

Zion Assembly Church of God

12th Annual **General Assembly Minutes**

September 8-13, 2015
United Christian Church
2200 Peerless Rd.
Cleveland, Tennessee



*“Piercing the Darkness
with the **Light** of Christ”*

A Biblical Explanation of the . . .

General Assembly

The General Assembly is an extraordinary event because 1) it represents the universal [or catholic] expression of the church in worship, fellowship, and decision-making, and 2) it is the highest tribunal of authority on earth under Christ in matters of faith and spiritual government.

In the General Assembly the ministers and members meet together with God in a decision-making capacity in order to determine the will of God, to seek His light and guidance for the future course of the church, and to commit themselves to live and work by the resolutions adopted by Assembly. The Assembly represents the one time of the year that the ministers and members gather together in His name from all over the world to bind and loose in the earth what God has bound and loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). They consecrate themselves to understand the will of God---to find the perfect mind of Christ. This is why in Jacob's words the church is a *dreadful place* (Genesis 28:16, 17): for it is at this special time that the church acts in its official capacity as God's *ekklesia*, having been ordained and authorized by Christ to do so (Matthew 16:19; 18:17; Mark 13:34; Luke 19:13; John 20:23; Acts 1:13-21; 6:1-6; 15:1-29). Here in this special meeting, the church reasons together with God (Isaiah 1:18; Acts 15:6-19, 28), and the ministers and members look judiciously into the Holy Scriptures (Acts 15:15-18 and compare with Amos 9:11, 12) seeking at the same time for the Spirit's illumination until an understanding is reached with God and one another on what is precisely the will of God (vv. 28-29). Then, having come to this understanding, all agree to "walk by the same rule" and "mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:16), that is, they bind ourselves to live and walk as one body by the decisions agreed upon in this sacred meeting.

Because the Bible is the supreme objective authority of the church, the General Assembly is "a judicial body only," that is, all decisions in regard to faith and government that are binding on the ministers and members must be shown to be in accord with the teachings of Christ and the apostles revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

The biblical model for the General Assembly and church's judicious process is found in Acts 15:1-29 in which the *apostles and elders* gathered together with the *whole church* (vv. 12, 22, 28) to deliberate together with the Spirit until an understanding of the will of God was determined. Thus it is said that the decisions made in the Jerusalem council *seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us* (v. 28). Then on this basis, they all agreed to live by the *decrees* [dogmas] *for to keep* (16:4). Thus it is said also, *And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily* (v. 5).

An underlying principle upon which the government of the church is established is corporate counsel based on the model in Acts 15. The church goes forward and operates by the counsel of the General Assembly which is made up of ministers and members from around the world, that is, by all of whom Providence has blessed to attend and participate. The wise man wrote, *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety* (Proverbs 11:14). And again, *Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established* (15:22).

When Rehoboam was made king in the Old Testament theocracy, it is said that *all Israel* came to Shechem to make him king (1 Kings 12:1). Moreover, it is emphasized that Rehoboam failed because he did not heed the counsel of the *elders and the people* in making decisions (vv. 6-15), but rather heeded the select counsel of a group of *young men that were grown up with him* (vv. 8-10), signifying that Rehoboam was partial in his

decision-making and succumbed to the opinion of the young men who actually opposed the will of God. Indeed, those young men, Rehoboam's former peers, typically were full of themselves, arrogant, boastful, and harsh in their opinions (vv. 10-14).

It will be noticed in the narrative regarding the house of God under Rehoboam that ultimately the will of God is all that really matters, and that the will of God is best determined by the deliberations and discerning gifts of the people who consecrate themselves to the Lord. Ultimately, however, God always has His way, sometimes in spite of the leaders and the people. *Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord* (v. 15; see also v. 24). Tragically, Rehoboam's actions caused the house of God to divide (vv. 16-20), but even this division was determined in the divine counsel and prosecuted according to the will of God. See the prophet Ahijah's prophecy (1 Kings 11:29-39). Thus God's fixed purpose in and through David was fulfilled in Christ through the southern kingdom of Judah. Nothing could prevent that!

The church under the spirit and terms of the New Covenant operates as *the habitation of God through the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:21). The ministers and members form the temple of God and are unified through the indwelling power and wisdom of the Spirit. This is the key to theocratic government--the indwelling graces and gifts of the Spirit being allowed to prevail in the church. For the Spirit creates a spiritual dynamic within the church that unites the ministers and members together in one body of Christ. The 120 on the day of Pentecost--before the Spirit had been poured out--were in *one accord* (Acts 2:1) because they had been *continually in the temple praising and blessing God* (Luke 24:53). Thus the essential key to the unity and power of the church is sanctification and remaining in a consecrated state in Christ. When everyone's ego is crucified [and is kept crucified!], then Christ rules supreme and the kingdom of God prevails! Thus Christ says in His prayer to the Father, *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in you, that they may be one in us . . . And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one* (John 17:17-23).

It is said following the day of Pentecost that *the multitude of them who believed were of one heart and of one soul* (Acts 4:32) and *great grace was upon them all* (v. 33). Likewise, the key to God's glorious government in this last day's Zion depends on our willingness to allow the Spirit to hold sway over us and prevail among us. The apostle Paul understood this divine principle and encouraged the church in the New Testament to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:1-3). He went on to say, *[For] there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all*⁷ (vv. 4-6).

We see then that it is imperative that we cultivate the graces of Christ within us and labor in prayer to create a heavenly atmosphere in the place where we meet to deliberate and act for God. The power fell on the day of Pentecost because they were together in accord in one place. And they succeeded and grew because they were of one heart and one soul and great grace was upon them all.

Should we expect God's blessings to fall on this last day's Zion on the basis of anything less than He required of the New Testament church? Surely not. It is an ancient and timeless principle that cannot be transgressed if we expect the blessings and favor of God to be upon this latter day house: *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . It is like the precious ointment upon the head . . . As the dew . . . that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing* (Psalm 133:1-3).

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Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome “Delegates”

Each year the General Assembly becomes more important and significant: for each year moves us closer to the fulfillment of end-times events. It is a time for God’s church to assemble from all over the world to seek direction and wisdom from on High!---to know how to proceed in the midst of an antichrist-dominated world, and to know how to pierce the darkness to rescue perishing souls and emerge together as a glorious, triumphant church!

We are in fact presently in the midst of end-time events---“*perilous times [have] come!*” The prophet Isaiah prophesied that in the very last days “*darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people*” (Is. 60.2). Who can deny that we are now in the midst of this darkness? As it was in Noah’s day and in the days of Lot in Sodom, so it is now. Certainly the “*prince and power of the air*” is having his way among the sea of people throughout the world---more than seven thousand million of them! Do not be deceived, brethren; it is the Dragon that is behind the idolatry, debauchery, violence and moral collapse in the world today. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but “*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph. 6.12).

But we have been entrusted with “Glad Tidings” in the midst of this darkness. Amen. The power of Christ’s kingdom has come. We are already “*translated into the kingdom of His dear Son.*” (Col. 1.13). We have power to overcome! And so we cry out with that strong voice from heaven, “*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ*” (Rev. 12.10).

In the inspired words of the mighty apostle, we are “*troubled on every side, yet [we are] not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body*” (2 Cor. 4.8).

Our feet may still be on earth, but our hearts and souls have already been translated. Or is it that heaven and the New Jerusalem have already come down to us? “*Behold the tabernacle of God is with men.*” The apostle put it this way: “*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels . . .*” (2 Cor. 4.6-7). Why?---“*that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*”

May the Lord bless us to pierce the darkness in this great Assembly; and to receive power and direction to go back to our fields of labor to pierce the darkness in our communities---to rescue the perishing and preserve the fruit that God gives us!

Zion Assembly Church of God

International Ministries Center



United Christian Church

(assembly site 2015)

Historical Assembly Sites



Administration

Presiding Bishop.....Wade H. Phillips
Superintendent of Operations..... Scott E. Neill
Chief Clerk.....Marie Crook
Julia Massey, Sandra Moore, Brenda Reitler, Rita Goodrum,
Shirley Kimble, Mindy Newberry, Sandy Morris, Molly Hayward

Chief Usher.....Tod Deakle
Eddie Davis, Vernon Johnson, Milford Kimble, Cecil Pounders,
Bill Reid, Cory Hall, Lynn Jones, Daren Childers, Jerry Nichols,
Dave Ashley, Jim Hayward, Matthew McDonald. J. L. Green

Chief Registrar.....Mandy Thompson
Shelby Erwin, Elizabeth McDonald, Ashley Reitler,
Rachel McDonald, Ally Thompson.

Assembly Business Committee

Chairman Joseph Steele
Zachary Snyder
L. W. Carter
E. A. McDonald
Ray Dickson
Byron Harris
Scott Neill
Miguel Garcia Sr. (alternate)

Video and Streaming..... Scott Neill, Ashley Neill,
Tanner Herring

Sound Equipment..... Jerry Pounders

Photography.....Julie Steele, Regina Brooks

Stage Manager..... Ricky Graves

Music.....Zachary Snyder

Maintenance/Props.....Jim Orange

Special Programs Director.....Wanda Busbee



Welcome to the 12th General Assembly!

Scott Neill

Superintendent of Operations

May we shout with the voice of victory and triumph, and worship our Lord in the beauty of holiness in this great Assembly. During this week we should feel the same way that our former General Overseer, A. J.

Tomlinson, felt when he said, "I feel uncomfortable when the Holy Ghost is not moving in our services." I have great expectations of what we are going to experience in our souls and bodies this week from God above.

We are back in familiar surroundings. United Christian Fellowship is again providing their facilities for our 12th General Assembly. Everyone is encouraged to show respect by properly caring for the property and equipment as we meet together.

Please consult with any authorized individuals (Scott Neill, Ricky Graves, Tod Deakle) in dealing with any problems that may arise during this Assembly. The following instructions are given so that everything will operate smoothly during the services.

- Please remain in the designated areas of the building such as: Main hallway around auditorium, Children's church area, nursery area and bathrooms across hall from auditorium.
- Food and drinks are not allowed in auditorium. The only exceptions are the speakers & moderator.
- If you are on program and need assistance with any equipment on stage (microphones, projectors, musical instruments, please see Jerry Pounders.
- If your program requires any visuals for the projection screens, please see Tanner Herring.
- Cd's should be given to Sound Engineer before the beginning of the session in which you will be on program.
- **Parking**: Please observe all parking signs throughout the city and on the church property. Cars parked in unauthorized areas may be towed at the owner's expense.
- **Nursery**: Nursery facilities are provided for your convenience. Signs will direct you to proper location.
- **Children's Ministry**: Children's Worship times are listed throughout the program. Please follow signs to designated area.
- DVD's are available for purchase during the Assembly in the hallway at the designated table.
- Due to this being the Lord's house, please refrain from chewing gum in the sanctuary.

Our prayer is that you will enjoy your time in Cleveland and may our time together be graced with the presence of the Lord!

Pre-Assembly Programs

Assembly Business Committee Monday, September 7, 2015

The Assembly Business Committee will meet at the International Ministries Center beginning at 6:00 p.m. to finalize its report to present to the 12th Annual General Assembly. The Doctrine Committee will meet also with this committee at this time. Anyone who has relevant questions or presentations may meet with the Committees at this time. Personal interviews should be arranged through the chairmen.

Ministers' Meeting Tuesday, September 8, 2015

Beginning at 9:30 a.m. the annual ministers' conference will convene in the auditorium at the International Ministries Center. All ministers are encouraged to attend and participate including mission directors. The purpose of the meeting is to promote unity and understanding through prayer and discussion. The Assembly Business Committee's report will be read and discussed. Also the floor will be open to discuss all relevant issues that might need clarification.

Ministers' and Companions' Luncheon (Immediately Following Ministers' Conference) 12:15 p.m.

All ministers and their companions are honored guests at the ministers' luncheon. This is sponsored by the International Offices. The luncheon will be held at the Mountain View Inn (located on the hill at exit 25 on I-75). Special singing: Erwin Family, TN. Guest speaker: Dr. Chris Thomas, Pentecostal Theological Seminary. Comments and special presentations by the First Lady. Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for this occasion.

Assembly Program

Tuesday

6:30 p.m. “Piercing the Darkness” with Praise

---Nicole Pounders, Alicia Harris

Message---“Behold, the Glory of the Lord appeared” (Ex. 16.10)

---Jonathan Gregory, KY

Official Opening of the Assembly

Welcome---Joe & Julie Steele

Special Prayers for the Assembly in Spanish, English, French, and Swahili. Concert of prayer by all the delegates in this great Assembly.

Announcements by Superintendent of Operations

Mini Concert

---Zachary and Kari Snyder

Assembly Expense Offering

Message---“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken”

(Acts 4.31)

---Joel Brooks, MS

Altar Service

Wednesday

9:00 a.m. “Piercing the Darkness” thru Singing and Rejoicing
---Nicole & Alicia

Special Songs---Everett Cox, GA

Message--- *“Where there is no [government], the people perish”*

(Isa. 9.6-7; Mt. 16:19, Heb. 13:7-17, 2 Pet 2.10)

---Rick Ferrell, KY

International Leaders' Reports:

-----Presiding Bishop

-----Assistant Presiding Bishop

-----Field Secretary

-----Field Secretary

-----Field Secretary

-----World Mission Director

-----US Missions & New Fields Director

-----Ladies Ministries Director

-----School of Ministry Director

-----Shepherding Ministries Director

-----Communications/Media Ministries Director

-----Youth Director/Camp Coordinator

-----Children's Ministries Director

-----Sunday School Director

-----*Voice of Zion/SYNC* Booster

General Treasurer's Report

---Lunch Break---

[**Note:** *Kidz' Konvention* schedule: Wednesday 7:00-8:00 p.m.;

Thursday 1:30-3:30, 6:15-8:00; Friday: 6:15-8:00 p.m.

Saturday: 8:45-10:00 a.m. 2:30--4:00, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

[A special Children's Program is scheduled for Sunday morning in the main auditorium]

2:00 p.m. Musical Prelude

Marches & Reports from Around the World

Regional Directors, have your region organized and ready to march on time. Turn in your written reports to the Presiding Bishop as you leave the stage.

2:10 **Africa**---directed by Bishop David Gomba

Kenya---Elijah Wafula, national overseer

Sudan---Elijah Wafula, national overseer

Ethiopia--- Teketel Zewde, national overseer

Uganda---Maurice Ogada, national overseer

Nigeria---Yomi Adekunle, national overseer

Ghana---David Dordah, national overseer

Cameroon---Eyong Eric Eyong, national overseer

Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Liberia---Amos Agbonifo,

Malawi, Mozambique---David Dzuwa, national overseer

Zimbabwe, Zambia---David Gomba, mission representative

Tanzania, Burundi, DRC (Congo), Rwanda

--- Edward Agar, national overseer

2:45 **Central/South America/Mexico**

----directed by Bishop Miguel Garcia, Sr.

Nicaragua---Freddy Garcia, national overseer

Guatemala---Ricardo Valenzuela, national overseer

Mexico---Danny Ramirez, national overseer

Peru---Yum V Munoz Quispe, national overseer
Chile---Javier Diaz Perez, national overseer
Argentina---Jorge Estroz, national overseer
Uruguay---Jorge Estroz, national overseer
Paraguay---Jorge Estroz, national overseer

3:15 **Caribbean**---directed by Bishop Sandraud Pierre

Dominican Republic---Sandraud Pierre, national overseer
Haiti---Santenniel Hostellus, national overseer

3:30 **Southeast Asia/Middle East/Far East**

---directed by Bishop Boone Bureenok

Pakistan, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma)
----Boone Bureenok

India Mid-East---Talari Padma Rao, provincial overseer

India Central---John Babu Ganta, provincial overseer

India South---V. Binoy Joseph, provincial overseer

Indonesia---Boone Bureenok, field secretary

Bangladesh---Boone Bureenok, national overseer

Philippines---Domingo Resurreccion, national overseer

----Supper Break----

***“Righteousness exalts a nation:
but sin is a reproach to any people”***
(Prov. 14:34).

Wednesday Evening

Note: *Kidz' Konvention* 7:00-8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m. Worship Him!---E.A. McDonald

Message—“*Piercing the Darkness of National Sin*” (Prov. 14.34)

---Todd McDonald, SC

Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs---Jim Melton, WV; Ashley Davis, VA



“Piercing the Darkness” . . . in the United States

March, Report, & Program

---directed by Bishop L.W. Carter

“Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles (nations), and the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish...” (Isaiah 60:11,12).

Thursday

Note: Kidz' Konvention today 1:30-3:30, 6:15-8:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord;
praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord" (Ps. 135.1).

---directed by E.A. McDonald

Camp Report and Program—Miguel Garcia, Jr.,

International Coordinator



Sunday School Program

--- Donna Pounders, director

Songs---McDonald Family; Becky Land, SC

Message---“*Piercing the Darkness thru the Holy Ghost*”

(Acts 1.8; Eph. 3.7-10)

---Pete Sarry, CA

—Lunch Break---

1:30 p.m. Special Songs---Everett Cox, GA

Message—“*Piercing the Darkness with Compassion*”

(Mt. 9.36; 18.23-35)--Pam Jones, IN

Special Songs—Charles Shelton, MS

In Memory . . .

*[Note: Ministers and their companions should be seated
near the rostrum in preparation for the ordination service]*

Ordination Service

[**Candidates:** Rick Ferrell, Bishop; Derrick McBride, Evangelist; Jonathan Gregory, Evangelist; James Hargraves, Evangelist; Barbara Hargraves, Evangelist; Kevin Clary, Deacon; Dewey Gibson, Deacon]

---Supper Break---

Thursday Evening

6:15 p.m. Mini Concert---Trevor Graves

School of Ministry Program

**“Piercing the Darkness . . .
with the Light of Christ”**

---directed by Bruce Sullivan



Assembly Expense Offering

Praise Reports—Edward Agar, Tanzania; Corey Hall, MS

Special Songs—Brenda Whitlock, Gina Brooks, MS

Healing Message & Prayer Service

**“Piercing Sin and Sickness
with the Healing Power of Christ”**

---Danny Ramirez, MX

Jesus is the Hope of the distressed, the Burden-Bearer of the troubled soul, the Comforter of those who mourn, the Healer of the sick and afflicted, the Light of the blind, the Voice of the dumb, the Saviour of the sinner, the Sanctifier of all who call upon His name, the Spirit-baptizer of those who thirst and hunger after righteousness.

Friday

Attention: The annual SYNC luncheon will be held at the Mountain View Inn at 12:15 p.m. Glenda Major & Alice Jones in charge.
All SYNC members and invited guests are encouraged to attend.

[National Overseers meet with Presiding Bishop and World Mission secretary right after SYNC luncheon]

9:00 a.m. “O sing unto the Lord a new song;
for He has done marvelous things” (Ps. 98.1)

---worship directed Nicole & Alicia

Voice of Zion/SYNC Boost

—Glenda Major, CA

Showing-Off the Talent of Our Seniors

---program directed by Billy Summerlin



Ladies Ministries Program

---Rosie Ramirez, director

Communications & Media Ministries Program

---Scott Neill, minister

Special Song--- Todd & Kim Erwin

**Message--- “Piercing the Darkness” ---
with the Glad Tidings”**

(Isa. 52:7-8; 61:1-2)---Lee Jaynes, MS

—Afternoon Break—

Friday Evening

[**Attention:** *Front three rows of seating are reserved for Youth Program*]
(*All youth [12-35] meet now in the Corridor for Youth March*)

6:15 p.m.

Showing-Off the talent of our Youth

---directed by Kim Erwin, TN

Senior Ambassadors' Program

“Piercing the Darkness” with Wisdom and Patience

---directed by E.A. McDonald

(Unwritten Program)

Assembly Expense Offering

Praise Report---Joanes Okal Oboo, Kenya



Youth Program

“Piercing the Darkness” with Zeal and Vision

—Miguel Garcia Jr., director

*Churches as well as nations go forward or slip backwards on the feet of their youth. And the leaders of the churches and nations, as well as the fathers and mothers, are responsible for how they go.
“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).*

Saturday

Note: *Kidz Konvention* today 8:45-10:00 a.m.,
2:30-4:00. 7:00-8:30 p.m.

8:15 a.m. Morning Prayer Service---directed by Allen
& Mandy Thompson

8:45 Praise Him!---Nicole & Alicia

Special Songs---Lee Brown, WV; Everett Cox, GA

Message---*“Conquering thru the Anointing”* (Judg. 14.5-6;
15.14-15; Is. 61.1-3)
---Tom Brown, WV

---Assembly Choir---

Recognition of Special Guests

Special Singing---Ashley Davis, WV; Becky Land, SC

Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

---Lunch Break---

2:30 p.m. Worship Him!---Michael George, SC

Special Singing---Cliff & Becky Kelton, MS; Sandy Garcia, CA

Assembly Business Committee Report

---Supper Break---

7:00 p.m.

Special Songs---The Four Pops

West Mobile Choir

Message---“Piercing the Darkness” to Rescue Souls

(Lk. 15.1-10 Eph. 2.1-10)---Jerry Pounders, MS

Assembly Expense Offering

Special Singing---Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria;

Miguel Garcia, Sr.



World Mission Program

---Scott E. Neill, director

**“Declare His glory among the heathen,
His wonders among all people”**

(Ps. 96.3)

---Parade of Nations---

It is impossible to overestimate the burden of the Lord for a lost world. Do we share and embody His burden in Zion Assembly?

*“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”
(Matthew 24:14).*

Sunday

9:00 a.m. Sunday School Lesson---J.J. Davis, VA

9:30 Special Singing---Trevor Graves, KY; Michael George, SC

Children's Ministries Program

---Cheryl McDonald, director

“Children reared in homes in which morality is taught and lived, rarely become delinquents”

---J. Edgar Hoover

---Assembly Choir---

Message---“And they went forth, and preached everywhere”

(Mk. 16.20)---Joseph Steele, GA

Announcements

Appointments

Consecration Service

Song: ***“Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All”***

led by Debbie, Betty, Brenda

Assembly Program Adjustments

*The Assembly program proceeded
as scheduled with the following exceptions*

Wednesday

Ashley Davis, VA sang in absence of Jim Melton, WV

Thursday

McDonald Family moved to week-end

Saturday

Everett Cox, GA sang in absence of Lee Brown, WV

Sandy Garcia, CA sang in absence of Cliff & Becky Kelton, MS

Registered Attendance: 409

Actual Attendance (Estimation): 460

Internet: 3,022 watched some portion of the Assembly
through our internet broadcast

International Staff Reports Twelfth Annual General Assembly

Presiding Bishop's Report to the September 14, 2014 --September 8, 2015

Note: This report reflects my work from the last day of the Assembly last year to last night, September 8, 2015

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Psa. 40.1-3)

I praise the Lord for His sustaining grace and strength, and for the inspiration He has given me to serve in this sacred position another year. Again this year, substantial gains have been made in spreading the Word of His kingdom throughout the world. The church was established in another nation this year--Indonesia---of which more will be said later in this Assembly. Outreach has also been done in some new states here in the United States which we expect to produce some missions and churches in this coming year. Also, several of our established churches have grown numerically and have had increases in several of our support departments.

In some ways this has been a trying year for me personally---perhaps the most trying year since we reorganized in 2004. We expect of course to be attacked on occasion from some outside the church, but it is always more hurtful to be disrespected and contradicted by a brother or sister on the inside. I'm thankful, however, that the incidents have been very few. What has encouraged and sustained me during these challenging times is the knowledge of God's Word---particularly the knowledge that "*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers . . .and spiritual wickedness*" (Eph. 6.12). Bearing this in mind, we can more readily forgive our brothers and sisters; for in most cases I'm sure these brethren did not realize that for a moment they had become and instrument of the devil.

Even Jesus was opposed and contradicted by some of the very ones whom He had chosen to form the foundation of the church. This was the case with the apostle Peter when he on one occasion "*took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him.*" He did not discern and grasp the deeper purpose of Christ's work and ministry (Mt. 16.23)---just as some in the church today may not realize the burden and inspiration that their leaders labor under. On the particular occasion

just mentioned in regard to Peter, Jesus said to him, “*Get behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for you [are not mindful] of the things of God, but those that be of men.*” It was this deep spiritual mindset that enabled the saintly Stephen in Acts 7.54-60 to intercede in behalf of his unconverted brethren in Israel who were at that very moment “gnashing on him with their teeth” like a pack of mad dogs! And it was this same spirit that enabled Jesus while still hanging on the Cross to pray for the very ones that were crucifying Him: “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*”

Perhaps it is appropriate here to say a word in behalf of the position to which I have been appointed as Presiding Bishop. The one holding this position is a man---a man like all of our pastors and ministers in Zion Assembly. Be he is also a pastor, and has been recognized and appointed by God and the church to be a pastor of pastors. He is called therefore to care for and oversee not one local church but all of the churches, to some extent. And he oversees also all of the ministers, Thus, he can say with the apostle Paul, “*Beside [the persecutions and trials of faith that come upon me daily, I have the care of all the churches]*” (2 Cor. 11.28). It stands to reason, therefore, that if we are to “*esteem [our pastors and overseers] very highly in love for their work’s sake*” (1 Thess.5.13), that this admonition would apply equally, if not more so, to the Presiding Bishop; for the esteem which we should have for our ministers would increase proportionately, it seems, in accord with the cares and responsibilities that we place upon them.

Again, it is conceded that the Presiding Bishop is a man, and thus we might well expect that he will do some things less than perfectly---at least in the judgment of some who may be misinformed or unjustly critical. If we believe a leader is acting disorderly, there is an orderly and duly ordained way of resolving the situation that will ultimately edify the church. But in any case, it has been our tradition in the Church of God, and we believe also that it is scriptural, not to rebuke a leader unless it has to do with something morally or scripturally wrong, and even then only in the mouth of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5.19). Otherwise, in the normal course of the burdens and responsibilities associated with a leaders’ position, we should support and respect his decisions and follow his leadership. Be *slow to speak*, brethren, and slower yet to criticize *those over you in the Lord* (Jas. 1.19; Heb. 13.7, 17; Prov. 10.19-21; 18. 2-7; et al), lest, as the wise man says, your criticism becomes a snare for your own soul (Prov. 17.27-28; 18.7,13). “*Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of the people*” (Acts 23.5; Ex.22.28).

I offer this counsel not for my sake only, and the work which I am responsible but for your sakes as well; and also for the men who may be appointed to a sacred position of leadership in the future, should the Lord tarry. Ultimately the whole church will benefit if we maintain proper respect and order for our leaders in the house of God.

Now in regard to the practical work connected with my office this year: I have served as the primary presbyter among all of the presbyters throughout the world; and consequently have been involved in scores of disciplinary actions to maintain proper order in the church. This includes examining and issuing licenses and ordaining scores of new ministers, and also revoking the credentials of a

few misguided and disorderly ministers, including three bishops, two of whom were national overseers. I have answered all correspondence and calls that have come into the office---roughly 390 letters and e-mails. I have kept up a regular correspondence with the overseers and ministers, and served as the editor-in-chief of our church magazine, the *Voice of Zion*. I want to thank our secretary, Marie Crook, for her assistance and untiring labors, and my wife, Dale, for her assistance in so many areas of the work.

Hundreds of ministers and members were given counsel both in the office and on the field. I have worked with the General Staff, the Assembly Business Committee, the Doctrine Committee, the overseers, pastors, and ministers to promote the work in all of its various dimensions and operations. I want to thank the General Staff and the regional overseers who have cheerfully cooperated with me in the promotion of the work. Most of our leaders sacrificed to move the work forward in their region and throughout the world, and it should be said that several performed exceptionally. I want to take this opportunity also to commend the companions of our overseers and international workers; for they have helped to carry the load of the work.

Again this year I served as teacher in our School of Ministry and worked closely with our new director, Brother Bruce Sullivan, assisting him to make this transition as smooth as possible. I worked with Brother Scott Neill in overseeing and directing the world mission work; and I planned and moderated the General Assembly. I also helped to edit the Sunday School literature. The overseers and ministers who cooperated with the Presiding Bishop and World Mission Director in some of our special world mission outreach efforts should also be commended, particularly Bishops L.W. Carter, David Gomba, Yomi Adegunle, Miguel Garcia, Sr., Edward Agar, Boonyong Bureenok, Danny Ramirez, Yoannes Oboo, and Ricky Graves.

I flew to California to teach and work with Brother Sullivan in the two schools for the Pacific Coast region. Attended with my wife the Kentucky-Indiana regional convention. These were both well planned and inspirational meetings.

In regard to the history I'm writing, *Quest to Restore God's House*, Volume I has been well received, and is generating a great deal of interest in and out of the church. I am now working on Volume II. I hope to complete it sometime in the 2016-2017 Assembly year. This volume will cover 1924-1990. Also the Presiding Bishop's 12 Annual Addresses to the General Assembly (2004-2015) are being published in book form and should be off the press within the next few months---hopefully by January. This volume will be about 450-500 pages. We will give notice in the *Voice of Zion* when it is ready.

I want to thank each of you for the many prayers that you have offered up in behalf of my family, and also for the many kindnesses that you have shown to us. May the Lord richly bless and keep you in the power of His saving grace.

The following are some personal statistics in regard to the work.

Sermons preached.....151
Converted.....3
Sanctified.....2
Holy Ghost Baptisms.....1
Added to the church.....4
Baptized in Water.....0
Tithes paid.....\$3444.00
Offerings given.....\$6120.00

Miles traveled.....27,050 (approximately 9,000 by air, 18,500 on the ground).

Revivals conducted.....1
Churches visited.....14
Regional Conventions Attended.....1
General Assembly (Moderated).....1

Thank you again for your prayerful support and splendid cooperation, and for the many kindnesses you have shown to me and my family. May the Lord bless and keep you in His great love and power.

Humbly submitted,

Wade H. Phillips

Assistant Presiding Bishop's Report to the 12th Annual General Assembly

Greetings in the precious name of Jesus who loved us, washed us from our sins, and redeemed us to. He has redeemed souls by His blood “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

It is with humility that I stand before you for the twelfth time as Assistant Presiding Bishop. It has been an honor to serve Christ and His church in this capacity for these many years.

At the last General Assembly I was also appointed as Business Manager for the International Offices and have served the church this year in a semi-retired capacity. Though I have not, kept regular hours at the International Offices, I have made myself available to assist the Presiding Bishop whenever I have been called on.

I have assisted the World Mission Secretary in sending the quarterly allotments to our Mission Representatives on the Mission Fields; assisted in purchasing domestic airline tickets when called on; assisted office secretary when needed; and also the General Treasurer in bringing all accounts to a positive balance to begin the New Assembly year. I have also reconciled the bank statements for the last two months and assisted in training a replacement for Cheryl McDonald who served as treasurer this year till July 31. I have also conducted routine business in behalf of the church as needed.

I have served on the Assembly Business Committee and attended the yearly meeting of this committee in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. It was a pleasure to greet the Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge again this year. I have also served on the Mission Committee, and taught in the School of Ministry in Cleveland.

In this modern day of technology much of the business of the church may be done over the phone and Internet. I still get many phone calls and emails requiring many hours of communication. It has been my pleasure to give counsel and offer assistance to those who call.

I have not visited many churches this year and the number of sermons preached has been very limited. However, I have published printed materials on a variety of subjects and loaded about thirty audio sermons over an internet website I preached in the Tennessee State Convention and twice in the local church in Cleveland.

I have continued to be faithful in my attendance at the local church here in Cleveland, and offer daily prayers for revival and a harvest of souls in our local churches around the world.

Submitted with love and prayers for you all,

E. A. McDonald

GEN. CHURCH YEARLY RECEIPTS, EXPENDITURES, BALANCE SHEET FOR YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015													PAGE 5	
50%														
FIRST QUARTER	TITHES	VOZ-SUB	ORPHAN	EXPENSE	MISSIONS	BLD. FUND	SC OF MIN	E. FUND	YOUTH	OCEMAR	TOTALS			
										MISSION	OTHER	ALL FUNDS		
BALANCE FORWARD	20139.68	4506.08	7292.91	0	9584.41	0	770.1	4188.54	15049.52	23782.67	0	85307.91		
RECEIPTS	45951.62	2010	4690.79	7214.87	5249.91	0	2033.17	455.25	1560.79	2982.68	7347.46	79486.74		
EXPENDITURES	-28957.35	-3704.03	-1220	-16351.81	-11446.09	0	0	-231.12	-53506.68	-5871.26	-125642.09			
BANK BALANCE	37233.95	2812.05	10753.7	-9136.94	10380.57	-11446.09	2803.27	4643.79	16373.19	-26741.13	1476.2	39152.56		
SECOND QUARTER														
BALANCE FORWARD	37233.95	2812.05	10753.7	-9136.94	10380.57	-11446.09	2803.27	4643.79	16373.19	-26741.13	1476.2	39152.56		
RECEIPTS	40604.15	1929	4535.28	157	2226.84	0	1331.66	174	1341.27	85094.52	4157.89	141451.71		
EXPENDITURES	-31312.41	-4291.62	-2400	-6711.4	-4939.14	-6564.06	0	0	-350.01	-46591.84	-4472.95	-106733.43		
BANK BALANCE	46225.69	349.43	12888.98	-15691.34	7668.27	-18010.15	4134.93	4817.79	17364.45	12651.65	1161.24	73870.84		
THIRD QUARTER														
BALANCE FORWARD	46225.69	349.43	12888.98	-15691.34	7668.27	-18010.15	4134.93	4817.79	17364.45	12651.65	1161.24	73870.84		
RECEIPTS	44111.2	5615	4327.73	244.33	4356.05	0	1180.14	826	1196.37	1080	8877.75	71816.57		
EXPENDITURES	-29383.77	-4807.81	-1855	-8938.23	-5846.07	-11312.91	-2123.85	-209	-273.45	-24009.6	-4763	-91542.69		
BANK BALANCE	61253.12	1156.62	15361.71	-22385.24	6180.25	-29823.06	3191.22	5434.79	18287.37	-10268.05	5255.99	54144.72		
FORTH QUARTER														
BALANCE FORWARD	61253.12	1156.62	15361.71	-22385.24	6180.25	-29823.06	3191.22	5434.79	18287.37	-10268.05	5255.99	54144.72		
RECEIPTS	66275.53	631	4697.84	164.04	3508.43	30	8317.1	205	1220.64	68714.54	14136.14	167992.26		
EXPENDITURES	-29397.57	-4650.14	-2055	-11585.23	-5203.54	-9335.57	-20030.65	0	-543	-33801.36	-14003.89	-130609.95		
BANK BALANCE	98231.08	-2862.52	18004.55	-33816.43	4485.14	-38532.63	-8522.33	5639.79	18965.01	24645.13	5390.24	91527.03		
YEARLY SUMMARY OF ALL FUNDS RECEIVED, EXPENDITURES, AND BALANCE IN TREASURY JUNE 30, 2015														
	TITHES	VOZ-SUB	ORPHAN	EXPENSE	MISSIONS	BLD. FUND	SC OF MIN	E. FUND	YOUTH	MISSION	OTHER	TOTALS		
												ALL FUNDS		
BALANCE FORWARD	20139.68	4506.08	7292.91	0	9584.41	0	770.1	4188.54	15049.52	23782.67	0	85307.91		
RECEIPTS	197042.5	10085	18241.64	7770.24	15343.23	30	12862.07	1600.25	5319.07	157871.94	34521.34	460747.28		
EXPENDITURES	-118951.1	-17463.6	-7530	-41566.87	-20442.5	-38862.63	-22154.5	-209	-1397.58	-157009.48	-29131.1	-464528.16		
BANK BALANCE	98231.08	-2862.52	18004.55	-33816.43	4485.14	-38532.63	-8522.33	5639.79	18965.01	24645.13	5390.24	91527.03		
												BALANCE		

General Treasurer's Report

12th Annual General Assembly

When I reflect upon the past 12 years since we began, my spirit is humbled that God has allowed me to participate in this glorious work which He has begun in us. I believe that what God has begun, He is able to bring to fruition. It is my desire to be faithful until He has finished His will in me and I hear Him say, "Well done thy good and faithful servant."

The pastors and churches are to be commended for their faithfulness to support the work of the church through the International Offices.

I want to give special recognition to my able assistant, Cheryl McDonald, along with her work in the local church, and the service as Children's Ministry Director. Cheryl picks up the mail from the Post Office, records all receipts from the ministers and churches, makes copies of all checks, makes bank deposits, makes out the checks and records and distributes of funds. She then lets me put my signature on the bottom of the checks and reads the report to the General Assembly. She also helps me with other office responsibilities.

I appreciate Sister Cheryl and Sister Crook for their valuable work they have done this year.

In the presence of God men are made to know that they are but mortals, flesh and blood beings, made from the dust of the earth, helpless and hopeless apart from God which gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As I look back on my life and ministry which is now in my 49th year, I can say of a certainty with Paul, it was the abundant grace of God through faith and love which is in Jesus Christ that enabled me, and counted me faithful putting me in the ministry.

Today I can say I have done nothing, I know nothing, I can do nothing apart from Jesus Christ. I have done all things by the grace of God through Jesus Christ who strengthens me.

Respectfully submitted,
E. A. McDonald

US Missions and Field Director

Greetings to the 12th General Assembly

This has been a very exciting year again for Zion Assembly. The mission work is coming along quite well. We now have several missions operating and the church has several prospects in different states.

The Lord is continuing to open doors everywhere and I am excited about how God is moving on the hearts of our young people. They are feeling the call of God as they look on the fields that are “white already to harvest.” In some cases some are leaving and selling their houses and giving up good jobs to please the Lord of the Harvest.

I have had the privilege of being in two rallies with the Presiding Bishop in Fairmont, West Virginia and Columbus, Mississippi. I have made three trips to Lorain, Ohio and participated with the Mid-East Regional Overseer, Tom Brown, in a revival where we took in two new members and conversed with some in Columbia, South Carolina hoping to renew the work there. I’ve driven approximately 9000 miles in this work and the outlook for the coming year looks good. Please pray that God will still direct us in this area.

Humbly submitted,
L.W. Carter

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Do good, O lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel” (Psalm 125:1-5).

World Mission Secretary Report

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

It has been an honor to serve the church this year in the position of World Mission Secretary. I would like to give our precious Lord thanks and glory for the opportunity to serve Him in this awesome responsibility. It was somewhat challenging to serve in triple roles as World Mission Director, full time pastor of the Greenville, South Carolina church and also as Media/Communications director.

After the Assembly of 2014, my first official church visit as World Mission Secretary was in Roanoke, Virginia. Immediately I started planning a trip to Thailand and Cambodia and then spent 10 days in these countries. Bishop Boone Bureenok, Overseer of Thailand, was a gracious host. While there we visited 10 churches. I taught classes and preached in the National Convention and also taught 2 classes in the nation of Cambodia. On Sunday evening we visited a mission in Bangkok in which one young lady gave her heart to the Lord.

In February, I was privileged to attend the National Convention in Mexico on behalf of our Presiding Bishop. It was a great honor to be able to travel with Bishop Joel Brooks during this trip. Danny Ramirez, Overseer of Mexico and his wife were gracious hosts during this trip. It was a great honor to worship and visit with the wonderful church members and friends in Mexico. I have heard stories how that people used to gather during conventions and fellowship and eat together. I was able to experience this very thing in the home of Estela Lopez. Sister Estela is the mother of Francisco Gonzalez Lopez. Thank God for the opportunity to visit Mexico.

In April, I with Bishop Ricky Graves was privileged to visit Kenya. The purpose of this trip was to reorganize the work of Zion Assembly Church of God which had been under the oversight of Joshua Amara. We conducted meetings with the ministers in Migora. God brought calmness and stability to the work. A finance committee was put in place which they had never had. Officers were elected so the work could obtain a church registration. A new District Overseer, Joanes Okal Oboo was appointed to replace Joshua Amara. After these officers were put in place, we flew back to Nairobi and spent 3 days drafting church registration papers with a government official. Elijah Wafula, Joanes Oboo and myself spent many hours working on these papers. They were prepared and we are still waiting on the government to open the doors again for church registrations. After

that, Ricky Graves flew back to the US and Bishop Wafula accompanied me to the national convention in Uganda under the leadership of Maurice Ogada. During this trip to Kenya and Uganda, I traveled on 8 different flights. The trip was a great success. To God be the glory.

During the year, I traveled 52,200 air miles on three trips.

I moderated 4 World Mission Board meetings, in which Bishop Phillips, E.A. McDonald, L.W. Carter and Cheryl McDonald were present.

A month ago, Bishops Miguel Garcia and L. W. Carter took a trip to reorganize the work of Zion Assembly in the nation of Honduras. A new interim overseer, Hernandez Ramirez was appointed to replace Hans Brooks. Bishop Phillips will give you more information about that later. Thanks is to be given to Miguel Garcia, Sr. and L.W. Carter for their willingness to take this trip.

Attended the Regional Conventions in West Virginia and Tennessee.

I received hundreds of emails during the year and **tried** to answer them. I am sorry if you sent me an email and you did not receive an answer.

Since August 1st, I have been serving full time at the International Offices. My family is staying in a RV behind the International Office thanks to Joseph and Julie Steele. We are in the process of selling our home in Greenville so that we can purchase one here in Cleveland. Thanks to Bishop Phillips for being understanding during this transition.

Respectfully Submitted,
Scott E. Neill

Field Secretary Report

Region or Nation Represented: Mexico

Number of Churches 4

Number of Missions 3

Number of Ministers 6

Bishops 0

Deacons 0

Evangelist 4

Number of Members 70

Approximate Number Attending Services 165

Number of New Churches Organized 1

Number of New Missions Organized 2

Number of New Ministers Licensed 2

Number of Conventions Conducted 1

How Many From This Region Attended School of Ministry 0

How Many From This Region Attended Youth Camp 0

How Many Revivals Were Conducted In This Region 10

How Many Members Were Added To The Church 11

Number of Voice of Zion Subscribers In This Region 2

Number of New Subscribers This Year 0

How Many Registered In The Regional Convention 86

Was This an Increase or Decrease? First Convention

Other Interesting Information: Sister Rosie Ramirez held one ladies day in Ensenada. Held 3 day leadership seminar in Nueva Palestina Chiapas. Special Children's Day celebration Sunday with over 150 children and 60 adults present.

New Buildings/Properties Obtained 3

Approximate Worth \$324,000 pesos \$14,000 US Dollars

Outstanding Instances of Healing/Miracles 0

Doors Opening Into New Areas: Berimerito Chiapas, La Gloria Baja California, Ensenada Baja California

Outlook---Expectaciones

We expect to organize 3 churches this coming year and enter 3 more mission areas. The calls have been coming in and we are praying for laborers.

Respectfully Submitted:

Daniel (Danny) Ramirez

International Children's Ministries Director

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

Throughout my life, God has placed several men and women in my path who have taken the time to coach and “cheer me on” in the Lord. Now, it is my turn to be a leader and to encourage others in their Christian walk. This past year, I have had many opportunities to labor for Christ. In November 2014, I organized children's classes for the Eastern Regional Youth Convention in Cleveland, TN. I was privileged to attend the Creative Ministry Solutions puppet conference in Anderson, SC, on March 13-14, 2015. At this conference, I gleaned a variety of techniques which have made my personal ministry more effective. The week of May 18-22, I taught a class with my husband at the Cleveland, TN School of Ministry. On June 7, 2015, I conducted the Children's Day service for the Cleveland, TN church. The week of June 22-26, 2015, I worked in the kitchen at the Mid-Central/TN youth camp in Westmoreland, TN. On July 24th, I taught a children's class for the South Atlantic Regional Convention in Greenville, SC. For this year's assembly, I have recruited teachers and coordinated the classes for another exciting Kidz Konvention. I have also prepared the Children's Sunday morning program for this General Assembly.

In order to promote Children's Day in Zion Assembly, I created thematic lessons and an ideas page. According to the many reports which I received, this year's Children's Day was a wonderful success. Throughout the year, I have continued to write a quarterly Children's Ministries newsletter, entitled “The Chalkboard.” I have also edited the Children's Sunday School literature. I have personally corresponded with many children's ministers to encourage them. I am thankful for each person who has answered the call of God to minister to children.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl H. McDonald

Field Secretary Report

Greetings to the 12 General Assembly

I thank the Lord for everything he has allowed me to do this year. I have preached more than fifty (50) sermons, taught fifty-two (52) Bible Studies; 10 lectures in different churches. I have visited ten (10) ministers and eleven (11) churches. I started three (3) missions that will become churches soon God willing. I have made two (2) trips to Haiti from the Dominican Republic where I met with some new ministers. During my first trip to Haiti I taught them Zion Assembly church government and encouraged them to keep on working for the Lord. During my second trip I shared many things I learned at the General Assembly. I pray I will be able to work more the coming year and keep record of all my field work.

I also founded a Theology School in the Dominican Republic since March 2013. We had our first graduation in July 2016. I am the only teacher because of the lack of resources. I have taught the whole year consisting of four (4) hours weekly.

Respectfully submitted
Sandraud Pierre

Field Secretary Report

Greetings to the 12th General Assembly

As Field Secretary, I assisted the Presiding Bishop in delivering messages in Spanish to the National Overseers. I translated e-mails and letters from the World Mission Secretary from English to Spanish for the Hispanic National Overseers. I helped the World Mission Secretary and assisted him with the National Overseers' itineraries and instructed them how to get from their countries to the General Assembly.

I helped with the translating of English to Spanish at the Cleveland School of Ministry, I also assisted and preached at the International Ladies Retreat in California.

As field secretary I flew 4952 miles
Drove approximately 25 hours
Made a missionary trip to Honduras
Installed a new Overseer in Honduras
Translated and preached in Honduras
Conducted two (2) meetings with Bishop L. W. Carter in Honduras
(While in Honduras we suffered through a blackout in the city due to political protesting. We also had a flat tire on our vehicle, but the Lord supplied our need and protected us.

To God be the glory for everything.

Respectfully submitted,
Miguel A. Garcia, Sr.

International *SYNC* Director

Greetings to the 12 Annual General Assembly

I want, first of all, to give thanks to God for His protecting hand and blessings this past year. I feel very proud and blessed to be able to have had a small part of what God is doing in ***Zion Assembly Church of God***. It is humbling to work with such a fantastic group of talented, professional and loyal workers.

This year I have strived to be more inclusive by introducing a contest designed especially for youth to help in promoting of the ***Voice of Zion*** Magazine. We are striving to put the ***Voice of Zion*** into more households, and I felt we needed the passion and social networking abilities of our youth. Thus, I sent out special applications for the youth; had post cards made advertising the new contest; and purchased twizzler candies with advertisements on them to get their initial attention. The contest includes \$75.00 cash prize in each region and another \$75.00 prize to be given out at the Assembly next year for the youth who sells the most ***Voice of Zion*** Magazines. My desire is that the youth will assist in making the ***Voice of Zion*** a large part of Christmas giving this year.

Again, I sent out packages of materials to each of the ***SYNC*** boosters asking them to boost ***SYNC*** throughout the year and also to encourage the subscribers in their districts to join early in order to be entered into a “Thank you ***SYNC*** Members” drawing (the drawing was also used as a mode of advertising during regional conventions). We had three gifts per region, with first prize being \$50.00. Joining early helps the ***Voice of Zion*** team at the International offices in managing their workloads. For advertisements for the ***SYNC*** program during the Assembly and conventions, I had postcards made up with a clear definition of what ***SYNC*** is and how to join.

This last Assembly year, I was able to travel throughout California and was blessed by being able to boost membership at various locations. While traveling to boost the ***Voice of Zion***, I also boosted the ***School of Ministry*** in the Northern California area, meeting held in San Jose CA. Sister Rosie Ramirez is always faithful to allow me to boost the ***Voice of Zion*** and ***SYNC*** at the women’s retreats each year.

I traveled to Cleveland, TN for the School of Ministry and planned and organized the luncheon with the faithful assistance of Sister Alice and the talented and hard work of Bro. Jim Orange. It was with great joy that I assisted the International Overseers while at the School of Ministry.

With the help of Sister Marie and my family I sent out invitations for this year's annual *SYNC* luncheon. My family and I made and purchased the decorations and gifts for the luncheon. My daughter –in- law, Tiffany Major made did a fabulous job of painting our photo booth. I organized and planned the *SYNC* program for Assembly.

We are very grateful to God for every one of the 447 *Voice of Zion* Members and especially for the 80 *SYNC* Members God gave us this year. *SYNC* Ministries been able to pay for the majority of all its expenses.

It has been a great honor to work for *Zion Assembly Church of God* in order to promote a magazine that I am so very proud of.

Respectfully submitted,
Glenda G. Major

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”
(Titus 2:13,14).

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

Ladies Ministries Report

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

This year's Theme for Women's Ministries was "He has made everything beautiful in his time..." (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The 10th Annual Western Region Ladies retreat was held at the Double Tree in Ontario, California February 6-10, 2015. There were 97 beautiful women in attendance. Fatima Valadez, Neomy Argueta, Barbara Rivera and I presented the Word of God. We had 27 women attend for the first time: 3 received sanctification, 3 baptized with the Holy Ghost speaking in tongues, and 8 received divine healings. We give God all the honor and glory for what He did during this retreat.

The 6th Annual Eastern Region Ladies retreat was held at the Oak Tree Lodge in Sevierville, TN. February 28-March 1, 2015. Snow, Ice and frigid temperatures could not keep 78 beautiful women away from attending this retreat. Barbara Hargraves shared that God has a plan, purpose, place, and time for each of us. I gave a class on true fasting which is a necessity for our Christian walk. Then we had a special time making and learning crafts taught by Alice Jones, Wanda Busbee, Victoria Green and myself. We give the glory to God.

June 20, 2015 was our first Ladies Day in Ensenada Baja California, Mexico We had a attendance of 30 women from three different denominations. Sister Martha Aviles and I gave these Beautiful women a special welcome then Sister Sara led us in worship. Sister Isabel Urcadiz presented the word of God, followed by Sister Daisy Abrego taught a class on the role of a single parent. I taught a class on are using the talent that God has given us! Sister Ofelia Montejo, National Women's Secretary from Frontera Corozal Chiapas gave encouraging words to serve the Lord and finish the race. The day finished with prayer. To God be the Glory.

I serve as our Women's Ministry Leader in Rialto. Conducted monthly services.

January 17, 2015 I attended National Convention in Mexico.

I traveled to Mexico 28 times this year.

I attended California and Mississippi Conventions.

Total of women attending retreats 205.

Total of women in Zion Assembly Church of God Women's Ministries:
United States 620; Countries 240.
Total in Retreat fund \$ 3,769.40.

Truly it has been a privilege and a honor to work for Our Lord Jesus Christ and His church, Zion Assembly Church of God.

I also want to thank our Presiding Bishop, Brother Phillips for allowing me to serve this year as International Women's Ministries Director.

Respectfully submitted
Rosie Ramirez

*“He hath made every thing beautiful
in his time: also he hath set the world
in their heart, so that no man can find
out the work that God maketh from the
beginning to the end”
(Ecclesiastes 3:11).*

School of Ministry Report

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

“Growing in Knowledge” was the theme for the school this year, and truly this theme was experienced by the forty-nine students who enrolled and attended the Cleveland school. From the opening service on Sunday evening, May 10th to the close of the last class on Friday, May 22nd the atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm, and the students discovery of deep riches in God’s Word. All students were eager to learn so as to be equipped and ready to give an answer to those who ask, and to be involved in the ministry of the church; and to also reach out into their communities to share the gospel of Christ.

Among those who enrolled in the school this year were six national overseers---Yomi Adekunle (Nigeria), Boone Bureenok (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Thailand), David Gomba (Zimbabwe, Zambia), Domingo Resurreccion (Philippines), Elijah Wafula (Kenya, South Sudan). Also attending was three regional overseers in the United States---Joel Brooks (South-Central), Rick Ferrell (Mid-Central), Miguel Garcia (Pacific Coast, South). Many pastors, evangelists, faithful workers attended, all of whom were eager to learn and Grow In Knowledge of our Lord.

Much praise was given by the student body to the instructors for the in-depth teaching that was given. The content of each class was taught with such anointing that all students received a better understanding of each subject. Each instructor brought a deeper insight into the understanding of the hope of His calling on the students’ lives, and ignited a hunger for more of the knowledge of God and His Word. In turn, the student body provoked the instructors with their eager and enthusiastic learning so that the instructors poured out unto them the wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord in which they had received by the Holy Spirit, just in the same way that Peter and John did in Acts 3:6 “Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee:...” The instructors were as follows: Bruce Sullivan, E.A. McDonald Jr., Todd McDonald, Cheryl McDonald, Wanda Busbee, and Wade Phillips.

One of the special events during the School of Ministry is the Church History Tour, and again this year’s tour did not fall short of being excellent. Special thanks to Brother Lynn Jones for sponsoring the tour this year. Tour day begin with boarding a beautiful tour bus. First stop was Hardy’s Restaurant where Bishop Phillips, the tour guide, gave a lecture of the church’s history and development in the 1800’s. Next stop was near Turtletown to visit the site of R. G. Spurling’s grave and his old home-

place. From there we travel on to the beautiful 216 acre biblical theme park known as “Fields of the Wood.” This site was where A.J. Tomlinson joined the Holiness Church at Camp Creek on June 13, 1903. The church was set in order in the home of W. F. Bryant, who was the lay leader of the holiness movement in the area, which home once set on this site. During the time when the tour attendees were on Prayer Mountain at the Fields of the Wood, Faye Bouknight, a student of the school this year, joined the church by covenant. The next stop on the tour was near Barney Creek, to the home of Ed and Mary Hawk for a delicious meal. This cottage home is use for a retreat center for Christian groups. After the meal we met in the Chapel at the center for a time of praise and worship. The Holy Ghost fell and all were blessed and many prayed over for special needs to be met. Such a wonderful blessing was felt by all. The last place that was visited was Barney Creek, which is the site where the original Christian Union Church was set in order by Spurling and his father. As always the Church History Tour was a great blessing.

The commencement Service was held on Friday evening, May 22, 2015. There were nineteen graduates and twenty-two post graduates. The following are the graduates: Yomi Adekunle, Boone Bureenok, Faye Bouknight, Joel Brooks, Kevin Clary, Everette Cox, Rick Ferrell, Vernon Johnson, Alice Jones, Pam Jones, Renetta Kelton, Chase Larmour, Glenda Major, Ashley Neill, Jim Orange, Tyler Pounders, Domingo Resurreccion, Tina Stephenson, Billy Summerlin, and Jeanette Surratt. The following are the Post Graduates: Wanda Busbee, Lanny Carter, Daren Childers, Kevin Clary, Dorothy Clardy, Eddie Davis, Faye Davis, Rick Ferrell, Miguel Garcia, David Gomba, Ricky Graves, Shanda Graves, Byron Harris, Chase Larmour, Jose Lozano, Vicki Neill, Jerry Pounders, Nicole Pounders, Julie Steele, Allen Thompson, and Mandy Thompson. Congratulations to all the graduates. Special recognition is given to the Valedictory and Salutatory students chosen for this year. Yomi Adekunle was chosen as Valedictory, and Pam Jones chosen as Salutatory. We were all blessed by the commencement program; each speaker, address, and song were a blessing. Refreshments were served to all who attended the service in the entrance hall following the Graduation.

This year will be a year to remember as to the sound doctrine which was taught by the anointing of the Holy Ghost through the instructors. The student body of 2015 went forth with the goal of living out the theme, “*Growing In Knowledge*” and with the following scripture written in their hearts and minds, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13).

Respectfully Submitted

Bruce Sullivan

Field Secretary Report

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In obedience to the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ; who said: “go ye into the world and preach the gospel,” it has been a blessing to fulfill His will in Zion Assembly Church of God.

The Zion Assembly missions has opened the doors of evangelism the gospel of Jesus Christ in a great manner, such that the gospel of Jesus Christ is far spreading across the entire world. Specifically here in west Africa where I have been appointed to serve as a field secretary. The Zion Assembly church of God is setting a pace that Africans have not experienced in a long time. From the preaching of the gospel (the undiluted word of God) to teachings on sound doctrine of Jesus Christ. The work of the holy spirit and ministry of Help by raising women and men of God, giving relief materials to the needy, helping destitutes and general welfare of the masses. It is good to say that the Zion Assembly has helped to reach the unreached.

By the grace of God I, Bishop Amos Agbonifo (field secretary Africa) through the teachings and guidance of these great mission has been able to penetrate some french speaking countries. Countries like Rep of Benin, (Cotonou) Togo (Lome), Ivory Coast (Abidjan) and Liberia (Monrovia) including Nigeria where I presently reside. Here in Nigeria I have been able to establish five churches under the leadership of Zion Assembly.

Speaking about the mercy and favor of God that abounds upon this mission, during my visit to the Rep of Benin (Cotonou) i was received by the ambassador of Nigeria to Rep of Benin with massive welfare and hospitality. While in Togo (Lome) i stayed in a good hotel where three Zion Assembly church of God was established. I received the grace of God to have the privilege of meeting a pastor who interpreted English to french language.

It is important to note that these societies are mostly dominated by Roman catholic religion and also traditional idol worshippers. They are taught on Idolatry version of the Christian faith, they are characterized with holy relics and powerful demonic forces, but in spite of these powerful forces at work the true gospel is being proclaimed though in rented place of worship.

We are pressing forward (Phil. 3:13-14) to see our members in Liberia totally healed Ebola disease as prayers is being raised for them all over our branches.

We are preparing to have a convention in Lome (Togo), after my visit in April I will be able to brief you on the center (venue) and date. I have also received so many invitations to Sierra Leone (Freetown) and Guinea to establish Zion Assembly churches, they are in need of a church who believe in the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ, but presently i can not afford to sponsor this trip without assistance from the head office

Churches and Missions:

Lagos 10

Rep of Benin 1 Missions 3

Ivory Coast 1 Missions 0

Togo 6 Missions 0

Nigeria 12 Missions 0

Liberia 1 Missions 2

Respectfully submitted,
Amos Agbonifo

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Do good, O lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel” (Psalm 125:1-5).

Media & Communications Report

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

It has been an honor to serve our church this year in the position of Communications and Media Director. I thank God for the opportunity. This year we have continued to updated the General Website.

I attended the 2015 School of Ministry and recorded all the classes.

In June, I was privileged to attend the Western Regional Convention under the directions of Bishop Miguel Garcia, Sr. What a powerful Holy Ghost convention the Lord blessed us with. While in California, I preached at the Van Nyes and the Rialto churches.

During this Assembly we are streaming live in English and Spanish. There is a schedule on the General Website showing the streaming schedule. As you can see on the screen, we are planning on you being able to log onto the General Website and listen to the messages after the assembly is over.

I want to thank Tanner Herring for his expert skills in operating this visual system during this assembly and for Jerry Pounders is who operated the sound system for us during the assembly.

Thanks to my daughter, , for her help during the year. Thanks to Allen Thompson, Corey Hall, and Byron Harris. Thanks to my wife, Vicki, for her help. On most Sundays we streamed live our services from the Greenville, SC church up until May 11th.

Respectfully submitted,
Scott Neill

Greetings to the 12th Annual General Assembly

I give honor and respect to the Godhead, to our Presiding Bishop and to all the leaders and members of Zion Assembly Church of God. It has been a joy and privilege to serve you as Shepherding Ministries Director and to serve with the headquarters staff to further the work of the church.

As many of you know I had a light stroke in April of this year. I have been left with weakness in my legs and arms as well as having problems with speech and neurological functions. The MRI testing determined that I also had several TIA's for at least a year prior to the stroke. God has been merciful to me though, and I have recovered remarkably--- because of your prayers and His healing power. I am still weak but getting stronger, praise the Lord! Brother Phillips asked me continue with the Shepherding work through correspondence, communicating with members who don't live close enough to one of our local churches to attend. I have been corresponding with about 15 families by letter, telephone, and through the internet this past year. Cindy and I have both sent letters and tried to lift people up with written sermons, poems and other encouragements from the Lord. We continue in prayer for them and the entire church that God will bless and heal you and supply all your needs according to His riches in glory.

I ask that we don't forget one another, but to continue to be "our brother's keeper," loving and supporting each other in the coming months. Shepherding is important to the spiritual strength and well-being of each member, especially the leadership of Zion Assembly. Pray for our Presiding Bishop, his wife and all the appointees that keep the church operating and preparing for the return of Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,
Rocky E. Dalton
Shepherding Ministries Director

International Camp Coordinator/Advisor

Greetings to the 12 Annual General Assembly

We want to thank the Lord for yet another Spirit-filled Camp season. The Holy Spirit is at work and very active in the lives and minds of the campers. Living in a world that grows ever more confused and twisted, there is no doubt that God is using our coordinators/directors along with every camp worker to raise up the next generation of Zion Assembly Church of God members, workers and ministers to speak the truth in love; and to go out into the world to pierce the darkness with the light of Jesus Christ! It is a place where we encourage pressing deeper into God's unlimited power; and the reports we have received throughout the different regions speak to us of the very fact that God is moving! This year once more, young people and kids have sought for salvation, been touched by God, and baptized with the Holy Ghost, and also baptized in water. We are truly living in exciting times!

One peculiarity this year in most of the camps and regions was that some of the speakers were not able to speak, the presence of the Lord was so evident that as soon as singing and praise began, the campers would flood the altars. They wanted more and more! This is what we need more of the deeper and genuine touch of God.

We had experiences of deliverance from evil spirits. Satan had to flee at the sound of the mighty name of Jesus!

One of our Regions (the Mid-Central Region) had an awesome increase this year in attendance, they went from 69 the prior year to just two shy of 100 this. Praise the Lord! What an awesome job!

Here is our report for All Winter and Summer Camps:

Professed Salvation: 72

Professed Sanctification: 18

Baptized w/ the Holy Ghost: 12

Baptized in Water: 60

Professed Healings: 5

Delivered: 1

Total attendance at Summer/Winter Camps: 557

Follow-up program- We are praying that our Coordinators/Directors and each Regional Overseer will put together a program to “follow-up” on the young people and children that come through our Camps. I have had the very same thought that our Presiding Bishop wrote about in the July issue of the *Voice of Zion*. It is a shame that we are investing so much effort, time and money and we don’t follow up on the ones who attend our camps. I believe it is time we invest some time in prayer, effort and money in the souls that come through our doors. We have a great responsibility to be good stewards of those who attend our camps.

Training- There is a real need to develop a training program for our Coordinators and Directors and also our volunteers. We are going to work closely with our Coordinator/Directors and Overseers to develop a comprehensive training manual for our camps---to train and develop workers to improve the quality of our camps going forward. Please pray for this endeavor.

Thank you and God bless each and every regional overseer for your support for the camp ministry, coordinators, directors, volunteer staff and kitchen workers, along with camp boosters and fund-raisers who made this years camps possible. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Lord and camping ministry. ***Allow me to restate what we said last year about the impact of our laborers at these camps;*** “You will never know how your presence at these camps have made a lifelong impact on our children and young people.” God bless you greatly, and we are hoping for more exciting reports like this at next year’s Assembly.

Humbly submitted,
Miguel A. Garcia Jr.

International Youth Director's Report

Greetings to the 12th Annual Assembly

As the International Youth director I know for a fact our church has a bright future. I have seen it firsthand this year as I have had the privilege to travel out of the country and to visit one of our summer camps. The Holy Ghost is working in and through our young people and preparing them to be partakers in this great last day's work. Our youth are making themselves ready for deeper experiences in the Lord, praying constantly for each other and for the church. Some are leaving jobs and convenient comforts at an altar of prayer, and the Lord is blessing them and meeting their every need. I believe that with the help of the Holy Ghost and getting behind our young people, we will see the church grow. They are going outside the church walls and doing the work of evangelizing the lost---in their schools and places of employment. For all He is doing, we praise God!

The words of the Psalmist David resound in my head and heart as it relates to this generation of the youth in the church.

“This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob” Psalm 24:6.

I had the privilege to attend the Central America Youth Convention held in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala. I want to say that our young people in Central America are on fire for God; they are doing well and send you greetings. It was an honor for me to have been with them. They love God and the church!

I saw a young man, a member of the church, as he was coming to one of the sessions at the convention riding on his bicycle. On the back of his bicycle he had created a “makeshift” basket where he placed a small child's plastic chair and on it was his daughter. Without the use of any ropes to restrain the seat, they rode to the session in intense humidity and heat. It tore me up because they were willing to do anything to be in the house of the Lord. This is our young people in Zion Assembly Church of God.

It is my greatest joy and privilege to serve God and His church in this capacity this year. Yet there is still a lot of work to do and we are ready to do it.

Statistic's:

Name of Director: Miguel A. Garcia Jr.

Number of messages preached during year: 19

Saved: 6

Sanctified: 3

Many lives touched and filled

A marriage was restored while at the altar in Guatemala during Youth Convention

Organized two (2) Youth Conventions

Held one (1) Youth Directors training workshop

Approximate miles traveled: 8900

How many registered for Youth Convention: 500

I was the Evangelist for South-Central Region Youth Camp

Voice of Zion offering:

- 1) Southcentral Region (Chase Larmour-Youth Director)- \$431
- 2) Pacific Region (Miguel Garcia Jr.- Youth Director)- \$400

Outlook (Expectations): The vision I have for this year is a burden I carry daily. I want to see more and more young people come to salvation by being "laser focused" with an eye towards outreach in the communities we live in by...

1. Praying more than ever-we need the Holy Ghost!
2. Working alongside Regional Overseers, Pastors and Regional Youth Directors to establish youth ministries in churches that do not currently have one.
3. Our goal is to increase the number of young people we have in our churches by working with our Regional Youth Directors to organize outreach events and hosting rallies and revivals.
4. Starting or continuing Discipleship training within our local youth ministries.
5. Working along with the U.S. Missions Director and Department to begin "FIRE" Teams to outreach.

I ask your prayers for us in this great work. Zion Assembly Church of God Youth Ministries is on the move and I believe we will see the glory of God in the salvation of souls.

"This is the generation of them that seek God!"

Respectfully submitted
Miguel Garcia, Jr.

2012 was the first year that the Presiding Bishop's Commendation Award was bestowed upon deserving members. It has since become an annual Assembly event. The Assembly Business committee passed this in the 2012 General Assembly.

The following have been recipients of these awards:

2012

*Honorio Garavito, CA
William (Bill) Reid, TN
Joshua Amara, Kenya*

2013

*Marie Spurling Crook, TN
Miguel Garcia, Sr., CA
Dale Phillips, TN*

2014

*Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria
Glenda Major, CA
Danny Ramirez, CA*

2015

*Robert Barron Ramirez, CA
Wanda K. Busbee, SC
Alice L. Jones, TN*

2015 ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE AND DOCTRINE REPORT

[We, your Assembly Business and Doctrine Committees, combined, after prayerful and thoughtful consideration, present this report to the General Assembly for your consideration].

SECTION I Governing Structure of the Church

In consultation with the Presiding Bishop, both the Assembly Business Committee and the Doctrine Committee present to this Assembly two important needs in the church at this time--- namely, a clearer understanding of the administrative structure and ruling authority of the church, and the need to adopt certain measures to help insure that the government of the church operates in harmony with and in conformation to the will of God.

In our tradition and practice of church government, we have historically swung the pendulum from one extreme to the other---from a democratic-individualistic kind of model of authority (represented in Christian Union from 1886 to about 1909) to a kind of popish-catholic model (represented in the system adopted under the leadership of A.J. Tomlinson from 1910-1943; a model which afterward was perpetuated by Tomlinson's son, Milton, until his resignation in 1990.)

A few years after Milton had taken office, a major controversy developed over what is the highest authority in the church. Some, led by Grady R. Kent (General CPMA Secretary), believed it was the General Overseer, while others led by J.B. Wright (Superintendent of Bible Training Camp) believed it was the General Assembly. Milton settled the argument in 1948 by conceding that the office of General Overseer is "subject to the Assembly."

Notwithstanding, Milton, like his father, continued to wield in practice nearly popish-like powers. For example, the Assembly only met one week a year, leaving the General Overseer to act and make decisions unilaterally for the whole church the other 51 weeks.

Perhaps we should hasten here to point out that this rather serious

error in regard to the government and administration of the church took nothing away from the otherwise exemplary character of the Tomlinsons--A.J. and Milton; both men were dedicated and zealous servants of the Lord and the church.

Notwithstanding, A.J. Tomlinson's thinking and position on the office of General Overseer in the context of the centralized governmental structure of the church was one of the fundamental causes for the disruptions in 1919-1920 and 1922-1923. And the function of this office also contributed to the division earlier in 1909-1910---though there were of course other issues that contributed to the divisions, including carnality.

Those who separated themselves from Tomlinson either overreacted and adopted systems that were more or less democratic: for example, the "Original Church of God" led by J.L. Scott in 1919-1920; or else adopted systems that were more or less Episcopal in nature: for example, the "Church of God" led by the Llewellyn-Lee faction in 1922-1923 gradually admitted that their system is Episcopal in nature and function. The democracy of the "Original Church of God" made that organization more or less ineffectual in its fellowship and outreach [it has never amounted to much]; and on the other hand, the Church of God has grown and now claims over 6 million members; yet this organization does not consider itself to be a divine institution, admitting that it is merely a denomination---a humanly devised system.

In December 1943 Homer Tomlinson led a schism in the church and formed an organization that he called "The Church of God" on the basis of an exalted office at the top of a pyramid of administrative authority. In developing this system, he followed more or less in the steps of his father; but Homer went further than his father in claiming to be the "King of the World."

In 1956-1957 Kent did the same thing, more or less, separating himself with a few hundred followers and naming their organization, "The Church of God--Jerusalem Acres". This group since that time has had several splits, each adopting a system based on an exalted man at the top of an administrative pyramid. Again in 1993, a group of ministers and members in the Church of God of Prophecy, which had for several years identified themselves as "The Concerned," created a schism and chose Robert Pruitt as their exalted General Overseer. They organized in July 1993, and like Homer and Kent before them, adopted the name "The Church of God." This group has since divided a number of times, and to our knowledge all have based their administrative systems on an exalted office at the pinnacle of a pyramid of Episcopal authority.

Beginning about 1986, questions were raised to challenge the

traditional view of the office of General Overseer and the governmental structure of the church; namely, that the church had drifted more or less into an Episcopal form of government, and that the office of General Overseer had become a popish-like position. This led in 1990 to the appointment of an International Committee to study the office of General Overseer.

The next year, however, Billy Murray, who had succeeded Milton as General Overseer in 1990, appointed a completely new committee to study further the office of General Overseer. (This was done under pressure from some of his advisors). Most of these new committeemen had little or no insight into the traditional theology and development of the office of General Overseer and the governmental structure built up around it. Consequently, they introduced a whole new governmental structure built on distrust of leadership, which consequently tended to strap or *neuter* inspirational and gifted leaders. They also distorted [either unwittingly or purposively] the 1990 committee's original thoughts on the *plurality* of leadership thereby consequently forming a government that blended both a Presbyterian and Episcopal type of system. What was lost in the shuffle and confusion was anointed and gifted leaders. In most cases, men and women who were not divinely called nor qualified for such high positions filled the chief seats of the church. And those who were spiritually gifted did not have the freedom to act under inspiration and the power of their anointing. In effect, what was ultimately lost was the sovereign headship of Christ over the church!

In Zion Assembly since 2004 we have made some remarkable improvements and progress in regard to the administrative and governing structure of the church. First and foremost, every effort has been (and is being) made to recognize and exalt the sovereign headship of God over the church. This we believe is the key to "theocratic government"---to build a governing system through which God in Christ and through the Holy Ghost essentially rules (Lk. 9:33-35; Jn. 14:26-28; 15:26; 16:7-15; Ac. 15:28; 1 Co. 2:3-16; et al).

Notwithstanding, we have noticed that God also rules instrumentally through His church. This is plainly seen in the Scriptures, not only theologically but in the practical acts of the church (cf. Mt. 16:19; 18:15-20; Mk. 13:34; Jn. 15:27; Ac. 1:15-26; 6:1-7; 15:1-16:5; 1 Co. 12:28; et al). The government is "upon His shoulder", that is, in and with Christ's body, the church (Is. 2:2-4; 9:6; Mt. 16:19; Mk. 13:34; Lk. 19:13; 2 Co. 3:5-6; 5:18-20; 6:1; et al).

Some of the improvements made in Zion Assembly since 2004 to conform more perfectly to theocratic government are: 1) We have modified the title of the highest office in the government, calling it the office of

Presiding Bishop [more precisely the *position* of Presiding Bishop]. This was done in order to modify the traditional exalted view of the office of General Overseer. Scripturally, the Presiding Bishop holds the same office as every other bishop, only he is *positioned* as the “chief” or “first among equals” in the administration of the church. 2) We have emphasized the biblical qualifications of the man for the position; particularly noting that he should have a proven record of faithfulness, stability, and experience, and be manifestly gifted and anointed to govern or rule in the church (Mt. 25:15; 1 Co. 12:28; Ep. 4:7-16). 3) We have limited the term of office to four years; yet we have left the tenure open for the same man to serve multiple terms if “it seems good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.” 4) We have endeavored to discourage thinking and actions that tend to exalt too highly the man holding the office, emphasizing that the one selected is appointed finally by the church, rather than unilaterally by the Holy Ghost [see Mt. 10:25-27; Ac. 1:21-26; 15:1-4, 22, 25, 28, 30, 33-40]. Notwithstanding, it has been emphasized also that the church should seek for the guidance of the Spirit in the whole selection process; and feel assured that the selection is pleasing to the Lord. In fact, the Presiding Bishop as well as other chief leaders should be “*esteemed very highly in love for their works sake*” (1 Th.. 5:13). 5) We have emphasized that the Presiding Bishop, as well as other leaders in the church, is a *servant*; and therefore should proceed in his work with lowliness and meekness, not as a lord or master (see Mk. 10:42-45; Lk. 22:24-27; Jn. 13:14-17; Ph.. 2:3-8; Ep. 3:8; 1 Pe. 5:2-6). While God gifts and empowers leaders in the church to be strong and just, as well as gentle and wise; there is a great difference between *leadership* and *dictatorship*, between the *pastoral* spirit and the spirit of *lordship* (cf. Mk. 10:42; 13:24; Lk. 22:25; 1 Co. 3:10; 1 Th. 2:4-12; He. 13:7, 17; 1 Pe. 3).

It remains, however, that while we have made some progress in our understanding of theocratic government, we have not arrived at the wisest and most biblical form of it, particularly in regard to the position of Presiding Bishop and the governing structure of the church. For example, it seems to us that the Presiding Bishop still acts with too much unilateral authority in making universal appointments and setting the agenda in general for the whole church worldwide. Granted, we should proceed cautiously in correcting any weakness in this regard, lest we overreact and err in the other direction---that is, in swinging the pendulum again to the other extreme: for, after all, God has set officers in the church and given them authority and inspiration to make decisions and to appoint other leaders to important positions in the church (see Mk. 13:34; Ac. 6:2-6; 13:1-4; 15:22, 25, 30, 33-40; 19:22; 20:17-18; 1 Co. 4:17; 12:28; 2 Co. 8:18, 23; 9:3; 12:17-18; Ep. 6:22). In fact, God ordains leaders to act with great authority;

therefore we should feel the weight of our offices and positions, and seek God for wisdom, humility, patience, anointing, soberness, gravity, strength, spiritual empowerment, and direction---in a word, the Mind of Christ!

The scriptures that we have cited above show that God's church has a peculiar form of government that is neither Congregational nor Presbyterian nor Episcopal, nor a Monarchical or Popish system. It is a government that ultimately is formed and operates under the authority and inspiration of God, through His Word and Spirit! Christ is the head of the church and, presently, between His Ascension recorded in Mark 16:19 and the Rapture foreseen in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, He rules the church through the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Ghost. And the highest gifts in the church are the God-called and God-gifted ministers (Mk. 13:34; 1 Co. 12:4-11, 28; Ep. 4:11-16; He. 13:7, 17). Yet the ministers of God's church do not act as an Episcopal elite but rather in harmony with the whole body of the church (Ac. 15:12, 22, 25-28): for all of the members are potentially Spirit-filled and guided by the same Spirit (Jn. 14:16-18; 15:26-27; 16:13-16; Ac. 15:28; 1 Co. 12:15-30). It should always be borne in mind that "*the government is upon [Jesus'] shoulder*" (Is. 9:6-7), that is, the government is *with His body*, the church. The ministers are part of the body; they do not stand above it or over against it. We thus call this form of government "theocratic" [a word that means "God-ruled" or "God-governed"]. The church is thus a *theocracy*.

Again, however, our old BTI books rightly defined theocratic government as "Government ruled by Spirit-filled men." God rules in His kingdom directly, but He rules in His church instrumentally, that is, through spiritually-gifted ministers and members who are recognized by the church as such (Ac. 15:28; Ro. 16:1, 7; 1 Th. 2:4-12; 5:12-13; 1 Ti. 5:17; He. 13:7, 17; et al).

Therefore, we recommend a modification in the governmental structure of the church, namely, the adoption of an International Executive Council to interact with the Presiding Bishop in the general oversight of the church. The International Executive Council will be composed of seven members including the Presiding Bishop. The bishops selected to fill these positions will be nominated by the Presiding Bishop, examined and approved by the Assembly Business Committee, and finally approved of and appointed by the General Assembly. The bishops nominated will be selected using such criteria as being able to govern, maintain a biblically sound family, possess a good reputation within and without the church, and have a proven record of ministry. The core principles and parameters of which they will operate will be unanimous agreement and a covenant of confidentiality.

In addition, in order for there to be a quorum there must be at least five Councilmen present, including the Presiding Bishop (unless he becomes morally or physically incapacitated).

SECTION II

Interim Presiding Bishop

The following business act dealing with the office of Assistant Presiding Bishop was accepted in the 2012 General Assembly:

“If the Presiding Bishop should become mentally or physically incapacitated, or if the office is vacated through moral failure or death, the Assistant Presiding Bishop will fill the office until the next General Assembly, at which time the process for selecting the Presiding Bishop will be implemented. We further recommend that if the Assistant Presiding Bishop should become mentally or physically incapacitated, or if the office is vacated through moral failure *or death*, the Presiding Bishop be authorized to choose a successor to serve in this capacity until the following General Assembly.”

“The term of office of the Assistant Presiding Bishop should offset the tenure of the Presiding Bishop so as to stabilize the government of the church in the event of mental or physical incapacitation, or if the office is vacated through moral failure or death. Therefore, we recommend that the Assistant Presiding Bishop be nominated and selected in this Assembly to serve until 2014. Then at the 2014 General Assembly the term of the Assistant Presiding Bishop will again be for four years.” (2012 AM; p. 41)

Seeing that the International Executive Council and the new modified governmental structure will supersede the present system of government that the church is operating under, we recommend the following changes:

“If the Presiding Bishop should become mentally or physically incapacitated, or if the office is vacated through moral failure or death, the World Mission Director will fill the office until the next General Assembly, at which time the process for selecting the Presiding Bishop will be implemented.”

SECTION III

School of Ministry and Bible College

In consultation with the Presiding Bishop, we have put a great deal of emphasis on our School of Ministry since 2005, and in recent years on the need for a more advanced educational program, namely, a Bible college. Perhaps everyone familiar with our School of Ministry program will agree that the school has contributed immeasurably to our unity, stability, and growth in Zion Assembly. The school has virtually unlimited potential as an auxiliary in the church---as an institutional “help” and “government” (1 Co. 12.28)---in assisting us to fulfill the church’s divine commission to evangelize and teach and disciple all nations!

Still, we realize that the School of Ministry does not afford sufficient time and resources to fully teach and train and prepare our wonderful young men and women for the ministry. So in 2011 we cast a vision for a Bible college. It was made clear then that the college was not to take the place of the School of Ministry, but to serve to educate and train more thoroughly our ministers and young people for the ministry. It was said in the Presiding Bishop’s annual address that year,

“The School of Ministry falls far short of the kind of thorough teaching and training that is needed to ‘thoroughly furnish’ and equip leaders with the knowledge and skills to enable them to take the church forward into the glory envisioned by the apostles and prophets---a glory in which the church’s admirers will one day look on her and say, *‘Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?’*” (S.S. 6:10)

“Nothing short of developing a Bible college and seminary will enable us to offer the kind of thorough-going education needed to set our ministers apart and equip them for the great end-times task of the church---that is, to ground and settle them in the spiritual and biblical mysteries of the Gospel and the church, and to fully equip them for national and international leadership in the sophisticated and complex world of the twenty-first century. We can see perhaps an illustration of this kind of educational experience in Jesus’ training of the Twelve Apostles. The Twelve

were with him for the most part of three full years, learning from the Master Himself by precept and example. It is not likely that anything less than this kind of intimate and thorough-going teaching and training will suffice for our leaders in the church in these last days. Our international leaders and Bible instructors simply need more time with the students, and also better facilities to adequately instruct and equip them for the end-times ministry of the church.”

In that same Assembly, the need to construct adequate facilities for a Bible college was introduced; and this proposal was considered with a former proposal to expand our International Ministry Center for more office and storage space. Thus both proposals would be accomplished in one building project, namely, by adding a two-story wing onto our International Ministry Center.

In order to finance this project, *The Prophets' Plan* was initiated, based on the account found in 1 Ki.6:1-5---in which “the sons of the prophets” under Elisha’s leadership cut down trees and built them a larger building for their school. In this financial plan, our ministers and members were challenged to give a sum of money equal to a tree that the “sons of the prophets” cut down in their day, hewn to fit the construction, and put in place in their new Bible college which was located along the Jordan River near Jericho. We estimated that a tree as such would cost in modern currency roughly \$800. Our people responded marvelously that year and the next, purchasing more than a hundred trees. Some purchased two or three trees (\$1600-\$2400). All in all more than \$162,000 has come in toward this project.

The rough estimate given at that time to construct the new addition was \$350,000. Since then we have learned that the estimated cost for a two-story addition---with all that is envisioned for the college and office and storage space---would be more than twice that much (closer perhaps to \$900,000)---though a substantial amount of this cost could be removed by our people volunteering their labor and various skills. If we could get to the place to break ground and frame the structure and dry it in, then our brethren could contribute some of their time and labor to hanging drywall, painting, laying brick and flooring, etc.

After we had embarked on raising funds for a Bible college, we were encouraged by some who desired to purchase facilities for a tabernacle. An overture was also made that offered promise that a tabernacle might be donated to us---a facility that would need only some minor reconstruction to meet all of our needs for our International Offices and Bible College.

When it looked feasible that obtaining these facilities might actually materialize, we presented a plan in the last Assembly to raise some funds for a tabernacle---thinking that a good offering with the funds already collected for the Bible college might be enough to remodel the building and that we would own it free and clear. Again our people responded wonderfully with pledges and offerings of just over \$100,000---of which approximately \$76,000 has come in so far. And the Assembly agreed also to raise funds on a regular monthly basis and call it “The Tabernacle Fund,” and most of our churches have been faithful in contributing to this.

In assessing our current needs and financial capabilities, and consulting some with the Presiding Bishop and Brother E.A. McDonald and others, we are ready to propose a plan going forward.

1. It may be financially prudent and productive for the church at this point to pay off the current loan on International Ministry Center (\$389,000). This could be done by merging the current monies we have in the Bible College Fund and the Tabernacle Fund, which when all of the pledges come in will be approximately \$280,000. We would then need only approximately \$110,000 to pay off the present indebtedness! [Note we would only be borrowing from the tabernacle fund; this fund would remain intact and be applied to the construction of a tabernacle when we get to that point.]

2. As soon as the current indebtedness on our International Ministry Center is paid off, we could then make a loan for the construction of the two-story wing addition---which will accommodate the need for international office and storage space, and the Bible college. We could then immediately break ground and go forward with the vision that was first cast in 2011!

3. In order to expedite this plan, we could initiate in this Assembly a fund-raising drive to pay off the indebtedness of the International Ministry Center! We are confident that we can do this---and that you will want to do it! If so, we will be ready by the next Assembly to have an exciting two-fold celebration---a mortgage burning of the old indebtedness, and a breaking ground ceremony for the new wing on the International Ministry Center.

Meanwhile, we can continue to have our Assemblies in rented facilities, and pursue plans for the internal development of the Bible College.

To assist us to fulfill the vision for the two-story wing addition on the International Ministry Center, we recommend that an attractive brochure be produced to promote the Bible College. These brochures can be used by our pastors and churches to raise funds in the communities where our churches exist. If we can agree on these measures, we recommend the Presiding Bishop oversee the production of these brochures; and try to have them ready for distribution as soon as possible.

SECTION IV

General Funds

We recommend that we continue to operate the same financial system for this upcoming Assembly year, and that funds be transferred between accounts to bring all funds into a positive balance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Assembly Business Committee

Joseph Steele, Chairman,
Zachary Snyder, Secretary
L.W. Carter
Ray Dickson
Byron Harris
Scott Neill
Miguel Garcia, Sr.

Doctrine Committee

Bruce Sullivan, Chairman
Rick Ferrell, Secretary
Ricky Graves
Joel Brooks
Trevor Graves
Tom Brown
Jimmy Johnson

General Assembly Clerk: *Marie Crook*

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

Cleveland, TN
September 12, 2015

Introduction

Each year the General Assembly seems to take on more importance. One of the reasons for this is that we are now in the midst of the very last days. “Perilous times [have] come” and we find ourselves surrounded by the “powers of darkness” and the prevailing spirit of Antichrist in the world today. All consecrated and discerning Christians know this. The church’s situation in the New Testament rings true also for us in this generation:



“We are troubled on every side, yet [we are] not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. 4.8).

In this Assembly we have heard from God, and have received some insight on how to navigate through the maze of the prevailing evil in the world. And we have been empowered to fight the good fight of faith--to overcome the enemy and be triumphant!

We are going forward therefore unafraid and fully confident that we will overcome in this present conflict against satanic principalities and powers, and against the spiritual wickedness now seated in high places in the political and religious governments of the United States and throughout the world. We are trusting in the faithful promises of our God whose Word cannot be broken! Even His words spoken to the “church in the wilderness” hold true for us in this last days’ Zion; for as the church under the Old Covenant was on the precipice of entering the earthly Promise Land (Palestine), so we can now see the heavenly Beulah Land on the horizon just ahead of us. And we can take heart that His words to Joshua

apply equally to us today:

“Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to [you] . . . Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon . . . I have given unto you . . . As I was with Moses, so will I be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage: for unto this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land . . . Only be thou strong and very courageous . . . Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper” (Josh 1.2-7).

See, our inheritance is a predetermined promise---“***I have given [the land] unto you!***” Notwithstanding, we still must ***take it***, for Jesus said, “***The violent take it by force!***” (Mt. 11.12). This is why we are pressing forward without fear, and in full assurance of faith:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me. . . You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps. 23.4-6).

Fighting and ***faith*** go together. The former is a demonstration of the latter, and necessary in order to please God and receive His approval (Heb.11.2-6). We must be willing to “*fight the good fight of faith!*” Jesus said, “***Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For everyone who asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and he that knocks it shall be opened***” (Mt. 7.7-8). In our Greek class in the School of Ministry, we learn that these verbs are in a tense that signifies *continuation*, that is, we must keep on ***asking, seeking, and knocking*** to receive the blessings! Again we are admonished by Jesus and the apostles and prophets to “awake,” “arise,” “shine,” “put on strength” “wrestle,” “resist”, “press,” “fight,” “reach forth”, “stretch forth”, “break forth,” “enlarge your tent,” “lengthen your cords,” and “do exploits!” And to encourage us, the inspired writer in Hebrews 11 lists the faithful who trusted God against seemingly impossible odds, pressing forward to conquer their enemies, remove mountains, work miracles, and inherit the promises!

I am reminded here of the time when King Saul was determined to use all of his powers as the head of state in Israel to have David killed. David and some of his men were apparently ambushed by Saul’s army

and trapped in a valley: and things looked pretty much hopeless (Psa. 11). The wicked had their bows bent, with their arrows on the string aimed at him and his handful of companions (v. 2). Considering the odds against them, David's counselors reasoned that they should flee to the mountains, saying: "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" (v. 3)---in other words, "If City Hall is against us, we don't have a chance!" We are up against impossible odds! Their advice to David was thus: "*Flee as a bird to your mountain*" (v. 1); in other words, "chicken out!"

But apparently David's men forgot who they were talking to, namely, the one who had killed a bear on one occasion, a lion on another, and a ten-foot Philistine warrior on another! This was the same David who had killed tens-of-thousands in battle! So David's answer was: "*In the Lord put I my trust . . . [for He] is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven . . . His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men . . . [and He] shall rain down snares [upon the wicked], fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest*" (vv. 4-6).

In his apostate condition, Saul did not realize that in fighting against David, he was fighting against the God of David! Yes, Saul was in the position as king, but David was under the divine anointing of kingship; for Saul had lost his anointing, though he was still in the position of king; and the anointing had come upon David though he was not as yet put in position! But God had already determined the transition---to dethrone Saul and exalt David. All that remained was for Him to see His will materialized. So what shall we say to these things: "*If God be for us, who shall be against us?*" (Rom. 8.31).

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us, For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 37-39).

Section I

Embodying and Sharing *the Life of God*

We teach in Zion Assembly that a believer is not merely potentially victorious, or positionally justified, but actually made righteous and victorious. And this real, effectual salvation is by the divine calling and sovereign power of God! We are careful therefore not to "name it and claim

it!” We don’t say therefore in Zion Assembly, “I decree and I declare.” That’s the rhetorical language of the so-called Word-Faith movement, which so many religious celebrities on television promote---the so-called “Prosperity Gospel” or “Health and Wealth Gospel.” Look, you can’t decree anything, nor call anything into existence, except what has already been decreed and declared in heaven! And it is the prerogative of God’s church in particular, ultimately, to “bind” and “loose” on earth what has been bound and loosed in heaven! (Mt. 16.19).

We proclaim in Zion Assembly that a believer may be instantaneously transformed by the power of the Gospel into a new creature---miraculously quickened unto life in the Spirit and set apart unto holiness! We believe in fact that this is a distinct mark of God’s church over against nominal Christians in common, run-of-the-mill churches. We don’t stand positionally sanctified: we are sanctified! We are the result of God’s glorious workmanship! This is how God’s **“peculiar people”** are recognized and identified! *“By their fruits you shall know them”*; through *“[your mutual love] shall all men know that you are my disciples”* (Jn. 13.35), and again, *“And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name [they shall] cast out devils . . . they shall speak with new tongues . . . they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover!”*

God’s church is a demonstration of victorious Christian living---a visible illustration of His power! That’s why the great apostle says to the church at Corinth,

“When I came to you, [I] came not with [excellence] of speech or of wisdom . . . [or] with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2.1-5).

In contrast to the majority of men-made denominations, God’s church stands out through the manifestation of His life and the demonstrations of His power! The members as a whole can say with the apostle Paul: *“And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God!”*

The church embodies the sanctified Life in Christ, and follows the pattern of His death and resurrection; that is, just as Jesus was crucified and resurrected, so His church is crucified and resurrected (Rom. 6.1-7; Gal. 5.24; 6.14; Eph. 4.24; Col. 3.1-3, 10). Paul declared, *“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”* And again, *“The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”*

Now observe; the primary word in Jesus’ and John’s and Paul’s

teaching is not light, but **Life**, though I do not care to make more of this distinction than is warranted by Scripture. Still, I believe it would be wise to stay close to the wording of the text:

“ . . . in Him was life; and **the life was the light** of men. And **the light** shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not . . . He came to His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God . . . And **of His fullness [of the Life in Him]** have all we received, and grace for grace” (Jn. 1.4-5, 11-12, 16).

Now behold a mystery! Christ died, but on the third day **the Life [zoe]** came back into Him---that eternal *Life* that is grounded in the Father was revived in Him: and through the power of **this Life**, Jesus was transfigured and caught up to God! John says, “*We beheld His glory!*” and Peter says, “*We were eyewitnesses of His majesty . . . [and heard such a voice from heaven---from the excellent glory] when we were with Him in the holy mount* (2 Pet. 1.17-19).

Great mystery! Did God die? Christ is God in the flesh and He is one person in two natures, that is, the divine and human natures were merged [hypostatized] together in the one person of Christ, which happened by a miraculous conception in Mary’s womb! (Lk. 1.28-35; see also Phil. 2.5-8; Heb. 1.8; Rev. 1.8; Isa. 9.6-7; 43.11; 44.6). But when He died, the Life principle that is grounded in God did not die, that is, the eternal substance of three persons did not die---the Trinity did not die: only the one person, the Son of God died! The eternal Life principle grounded in the Father remained and came back into Christ.

Now observe; **the Life** produces light! Again I don’t care to make more of this than is warranted by Scripture; but it seems to me that **the Life** here is the most essential attribute of God---divine life, spiritual life!---and the Light emanates from that divine Life. Yet the two are so closely related so as to be indistinguishable to our natural understanding. Still, I would be uncomfortable in reversing the words to say the Light was **the Life** of men! For it is certain that **the Life** signifies the very Being of God--the essential substance of God! Perhaps the Light does also; but the Light is the manifestation of the invisible Life!

Life is defined in Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary as 1) “The condition that distinguishes living organisms from inorganic objects and dead organisms”; 2) “The sum of the phenomena of metabolism, growth, and reproduction”; 3) “The animate existence of an individual”; 4) “The force that makes or keeps something alive”; 5) “The quickening principle of natural phenomena”; 6) “The effervescence or sparkle of a living thing”; 7) “Energy” and “consciousness” in higher forms of life.”

Metabolism is defined as the “sum of chemical and/or spiritual processes in an organism or in the soul, in which energy is produced and reproduction is the result.”

Light is often associated in Scripture with intellectual comprehension---human understanding. Thus Paul says to the believers at Ephesus, “***The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...***” (Eph. 1.18), and again “*Whereby, when you read [my letters], you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*” (3.4). And Peter says that we should be diligent to “***add to [our] faith . . . knowledge***” (2 Pet. 1.5). My point is that there is something more fundamental in our faith than intellectual knowledge and comprehension (cf. 1 Cor. 2.1-10). “***By faith we understand***” (Heb. 11.3), and “***by faith [we] are saved***” (Eph. 2.8)---not by our intelligence or empirical knowledge; nor by our creedal statements and declarations of faith recorded on paper; but rather by ***the Life of God!***

Now you may be saying, “Oh Brother Phillips, that’s over my head! Well, its over my head, too, and that’s the point! “***By faith we understand!*** We are neither **Gnostics** nor **philosophers** nor **scientists!** We are “**Christians**, and believe that “***the things which are seen were not made by things that are visible!***” “***For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him!***” (Heb. 11.6).

There is heart knowledge---an incomprehensible bond hidden in the soul between God and redeemed men; a relationship anchored deep in the Spirit, deep in the love of God, which the human mind cannot fully comprehend, nor the angelic mind for that matter! ***The Life*** is that mysterious power that unites our being with the Being of God through faith, that enables the believer to cry out, *Abba!* His divine Life becomes our life. Thus the apostle: “***I am [have been] crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live [in the flesh], I live by faith of the Son of God***” (Gal. 2.20).

But, accordingly, if we are not careful we will measure others by our head knowledge and fail to discern through the Spirit the life of Christ in them---and thus unjustly judge them, that is, fail to see the grace of Christ in them. We may even go so far as to de-Christianize them on the basis of our traditions and private interpretation of the Scriptures. This was the basic argument of R.G. Spurling in his invaluable little book, *The Lost Link*---in which he explained the principles upon which he restored the Church of God in 1886, and convinced A. J. Tomlinson to join the church in 1903.

“Many preachers preach about love and dwell on charity and think it no

more than the natural element or religion, but fail to see it to be the law of the new covenant by which to infallibly know each other as members of God's church, and is the law by which God will judge the world. This law will try the life of every man. It exposes the idolatry of the world. God has put in the heart of every person the power to love something, therefore, whatsoever we love best is what we worship. It is an idol if it is not God. Oh, the idolatry that is in the world today! So judgment has begun at the house of God (Church of God). We need not fear judgment if we love God above all things, but know that God's law stands by your heart to judge all men's lives. Oh, love God's eternal law. The lost link is seen as the law of unity."

Then he drove the point home further by saying,

"If you want to see a church scattered, just pull the string of church doctrines and you can destroy more good than the greatest revivalist can do."

Spurling was convinced that brotherly love was the very basis for the fellowship of the church, and that where this divine principle is given liberty, God's church will flourish and shine with the glory of the Lord.

We have noted elsewhere that our beloved Brother Spurling perhaps went too far in his liberal views---at the expense of a sound doctrinal discipline for the church; but, still, we may glean a great deal of wisdom from his deep insights into the mystery of Christian fellowship and the art of church ministry. We hope of course that in Zion Assembly our increasing knowledge will enable us to be more effective in winning souls and building up God's church.

Country comedian, Jerry Clower, tells the story of Uncle Lunie Ledbetter and his son, Marcel. Uncle Lunie was asked by some of his friends at the local hang-out if Marcel had changed since he had sent him off to college. Uncle Lunie said that he could not tell of any difference. They said, "You mean you spent all that money and he doesn't even talk differently." Uncle Lunie said, "Well, I've noticed he does talk a little differently now; for example, he used to be plowing with 'Ole Beck,' our mule, and I would hear him say, 'Wo, Beck, gee back, and come up.' But the other day I heard him say, 'Halt Rebecca, pivot, and proceed.'"

Now here is why grasping this point is so important: it is the eternal Life in Christ that we are primarily to share with a lost world---a world separated from God by sin and darkness. Light comes gradually---like the breaking of dawn ascending to the brightness of the noonday sun: *but the*

Life is an instantaneous and miraculous conception! Immediately, the new convert is endowed with spiritual discernment, though he may have little theological knowledge or intellectual comprehension of the written Word. What is important is that the new believer has been made righteous and is regenerated, and now has intuitive and personal knowledge of the true God.

Salvation is thus not merely an intellectual apprehension; it is a complete transformation of the believer's soul, mind, and spirit! The person actually becomes a new creature---"*behold all things become new!*" And in the second work of grace, the *old man is crucified* and the *new man* is made perfectly whole and free from sin!---"***For he who [has died in Christ] has been freed from sin!***" (Rom. 6.7).

So the soul winner must be deeply involved---emotionally, affectionately, empathetically---in the soul-winning process, and also with "other sheep" in order to win them. We must get in the skin of them to whom we are ministering and relate to them at their deepest level. But it is even truer that we must get deeply in the skin of Christ, and in fact become the body of Christ, and get under Christ's burden with Him. Jesus said, "*take My yoke upon you*" (Mt. 11.29), that is, "Labor with Me to convert souls and build My church!"

I was teaching along these lines sometime ago, and a brother in a certain denomination challenged me; being apparently offended by my boldness in claiming to be able to convert souls. But see, that is biblical language. Hear the Lord's brother, James: "*Brethren , if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death*" (James 5.19-20). And the prophet: "***He that wins souls is wise!***" (Prov. 11.30). Jesus said, "***Heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead, cast out devils!***" (Mt. 10.8). These passages show the inexplicable intimacy between Christ and His church.

Now think on Paul's words to the Philippians:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you . . . I have you in my heart . . . For God is my [witness], how greatly I long after you all in the bowels [deep in the being] of Jesus Christ. And I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment [spiritual insight] . . . That you may be sincere and [blameless] till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness . . . unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1.3-11).

Note especially the words, “*I have you in my heart . . . I long after you in the bowels [**en splanchnois**, ‘inward parts’] of Jesus Christ.*” **See his deep spiritual bond with the saints!** Paul is claiming here to be so engrafted together with Christ through the Holy Ghost---that is, not only in harness with Him, but merged together with Him in the Holy Ghost---like a branch in a Vine, or a branch in the trunk of a tree which is **bonded by the living sap that flows in the tree**, so that his affections and Christ’s had become one. This deep intimacy is like the “*engrafted word*” that the apostle James mentions (James 1.21); and it is through this oneness and intimacy that Christ and the church together give birth to babes in the Gospel!

Peter says that this oneness with Christ happens through being “*born again of the **incorruptible seed, the word of God, which lives . . .***” (1 Pet. 1.22). Now recall what Moses said in the opening chapter of Genesis: “*Then God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind . . . the herb **yielding seed after his kind . . . whose seed is in itself, after his kind***” (Gen. 1. 12, 24). Then the only question that remains is: have you as a man been reborn after the seed of God? Having been born once of sinful parents, are you now “born again” by the seed of a holy God? For your parents necessarily passed on to you their sinful nature---even if they had become sanctified; for they can only pass on their original sinful nature, not their new sanctified nature! Thus John says, “*[whosoever] is born of God does not commit sin!*” (1 Jn. 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4). And Paul speaks of being “*born of the Spirit*” in contrast to being “*born after the flesh*” (Gal. 4.29; see also Jn. 3.3-8).

This teaching is not an isolated instance in Paul’s letters to the church. He wrote to the bewitched Galatians that he was “*[travailing] in birth again until Christ be formed in [them]*” (Galatians 4:19). He reminded the saints at Thessalonica that he had been with them as “*a [nursing mother] who cherishes her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us*” (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8). In fact, look at the phrase “*we are laborers together with God*” (1 Cor. 6.1). It brings to mind a **woman going into labor** to give birth to new life! and afterward the bond that is made between the parent and the child through travail and birth!

It seems to me that Paul sees himself and his ministry in the light of two metaphors: one as a co-partner with Christ in the masculine sense of fathering children. It is in this sense that he calls Timothy his son, and

writes to the Corinthians, saying, “*for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel*” (1 Cor. 4:15). On the other hand, he sees himself in the feminine sense, being part of the body of Christ, the bride, giving birth to children and nourishing them up to full maturity. And this agrees with the words of the prophet: “*for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children*” (Isa. 66:8), and again, “*thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side*” (60:4).

Rachel, a type of the church, cried out, “*Give me children or else I die!*” Jesus once lamented, as He overlooked Jerusalem, saying, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.*” This is the spirit that we are seeking for in this present restoration of the church---to be a body under a *spiritual burden* reaching out in love through the Holy Ghost to save a lost world and build God’s church---*like a woman in travail to bring forth children.*

This is the work of the Holy Ghost: to baptize, to immerse us in God’s love, to create a genuine *theosis* so that we become truly and actually the *body* of Christ!---so that the seed of Christ may pass through us into repentant sinners, and we together beget new creatures in Christ! So that we can then say with the apostle, “*I have begotten you through the Gospel!*” And “[*I*] *travailed in birth until Christ was formed in you!*” And that it may be said of us in this last day’s Zion, “[*When*] *Zion travailed she brought forth her children!*”

Now this conception can be realized only through the operation of the Holy Ghost: for He gives life, that is, He takes what is of Christ and plants it through us into the hearts of believing sinners (Jn. 16. 13-16; Rom. 5.8; 1 Cor. 2. 2-16; 12.3), transforming them into saints; and translating them into the kingdom of Christ (Jn. 3.3-8; Col. 1.13).

Sometimes I wonder if we really understand the reason for **Spirit baptism**; particularly the fact that it is essentially an **immersion deep into the Life of God**, so that we can fellowship with God and one another on a deeper level; and **be enabled to more effectively win the lost!** But it is not only a deepening but an elevating---an **ascending upward into heavenly places in Christ!** (Eph. 1.3, 20-23; 2.6). The Spirit-baptized saint sees visions, dreams dreams, prophesies mysteries, and carries a **spiritual burden for lost souls**---persons dead in sins and trespasses. The truly Spirit-baptized believer is not the average perfunctory Christian or common member of a religious denomination. He is a child of the Spirit! **The Spirit groans and prays through him, and plants through him the seed of new spiritual life. He then travails to give birth to new creatures in Christ!**

A.J. Tomlinson graphically describes being baptized with the Holy Ghost in the General Assembly in 1908 while G.B. Cashwell was preaching.

“While he was preaching, a peculiar sensation took hold of me and almost unconsciously I slipped off my chair in a heap on the rostrum . . . I did not know what such an experience meant. My mind was clear, but a **peculiar power** so enveloped and thrilled my whole being that I concluded to yield myself up to God and await results. I was soon **lost to my surroundings as I lay there on the floor, occupied only with God and eternal things**. Soon one of my feet began to shake and clatter against the wall. I could not hold it still . . .

“My body was rolled and tossed about beyond my control, and finally while lying on my back, my feet were raised up several times, and my tongue would stick out of my mouth in spite of my efforts to keep it inside my mouth.

“At one time, while lying flat on my back, I seemed to see a great sheet let down, and as it came to me I felt it as it enveloped me in its folds, and **I really felt myself literally lifted up and off the floor several inches, and carried in that sheet several feet** in the direction my feet pointed, and then let down on the floor again. As I lay there **great joy flooded my soul**. The happiest moments I had ever known up to that time. I never knew what real joy was before. My hands clasped together with no effort on my part. Oh, such **floods and billows of glory ran through my whole being . . . There were times that I suffered the most excruciating pain and agony**, but my spirit always said ‘yes’ to God.

“Then came a very interesting part of the experience. ‘They shall see visions.’ In vision I was carried to Central America, and was shown the awful condition of the people there. **A paroxysm of suffering** came over me as I **seemed to be in soul travail for their salvation**. Then I spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, and in the vision I seemed to be speaking the very same language of the Indian tribes with whom I was surrounded.

“Then after a little rest I was carried in vision to South American, and of all the black pictures that was ever painted that was surely the blackest. The vision settled on Brazil, and after another **paroxysm of suffering or soul travail** the Spirit spoke again in another tongue; then after a little relaxation I was carried

to Chili, with the same effects and results; then in like manner to Patagonia, away down among those illiterate Indians. Each place I was shown I gave assent in my spirit to go to them.

“From Patagonia to Africa, and on to Jerusalem, and while there I endured the most intense suffering as if I might have been suffering similar to that of my Savior on Mount Calvary. I never can describe the awful agony that I felt in my body. After every **paroxysm of suffering** came a tongue. From Jerusalem I was carried to Northern Russia, then to France, thence to Japan, and then I seemed to get back to the United States, but soon I was taken away North among the Esquimeaux. While there the language of the Spirit spoken through me seemed similar to the bark of a dog. I was carried to a number of other places in a similar manner.

“I must not fail to tell of the **terrible conflict** I had in the vision with the devil. I came in direct contact with him. While in this state came the most awful struggle of all. While talking in an unknown tongue **the Spirit seemed to envelope me**, and I was taken through a course of **casting out devils**. A real experience in the vision, and the last verses of Mark sixteen came very vividly before my mind.

“**In the vision I could see multitudes of people awakened** and coming this way. Among them were Mrs. Tomlinson and my children. (They all received the baptism a few months later.) **I saw us all on a missionary journey**. Glory to God! This was **really being baptized with the Holy Ghost** as they received Him on the day of Pentecost.” (*The Last Great Conflict*, pp. 233-236).

What comes through so plainly in Tomlinson’s description of his Spirit-baptism is the ultimate **purpose of Spirit-baptism**---namely, a **deep spiritual immersion; an empowerment** from on high that makes one **willing to go anywhere and everywhere** to proclaim the Gospel; the desire to be a **transforming agent for God**; to be the **feminine counterpart of God**---the body of Christ, the bride of Christ; the desire to **bring forth children of God**; to be so **intimate with and in union with Christ** that His seed passes through us and is **miraculously conceived** in the hearts of sinners, transforming them into new creatures in Christ!

In concluding this section, you can see that I am concerned that we grasp the **most essential characteristic of the church, that is, its spirituality**---our essential union with God and our depth in God.

And this not merely for our own benefit, but in order to **effectively fulfill the mission of the church**. Spirit-baptism is primarily **an anointing for witnessing** but even more essentially an empowerment to participate with God in the miraculous conversion process!

“And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry . . . until you be endued with power from on high” (Lk. 24.49). “But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1.8). “He that wins souls is wise” (Prov. 11.30). “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel” (1 Cor. 4.15).

Section II

God’s Church---Victorious Over Sin and Death!

God’s church is the *“church of the living God!”* It is therefore a *living church!* Its members are *lively stones*, built up a spiritual house---a *habitation of God through the Spirit!* (1 Pet. 2. 5-9; Eph. 2.22).

Just as Christ was raised from the dead, so His church has been raised from the dead! And this must be the primary meaning in Jesus’ declaration, **“And the gates of hades [the grave/death/sin] shall not prevail against [the church]!”** Like Christ, the grave of apostasy could not hold the church down. Laying there in gross darkness during the Dark Ages, God’s church heard the prophetic cry and at the appointed time came forth! *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come!” “Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite?”* (S.S. 6.13).

The church has power over sin and death!---power to resurrect, power to heal, power to restore, power to forgive sin: and power to bind, power to loose! (Mt. 16.18-19; Jn. 20.23). Indeed, God *“is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 3.20-21).

The **dynamic life and resurrection power** of the church is illustrated in the “church in the wilderness” and symbolized in the Old Tabernacle. See here: the center of the congregation (made up of an estimated 3 million members) was the Tabernacle; and in the Tabernacle was the outer court and inner court; and in the inner court was the Holy of Holies; and in this Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant; and in the Ark were three significant things; one of which was **Aaron’s rod that budded** (Heb. 9.3-4). Now Aaron’s rod was a **dead stick**, probably a branch from an

almond tree. But God **miraculously caused it to bud and to bring forth blossoms and almonds** to confirm God's divine order and the government of His house, that is, in the first instance it confirmed Moses to be God's chosen leader over against Korah and the 250 rebellious *princes* ["men of renown"] in Israel that rose up against him (Num. 16.1-50; 17.1-10).

But more importantly, it seems to me, we are to learn from the symbol of Aaron's budding rod that God's house has miraculous life in it, and thus that God's church has been delegated power to resurrect the dead, and to heal the sick! Again, Jesus said, "**Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils!**" (Mt. 10.8). The **power to resurrect dead sinners** to newness of life has been breathed into God's church by Christ! *And He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Ghost!* (Jn. 20.22). *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy!* (Lk. 10.19). Jesus said, *even the spirits are subject to you!* (v. 20). Christ has authorized and inbreathed His church with His glorious powers!---**even the power to abolish death!** (2 Tim. 1.10). Yes, *sin once reigned unto death*, but not now! Christ rose from the dead, and so has His church!

The church has Good News---and embodies the power of salvation. She is now empowered to be death to death, and destruction to destruction. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death!* (Hosea 13.14). **Awesome powers** have been transmitted to Christ's church, **including the power to raise the dead!** "*And greater things shall he do because I go to the Father!*" Yes, Christ was given *the keys of death and the grave* (Rev. 1.8); but He made a duplicate set and gave them to His church! (Mt. 16.19). His commission is therefore, "**Go . . . raise the dead!**"

We have a message that takes the sting out of death; for though a believer may die, yet shall he live; and in fact **believers never die!** (Jn. 11.25-26). Praise God! **Death is swallowed up in victory!** In Christ, sin and death are destroyed and the grave is buried! It is exuberating to know that not even sin and death have dominion over us!---that just as Jesus died to fulfill all righteousness, and then came forth from the grave on the third day for our justification; so also **the church came forth from the grave!** This is doubtlessly the meaning of "**the gates of [hades] shall not prevail against [the church]!**" **Spiritual death** seems to be **an impenetrable fortress**---like Jericho---a city fortified with walls and gates. But you know the story: the walls came tumbling down by the power of God when "the church in the wilderness" marched around seven times and blew the trumpets!

But Jesus' declaration---"***The gates of hades shall not prevail***"--- signifies more than that. It means that God's church has been entrusted with *the words of eternal life* and empowered to raise the dead---**to bring sinners to life; and otherwise is enabled to pull them out of the fire!** (Jude 23).

We are talking here of being **baptized with a supernatural energy**---a power of electrifying force that will quicken the dead and raise them from the grave! **The gates of the grave shall not prevail against [the ministry of the church]!** We have been given the *ministry of reconciliation!* (2 Cor. 5.17-21; 6.1). Paul: "***I have begotten you through the Gospel!***" (1 Cor. 4.15); "***I have begotten [my son, Onesimus] in my bonds***" (Philemon 10).

Section III

The Church---an Extension of Christ's Incarnation

The church is therefore more or less an extension of the incarnation of Christ; we embody His life and power. And by embodying His life and power, we embody the life and power of the Father and the Holy Ghost: for **in Christ dwells "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"** (Col. 2.9); and thus when we receive Christ into our hearts, we receive the whole Trinity---the **whole Godhead dwells in us!** This makes the church a living dynamo!

See, when Christ was here in the flesh, He manifested the invisible Father and Holy Ghost, and revealed His preexistent self also, His special status as the eternal *Logos*, who until His incarnation had remained a mystery "*in the bosom of the Father*" (Jn. 1.18; Lk. 10.22; Eph. 1.3-23; 2.12-22; 4-11; Phil. 2.5-11). Christ brought to light that God exists in three persons; or, to put it another way, the one true God is three persons in one eternal and infinite substance---one Godhead!

But then Jesus went back to the Father, and so again was out of sight, having been caught up to the throne of God *far above the heavens!* Notwithstanding, God purposed that the incarnation of Christ would be extended in His church. In other words, He said, "**I'm going away, but you're not:** I'm leaving My church, My body, here, fully **empowered and equipped to be My witnesses.**" While He was here in the flesh, Jesus said, *I am the light of the world;* but He warned, *Yet a little while is the Light with you . . .* (Jn. 8.35), and again, *It is expedient that I go away . . .* So now He declares, "*Ye are the light of the world*" (Mt. 5.14). And again, *For you were sometime in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord*" (Eph. 5.8). Now look a little closer: "*But all things that are reprov'd are*

made **manifest by the light**: for whatsoever does make manifest is light” (v. 13); that is, now in **His church is the light of truth**, and **the church is the highest judiciary of right and wrong on earth** (cf. Lev. 10.10-11; 20.24-26; Mt. 16. 19; 1 Tim. 3.15; 1 Pet. 2.9). Thus, He says, put your light on a candlestick so *all in the house* [all in the world] may know the truth and *see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven!* (Mt. 5.14-16).

Look, **right and wrong are not determined by the Supreme Court of the United States**, nor by the collective opinion of a sinful society; nor by a professing Christianity that is prostituting the Word of God. “*You are my witnesses, saith the Lord*” (Isa. 43.10-12; 44.8). The **church in these last days is the revelatory agent of God**—“*to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God . . . to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known [thru] the church the manifold wisdom of God*” (Eph. 3. 9-10).

But much of the revelation of God and His truth is embodied by the church in a mystery and is thus only spiritually grasped, that is, spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2. 14-16); it is thus revealed through being lived out by the church. The church is thus a body of revelation---a **city set on a hill** in which God is manifested (Mt. 5.14; Rev. 21. 9-11, 21-27). In the Scriptures, **City** is more or less synonymous with **government**, and also **Mountain** is synonymous with **government!** Thus,

“And in this mountain [Zion---the church, God’s government--see Isa. 2.2-4] shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things [a banquet of quality food and drink with rejoicing] . . . And I will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over the nations. He will swallow up death in victory . . . For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest . . .” (Isa. 25.6-7, 8, 10).

“Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified . . . I will also give thee for a light unto the Gentiles, that you may be My salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49.3,6)

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift

up your eyes, and **see**: all they gather themselves together, they **come to thee** . . . The abundance of the sea **shall be converted unto thee**, the forces of the Gentiles **shall come unto thee**" (Isa. 60.1-5).

Three significant points may be gleaned from these passages: 1) Converts are coming to what they see---they come to thy light [vv. 1-3] 2) 'Other sheep' must be converted to the church! [v. 5] 3) Being confronted with uniting with the church creates a crisis situation for the believer! Paul--a proud and zealous Jew under the Old Covenant---had to be converted and come under the church's New Covenant (Acts 9.1-16; Phil. 3.5-6); Believing Jewish priests were converted to the new covenant faith---literally joined the church (Acts 6.7). This was true also with our founding fathers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Richard G. Spurling (*Lost Link*, pp. 6, 48; Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, p. 43); and A. J. Tomlinson (*Answering the Call of God*, pp. 5, 17; *Conflict*, p. 159; *Quest*, pp. 209-215); see my personal experience related in (*VOZ*, pp. 12-14).

Note carefully Paul's words to the Corinthians:

"You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3.2-3).

And Peter's words in the case with the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple:

"Look on us . . . [I don't have any money to give you]; but such as I have . . . In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God . . . And all the people saw him . . . and were filled with wonder and amazement" (Acts 3.2-10).

Section IV

"Called in One Body"

One Church for All!

I believe we need to be bold and plain in our criticism and rejection of denominationalism as an acceptable system of Christian formation.

The very word “denomination” denotes “division” and is equated with sectarianism, being also in almost every instance the result of partisanship and schism, which are “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5.19-21). In fact “division”, “schism”, “sedition”, and “heresy” [which causes division] are explicitly denounced and forbidden in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 1.10-13; 12.25; Rom. 16.17; Gal. 5.20; Titus 3.10; 2 Pet. 2.1).

Denominationalism as a system has been built historically upon prejudiced opinions and unscriptural practices, such as racism, nationalism, tribalism, social status, economic status, cultural biases, and class structures. Hence, there are black churches (e.g., African Methodist Episcopal, Hispanic churches (e.g., Latin American Council of Christian Churches, which separated from the Assemblies of God in 1922), oriental churches [e.g., Asian Christian Charismatic Fellowship], and state churches--e. g., Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Romanism, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, et al., and literally hundreds of associations and organizations built along the lines of race, national and tribal identities, social and cultural biases, and class systems. And these have been set in motion in spite of the plain revelation of the apostles’ teachings that in God’s church “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free” (Col. 3.11).

Racial, cultural, economic, social, political, nationalistic, and tribal prejudices are the result of man’s fall in Eden: and therefore are learned behaviors. Class structures and caste systems were invented by sinful minds. Small children in their innocence show instinctively that these prejudices are the result of man’s fallen nature. Thus Jesus said, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise” (Mt. 21.16) and again, “I thank Thee, O Father . . . because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (11. 25). In fact, where innocent children are not influenced by prejudiced and carnal adults, racial characteristics, tribal distinctions, and economic status mean nothing to them. So they sing: “Red and yellow black and white, they are all precious in His sight.”

It is plain that the church in the Scriptures is one visible and corporate body [as far as it extends throughout the world]---both as it actually existed in the Old and New Testaments and as it is envisioned in the prophetic writings of Jesus and the apostles and the prophets (Mt. 5.14; 16.18-19; Jn. 10.16; 17.20-23; Acts 2.42; 6.1-6; 15.1-16.5; Rom. 16.1; 1 Cor. 7.17; 12.12, 20; 14.33; Eph. 1.10; 2.11-19; 3.6, 9; 1 Thess. 1.1-4; Rev. 19.7-9; Isah. 42.6; 49. 6; 60.3; Amos 9.11-12; et al.); and all of the local churches are ordained to consist together and inhere in that one body (Acts 15.1-16.5; 1 Cor. 16.1, 19; 2 Cor. 8.1; Gal.1.2, 22; et al)-

--to “walk by the same rule”, “speak the same thing”, have “one mind”, speak with “one voice”, and have “the same judgment” in regard to faith [doctrine], government and discipline (Acts 2.42; 6.1-6; 15.1-16.5; Rom. 15. 6; 16.17; 1 Cor. 1.10; Phil 3.16; 2 Thess. 2.15; Isa. 52.8; et al.).

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body” (Col. 3.15)

“And that He might reconcile both [Jews and Gentiles] unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2.16) . . . That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body . . . (3.6, 9).

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith [doctrine], one baptism . . .” (Eph. 4.4-6).

“For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ [i.e., Christ’s body] . . . But now are they many members yet one body” (1 Cor. 12.12, 20).

God’s desire and plan is that all believers come together in one body to reflect the unity of the Trinity in answer to Jesus’ high priestly prayer: “Neither pray I for these [apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be made one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (Jn. 17.20-23).

This oneness has not been fully achieved as of yet (Eph. 1.10; 4.11-16), but is plainly the will of God as shown in the prophetic words of Scripture, and in the vision of the prophets and apostles and Christ. Jesus said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10.16). Note, this fold! This fold, this peculiar people, this holy nation, was first established at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19.5-8; 24.3-7; Deut. 1.19; 4.10, 15-24; Acts 7.38; 1 Pet. 2.9); then, during Christ’s earthly ministry, was brought under the terms of the new covenant (Jer. 31.31-33; Heb. 7.11-28; 8.1-13). Further, in God’s prophetic time, and by His miraculous power, all believers will be drawn together into this one fold (Jn. 10.16; 11.49-52; 17.20-23; Eph. 1.10; 2.11-19; 3.6; 4.11-16; Isa. 60.1-5; et al). Isaiah’s prophecy makes it plain that there is a “thee” and a “they”. “All they gather themselves together, they come to thee!” (60.4).

Section V

The Evils of Denominationalism

In light of the plain teachings and practices of Jesus and the apostles in regard to the church in the Scriptures, denominationalism is obviously an unacceptable mode of Christian formation. This does not mean necessarily that all denominations are evil per se, in fact, there are many denominations that are well intentioned and do much good. Still, however, denominationalism stands in contradiction to God's prophetic purpose to unify His people in one body of Christ; and this visible union is for His own glory and for the mutual benefit of all believers!

Denominationalism transgresses against the divine command that there should be no schism nor division in the church (Rom. 16.17; 1 Cor. 1.10; Gal. 5.19-21). Denominationalism defies the very doctrine and historical narrative of the church in the Bible; which is plainly revealed as one visible body operating under one government and discipline: a church in which all the members are commanded to "walk by the same rule", "mind the same thing", have "the same judgment", "see eye to eye", and to labor together to fulfill Christ's mission in the world.

Further, the church in the New Testament refused to compromise the teachings of Christ and the apostles, being committed to teach and practice "all things whatsoever" that Christ commanded (Mt. 28.19). It also guided and encouraged its members to "live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4.4); and "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2.42).

One of the cardinal doctrines upon which our founding fathers restored the church in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century was that God's church is not a denomination, and that, in fact, denominationalism stands as a "Babylon" of confusion. Reflecting on the fall of the New Testament church and the subsequent development of denominationalism; which stood in lieu of the Bible church, R. G. Spurling wrote:

"[We are] driven to the wall and stand aghast and cry . . . Where did the Church sidetrack? ... Where did the builders fail to build with gold, silver and precious stones and commence to build with wood, hay, and stubble?"

"Oh, what confusion reigns in the various sects of earth today. It could not have been worse on the top of the tower of Babel when God came down and confounded the language of the people. It seems that our tower of Babylon is built and our spiritual

language confounded. Above all this din of strife and confusion I hear Christ praying in John 17:21, that they all may be one. Would He thus have prayed for unity and given a law that would bring discord? Nay, never. But, says some, there is no division of God's people; but our reason says not so. Christ said the world might believe but there is not the unity which Christ wanted by any means but a confusion that He does not want."

Observe; it is easy for one to formulate in his imagination certain theological ideas about the church, and write papers for seminaries and theological societies expressing a number of speculations and endless theories about the church---e. g., the doctrine of a spiritual or "invisible church", the doctrine of apostolic succession, etc.; but when one looks at the church in the Bible, he sees something quite different: namely, many local churches operating together under one visible government, and agreeing together and walking together as one visible body of Christ (Acts 15.1-16.5). The twelve apostles labored together under one visible government; and they taught the same thing; and all of the ministers and members walked by the same rule of faith and practice.

One of the most popular theological fictions today that almost all Christians have bought into is the doctrine of an "invisible church"--a myth that we have elsewhere proven beyond any doubt to be merely the child of "vain imagination." Notwithstanding the absurdity, this errant doctrine has given strength to the development and practice of denominationalism. Many renown leaders in fact have postulated some of the most convoluted notions to justify denominationalism. A world-renown Pentecostal leader, with roots in our own tradition of the faith, even went so far as to commend denominationalism on the basis that the existence of denominations provides a safeguard against institutional pride, and helps prevent "bigotry" and "ecclesiolatry." Now ponder on that logic in light of Jesus' and the apostles' call and prayers for Christian union!

The corresponding evil associated with the invisible church fiction is that it militates against a sincere commitment to the government and mission of the actual visible church of the Bible: for, accordingly, if one is born again into a spiritual or invisible body---which is commonly referred to as the "true church", then it really doesn't matter to which denominational church one may belong; for the "true church", the imagined mystical body of Christ, is simply something realized in the Spirit. Then one might just as well unite with one local evangelical fellowship as another, or be a part of one Pentecostal denomination as another; for what really matters is that you are in the true spiritual church---the one floating around in the universe

somewhere, or everywhere; part of it being in the multiplicity of sects and denominations on earth; part of it being in the independent fellowships located here and there; and part of it being in persons with no affiliation to any visible fellowship and church government at all. It was this logic that our founders and pioneers in the Church of God found to be absurd in the light of the actual church one sees operating in the Gospels and book of Acts; and that is plainly theologized in the apostolic epistles.

Now the evils of denominationalism are many. Besides the obvious disparity in doctrine and discipline among the ever multiplying number of denominations, which prevents God's people from obeying the apostolic commands to "walk by the same rule," "mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16), have "the same judgment," speak the same thing," and to "be perfectly joined together" so "there be no divisions among you" (1Cor.1:10), there is the further evil that denominationalism encourages and harbors errant and corrupt ministers and members; for it is often the case that when one particular denomination reproveth and revokes a minister's credentials, the minister is then joyously welcomed by another denomination, and therewith his sin and disorderliness is white-washed and remains to corrupt his newfound fellowship. And the denomination that excluded him often has meanwhile accepted a minister or member from another denomination who had been reproveth and excluded for some corrupt behavior. And thus denominationalism harbors and promotes an endless number of heresies and moral defilements which spread like a cancer through the whole system.

Further, denominationalism promotes the senseless waste of precious financial resources, for instead of one financial plan for the church, there are a thousand plans implemented and supported. And in the place of one general storehouse there are ten thousand. Consequently, monies that could be used in the advancement of world evangelism and for discipleship and benevolent programs for believers, are rather squandered on the various bureaucracies and political structures.

Finally, the prophetic vision and mission of the church is blurred and distorted by denominationalism; in fact, the prophetic call for visible Christian union is often flatly denied in order to justify and sustain the system of denominations. Thus denominationalism is substituted in lieu of the prophets' and apostles' vision of the one glorious Church of God (S.S. 6.8-10; Isa. 2.2-4; 49.6.22; 60.1-5; Jn.10.16; 11.49-52; 17.20-23; 1 Cor.12.12-28; Eph. 1.10; 1.11-19; 3.6; 4.4-6, 11-16; et al.); and the call to labor together toward that end---toward the union of God's people in one visible body---is also either obstructed or denied!

Two of the most ridiculous arguments used to justify

denominationalism are, first, that it is impossible for Christians to agree on what Jesus and the apostles actually meant in their words and teachings; and, second, that many things that Jesus and the apostles taught are not essential to the Gospel. So they conclude that believers should just “agree to disagree.” Yet Jesus and the apostles call believers to search the scriptures diligently, and to reason together to determine the mind and will of God (Jn. 5.39; 7.16-17; Acts 2.42; 5.28; 15.1-16.5; Rom. 6.17-18; 16.17; 1 Tim. 1.3; 6.1-3; 2 Tim 3.10, 15-16; Heb. 6.1; 2 Jn. 9; et al). In other words, we are called to agree together on the meaning of Jesus’ and apostles’ doctrine, rather than to accept the hopeless and self-defeating idea that we cannot know the truth---that we cannot come together with open Bibles in hand, and pray and seek God together until the Spirit of the Lord enables us to see eye to eye on every word of God; for “man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Mt. 4.4; see also Deut. 6.24-2; 8.1-3).

Believers are commanded in fact “to live by every word of God,” and to proclaim and disciple believers in the “all things whatsoever” that Christ commanded (Mt. 28.19-20; see also Mt. 5.6; Acts 20.27; 2 Tim. 3.14-17; 4.2-5)! Proclaiming and practicing all of the teachings of Christ and the apostles is our commitment in Zion Assembly, and also our message to the nations.

Thomas Jefferson, the celebrated third president of the United States, was a deist and thus denied the miraculous nature of Christ’s birth and other miracles in the Bible. For deists believe that “God” created the world and then left it to run more or less mechanically on its own. There is no room in the deist mind therefore for divine interventions.

Jefferson believed in the historical Jesus, but denied that Jesus was God in the flesh. He thus famously (or infamously) cut out of the New Testament all of the supernatural interventions and miraculous narratives, including all those associated with Jesus’ earthly ministry, leaving us with what Jefferson supposed was Jesus’ true ethical teachings. This “Bible” is now infamously called the “Jefferson’s Bible” (We have a copy of it in the church’s library in Cleveland).

Interestingly, most Christians see the heresy and corruption of the “Jefferson Bible,” yet they don’t seem to be able to see the correspondence of “Jefferson’s Bible” to denominationalism, that is, that the denominational system does the same thing. For one denomination says “this doctrine” is not essential to the Gospel and another says “that doctrine” is not essential to the Gospel. And so these various groups “[make] the Word of God of none effect” in regard to the particular teachings in question. They supplant God’s commandments with their traditions---the same thing that Jesus

accused the Pharisees of doing! (cf. Mt. 15. 6; Mk. 7.13).

Denominational leaders thus teach their constituents to ignore many of the commandments of God. A friend of mine in a certain Pentecostal denomination said to me not long ago in regard to Jesus' teaching on Footwashing, that this practice is not essential to the Gospel and therefore that it was not necessary to observe it. Others deny the power to live a sanctified life, and still others deny the Trinity, the Rapture, the Millennial Reign of Christ and the church on earth, the immortality of the soul, eternal damnation, etc. On the other hand, some denominations teach doctrines that are not in Scripture, that is, they add to the Word of God; for example, some teach a limited atonement (advocating that God decreed from eternity those who would be saved and those who would not be saved), and eternal security ("once-in-grace-always-in-grace"); others teach the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the intercession of "Saints," Purgatory, Papal infallibility, etc.

In view of the great diversity of theological teaching and the confusion that exists in the denominational system, I have proposed in jest that the various denominations might consider producing a multi-denominational Bible---that is, a Bible that would be fitting for all of the various groups: and in reverent sarcasm I suggested further that it might be called "The Great Babylon Bible!" I theorized further that it might turn out to be a rather voluminous book in order to be equitable to all, and to give vent to the pluralism and multiplicity of opinion within the various groups; yet I hypothesized that its core teachings would probably compose fewer pages than the "Jefferson's Bible." In this way a great Ecumenical movement could be advanced that would be more or less inoffensive to all and thus embrace all of humanity; forming a "beautiful" tapestry of "unity in diversity."

So much for such witlessness. It is truly mind-boggling in view of the glaringly visible government and oneness of the church in the Bible, how the great majority of Bible-believing evangelicals accepts so readily denominationalism on one hand, and the fiction of a spiritual or invisible church on the other. Observe, the apostles in the New Testament did not oversee twelve independent mega-churches. Acts 15 and the revelation of the church throughout the Bible manifestly stands in contradiction to such knotty thinking and tortuous interpretation of the Scriptures. Such reasoning is obviously an attempt to excuse, if not justify, denominationalism and the invisible church myth, and enables denominational Christians to relieve themselves of the full responsibilities of fulfilling the great commission: for it is presumed that somehow the mission of the church is being accomplished by all of the various groups and independent churches, and

also the individual Christians who have no group affiliation: and this in spite of their contradictory teachings and practices and in-fighting. The founders and early pioneers of the Church of God considered this rationale to be preposterous---and so do we also today in Zion Assembly.

The basic reason, it seems to me, for the acceptance of the invisible church fiction, on one hand, and the absurdity and confusion of denominationalism on the other, is that it is simply too overwhelming to accept the plain truth of the matter, that in the New Testament there is simply one visible and corporate body of Christ, and that all the apostles and elders were covenant members of that one body. It seems to be just too uncomfortable and disconcerting to accept what Jesus and the apostles so plainly taught and practiced in regard to the Bible church. For if believers would accept on its face the plain teaching and historical narrative of the church in the Bible, then they would immediately be faced with the sobering prospect of having to radically reorder their thinking, and become inconvenienced with the need to reform. This was, in fact, what the founders and early pioneers of the Church of God were faced with in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. They, however, in spite of the consequences---the hardships, deprivations, ridicule, and persecutions---courageously accepted the plain revelation of the church in the Scriptures, then stepped out by faith to restore it, boldly proclaiming, “one church for all!”

Actually the great majority of believers in the world today give little thought to Jesus’ and apostle’ doctrine of the church. It falls our lot in Zion Assembly therefore to labor to create an ecclesiological consciousness in other believers. We need to preach and teach the church! But in order to effectively and convincingly teach and preach it, our ministers in Zion Assembly must themselves see it in the Scriptures, and grasp the prophetic vision! This brings us to our next section.

Section VI

School of Ministry and Bible College

We have put a great deal of emphasis on our School of Ministry since 2005, and in recent years on the need for a more advanced educational program, namely, a Bible college. Perhaps everyone familiar with our School of Ministry program will agree that the school has contributed immeasurably to our unity, stability, and growth in Zion Assembly. The school has virtually unlimited potential as an auxiliary in the church---as an institutional “help” and “government” (1 Cor. 12.28)---in assisting us to

fulfill the church's divine commission to evangelize and teach and disciple all nations!

Still, we realize that the School of Ministry does not afford sufficient time and resources to fully teach and train and prepare our wonderful young men and women for the ministry. So in 2011 we cast a vision for a Bible college. It was made clear then that the college was not to take the place of the School of Ministry, but to serve to educate and train more thoroughly our ministers and young people for the ministry. It was said in the Presiding Bishop's annual address that year,

“The School Ministry falls far short of the kind of thorough teaching and training that is needed to “thoroughly furnish” and equip leaders with the knowledge and skills to enable them to take the church forward into the glory envisioned by the apostles and prophets---a glory in which the church's admirers will one day look on her and say, “Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (S.S. 6:10).

“Nothing short of developing a Bible college and seminary will enable us to offer the kind of thorough-going education needed to set our ministers apart and equip them for the great end-times task of the church---that is, to ground and settle them in the spiritual and biblical mysteries of the Gospel and the church, and to fully equip them for national and international leadership in the sophisticated and complex world of the twenty-first century. We can see perhaps an illustration of this kind of educational experience in Jesus' training of the Twelve Apostles. The Twelve were with him for the most part of three full years, learning from the Master Himself by precept and example. It is not likely that anything less than this kind of intimate and thorough-going teaching and training will suffice for our leaders in the church in these last days. Our international leaders and Bible instructors simply need more time with the students, and also better facilities to adequately instruct and equip them for the end-times ministry of the church.” In this same annual address we introduced the need to construct adequate facilities for the Bible college, joining this proposal with the need to expand our International Ministry Center for more office and storage space. We thus envisioned accomplishing this in one building project, by adding a two-story wing onto our

International Ministries Center.

In order to finance this project, we initiated what we called The Prophets' Plan, based on the account found in 1 Kgs.6.1-5---in which "the sons of the prophets" under Elisha's leadership cut down trees and built them a larger building for their school. In this financial plan, our ministers and members were challenged to give a sum of money equal to a tree that the "sons of the prophets" cut down in their day, hewn to fit the construction, and put in place in their new Bible college which was located along the Jordan River near Jericho. We estimated that a tree as such would cost in modern currency roughly \$800. Our people responded marvelously that year and the next, purchasing more than a hundred trees. Some purchased two or three trees (\$1600-\$2400). All in all more than \$162,000 has come in toward this project.

The rough estimate given at that time to construct the new addition was \$350,000. Since then we have learned that the estimated cost for a two-story addition---with all that is envisioned for the college and office and storage space---would be more than twice that much (closer perhaps to \$900,000)---though a substantial amount of this cost could be removed by our people volunteering their labor and various skills. If we could get to the place to break ground and frame the structure and dry it in, then our brethren could contribute some of their time and labor to hanging drywall, painting, laying brick and flooring, etc.

After we had embarked on raising funds for the Bible college, we were encouraged by some who desired to purchase facilities for a tabernacle. An overture was also made that offered promise that a tabernacle might be donated to us---a facility that would need only some minor reconstruction to meet all of our needs for our International Offices and Bible college. When it looked feasible that obtaining these facilities might actually materialize, we presented a plan in the last Assembly to raise some funds for a tabernacle---thinking that a good offering with the funds already collected for the Bible college might be enough to remodel the building and that we would own it free and clear. Again our people responded wonderfully with pledges and offerings of just over \$100,000---of which approximately \$76,000 has come in so far. And the Assembly agreed also to raise funds on a regular monthly basis and call it "The Tabernacle Fund," and most of our churches have been faithful in contributing to this.

In assessing our current needs and financial capabilities, and consulting some with Brother E.A. McDonald and others, I am ready to propose a plan going forward.

1. It may be financially prudent and productive for the church at this point to pay off the current loan on International Ministry Center (\$389,000). This could be done by merging the current monies we have in the Bible College Fund and the Tabernacle Fund, which when all of the pledges come in will be approximately \$280,000. We would then need only approximately \$110,000 to pay off the present indebtedness! [Note we would only be borrowing from the tabernacle fund; this fund would remain in tact and be applied to the construction of a tabernacle when we get to that point.

2. As soon as the current indebtedness on our International Ministry Center is paid off, we could then make a loan for the construction of the two-story wing addition---which will accommodate the need for international office and storage space, and the Bible college. We could then immediately break ground and go forward with the vision that we first cast in 2011!

3. In order to expedite this plan, we could initiate in this Assembly a fund raising drive to pay off the indebtedness of the International Ministry Center! I am confident that we can do this---and that you will want to do it! If so, we will be ready by the next Assembly to have an exciting two-fold celebration---a mortgage burning of the old indebtedness, and a breaking ground ceremony for the new wing on the International Ministry Center. Meanwhile, we can continue to have our Assemblies in rented facilities, and pursue plans for the internal development of the Bible college.

To assist us to fulfill the vision for the two-story wing addition on the International Ministry Center, we promised last year to design an attractive brochure to promote the Bible college. These brochures can be used by our pastors and churches to raise funds in the communities where our churches exist. If we can agree on these measures, we will give the production of this brochure a priority on our agenda this year; and try to have them ready for distribution as soon as possible.

Section VII

Governing Structure of the Church

In this final section of the address, two important needs in the church should be brought to our attention---namely, a clearer understanding of the administrative structure and ruling authority of the church, and the

need to adopt certain measures to help insure that the government of the church operates in harmony with and in conformity to the will of God.

In our tradition and practice of church government, we have historically swung the pendulum from one extreme to the other---from a democratic-individualistic kind of model of authority (represented in Christian Union from 1886 to about 1909) to a kind of popish-catholic model (represented in the system adopted under the leadership of A.J. Tomlinson from 1910-1943; and which afterward was perpetuated by Tomlinson's son, Milton, until his resignation in 1990.

A few years after Milton had taken office, a major controversy developed over what is the highest authority in the church. Some, led by Grady R. Kent (General CPMA Secretary), believed it was the General Overseer, while others led by J.B. Wright (Superintendent of Bible Training School) believed it was the General Assembly. Milton settled the argument in 1948 by conceding that the office of General Overseer is "subject to the Assembly."

Notwithstanding, Milton, like his father, continued to wield in practice nearly popish-like powers. For example, the Assembly only met one week a year, leaving the General Overseer to act and make decisions unilaterally for the whole church the other 51 weeks.

Perhaps we should hasten here to point out that this rather serious error in regard to the government and administration of the church took nothing away from the otherwise exemplary character of the Tomlinsons---A.J. and Milton; both men were dedicated and zealous servants of the Lord and the church.

Notwithstanding, A.J. Tomlinson's thinking and position on the office of General Overseer in the context of the centralized governmental structure of the church was the fundamental cause for the disruptions in 1919-1920 and 1922-1923. And the function of this office also contributed to the division earlier in 1909-1910---though there were of course other issues that contributed to the divisions, including carnality.

Those who separated themselves from Tomlinson either overreacted and adopted systems that were more or less democratic: for example, the "Original Church of God" led by J.L. Scott in 1919-1920; or else adopted systems that were more or less Episcopal in nature: for example, the "Church of God" led by the Llewellyn-Lee faction in 1922-1923 gradually admitted that their system is Episcopal in nature and function. The democracy of the "Original Church of God" made that organization more or less ineffectual in its fellowship and outreach [it has never amounted to much]; and on the other hand, the Church of God has

grown and now claims over 6 million members; yet this organization does not consider itself to be a divine institution, admitting that it is merely a denomination---a humanly devised system.

In December 1943 Homer Tomlinson led a schism in the church and formed an organization which he called "The Church of God" on the basis of an exalted office at the top of a pyramid of administrative authority. In developing this system, he followed more or less in the steps of his father; but Homer went further than his father in claiming to be the "King of the World."

In 1956-1957 Kent did the same thing, more or less, separating himself with a few hundred followers and naming their organization, "The Church of God--Jerusalem Acres". This group since that time has had several splits, each adopting a system based on an exalted man at the top of an administrative pyramid. Again in 1993, a group of ministers and members in the Church of God of Prophecy, who had for several years identified themselves as "The Concerned," created a schism and chose Robert Pruitt as their exalted General Overseer. They organized in July 1993, and like Homer and Kent before them, adopted the name "The Church of God." This group has since divided a number of times, and to my knowledge all have based their administrative systems on an exalted office at the pinnacle of a pyramid of Episcopal authority.

Beginning about 1986, I began in my capacity as General CPMA Secretary and as a general staff member [having been appointed to these positions in 1982], to raise questions and to challenge the traditional view of the office of General Overseer and the governmental structure of the church. I argued that the church had drifted more or less into an Episcopal form of government, and that the office of General Overseer had become a popish-like position. This led in 1990 to the appointment of an International Committee to study the office of General Overseer. I was appointed as a member of this committee and articulated the major arguments to show the unscriptural and unwise aspects of the office of General Overseer and the system of government correlated to it.

The next year, however, Billy Murray, who had succeeded Milton as General Overseer in 1990, appointed a completely new committee to study further the office of General Overseer. (This was done under pressure from some of his advisors). Most of these new committeemen had little or no insight into the traditional theology and development of the office of General Overseer and the governmental structure built up around it. Consequently, they introduced a whole new governmental structure built on distrust of leadership, which consequently tended to strap or neuter inspirational and gifted leaders. They also distorted [either unwittingly

or purposively] my original thoughts on the plurality of leadership and consequently formed a government that is a cross between a Presbyterian and Episcopal type of system. What was lost in the shuffle and confusion was anointed and gifted leaders. In most cases, the chief seats of the church were filled by men and women who were not divinely called nor qualified for such high positions. And those who were spiritually gifted did not have the freedom to act under inspiration and the power of their anointing. In effect, what was ultimately lost was the sovereign headship of Christ over the church!

In Zion Assembly since 2004 we have made some remarkable improvements and progress in regard to the administrative and governing structure of the church. First and foremost, every effort has been (and is being) made to recognize and exalt the sovereign headship of God over the church. This we believe is the key to “theocratic government”---to build a governing system through which God in Christ and through the Holy Ghost essentially rules (Lk. 9.33-35; Jn. 14.26-28; 15.26; 16.7-15; Acts 15.28; 1 Cor. 2.3-16; et al).

Notwithstanding, we have noticed that God also rules instrumentally through His church. This is plainly seen in the Scriptures, not only theologically but in the practical acts of the church (cf. Mt. 16.19; 18.15-20; Mk. 13.34; Jn. 15. 27; Acts 1.15-26; 6.1-7; 15.1-16.5; 1 Cor. 12.28; et al). The government is “upon His shoulder”, that is, it is in and with Christ’s body, the church (Isa. 2.2-4; 9.6; Mt. 16.19; Mk. 13.34; Lk. 19.13; 2 Cor. 3.5-6; 5.18-20; 6.1; et al).

Some of the improvements made in Zion Assembly since 2004 to conform more perfectly to theocratic government are: 1) we have modified the title of the highest office in the government, calling it the office of Presiding Bishop [more precisely the position of Presiding Bishop]. This was done in order to modify the traditional exalted view of the office of General Overseer. Scripturally, the Presiding Bishop holds the same office as every other bishop, only he is positioned as the “chief” or “first among equals” in the administration of the church. 2) we have emphasized the biblical qualifications of the man for the position; particularly noting that he should have a proven record of faithfulness, stability, and experience, and be manifestly gifted and anointed to govern or rule in the church (Matthew 25:15; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:7-16). 3) we have limited the term of office to four years; yet we have left the tenure open for the same man to serve multiple terms if “it seems good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.” 4) we have endeavored to discourage thinking and actions that tend to exalt too highly the man holding the office, emphasizing that the one selected is appointed finally by the church, rather than unilaterally by the

Holy Ghost [see Mt. 10:25-27; Acts 1:21-26; 15:1-4, 22, 25, 28, 30, 33-40]. Notwithstanding, it has been emphasized also that the church should seek for the guidance of the Spirit in the whole selection process; and feel assured that the selection is pleasing to the Lord. In fact, the Presiding Bishop as well as other chief leaders should be “esteemed very highly in love for their works sake” (1 Thess. 5:13). 5) we have emphasized that the Presiding Bishop, as well as other leaders in the church, is a servant; and therefore should proceed in his work with lowliness and meekness, not as a lord or master (see Mk. 10:42-45; Lk. 22:24-27; Jn. 13:14-17; Phil. 2:3-8; Eph. 3:8; 1 Pet.5:2-6). While God gifts and empowers leaders in the church to be strong and just, as well as gentle and wise; there is a great difference between leadership and dictatorship, between the pastoral spirit and the spirit of lordship (cf. Mk. 10.42; 13.24; Lk. 22.25; 1 Cor. 3.10; 1 Thess. 2.4-12; Hebrews 13.7, 17; 1 Pet.5.3).

It remains, however, that while we have made some progress in our understanding of theocratic government, we have not arrived at the wisest and perfect biblical form of it, particularly in regard to the position of Presiding Bishop and the governing structure of the church. For example, it seems to me that the Presiding Bishop still acts with too much unilateral authority in making universal appointments and setting the agenda in general for the whole church worldwide. Granted, we should proceed cautiously in correcting any weakness in this regard, lest we overreact and err in the other direction---that is, in swinging the pendulum again to the other extreme: for, after all, God has set officers in the church and given them authority and inspiration to make decisions and to appoint other leaders to important positions in the church (see Mk. 13:34; Acts 6:2-6; 13:1-4; 15:22, 25, 30, 33-40; 19:22; 20:17-18; 1 Cor.4:17; 12:28; 2 Cor.8:18, 23; 9:3; 12:17-18; Eph. 6:22). In fact, God ordains leaders to act with great authority; therefore we should feel the weight of our offices and positions, and seek God for wisdom, humility, patience, anointing, soberness, gravity, strength, spiritual empowerment, and direction---in a word, the Mind of Christ!

The scriptures that we have cited above show that God’s church has a peculiar form of government which is neither Congregational nor Presbyterian nor Episcopal, nor a Monarchical or Popish system. It is a government that ultimately is formed and operates under the authority and inspiration of God, through His Word and Spirit! Christ is the head of the church, and presently, between His Ascension recorded in Mk 16:19 and the Rapture foreseen in 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15.51-53, He rules the church through the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Ghost. And the highest gifts in the church are the God-called and God-gifted ministers

(Mk. 13:34; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 13:7, 17). Yet the ministers of God's church do not act as an Episcopal elite but rather in harmony with the whole body of the church (Acts 15:12, 22, 25-28): for all of the members are potentially Spirit-filled and guided by the same Spirit (Jn. 14:16-18; 15:26-27; 16:13-16; Acts 15:28; 1 Cor. 12.15-30). It should always be borne in mind that "the government is upon [Jesus'] shoulder" (Isa. 9:6-7), that is, the government is with His body, the church. The ministers are part of the body; they do not stand above it or over against it. We thus call this form of government "theocratic" [a word that means "God-ruled" or "God-governed"]. The church is thus a theocracy.

Again, however, our old BTI books rightly defined theocratic government as "Government ruled by Spirit-filled men." God rules in His kingdom directly, but He rules in His church instrumentally, that is, through spiritually-gifted ministers and members who are recognized by the church as such (Acts 15.28; Rom. 16.1, 7; 1 Thess. 2.4-12; 5.12-13; 1 Tim. 5.17; Heb. 13.7, 17; et al).

I am proposing, therefore, that the Assembly Business Committee recommend to the General Assembly a modification in the governmental structure of the church, namely, the adoption of an Executive Council or International Administrative Council to interact with the Presiding Bishop in the general oversight of the church. The Executive Council might be composed of seven members including the Presiding Bishop. The men selected to fill these positions could be nominated by the Presiding Bishop, and appointed finally by the General Assembly. They should also be examined [vetted] by the standing Executive Council before being presented to the General Assembly. Consideration should be given also to the international nature of the church in making these appointments.



International Appointments 2015-2016

International Executive Council

[This council was nominated by the Presiding Bishop and was unanously approved by the General Assembly]

Wade H. Phillips, Scott E. Neill, L.W. Carter, Bruce Sullivan
Miguel Garcia, Sr., Joe Steele, Joel Brooks

General Field Secretary	Miguel Garcia, Sr.
World Mission Secretary.....	Scott E. Neill
General Treasurer.....	Vicki Neill
Communications/Media Ministries.....	Scott E. Neill
Shepherding Ministries Director.....	Byron Harris
School of Ministry Director.....	Bruce Sullivan
Ladies Ministries Director.....	Kim Erwin
Sunday School Director.....	Donna Pounders
Sunday School Literature Editor.....	Todd McDonald
Youth Ministries Director.....	Miguel Garcia, Jr.
Children's Ministries Director.....	Cheryl McDonald
Camping Coordinator/Advisor.....	Miguel Garcia, Jr.
<i>Voice of Zion/SYNC Booster</i>	Glenda Major
Office Assistant/ <i>Voice of Zion</i> Lay-out & Design.....	Marie Crook

Assembly Business Committee

Chairman: Joseph Steele
Byron Harris, Scott E Neill,
L.W. Carter, Zachary Snyder, Ray Dickson
Jim Orange, Miguel Garcia, Sr.

Doctrine Committee

Chairman: Bruce Sullivan
Tom Brown, Rick Ferrell, Tod Deakle
Joel Brooks, James Hargraves, Jimmy Johnson,
Trevor Graves

Construction Committee

Chairman: Wade H. Phillips
Ricky Graves, E.A. McDonald, Lynn Jones, L.W. Carter,
Todd Erwin, Tod Deakle, Scott E. Neill, Cecil Ponders,
Jim Orange, Ricky Graves

General Trustees

Wade H. Phillips, E.A. McDonald
Scott E. Neill, L.W. Carter, Todd Erwin

States Overseers

North Carolina, South Carolina.....	Bruce Sullivan
Georgia, North Alabama.....	James Hargraves
Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio Pennsylvania, Maryland.....	Tom Brown
Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois.....	Rick Ferrell
Tennessee.....	Joseph Steele
Mississippi, South Alabama, Louisiana.....	Joel Brooks
Idaho, Wyoming.....	L.W. Carter
Colorado, Kansas, Missouri.....	L.W. Carter
Oregon, Washington.....	L. W. Carter
California, Nevada.....	Miguel Garcia, Sr.
Texas.....	Samuel Hernandez

National Overseers:

Argentina	Jorge Estroz
Bangladesh	Boonyong Bureenok
Benin	Amos Agbonifo
Burundi	Edward Agar
Cambodia	Boonyong Bureenok
Cameroon	Eyong Eric Eyong
Chile	Javier Perez Diaz
Dominican Republic	Sandraud Pierre
Democratic Republic of Congo	Edward Agar
England	Wade H. Phillips
Ethiopia	Teketel Zewde Wasse
Ghana	David Dordah
Guatemala	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
Haiti	Santainel Hostelus
Honduras	Jonaton Hernandez Ramirez
India (Mid-east)	Padma Rao Talari
India South	Joseph Binoy
India Central	John Babu Rao Ganta
Indonesia	Boonyong Bureenok
Ivory Coast	Amos Agbonifo
Kenya	Elijah Wafula
Kenya South	Joanes Okal Oboo
Liberia	Amos Agbonifo
Malawi	Mariele Dzuwa
Mexico	Danny Ramirez
Mozambique	Mariele Dzuwa
Myanmar (Burma)	Boonyong Bureenok
Nicaragua	Freddy Garcia
Nigeria	Yomi Adekunle
Paraguay	Jorge Estroz
Pakistan	Boonyong Bureenok
Peru	Yum V Munoz Quispe
Philippines	Domingo Resurreccion
Rwanda	Edward Agar
South Africa	David November

South Sudan	Elijah Wafula
Tanzania	Edward Agar
Thailand	Boonyong Bureenok
Togo	Amos Agbonifo
Uganda	Maurice Ogada Odede
United States	L.W. Carter
Uruguay	Jorge Estroz
Zambia	David Gomba
Zimbabwe	David Gomba

Churches/ Pastors/ Missions
United States

Anaheim, CA.....	Juan Avila
Arroyo Grande, CA.....	Eddie Gill
Bayou La Batre, AL.....	Tod Deakle
Browder, KY.....	Daren Childers
Chestnut Hill, TN	Byron Harris
Cleveland, TN.....	Kim Erwin
Colton, CA.....	Daniel Urcadiz
Columbus, MS.....	Ricky Graves
Barrackville, WV.....	Jerry Reel
Dallas, OR.....	Kim Merrill
Fort Morgan, CO.....	Nazario Ornelas, Jr.
Ft. Oglethorpe, GA.....	James Hargraves
Fresno, CA.....	Alex Garcia
Fries, VA.....	Rocky Dalton
Goshen, IN.....	Zachary Snyder
Greenville, SC.....	Todd McDonald
Hartsville, TN.....	Ray Sanders
Hesperia, CA.....	Jose Lozano
Idamay, WV.....	Tom Brown
Jacksboro, TN.....	Ray Dickson
Karnes City, PA.....	Brenda Reitler
Kosciusko, MS.....	Billy Summerlin
Lompoc, CA.....	Bill Solomon
Lompoc, CA (FCI).....	Vicente Garcia
Lompoc, CA (UOP).....	Vicente Garcia
Madera, CA.....	Juan Lopez
Oil City, PA.....	Majorie Gifford
Okolona, MS.....	Chase Lamour
Oxnard, CA.....	Noemy Argueta
Pelzer, SC.....	Bruce Sullivan
Pulaski, TN.....	William Crook
Rialto, CA.....	German Bor
Roanoke, VA.....	J.J. Davis
Rubidoux, CA.....	Gilberto Zavala, Sr

Salisbury, MD.....	Buddy Quillen
Salton City, CA.....	Tatima Valadez
San Jose, CA.....	Jorge Carrasco
San Jacinto, CA.....	Guillermo Amnador
Scottsville, KY.....	Rick Ferrell
Smithfield, WV.....	Lee Brown
Taylors, SC.....	Andrea Faye Davis
Van Nuys, CA.....	Miguel Garcia, Sr.
Ware Shoals, SC.....	Greg Kelly
West Mobile, AL.....	Joel Brooks
Wilmington, NC	Robert Llanaza

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Bay Area, CA.....	Eddie Gill
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Flintville, TN.....	Roger Barbour
Gainesville, MO.....	Jerry Tingler
Hartsville, SC.....	Jimmy Johnson
Highgrove, CA.....	Pete Sarry
Los Angeles.....	Raul Carrasco, Sr
Placentia, CA.....	Eswin DeLeon
Santa Ana, CA.....	Wilson Perez
San Jacinto, CA.....	Guillermo Amador

International Churches/Missions

Nation	Churches	Missions
Argentina	5	3
Bangladesh	3	3
Benin	5	2
Burundi	6	3
Cambodia	2	5
Cameroon	3	2
Chile	13	2
Dominican Republic	14	3
Democratic Republic of Congo	23	6
England	1	0
Ethiopia	1	1
Ghana.	1	0
Guatemala	11	15
Haiti	305	70
Honduras	15	4
India Mid-East	14	15
India Central	15	2
India South	30	4
Indonesia	1	0
Ivory Coast	1	1
Kenya	25	4
Kenya South	9	4
Liberia	1	0
Malawi	88	42
Mexico	4	3
Mozambique	23	5
Myanmar	1	12
Nicaragua	4	1
Nigeria	22	2

Pakistan	1	0
Paraguay	1	0
Peru	1	0
Philippines	7	9
Rwanda	1	1
South Africa	3	5
South Sudan	5	3
Tanzania	50	15
Thailand	20	6
Togo	7	10
Uganda	3	3
United States	45	11
Uruguay	1	1
Zimbabwe	3	2
Zambia	0	1

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794

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In addition to these statistics, the church has 1018 ministers and 86,416 members in a total of 45 nations. Some members exist in nations where no church has yet been established.

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 Sanchez, Pedro Danilo
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Bolanio, Adejane J.
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Daudi, Lensa
Davis, Andrea Faye
Dorkas, Joseph
Dorkas, Oyediran Tunrayo
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Elizzbeth, Llesanmi Omodasola
Elizabeth, Alabi Opeyemi
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Faida, Rebecca
Fayoke, Asummo Omotola
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Folasade, Ajayi Cecilia
Folasade, Osobu Paulina
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Grace, Sanni Iyabo
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Jandura, Memory D.
Jones, Pamela Lynn
Joselyn, Treva
Kimble, Shirley
Michael, Issac
McKee, Ofelia
Mojirayo, Taiwo Agnes
Obegoriola, Alarape
Obuyo, Damaris
Ogonda, Joyce Adhiambo
Okumu, Elly
Olajumoko, Olaiya Olanike
Oluwa, Adebawale Janet
Omotunde, Durodola Adepeju
Owira, Grace Auma
Periera, Rebecca

Pounders, Donna
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Reitler, Brenda
Rivera, Barbara
Romo, Reina
Sadler, Florence
Sirrio, Janel
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ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following has been accepted by the General Assembly in proper order that is by agreement in one accord.

INTRODUCTION

Zion Assembly Church of God is a Spirit-filled body of believers who have covenanted themselves together with God to accept and obey the teachings of Christ and His apostles (Exodus 19:3-6; John 14:6, 8; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:24-32). This commitment is firm, even in this present time of apostasy, when so many are “falling away” and “[departing] from the faith” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2; 3:1-12; Jude 3-19).

The ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to live and worship together in this “most holy faith,” to walk in truth, to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” “and to cultivate among themselves the graces of love and holiness.” They seek for the perfections of Christ in their fellowship, and by His grace and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ so completely that when He appears they shall be like Him (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:1-17; 1 John 3:2).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivate mutual love and care within the household of God, the ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to labor for the unity of all believers, until all “see eye to eye,” “speak the same thing,” “walk by the same rule” (Isaiah 52:8; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 3:16). In this manner, they seek to carry forward the apostolic vision: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Zion Assembly has further obligated itself to publish and to proclaim the full Gospel into all the world in obedience to Christ’s commission to the church (Matthew 28:19).

Note: The articles on *Man, Sin, Works of the flesh, Christian Perfection, Perseverance, and Antichrist* have been added to this edition of the *Abstract of Faith*. They were accepted by the 8th Annual General Assembly in proper order on September 10, 2011.

Church Membership

Membership in Zion Assembly Church of God is open to all believers whose testimony is evidenced by the fruit of the new birth, and who are willing to covenant themselves together with Christ and the church to walk in the light of the Gospel. Candidates become members by the following solemn obligation:

Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you will accept this Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and agree to walk together as one body in the light of the Gospel to the best of your knowledge and ability?

In response to this covenant formula the candidate answers, “I will by the grace of God.” The minister then lays hands on the new member and offers prayer for divine guidance and strength; the congregation follows with an affectionate welcome and extends the right hand of fellowship.

Prominent Teachings in the Scriptures

Note: *The following statements are not meant to form a creed, or to be thought of as an exhaustive statement of beliefs upon which the church is built. They are simply an abstract of some of the important and fundamental teachings and principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures, which form an essential part of the church’s Rule of Faith.*

The Trinity—The Bible teaches that the one eternal God exists in three persons: namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Three have distinct identities, yet they form one undivided Godhead, subsisting in the same nature (Romans 5:5; 15:16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 5:19; John 3:5; Ephesians 2:18; Titus 3:5). The Father is God (Ephesians 4:6), the Son is God (John 1:1-3; 10-1; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8), the Holy Spirit is God (John 14:17; 16:13; Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10), yet there are not three gods, but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three persons of the divine Trinity work together in perfect unity for the salvation of man (John 3:5; 6:44; 14:6, 16, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and God’s “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Through Him, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received into glory, and now sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Acts 7:55; 1 Timothy 3:16). Through Him alone men have access unto the heavenly Father. It is through His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross that we are saved. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). He is the spotless “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He is also the head of the church and the savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

The Bible—The Holy Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—reveal God and His will for man. They are inspired, inerrant, infallible, and unchangeable (2 Timothy 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:16-21). The truths of the Scriptures are revealed by prophecy, type, precept, and example, illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit. The teachings of the Bible, particularly in the light of the New Testament, are the Church’s final rule for faith, practice, government, and discipline (Acts 2:42; 2 Peter 3:1, 2). Walking in the light of God’s Word is the guiding principle and commitment of Zion Assembly Church of God. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The Church—The church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Exodus 19:5-8; 24:3-8; Psalm 119:57; John 14:15; 17:6, 8, 14; 1 Peter 2:9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God’s people (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:7; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and “false brethren” (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (John 3:3-8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13). One is “born” into the kingdom; he/she is “added to the church” (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:47). The church will succeed to proclaim the gospel into all the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16); will be perfected “with the washing of water by the word,” and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Ephesians 5:26, 27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church for the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 16:4, 5). The purpose of the General Assembly is

to promote unity and fellowship among the saints, to search the Scriptures for additional light and understanding, and to resolve differences in interpretations which tend to be divisive among the ministers and churches. All matters of faith, government, and discipline are discussed before the entire body of the church assembled and resolved in one accord with the manifest approval of the Spirit (vv. 12, 22, 28). This form and order is based on the precedent: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts 15:28). All male members in good standing have an active voice in the Assembly. Women are a vital part of the church's life and ministry. In matters dealing with church authority, however, they voice their opinions through their husbands and church elders (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-17).

Man---Man is unique in all of God's creation. Only he was created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:27; 5:2; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 1 Corinthians 11:7; Ephesians 4:24), and therefore man has a unique relationship to God. His nature is composed of soul, spirit, and body (Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12), though "soul" and "spirit" may be fully distinguishable only to the Spirit of God (Hebrews 4:12 and compare John 12:27 and 13:21). Of all the living things on earth, only man has God-consciousness and an immortal soul (Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:45). He thus has an everlasting destiny in heaven or hell, with eternal life or everlasting death and damnation (Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:4-6; 21:7, 8). He was created by divine decree in one day; he did not therefore evolve, nor does he exist by chance. Moreover, the uniqueness of man is seen in that he was given authority in earth over all living things including animal life (Genesis 1:26, 28). This uniqueness is partly why the Psalmist exults, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), and why he asks, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (8:3, 4).

Man was created *male* and *female* (Genesis 1:27; 2:18, 21-25) in order that the genders might come together under divine institution as husband and wife (2:21-25; Mark 10:6-9) to procreate the race of man---to "be fruitful, and multiply" (v. 28; 9:1)---and to provide comfort and companionship for one another (Proverbs 18:22; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Ephesians 5:22-25, 28-31; 1 Peter 3:7). This is the divine order for man, making *fornication* (pre-marital sex, homosexuality, incest, bestiality) and *adultery* (unfaithfulness in marriage, and divorce and remarriage while one's first companion is still living) vile corruptions of God's expressed will and design for man (Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:28; Mark 10:7-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 39).

Included in man's God-consciousness is an innate sense of morality---of moral right and wrong---and a sense of accountability for his behavior (Acts 17:28-30; Romans 1:19, 20; John 1:9). Moral responsibility and accountability are predicated on the nature of man's God-consciousness and free will, that is, his ability to choose and act in obedience or disobedience to God's revealed will (Joshua 24:15-25; 1 Kings 18:21; Ezekiel 20:39; Luke 13:35; John 3:36; Revelation 22:17).

Man was created holy, in the moral image of God (Genesis 1:27, 31; 5:1, 2), but his fall in Eden plunged him into sin and corruption. His fall was predicated on the fact that he has free will. Adam chose, under the influence of Satan's seductive power, to disobey God. Because man is a race, unlike the angels, sin was transmitted to all men through Adam's transgression (Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21). His redemption and reconciliation to God was made possible by the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 5:15-19).

Christ is the second man Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45). He is therefore called the Son of Man as well as the Son of God (Matthew 12:8; 16:13; Luke 1:35; John 1:14; Colossians 1:15, 19; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8). In Him God and man exist in one person (John 1:1-3, 14; Philippians 2:5-8). The first Adam failed and plunged man into sin; the second man Adam, Christ, lived triumphantly over sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15), making it possible for us also to triumph over sin and be saved (Isaiah 53:4-9; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:21-24). He that believes and repents and is born again shall be saved (John 3:3-8, 16; 10:28). Christ is the perfect man, and all men can be made perfect in and through Him, our redeemer and sanctifier (Hebrews 2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12).

Sin---Sin is a real and expressed evil. It originated in Satan in heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14; John 8:42; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:7-9), and in man in the Garden Eden when Adam rebelled and transgressed against God's explicit command and ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6, 17). Sin is thus willful rebellion against the law of God (Exodus 35:19; Psalm 51:3; Hebrews 4:7; 10:26; 13:18; 2 Peter 3:5) It may be defined as *lawlessness* (Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:9), *transgression* (Psalm 119:158; Ephesians 2:1; 1 John 3:4), *disobedience* (Romans 8:7; Titus 1:16; 3:3; 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 2:7,8), and *rebellion* (Psalm 78:8; Lamentations 1:18; 3:14; Daniel 9:5). Sin exists also in unbelief (John 3:18; Titus 1:15; 1 John 2:22-24; Revelation 21:8).

Unlike the angels, mankind is a race; thus when the first man Adam sinned, sin was transmitted to all men through him (Romans 5:12). All men are therefore born with the sin nature and thus with the propensity

to sin (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Ephesians 2:3; 1 John 1:8). None are exempt, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Sin exists in two forms: 1) in the very being of man, in his rebellious nature (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 2:3); 2) in actual acts of transgression (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). Sin is conceived in the heart and is expressed in thought (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19), word (Matthew 5:22), and/or deed (Romans 1:32).

Death and everlasting damnation is the penalty that God imposed upon mankind for sin (Romans 6:23). The Good News is that the shedding of Jesus’ blood, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection provided the remedy for sin (Romans 5:15-19; Hebrews 9:22). By grace, through faith in Christ, transgressions are forgiven and the “old man,” the sin nature, is crucified.

In justification, actual transgressions are pardoned and washed away (Romans 3:28-30; 5:1; Ephesians 2:5; 13-18); in sanctification, the very nature of sin rooted in man’s heart is uprooted and removed (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Colossians 3:3-10). The sanctified believer is thus made free from sin (John 8:36).

Works of the Flesh---The “works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (Galatians 5:19-21). The apostle Paul sets forth three general categories of carnality [“works of the flesh”]: 1) sensual and sexual sins, which include adultery, fornication, immorality, impurity, unfaithfulness, and lewdness of all kinds, which may be committed before and/or during marriage; 2) sins of spiritual deception and demonic seduction through false religion, which include idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, necromancy, magic, enchantments, palm readings, superstitious rituals of paganism, and new age teachings and practices; 3) sins that stem from a malicious and spiteful spirit, which include hatred, enmities, wrath, strife, jealousy, uncontrolled anger, murders [actual or harbored in the heart], bitter disputes, dissensions, factions, heresies, seditions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and ranting and rioting.

The list of the “works of the flesh” given by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5 is not a complete list of sins. There are many more subtle works of the flesh and of the spirit that are not so “manifest” or obvious, including greed, covetousness, stealing, extortion, gossip, slander, whisperings, and evil speaking. The apostle thus adds to his list of sins

the words, “and such like.” His point in bringing these sins to the attention of the church, and identifying them in particular, is to make us more conscious of the destructive nature of sin, and to set forth God’s remedy for sin in Christ. Deliverance from the powerful works of the flesh cannot be obtained through the law and practices of religion, but only “through sanctification of the Spirit” and the Word of God (Galatians 5: 16-18, 24; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). The sanctifying power of Jesus’ blood received by faith through the Holy Spirit is the remedy! The “old man” must be crucified in order for the believer to be made free from and victorious over sin (John 8:36; Romans 6:6; 8:1-6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 2:11, 12). Further, the old man is kept crucified by our daily consecration and “walk in the Spirit” according to the Word of God (Galatians 5:16, 25; 2 Timothy 2:21-23)

Salvific Work of Grace

Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just, and good (Isaiah 6:1; John 6:44; Acts 2:37, 38). True repentance can be made only through the work of the Spirit in conviction (John 16:7-15; 1 Corinthians 12:3; see also John 8:32; 14:6).

Repentance is the act of confessing one’s sins before God, being willing to forsake them and to turn to Christ with all of one’s heart, mind, soul, and strength. True repentance can be made only in the spirit of “godly sorrow” (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10). Repentance is manifested by certain fruit “meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:2). The act of repentance should be followed by water baptism [see below] (Mark 1:4, 5, 15; Luke 13, 3; Acts 3:19; 5:30, 31; 1 John 1:9). Repentance is a prerequisite experience for justification.

Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God. It is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is the act of God in forgiving the transgressions of a penitent sinner. Justification is the result of repentance and faith (Romans 8:1, 2; 3:23-26; 1 John 1:7). The genuinely justified person has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1, 2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration (Born Again) is the act of God in creating new life in the heart of the believer through the Holy Ghost. It is a definite and instantaneous experience. Man is dead in sins and trespasses through Adam, and can be quickened or regenerated only through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5; Colossians 2:13, 14; John 5:24). Regeneration is the same as the new birth. “Born Again” is another term for regeneration. The result of this experience is that the believer becomes a child of God. It is through this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23). The new birth is a prerequisite condition for the experience of sanctification.

Fruit of the Spirit is of divine origin. It is the very life of God poured into the heart of the regenerate believer. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22, 23). We are admonished in the Scripture to walk in the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11).

Divine Healing is provided for all in the atonement. Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross provides healing for the whole man, including his body. Divine healing is effected by faith without the aid of medicine or surgical skills. In cases where one is healed through the assistance of physicians, medicine, herbs, etc., God is still to be praised: for it is God who heals in any case. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:2, 3; Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 8:17; 2 Peter 2:24; James 5:14-16).

Subsequent Grace

Sanctification is the second definite work of grace wrought in the regenerated heart by faith. In sanctification, the carnal nature is eradicated (“the old man is crucified”) so that the believer no longer has the inclination or propensity to sin; that is, in sanctification the desire to sin is removed (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12, 13; Romans 6:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). Sanctification enables the believer to bring his/her body under subjection to Christ, and to live a life consistent with the spirit of holiness and in accordance with the Word of God. Sanctification is a prerequisite condition for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Holiness is the result of sanctification. It is a state of grace and purity

in which perfect Christlikeness is desired and pursued (Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:2). God has called us unto holiness (Thessalonians 4:7). “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15, 16). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14; see also Luke 1:74, 75; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Titus 2:11, 12; Eph. 1:4; 4:13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27; see also Psalm 45:9-13).

Christian Perfection---The perfection of the believer is the call and aim of the Gospel (Matthew 5:48; John 8:36; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Colossians 1:22; Hebrews 6:1; James 1:4; Jude 24). Redemption anticipates purification and perfection, and this state of grace is to be attained “in this present world” (Titus 2:11-14). Christ gave His life and shed His blood to make believers perfect in Him (Hebrews 10:1, 14; 13:21), both individually and corporately in the body of Christ (Matthew 5:48; John 17:20-23; 2 Corinthians 13:9; Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 1:10; 2:14-22; 4:11-16; 5:27; Revelation 19:7, 8). This glorious experience has therefore been called “Christian perfection,” for it is attained in and through the grace of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The grace of perfection therefore glorifies God, not man.

It is important to understand that Christian perfection is not the same as absolute perfection: for only God is absolutely perfect (Exodus 9:14; 1 Samuel 2:2; 1 Chronicles 17:20; Job 11:7; Mark 10:18). Thus Christian perfection is defined and explained in the Scriptures in ethical terms, rather than in legal terms; that is, Christian perfection is a state of grace attained through a perfect relationship with God. As such, it is rooted in and springs forth from “perfect love” (Matthew 5:44-48; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17). Love is in fact the “bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14). Christian perfection is therefore essentially grounded in love and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit (1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 15:17; 16:9; 19:9; Romans 5:5; Hebrews 10:22). Accordingly, a believer may err in mental judgments, be forgetful, be sick or afflicted physically, have moments of anguish and perplexity, etc., and yet not be charged with sin or willful rebellion and disobedience against God’s will and law (Romans 8:33; Ephesians 4:26; Hebrews 10:26). The human condition therefore does not necessarily militate against the saint’s perfect relationship with God and with his fellow man.

There is, moreover, growth in sanctification and in perfection unto a more glorious state of perfection in Christ. Thus the saint is transformed ever more perfectly by the Spirit of God into the image of Christ “from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Sanctified believers are admonished to continue to “perfect holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). The Good News is “we know that, when [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2; Ephesians 5:27).

Perseverance---Perseverance reveals the grace imparted to a believer to live in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in spite of any opposition or hardship that may challenge his Christian faith (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Although the word “perseverance” is used only once in some translations of the Bible (for example, Ephesians 6:18 in the King James Version) there are many other words that are closely related to it, such as *abide* (John 15:4-5, 7-9), *endure* (Matthew 10:22), *continue* (John 8:31-32), *steadfast* (Hebrews 3:14, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 2 Peter 3:17), *patience* (Luke 21:19), *overcome* (Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). In each of these references, the words clearly imply a fight of faith for the follower of Christ. Therefore, perseverance is not an act of God for a believer, but the action of the believer in response to the command of Christ to continue in His Word and grace.

In considering perseverance, two questions immediately present themselves: 1) what is God’s role? 2) what is man’s role? Philippians 2:13 says that God works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. But how is this work accomplished in us? It is by His grace. Paul shows that it is by grace that our walk with Him begins (Ephesians 2:8-9), and in another place that this same grace teaches us that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” and to “look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13). Further, God’s grace is able to keep us faultless with joy (Jude 24). It is important to understand, however, that man must respond in faith and accept the grace He has provided for him (Romans 10:9-10). It is at the crisis moment of transforming faith that man begins his walk with God; but just as man turns to God for saving grace, he must also seek Him for sustaining grace (Matthew 7:7-11, 21-27; Luke 8:15; 11:28; John 14:15, 23; Jude 24). Man’s perseverance depends on his continued desire to walk with the Lord (John 8:31; Colossians 1:23; Jude 21). This is shown further by the original New Testament word, *sozo*, that signifies “to save.” This word is expressed in three tenses: “I am saved,” “I am being saved,”

“I shall be saved.” Thus, man must be willing to continue to “press” into the kingdom of God, and to persevere at all costs in order to be finally saved (Luke 9:23; 16:16).

The commandment to persevere---endure, abide---in Christ carries eternal consequences. The inheritance of eternal life hinges on the Christian’s decision to continue to seek the grace of God and to walk in obedience to His Word. We must be “willing and obedient” (Isaiah 1:19) and “willing to live honestly” (Hebrews 13:18). According to the apostle John, if an individual does not remain in the doctrine of Christ, he does not have God, and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life (2 John 9; 1 John 5:12); therefore the judgment for those who do not persevere is eternal damnation and separation from God (Matthew 25:41-46, Hebrews 10:26-27).

Practical Graces

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken, or the satisfying of one whom otherwise has been wronged (Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8, 9). This act alone does not save, but it gives evidence of a heart that has truly repented. Restitution glorifies the grace of God and supports the testimony of the believer. It also gives opportunity to reconcile with those who have been wronged. It is the fulfillment of the law of love (Romans 13:8). Some restitutions should be made only with great care and with pastoral guidance, in order to avoid further offense or injury.

Sabbath means rest. Observance of the Sabbath in the Old Testament (the seventh day) was instituted to point to the believer’s spiritual rest in Christ under the New Covenant. The Old Testament requirement to keep the Sabbath holy is now superseded by the commandment: “Be ye holy,” for in Christ the believer is enabled and required to live holy every day. Sunday is not the Sabbath, but is a day set aside by the church to give special attention to the worship of God and the fellowship of the saints (Hosea 2:11; Colossians 2:16, 17; Romans 14:5, 6; Hebrews 4:1-11).

Meats and Drinks---The prohibitions against certain meats and drinks in the Old Testament were not extended into the New Testament church. These ceremonial aspects of Mosaic legislation were “nailed to the cross” of Christ, and done away with in the covenant of grace (Colossians 2:13-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 9:8-11). What one eats and drinks (with the exception of intoxicating beverages) is now a matter of conscience, and

does not violate the nature and principles of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction: "...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (See also: Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Tithing And Giving---Tithing is the giving of one tenth of one's increase to Christ, our High Priest. It began as a voluntary act with Abraham, was required under the Mosaic law, and carried forward by Christ as a discipline for the New Testament church (Matthew 23:23). Tithes are to be brought to the house of God and properly distributed by the ministers having the charge of the treasury (Malachi 3:10). Freewill offerings are to be encouraged and regarded as a gift from the heart. Tithing and giving into the church are part of God's plan to finance His work through the church on earth. We are required in the Scriptures to be good stewards of that which God has entrusted in our care (See also: Genesis 14:18-20; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-21).

Swearing and Profanity—Taking an oath is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12). Jesus said, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all...But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:34, 37; see also Exodus 20:7). An affirmation of the truth is sufficient; it is acceptable even in secular courts. Similarly, the use of profanity reflects an impure heart and has no place in the life of a child of God (Matthew 15:18, 19; Philippians 1:27; 3:20; 1 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 2:7; James 3:8-10).

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs—"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2). Believers are admonished not to "...give place to the devil." So-called moderate or social drinking certainly gives place to the adversary and thus believers should totally abstain (Ephesians 4: 27; see also: Isaiah 28: 7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Much of what is said about intoxicating beverages is true also of drugs. The use of drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine, etc., impair the body and is not in keeping with the teachings and

principles of Christ and the Scriptures. These things defile the body and are inconsistent with God's call to soberness (2 Corinthians 7:1; Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31, 32; Ephesians 5:3-8; James 1:21). Drugs used for medical purposes should be taken only under the care and direction of a physician, and then only in good conscience.

Gambling (“Gaming”)—Due to the increase of lotteries and other forms of gambling, we feel that we should make it clear that Zion Assembly Church of God is opposed to gambling in any form. Gambling brings with it a negative effect on society and is immoral (Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10). This sin is associated with wasting time, money, and possessions. It also carries with it the stigma of greed and covetousness (see Exodus 20:17; Psalms 10:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:5). Gambling of any kind (lotteries, casinos, sports betting, video poker, (slot) machines, on-line gambling, bingo, etc.) is denounced in principle throughout Scripture. It is also addictive, leads to increased crime, and often destroys marriages and homes.

Unequal Yoke—The Bible teaches against the children of God being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Binding ourselves with unbelievers in organizations and secret orders with an oath is contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the plain teaching in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:14-17). As the espoused bride of Christ, we have covenanted ourselves to give undivided loyalty to Christ. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 50:5). Membership in organizations which require an oath of secrecy should be dissolved before becoming a member of the church. “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing” (John 18:20).

Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is an instantaneous experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to entire sanctification. In this baptism, Christ is the agent; the Spirit is the element (Matthew 3:11). The baptism with the Spirit on the sanctified life is accompanied with speaking in tongues: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4; see also: 10:44-47; 19:1-6). The baptism with the Spirit is a baptism of

spiritual empowerment for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 1:8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:11-16).

Speaking in Tongues always accompanies the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The believer speaks in “unknown tongues” as “the Spirit gives utterance” (Acts 2:4). “Unknown tongues” is distinguished from speaking by the gift of the Spirit in “divers tongues,” that is, in languages that are known to man (Acts 2:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:2). In either case (“unknown tongues” or languages known to man), the manifestation of tongues (and interpretations) is always consistent with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 14:26). The gift of tongues is a sign to unbelievers (vv. 14:21-23), but serves also for the self-edification of the believer (v. 4).

Gifts Of The Spirit—There are various gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The gifts of the Spirit were in operation in the New Testament church, but thereafter the church began to “fall away” and the manifestations of the spiritual gifts began to wane. After the apostasy in the fourth century, and the ensuing “dark ages” of Christian history, the manifestations of spiritual gifts (particularly tongues-speaking) were almost non-existent (manifested on occasion mainly among so-called heretics and unorthodox Christians). In these last days (particularly since early in the twentieth century) God is again pouring out His Spirit “upon all flesh” according to prophecy in order to fulfill His eternal purpose through the church (Joel 2:28-32; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38, 39).

Signs Following Believers—Signs in the New Testament were mainly for the purpose of confirming the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. As believers went forth preaching the Word in Jesus’ name, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the Word with signs following (Mark 16:15-20). Miraculous signs follow believers in order to confirm the proclamation of the Word of God, to convict sinners, and to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ordinances

Water Baptism is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the Gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection,

which are experienced in the life of the believer (Romans 6:3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate is actually born again (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8-10; 16:15, 16; John 3:22, 23; Acts 10:47, 48; 16:33). Water baptism is identified with spiritual regeneration; it is not the door into the church.

Lord's Supper is a memorial meal, which calls to remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Jesus commanded that this sacred meal be observed "in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. This sacred ordinance should be observed with holy reverence, only after careful self-examination (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17; 11:23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ's covenant with the church (Luke 22:20).

Feet Washing is an ordinance in the church. Following the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ girded himself with a towel, washed the disciples' feet, and said: "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). This ordinance is distinguished from the cultural practice of feet washing in the Middle East; it has spiritual significance and is commanded to be observed by believers (1 Timothy 5:10). The purpose of feet washing is not fulfilled through charity and good works. It is to remind us that we have one Master and Lord, who is the head of the church, and we are all His servants, and servants of one another.

Divine Sanctities

Sanctity of Life—Human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Taking of innocent life is thus strictly forbidden in Scripture, including abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genocide, and suicide (self-murder). "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). Whosoever sheddeth innocent blood will not be held guiltless before God (Genesis 9:6; Numbers 35:30, 31; Romans 13:8-10; Revelation 21:8).

Sanctity of Marriage—Jesus said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one

flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13:4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for “whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church (see Exodus 20:14, 17; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:15-20; 7:2, 3).

Sanctity of the Body—Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:20-21). “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (3:16-17). We are also admonished to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1), and “...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31b). Incest, same sex unions, and all homosexual and lesbian relationships are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. These practices are an abomination to God, though they may be sanctioned by a state or religious institution (Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 18:22, 23; 20:10-21). Practices such as “body piercing,” tattooing, mutilating and disfiguring the body are of pagan origin and contrary to the spirit of holiness and biblical principles. These practices should have no place in the lives of believers (Cf. Timothy 2:8-10; Romans 12:1, 2; Isaiah 3:16-22; 1 John 2:15-17).

Eschatology

The Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming Of Jesus—Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:27, 28). “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). All who are caught up in the first resurrection will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Christ will then return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6; see also Zechariah 14:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21).

Resurrection—There will be a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be raised at Christ’s first appearance in the clouds of glory. The resurrection of the wicked will occur after the thousand years reign of Christ on earth. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15; see also Daniel 12: 2; Revelation 20: 4-6; John 5: 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 41-58).

Eternal Life for the Righteous—The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11-13).

Eternal Punishment for the Wicked—Those who reject or disregard the call to repentance and salvation are doomed to eternal damnation (John 3:15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is the “the second death,” and is a place of eternal torment. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8; see also: 20:10-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14:15; Matthew 25:46; Mark 3:29).

Antichrist---Antichrist can signify either “against Christ” or “in the place of Christ,” or a combination of the two meanings. Antichrist is one who opposes Christ or who assumes the prerogatives of Christ as our Lord and Savior.

While only the apostle John uses the word, antichrist, the apostle Paul is apparently speaking of the same spirit and principle when he refers to the “mystery of lawlessness” and the “lawless one” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8. John identifies certain “false prophets” and “deceivers” as antichrists (1 John 1-3; 2:18; 2 John 7). The prophet Daniel is in reference to this same spirit in his prophecy of the “beast” in Daniel 7, which corresponds also with John’s vision of the “beast” in Revelation 11; 13; 17; 19.

We may conclude then that the spirit of antichrist signifies the deceptive and seductive spirit in the world that seeks to confuse the true identity of Christ and to corrupt His Gospel. Antichrist may take many religious, social, and political forms, but all have the same goal---namely, to compromise and corrupt the true doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ with false doctrines and the pretense of false Christs (Matthew 24:4,5, 11, 23, 24).

Prophecy predicts that a particular person in the very last days will come on the scene that will embody and personify the spirit of antichrist in the world. This man is variously characterized as the “lawless one” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8) and the “beast” (Daniel 7:10, 11, 25; Revelation 13:1). Jesus is in reference to this spirit of deception and lawless spirit in Matthew 24:5, 24 and John 5:43. Our concern in the church, however, is not so much with the coming of the particular Lawless One---“the beast”---but with the spirit of antichrist now prevailing in the world: for it seems that the prophetic Lawless One will not be fully revealed until after the rapture of the church (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8). Until then, the Spirit of God and the church will restrain and prevent his rise to power and his full revelation.

God’s church rests upon the revelation---the “rock”---that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-18), and that He was incarnate in the virgin Mary, died for our sins, and was resurrected on the third day so that man can be redeemed and brought back into fellowship with God our Father (Romans 5:6-10). The Spirit of Christ indwells believers, enabling them to live their lives consistent with the law of God (Romans 8:1-7); whereas the spirit of antichrist opposes the truth of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures, providing substitutions for the saving grace of Christ. The diabolic influence of antichrist is found throughout the world, resisting the true Gospel and substituting in its place myriads of false gospels (Galatians 1:1-9; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). These are “lying spirits” set to deceive and destroy precious souls (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13, 14). John exhorts believers to “try the spirits”---test them, prove them---against the truth of Christ and His teachings revealed in the Scriptures (1 John 4:1-3). The spirit of antichrist, personified in the Lawless One, will be completely destroyed with the brightness of Christ’s second coming and the power of His Word (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Meanwhile the saints are empowered to resist and overcome the spirit of antichrist in the world through faith, the Word of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline

The following guidelines are explicitly revealed in the Scriptures or else shown to be consistent with biblical teachings. They are brought to our attention to enhance our relationship with Christ and one another, and to encourage us to live in a way that will bring glory and honor to the name of Christ and to support the witness of the church. We are admonished

in the Scriptures: “...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12b). Jesus instructs us: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Prayer—Jesus’ admonition to “watch and pray” (Matthew 26:41a) has never been more urgent than today. We live in “perilous times,” and Christ and the apostles warned that the times will only worsen as we approach our Lord’s return. Therefore, daily prayers and family devotions should be a priority in every church home. Maintaining a prayerful attitude is a key to spirituality for every individual and local congregation. Again Jesus said, “...men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1a), and the apostle encouraged believers to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are also enjoined to “...pray one for another...” James 5:16a). Special prayers should be made for those in authority and for those who have given themselves in service to God and to the ministry of the Word (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called “the house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

Bible Study—Reading and studying the Scriptures are invaluable to the spiritual welfare of the child of God. Every member of the church is encouraged to be a faithful student of God’s holy Word. Paul instructs us to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God...” (2 Tim 2:15a), for “the holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (3:15). Further, he says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (v.16). The importance of the Word of God is eloquently expressed by Psalmist: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” And again, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:105, 11).

Church Attendance and Worship—Worship and fellowship with believers of “like precious faith” is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4:23b; Ephesians 5:19). Each member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and thus the body will be hindered to the degree that one member fails to actively participate in its life and mission. Accordingly, members should actively support every function of the church, and participate as much as possible. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer is worthy of our careful attention: “And let us consider one another to

provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much more as we see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyles and conversations. “And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane” (Ezekiel 44:23a). A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry of God’s Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the minister delivers the message, lest Satan come and steal the Word of God from their hearts (Mark 4:4, 15). God’s love “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Walking Circumspectly—Children of God should “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time for the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15,16). Living a consecrated life at home and abroad will give no place for anyone to justly think or speak of you as a hypocrite. Our manner of life and conversation should be holy in word and deed, as becoming to a child of God. As representatives of Christ in this world, and members of the Church of God, we should fashion ourselves with modesty and sobriety (Psalm 1:1-3; Philippians 1:27; Thessalonians 5:15-23).

Entertainment and Worldly Attractions—Christians should never participate in worldly attractions and entertainment where the principles of holiness may be compromised. Believers should participate in activities with unbelievers only with a guarded disposition, lest one becomes entangled or entrapped in the snares of Satan. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8; see also 2 Peter 2:19-22).

Illicit Relationships—Paul admonishes us to “give no place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). Forming too close an intimacy with the opposite sex, even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, creates an environment for temptation and gives opportunity for the “wiles of the devil.” Samson is a classic case of this unwise behavior, which led to his fall from grace (Judges 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation

(Genesis 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, “Flee fornication” (1Corinthians 6:18). The words of James, the Lord’s brother, also come to mind: “Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death” (James 1:13-15). In view of these solemn admonitions, great care should be taken to avoid associations and situations, which could reflect upon one’s character and bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

Outward Adornment—Christians are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ in this present world (2 Corinthians 5:20). As such they should be careful to adorn themselves as befitting their Lord’s plainness and purity. Adorning oneself after a worldly fashion with facial paint, gold, pearls, costly apparel, etc. is inconsistent with the testimony of one professing a life separated unto God. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel...But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:1-6; see also 1 Timothy 2:8-10; Isaiah 3:16-24; 61:10).

Corporate and Self-Discipline—Self-examinations to evaluate one’s own faith and spirituality are healthy (1 Corinthians 11:28). Sincere concern for others is also good and to be encouraged. We are our brother’s keeper. Counsel should be given only in the spirit of love and with godly wisdom, and according to the rule of discipline outlined in the gospel (Matthew 18:15-20). (A harsh spirit of criticism is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of both the critic and the one receiving the criticism: Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 5:14, 15; Ephesians 4:30-32). Discipline should be administered only as a last resort, and always through prayerful counsel and with the ultimate good of the erring brother/sister in mind (1 Corinthians 5:1-7; Galatians 6:1-5).

Notes

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