



PROTECTION • PREVENTION • PROACTIVE • PARTNERING

STRAIGHT ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS

1. Who is served by Children of Promise?

Children of Promise (COP) serves children in desperate need in developing countries where the Church of God is active. We serve in 29 countries and currently sponsor 4,536 children. Botswana in southern Africa is slated to open in the latter part of 2018.

2. What needs are met?

COP provides nutrition (food), education (school fees, supplies, uniform, materials, etc.), health care, and spiritual nurture for children living in poverty.

3. How are the local programs operated?

When national leaders or assemblies recognize over-whelming needs, they invite COP into their countries or regions. After training occurs and a plan is in place, children apply for sponsorship. Local committees visit homes and collect information regarding families' needs and situations to determine for whom sponsorship is needed.

Program directors in each country are volunteer servants who oversee other volunteers who carry out the ministry through the local congregations of the Church of God in each country.

4. What kind of accountability is in place?

- a. COP is a member-in-good-standing of ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability). Annual reviews are conducted. During the latest review, COP received a clean bill of health.
- b. An annual audit is conducted according to national accounting standards by an independent accounting firm. The audit report is submitted to the Children of Promise Board of Directors and to ECFA. The auditor meets personally with the Board of Directors.
- c. Each sponsored child is visited and interviewed every three years or less. During site visits, financial records and receipts are checked by US staff. Financial reports are reviewed, and parents, pastors, and local committee members are interviewed. A checklist of ministry expectations and questions is completed on site during each US staff visit.
- d. Financial reports of onsite activities are submitted monthly to the Children of Promise office by program directors around the world.
- e. COP invites and encourages its sponsors and donors to accompany COP staff on site visits, involving them in the interviewing of children, visiting their homes, as well as participating in program activities.

5. What is the ministry's strategic vision?

Across the globe, the Children of Promise child sponsorship ministry will develop adults who will lead lives characterized by:

- Christ-centered living
- Appreciation for, and pursuit of, life-long learning
- Physical and emotional health
- Leadership and exemplary service in the Church of God and their communities
- Commitment to leading and providing for their families
- Specific objectives include: Improving care in the areas of health, loss, and abuse response
- Sponsor 10,000 children by 2020.

6. How is COP governed?

The ministry is governed by a Board of Directors made up of people from various walks of life and ministry. Presently, we have a president of a major retirement fund for clergy, an engineer, a CPA, a college professor, a social worker, a former Children of Promise staff member, a financial analyst, a ministry coordinator from Christian Women Connection, a children's pastor/educator, an estate lawyer, and a family physician.

The executive director is responsible to the Board and serves as an ex-officio member. The staff in the US office is responsible to the executive director. Program directors around the world work with the executive director in carrying out the program guidelines, procedures, and expectations.

7. Where do you get your funding?

COP's only sources of support are its sponsors and donors. We do not receive any funds from Church of God Ministries, nor does COP contribute to Church of God Ministries. All financial matters are separate, and each raises funds independently.

Of the monthly sponsorship amount given by sponsors (usually \$32, but we do have a few programs at \$38 and \$50 per month), 20% is retained for Making It All Happen. This amount provides roughly 50% of the funds needed for the operation of the international ministry of Children of Promise based in Anderson, Indiana.

The other 50% must be raised through donations from churches and individuals to Making It All Happen. We have no other outside support. It is a grass-roots effort with many people sacrificing so children can be helped. Just as a church must meet basic needs for ministry to work, Children of Promise is successful only because of caring, compassionate, and giving individuals and Church of God congregations both in the United States and globally.

8. What is the spiritual component of sponsorship?

Every child is required to be involved in the Sunday School or Christian education program of the local congregation in their community. Parents agree to this when the child is enrolled. Christ as Savior is introduced to every child. We have had families convert from Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism, etc. One of our overriding goals is to have every child meet the Lord and become active contributors to the local church and community.

9. How effective has the ministry been?

Some of our children have been literally saved from starvation, abuse, neglect, indentured servitude, homelessness, death. Children and families attest to the fact that most of the children in the program would not be able to attend school without this assistance. In some areas, the children would not eat at all were it not for the program. After 25 years of ministry, Children of Promise has produced young people who are now doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, ministry leaders, lay leaders, architects, pastors, and volunteers and staff members of Children of Promise in a number of countries. Currently, Children of Promise staff and directors are focusing efforts on fighting child trafficking through sponsorship. Church of God congregations have responded well to fighting child trafficking. Much more yet needs to be done.

10. What are your most pressing needs?

- Giving to the “Making It All Happen” fund. Giving to this fund blesses the entire operations of the ministry and makes additional growth possible.
- Involving more congregations in giving to Making It All Happen.
- Sponsoring more children by individuals, families, and organizations.
- Involving more Church of God congregations to participate in the annual Children of Promise Sunday sponsorship event.
- Expanding staff to enable more children to be served.

11. If I sponsor a child, is that child real?

Absolutely. Your child is the specific child you choose.

12. Am I the only sponsor for my child?

Yes, there is one sponsor per child. The sponsor may be an individual or may be a group (such as a Sunday School class).

13. I wrote my child with specific questions that were not answered. Why is that?

There are a wide variety of reasons this can happen. Feel free to contact Children of Promise and we will be glad to go into greater detail, but here are a few reasons:

When it’s time for a child to write their letter to the sponsor, they most often do it in a group setting at the church. They do not have the sponsor’s letter in front of them and cannot remember your questions.

In some cultures, children rarely are allowed to express their thoughts, and are encouraged not to. To write them down is very foreign. Thus, it is difficult for them to write more than general greetings and information.

In many of our countries, mail is primarily for business and government. Personal letters are rare. Many families will never receive postal mail. For many of the children, the sponsor letters are the only letters they ever write. It is not a priority in school curriculum, and it is not a part of everyday life. It is a foreign experience for them. This presents a challenge for the children to write a letter that meets North American cultural expectations.

In many cultures, a child simply does not communicate directly with adults, nor do they share personal information about themselves, especially with an adult seen as a benefactor. They would not consider information about their personal lives to be important enough to tell an adult.

Our directors and volunteers work hard to overcome these challenges in communicating with sponsors. The fact remains that the cultural differences are very real and are, at times, very puzzling to North Americans.

Scott Compton, our former director in Tanzania, put the issue into context very well when he wrote to us about the challenges on site: *“Underneath all the writing challenges, we see and understand that a far more important form of communication continues to flow underneath everything we do. You may not feel it in the letters you receive, but I can assure you that you are sending a deep and profound message to your child. At some point a sponsor held a picture of a child in his or her hands at a church or meeting. That sponsor made a decision to give that child hope by investing in his or her life. And, consequently, a director on the other side of the world had the privilege to take a child’s small hands in his or her own and tell him or her that he or she had been sponsored and watched as he or she smiled and his or her family fight back tears. In each of those moments, you spoke directly into the life of a child. And you communicated to that child: That his or hers life matters; that hope is for everyone; and that God adores him or her.”*

14. What were the milestones in the history and development of Children of Promise?

In 1992, Jean and Sidney Johnson retired as Church of God missionaries to Asia. Prior to returning to the States, the Johnsons asked the Asian Church of God leaders what could they, as a retired couple, do to continue helping ministry in Asia. The leaders replied, "Help our children." From that cry, the vision to help children in need outside the United States was born.

The Johnsons worked with the Christian Women Connection (originally Women of the Church of God) and Global Strategy of the Church of God (originally the Missionary Board) to begin Children of Promise in 1992. Jean and Sidney worked tirelessly, traveling to speaking engagements, building up the ministry, and most importantly changing the lives of over 2,000 children. The Johnsons grew the ministry from nothing to sponsoring 2,240 children in 14 countries by December 2002, when they retired from Children of Promise. The Johnsons and the ministry of Children of Promise is known for observing high ethical standards, being fiscally conservative, and passionately loving and caring for children.

As the organization grew, it became a recognized 501(c3), nonprofit entity, independently operating financially and governmentally, with its foundations and ties to the Church of God. During this time, the governance of the ministry changed from being a committee of Church of God Ministries (Global Strategy) and Women of the Church of God agency personnel only. The Board structure was adopted in 2002.

The Board of Directors selected Drs. Paul and Brenda Maxfield as Co-Coordinator of the ministry beginning in August 2003. The Maxfields served on the mission field for 12 years in Honduras, The Cayman Islands and Costa Rica. Through the collaborative efforts of the Maxfields, the Children of Promise sponsorship ministry began to expand exponentially. In 2007, Brenda returned to teaching, a great love of hers. The Board of Directors appointed Paul as the Executive Director in 2007. Paul (& Brenda) made the dreams of many more children become real.

Children of Promise has grown dramatically each year. As of January 2018, 4,536 children are sponsored in 29 countries. If all goes well, Botswana, in southern Africa, will become the 30th country when it opens a Children of Promise program in late 2018. Children of Promise is one of the most effective ministries in the history of the Church of God, touching lives all over the globe. In partnership with sponsors, donors, and Church of God congregations, the lives of over 13,000 children have been touched. The ministry endeavors to reach more countries and more children.