operational Policy and Rules:**

-Van is not to exceed 15 passengers

-Passengers must stay seated and belted at all times

-Van is to be cleaned and kept free of paper, trash, books, etc. after each use

-No secular music is to be played on the van at any time

XIII. CHURCH VAN POLICY-The church van is designed to be a blessing to all groups within the church. The following guidelines shall govern its use:

-Contact for use of the van should be made with the church office. A special calendar located in the church office is used for scheduling purposes.

- A week's notice is required for scheduling the van, unless, of course, an emergency arises.
- It is recommended that parental permission slips be issued and collected by sponsors of the groups using the van.
- The driver of the van must be a minimum of 25 years of age and hold a valid driver's license
- The driver is responsible for any violations he/she might obtain while using the vehicle.
- The driver is responsible for picking up "Van Use" forms from the church office, and completing all necessary work required on the form
- Church credit cards may be used with the van only after proper authorization has been given
- Van is to be returned with full tank of gas
- The driver of the van is responsible for conduct of passengers while traveling to and from an event
- Groups using the van, when possible should help defray gas expenses.
- At least 5 individuals constitute a group in order for the van to be taken from the church grounds. No more than 15 people are to be transported in the van at one time
- The van is to be picked up and returned to the church. The van must be used for church-related functions only.
- Keys and all necessary forms should be picked up from the church office the day the van is to be used. If the office is closed, it is the responsibility of the party using the van to make the necessary arrangements to obtain the keys and form.
- Information concerning gas, oil, and insurance can be found in the glove box, an emergency kit is also provided in the event of need
- A log to record all trips, mileage, gas expenditures and other pertinent information remains in the office. Please fill it out each time you drive the van
  - Each seat accommodates 3 persons; the back seat four
- Do not leave books, Bibles, or other materials on the van
- No alcoholic beverages and smoking are ever allowed while on the van
- Van is to be used to transport people only, not to be used to transport materials, the church trailer shall fulfill this need
- Each driver is responsible for his/her traffic violations
- Be an example and testimony to others
- Failure to comply with these rules will result in loss of van privileges