

Zion Assembly Church of God
15th Annual
General Assembly Minutes

September 4-9, 2018
United Christian Church
2200 Peerless Rd.
Cleveland, Tennessee

Theme:
“Pressing Forward”

*“... and nothing shall be
impossible unto you”*

---Jesus

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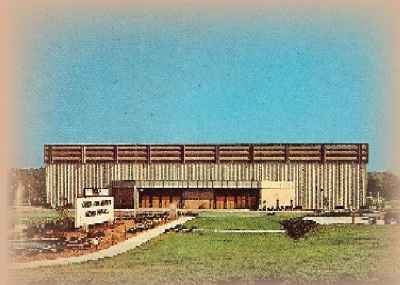
Zion Assembly Church of God

International Ministries Center



United Christian Church
(Assembly site 2018)

Historical Assembly Sites



The General Assembly: The Highest Tribunal of Authority in the Church

The first General Assembly recorded in Acts 15 was a demonstration of the New Testament church's government and divine order. No doubt the unity of the church would have been shattered in its infancy if the decisions of this government had not been respected and obeyed. For the church had become passionately divided in opinion over two issues: namely, the practice of circumcision and certain dietary laws that had been observed under the Old Covenant. The fundamental issue at stake was this: What was the basis of the church's fellowship? Could believing Jews fellowship with believing Gentiles who had not been circumcised and were eating things unlawful under the Old Covenant? These issues were settled in divine order in the council in Jerusalem (A.D. 51/52). This is why our forefathers declared early in our historical development that the **“General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church on earth.”**

Three things are worth noting in examining the procedures and principles followed by the apostles and elders in that first General Assembly:

1. The whole church came together to address the issues, not just the bishops and elders. This is clear from Acts 15.4, 12, 22, 28. The church from the beginning was therefore obviously not an Episcopal or Presbyterian form of government. Moreover, since delegates from many of the local churches were present and participated, and the decisions were kept uniformly by all the churches (vv. 23, 30, 31; 16.4-5), the government was obviously not Congregational in form and practice. It is clear also that, though the apostles and elders led the way in the discussions (15.6-18), everyone present participated and agreed together in the final decisions (vv. 22, 25, 28).

2. The highest authority in this council was God and His Word in Holy Scripture. This may be seen in James' decision [the Council's moderator], which he based on “the words of the prophets” (vv. 15-17), and on what **“seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us”** (v. 28). This formula---God and His Word in Holy Scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the mutual agreement among the Assembly delegates on the meaning of the Scriptures---is what we

call “theocratic government.” We believe this is the biblical model for church government in distinction from Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational models.

3. There was a duly recognized order for the meeting and due respect given to its authorized officers in charge: and, not insignificantly, there was also a deep spirituality that had been cultivated and continued among the delegates. One by one those who had something to contribute to the council’s understanding were given liberty to speak---Peter, Paul, James (the Lord’s brother), et al.---and this brought about the necessary light and understanding to resolve the issues. The believing Pharisees who had been contrary in opinion apparently were enlightened and came into agreement with the final decision. It is possible that some may have went out from this meeting and later joined with the Judaizers to form a dissenting sect (v. 24); but this dissenting sect was certainly not God’s church: for it taught and practiced things contrary to the apostles’ and elders’ doctrine and the church’s rule of faith and practice (cf. Acts 15.25-31; 16.4-5).

Too much emphasis cannot be put upon the need for right living and a moderate spirit in the process of discussing and settling issues. Hear the apostle, “*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand*” (Phil. 4.5). This is of paramount importance. The General Assembly is no place for arrogant, stubborn spirits and self-willed dispositions. On the contrary, love, meekness, and mutual respect among brethren must prevail if the church is going to function in divine order. Further, we are called to “reason together” with God (Is.1.18); after all, all men are finite and prone to misjudgment, only God is infinite and infallible. Therefore, we will “*come to the knowledge of the truth*” only in humbleness of mind and by submitting to the preeminence of the Holy Spirit and the will of God recorded in Scripture.

This special gathering---the General Assembly---should be grounded therefore in much prayer with fasting. Consecrating ourselves through spiritual disciplines is necessary if we want the atmosphere of this important meeting to be charged with the presence of the Lord; and if we truly desire the Holy Ghost to reveal the mind and power of Christ. Only in this way can we answer the apostolic call in Zion Assembly to be “*an holy nation*”---“*an habitation of God through the Spirit,*” and “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

---WHP



Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome Delegates

We expect a glorious time in the Lord this week; but it is imperative that we consecrate and commit ourselves afresh in order to see His glory descend upon us (Is. 60.1-3). This Assembly is a special meeting---indeed a meeting ordained by the Lord so that we might counsel together with Him, and to chart a course for the church to follow in the months and years ahead (Acts 15.22-31; 16. 4-5).

This grand event provides a forum for us to rekindle the fires of holiness and Pentecostal power; to fan the flames of any flagging tendencies; to stir our affections and sharpen our sights to fulfill the ministry and mission that Christ has given to us---namely, to be instrumental in converting and sanctifying souls and planting churches in every nation and city on earth (Mt. 24.14; 28.19-20).

In Zion Assembly we accept the charge and challenge of the Great Commission, though we do not discount the fact that other believers help us to fulfill certain aspects of it. In the final analysis, however, we see in the Scriptures that the purposes of God are more especially revealed and fulfilled through His special covenant people, His church! (Ex. 19.5-8; Mt. 16.18-19; 1 Cor. 12.12-28; 2 Cor. 3.2-3; Eph. 3.9-10; 1 Pet. 2.9). In the words of the great apostle, we are commissioned

“ . . . to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known [through] the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3.9-10).

And, thus, the prophet:

“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak . . . It will surely come (Hab. 2.2-3).

We want this 15th Annual General Assembly to be transformed by God’s power into an awesome and dreadful place (Gen. 28.17). Surely we need to hear the Lord’s awe-inspiring voice in this critical hour through gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost. *“Hear what the Spirit saith to the churches!”* We expect therefore that God’s anointed people will together in these last days *“lift up [His] voice . . . [and] see eye to eye”* (Is. 52.8).

About the Theme

The idea behind the Assembly theme---“**Pressing Forward**”---is thus to awaken and stir in us a zeal to fulfill the prophetic vision of the church; to make us mindful of how important the church is to God; and to know how strategic she is in God’s unfolding plan in these last days.

The prophetic vision of the church should arouse and quicken our hearts to exert every bit of our energies to restore the original pattern of the church revealed in the Scriptures, particularly in the light of the Gospel; to rely upon the anointing of God to break every yoke of bondage and to set men free from every sinful condition; and to inspire us to go forward to plant churches in every nation and city on earth. For every man and woman must see by the light of the church the glory and power of our wonderful Christ and the end of His righteous judgment (Mt. 5.14-16; 2 Cor. 3.2-3; Eph. 3.9-10; Col. 1.25-29; Rev. 1.1-3, 7-8, 18-19; 19.7-8, 11-21). We should remain acutely aware, however, that to accomplish this task and to do exploits for Christ we must **Press Forward** with a holy determination: for we will surely be met by powerful opposing forces (Eph. 6.10-12).

The prophetic vision of the church is exciting: for in the end the church emerges triumphantly over all demonic principalities and powers of the air, and victorious against all antagonistic and corruptive forces on earth. The church will, according to the promises of Him who cannot lie, “*be exalted above the hills*”, fill the earth with the testimony and power of Jesus, defeat the armies of Antichrist, and rule and reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years (Is. 2.2-4; Rev. 19.7-9, 11-15; 20.1-6). Praise the Lord!

“Pressing forward means pushing our way through demonic principalities and powers to obey God and fulfill His purpose for us in the earth. Jesus said, “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Lu. 10.19). And again, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Mt. 17.20)

Administration

Presiding Bishop..... Wade H. Phillips

Superintendent of Operations..... Anton Burnette

Chief Clerk.....Marie S. Crook
Julia Massey, Sandra Moore, Brenda Reitler, Rita Goodrum,
Shirley Kimble, Sandy Morris, Molly Hayward, Shelby Erwin
Billie Smith

Chief Usher.....Tod Deakle
Chad Spicer, Vernon Johnson, Cecil Pounders, J. L. Green
Bill Reid, Madison Kachel, Robert Ramirez, Daren Childers,
Jerry Nichols, Jim Hayward, Lee Jaynes.

Chief Registrar.....Renetta Kelton
Shelby Erwin, America Burnette, Victoria Burnette, Marie Carroll
Ashley Reitler, Ashley Neill, Rachel McDonald, Emma Erwin.

Assembly Business Committee

Chairman Scott E. Neill
Zachary Snyder
L. W. Carter
Elijah Wafula
Jim C. Orange
Anton Burnette
Pete Sarry
Tod Deakle (Alternate)

Video and Internet Streaming.....Danny Shroader, Derrick McBride

Sound Equipment.....Jerry Pounders

Photography.....Julie Steele

Projection Director.....Donnie Burnette

Stage Manager..... Joseph A. Steele

Music.....Kim/Todd Erwin

Special Programs director.....Wanda K. Busbee

Maintenance/Props.....Jim C. Orange



Greetings!

Anton Burnette Superintendent of Operations

Having come from an independent, “Pentecostal” background, one of my first experiences with the church was at the General Assembly. The gravity of this event opened the door for me to begin to understand the importance of having a proper view of the church. One of the identifying marks of the Bible church is the General Assembly. This important meeting is not simply another convention or conference; nor merely a time in which we fellowship, meet new friends and reacquaint ourselves with old ones. Rather, it is a divine institution where the whole church comes together to hear from God, settle issues, and to be edified. As we enter this time of assembly, we should do so therefore prayerfully and reverently.

We are grateful that the United Christian Church once again has opened its doors for us to convene our annual Assembly in their facilities. Everyone is encouraged to be respectful of their property and equipment this week. The following instructions are offered to help insure that everything will proceed smoothly during each part of the Assembly.

- 1) Delegates should consult with the appointed Assembly staff (superintendent of operations, ushers, stage manager, etc.) in dealing with any problems that may arise during the week.
- 2) Always remain in designated areas of the building---auditorium, main hallway, children’s church room, nursery room and bathrooms located in the mail hallway.
- 3) Food and drink are not allowed in the auditorium, except at the moderator’s table.
- 4) If you are on the program and need assistance with equipment, see Jerry pounders.
- 5) If you need to put pictures, scriptures, etc. on the projection screens, see Donnie Burnette.
- 6) Give soundtracks and media devices to the sound engineer, Jerry Pounders, before the session in which you are on the program.
- 7) Observe all parking signs in the church parking lot and also throughout Cleveland.
- 8) Nursery facilities are provided for you convenience. Observe directional signs.
- 9) Children’s church worship times are posted throughout the Assembly program.
- 10) Please refrain from chewing gum in the sanctuary.

We pray and trust that you will enjoy your time in Cleveland and be abundantly blessed in this great General Assembly.

Pre-Assembly Programs

Assembly Business Committee

Monday, September 3, 2018

The Assembly Business Committee (ABC) will meet at International Ministries Center beginning at 6:00 p.m. to finalize its report to present to the 15th Annual General Assembly. The Doctrine Committee (DC) will meet with the ABC in regard to any business that needs to be presented to the Assembly for consideration. Anyone who has relevant questions or presentations may interact with the ABC and DC at this time. Personal interviews with the Committees should be arranged through the chairmen.

Ministers' Meeting

Tuesday, September 4, 2018

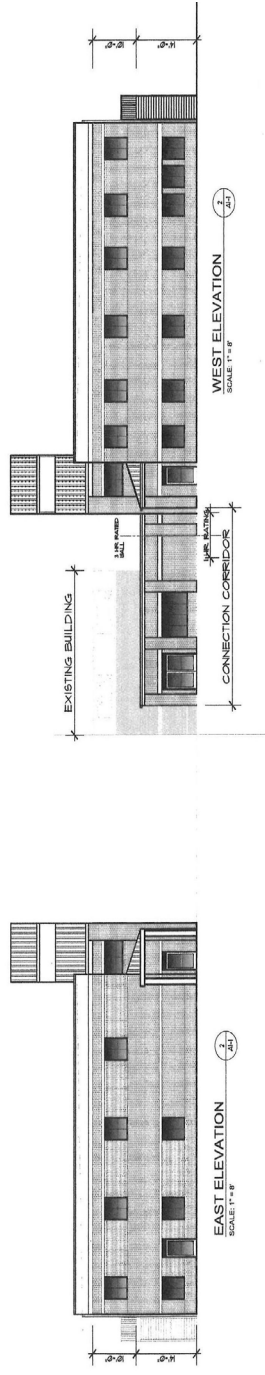
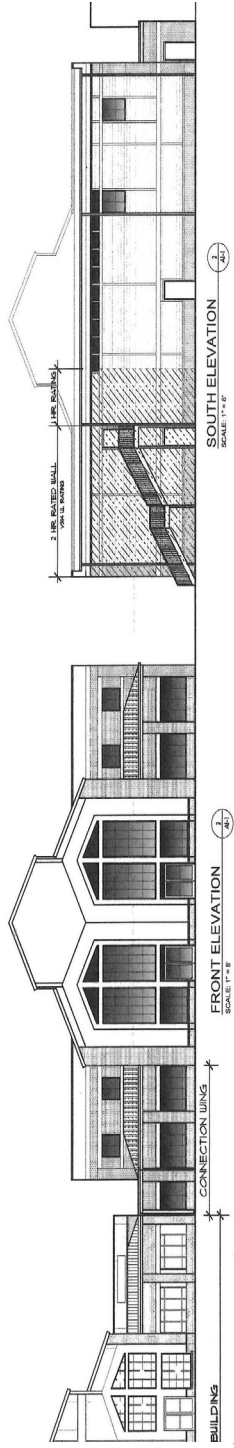
Beginning at 9:30 a.m. the annual ministers' conference will convene in the International Ministries Center in Cleveland. The meeting is open to all; ministers are especially encouraged to attend and participate. The purpose of the meeting is to promote unity and understanding through prayer and discussion. The preliminary report of the ABC will be read and discussed: and the floor will be open to discuss any issues that might need clarification.

Ministers' and Companions' Luncheon (Immediately following the Ministers' Meeting)

12:15 p.m.

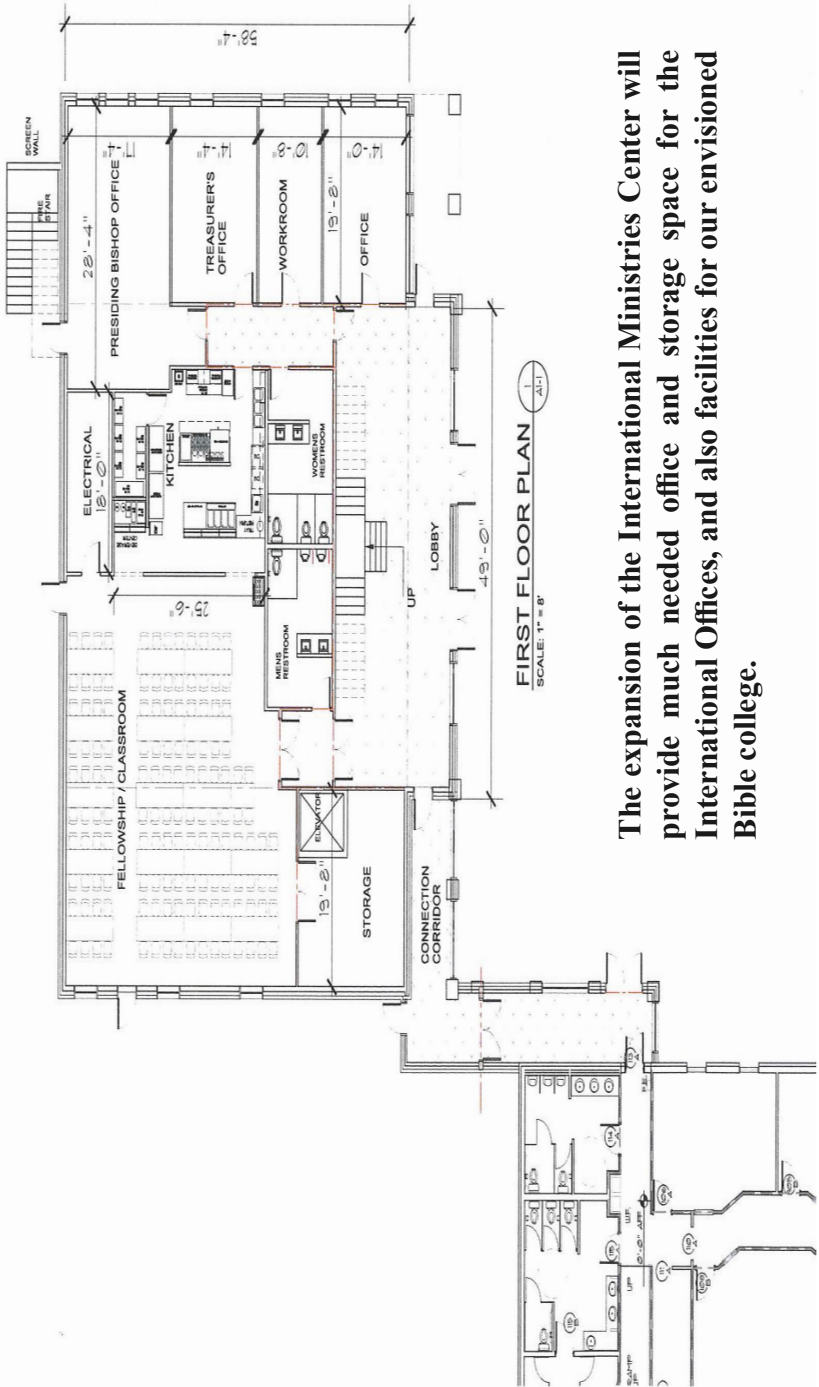
All ministers and their companions are honored guests at the Ministers' Luncheon. This is sponsored by the International Offices. The luncheon will be held in the Cafeteria of the United Christian Church. Special singing: The Erwin Family, TN. Special speaker: Joseph Steele, regional overseer, California South/Nevada. Comments and special presentations by the First Lady of Zion Assembly. Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for this occasion.

Architect's Blueprints for the Two-Story Addition of the International Ministries Center



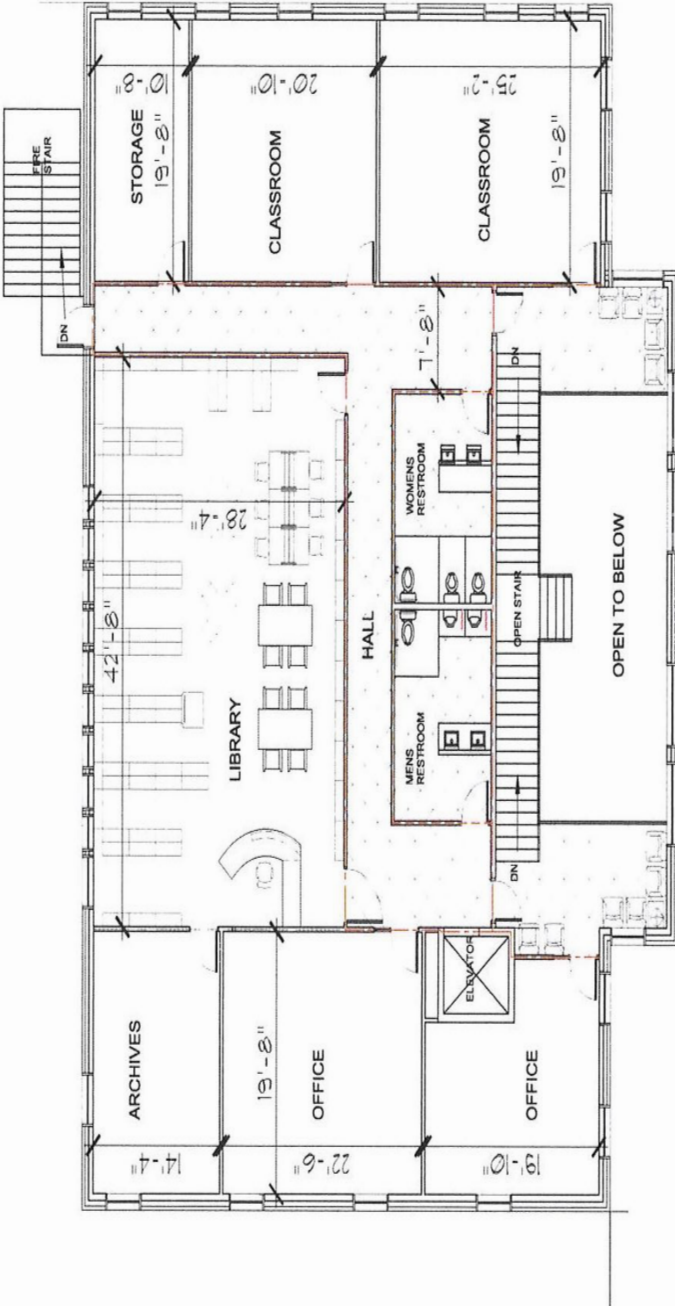
SCHEMATIC ELEVATIONS
 Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"
 ZION ASSEMBLY CHURCH OF GOD ADDITION
 C:\IM\CD 0110

RARDIN & CARROLL
 ARCHITECTS
 1000 W. 10TH AVENUE, SUITE 100
 DENVER, COLORADO 80202
 PHONE: 303.733.1100
 FAX: 303.733.1101
 WWW.RCARCHITECTS.COM



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 8'

The expansion of the International Ministries Center will provide much needed office and storage space for the International Offices, and also facilities for our envisioned Bible college.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN 2
 SCALE: 1" = 8'
 AI-1

Assembly Program

Tuesday Evening

7:00 p.m. Praise and Worship---Erwin Family, TN

Official Opening of the Assembly

Welcome---Anton and Grace Burnette, TN

Multi-lingual Concert of Prayer led by representatives from Africa, North America, Southeast Asia, South America, and Caribbean.

Message---*“Pressing Forward violently”* (Mt. 11.12; Lu. 16.16)

---Derrick McBride, MS

Ladies Ministries Report and Program

---Donna Pounders, director



Special Singing---Becky Land

Assembly Expense Offering

Message and Invitation---*“Pressing Toward the Mark*

for the Prize . . .” (1 Cor. 9.24-27; Phil. 3.14)

---Ricky Graves, KY

[**Note:** *Kidz’ Konvention* schedule: Wednesday 7:00-8:00 p.m.; Thursday 1:30-3:30, 6:15-8:00; Friday: 6:15-7:15 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.

Wednesday

9:15 a.m. *Pressing Forward* with Praise!---Nicole Pounders
& Alicia Harris, MS

International Leaders' Reports:

Presiding Bishop

International Executive Council

Assistant Publisher

General Treasurer's Report

*(Note: Other International Staff members will
report during their respective programs)*

Special Songs---Ashley Davis, WV

Message---“*Pressing Forward in Divine Order*”

(1 Cor. 11.34; 14.40; 16.1;
Col. 2.5; Titus 1.5)---J. J. Davis, WV

---Lunch Break---

2:00 p.m. Musical Prelude

Reports from Around the World

Overseers, be prepared to give your report on time.

*Turn in your written reports to the Presiding Bishop as you leave
the stage.*

2:10 **North America**

Canada---Zachary Snyder, national overseer

Mexico---Danny Ramirez, national overseer

United States---Wade H. Phillips, national overseer

3.00 **Africa**

Kenya---Elijah Wafula, national overseer
South Sudan---Elijah Wafula, national overseer
Ethiopia---Geremew Eshete Esundalew, interim overseer
Uganda---Maurice Ogada, national overseer
Nigeria---Yomi Adekunle, national overseer
Ghana---David Dordah, national overseer
Guinea---Seraphin Gomez, national overseer
Cameroon---Eyong Eric Eyong, national overseer
Togo, Benin, Sierra Leone, Liberia---Mark Agbonifo,
mission representative
Malawi/Mozambique---Maliele Dzuwa, national overseer
Zimbabwe/Zambia/DRC (Congo)/Rwanda---David Gomba,
mission representative
Tanzania, Burundi, David Gomba, national overseer
South Africa---Yomi Adekunle, mission representative

3.25 **Central America**

Nicaragua---Freddy Garcia, national overseer
Guatemala---Ricardo Valenzuela, national overseer
Honduras---Jonathan Hernandez, national overseer
Costa Rica---Eugenio Cespedes, mission representative

3:35 **Caribbean**

Dom. Republic---Saintaniel Hostelus, mission representative
Haiti---Saintaniel Hostelus, national overseer

3:50 **South America**

Venezuela---Bani Rangel Jimenez, national overseer
Peru/Bolivia---Yum V. Munoz Quispe, national overseer
Chile---Javier Diaz Perez, national overseer
Argentina/Uruguay/Paraguay---Jorge Estroz, national overseer

4:05 **Middle East**

Pakistan---Sam Bureenok, mission representative

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

India Central---John Babu Ganta, provincial overseer

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

4:15 **Southeast Asia**

Thailand---Sam Bureenok, national overseer

Cambodia/Myanmar (Burma)---Sam Bureenok, Mission representative

Bangladesh---Suku Ranjon Skider, national overseer

4.30 **Far East**

Philippines---Domingo Resurreccion, national overseer

---Supper Break---

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mt. 28.18-20).

Wednesday Evening

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

7:00 p.m. 'I will praise the Lord with my whole heart
in the Assembly...' (Ps. 111.1)---Kari Snyder

Message---*“Pressing Forward Together with God”* (1 Cor. 3.9)

---Allen Thompson, MS

Assembly Expense Offering

Senior Ambassadors' Program

—Ruth Tingler, director

*“I am as strong this day . . . for war . . . [and]
if so the Lord be with me, then shall I be able
to drive out [the giants]”* (Josh. 14.11-12).



Special Singing---Erwin Family

Message---*“Pressing Forward in Victorious Faith”* (Mk. 2.5;

(1 Jn. 5.4; Rom. 1.17; 4.20)---Roberto Lopez, CA

*“Yet the righteous will hold to his
way [keep moving forward]. And
he who has clean hands [will
become] stronger and stronger.”*

Job 17:9

Thursday

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

9:00 a.m. Camp Reports—Miguel Garcia, Jr.,
International Coordinator

Special Songs---Sam and Oi Bureenok, Thailand

“Pressing Forward in Education and Ministerial Development”

---Anton Burnette, director



Message---“Pressing Forward in Truth and Love”

(1 Cor. 13.6; Jn. 13.35; 3 Jn. 3)---Trevor Graves, KY

—Lunch Break---

1:30 p.m. “To God be Glory in the Church”
---Cliff and Becky Kelton, MS

Special Songs—TBA

In Memory . . . Members and Friends: Tom Villers; Eddie Brassfield, Charles Fields; Cathy Pounders; Patricia Worthy; Jim Melton; Anthony Delaunay; Marcia Black; Mary Mundy (91 yrs. charter member of Roanoke); Mary Bryant; Noemy Argueta; Bertha Carrasco, Verla hitlock, Roger Glass.

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

Message—“Laying on of hands by Elders” (Acts 14.23;

1 Tim. 4.14; 5.22; Titus 1.5-6)---Ron Massey, WV

Ordination Service

[Jose Manuel Lozano(Bishop); Daron Miller (Evangelist);
Ambrosia (Roberto) Lopez (Evangelist)

---Supper Break---

Thursday Evening

6:15 p.m. “O magnify the Lord!”---**Instrumental Praise**
by **Zion’s musicians**---directed by Todd/Kim Erwin

Special Song—Daron Miller, TN

School of Ministry Program

---Bruce Sullivan, Superintendent



Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs—Becky Land, SC; Toronto delegation

Testimonies of Healings—Mary Orange, TN; Travis Graves, KY



Healing Message & Prayer Service

Daron Miller, TN in charge

“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” Mt. 8.3

Friday

9:15 a.m. Special Songs---Teresa Pettit, AL

Voice of Zion/SYNC boost

—Glenda Major, director



Special Songs---Lee Brown, WV

Sunday School Program

—Donna Pounders, director

Media Ministries Program---Anton Burnette, director

---Afternoon Break---

Friday Evening

[Attention: Front three rows are reserved for Youth Program.

All youth [12-35] meet at 7.15 in corridor for Youth March]

6:30 p.m.

Special Songs---West Mobile Choir

Shepherding Ministries

---Wilma Carter, director



Message--- *“Pressing Forward in Grace and Power”*

(Rom. 1.5-7; 1 Cor. 1.18; 2.5; 4.20)---Chase Larmour, MS



Youth Program---Pamela Jones, director

“Higher Ground”

Note: There will be a Youth Afterglow at the International Ministries Center immediately following this program.

Saturday

Attention: The annual SYNC luncheon will be held in the cafeteria downstairs on Saturday at 12:15 p.m. immediately following the Presiding Bishop's annual address. Glenda Major in charge. All SYNC members and invited guests are encouraged to attend.

8:45 a.m. **Morning Prayer Service**---Allen/Mandy Thompson
in charge

9.15 Praise Him!---Teresa Pettit, AL
Special Songs---Toronto delegation

Message--- *“Pressing Forward in the Anointing”* (Ex. 40.15; Ps. 23.5; 3.10; Acts 1.8; 1 Jn. 2.27)---Tom Brown, WV

Recognition of Special Guests

---Assembly Choir---

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

[Bishop Phillips recognized his daughter, Tuesday]

---Lunch Break---

Saturday Afternoon

2:30 p.m. Worship Him!---Monday Family, TN
Special Singing---Charles Barker, IN; Victoria Green, TN

Assembly Business Committee Report

---Supper Break---

Registered Attendance:
Actual Attendance (Estimation):

Saturday Evening

7:00 p.m. “[God is] greatly to be praised in the city of our God,
in the mountain of His holiness” (Ps. 48.1)

--- Henry Rodriquez, CA

Special Singing---Ethiopian delegation

**Message---“You have compassed this mountain
long enough”** (Deut. 2.3)--- Zachary Snyder, IN

Assembly Expense Offering



World Mission Program

---Scott E. Neill, director

---Parade of Nations---

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me . . . Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth . . . Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers . . . and thou shalt know that I am th Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me” (Is. 49.14-16, 18-23).

Sunday

9.00 a.m. Sunday School Lesson---Jim Orange, TN

9:30 Special Singing---Claudia Hernandez, CA; Babs Sullivan, SC

Children's Ministries Program

---Cheryl McDonald, director



---Assembly Choir---

Message—*Pressing Forward “Terrible as an Army with Banners”*

(S.S. 6.10; Rom. 8.37)--- L. W. Carter, VA

[Brother Carter recognized Paul and Cathy Horton]

Announcements

Appointments

Consecration Service

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

---led by Betty, Debbie, and Brenda

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Phil. 3:12

Assembly Program Adjustments

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

Note:

The Presiding Bishop gave excerpts from his message throughout the Assembly and completed it on Saturday as scheduled.

Wednesday

Wayne Loftis sang

Alicia Harris, MS (absence)

Thursday

Toronto delegation (absent)

Friday

Teresa Petit, AL (absent)

West Mobile Choir (absent)

Saturday

**Nevil Creary, Canada sang in native language
(replaced Toronto delegation)**

Saturday Evening

Ethiopian delegation (absent)

Sunday

**In absence of Cheryl McDonald, Children's Ministries Director,
Kayla Graves directed the program**

Claudia Hernandea, CA (absent)

Recognition of Special Guests:

David Roebuck, Historian for Church of God

Stan York, NC, John Bolin, AZ, Wayne Loftis, TN

Mary Etta Hawk, TN, Sam Standsbury, TN, Donie James

Registered Attendance:

Actual Attendance (Estimation): 414

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 General Assembly accepted this practice in 2012.

The following have been recipients of this award:

2012

*Honoria Garavito, CA
William (Bill) Reid, TN
Joshua Amara, Africa*

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 Jones, TN*

2016

*Jeanette Surratt, SC
Donna Pounders, MS
Saintainel Hostelus, Haiti*

2017

*Ricky Graves, KY
Gaven McDonald, SC
Zachary Snyder, IN*

2018

*Charles & Mary Barker
Clifford & Becky Kelton
Robert & Marie Llaneza*

International Staff Reports Fifteenth Annual General Assembly

Presiding Bishop's Report to the Fifteenth Annual General Assembly September 11, 2016--September 4, 2018

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion . . . The city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge . . . Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments . . . Walk about Zion . . . Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death (Ps. 48.1-3, 11-14).

My report this year is much like last year's. It has been in many ways a trying and challenging year, but also a victorious one. In all of our endeavors and through all of the challenges that have arisen, the Lord has been faithful and has supplied the necessary strength, grace, and anointing for us to persevere and fulfill our responsibilities. We have indeed *“fought with beasts”* on occasion and *“wrestled with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.”* But the Lord enabled us to triumph in every situation and to press forward in the work.

Regarding our administrative tasks and *care of all the churches*, I have answered all correspondence and calls that have come into the office (roughly 325 letters and e-mails); kept up a regular correspondence with the overseers and ministers; served as the editor-in-chief of our church magazine, the *Voice of Zion*; worked closely with the overseers and pastors in overseeing and building up the church nationally and internationally; and visited a number of pastors in regard to disciplinary issues.

I want to commend my secretary, Marie Crook, for her untiring assistance, and my wife for her assistance with the *VOZ* and for attending to many other chores and errands. Brother Neill was valuable as a proof-reader for the paper, and assisted me in a number of other ways. Glenda Major and her husband, Steve, have been a tremendous blessing since they moved to Cleveland from California. They are hard workers and always anxious to do whatever is needed and helpful to advance the church and its work. Renetta Kelton has assisted the offices at headquarters in various

ways. She's a hard worker, willing to tackle whatever task is given to her.

I have counseled many hours with the ministers and churches, both in the office and on the field, in person and by phone and email. I have worked with the General Staff, the Executive Council, the Assembly Business Committee, the Doctrine Committee, the overseers, pastors, and ministers to promote the work in all of its ministries and phases. There were again this year several disciplinary actions taken. These always preoccupy too much of our time: but they are a necessary part of our *reason for being* as overseers and elders in the church. The good news is that, by the grace of the Lord, every disciplinary and administrative problem was solved one way or another---in some cases counsel alone was sufficient; in other cases discipline was necessary; and in a few cases, a minister had to be removed from his position and his license revoked. But, in all cases, it may be said without reservation, and with the witness of Spirit, we acted responsibly in love and truth and with compassion in the best interests of the church and the persons involved.

I want to commend General Treasurer (Vicki Neill), the General Staff members, the regional and national overseers and pastors, most of whom have been cheerfully cooperative with the Presiding Bishop in the promotion of the work. We have enjoyed also working with Brother Daron Miller for the past three months in the Mission Department, and with Sister Pam Jones who has been serving since August 1st as General Treasurer, succeeding Sister Neill who moved back with her husband to South Carolina to oversee the work in Greenville. Some of these have sacrificed much to move the work forward in their regions and throughout the world. I want to take this opportunity here also to commend the companions of our overseers and international workers, for they minister and attend to their husbands/wives so that they may in turn minister and attend to others.

I have again this year worked with Brother Sullivan, serving as president of the School of Ministry; worked with Brother Neill and assisted to direct the mission work throughout the world; and planned and moderated the General Assembly. My travels this year included trips to two countries and thirteen states [IN, AL, MS, GA, FL, CA, KY, WV, VA, TN, SC, NC, PA] to assist the overseers and pastors in the work.

My work connected with School of Ministry included helping to organize and plan materials; wrote and taught several lessons for the schools in northern and southern California and in Cleveland; attended and participated in three of the regional and state conventions in the United States---Alabama/Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee; and was privileged to have my faithful companion, Dale, with me for two of these conventions.

I was preoccupied again this year with a great deal of writing. Besides the monthly chore of being the chief editor and writer for the *Voice of Zion*, I wrote a new book, *Mystery of Sin*, which seems to have stirred a good bit of interest within and without the church. Also dealing with the architects and banks and the many city departments and agencies connected with our expansion program for the International Ministries Complex has consumed much time and energy.

I praise the Lord for the progress made this year. *To God be the glory, great things He hath done!* Some of us planted, others watered; but *God gave the increase!*

The following are some personal statistics in regard to the work. I offer these only to make myself accountable to this honorable body.

Sermons Preached.....	199
(includes written messages and lessons taught)	
Revivals conducted.....	1
Converted.....	10
Sanctified.....	4
Holy Ghost Baptisms.....	6
Added to the church.....	11
Baptized in Water.....	2
Tithes paid.....	\$4,290.00
Offerings given.....	\$3,780.00

Miles traveled.....	26,000 (approximately 6000 by air).
Churches organized.....	0
Churches visited.....	16
Regional Conventions Attended.....	3
General Assemblies moderated.....	1

Thank you again for your prayerful support, kindness, and cheerful cooperation. I wish we had time to recognize all of our faithful ministers and workers who have assisted the Presiding Bishop in the discharge of his duties and responsibilities and the promotion of the work. But the Lord has the perfect record---and He will shortly reward all of us at His coming. May the Lord bless and keep you in His great grace and power.

Humbly submitted,



Wade H. Phillips

**World Mission Director/Assistant Publisher's Report
to the
Fifteenth Annual General Assembly
September 4-9, 2018**

Psalm 28:7

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Psalm 113:3

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised., my heart trusted in him and my heart greatly rejoices."

I hold the words of the Psalmist David dear when he says, "*the Lord is my strength, my shield, my heart trusted in him and my heart greatly rejoices*"

I want to thank the Lord for all He has done and accomplished this year. Without the presence, power and direction of the Lord it would have been a greater challenge. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my precious wife Vicki for all her support, prayer and for her shoulder to lean on. I have been privileged to have her travel with me on various trips and I thank God for her.

I appreciated the opportunity to have worked with our great pastors, leaders, overseers and mission workers around the world. Most days I have worked closely with our Presiding Bishop in which we held on many occasions several conferences dealing with various situations related to missions and to the office of World Mission director.

Throughout the year I have been able to accomplish the following things with the Lord's help:

1. I coordinated travel plans for the overseers.
2. Received and answered many emails, phone calls, Facebook Messenger messages and Whatsapps messages to put a number on!
3. Zion Assembly is now represented in 46 countries.
5. In November, I attended the Youth Convention here in Cleveland.
6. In December, Sister Donna Pounders and I made a trip to Haiti me twith Bishop Saintinel Hostellus. We were able to visit several of the churches, missions and conducted meetings with several pastors and leaders. I have worked diligently over the past 3 months trying to get Bishop Hostellus and his translator, Brother Patrick to be able to attend this General Assembly. Brother Patrick's passport was

filled out incorrectly making it impossible for him to attend.

7. In December, Brother Jim Orange and I made a trip to Guatemala for the National Convention and to conduct the School of Ministry. Before the trip, arrangements were made for the following overseers to attend: Eugenio Cespedes and son from Costa Rica; Freddie Garcia, overseer of Nicaragua; Nolvin Hernandez, National Youth Director & pastor from Honduras; Bani Rangel, overseer of Venezuela; Danny Ramirez, overseer of Mexico. Many thanks to Ricardo Valenzuela, overseer of Guatemala and his lovely wife and family for their wonderful hospitality.

8. I attended and preached in the South Carolina Regional Convention.

9. Prepared paperwork and oversaw the distribution of the allotments for the Overseers and mission workers on a quarterly basis. With the assistance of General Treasurer, we have been able to issue debit cards to some of our overseers which helps eliminate some of the obstacles in getting out the allotments.

11. I would like to thank Norie Garavito, Danny Ramirez, Renetta Kelton, Roberto Lopez, and Miguel Garcia, Jr. in assisting in translating and also with conference calls that I made.

12. I would like to thank also Marie Crook and Renetta Kelton for their help in the office.

13. Wrote one article for the *Voice of Zion* and assisted Brother Phillips in monthly editing.

14. Attended ABC committee meetings at Pigeon Forge, TN and during the School of Ministry.

15. While in Pigeon Forge for ABC committee meeting, I joined Bishop Phillips and greeted the Ladies that attended the Ladies Retreat.

19. Made 15 local church visits.

20. Submitted monthly reports and tithes.

21 Traveled 13, 000 miles by air and 15,000 miles by automobile.

Thanks to my wife for all of her support and love.

Humbly submitted,
Scott E. Neill, *World Mission Director*

Assistant Publisher

Greetings to the 15TH Annual General Assembly

I would like to thank the Lord for the opportunity to serve in this position. The printed material is the only way to make a lasting impact on the world. Thoughts and ideas are preserved and will always be available for others. As one has said, “Collecting your thoughts will not cost you a penny.” We are trying to make sure that future generations can look from this time in history.

After the 2017 General Assembly, we formatted and sent to print the *Assembly Minutes*. By doing our own publishing, in house, we are able to cut printing cost in half.

We were able to publish a new book written by Brother Phillips entitled, “*Mystery of Sin*”. It is presently being translated into Spanish and our plan is to publish it within the next few months.

Along with the minutes and new book, we have prepared and printed ministers and church treasury report books. Again cutting printing in half.

Thank the Lord for all that we were able to accomplish this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott E. Neill

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” Isaiah 52:7

General Treasurer's Financial Report

Zion Assembly Church of God

15th Annual General Assembly Financial Summary

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

SUMMARY OF ALL FUNDS:

	Balance Forward	Total Income	Total Expenses	Ending Balance
Checking Account (Operating Funds)	\$83,854.31	\$428,227.20	\$423,893.44	\$88,188.07
College Fund Account	\$46,385.68	\$125,293.06	\$115,718.86	\$55,959.88
Tabernacle Fund Account	\$9,479.55	\$3,139.63	\$0.00	\$12,619.18
PayPal Checking Account	\$479.64	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$479.64
PayPal Online Account	\$833.00	\$405.98	\$463.56	\$775.42
TOTAL: ALL ACCOUNTS/FUNDS	\$141,032.18	\$557,065.87	\$540,075.86	\$158,022.19

Fund Balances in Checking Account:

Fund	Balance Forward	Total Income	Total Expenses	Ending Balance
Emergency Fund	\$3,042.51	\$3,847.59	\$500.00	\$6,390.10
Ladies Retreat Fund	\$6,864.93	\$18,681.16	\$14,819.87	\$10,726.22
Missions Fund	\$53,479.48	\$171,487.13	\$171,484.46	\$53,482.15
School of Ministry Fund	\$1,552.61	\$13,506.17	\$8,676.80	\$6,381.98
Spanish Voice of Zion Fund	\$1,389.39	\$29.00	\$0.00	\$1,418.39
Sunday School/Orphanage Fund	\$6,892.62	\$17,274.62	\$9,800.00	\$14,367.24
Tithe/General Fund	\$642.27	\$184,249.22	\$208,197.42	-\$23,305.93
Voice of Zion Fund	\$1,002.96	\$8,076.50	\$7,585.39	\$1,494.07
Youth-Media Fund	\$8,987.54	\$11,075.81	\$2,829.50	\$17,233.85
CHECKING ACCOUNT TOTALS	\$83,854.31	\$428,227.20	\$423,893.44	\$88,188.07

International Ministries Properties Mortgage

	Balance Forward	Principal Paid	Interest Paid	Mortgage Balance
Mortgage-International Properties	\$131,646.63	\$131,646.33	\$1,221.47	\$0.00

Department of Education/Media Ministries

Greetings to the 15TH Annual General Assembly

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 29:2

I am thankful for the opportunity to have served this year in the Education and Media departments. I want to thank my wife, Grace and our children for supporting me in this position, constantly praying and assisting me where needed. I also want to thank the Cleveland congregation for supporting me as their pastor and in the broader mission of the church.

I appreciate being able to work with our Presiding Bishop. I am thankful that I have been able to learn about the proper administration of the church. His knowledge and wisdom regarding ministry and his depth of knowledge regarding church history has provided me with a better perspective of how to reach the lost with the Gospel and how to reach the other sheep with the message of the church.

Below is a concise report of my activities for the year:

1. After speaking to the Presiding Bishop and many pastors and state overseers, I developed a plan for the education and media departments.
2. Worked with the Presiding Bishop in mapping out a broad vision for our Bible College.
3. Investigated the requirements and process by which the Bible College could grant degrees with the approval of the state of Tennessee.
4. Investigated the requirements and process by which the Bible College could receive accreditation.
5. Worked with the Presiding Bishop and the World Mission director in the planning of the expansion of headquarters. Met with architects and builders in regards to the building plan.
6. Developed the layout of what is expected from each of our future Bible College courses.
7. Investigated the best learning management system for the administration of the courses online.
8. Purchased domain names for the future use of the church and Bible College.
9. Began the creation of the Bible Church online course.
10. Updated Zion Assembly website monthly with the current Sunday School literature.

11. Updated Zion Assembly website with all the General Assembly Minutes.
12. Updated Zion Assembly website with other various updates and news as needed.
13. Developed online content plan for Zion Assembly emphasizing the best way to represent the church online.
14. Wrote the forward for the book, *Mystery of Sin* authored by Bishop Phillips.
15. Attended and instructed at the School of Ministry in Northern California, Southern California and Tennessee. Boosted the future Bible college and gauged interest of those who attended. We recorded many of the classes. Also tested live streaming one of the classes on Facebook.
16. Attended and preached at state conventions in Northern California, Southern California, South Carolina and Tennessee. I boosted both the media and education departments. I boosted the future bible college and gauged interest of those that attended.
17. At the Southern California convention, I taught a session on the use of Social Media by the church.
18. Attended Camp Jubilee in Tennessee. Gauged the interest of our young people in our Bible College.
19. Attended the regional winter retreat in Tennessee.
20. Attended the Youth Convention in Cleveland. Worked with the Youth Ministries director in raising money for media.
21. Visited nine churches. Conducted 1 revival. Preached several special services.
22. Preached a youth service in a non-denominational fellowship campmeeting.
23. As pastor in Cleveland I preached weekly and worked to build the local congregation. Used this experience to adapt our plans in the education and media departments to make sure that all that we do will benefit our local churches.
24. Attended ABC committee meetings in Pigeon Forge and Cleveland.
25. Submitted my monthly reports and tithes.

Thanks to my wife, my children and our home church for their constant support and love.

Humbly submitted,
Anton Burnette

Sunday School Director

Greetings to the 15th Annual General Assembly

I thank God He has given me opportunity to serve the church in the capacity of Sunday School Services director again this year. It is an honor that I value deeply.

As director I initiated outreach events that promote Sunday School attendance on the local level. I oversaw the electronic distribution of the Sunday School material each month and managed information sent in from the local churches as to their growth. We currently email the Faith-N-Focus material both in English and Spanish to 340 plus individuals each month, many of whom are Sunday School superintendents and pastors who make copies and distribute the lessons in their local churches and missions. The lessons are also available each month on the International website for easy downloading.

This year, many of our churches reported several outreach activities as well as successful Vacation Bible Schools throughout the summer. These wonderful activities along with attendance records are reported each quarter on the website. We encourage each church to submit quarterly reports to the Sunday School Services director via email. The information received is beneficial toward recording growth in our Sunday School Department.

We wish to commend our local churches for their support of the orphanage work in Zion Assembly. A total of \$17,2742 was received for this worthy cause. By each local church sending in 50% of the Sunday School offerings, the material and spiritual needs of these precious children are being tended to.

This year we are pleased to recognize five churches for their excellence in giving to support the orphanage work in Zion Assembly.

1st: \$2,078.94 Greenville, SC
2nd: \$1,421.20 West Mobile, AL
3rd: \$1,242.70 Cleveland, TN

Honorable mention: Goshen, IN (\$1,036.60) and Taylors, SC (\$1,032.74)
I was honored to attend the following events to promote the work of Sunday School outreach:

Promote our Fall Outreach entitled, “Come Fall In Love with God’s Word”
Accompanied the World Missions director to Haiti
Attended the South Central Regional Convention

Respectfully Submitted,
Donna Pounders

Ladies' Ministries Director

Greetings to the 15th Annual General Assembly

I am humbled and honored to have served the wonderful ladies of Zion Assembly this past year. I am thankful and grateful to the Lord for providing me the inspiration needed and for allowing me to lean on Him for guidance. All glory and honor belong to Him for all that was accomplished!

This year's retreats were held in Ontario, California and in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Our theme was taken from Psalm 119:133, "Order my steps in the Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." The Lord's presence was surely with us during the retreats. Each service ushered in God's presence, confirming His Word through inspiring testimonies, anointed preaching and Spirit-filled singing. Both weekends were filled with praying, dancing in the Spirit, and shouting as we worshipped together and encouraged one another to walk in holiness and with eternal purpose.

Our total attendance for both retreats was 193...to God be the glory! It was apparent that each lady left the retreat encouraged and determined to walk in the path of God's Word. Many could be heard saying, "Walk on sisters....walk on!" as they departed to their homes.

Zion Assembly women are the most beautiful women in the world, both inside and out, and I am honored to serve the Lord alongside each of them!

This past year I enjoyed the company of my sisters in Christ during the following events:

Attended the Ladies Retreat in Ontario, California
Attended the Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge, TN
Accompanied the World Missions director to Haiti
Attended the South Central Regional Convention

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Pounders.

International Youth Director

Greetings to the 15th Annual General Assembly

I Corinthians 15:57 *“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

I give God glory and honor for all that was accomplished this past year and I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to serve in this position. It has been a great blessing to work with Zion Youth!

I planned and conducted two Youth Conventions in November 2018. The Western Regional Convention was held at Arleta, CA and the Eastern Regional Convention at Cleveland, TN. The theme for the Victorious Youth Department was “Take a Stand, Be An Example”, which was presented at the conventions. A challenge was given to the youth to take a stand in word, prayer, service, outreach, faithfulness, and commitment, and they were challenged to be active in raising funds for the Media Ministries. I have received many reports from local youth leaders and pastors that the youth were truly blessed in these conventions and were challenged to do more for the Lord and His church.

I attended and spoke at the Leadership meeting that was held at the International Ministries Center. I also taught a class at the Winter Retreat. I attended the Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge and showcased our Zion young ladies on Saturday afternoon. I taught a class on prayer at the church in Columbus, MS. Attended the School of Ministry at Cleveland. Directed the Junior and Senior camps held at Camp Jubilee in Tennessee. I have written five Sunday School teen lessons. To God be the glory for all that was accomplished this year in the Victorious Youth Ministries.

I want to thank all of the State Youth directors, along with the local Youth Leaders and pastors for their support, prayers, and dedication to Zion Youth.

Total Youth Media Funds raised this year was **\$11,0754.82.**

We give special recognition to the following local youth groups who raised the most funds:

Idamay, WV **\$872.19**
Cleveland, TN **\$987.00**
Greenville, SC **\$1,324.15**

Continued on next page

Personal Statistics:

Revivals Conducted: 1

Messages Preached: 26

Saved: 2

Offerings: \$4,060

Mileage: 4,583

Air Miles: 3,628

I want to encourage our youth to reach higher for greater expectations as we work to build the Kingdom of God and Zion Assembly Church of God.

Humbly submitted,

Pamela Jones

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NIV)

International Shepherding Ministries Director

Greetings to the 15th Annual General Assembly

It is an honor and privilege to serve the Lord and to work for the Him in any capacity and I would like to thank our Presiding Bishop for having confidence in me to appoint me to this position.

I was able to travel with Bishop Carter to the local church in Toronto, Canada and assist in revival there. Attended and spoke in the Regional Minister's Convention in West Virginia. Attended the Couple's Retreat in Ghent, WV. Attended the Eastern Youth Convention in Cleveland, TN. I attended and spoke in the meeting in January in Cleveland with the Presiding Bishop. Attended and spoke at the Mideast Regional Fasting and Prayer Conference in WV. Attended Ladies Retreat. Attended the School of Ministry and groundbreaking service for the new Headquarters Complex in Cleveland. Served on staff of the Mideast Regional Youth Camp. Attended and spoke at the Mideast Regional Convention.

I corresponded by letter three times with the Pastors and by phone and letter with the Regional Overseers. Visited 15 local churches. Served as local Ladies Ministries Director for any local church in Roanoke, VA.

My thanks to all of the local Shepherding Ministries directors for the love and concern shown to the precious souls that we have been entrusted to care for, and especially to the pastors who have responded to the call for help in raising the money for our Emergency Fund this year.

I want to thank Bishop Carter for his assistance in my travel and work this year, and I thank my local church for their prayers and support and I trust I've been a faithful worker.

Respectfully submitted,

Wilma Carter

International SYNC Ministries Director

Greetings to the 15th Annual General Assembly

I thank God for His faithfulness and His protecting hand this past year.

It has been a great honor to have worked in the *SYNC* and *Voice of Zion* Ministries. It has been my special honor to have been permitted to work with those at the International Offices who labor to put out the *Voice of Zion*. It has been astounding to me to see the amount of work and time it takes to produce, publish, and mail out the magazine each month. Marie Crook, Renetta Kelton, Dale Phillips and Bishop Phillips each labor long and hard month after month.

I wish to thank each of the regional *Voice of Zion/SYNC* directors for the great work they do on behalf of the *Voice of Zion* and *SYNC* ministries. Your work for God does not go unnoticed.

I have been honored to work with Bishop Phillips in the development of our own evangelistic tracts. We are using various articles taken directly from the *Voice of Zion* and other books published by Zion Assembly. The back of each pamphlet includes our contact information. My prayer is to be able to reach a broader audience than we are now reaching. Our intent is to introduce others to Zion Assembly's unique and timely message.

I was privileged to attend the regional conventions in Tennessee and Kentucky. Sent out postcards as reminders to all the *Voice of Zion* subscribers of their need to renew their subscriptions. During December mailed out Christmas cards with a "note of thanks" to each subscriber for their support of the *Voice of Zion*. Periodically sent out letters of encouragement to the overseers, pastors and the regional workers. Purchased and sent out invitations for *SYNC* luncheon. With the help of Alice Jones and my faithful family, we planned and organized the *SYNC* luncheon. We spoke with various caterers, purchased food and supplies for the luncheon, purchased decorations and decorated the luncheon area, as well as planned and organized the *SYNC* program with the assistance of Bishop Anton Burnette for the General Assembly. I put together a *SYNC* and *Voice of Zion* table in the lobby of the General Assembly using the artistic and educational design provided by Amy Gregory.

I am thankful for God's faithfulness for again providing for the financial needs of the *SYNC* program.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenda Major

2018 ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE AND DOCTRINE REPORT

We your Assembly Business Committee, after prayerful and careful consideration, present this report for your consideration.

Section I

Deeding of Local Church Properties

We want once again to bring to the attention of this Assembly an important resolution concerning local church properties. The 2005 Assembly Minutes, page 16, reads as follows:

Local church properties belong to the local church. However, there are many aspects to be considered in deeding properties to protect the local church from loss. We recommend that a standard deed from the Zion Assembly Church of God be drafted by an attorney, and that local church property should be deeded to the local church property trustees of:

Illustration:

Zion Assembly Church of God
located at 316 Victory Lane
Sanctified City, NC 24238
International Offices at 5512 Waterlevel Highway
Cleveland, TN 37323

In regard to Local Church Trustees, the 2005 Assembly Minutes, page 16, reads as follows:

“We recommend that the local church, in a regular quarterly business meeting, select at least three local church trustees (men or women who are familiar with and established in Biblical principles as outlined by the General Assembly). The trustees will be authorized to endorse all legal documents pertinent to the daily operation of the local church that require their signature. All business transactions should have the approval of the local church in business conference and be in harmony with the rulings of the General Assembly. Those selected should be reaffirmed in the first business meeting after each General Assembly and serve

as long as they retain the unanimous approval of the local church. In the case of death or moral failure, a new trustee should be selected at the next quarterly business meeting.”

We recommend the following replace the former statement

Local church property is to be held in trust by at least three members (“trustees”— men and/or women) established in biblical principles as outlined by the General Assembly. The trustees shall be nominated by the pastor and appointed by the local church in regular business conference. The trustees will be authorized to endorse all legal documents pertinent to the daily operation of the local church that require their signature. All business transactions should have the approval of the local church in business conference and be in harmony with the rulings of the General Assembly. Those selected should be reaffirmed in the first business meeting after each General Assembly and serve as long as they retain the unanimous approval of the local church. In the case of death or moral failure, a new trustee should be selected at the next quarterly business meeting.

In the event, for various reasons, that the church is diminished to two members or less, the International Presbytery of the church [i.e., the Presiding Bishop and national, state, or regional overseer] in counsel with the remaining members is hereby authorized to disband the church at its discretion. The members who remain shall be transferred (enrolled) to the nearest or most convenient local church, and the International Offices [Central Offices] of the church, located at 5512 Waterlevel Highway, Cleveland, TN 37323, shall have the option to assume or not to assume ownership of that property. If the decision is made to sell the local property, any indebtedness shall be settled before any funds are distributed for other purposes.

Section II

Irreconcilable Factions and Local Church Property

Be it further resolved, that in cases in which the members of a local church become visibly and irreconcilably divided in opinion over an issue regarding the doctrine, government, or discipline of the church, the members remaining faithful and consistent with the rulings of the General Assembly, and in harmony with International Presbytery of the church [i.e., the Presiding Bishop and the national, state, or regional overseer] shall be considered the rightful owners of the local property and the funds in local church treasury.

Section III

Social Media Platform

In order to maintain our intrinsic unity and united message to the world we recommend that our members and ministers use wisdom and discretion when

utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Posts, tweets and such like that deal with doctrine and/or spiritual matters should be in harmony with the rulings set forth by the General Assembly. If an individual feels he has received additional light that has not been ruled upon by the Assembly, he should put his opinion in writing for the Assembly Business Committee (ABC) to review; and if the ABC agrees that the opinion is sound and beneficial to the church, it may be presented to the Assembly for consideration. Controversial and/or offensive subjects that do not relate to biblical truths should be avoided. Though our proclamation of Bible truth may offend, our attitude and conduct should not. It seems wise to follow the counsel of Solomon in regard to this matter: “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established” and “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov. 11.14; 15.22).

Section IV

Ministers and the General Assembly Rulings

We feel it necessary to remind the ministers of two important rulings of the Assembly from 2008 and 2011.

“Since the underlying purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and understanding among the saints and throughout the whole church, we recommend that special care be taken by each overseer, pastor, and local church to operate within the guidelines and recommendations of the General Assembly. We further recommend that each local church be informed of the business acts of the General Assembly immediately following the annual event. (Local churches having questions or concerns regarding the actions of the General Assembly should be directed to the Assembly Business Committee for review and clarification)” (2008 Assembly Minutes, p. 18).

“We recommend that each pastor read the Assembly resolutions to the local church in order to keep those not able to attend the annual gathering informed of the business acts of the church. It is not necessary, however, for the business acts to be ratified: for the Assembly is the “highest tribunal of authority in the church” (2011 Assembly Minutes, p. 43).

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 church’s 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 the 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 (Matt. 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 (Gen. 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 (Matt. 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, we bind ourselves to live and walk as one body by the decisions agreed upon in this sacred meeting.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that each pastor abide by any and all Assembly rulings and inform the local church of any and all Assembly rulings and declarations after each Assembly. This will help maintain unity and mutual understanding within the church's fellowship.

Section V

Ministerial Allotment

The last time the Assembly adjusted the "full-paying" allotment of the ministry was in 2014. Inflation has increased the cost of living by approximately 4%. The current weekly allotment is set at \$935.00. This committee recommends that we increase the weekly allotment by \$40.00, bringing the amount to \$975.00 per week, or \$4,225.00 per month, which represents a 4% increase since 2014 (a bit less than 1% per year). This applies only where funds are available.

Section VI

In the Event of the Death of the Presiding Bishop

Section I, page 43 of the 2017 Assembly Minutes, titled "The Simultaneous Death and/or Moral Failure or Physical Incapacity of the Presiding Bishop and World Mission Director," states:

"The Assembly has decreed that in the event of the death and/or moral failure or physical incapacity of the Presiding Bishop (PB) the World Mission Director (WMD) will fill the office of the PB until the next Assembly. However, no procedure is in place in the event that both the PB and WMD should die or become incapacitated at the same time.

We recommend, therefore, that in the event of the death and/or moral or physical failure of the PB and WMD at the same time, the secretary

of the International Executive Council (IEC) call a meeting of the Council and preside over the selection of a moderator for the meeting. The selection of moderator should be accepted unanimously. The meeting will then proceed to select an interim Presiding Bishop to fill the position until the Assembly. Then that Assembly will follow the normal procedure of selecting the Presiding Bishop.”

We recommend the following changes be made:

“In the event of the death and/or moral or physical failure of the Presiding Bishop, the secretary of the International Executive Council (IEC) shall call a meeting of the Council and preside over the selection of a moderator for the meeting. The selection of moderator should be accepted unanimously. The council will then proceed to select an interim Presiding Bishop to fill the position until the Assembly. Then the Assembly will follow the normal procedure of selecting the Presiding Bishop.”

Section VII

Zion Assembly Bible College and Seminary

We recommend that the name of the future Bible college be named “Zion Assembly Bible College and Seminary” barring any legal issues that may arise.

Section VIII

School of Ministry Institute

We fully support Section IV of the Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address titled, “School of Ministry Institute.” It is apparent that the School of Ministry has played an active role in the development of our ministers and members as well being the primary seed for envisioning our future Bible College. We recommend, therefore, the name of the school be changed to School of Ministry Institute (SMI).

Section IX

International Properties Building Fund (IPBF)

We fully support Section III of the Presiding Bishop’s annual address, titled “Go Up . . . Bring Wood and Build the House: Pressing Forward with our Vision to Expand our International Ministries Complex”. He states that the importance of this endeavor is seen in three primary reasons: 1) the current facilities are not adequate for the day to day operations of the International Offices and more space is desperately needed; 2) in order to plan for the future growth of the church it would seem wise that while we expand the facilities for more office space we should also include adequate space and facilities for our envisioned Bible college; and 3) the

headquarters addition and Bible college will serve as a visible marker that Zion Assembly is a fellowship that knows where it is going and is determined to get there.

Accordingly, we recommend also that the current “Tabernacle Offering” received monthly in the local church toward a future tabernacle and sent in to headquarters with the treasurer’s monthly report, be continued but now be called International Properties Building Fund (IPBF). This monthly contribution from the local churches will help with the monthly mortgage payment on the International Ministries Complex expansion and upkeep. We recommend also that the funds currently held in the “Tabernacle Fund” (\$12,806.19) be transferred to the IPBF.

In addition to the funds transferred from the “Tabernacle Fund,” we recommend that the funds held in the “Bible College Fund” (\$22,237.46) also be transferred to the IPBF.

Further, since the International Offices and the envisioned Bible college are (and will continue to be) the most formidable and utilized facility for teaching, training, and “sending forth” of laborers to the mission field, we recommend that 20% of the funds received for World Missions be placed into the “International Properties Building Fund” toward financing the expansion of the International Ministries Complex.

Section X 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.

Section XI Endorsements for International Executive Council

We fully endorse the nominations of the Presiding Bishop to serve with him on the International Executive Council for the 2018-2019 Assembly year: Scott E. Neill, Bruce Sullivan, Joseph A. Steele, Rick Ferrell, L. W. Carter, and Anton Burnette.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Neill, *Chairman*
Zachary Snyder, *Secretary*
Elijah Wafula, Anton Burnette, Tod Deakle,
L. W. Carter, Jim C. Orange, Pete Sarry

Doctrine Committee Report-2018 General Assembly

The Committee has been asked to clarify the significance and importance of Communion and Feet Washing, and also the office of “evangelist”.

Lord’s Supper/Communion

Communion was instituted by Christ on the night of his betrayal (1 Cor. 11.23) and was practiced regularly by the early church (Acts 2.46; 1 Cor. 11.20-29). Communion served 3 important purposes.

- 1. Communion was implemented to serve as a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice as the means for man’s righteousness** (1 Cor. 11.26; 2 Cor. 5.21). Jesus commanded that this sacred meal be observed “in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11.24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. It is significant that Jesus implemented “Communion” immediately following the Passover meal. Just as Passover was commemorated by the Jews to remind them of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity and protection from death, Communion was instituted by Christ as a reminder of our deliverance from sin and death, through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God - Jesus Christ (Jn. 6..53-56).
- 2. Communion was implemented to remind the members of the family of God of their “common salvation” (Jude 3).** *“For (we) are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3.26; see also 1 Cor. 10.7). Therefore, Communion is meant to be celebrated with one’s brothers and sisters in Christ as a reminder of our spiritual unity (Eph. 4.3).
- 3. Communion gives the opportunity for self-examination and personal cleansing.** Communion provides the child of God an opportunity to seek the Lord in self-reflection, to actively and intimately look upon his or her life to make sure there is nothing causing a separation between them and the Lord. This reflection in prayer and seeking the Lord, allows one to not only be assured of their right standing with God, but also with their fellow man. It is therefore, imperative to remaining in the center of God’s will. One should never partake of Communion without reflecting on the sacredness of its symbolism or without examining one’s self for any offenses against Christ (Ps. 139.23; 1 Cor. 11.28; 2 Cor. 7.1; Col. 3.8; Matt. 6.12). *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup”* (1 Cor 11.28).

Feet Washing

Feet Washing was also instituted by Christ on the night of his betrayal (John 13.1-11). The timing of its implementation serves to emphasize its importance. Though providing water for one to wash their own feet was commonly practiced in ancient times, it was highly unusual for anyone, except a servant, to wash another's feet. Therefore, Christ's actions and commandment to wash one another's feet instituted a new practice which served to graphically teach His followers important kingdom principles. Feet washing was instituted by Christ to remind the child of God of three important principles.

- 1. Feet washing was instituted to encourage each member of the body of Christ to have the mindset of a servant** (Phil. 2.5-7). As Children of God, we are to be guided by two commandments (Matt. 22.40). We are to love God above all others (Matt. 22.36-37; Matt. 10.:37) and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22.39; John 13.34). Love is selfless, always seeking the betterment of the object of its affection (1 Cor. 13.5). Therefore, love causes us to serve God (Matt. 4.10) and serve others (Gal. 5:13). In feet washing Jesus graphically taught the principle of servant leadership. Whether in the home or at church, Christian leaders are to rule with a servant mindset always putting the will of God and the needs of others above their own will and own needs.
- 2. Feet washing serves to remind the participant to maintain a humble spirit.** Just as today, feet washing in ancient times, was considered a lowly task. It is very difficult for the proud to literally wash the feet of another. Therefore, Feet Washing was instituted as a means of graphically reminding one “...*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly . . .*” (Rom 12.3; See also James 4.6; 1 Pet. 5.5).
- 3. Feet washing is also a time of personal cleansing.** In ancient times, a person's feet were usually covered with sandals. Therefore, while the rest of the body remained relatively dirt free, the feet usually became covered with dirt and filth simply by traveling the ancient roads. Similarly, the child of God has been cleansed by regeneration (Titus 3.5), but is susceptible to unintentional defilement of their actions and attitudes simply by living in a world of sin (2 Pet. 2.8). Therefore, the child of God must maintain a constant vigilance and take time for personal cleansing (2 Cor. 7.1; Matt. 6.12). For this reason (among others) Christ instituted feet washing as a time of personal examination. We do not need a total regeneration but to cleanse ourselves from individual actions or attitudes which may have unwittingly entered our lives. “*Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all*” (Jn. 13.10).

Evangelist

In the early years of the New Testament church, it is clear the apostles of Jesus Christ traveled to various cities and villages evangelizing (Acts 10.34-44; 11.20) and establishing churches as necessary (14.23). The establishing of churches necessitated the appointment of local church pastors to oversee the spiritual wellbeing of the local membership as well as to continue the evangelistic outreach in their specific region.

While the apostles of Christ were heavily involved in evangelism, it is also clear, there was another office which shared this trans-local ministry, namely, the evangelist. The word *evangelist* means “a proclaimer of the Gospel.” Therefore, an evangelist is one who is specifically called, and uniquely gifted, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Though the Bible lists *evangelist* as one of the five ministry gifts given to the church (Eph. 4.11), there is only one mention of a person specifically called an “evangelist” in the New Testament and that was Philip (Acts 21.8). Therefore, in seeking to understand the ministry of “evangelist”, it is critical to examine both the meaning of the word and the ministry of Philip. Acts 8 gives the account of Philip’s outreach to Samaria (vv. 5-12) as well as his call to personally evangelize the Ethiopian eunuch (vv. 26-40). These accounts demonstrate the proper focus of an evangelist.

While the pastoral ministry is local in a strict sense, the evangelist’s ministry clearly transcends the local arena. Perhaps this is the reason “evangelist” is listed before pastor and teacher in Eph. 4.11.

While the ministry of the “apostles of the Lamb” was vital, it also seems to have been limited to a particular time and for a particular purpose (Eph. 2.20; 2 Pet. 3.1). This makes the outreach ministry of the modern “evangelist” even more crucial today. Though the ministry gift of evangelist is mentioned in scripture, the modern ministry of “missionary” is not. This committee believes it very likely that the ministry of “missionary” is encompassed in the ministry of “evangelist” and gives further clarification to this office.

This committee recommends therefore the church recognize the unique, trans-local ministry of evangelist and encourage all evangelists to be keenly focused on their calling and make every effort to “*make full proof of [their] ministries*” (2 Tim. 4.5). Each evangelist should follow the example of Philip and be looking for opportunities to share the Gospel especially in “new fields.” We also recommend the evangelists to work under the authority of the overseers of each region in the establishment of churches through evangelistic efforts.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce Sullivan, *Chairman*
Yomi Adekunle, J.J. Davis,
Rick Ferrell, Tom Brown,
Alternate: Jimmy Johnson, Trevor Graves

Wade H. Phillips



Presiding Bishop

Marie Spurling Crook



Chief Clerk

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

Cleveland, TN
September 8, 2018

Bible Pledge

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I promise to read and study it, and by the grace of God to obey it. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Church Pledge

I promise to walk together with my brothers and sisters in Zion Assembly according to the light we have received together in our General Assemblies. I will be faithful to our commitment to proclaim the "whole counsel of God," and will work together with my fellow members under the church's divine government and discipline. I will strive always to keep and promote the faith "once delivered to the saints"---one God, one Faith, one Mind, and one Church for all. Amen.

Introduction

One of the primary aims in choosing "**Pressing Forward**" as the theme for this Assembly is to keep us mindful of the original charter for Zion Assembly; namely, to restore the distinct identity and prophetic vision of the church of the Bible; so that we, in turn, can fulfill her mission in the world. For we knew in April 2004 [even as we know now] that the authority of the church is tied to her prophetic identity: so much so that if her prophetic identity is lost or covered over by darkness, the authority of the church proportionately fades away into the same darkness. This darkness, in turn, engulfs the doctrine, government, discipline, and very life of the church. We have seen this scenario played out in church history on many occasions, both by examples in the Old Testament and in the early centuries of the New Testament church; and more recently in our own experience in our former fellowship.

On the other hand, when the church comes forth from the darkness by the power and glory of Christ, "*and His glory [is seen upon Her]*" (Is.

60.1-3), her authority also returns, commensurate with His evident glory, His *shekinah*; and in turn the doctrine, government, discipline and life of the church begin to be restored and reestablished.

It was with this understanding in mind that we tried to reason with our brethren in our former fellowship in the 1980s and right on up to 2004, warning and pleading with them, often in tears, to reconsider their thinking regarding the misguided ideas they were advocating and adopting, including the compromises and radical changes in regard to the church's government, teachings, and discipline. But our pleas fell on deaf ears, for the leaders had hardened their hearts even against the very counsel of the Holy Spirit himself (cf. Acts 7.51; Gal. 3.1-3; Heb. 3.7-10; 2 Tim. 4.3).

But it should be pointed out that neither did many who joined Zion Assembly in April 2004 grasp the fundamental reasons for our actions at that time; and many since then have covenanted with us but have not been truly converted to our faith and the prophetic vision of the church. Even now many believe we reorganized merely to reestablish the biblical view of divorce and remarriage and plainness in dress and outward appearance, and a few other doctrines and practices traditionally held sacred and considered important. As it has turned out, we have discovered that most within our tradition of faith did not have a true "vision of the church": that is, a sound understanding of the nature and principles of the church of the Bible. Comparatively few in fact have comprehended that the most serious casualties of the "falling away" that took place between 1980 and 2004 was the government and authority of the church. For these attributes represent the very core of the church, the very nature of the church as Christ's *ekklesia*---the 'called out' and duly ordained assembly of God, which is authorized, gifted and empowered to evangelize the nations and to teach, govern, and discipline God's people (Mt. 16.18-19; 18. 15-20; Mk. 13.34; Lu. 19-12-13, 17; Jn. 20.23; Acts 1.13-26; 6.1-7; 15.1-16.5; 1Cor. 5.1-13; et al). It was with this understanding of the word *ekklesia* in mind that Jesus declared, "***Upon this rock I will build my [ekklesia].***" Theocratic government and authority are therefore primary pillars of God's church; the doctrine, discipline, ministry and mission of the church stand in proper order and derive their authority, proper function, and effect from these two primary pillars. (See Section V for a further explanation of the term, *ekklesia*).

It is this prophetic vision of the church---a "vision" cast by the Old Testament prophets and Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament---that we have been laboring since 2004 to form in the minds and hearts of our people. This is no more or less than the very aim of the apostle Paul

in his ministry in the New Testament, namely, to teach and encourage the saints to ***“continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”*** (Col. 1.23); indeed, it was the primary aim of the council at Jerusalem in Acts 15; namely, that the ***“decrees [dogmas]”*** agreed upon in that sacred assembly (Acts 15.28), and ***“ordaineazd of the apostles and elders”*** be circulated and delivered everywhere so that ***“the churches were established in the faith”*** (16.4-5). I don’t believe it is too much to say that we too, like the apostle Paul, have been ***“travailing in birth”*** until this vision of the church is born again in the hearts of our people; and they are truly converted to the faith, government, authority, discipline, and global mission of the church.

A right view of the church is important

Our deep convictions about the “church message” are based on the prominence that Jesus and the apostles placed upon the church: for they taught that the Father sent the Son into the world to set His church in order, to purchase it with His own blood, and to proclaim His truth to the ends of the earth (Lu. 6.12-16; Jn. 17.1-26; Acts 20.28; Eph. 1.14). The church then, after all, is the Father’s mediatorial instrument to reconcile the world to Himself! (Jn. 17.3-26; 2 Cor. 3.1-6; 5.18-20; Eph. 1.3-6).

The church and ***“the faith”*** go together. The church’s authority, ministries, doctrine, and discipline are in fact indispensable gifts to evangelize the world and to govern and guide God’s people until they are united together into ***“one fold”*** and made “rapture ready” (Jn. 10.16; 17.20-23; Eph. 4.11-16; 5.26-32).

It is our purpose, therefore, to plant the seed of the church in the hearts and minds of believers throughout the world and to awaken in them an ecclesiological consciousness, that is, to create an awareness in them of the church of the Bible and its divine mission. For it is evident that comparatively few Christians today have given much serious thought to the nature and characteristics of the church as it is revealed in the Bible: the church we see so plainly operating in the Scriptures. This then is our peculiar burden in Zion Assembly. Others share with us a burden for the lost and many are zealous for basic evangelism, but few indeed have a biblical vision of the church and thus accordingly fail to understand that the vision of the church is connected with the fulfillment of the Great Commission: that the latter cannot be realized without the former. May the Lord help us, therefore, to be faithful stewards of this glorious message; and stir within us the zeal to carry it to the ends of the earth!

Section I

Who is He? . . . Who is She?

Jesus commissioned the church to go into all the world---to every nation---with a two-fold message: primarily, the message of repentance to a lost world, and secondarily, the full Gospel message to fellow believers---that is, the “*all things whatsoever*” message that Jesus taught and commanded to be observed (Mt. 28.20). This two-fold message necessarily includes the government, authority, teachings, discipline, and mission of the Gospel church (cf. Mt. 4.4; 16.18-19; 18.17-18; Mk. 8.38; Jn. 14.26; 15.15; 16.12-15; 20.23; Acts 15.1-16.5; 20.27; Eph. 4.11-16; 1 Tim. 3.15; 2 Tim. 3.14-16).

This two-fold message may be seen in the apostle Paul’s concluding words to the church at Ephesus regarding the mystery of marriage (Eph. 5.22-32). After giving instructions to the husband and wife, he then compares the sacred union to Christ and the church, saying, “*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*”. Observe carefully his words “***Christ AND the church***”. The apostle thus makes it plain that our message and ministry is incomplete if it does not include the revelation of the church, the body of Christ, as well as the revelation of Christ himself. Let us then be faithful always to “***speak concerning Christ AND the church!***”

“Who is He?”

Two of the most important and intriguing questions ever presented to men were posed by Jesus. The first was put to the Pharisees: “***What think ye of Christ?***” (Mt. 22.41-46). The second was put to His disciples: “***Whom do men say that I the Son of Man Am?***” (Mt. 16.13-19). It is difficult for us who are *born again* to imagine how puzzling these questions were when they were first asked: for indeed “***darkness [had covered] the earth, and gross [deep] darkness the people***” (Is. 60.2). The world was blinded by sin and Satan and thus “***comprehended not***” the glory and power of the Gospel in Christ (Jn. 1.5; 2 Cor. 4.4). The initial answer returned by the Pharisees shows that they had no special revelation of the deity of Jesus and His power to forgive sin and transform sinners into saints. Many assumed that He was no more than “*the carpenter’s son*” (Mt. 13.55); others that He was “*the son of David*”, that is, no more than a man and the natural heir to the throne of King David (Mt. 22.42). Others thought no more of Him than the unbelieving Gentiles; some even accusing Him of being *Beelzebub* (Gr. *Beelzebul*), the prince of demons who stood opposed

to the true God (Mt. 10.25; 12.24: Lu. 11.15-19). Some even accused Him of being the vilest of blasphemers, passing Himself off as the Son of God to cover the fact that He was in their warped imagination born of fornication, born a bastard (cf. Jn. 8.31-44).

The majority today, including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and cults like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons believe Jesus was a good man, even a prophet, the messiah, or a guru: but they don't believe He is Almighty God and equal with the Father; nor that He is the "*only begotten Son*" of the Father.

Jesus' Profound Declaration

But God's true church believes and proclaims, like Peter, that He is "*the Son of the Living God*"; and, like Thomas, that He is in fact "*Lord*" and "*God*" (Jn. 20.28). In fact, these profound responses to Jesus question---"*Whom do men say that I the Son of Man Am?*" identify the very foundation upon which God's true church stands. The revelation of His deity is the "*rock*" upon which the church is built; it is the "rock of revelatory confession" (Mt. 16.15-18; 1 Cor. 1.1-24). Thus, Jesus' profound declaration, "*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but My Father which is in heaven: and upon this rock I will build My church!*"

Jesus' further comment that the "*gates of hell shall not prevail against [the church]*" is the assurance that though the church may stumble, "fall away" and go into darkness, it will finally come forth in glory and power! Jesus' declaration here is therefore a prophecy: a prophecy predicting the fall of the church and her resurrection and final triumph! The assurance that the "*gates of hell shall not prevail against [the church]*" does not necessarily, however, apply to all of us here right now in this Assembly; nor does it imply that once we are in grace that we will always remain in grace; in fact, it rather signifies that God from the beginning foresaw in His prescient mind all who would freely choose to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil by the grace of God, and endure in their faith and testimony to the end; for He foresaw "*from the foundation of the world*" all who would of their own freewill faithfully endure and be presented to Christ "*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*" (Mt. 24.12-14; Eph. 1.3-14; 5.27; Rom. 8.28; 2 Thess. 2.13-14; 2 Tim. 1.9-12). Therefore, He foreordained [predestinated] men's destinies from eternity on the ground of His foreknowledge, not vice versa as the Calvinists teach; that is, He did not foreknow because He had decreed or foreordained, rather He foreordained or decreed because He foreknew

from eternity who would believe in Him and obey and serve Him to the end (Mt. 24.13-14; 1 Pet. 1.13-25; 2 Pet. 1.5-11; Rev. 22.17). It is thus that we sing, “Will you be among the Bride, or will you not” (cf. “When the Church of God Arises”, *Glorious Hymns*, p. 528).

Obviously then, the church is of utmost importance not only for the government and discipline [the perfection] of God’s people but as the special instrument to fulfill God’s primary plan for redemption---to evangelize the unsaved!

“Who is She?”

It is appropriate to ask, therefore, not only “*Who is He?*” but “*Who is she?*” Thus, the prophet:

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? (Song 6.10), and again, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” (8.5).

For the church is united together not only in Christ’s person (Jn. 15.1-7; 17.20-23; 2 Cor. 5.17) but yoked with Him in ministry and mission (Mt.11.29-30; 28.18-20; Eph. 4.1-16).

Just as sinners need to know who the Bridegroom is, so Christians caught in the chaos of denominationalism and independent churches need to know who and what the church is. As the saints under the Old Covenant wandered and were scattered upon every mountain and hill, so God’s people today have “*wandered . . . [and been] scattered upon all the face of the earth*” (Ezek. 34.6; see also Jer. 10.21; 23.2-5; 30.1; 31.10; Ezek. 11.16-17; 34.12; Jn. 10.16; 17.20-23; Eph. 2.11-22; 3.6; et al.) They must be taught that Christ has a “*fold*”, a “*building*”, a “*house*”, a “*city*”, a “*garner*”, a “*storehouse*”, a “*restingplace*” to unite together His scattered people in one “*holy nation*”, one visible body of Christ!

The church is thus a “*a peculiar people*”, “*a holy nation*”, a special corporation of believers distinguished from all other peoples in the earth (Ex. 19.5-8; Deut. 4.20; 7.6; 14.2, 21; 26.18; 1 Kg. 8.53; Ps. 135.4; Titus 2.14; 1 Pet. 2.9; et al.). Certainly, God’s church is not just another run-of-the-mill denomination or independent ministry man-handled to suit the whims and greed and pride of men.

The myth of an invisible, mystical body of Christ is plainly exposed by the revelation of the church in the Bible; for everywhere in the

narratives of the Scriptures, the church is shown to be a body of believers visibly connected and operating under one government and discipline, and laboring together to fulfill the same global mission. Further, the glorious end-time prophecies of the church depict her always as a “bride” foreordained to be exalted to heaven and presented to Christ ***“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white”***. Thus, the prophetic benediction by that heavenly multitude in the Apocalypse, ***“Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb”*** (Rev. 19.7-9).

God’s church looks different, acts different, walks different, and thinks different from common peoples and common churches in the world. She is special, peculiar! ***“Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people [nations] . . . that are upon the face of the earth”*** (Ex. 19.5; Deut. 7.6; 14.2). See, just as Christ is a special treasure unto us (Mt. 13.44-45); so, she is a special treasure [inheritance/possession] to Him! ***“That we should be to the praise of His glory . . .”*** (Eph. 1.12-14)

She is endowed with supernatural Gifts and Abilities

The church is transformed by God’s grace and power into a holy vessel. She is often caught up into glory and ***“made [to] sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!”*** (Eph. 1.3-4; 2.6). Eternity and Heaven are in her soul! She is presently being changed ***“from glory to glory”*** into the glorious image of Christ (2 Cor. 3.18). As such, she is in spiritual union with Him: and, in that state of spirituality and disciplined consecration, she is ***“unmovable”*** and ***“inseparable”*** from Him (Jn. 10.27-29; Rom. 8.35-39; 1 Cor. 15.58; Jude 19-24).

The intimate Union between Christ and the Church

The church is exalted in the prophetic Scriptures. The prophet Isaiah was moved by a vision of the church and wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit, saying,

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it”
(Is. 2.2).

How could the church not be exalted? in view of her glorious union with Christ, being betrothed to Him as His bride and body---"***flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone***"! And in view of the prophecies that depict her exaltation in glory (Eph. 5.27; Rev. 19.7-9; 21.2-3, 9-11). The members' intimate union with Christ and with one another exalts the church "***above all people***" on the face of the earth (Ex. 19.5; Deut. 7.6; 14.2; Ps. 135.4; Jn. 17.6-26). She is a "***holy nation***" set apart from all other nations in the world! Now observe; the church is depicted throughout the Scriptures as the very counterpart of Christ. This point cannot be overemphasized, for the ascended Christ, who now occupies the heavenly throne with the Father in glory, works His perfect will on earth through the Holy Ghost and the instrumentality of His church (Mk. 13.34; 2 Cor. 3. 2-3; 5.18-20). It is true that Christ is the source of the church's energy and strength, but, at the same time, she is His body---His hands, feet, eyes, ears, and vocal cords (Rom. 12.4-13; 1 Cor. 12-31; Eph. 4.4-16). Christ and the church are "***laborers together***", and the ministers and members are "***joint-heirs with Christ***", and will soon be "***glorified together***" with Him in the Rapture (Jn. 14.1-3; 17.24-25; Rom. 8.17; 1 Thess. 4.17-18).

We have elsewhere spoken and written of the almost endless metaphors, symbolic titles, types, and comparisons that depict the profound union between Christ and the church. The church is in fact revealed as the very counterpart of Christ: for example, Bridegroom/bride; Shepherd/fold; King/queen; Prince of Peace/city of peace; Adam/Eve; Isaac/Rebecca; Boaz/Ruth, etc. (For a more exhaustive list of comparisons, see Annual Address, 13th General Assembly, ***Assembly Minutes***, 2016, pp. 60-61)

The church is often depicted in identical terms with Christ to more explicitly show their intimate covenant union. Thus, He is a Jew and part Gentile, she is Jewish and part Gentile; He is the Light, she is the Light; He is the Seed, she is the seed [Gal. 3.16, 29; Rev.12.13-17]; He is the Lamb, she is the sheep; He has Dove's eyes, she is His undefiled Dove; He is "all fair", she is "all fair"; He is the Temple, she is the Temple; He is a Living Stone, she is 'Lively Stones'[1 Pet. 2.4-5]; He is the Arm of the Lord, she is the Arm of the Lord; He is Salvation, she is Salvation [Is. 49.4-6]; He is the Messenger, she is the messenger; He is the Voice, she is the voice [Rev. 18.23; Jer. 7.34; 16.9]; He is exalted, she is exalted; He reigns, she reigns; He judges, she judges [1 Cor. 5.12-13; 6.1-3]; He embodies God [Col. 2.9], she embodies God [1 Cor. 6.19-20; 2 Cor. 3.3]; He is crucified, she is crucified [Rom. 6.6; Gal. 2.20; 5.24; 66.14]; He is resurrected, she is resurrected [Rom. 6.4-5; Col. 3.1]; He ascended, and so she will ascend! [1 Thess. 4.16-17]; indeed, even now we are "***made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!***" [Eph. 1.3; 2.6]

See how profound our union with Christ is, that it is depicted in the intimacy of marriage! Just as *“Adam knew his wife”* so Christ and the church intimately know each other! We share the throne of God together as a king and queen in the Kingdom of God (Ps. 45.9-15). And we are laborers together with God! Thus, we are said to be His salvation to the ends of the earth! (Is. 49.1-6). We are the Light of the World. We bring conviction and do the convincing of sin through anointed proclamation of the Gospel! (Jn. 16.7-9). We convert and save sinners [Jas. 5.19-20]; we heal the sick [Mt. 10.8; Jas. 5.14-16). But you say we are only human. Well, Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are [in other words, he was human], but *“he prayed . . .”* That’s the whole point: when the Holy Ghost indwells a believer and the anointing is upon him, he becomes more than human. Don’t say, therefore, well, we are only human: for God uses humans to do supernatural things! We have been divinely commissioned and empowered to go *“heal the sick, cleanse lepers, and raise the dead, and cast out devils!”* (Mt. 10.8). Jesus said, *“. . . and nothing shall be impossible to you!”* (Mt. 17.20; Lu. 1.37). For if you have faith, you can *“say to this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done [or will come to pass]”* (Mt. 17.20; 21.21). I like the translation that says, *“Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall [move]!”* Move mountains! Kill giants! Raise the dead!

The Prophetic Vision

This then is what we call the “vision” of the church. And how thrilling it is! For it is a prophetic vision which God moved upon holy men of old to write down in Scripture. The whole glorious revelation of Christ and the church is now *“made known to us”* (Eph. 1.9): and we are called and commissioned to go to every nation on earth to proclaim and teach it, and to disciple believers in the *“all things whatsoever”* that Christ commanded, which includes laboring to reconcile all of God’s people in one, visible body of Christ (Jn. 10.16; 11.49-25; 17.20-23; (2 Cor. 5.18-20; Eph. 1.10; 2.11-19; 4.4-6, 11-15; see also Is. 60.1-5; et al).

Section II Pressing Forward in the Holy Ghost

It seems we are now poised by God’s gracious providences to surge ahead in the coming months and years. The Holy Ghost has blest and prospered the church and positioned us in recent years to ride the

swell of the great waves of God's glory onto the shores of Beulah Land. Anticipating this mighty move forward, the prophet wrote,

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Is. 54.1-3).

We are further encouraged by the inspired utterance of the apostle Paul, in which he prophesied that the forward advance of the church will proceed until ***“. . . we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”*** (2 Cor. 3.18).

It is because we are now on the precipice of glorious prophetic fulfillments that we might well expect strong resistance from our archenemy and the demonic forces under his authority and direction (Eph. 6.10-12). Certainly, we should expect no less than what Nehemiah experienced in his day, and Daniel in his, as well as other prophetic restoration movements ordained by the Lord. These prophets were opposed mightily by demonic forces couched in political and religious agendas, worldly ambitions, and crafty schemes for filthy lucre and positional power. We must fix our minds and stir ourselves to go forward against all resistance in the forms of slander and false accusations, the spirit of discouragement, and all manner of tricks and wicked designs of the enemy. For we are forewarned in the prophetic Word that in these last days we will be greatly tried and tested by the spirit of antichrist; yet, praise the Lord! we are assured in the same breath of prophecy, ***“But the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many*** (Dan. 11.31-33).

The very idea of “pressing” denotes opposition. We are pressing against something; namely,

1) Sinful Forces in the earth [in high places]; 2) Ignorance/poverty; 3) Darkness/human oppression/depression; 4) Religious, social, political chaos/antichrist; 5) Lukewarmness/discouragement/indifference; 6) Evil [sickness/death/war/pestilences]; 7) Demonic Forces

Yet despite all resistance and opposition, we are in the same prophetic breath assured by Jesus of a special empowerment by the Holy Ghost to enable us ***“to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy”*** (Lu. 10.19). As we engage ourselves in battle, we can surely depend on God’s glorious power to surge through our souls enabling us to overcome Satan and his demonic hordes.

It was so with the prophet Daniel: that when he fell into a trance and received that “great vision” from the Lord, and became drained of his natural strength, having fasted for many days, and laying prostrate on his face; that suddenly he felt ***“an hand [touch him], which set [him] upon [his] knees and the palms of [his] hands.”*** Then the angel of the Lord (perhaps the preincarnate Lord himself) said, ***“Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, they words were heard, and I am come for thy words [I have heard your prayers]”*** (Dan. 10.10-12). At that moment, the Lord dispatched Michael, one of the archangels and head of His angelic army, to rebuke the powers of hell and rescue His prophet and encourage His people to go forward in the restoration of the church, the city of God, and the fulfillment of her mission in the world (vv. 13-21).

This is precisely what it will take for Zion Assembly to succeed in this generation, namely, the Holy Ghost and a holy determination in our ministers and people to ***“fight the good fight of faith!”*** *The Psalmist prophesied, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power”* (Ps. 110.3). And Jesus said, ***“The violent [will take the kingdom of God by force]”*** (Mt. 11.12). Recall His encouraging words, that as we “Go” at His command to evangelize the nations, He promises, ***“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world!”*** (Mt. 28.20)

How many times do we read in the book of Judges ***“Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him”*** or a similar phrase. It was true with Othniel, Gideon, and Jephthah. On more than one occasion it was said of Samson that ***“the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him”*** enabling him to slay lions, slaughter Philistines, tear down the great entrance gate into the pagan city of Gaza, bar and all; and later in his dying moment pulled down the temple of Dagon with his bare hands. It was the same David against a bear, a lion, and Goliath---***“the Spirit of the Lord came upon him”***.

Be assured brethren, when the quickening power of the Holy Ghost comes upon you, at that moment you become more than human: for you are under the anointing of the Holy Ghost and empowered with supernatural energy: and endowed with spiritual gifts and graces. Under the anointing of the Spirit, you transcend human limitations. You become invincible, unmovable, unconquerable!

Never lose sight, brethren, of the prophetic vision----“**Write the vision, make it plain**” for God’s church is going somewhere. We are Zion On the Move! God has given us assurances, and thus we have great expectations of glorious things ahead.

We are making plans for a harvest of souls and expect a great inflow of “**other sheep**” into the sheepfold. For God has promised it! Yes, there is a “**set time**”, prophetically, that His sheep will hear His voice, and He will bring them into the fold (Jn. 10.16; and cp. Ps. 102.13; see also Gen. 17.21; 21.2; Ex. 9.5; Job 14.13). Still, however, since we are “**laborers together with God**”, we will be instrumental in evangelizing the world and bringing together His people into one body of Christ. In fact, the church, the body of Christ, serves as His vocal cords and His hands and feet (1 Cor. 12.12-31).

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace . . . [and] salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth” (Is. 52.7).

We are going into places with the Good News of forgiveness and deliverance: places where there are no churches . . . where the people are in sin and darkness and many are possessed with demons. We must be empowered, convinced of our message and mission, committed, determined, excited and exuberant with a contagious enthusiasm for our God and His church.

The apostle Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah’s words, “***How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things***” (Rom. 10.15). Feet in and of themselves are not beautiful. In fact, feet don’t preach. But the feet of preachers are beautiful because they take the messengers to the mountains and hills and valleys to proclaim the Good News. Their feet are beautiful because they are anointed! Feet don’t preach but they carry the preachers to the cities and nations so they can preach. That’s the meaning of beautiful feet. Neither are preachers beautiful in and of themselves, but as messengers and angels of the Lord they are beautiful: for they bring with them the beautiful message of salvation!

The Conquering Spirit

Finally, brethren, recall the courage and vision of Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful witnesses in the “*church in the wilderness*”. When others were reluctant to go forward and were overcome with a spirit of

fear because of the appearance of “giants” in the land, these two anointed leaders had “another spirit”, a courageous, conquering spirit. Caleb said, **“Let us go up at once and possess [the land]; for we are well able to overcome it”** (Numb. 13.30-31). God give us an army of men like Joshua and Caleb!

Section III

Go Up . . . Bring Wood, and Build the House” **Pressing Forward with our Vision to Expand the** **International Ministries Complex**

We are now on the brink of being able to start the construction on the two-story expansion of our International Ministries Complex. As most of you know, this expansion has been envisioned and boosted now for over 9 years. We saw the need for more office and storage space as far back as 2008 (see *Assembly Minutes*, 2008, p. 21), and soon after that time we began to envision a Bible college so we could more thoroughly train and develop our ministers, missionaries, and dedicated workers in the peculiar teachings, government, mission and discipline of God’s church (cf. Presiding Bishop’s Annual Addresses 2009/2011 in *Let Us Rise Up and Build . . . Historical Annual Addresses*, pp. 189-190, 276-281); and Assembly Business Committee [ABC] reports, *Assembly Minutes* 2011, pp. 70-74; 2012, pp. 81-84).

In 2011 we adopted a plan called *The Prophets’ Plan* to help pay off our international properties indebtedness and to finance a new loan to expand our International Ministries Complex and to fulfill our vision. This was laid out in the Presiding Bishop’s annual address based on 2 Kg. 6.1-5 and was enthusiastically received and supported by the General Assembly (*Let Us Rise Up and Build*, pp. 278-281, 350-351). We followed this plan in the next few years and raised over \$300,000 dollars, which enabled us to pay off our indebtedness, which included also the purchase of the property next door to the church (Lloyd’s Auto Sales) for \$160,000. We celebrated this grand achievement with a mortgage burning and groundbreaking ceremony during the School of Ministry in Cleveland on May 19th of this year. Since then we have paid off architect fees in the amount \$41,800 and engineering fees for the project in the amount of \$6,000.

So now, here we are. The need for the two-story addition is pressing

us more now than it was seven years ago or even one year ago. It's time to build---to press forward! The prophet Haggai's prophecy is as applicable for us here today as it was to the Jewish exiles when it was first spoken 2500 years ago:

“Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages [earns them]to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house”
(Hag. 1.2-9).

I trust that you here today can feel, as I do, the weight of the Lord's commandment in this prophecy: ***“Go Up . . . Bring Wood, and Build the House, and I will take pleasure in it, and . . . be glorified.”*** Again, was the Lord speaking here only to the Jews in Palestine who had recently returned from captivity in Babylon? or was this commandment also for us today? Most assuredly it is also for us today (cf. Rom. 4.23-24; 1 Cor. 10.11). For, to be sure, God is more concerned with the restoration, grace, beauty, and dignity of His house now under the terms of the New Covenant than He was over 2500 years ago under the Old Covenant---500 years before Christ had come to earth in flesh and purchased the church with His own blood!

Why this Building Program is Needed

Perhaps it would be good here to state more succinctly and systematically the reasons why this addition to our International Ministry Complex is so necessary at this time. There are three primary reasons: **1)** we simply do not have adequate space or facilities in our present building for the operation of our International Offices; **2)** it seems only wise and frugal that, since we are enlarging our existing building, we should go a step farther to include adequate space and facilities for our envisioned

Bible college. As our director of Education has already mentioned, the expectation for our college is to begin online Bible courses in January 2019 and by the fall of 2020 offer intensive two-week and three-week courses on campus, that is, for the students to attend classes in-house at the International Ministries Complex. Then in 2021 we plan to have a program in place which will include ten full courses (online and in-house) to qualify students for graduation from “Zion Assembly Bible College and Seminary” with a Biblical Studies Certificate (note, the name of the college is pending on the ABC’s report on Saturday and Assembly approval); and 3) the new addition and facilities will serve as a sign to onlookers of God’s evident favor upon our faith, ministry, and mission in Zion Assembly. It will mark us as a body that is on the move with a vision for the future---a fellowship that knows where it is going and is determined to get there! Our manifest progress will be impressive to the world in general, but more especially to “*other sheep*” who will be “[*asking*] *their way to Zion.*”

Financing the Vision

We noticed above the example given in 2 Kgs. 6.1-5, in which the “sons of the prophets” counseled with their leader, Elisha, and informed him that the place for their school and residence was too small; and, thus, they begged permission of him to build a new and larger facility for their school and dwelling. Elisha consented and agreed to go with them to a place along the lower Jordan River Valley, and there they cut down trees and hewed them and built a house in which to dwell and to teach and train the ministers of God.

When we inaugurated this plan---*The Prophets’ Plan*---at the Assembly in 2011 to assist us in financing this construction venture, we estimated that the approximate cost of the trees in modern currency, including cutting them down, hewing [carving] them out, and fitting them into place in the new building amounted to about \$800 per tree (*Let Us Rise Up and Build*, pp. 279-280). Our people responded wonderfully and sacrificially toward this noble vision, and this has brought us to where we are today; and, I believe, *The Prophets’ Plan* will continue to help us to complete the job.

To further help in financing this great building program and vision, I recommend twenty percent (20%) of the World Mission funds go toward this noble effort; for the new facilities will be directly connected with world outreach and the education and training of our overseers, missionaries, and pastors. If this seems good and wise to the ABC, the brethren may present it to the Assembly for final resolution.

One final thing needs to be clarified while we are on this subject. In 2013 someone here in Cleveland had offered to purchase and donate to the church a facility that we could use for an Assembly Tabernacle, and possibly also expand and remodel it to use for our International Offices. In anticipation of this possibility, we resolved in the next General Assembly (2014) to create an Assembly Tabernacle fund for this remodeling. Under this plan the churches were to contribute on a regular basis and send in the funds to the General Treasurer with their monthly reports (see 2014 annual address, *Let Us Rise Up and Build*, pp. 388-389; *Assembly Minutes*, 2014, p. 50). As it turned out, regretfully, the person making this offer backed out, and we were left with a Tabernacle Fund that was rather obsolete.

We recommend therefore, in view of these developments and where we stand now, to create simply one international building fund and to dispense with the Tabernacle Fund and the Bible College Fund and focus rather only on constructing one project at a time: which presently will be on the pending two-story addition to our International Ministries Center. Then when this great project is finished and has been paid for, we can again think about building a Tabernacle and, at the appropriate time, reenact a Bible college fund.

If this strategy seems wise and acceptable to this Assembly, we could transfer the \$12,806.19 that presently exists in the Tabernacle Fund and the \$22,237.46 that exists in the Bible College Fund to the one simple building fund account---an account that could be called the International Properties Building Fund (IPBF). Accordingly, it will be through this fund that we finance the new two-story expansion of the International Ministries Complex and future projects. One final point in this regard: the monthly offering that has heretofore been received from the churches for the Tabernacle Fund will now be received for the IPBF (International Properties Building Fund) and sent to the General Treasurer with the local treasurer's monthly report.

Finally, brethren, it may be worth repeating here the admonition given in my annual address in 2011 in promoting *The Prophets' Plan*:

“The main thing brethren is to get in the spirit of it, like the sons of the prophets did in Elisha’s day. There is nothing that we cannot accomplish together if we get in the spirit of it. That’s how the magnificent temple of God was built on Mount Zion in Solomon’s day. It was first in David’s heart, and the vision and affection for it then took hold of the people of God. The spirit of giving got into David and then into all the leaders and the people . . . the account is given in 1 Chronicles 29.

The key to it all is shown in vv. 2-14, namely, they caught a vision of God's house, and the vision conditioned their affections and will to make it a reality. David said, 'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, and 'I have set my affection to the house of my God' (vv. 2-3). And the people 'offered willingly and gave . . . to the treasure of the house of the Lord' (vv. 6-7). And when all was given, 'Then the people rejoiced. for they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy (v. 9). And when Solomon built the house of God there was nothing like it in all the earth.'"

Section IV

“School of Ministry Institute”

In casting a vision for a Bible college in the annual address in 2011, we were careful to point out that

“Notwithstanding the need for an institution of higher learning in the church, it is not our intention for the college to replace the School of Ministry, but that both serve together to meet the overall needs of education in the church. The School of Ministry will continue to serve for basic preparatory work for the ministry and especially for our outreach work in the nations while the college will serve to prepare our ministers more fully for national and international leadership and for a more excellent and thorough-going education” (*Let Us Rise Up and Build*, p.278).

Earlier in the address we noted that

“The School of Ministry has done a wonderful job since it was inaugurated in May 2005 in preparing our ministers and workers with some basic knowledge and skills for the ministry. More than 600 ministers and workers have graduated or have attended one or more years of the school. We thank God for that. However, 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 world in which the church’s admirers will one day look on and say, ‘Who is she?’ (Song 6.10), and her ministers, like the angel in John’s vision, will say, ‘Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife’ (Rev. 21.9).

“Nothing short of developing a Bible college and seminary will enable us to offer the kind of thoroughgoing education needed to set our ministers apart and to equip them for the great end-times task of the church – 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” (*Let Us Rise Up and Build*, pp. 276-277).

In view of this educational vision for the church, perhaps it would be good to identify and distinguish the School of Ministry as an institution. The official title will then be ***School of Ministry Institute (SMI)***. Again, if this seems good and profitable for the church, the ABC may present it to the Assembly for consideration.

Section V

God-Ordained Church Government

The term “theocratic government” became a popular expression among our forefathers in the early 1900s. It was defined in those days as “government under the immediate direction of God.” But gradually the church understood *theocracy* as meaning God mediating His government indirectly through “Spirit-filled men.” In fact, gradually this latter idea became the prevailing view. To capture this meaning, I have explained the word “church” to mean “God’s instrumental government” on earth. But the fact is God works both ways---directly through the Spirit and indirectly through God-ordained and duly-appointed men. But in the normal course of theocratic administration and operations, God works instrumentally through the church to establish His truth and will on earth. I will give a few examples of both methods in a moment.

Regarding the word, *ekklesia*

The term that Jesus used in Matthew 16.18 and 18.17, which is translated “church” in most of our English versions, comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*. This word means literally “called out,” but it implies

being called out of the kingdom of God, not out of the world: and more to the point it means being called out of one's privacy or individualism into a duly-called and orderly assembly to transact business (note how the word *ekklesia* is used to identify the governing secular assembly in the city of Ephesus in Acts 19.32, 39, 41). Thus, regarding God's *ekklesia* ["church"] the word indicates the "many members" of Christ's body being called together, in divine order, to participate together in the decision-making process of the church. Accordingly, it may be seen that one is not automatically a member of the church through the new birth; rather he joins and thus is "added" to the church by covenant subsequently to being born-again by the Spirit into the kingdom of God (Lu. 17.20-21; Jn. 3.3-8; Col. 1.13; Acts 2.41; also cp. Ex. 19.5-8 and 24.3-4, 7-8 with Jn. 17.6,8, 14 and 1 Pet. 2.9). Thus, the apostle says to the Corinthian believers, "*I have espoused you to one husband*" (2 Cor. 11.2), and the prophet wrote, "*For as a young man [marries] a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as a bridegroom [rejoices] over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee*" (Is. 62.5; see also Ex. 19.5-8; Jer. 50.5; Ezek. 16.8; Eph. 5.29-32; et al).

The visible and corporate nature of the church is thus plainly distinguished from the invisible, mystical nature of the kingdom of God (Lu.17.20-21; Col. 1.13), the former being the assembled body of Christ authorized to transact business on earth in His name (Mt.16.19-20; Mt.18.15-20; Rom. 16.17). Accordingly, theocratic government cannot be practiced properly and fully in the spiritual and mystical realm of the kingdom of God: for it is impossible to practice corporate discipline, corporate decision-making, and to fulfill the corporate mission of the church where there is no mutual covenant and agreement between believers regarding doctrine and polity.

Acting for and with Christ

The church then is literally a "corporation" [body] of believers duly called-out and ordained by the Lord to do business for Him---to transact in the earth what He has transacted [bound and loosed] in heaven (Mt. 16.19; 18.15-20; Jn. 20.23; Acts 15.1-16.5). This is precisely the meaning in Jesus' parable in Lu. 19.12-27. The phrase "*Occupy till I come*" in v. 13 literally means "Carry on My trade or business until I return." Paul even went so far to say that, in view of Jesus' ascension to the Father, the church now prays and acts in "*Christ's stead*" (2 Cor. 5.20). Further, the church is the final arbiter in the interpretation of Scripture and disciplinary issues (Mt. 18.15-20; Acts 15.1-16.5; 1 Tim. 3.15). It is in this sense that the church is called *Bethel* ["house of God"] and therefore should be

considered a “*dreadful place*” and the “*gate of heaven*” (Gen. 28.17-19). Our illustrious forefathers therefore understood the church literally to be “God’s government for His people”, and they fellowshiped and practiced their faith and churchmanship on this basis.

Direct and Instrumental Divine Intervention

A few passages that illustrate the church as God’s instrumental government are Mk. 13.34; Lu. 19.12-27; Acts 6.1-7; 15.1-16.5; 1 Cor. 3.8-15; 4.1-2; 5.1-13; 6.1-4. In fact, we see Spirit-filled men ruling for Christ in and through the church everywhere in the Scriptures, under both Old and New Covenants; and the prophetic vision of the church reveals that Christ will continue to use the church instrumentally to rule and reign with Him throughout the Millennial Kingdom on earth (Rev. 20.4-7; see also Dan. 7.18, 22, 27; Mt. 19.28; Lu. 22.30; 1 Cor. 6.2-3; 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 5.10). Still, we see that on occasion it was necessary for the Lord to break in directly on the church to establish His will and purpose: for the church is sometimes slow to grasp the mind and will of Christ and the “higher things” of God, and unable also to immediately foresee or understand the prophetic future. Thus, in some instances, the Lord acts directly to establish His will. We see this, for example, in God writing with His “finger” the Ten Commandments (Ex. 31.18; Deut. 9.10-11); in intervening miraculously to rain down bread from heaven; in appearing in dreams and visions; and in leading and guiding the church through gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9.15-16; 13.2, 4; 22.17-21; Rom. 1.1; Gal. 1.15-16; et al). Simply put, in some instances God acts directly and unilaterally, which is His prerogative. It was with this understanding that the old mountain preacher told a young seminary student who was attempting to explain an incomprehensible mystery about the inner workings of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost): “Son, you are whittling on the wrong end of the stick”---a mild way of reproving him for his arrogance and insolence: for some things are too high and lofty for us, and must remain hidden in God’s infinite counsel and judgment (Job 11.7-12; Eccl. 3.11; Rom. 11.33-34).

A classic case in the New Testament of God’s direct intervention was His call and conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who became our apostle Paul (see Gal. 1.11-17; 2.1-3; Eph. 3.1-11; 1 Tim. 1.12-16). It seemed irrational and obscene or repulsive to the church to use such a man in the ministry, and indeed, more especially that he should be ordained an apostle---a man that had proven himself to be a blasphemer and great

persecutor of the church; one that had used all of his powers to “[make] havoc of the church” and “beyond measure [to persecute . . . and waste it]” (Acts 8.1-3; 9.1-2, 13-14, 21, 26; Gal. 1.21-24; 1 Tim. 1.12-16). The mothers and fathers and siblings of those to whom Paul was now appointed to oversee were very likely among the casualties that he had killed or imprisoned and scattered. The disciple Ananias of Damascus thus hesitated, if not protested, against the revelation that God intended to use Saul in the ministry, especially in the elevated office of apostle. The simple conclusion by the Lord, however, was “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9.15). This direct intervention of God was pure and simple theocratic government--God acting unilaterally to fulfill His will and purpose in the church.

Notwithstanding God’s direct intervention in governing the church, it may be noticed that even in the case of Saul (Paul) there was in the final analysis the instrumental use of Ananias and Barnabas and others in getting him established in the church and accepted by the leadership in Jerusalem (Acts 9.10-19, 27-30; Gal. 1.18, 22-24; 2.9-10).

Dignity of Every Member in the Decision-Making Process

Now we are well versed in Zion Assembly that God’s church is not ultimately ruled by an episcopate, that is, a body or college of bishops; but rather every male member in good standing is part of the decision-making process (female members contribute also through prayer and through their husbands and elders). The dignity of each member in this respect is based on the fact that every member is potentially filled with the Holy Spirit, who is given to “teach [us] all things . . . and guide [us] into all truth” (Jn. 14.26; 15.26-27; 16.13-15; cf. also Zech. 4.6); and we see in the council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 that the “whole church” participated in the discussions and contributed to the outcome (vv. 1-3, 12, 22, 25, 28, 30-31; see also Prov. 11.14; 15.22; 24.6).

What is clear and inarguable is that theocratic government now rests with God’s church, and in fact identifies the true church. Christ is indeed the head of the church, and the Father is the head of Christ: but after Jesus came to earth and established the church and purchased it with His own blood (Mk. 3.13-16; Lu. 6.12-17; Acts 20.28; see also Mt. 16.18-19; 18.15-20; et al.), He ascended back to the Father and left His government with His church in this world (Mt. 5.13-14; Mk. 13.34). The prophecy of Christ in Is. 9.6-7, particularly the phrase “. . . and the government shall

be upon His shoulder”, should be understood to mean that the government of Christ is now with His body, the church (see Is. 2.2-4; 25.6-7; Mic. 4.1-3; et al). It will be observed that the word *mountain* is often used as a metaphor for “government”, as is the case in the passages just cited. We hold therefore that “the highest tribunal of authority in the church on earth is the General Assembly.”

God-called and Anointed Leaders in the Theocratic Process

But again, notwithstanding the dignity of every member of the church and the privilege of everyone to participate and to contribute potentially in the decision-making process, the rulership of the church remains principally in the hands of divinely-called and anointed elders; for, significantly, after the foundation of the church was laid by the apostles who had been directly appointed by Christ (Lu. 6.13; Acts 1.14-26; 2.42; 6.1-7; 15.1-16.5; Eph. 2.20; et al), and after these apostles had passed off the scene of action in the first century, the church was ruled by presbyters or elders, and it remains so today (Acts 11.29-30; 14.23; 15.2, 4, 22, 25-28; 20.17-18, 28; 16.4; 21.18; 24.1; 1 Cor. 12.28; 1 Eph. 4.11; Tim. 3.1-7; 4.14-16; 5.17-19; Titus 1.5-7; Heb. 13.7, 17, 24; Jas. 5.14; 1 Pet. 5.1-2).

Further, among these elders there are “*chief men*” (Acts 15.22). We see clear evidence of this in the Jerusalem council in Acts 15; such were Peter (vv. 7-11); Paul and Barnabas (v. 12); and preeminently James, the Lord’s brother (vv. 13-21). And we might add Judas and Silas who are named as “*chief men among the brethren*”. This Judas may have been the brother of Joseph Barsabas who had given way to Matthias as the successor to Judas Iscariot in the apostolic band (Acts 1.21-26), though a few scholars believe he may have been the younger brother of Jesus and James, and the author of the epistle that bears his name (cf. Mt. 13.55; Mk. 6.3; 1 Cor. 9.5; Acts 1.13-14, 23; Jude 1.1). In any case, these leading elders were appointed to return with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to report by mouth as well as by letter from the apostles and elders regarding the resolutions [*dogmas*, “decrees”] adopted at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15.22-27; 16.4-5).

The prominence of elders in theocratic government is a carry-over from the Old Testament church into the New Testament church. We read of the “*chief fathers of the congregation*” (Numb. 31.26), and the “*chief fathers*” of the Levites (1 Chron. 9.34), and the “*chief fathers*” of the priests (24.31). King David appointed 2700 “*chief fathers*” and made

them “*rulers*” over the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh for “*every matter unto God . . .*” (1 Chron. 26.32). Likewise, we see in the restoration of the house of God following the Babylonian Captivity under Ezra and Zerubbabel that the government and work of God went forward under the oversight of elders (Ezra 5.10; 6.7; 7.28).

It is of paramount importance therefore to maintain our esteem for leadership in the church, especially elders in prominent positions, and to “*know them*” [i.e., give them due recognition] which labor among us, and “*to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake*” (1 Thess. 5.12-13), rendering also to all their needs (cf. 1 Cor. 9.9-14; 1 Tim. 5.17-19; see also 1 Cor. 16.15-18; Phil. 2. 25-30; Heb. 13.7, 17; et al). This does not mean that leaders cannot or will not fail on occasion; in fact, it is inevitable that some will stumble and disappoint us; and some will fall grievously into perdition. But this is nothing new or strange: recall Judas Iscariot, Demas, Diotrefes, Philetus, Hymenaeus, and others who once labored with the apostles. Jesus and the apostles were careful in fact to warn us of this inevitability. “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Cor. 10.12). Jesus said, “*it must needs be that offenses come; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh.*” And the apostle Paul warned that “. . . *there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*” (1 Cor. 11.19). Thus, we are admonished by the writer of Hebrews that in order to remain God’s house we must “. . . *hold fast [our] confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*” (Heb. 3.6); and again,

“Cast not away therefore your confidence . . . For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (10.35-38).

“Church Fathers”

There are those among us whom we esteem as “*fathers*” in the church. These ministers are indeed peculiar or special and “*worthy of double honor*”: for as Paul says in another place, “*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel*” (1 Cor. 4.15). Seeing himself in this role, he boldly admonished the believers to follow and pattern their life after him as a father in the church (v. 16; 11.1; Phil. 3.17; 1 Thess. 1.6; 2 Thess. 3.9). Paul’s words here elevate the church above that

of a common institution or denomination to a house or “*habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph. 2.22), a point that we will elaborate upon further in a moment.

A *father* then is one who has begotten or given birth to many of the believers in the church; and has labored to establish and nourish ministers and local churches. Then, among these “fathers” are a few who have ministered to and built up the church universally. Such was the apostle Paul and other apostles and elders. In church history they are therefore called “Church Fathers.” It was thus that the apostle Paul could say to the Corinthians believers, “*I have begotten you through the Gospel,*” and to the Galatians, “*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you*” (Gal. 4.19); and yet again while in prison he claims to have “*begotten*” Onesimus in the Lord and refers to him as his “*son*” (Phile. 1.10).

This was the special kind of spiritual bond that Paul and other elders in the church had formed with the members of Christ’s body. They saw themselves as “shepherds” and the believers as “sheep,” but more intimately they saw themselves as “fathers” and the saints as “children”--- “sons” and “daughters” (cf. 2 Cor. 6.13; 1 Thess. 2.11; 2 Jn. 1, 4; 3 Jn. 4): for they had mediated on earth the “new birth” experience in them from above. And even after giving birth to these “children”, the apostle Paul relates further his relationship with them in terms of a deep inner affection, saying, “. . . *how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 1.8), and he uses this same imagery elsewhere (cf. Col. 2.19; 3.12; Phile. 7, 12; et al). Still further, he reminds the saints in Thessalonica that “*as the apostles of Christ . . . we were gentle among you, even as a nurse [cherishes] her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us*” (1 Thess. 2.6-8).

Now this is the crux of the matter, brethren: it is only in the context of a spiritual bonding and intimacy with Christ and one another that actual *theocracy* can be realized and work. Christ is the head of the church and the savior of the body, to be sure, but He mediates His headship in the church in and through the Holy Spirit and His ministers: and He can only do this in proportion to the depth of spirituality and maturity that we have in our fellowship. Otherwise we function no better than a common denomination. So, let us heed the words and admonition of the great apostle in Eph. 2.18-22:

“For through him we both [that is, Jew and Gentile believers in covenant fellowship in one house] have access by one Spirit unto

the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Office of Presiding Bishop

One final point on this important subject---on the proper function of theocratic government. It has become a settled point among us that there is a hierarchy of executive authority in the church which culminates in a “chief” or a “first among equals” in the divine order of administrative authority. Paul in fact recognized a hierarchy of influence and status even among the apostles, saying on more than one occasion he was not “*a whit behind the very chiefest apostles* (2 Cor. 11.5; 12.11). And this point is further supported by the obvious elevated stature of James [the Lord’s brother], and Peter and John among the leaders of the apostolic church (Gal. 2.9). Further, James stands out as the chief apostle and elder among these three. Besides the fact that he moderated the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, the following passages show his eminent stature and position in the church (Acts 12.17; 15.13-21; 21.18; Gal 1.19; 2.9, 12).

Jesus seems to take it for granted that everyone knows there must be a “*chief among you*” (Mt. 20.27; Mk. 10.44-45). Remarkably, this idea is a common view and practice even among primitive peoples, including the American Indians. For obviously someone in the order of government must be able to say finally, “*Wherefore my sentence is*” (Acts 15.19). Thus, a team needs a captain; a city a mayor; a state a governor; an army a commander or general; a company an executive officer, etc. In the narrative of the centurion in Mt. 8.5-10, Jesus honors the centurion’s sense of humility (“*I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof*”), but also his understanding of duly-appointed authority both regarding Jesus’ heavenly authority and his own as being appointed by Rome.

We have in Zion Assembly given the title of “Presiding Bishop” to the special or strategic position of universal oversight in the church. We believe it is in line with the way God mediated instrumentally His sovereign headship over the church under both Old and New Covenants, beginning with *Moses*, then *Joshua*, and continuing through the kings (*Saul, David and Solomon*, et al.) whose judgments and oversight of God’s people were on occasion conditioned by judges (*Samuel*, e.g.) and

prophets (*Elijah* and *Elisha*, et al.). Further, after Jesus ascended back to the Father, He left the oversight of the church in the hands of apostles and elders, preeminent among them were *James*, the Lord's brother, *Peter*, *John*, and later *Paul* and others (Acts 20.17-18, 21-32; Cor. 11.28; et al). Moreover, the prolific writings of the Early Church Fathers in the second and third centuries also give plain evidence that this system of government continued until the predicted apostasy culminated under Sylvester I and Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, which ushered in the Dark Ages in the succeeding centuries (Is. 60.2; Acts 20.29; 1 Tim. 1-3; 2 Pet. 2-22; 3.1-3; Jude 3; Rev. 2.5; et al).

Now regarding the function, privileges, and limitations of the office of Presiding Bishop in the church and the person occupying it. The Assembly has laid down a criterion of requirements regarding the character and qualifications of the man holding this sacred position of trust; including that he should have “a proven record faithfulness, stability, and experience, and be manifestly gifted and anointed to govern or rule in the church” (*Assembly Minutes*, 2015, p. 56). It was also emphasized that the General Assembly in which the Presiding Bishop is selected should “feel assured” by the Holy Spirit that the selection “is pleasing to the Lord” (*Ibid.*, p. 56); and further that the man holding the office should have a servant's heart and a pastoral disposition, over against a spirit of lordship or dictatorial disposition (*Ibid.*, p. 56).

Further, it has been emphasized that in the past the extent of the authority and privileges of this position, under the title of “General Overseer”, were somewhat abused; then in an effort to correct abuses the pendulum swung to the other extreme and the person holding the office was prevented from freely exercising his calling and God-given gifts to lead and guide the church to fulfill her mission and prophetic destiny. So, we have been warned about swinging the pendulum from one extreme to the other. This brings us to where we are in this present hour: yet seeking to fully understand this important position, so that the church can fully benefit from it and the man occupying the office can freely function and exercise the gifts and abilities which God has imparted to him for this purpose. More will be said about this in a moment.

The position of Presiding Bishop calls for confident and courageous leadership. The man holding the office must “[take] the oversight” of the church with conviction and a strong sense of personal calling. He must be intimately acquainted with the Lord, and eager always to please Him and carry forward His prophetic plan for the church. Accordingly, he does not seek to please men but God; and, therefore, rules and guides the church not according to public opinion but according to the revealed will of God-

--His commandments and principles. He is not intimidated by criticism and threats and thus does not compromise or modify biblical standards and apostolic commands to conform the church to the whims of men; but rather fears God alone and is loyal to His Word and government. His ear is open to the voice of the Lord and he has a strong determination to establish God's will on earth even as it is in heaven! He thus oversees the church theocratically, leading and guiding her to fulfill her prophetic mission in the world.

We see this kind of leadership in men like Moses who withstood the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their followers---250 overseers ("*men of renown*") in the "church in the wilderness" (Numb. 16.1-33). Moses was bold and confident because he was carrying forward the plan of God for the government of His people: and God honored his leadership. The defense that he gave for his leadership and actions was simply, "*I have not done [these things] of mine own mind*" (v. 28), that is, he was reverently standing and acting for the Lord and carrying forward His will into action. The result of this uprising against the government of God was calamitous and tragic for Korah and his followers: the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up including their wives and children! (vv. 25-35; Jude vv.10-11).

The apostle Paul demonstrated also this kind of courageous leadership. For example, while he was preaching and laboring to establish the church in Asia (in Ephesus and the region roundabout), he was contradicted and withstood powerfully by Alexander, Philetus, Hymanaeus and others; and he was also forsaken by Demas, a fellow worker, and thrown into prison being blasphemed and falsely accused. Indeed, he was at first forsaken by all men; but he pressed on and persevered. His courage and fortitude won out in the end. He confessed that though "*At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me out of every evil work . . .*" (2 Tim. 4.14-18; see also 1 Tim. 1.20; 2 Tim. 1.15; Acts 19. 22-41).

In addition to the important characteristics and qualifications for the office of Presiding Bishop mentioned above, I would add one more that perhaps outranks all the others in importance. I speak now as one who has held this position for fifteen years, and beforehand worked closely under general appointment with Bishop M.A. Tomlinson for eight years (1982-1990), and afterwards for ten more years with his successor, Billy D. Murray, Sr. (1990-2000). I believe I can say in some sense regarding Zion Assembly what Paul said to one of the New Testament churches,

“I have begotten you through the Gospel”, meaning that I have been instrumental in leading many of you here today to the Lord, ordaining and mentoring many of you in the ministry, and have led the way in restoring and reorganizing the church on the original foundation laid by Christ and the Apostles. Moreover, we accomplished these things amidst malicious slander, hateful persecution, and powerful opposition. Further, for the record, I labored with my faithful wife and others in the early months of this noble effort without any financial support, and then for many more months with only meager support. I call attention to these experiences here only because they helped qualify me to say what I’m saying; namely, that the man who serves as Presiding Bishop should be a “father” of the church: one who has “begotten” through the Spirit and Word of God many of the souls to whom he is serving and ministering. It was thus that Paul wrote in defense of his leadership and position in the church: *“Ye are our epistle [or letter of commendation] written in our hearts, known and read of all men . . . manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God”* (2 Cor. 3.2-3).

Further, the man holding the office of Presiding Bishop should have a proven record that he is *“[a pastor] after God’s own heart”* (Jer. 3.15; 23.4), not just a pulpiteer or gifted instructor of the Word: for as the apostle says, *“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ; yet have ye not many fathers”* (1 Cor. 4.15). The God-ordained and anointed bishop in this position protects and feeds the sheep of his pasture and tends to and cares for all their spiritual interests and needs. He is in spiritual union with his flock; has *“begotten”* the believers out of his own “bowels” or inner affections (Phile. 10, 12); and refreshes the *“bowels of the saints”* through his love and care (v. 7). In a word, the Presiding Bishop and all pastors should have the very mind and inner affections of Christ working in them to care for and to spiritually build up the saints, each pastor and overseer according to his appointed sphere of authority and responsibility (Rom. 12.3-8; 1 Cor. 12.4-30; 2 Cor. 10.13-16; Eph. 4.7-13; Phil. 2.1-8).

Now in the overall governing structure of the church, the Presiding Bishop is subject to the General Assembly, which is the church’s “highest tribunal of authority on earth under Christ”; and in 51 weeks between Assemblies, he functions in counsel with an International Executive Council, the presbyters (the national and state overseers), and the ministers in general. It should be borne in mind always, however, that the church is not an oligarchy, episcopacy, or popish system, neither a presbyterian nor congregational form of government. The church is not run by committees and councils nor by a handful of influential men and women. Rather it is a peculiar system that is especially conducive for the sovereign headship of

Christ, who, as has been pointed out, retains always the prerogative and divine right to break in and act directly in the church through extraordinary gifts, operations, administrations of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12.4-11, 28-30; Eph. 4.3-13). For in the Bible church, God is king and Jesus is Lord! and the Word of God is the final word on all matters of faith, government, and discipline.

This aspect of theocratic government is vitally important, for good and well-meaning men are prone to make serious errors. We have examples of this in church history under both Old and New Covenants. Abraham, for example, conspired with his wife, Sarah, to have a child by her servant, Hagar, contradicting God's plan for Sarah to conceive miraculously and give birth to Isaac, the "*son of promise*" (Gen. 16.1-16; 21.10, 12; Gal. 4.22-30). Moses smote the rock twice in the wilderness in anger and arrogance not discerning the serious implications of reproaching the very work of God in Christ for the salvation of the world (Ex. 17.6; Numb. 20.8-12; Ps. 106.32-33; 1 Cor. 10.4). David would have, had it been his power, prevented God from striking down Uzzah for touching the sacred Ark, and in so doing would have diminished the theocratic message and discipline of the church (2 Sam. 6.6-9). In the New Testament, Peter would have prevented Christ from being crucified if it had been in his power (Mt. 16.21-23). He also failed to comprehend the full meaning of Christ's stature and uniqueness in the Transfiguration, ignorantly suggesting that three tabernacles be built to honor Moses and Elijah with Christ (Mt. 17.2-6). And he would have ignorantly prevented Jesus [if had been in his power] from establishing the doctrine and practice of footwashing in the church (Jn. 13.1-17). Further, even after Peter was Spirit-baptized, he caused a dissimulation [confusion thru hypocrisy] in the church between Jews and Gentiles (Gal. 2.11-14). It is no wonder then that we hold James, the Lord's brother, as the ruling bishop of the church rather than Peter [as the Roman Catholic Church does]; nor should we be surprised that James, not Peter, moderated the first General Assembly held at Jerusalem in Acts 15.

There are a hundred other instances that might be cited here to prove the point that the church must always exalt and honor the headship of Christ above all, allowing Him always the freedom to ultimately break in to save the church from committing grave and destructive errors. Still, however, in the normal course of operations in a theocracy, God works through ruling bishops and elders whose offices are listed as the highest gifts in the church (Mt. 24.45; Mk. 13.34; Acts 14.23; 15.2, 4, 6, 22-28; 1 Cor. 12.28; Eph. 4.13; Titus 1.5; et al); and at the apex of the Lord's duly-appointed ruling system is the position of Presiding Bishop (Mt. 20.27; Acts 15.19). This office is therefore critically important in the overall context of the church's governing system; and thus, the one holding the

office, as well as other ruling elders, should be “*very highly esteemed in love for their work’s sake.*” To diminish or in any way injure the esteem for the one holding the office of Presiding Bishop inevitably injures the whole church. To do so, according to the ancient adage, is like “cutting off your nose to spite your face.” Further, the esteem encouraged by the apostle for this duly-appointed leader is not merely in respect to his position, but for the man himself; on the basis that he has a proven record of integrity and sacrificial love and care for the sheep; and the fact that God has apparently called and ordained him for the work that he is doing. The Presiding Bishop can only function effectively therefore on the ground of a high degree of trust and confidence: for as the ancient maxim says, “There is no government where there is no trust.” Theocracy worked in the “church in the wilderness” under the oversight of Moses because the people believed not only the Lord but also “*His servant Moses*” (Ex. 14.31).

We might well expect, moreover, that as the Lord himself acted strangely and mysteriously on occasion, so might the executive leader of the church under the inspiration and unction of the Lord. For how would King Solomon have thought to pretend to cut in half a baby in order to reveal the rightful mother except God had imparted to him the wisdom to do so? (1 Kg. 3.23-28); and this was the conclusion of “*all Israel . . . for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.*” Or who would have thought to command a prophet to marry a known prostitute to illustrate the love of God for His unfaithful and backslidden people except God inspired him to do so (Hos. 1.2; 3.1-3). Many judgments are therefore entrusted to the chief leader of the church: for in the divinely prescribed order of things he speaks and acts in many instances for Christ, the head of the church.

We see then that whether God intervenes directly or indirectly in the government of the church, His sovereignty and conclusive will must always be emphasized and preserved, that is, if our claim in Zion Assembly to be God’s church is to carry any weight and spiritual conviction. For Christ is the “*author*” as well as the “*finisher*” of our faith; and He is the “*Chief Shepherd*” and “*Bishop of our souls*” (1 Pet. 2.25; 5.4). It is thus that Ezekiel prophesied that in the very last days, the Lord will “*set up one shepherd over [His church and kingdom], and he shall feed them, even My servant David [i.e., Christ] a prince among them; I the Lord hath spoken it. And I will make them a covenant of peace . . . and there shall be showers of blessing*” (Ezek. 34.23-25); which is to say, that the Presiding Bishop and the overseers and pastors in the church will be so much in union with the mind and will of Christ that it will be as if there is simply one anointed ruler (cf. Is. 52.8-10; Rom. 15.5-6; 1 Cor. 1.10; Eph. 4.3-16; Phil. 3.16).

It is this vision of the glory of the last days church, it seems to me, that directed Paul's overarching argument in Roman 9.9-33. God's infinite wisdom, sovereignty and divine aim must rule ultimately in His church. Accordingly, the key verses in this Pauline passage are vv. 18-26:

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault! For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.”

What is clear in these passages is that God must be free to work His sovereign will among us. For *“it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”* (v. 16). For who but God has the wisdom, power, and perfect judgment to harden one and soften another, or to show mercy to one and deny it to others? Who but the Lord *“has power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?”* (v. 21). For in Him alone dwells infinite knowledge and grace without respect to persons. And He has chosen to reveal to His church intimately and insightfully His divine mind and righteous judgments (Mt. 16.17-19; 1 Cor. 2.9-16; 5.13; 6.1-4; see also Is. 2.2-4); and no one can change or alter His plan in this regard! (Eph. 3.9-10; 1 Tim. 3.15). In the end, the Lord's true Zion---made up of regenerated (born-again) Jews and Gentiles joined together in one covenant body, Eph. 2.14-16; 3.6---will emerge triumphant through faith; and as she goes forward she will be waving the banner of His free grace and glorious power!

Thus, in a theocracy the Spirit and the Word of God prevail. We must always *“hear ye Him”* (Mt. 17.5) and yield to the Lord's will through the ministry and operations of the Holy Ghost; being careful always to

acknowledge and yield to His infinite mind and sovereign will, lest we find ourselves “whittling on the wrong end of the stick” that is, usurping prerogatives that belong exclusively to God. Therefore, brethren, take heed to encourage and give liberty to the operations, demonstrations, and gifts of the Holy Ghost so that we might be led by Him “*into all truth and righteousness*” and be made to “*sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*”

In consideration of the normal course of governmental operations in the church, we are therefore admonished to respect, obey, and submit to those duly-appointed over us in the Lord (Heb. 13.7, 17). This is true at the local level of administration regarding the authority and function of pastors, and with overseers at state and national levels of administration, and especially regarding the Presiding Bishop who counsels and coordinates with leaders at every level of administration in the church throughout the world. For God’s anointing rests upon him as the chief leader of the church, and often imparts a “*word of knowledge*” or “*word of wisdom*” or “*discerning of spirits*” to enable him to know the Mind of Christ; so that he in turn can teach and guide the church according to the mysteries of God’s will. We see this throughout the history of the church in both Old and New Testaments. It’s true there is “*safety in the multitude of counselors*” yet the chief leader must finally weigh the counsel of all and then give his sentence (Acts 15.13-19).

Only by yielding to God’s system of government can we be a “*peculiar treasure unto [God] above all people*” (Ex. 19.5; Deut. 4.20, 23; 5.1-4; 7.6-9; 14.2, 21; 26.18; 32.8-9; 1 Kgs. 8.51-53; Ps 135.4-6; Song 6.8-10; 8.5-12; Is. 41.8; 49.1-6; Ezek. 16.8; Rev. 12.1-17; 19.7-8; 21.2-3, 9-10); and only by putting into practice God’s ordained government will we realize the kind of stability and increase that the church did in the New Testament (Acts 16.4-5). Otherwise we will surely sink into confusion and disorder: for *theocracy* distinguishes God’s church from maverick or renegade independent ministries on one hand, and from common man-handled denominations on the other. Practicing theocracy is what defines Zion Assembly as being truly a divine institution. Let us then walk softly before the Lord’s presence (at the base of Mt. Sinai, so to speak): for therein is a “*dreadful place*” and “*our God is a consuming fire.*”

Section VI

Seeking Excellence thru *Faithfulness and Spiritual Disciplines*

Note: the following section of the Presiding Bishop's annual address was delivered on Friday morning [September 14th] in the recent General Assembly. It seems fitting to include it in this mission edition of the paper: for it encourages our ministers and workers to discipline themselves to work together in the government and divine order of the church for the glory of God and maximum yield of fruit for the harvest. If we will take heed to this counsel, we will surely excel in the October World Mission Drive: and a harvest of souls will be realized, and a stronger and more vibrant fellowship and union in Christ will emerge.

There is not a spiritual or moral attribute of the Christian believer that is more admirable than *faithfulness*. This praiseworthy quality is thus also magnified in God. The psalmist wrote a large portion of Psalm 89 to exalt this perfection in the Lord, saying “*The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*” And in admiration of the goodness and forgiving nature of the Lord, the prophet Jeremiah exclaimed, “*great is Thy faithfulness*” (Lam. 3.23).

I have in mind here, however, a structured or orderly faithfulness, that is, a faithfulness in the context of the saint's position in the visible and corporate body of the church----a position in which each member finds his duly-appointed place in the government and work of the church and abides and labors therein faithfully to fulfill his part in the body of Christ. It is indeed impressive to observe a faithful man or woman who is ever about the Father's business, always going about faithfully, on time and consistently, to do what he or she is appointed to do; whether it is in reporting, in tithing and giving, in attendance to scheduled meetings of the church, or in fulfilling his/her part in duly-assigned duties in the context of the church's support ministries. When members are totally occupied in fulfilling their own duties and responsibilities, the devil has little, or no, opportunity to tempt them with worldly attractions and carnal things, or to preoccupy them with judging what others in the church may or may not be doing.

I have noticed in my fifty years in the ministry and fellowship of the church, that in nine out of ten cases in which a person is criticizing

another person's work, he is not doing his own work. I heard of a woman some years ago that was always complaining to her husband about her neighbor's wash hanging on the clothesline in open view. She kept pointing out and saying, "Look how dirty and dingy those clothes are." Her husband finally got tired of her constant complaining and criticizing and took a cloth and wiped the dirt and grime from the kitchen window that his wife was looking through: and, behold, the neighbor woman's wash was white and clean!

I recall on one occasion while working in the coal mines of a man complaining to his foreman that he had been watching a fellow miner for over 15 minutes and that the man had been doing nothing the whole time except wasting the company's money. The foreman then asked the tattletale, "And what did you accomplish in those 15 minutes?"

Finding our place in the organization and corporate work of the church is vitally important; and it is just as important to abide in our place in the church: so that we may perform our assigned duties and complete the work apportioned to us (cf. 2 Cor. 8.10-15). The apostle Paul explained, "*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him*" (1 Cor. 12.18). Earlier in this passage he emphasized that "*there are diversities of gifts . . . differences of administrations . . . diversities of operations . . . But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*" (vv. 4-11). He then concluded his inspired explanation by emphasizing that not all have the same office, gifts, and position in the church; but all work together for the upbuilding of the church and toward the completion of her mission in the world (vv. 27-30). In fact, he boldly points out, using again the body metaphor, that some members which "*we think are less honorable*" are just as important to the proper functioning of the body as members which we tend to see as more honorable (vv. 14-26). He reiterates and lays down the same principles in 2 Cor. 9.1-13.

The apostle Paul lays out further in his letter to Titus, whom he had appointed to oversee the churches in Crete (Titus 1.5), the kind of conduct that is expected of ministers and members in God's house. The core characteristics of this holy lifestyle are sobriety [sensibleness], dignity, wisdom and thoughtfulness, soundness in faith and doctrine, discretion and sexual purity at home and in public, and brotherly love and patience; in a word, all of the members are expected to illustrate "*a pattern of good works*" and to manifest a behavior that "*becometh holiness*" (2.1-9). Significantly, he then sums up his instructions, saying, "*showing all good fidelity [faithfulness]; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things*" (v. 10).

Tithing and Giving

While it is not explicitly singled-out in this specific passage in Titus; yet being a faithful tither and generous giver is implied in the commands to be “*a pattern of good works*” and “*showing all good fidelity . . . in all things.*” Tithing and giving are core principles in God’s Word and constitute essentially His financial plan for His church. To be negligent or slothful in this spiritual discipline is called robbery by the Lord, provokes His displeasure and places the disobedient member under a curse. On the other hand, to obey this ordinance invokes the Lord’s spiritual and material blessings. Listen to the prophet:

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord . . . Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me . . . in tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me . . . Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove Me now herewith saith the Lord . . . if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes . . . And all nations shall call you blessed . . .” (Mal. 3.7-12).

We have mentioned the importance of tithing and giving several times in recent years because it is so essential to the mission and successful operation of the church, besides being a plainly-stated commandment of the Lord. When a few members fail to do their part in this important discipline, others must give more to make up for those who do not give their part. This ought not to be so. Ministers especially should be an example of this spiritual discipline: for as the apostle says in another place: “*be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation [conduct], in charity, in faith, in purity*” (1 Tim. 4.12). Accordingly, counsel and reproof are in order when ministers preach one thing and live another, and discipline is necessary when they fail to respond in faith and humility to good counsel from those over them in the Lord. We simply cannot have ministers not reporting and not setting a good example in the spiritual disciplines of the church, including tithing and giving.

Let me encourage all of our people to be faithful in the commandment and discipline of tithing and giving: and then behold and watch the Lord do His part and fulfill His promise: “*[I will open to you] the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes . . .*”

Teamwork

Every member abiding in his/her place and doing his/her part

It is a beautiful and pleasant sight to see brethren manifesting holiness and godly living and working together in unity and harmony (Ps.133.1), with each member functioning according to his/her God-given gifts and abilities. Let's think for a moment of the church in terms of a "team" such as a football or basketball team. What immediately comes to mind is teamwork. The success or defeat of the team is largely dependent on the coordination and cooperation of the individual players for the sake of the team. There are many teams that have an outstanding player or superstar, yet never seem to bring home a trophy: because their players don't work together to achieve the maximum production from all the players collectively. On winning teams each player uses his abilities and skills to advance the objectives of the whole team. There is no room for slackers, nor selfishness and vainglorious conceit on the part of any individual player; each one does his part in coordination with other players to achieve the goal of the team---that is, to defeat the opposition and win! Then all may glory in the victory achieved by the whole team!

Behold how much can be accomplished when everyone abides in his place in the church and pours himself into his work for the glory of God and the church! On the other hand, the apostle warns against being disorderly and "*busybodies in other men's business [matters]*" (2 Thess. 3.11; 1 Tim. 5.13; 1 Pet. 4.15): for busybodies inevitably gender strife and spread discontent and discouragement throughout the body of Christ. Thus, the apostle Paul exhorts and commands "*that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we command you*" (1 Thess. 4.11).

Busybodies and Disorderly Members

No one likes to think of himself/herself as a busybody or disorderly person; but as the old saying goes, "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck: it is probably a duck." There is another old saying, "If the shoe fits wear it." If this be the case with any of our people, we exhort you rather to be wise, "consider your ways" and be converted to the "*more excellent way!*"

We read in Judges in the "church in the wilderness" the oft repeated observation, "*In those days there was no king in Israel: and every*

man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17.6; 18.1; 21.25). It is a reminder that where there is no government nor visible governor, the people go astray and are scattered, and the whole nation suffers from the disorder and apostasy. On the other hand, when each member of the church abides in his calling (as a janitor, usher, singer, musician, treasurer, support ministries director or worker, teacher, evangelist, deacon, bishop, pastor, overseer, or general executive) and accepts his position in the church, applying himself zealously to fulfill his particular duties and responsibilities, the whole church is blest and benefits from his/her faithfulness and self-giving. Thus, says the apostle:

“We then [who] are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor [and fellow member in the church] for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me” (Rom. 15.1-3).

Surely we can all see that disciplining ourselves to abide in our own calling and position in the church, and minding our business and faithfully performing our own appointed duties is the only way to edify and advance the church---I mean, the Lord’s church which we all profess to love; and it’s the only way that we will be able to see the rapture of “*a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing . . .*”!



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2018-2019

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Benin	Mark Agbonifo
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Burundi	David Gomba
Cambodia	Sam Bureenok
Cameroon	Eyong Eric Eyong
Canada	Wade H. Phillips
Chile	Javier Diaz
Costa Rica	Eugenio Cespedes
Democratic Republic of Congo	Wade H. Phillips
Dominican Republic	Saintaniel Hostelus
Ethiopia	Geremew Eschete Esuandalew
Ghana	David Dordah
Guatemala	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
Guinea	Philippe Seraphin Gomez
Haiti	Saintaniel Hostelus
Honduras	Jonatan Hernandez
India (South)	V. Binoy Joseph
India (Mid-East)	Talari Padma Rao
India Central	John Babu Rao Ganta
Ivory Coast	Mark Agbonifo
Kenya (North)	Elijah Wafula
Kenya (South)	Joanes Oboo
Liberia	Mark Agbonifo
Malawi	Maliele Dzuwa
Mexico	Danny Ramirez
Mozambique	Maliele Dzuwa
Myanmar (Burma)	Sam Bureenok
Nicaragua	Freddy Garcia
Nigeria	Yomi Adekunle
Pakistan	Sam Bureenok
Paraguay	Jorge Estroz
Peru	Yum V Munoz Quispe

Philippines	Domingo Resurreccion
Rwanda (Mission Rep.)	David Gomba
Sierra Leone	Joseph Alabi
South Africa (Miss Rep.)	Yomi Adekunle
South Sudan	Elijah Wafula
Tanzania	David Gomba
Thailand	Sam Bureenok
Togo	Mark Agbonifo
Uganda	Maurice Ogada Odede
Uruguay	Jorge Barrios
United States	Wade H. Phillips
Venezuela	Bani Rangel Jimenez
Zambia (Miss. Rep.)	David Gomba
Zimbabwe (Miss. Rep.)	David Gomba

National Overseers

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International Churches/Missions

Nation/Provinces	Churches	Missions
Argentina	7	2
Bangladesh	5	4
Benin	2	0
Bolivia	1	0
Burundi	6	3
Cambodia	3	5
Cameroon	5	1
Canada	1	0
Chile	14	1
Costa Rica	3	5
Dominican Republic	12	2
Democratic Republic of Congo	31	6
England	0	1
Ethiopia	2	2
Ghana.	1	0
Guatemala	18	8
Guinea	1	0
Haiti	410	3
Honduras	10	17
India Mid-East	15	16
India Central	20	1
India South	30	3
Ivory Coast		
Kenya (North)	27	2
Kenya (South)	38	6
Liberia		
Malawi	63	1
Mexico	9	5
Mozambique	45	5
Myanmar	1	5

Nicaragua	6	2
Nigeria	52	2
Pakistan	1	0
Paraguay	1	0
Peru	3	2
Philippines	7	11
Rwanda	0	1
Sierre Leone	2	0
South Africa	4	3
South Kenya	10	4
South Sudan	3	1
Tanzania	22	14
Thailand	3	4
Togo	4	0
Uganda	2	2
United States	44	8
Uruguay	1	1
Venezuela	4	3
Zimbabwe	3	2
Zambia	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	952	165

In addition to these statistics, the church has 1038 ministers and 88,340 members in a total of 46 nations and provinces. Some members exist in nations where no church has yet been established.

Bishops

Adekunle, Yomi
Adelere, Adediran Solomon
Agbonifo, Amos O.
Avila, Juan
Burnette, Anton
Carter, Lanny Woodrow
Chavez, Ricardo Valenzuela
Clement, Erasto
Dalton, Rocky
Espinoza, Ernesto
Ferrell, Rick
Ganda, Kenneth
Garcia, Miguel, Jr.
Gomba, David
Graves, Ricky
Harris, Byron
Hostelus, Saintaniel
Jones, William
Kelton, Clifford
Lozano, Jose Manuel
Massey, Ron
McDonald, E.A.
McDonald, Todd
Misago, John Karegea
Neill, Scott E.
Oboo, Joanes Okal
Perez, Javier Patricio Diaz
Perez, Jorge Enrique Estroz
Pierre, Sandraud
Phillips, Wade H.
Ramirez, Daniel
Resurreccion, Domingo
Sarry, Pete
Sebutoto, Audax Petro
Snyder, Zachary A.
Steele, Joseph A.
Sullivan, Bruce
Wafula, Elijah
Webster, Davis

White, A.B.

Male Evangelists

Abeka, Daniel
Abura, Lazaro Orango
Achacha, Julias
Adebayo, Según
Adegboyega, Idowu Israel
Adebowale, Elijah Idili
Adelere, Adediran Solomon
Adera, John Odhiambo
Aderemi, Aderoju Timothy
Agbe, Nyakou
Agbonifo, John Idemudia
Agbonifo, Mark Tokunbe
Agullana, Arnel Ganno
Agwanda, Joash
Akali, Ezakia
Akilolu, Taiwo Francis
Akuom, Sulman O.
Akwanya, Gerald
Alanya, Michael
Alfredo, Robert B.
Aluodo, Richard
Amando, Julio
Amos, Adetokun
Armand, Behanzin A.
Aremu, Abraham
Auyo, Juliias Myereere
Ayobami, Sanni Olusegun
Awiti, Daniel Oshiambo
Bagonle, Adebowak Elijah
Ballios, Jorge Antonio
Bamidele, Ademibawa Moall
Banvelos, Ambrosio Lopez (Roberto)
Barbour, Roger
Barker, Charles D.
Barrios, Jorge Antonio
Benjamin, Ammana. China
Betin, Akpatcho

Bienvenu, Oueni
Bor, German
Brown, Tom
Brown, Brooks Lee
Bundgere, Daniel Eliaz
Bureenok, Surisak
Brunet, Ricky Paul
Carrasco, Sr., Raul
Carrasco, Jorge
Carillo, Raul Arthur
Castillo, Moses Tarin
Catig, Teofilo
Corrales, Eugenio Cespedes
Chamorro, Vidal Morinigo
Chandra, Murala Surya
Childers, Daren
Christophe, Essee
Coello, Jose elis Orlando
Cook, Joseph Norris
Corrales, Eugenio Cespedes
Cortez, Carlos Jesus
Cortez, Luis Orlando
Creary, Nevil Sena
David, Oyadokun Olatundo
David, Samuel C.
Davis, John J.
Deakle, Tod
Diram, Joseph Oje
Dogbeda, Nouwe Kami
Dominguez, Gregorio
Duba, Ratna Babu
Ebenezer, Adebisi Oluseye
Edward, Orobosa Kelly
Elisha, Chokka
Emanuel, Abioye Aladimeji
Espinoza, Carlos Adan Garcia
Esuendalew, Geremew Eshete
Esse, Chritop
Estacio, Mario,
Etta, Silas
Everett, Patrick Meredith

Eyong, Eric Eyong
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Garcia, Vitalino Martinez
Geda, Janes A.
Geremew, Eshete Esuendalew
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Gregory, Jonathan
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Hernandez, Nolvin
Hernandez, Samuel
Ignacio, G. Benjamin
Ignacio, Ernesto
Ignacio, Melchor Gundran
Israel, Adebaye Oluwasagun
Israel, Koumako
Jaramillo, Alex Raymond
Jaramillo, Robert
Jandura, Godwin
Jaoka, Juma
Jaynes, Robert Lee
Johnson, James, Jr

John, Felix Kentangie
Joseph, Okello Nabii
Juma, Eluid
Kagose, Peterlis
Kanydere, Simion William
Kayode, Oluwadepo Isaiah
Kelly, Greg
Knowles, Wyburn Neal
Kumar, Boddu Arunodaya
Lacorte, Jerry Seneres
Lagos, Mario
Larmour, William Chase
Lwe'ya, Yakobo Etumbedcho
Llobrera, Alejandro G.
Llobrera, Alvin
Lopez, Juan
Lopez, Virgilio Amador
Lopez, Francisco
Lopez, Nicolas Daiz
Lourdes, La Cruz Martinez Sandra
Lumbly, Samuel G.
Lwamba, Justin
Mabombe, Daudi
Mabula, Paulo
Mafuru, Alex
Magare, Ondigo
Maliyamungu, Michael Barnaba
Maliyamungu, Paskal
Mang'ira, Antinius
Martinez, Luis Alberto
Masese, Antonius Minira
Matabaro, Sylvester Fansisco
Mathayo, Allex
McBride, Derrick
Mchura, Joseph
Mellado, Luis Alberto Martinez
Mendes, Feri Joel Martin
Miduda, Vitalis
Miller, Daron
Miruka, Amos Otieno
Mito, George

Mlengera, Meshak
Mnyangala, Michael Barnaba
Morgan, Nigel
Montecinos, Carlos Amador
Morakinyo, Ariwajoye Thomas
Morinigo, Maria Sirila Acosta de
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Muga, William
Myodonga, Frederick Ochali
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Oberio, George Otieno
Obiero, Mourice
Oboo, Joanes Okal
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Ochanda, John
Ochola, Patrick
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Ogola, Lawrence, Oluoch
Oguntore, Samuel Bamikohh
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Ojetunde, John Owseye
Ojwang, Peter Otieng
Oketch, John Okoth
Oketch, Joseph Ombajo
Okeyo, Steve O.
Okimyi, Kigina Daniel
Okinyi, Florence Aoko
Okode. Jane Akinyi
Okong'o, Samwd O.
Okong's Silas
Okoth, Simon
Okumu, Joshua

Olaide, Adebayo Kehinde	Pastran, Manuel Antonio
Oldyede, Aderibgbe Babatumde	Paulasa, Jorge Mario
Olal, Moris Anyanga	Perez, Gladys
Olal, Michae Ngome	Perez, Leonardo Mendez
Olawuyi, Adekunle	Pounders, Bobby
Oloo, Almas Olouoch	Prakash, Yannabathula
Olubenga, Oyeyemi Gabriel	Punda, Mika O.
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Olufemi, Olagunju Issac	Quezada, Sofanor
Olusola, Adeleye Jonathan	Quillen, Joseph
Ombalo, Michael	Quispe, Yum Munoz
Ombeta, Paul Odonyo	Rajoro, Peter
Omity, Makori	Ramirez, Hernandez Jonathan
Omondi, Fred	Ramirez, Odalis Margoth
Onesi, Matthew Bayode	Rangel, Ezequiel del Carme
Onyango, Josia	Rao, Nimmala Sanjeeva
Onyango, Philip Tel	Rao, Talari Padma
Ooko, Agnes	Rao, Yadia Mohan
Opiyo, Lukas	Ratnam, Sirra Mani
Orange, James	Reel, Jerry
Ornelas, Jr, Nazario	Rodriquez, Carlos Rafael
Origi, John	Ruben, Perez Dario
Orwa, George Ohola	Ruiz, Jose Dionicio
Osewe, Bernard	Saez, Mario Alfonso Flores
Osobu, Dotun	Saka, John Onyango
Otieno, Boaz	Sakwa, Dan Ouma
Otieno, Francis	Sakwa, Jack Obimbo
Otieno, Okello	Sakwa, Jacob Obimbo
Otumba, Julias A.	Samson, Akinlolu
Ouma, James Ng'anda	Samson, Akinola Akinlolu
Ouyo, Julias Myerere	Sanchez, Antiono
Oweri, Julias	Sanchez, Carlos Lopez
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Oyando, Eucabet	Senapati, Gabriyel
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Ozuda, Isaiah Omonid	Solomon, George W.
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Tingler, Jerry
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Viswanatham, Biddika
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Wesley, Janga John
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Zuilenam, Quillermo Lionlaf

Female Evangelists

Alabi, Opeyemi Elizabeth
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Antango, Jane
Atieno, Monica
Badmus, Esther Olufunmilayo
Bolanio, Adejane J.
Chicag, Ana Gladys Martinez
Clardy, Dorothy
Daudi, Lensa
Davis, Andrea Faye
Dorcus, Oyediran Tunrayo
Daudi, Lensa
Duniani, Jeanne
Edward, Veline Nelson
Elizabeth, Ilesanmi Omodasola
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Esther, Omotomilola Temitope
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Etando, Aziza
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Fayokeye, Asummo Omotola
Flores, Claudia Irene
Folasade, Ajayi Cecilia
Folasade, Osobu Paulina
Garcia, Irma Yolanda Martinez
Gonzales, Griselda Santiago
Grace, Sanni Iyabo
Gifford, Majorie
Ilesanmi, Mercy Olawunmi
Jandura, Memory D.
Jones, Pamela Lynn
Joseph, Dorkas
Joselyn, Treva
Kimble, Shirley
Lwanba, Mwajuma
Maciel, Olga Beatrice
Michael, Issac
McKee, Ofelia

Morgan, Suson
Mojirayo, Taiwo Agnes
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Obuyo, Damaris O.
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Ogonda, Joyce Adhiambo
Okumu, Elly
Olajumoko, Olaiya Olanike
Olu, Oladele Olukemi
Olufunke, Olujide Felicia
Olutunde, Adeyemi Joseph
Oluwa, Adebowale Janet
Omotunde, Durodola Adepeju
Ortiz, Celia Waldina Hernandez
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Owira, Grace Auma
Periera, Rebecca
Pinela, Margarita del Saez
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Reitler, Brenda
Rivera, Barbara
Romo, Reina
Sadler, Florence
Sandra, Lecruz Martinez
Sirrio, Janet
Snyder, Kari Elaine
Stephenson, Tina
Suna, Susilia
Tomi, Opakunle Florence
Williams, Linda
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Exhorters

None

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Clary, Kevin
Creary, Nevil Sena
Davis, Clyde (Eddie)
Davis, Jimmy
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Gibson, Dewey Allen
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Monday, Sam
Moore, Larry Wayne
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Odoyo, Alfanyo
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Okomgo, Elphace
Oombo, James Opany
Omity, Makori
Omwando, Peterson O.
Onwaga, Joash Odongo
Reid, William
Spicer, Chad

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; I 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" (1 Corinthians 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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