

Pentecostal Holiness Church ^[1]

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by Karin Lorene Zipf, 2006; Revised December 2021

See also: [Pentecostal Holiness Church](#) ^[2] (from NC Atlas Revisited)

[The Pentecostal Holiness Church](#) ^[2] evolved from two religious traditions that spread rapidly among North Carolina evangelical Christians during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Holiness movement began with a series of Methodist revivals that occurred in 1867. In the eighteenth century, John Wesley had first introduced the doctrine that salvation required two "blessings," or religious experiences. The first, justification, represents a believer's conversion; the second, sanctification, signifies an individual's purification. In this stage, the individual reaches a state of "holiness" that enables him or her to lead a pure life, free from sin. In the twentieth century some Holiness churches began to advocate a third blessing, the Pentecostal experience, which included speaking in tongues (glossalalia) to indicate an individual's "baptism by the Holy Spirit."

Abner Blackmon Crumpler, a Methodist preacher, was the first to spread the Holiness doctrine in North Carolina. In 1896 a Holiness revival took place in Dunn, and Crumpler encouraged his adherents to find the second blessing, sanctification. The doctrine spread quickly throughout eastern North Carolina towns such as Elizabeth City and Goldsboro. In 1899 Crumpler withdrew from the [Methodist Church](#) ^[3] and joined the newly formed Pentecostal Holiness Church in Goldsboro.

Crumpler preached his revelations without contest until an auspicious revival in 1906 presented him with a major doctrinal challenge. That year brought the [Azusa Street Revival](#) ^[4] in Los Angeles, the first revival that preached the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which led to speaking in tongues. To be sure, some North Carolinians had experienced speaking in unknown languages upon conversion; but not until [Gaston B. Cashwell](#) ^[5] returned from Los Angeles in 1908 preaching the doctrine of baptism of the Holy Spirit did North Carolinian Pentecostal Holiness Churches embrace the notion that an individual must speak in tongues upon receiving the Holy Spirit. Converts not only spoke in tongues but also practiced other traditional evangelical signs of conversion, such as making strange movements, jumping, falling into trances, and lying rigid on the floor.

Crumpler and many other congregants refused to acknowledge this "third blessing" of Pentecostalism. Between 1908 and 1911, Pentecostal and Holiness churches of North Carolina splintered into many groups. Some churches had Methodist origins and others had Freewill Baptist origins. For example, the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church became dominant in southeastern North Carolina.

Holiness and Pentecostal traditions have attracted the interests of many groups throughout North Carolina, with both black and white congregants embracing the doctrines of sanctification and speaking in tongues. The [United Holy Church](#) ^[6], located near [Wilmington](#) ^[7] in Method and founded in 1886, represented one of the first holiness denominations organized by African Americans. The largest African American Pentecostal denomination, the [Church of God in Christ](#) ^[8], was formed in 1897. Some early congregations were interracial, such as the [Pentecostal Assemblies of the World](#) ^[9], the [Church of God](#) ^[10], the [Fire-Baptized Holiness Church](#) ^[11], and the [Pentecostal Holiness Church](#) ^[12]. But these denominations split in the 1920s as African American churches gained independence and whites desired segregated services. African Americans turned to the Church of God in Christ and whites established the [Assemblies of God](#) ^[13].

The Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Assemblies of God, and the Church of God in Christ came to represent the three largest Pentecostal and Holiness denominations in the nation. In 1973 the Pentecostal Holiness Church became the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. It represents a fundamentalist religion that believes in Christ's resurrection, truth in the scriptures, justification, sanctification, baptism of the Holy Ghost, divine healing, and the premillennial return of Christ to earth. Most congregations follow these doctrines consistently, although customs vary somewhat among African American, white, and Native American members. By the early 2000s, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church had approximately 2.5 million adherents spread throughout 35 states and more than 70 foreign countries. More than 300 affiliated churches are in North Carolina. The denomination, headquartered in Oklahoma City, also manages three colleges—one in Oklahoma, a second in Georgia, and a third in South Carolina.

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