

A SHORT HISTORY OF EVANGEL TEMPLE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
(Currently)

GATEWAY CHRISTIAN CENTER, AG

(Some of the dates are approximated based on limited information)

1920's – 1960's

The church began as a result of a tent revival in 1926, across the street from the future site of the **Sulphur Springs Assemblies of God**, which would become Evangel Temple in the early 1980's. In 1929 the Church was set in order as the **Mount Zion Holiness Church**, with **Rev. M.R. Perry** as Pastor, and with 27 members. By that year an open wooden tabernacle had been constructed, and the following men were serving as trustees: J.W. Bates, Ed Simons and Andrew Porter.

Sister Sarah (Hobbs) Coile, a member of Evangel Temple, began attending in 1935 while **Rev. Elmer Green** was Pastor, and by the mid 30's she recalls that an enclosed church had been completed. Sister Coile says there was a powerful sense of God's presence in the church when she first visited at 15 years old, and she could not wait to get to the altar and get right with God after the sermon was preached.

A **Rev. Ford** became Pastor around 1937, followed later by **Sister Ruth Hargis** prior to her marriage to **Rev. Curtis Ringness**. Brother and Sister Ringness both later pastored from 1939-1941, and during their pastorate a parsonage and indoor plumbing were added to the rear of the church. In this period Rev. Ringness regularly conducted street meetings on Saturday night near the Sulphur Springs pool off Nebraska Avenue, with local Bible school students participating. One of those young Bible school students assisting in these services was the future evangelist Billy Graham who attended Florida Bible Institute in Temple Terrace at that time.

In 1941, **Rev. Percival** was elected and during his pastorate the church was cleaned regularly for 50 cents per week. **Rev. June Willis** followed Brother Percival as Pastor until 1945, after which **Rev. Ed Ponton** was elected. During the late 1940's **Sister Ruth Minor and Sister Dorothy Minor** filled in as leaders until **Rev. Paul Spenden** was elected Pastor, followed by **Rev. L. T. Martin**, and in 1952, **Rev. John Hardt**. In 1959, Rev. John Hardt's son **Rev. Joe Hardt** was elected pastor, followed by **Rev. Wayne Pitts** in 1967.

1970's – 1990's

Rev. James McClain was elected pastor in 1973, followed by **Rev. Joe McCutchen** in 1974. During Rev. McCutchen's pastorate, the church body purchased property in North Tampa on Central Avenue between Fletcher Avenue and Bearss Avenue, just off I-275. After selling the old church, the fellowship met in a local school for about a year, then moved into the present sanctuary which became known as **Evangel Temple Assemblies of God**.

Rev. Rick Davison followed Rev. McCutchen, who was succeeded by **Rev. Don Evans** elected in June, 1990. During Brother Evans's pastorate, a major building project was undertaken that has approximately doubled the size of the original church. The church continues to grow both spiritually and numerically, and Pastor Evans has been used of God to spearhead a Bay area wide cross-cultural, cross-denominational revival. This series of meetings began with a well attended Restoration '97 event held at the USF Sundome. Evangel Temple became **Gateway Christian Center, Assemblies of God** in 1990. In 1996, Pastor Evans launched a well attended branch of the national Assemblies of God educational thrust aimed at selected inner cities called the **Urban Bible Training Center** (UBTC) with classes offered at Gateway.

2000's – Present

In 2004, **Gateway Christian Academy & Preschool** was added to the ministries of Gateway.

The church continues to maintain and support a broad range of ministries, strong foreign missions support, and other forms of outreach.

Over the years, first as Sulphur Springs Assembly of God, later as Evangel Temple, and currently as Gateway Christian Center, this church has sent out many laborers into God's vineyard, including pastors, evangelists, singers and other leaders in the work of the Kingdom.

As a post script, it is to the glory of God that the original Sulphur Springs church building continues to serve as a lighthouse, providing facilities for an inner city ministry under the name of All Nations Outreach Center, a home missions work supported by Evangel Temple. And so, Sulphur Springs/Evangel Temple/Gateway Christian Center continues in her labors to fulfill the command of Christ found in Matthew 24:14, until He comes.