

Gilbert E. Patterson Dies

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Gilbert E. Patterson, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), died March 20 after battling prostate cancer. He was 67. Senior pastor of 12,000-member Temple of Deliverance COGIC in Memphis, Tenn., Patterson had led the nation's largest Pentecostal denomination since November 2000. "Under his leadership we've seen tremendous strides toward true spirituality," Bishop George D. McKinney, overseer of COGIC's San Diego jurisdiction and a member of the church's General Board, told Memphis' Fox 13 News. Even after announcing in September 2005 that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer, Patterson remained active in ministry. He was seen in weekly broadcasts from his church that aired on Trinity Broadcasting Network and Black Entertainment Television. "It was a direct result of his work, such as his TV ministries, that allowed people to see COGIC as it should have been projected," Bishop Jerry Maynard told Fox 13 News. Patterson leaves two leadership positions vacant, but COGIC leaders said filling those seats is not their immediate focus. "We have lost a great leader, and we are in mourning," said Bishop Charles Blake, who is now serving as the denomination's interim presiding bishop. "Time will take care of all those leadership issues. Right now we must reflect on the great leadership of Bishop G.E. Patterson. We're not focusing on succession. Right now we want to focus on the bishop's family and how we can help them." Senior pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ, Blake will lead the 5.5 million-member denomination until its next election is held in November 2008 or until a special election is called. Patterson is survived by his wife of 35 years, Louise.