

## **Charles E. Blake**

### **Speaker**

For Charles E. Blake, presiding bishop of the 6.5-million member Church of God in Christ, the ministry has never been about the numbers. It's been about saving—spiritually, emotionally, educationally and physically—people from America to Africa.

But the numbers have been impressive. Blake, who is also the jurisdictional prelate of the First Jurisdiction of Southern California, oversees more than 250 churches. As founder and CEO of Save Africa's Children, he directs the support of more than 100,000 children in 340 orphan-care programs in 23 African nations.

Blake received a bachelor's degree from California Western University (now known as United States International University), and a master of divinity degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center in 1965. He continued his education at the California Graduate School of Theology, where he earned a doctorate of divinity in 1982. He also received an honorary doctorate from Oral Roberts University.

When Blake became pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in 1969, the Los Angeles church had 50 members. A membership explosion and a move to a larger edifice on Crenshaw Boulevard saw membership soar to its current 24,000.

With more than 80 programs, the church's outreach meets the psychological, social and economic needs of its congregation. Facilities expansions include the Education Building, Crystal Room and The West Angeles Christian Bookstore. Educational ministries include The West Angeles Christian Academy and The West Angeles Bible College, which started its first classes in 1987. In the same year, a full-time Counseling Department was established. West Angeles has been recognized as one of the fastest growing churches in the nation and reaches millions through its television and radio broadcasts.

Blake has been actively involved on several boards, including for C.H. Mason Theological Seminary, where he was founding chairman; the Interdenominational Theological Seminary; Oral Roberts University; the International Charismatic Bible Ministries; the Los Angeles Board of the Azusa Centennial Celebration; and the Pentecostal World Conference.

He currently serves as the chairman and founder of the Los Angeles Ecumenical Congress (LAEC), an interdenominational coalition of religious leaders and pastors. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Religious Advisory Committee.

Throughout his distinguished service to humanity, Blake has received numerous awards, commendations and accolades, including the Distinguished Leadership Award presented by the African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston University, the 2006 Trumpet Award, the Salvation Army's William Booth Award, the Greenlining Institute's Big Heart Award and the Harvard Foundation Humanitarian Medal.

Blake is married to Mae Lawrence Blake. They have three children and seven grandchildren.