

# Zion Assembly Church of God 16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly

September 3-8, 2019  
United Christian Church  
2200 Peerless Rd.  
Cleveland, Tennessee

*“Ye are My Witnesses*



*saith the LORD [Jehovah]”*

*“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” (Is. 43.10)*

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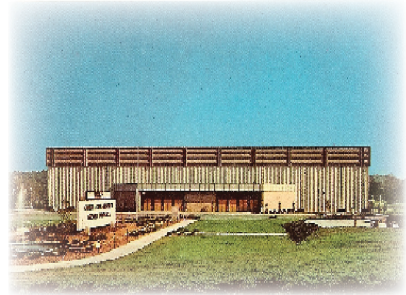
# Zion Assembly Church of God

## 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

# Welcome Delegates



**Wade H. Phillips**  
*Presiding Bishop*

The General Assembly is a special meeting ordained by the Lord to 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). It provides a forum for us to proclaim the Word of God; rekindle the fires of holiness and Pentecostal power; fan the flames of evangelism; stir our affections and deepen our consecration; lay out a plan to more effectively disciple believers and attract the “other sheep” to the fold. Finally it gives us a forum to resolve any issues that may hinder our unity and progress forward.

In the final analysis, the mission of Christ in the world will be fulfilled through His covenant people, the church (Ex. 19.5-8; Mt. 16.18-19; 2 Cor. 3.2-3; Eph. 3.9-10; 1 Pet. 2.9). The inspired prophet wrote:

*“I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth”* (Is. 49.6).

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!”* Let us then seek to *“lift up [His] voice [together] . . . [until we] see eye to eye”* and can go forward together **like a mighty army** to fulfill our mission in the world (Song 6.8-10; Is. 52.8).

## *About the Theme*

The Assembly theme---“**Ye are My Witnesses**”[Is.43.10]---reminds us of who and what the church is and how important it is to the LORD. The church is the *“the chosen servant of the LORD”* and as such is privileged to *“[dwell] in the secret place of the Most High God [and] to abide under the shadow of the Almighty”* (Ps. 91.1). Being betrothed to Christ, the church is privy to His secrets and revelations, which enable us to dwell under His pavilion (Ps. 25.14; 31.20; 45.9-14; Prov. 3.32; Mt. 13.35; Eph. 1.8-9, 17-23; 3.9-10; Col. 3.3-4). We are called to be His special witnesses: *“to show forth His praises [graces/attributes/perfections]”* (1 Pet. 2.9).

Because we are joined to Christ and one another in a special covenant bond (Ex. 19.5-8; 24.6-8; 2 Kg. 23.1-3; Ezek. 16.8), we are accordingly on a prophetic journey with Him through time to experience finally *“the glory of His inheritance in the saints”* (Ex. 19.5-8; 24.6-8; 2 Kg. 23.1-3; Ezek. 16.8), Eph. 1.18). We are a *“city set on a hill”* to show forth the light and glory of the LORD (Is. 60.1-5, 14; Mt. 5.14; Eph. 5.8, 13).

This forms our peculiar witness for the Lord. It is not just supernatural revelation in a Pentecostal ecstasy---that is, being caught up *“in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”*; it is a revelation lived out on earth in suffering with Him: an experiential knowledge of the Lord obtained through deprivations, trials, tribulations and persecutions, as well as a knowledge obtained through victories in the Spirit. Adversities open the way for genuine glory. Hear the apostle Paul: *“Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak then am I strong.”* And listen to the apostle Peter: *“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”*

We should glory in suffering therefore, as well as in Pentecostal blessings and spiritual ecstasies, for they work together for our growth and perfection in Christ and qualify us for heavenly glory.

***“I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God”*** Is. 43.11-12.

## Administration

**Presiding Bishop**..... Wade H. Phillips

**Superintendent of Operations**..... Anton Burnette

**Chief Clerk**.....Marie Crook  
Julia Massey, Sandra Moore, Brenda Reitler, Rita Goodrum,  
Sandy Morris, Molly Hayward.

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

**Chief Registrar**.....Mandy Thompson  
Shelby Erwin, America Burnette, Victoria Burnette, Marie Carroll  
Ally Thompson, Ashley Miller, Rachel McDonald, Emma Erwin.

### Assembly Business Committee

Chairman .....Zachary Snyder  
J.J. Davis  
Ricky Graves  
Elijah Wafula  
Jim C. Orange  
Kevin Clary  
Tod Deakle

**Video and Internet Streaming**.....Madison Kachel

**Sound Equipment**.....Anton Burnette

**Photography**.....Julie Steele

**Projection Director**.....Donnie Burnette

**Stage Manager**..... Joseph A. Steele

**Music**..... Kim Erwin, Zachary Snyder

**Special Programs Director**.....Wanda K. Busbee

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



## Greetings!

### **Anton Burnette** **Superintendent of Operations**

Praise God for the General Assembly! What a great opportunity for the church to shine forth. The General Assembly is not simply another convention or conference; not simply a time for fellowship, to meet new friends and reacquaint ourselves with old ones. It is a divine institution in which the whole church comes together to hear from God, settle issues, and to be spiritually edified. As we enter this time of “assembling ourselves together”, we should do so prayerfully and reverently.

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

- 1) Delegates should consult with the appointed Assembly staff (Superintendent of Operations, ushers, stage managers, 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 main 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 Anton Burnette.
- 5) If you need to put pictures, scriptures, etc. on the projection screens, see Donnie Burnette.
- 6) Give soundtracks and media devices to Sound Engineer 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 your 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.

## **Construction Underway on the Two-Story 10,000 sq. ft. Expansion of the International Ministries Complex**



**We are hoping that construction of the new addition of the International Ministries Complex will be finished by April 2020. If all goes according to plans, we will have a ceremonial ribbon cutting during our School of Ministry in May. The new addition will provide much needed office and storage space for the International Offices, and facilities for *Zion Assembly Bible College and Seminary*.**

**Pre-Assembly Programs**  
**Assembly Business Committee**  
**Monday, September 2, 2019**

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 16th 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 3, 2019**

Beginning at 9:00 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 at the King's Table [in the Mountain View Inn on hill just off I-75 Exit 25]. Special singing: Trevor Graves, KY. Special speaker: Pastor Mike Shreve, Cleveland, TN. Comments and special presentations by the Dale L. Phillips. Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for this occasion.

# Assembly Program

## Tuesday Evening

6.30 p.m. **Official Opening of the Assembly**

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

Welcome---Alice Jones and the ladies of Cleveland

**Witnesses in Praise**---Kim Erwin

“Praise Him for His mighty acts”

***Voice of Zion/SYNC boost***—Glenda Major, director

**Media Ministries report**---Anton Burnette, director

Special Songs---Becky Land

**Ladies Ministries Program**

---Kim Erwin, director



Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs---Molly Hayward, MD; America Burnette, TN

**Message**---“*Witnesses to who He is*”

(Is. 9.6-7; Mt. 16.13-19; Jn. 1.1-3, 14; Col. 2.9-10)

---Bruce Sullivan, SC

[**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. Witnesses in Praise!---Monday Family, TN

### Presiding Bishop's Annual Address Section II

Special Song---Babs Sullivan, SC

### International Leaders' Personal Reports:

Presiding Bishop

International Executive Council

Assistant Publisher

General Treasurer's Report

Special Song---Burnette Family

### Message---"*Witnesses to who She is*"

Ezek. 43.10; Song. 6.8-10; Mt. 5.14; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.9-10

--Anton Burnette, TN

---Lunch Break---

2:00 p.m. Musical Prelude

### Overview of the Work 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.*

## **North America**

Canada---Wade H. Phillips, national overseer  
Mexico---Danny Ramirez, national overseer  
United States---Wade H. Phillips, national overseer

## **Africa**

Kenya---Elijah Wafula, national overseer  
South Sudan---Elijah Wafula, national 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, Ivory Coast, 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

## **Central America**

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

## **Caribbean**

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

## **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

## Middle East

India Mid-East---Talari Padma Rao, provincial overseer  
India Central---John Babu Ganta, provincial overseer  
India South---V. Binoy Joseph, provincial overseer

## Southeast Asia

Thailand---Sam Bureenok, national overseer  
Cambodia/Myanmar (Burma)---Sam Bureenok, Mission representative  
Bangladesh---Suku Ranjon Skider, national overseer

## Far East

Philippines---Domingo Resurreccion, national overseer

---Supper Break---

*“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Mt. 24.14).*

*“Jesus came and spake unto them saying . . . 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” (Mt. 28.18-20).*

## Wednesday Evening

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

7:00 p.m. "Praise God in His sanctuary" (Ps. 150.1)  
---Susan Morgan, Canada

Message---"*Witnesses thru Stability and Steadfastness*"  
(Col. 2.5-7)---Corey Hall, MS

Assembly Expense Offering

### Senior Ambassadors' Program —Ruth Tingler, director

*"The hoary [grey/white] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness"* (Prov. 16.31).



Special Singing---Erwin Family

Message---"*Fearless Witnesses*"  
(Josh. 1.9-11; Is. 44.1-2, 8-9; Acts 21.10-14;  
Rev. 2.10-11, 26; 3.10-12)---Byron Harris, MS

*"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—**Kim Erwin**  
**International Coordinator**

Special Songs---TBA

## Sunday School Program

---Mandy Thompson, director



Praise Report: Jerry Nichols, KS; Danny Schroader, Jr., KS

## Message---“Witnesses thru Humility and Forbearance”

(Mk. 11.25-26; Col. 3.12-15)---**Joseph Steele, TN**

—Lunch Break---

1:30 p.m. *“Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord”*

---Cliff and Becky Kelton, MS

Special Songs—Wayne Floyd, SC; Robert Llana, NC

***In Memory . . . Members:*** Ed Reitler; Doris Villers; Joseph Cook; Jonatan

Hernandez [Honduras]; Mata Gomez [Ivory Coast];

***Friends:*** Faye Lawson; Benny Clardy.

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

**Message—“Witnesses thru Patience and Suffering”** (Acts 5.41;

2 Cor. 12.7-10; Heb. 10.32-37; 2 Pet. 4.1)

---**Jose Lozano, CA**

## ORDINATION SERVICE

—Supper Break—

## Thursday Evening

6:15 p.m. *“Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet . . . cymbals . . . stringed instruments and organs”*---**Instrumental Praise by Zion’s musicians**---directed by **Todd/Kim Erwin**

Special Song—**Ashley Davis, WV**

**School of Ministry Program**  
---**Bruce Sullivan, Superintendent**

Assembly Expense Offering



Special Songs—**Becky Land, SC**

Witnesses to God’s healing power—**TBA**

## Healing Message & Prayer Service

---**J.J. Davis, WV in charge**

*“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up . . .”* Jas. 5.13-14

## Friday

**Attention:** *The annual SYNC luncheon will be held today at 12:00 at Fulin's Asian Cuisine located in the Cleveland Town Center [off I-75 Ex. 27]. Glenda Major in charge. All SYNC members and invited guests are encouraged to attend.*

9:30 a.m. **Praise Him!** ---Canada delegation

### **Witnesses thru Education and Ministerial Development**

---Anton Burnette, director



Special Songs---Alex and Holly Drake, KY; Victoria Green, TN

### **Message---“Witnesses thru love and rejoicing”**

(Ps. 5.11; 9.1-2, 14; Jn. 13.35; 1 Pet. 1.8)---Kari Snyder, AL

—Afternoon Break—

*“He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments”*

Ps. 78.5-7.

## Friday Evening

*[Attention: Front three rows are reserved for Youth Program.  
All youth [12-35] meet at 7:45 in the Corridor for Youth March]*

6:30 p.m. Special Songs---West Mobile Choir

### Shepherding Ministries Program ---Wilma Carter, director



Message---“Witnesses of His goodness and mercy”  
(Ex. 33.19; 2 Chron. 6.41-42; Neh. 9.30-32; Rom. 2.4)  
---Ricky Graves, KY



### Youth Program

Theme: “Can I Get a Witness?”  
Pam Jones, director

*[Attention: Youth Afterglow [bonfire] immediately after Youth Program at the International Ministries Complex]  
Kidz Convention in the morning 8:45-10:00 a.m.,  
2:30-4:00. 7:00-8:30 p.m.*

*“He said to him again the second time,  
Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me? He  
said unto him, Yea, Lord; you know that I  
love you. He said unto him, Feed my sheep”.*  
Jn. 21.16

## Saturday

8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer Service---Eddie and Faye Davis, SC

9.00 Praise Him!---Trevor Graves, KY

**Message---“And ye also shall bear witness . . .”**

(Jn. 15.26-27)---Tom Brown, WV

Recognition of Special Guests

—Assembly Choir—

## Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

—Lunch Break—

## Saturday Afternoon

2:30 p.m. Worship Him!---Alicia Harris, TN

Special Singing---Charles Barker, IN; Vernon Johnson, VA

## Assembly Business Committee Report

---Supper Break---

*“It is therefore the sense of this meeting that we do our best to press into every open door this year and work with greater zeal and energy for the spread of the glorious gospel of the Son of God than ever before”.*

*[Minutes of first Annual Assembly held  
January 26-27, 1906 Camp Creek, N.C.]*

## Saturday Evening

7:00 p.m. *“Praise the Lord . . . young men, and maidens;  
old men, and children”* (Ps. 148.7-12)

---Henry Rodriquez, CA

**Message---**“ . . . *after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*”

(Acts 1.8; Mt. 3.11)---Zachary Snyder, AL

Special Singing---Canada delegation

Assembly Expense Offering

## World Mission Program

---Wade H. Phillips, director

---Parade of Nations---

The mission of the church is a continuation of Christ’s earthly ministry (Jn.14.12). The redemption and restoration of men’s souls were primary purposes for His coming to earth. *“For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Mk. 10.45). And He commanded His disciples to fulfill this same objective in the world; saying, *“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”* (Mt. 4.19). The apostle Paul later confirmed that the ministry of bringing people to God has been imparted to His church. He wrote, *“God . . . has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation”* (2 Cor. 5.18). It should be the desire of every true believer to bring souls to Christ.

## Sunday

9:15 a.m. Sunday School Lesson---Alex Jaramillo, AZ

9:45 Special Singing---California Delegation

### Children's Ministries Program

---Kayla Graves, director



---Assembly Choir---

### Message—"Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth with the 'all things' message"

(Mt. 24.14; 28.19; Mk. 16.15)

---Scott E. Neill, SC

Announcements

Appointments

Consecration Service

Song: "*Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All*"

---led by Betty, Debbie, Dreama, and Brenda

*"I can hear my Savior calling,  
Take thy cross and follow Me.  
Where He leads me I will follow  
. . . I'll go with Him, with Him  
all the way"*

---E.W. Blandly

## **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**

**Corey Hall, MS (absent)  
Joanes Oboo, Kenya took his place**

### **Thursday**

**Nevil Creary sang solo representing  
Toronto delegation (arrived late)**

### **Friday**

**Teresa Petit, AL (absent)  
West Mobile Choir (absent)**

### **Saturday Evening**

**Ethiopian delegation (absent)**

### **Sunday**

**Alex Jaramillo, AZ (absent)  
L.W. Carter took his place for Sunday School lesson  
California delegation (absent) special singing  
by Henri Rodriguez**

### **Recognition of Special Guests:**

**David Roebuck, Historian for Church of God  
Stan York, Historian for International Pentecostal Holiness Church**

**Registered Attendance 388**

*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**

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

**2013**

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

**2018**

*Charles & Mary Barker, IN  
Clifford & Becky Kelton, MS  
Robert & Marie Llanaeza, NC*

**2019**

*Richard and Kim Merrill, OR  
Becky Land, SC  
Dave and Judy Ashley, WV*

# International Staff Reports Sixteenth Annual General Assembly

## Presiding Bishop's Report to the

Sixteenth Annual General Assembly  
September 9, 2018--September 3, 2019

*“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord . . . This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face . . . Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.” (Ps. 24.3-10).*

This year has been in many ways triumphant. In all of our endeavors and through all of the challenges that had arisen, the Lord enabled us with His grace, strength and anointing to persevere and emerge as “more than conquerors” in every situation.

We have done our best to “care [for] all the churches under our oversight, and to answer all correspondence and calls that have come into the office (roughly 400 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 and churches regarding disciplinary issues in several states and countries. These always preoccupy too much of our time: but they are a necessary part of our work as overseers and elders in God’s church. By the grace of the Lord, every disciplinary and administrative problem was solved---in some cases counsel alone was sufficient; in others 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 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 the General Staff and international department heads and assistants [Anton Burnette, Daron Miller, Pam Jones, Bruce Sullivan, Marie Crook, Kim Erwin, Glenda Major, Renetta Kelton, Jim Orange, Alice Jones, Todd Erwin, Grace Burnette, Dale Phillips, and Rosa Nicholson] for their cooperation and hard work. Sister Pam Jones is a gift to the church in many ways. It turns out that she came to us as a seasoned finance director, including knowing the ends and outs of real estate and construction finance. But she also somehow gets involved in

every thing going on at headquarters---and is a blessing. Brother Miller has been invaluable in the Mission Department. The work around the world has greatly advanced under his untiring efforts, both in regard to unifying the church and in grounding [solidifying] the work throughout the world. Everywhere he goes he is loved and appreciated. I get glowing reports from the overseers and ministers in the nations about his love and affections for the ministers and people. Brother Burnette has also been invaluable in promoting and advancing the work in the Education department and Media ministries and also invaluable as a computer expert for the international offices. These brethren and Sister Pam have also been very involved in the new building project. Glenda Major is a gift to the church and has made herself invaluable in a number of ways---in promoting VOZ and SYNC, in spearheading the new Tract Ministry, and in developing and up-keeping the landscape around the international office complex. She also seems to get her hand in everything going on. [Sister Major's husband, Steve, also has been a tremendous blessing to our work]. 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 Scott Neill, though having moved back to Greenville, South Carolina to pastor and oversee that region, has contributed to advance the work at headquarters as assistant publisher. Every name mentioned and still others not mentioned are all hard workers and always anxious to do whatever is needed and helpful to advance the church and its work. I feel like giving them a cheer would be in order here.

I want to commend also the regional and national overseers and pastors, most of whom have been cheerfully cooperative with the Presiding Bishop in the promotion of the work. 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 Institute [SMI], both in our Cleveland and California schools; and planned and moderated the 15th Annual General Assembly. My travels this year included trips to two countries and ten states [IN, AL, MS, GA, CA, WV, VA, TN, SC, NC, some of these several times] to assist the overseers and pastors in the work.

My work connected with SMI included helping to organize and plan materials; write and teach several lessons for the schools in southern California and Cleveland; attended and participated in two of the regional and state conventions in the United States---Alabama/Mississippi and Tennessee; and was privileged to have my faithful companion, Dale, with me for 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 authored ten tracts to advance our new Tract Ministry. Also dealt with the architects, general contractor, bank officials and city departments and agencies connected with our expansion program for the International Ministries Complex.

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 in everything God gave the increase!

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

Sermons Preached.....	163
(includes written messages and lessons taught)	
Converted.....	7
Sanctified.....	3
Holy Ghost Baptisms.....	2
Added to the church.....	7
Baptized in Water.....	0
Tithes paid.....	\$4,705.00
Offerings given.....	\$5,050.00
Miles traveled.....	22,000 (approximately 6600 by air).
Churches visited.....	17
Regional Conventions attended.....	2
General Assemblies moderated.....	1

Again, I want to thank everyone 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 one way or another in 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 love.

Humbly submitted,  


Wade H. Phillips

# **Assistant World Mission Director Report**

## **Sixteenth Annual General Assembly**

**September 9, 2018 – September 3, 2019**

### **Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly**

*“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of host” [Zech. 4.6].*

*“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” [Mk. 16.15-20].*

I’m trusting that the Lord will empower us as His church through His Spirit to fulfill the great commission. Amen.

I thank the Lord for the opportunity to have served the church this year in the capacity of assistant world mission director. It has been a great year---exciting, joyous, and full of anticipation for what the Lord will do next as we heed His call. These are exciting times we are living in---the very last days! The apostles yearned in their hearts to experience the day in which we live. I had prayed for many years that the Lord would not leave me out of His work in the last days; and He has been faithful to hear my prayer: putting me right in the middle of what He is doing thru His church in these very end-times.

I appreciate the opportunity to have worked with our overseers, pastors, leaders, and mission workers all around the world. I also have had the privilege of working closely beside our Presiding Bishop. Brother Phillips is truly a great leader, teacher and mentor. This past year we have had many conferences dealing with different situations in the nations around the world. The Lord has always been faithful to guide and direct our steps.

This year I have been able to accomplish the following work by the grace of God.

1. Arranged travel for overseers to attend School of Ministry and General Assembly.
2. Received and answered over 12,000 emails, phone calls, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger.
3. Attended two weeks of School of Ministry in Cleveland TN.
4. Prepared and distributed quarterly allotments to overseers and mission workers. With the assistance of the General Treasurer we have been able to cut costs of the

fees associated with sending allotments. Sister Pam Jones has been a big help to me in the distribution of allotments to our National Overseers.

5. I have written one article for the VOZ and have submitted reports to Bishop Phillips of my mission trips [these were edited and published in the VOZ].

6. Traveled and ministered in seven nations this year, including:

1. Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Tanzania

Benin and Togo - National Overseer Mark Agbonifo.

Nigeria - National Overseer Yomi Adekunle

Tanzania - National Overseer David Gomba

In Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Brother Mark Agbonifo, Yomi Adekunle and myself traveled together and ministered in the churches. We had several meetings with pastors and leaders. The Spirit of God brought unity among the brethren. We also traveled together to Ibadan, the center of the work in Nigeria where Brother Adekunle is overseer and the local pastor. The church celebrated its 10th Anniversary there. It was glorious. We preached and ministered, and the power of God moved mightily. Fourteen people were baptized in water during this convention and Brother Adekunle's son, Pleasant, was one of them. Many hearts and lives were changed and blessed by the Lord in this convention. Then I moved to Tanzania and met Brother Gomba. The church in Tanzania was celebrating its 14th Annual Convention. The Convention was held in Shirati, the birthplace of the church in that nation---and also the birth place of Brother Gomba. His mother and family still reside there. The convention was great. We held services in the morning under the tents at Sister Gomba's house. Then in the evening time we moved the services to the village, where we ministered and evangelized the area. Many were saved, delivered, healed, and set free by the power of God. We baptized 23 in Lake Victoria. It was a beautiful sight. Tanzania has been in revival ever since.

2. Haiti—I was there with Bishop Hostelus. Brother Patrick Alexandre interpreted. We traveled to many churches in remote areas, preaching and encouraging the brethren.

3. Mexico—I was blessed to be able to minister in the convention in Frontera along with Brother Danny Ramirez and several others from California. I also ministered in Mexicali [in north Mexico] with Brother Ramirez.

4. Nepal—God has miraculously opened the door in the nation of Nepal. Just last month in August, I met up with Pastor Raju Pariyar and 25 pastors from different districts all over the mountains of Nepal. We all came together for a convention in Bharatpur, Chitwan. The Lord confirmed His Word and 24 pastors made covenant with Zion Assembly Church of God.

Traveled—46,943 miles by air this year; 7000 miles on the ground by car.

Preached in the California conventions [North and South]

Saved—34

Baptized in water—32

Preached one revival

Local church visits—10

Sermons preached—140

Sanctified—40

Baptism Holy Ghost—37

Added to the church—28

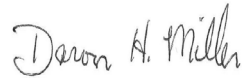
Homes Visited—38

Reported faithfully to the Presiding Bishop and General Treasurer.

I would like to thank Norie Garavito, Danny Ramirez, Renetta Kelton, Ricky Brunet and Roberto Lopez in assisting in translation, and with conference calls. Special thanks also to Anton Burnette, Donnie Burnette for media assistance.

I would also like to thank Marie Crook, Renetta Kelton, and Pam Jones for their help in the office, and especially my wife, Kim, for her love and support.

Humbly submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daron H. Miller".

*Assistant World Mission Director*

# Department of Education/Media Ministries

## Greetings to the 16<sup>TH</sup> Annual General Assembly

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” - 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the Lord and His church in regards to Education and Media departments throughout the last year. I want to thank my wife, Grace and our children for supporting me in this position, constantly praying and assisting me when 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 daily with our Presiding Bishop. His vision and knowledge has greatly helped to equip me to fulfill the tasks before me in the Education and Media departments.

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

1. Consistently worked towards the vision and goals for the education and media departments. Studied several different industries and strategies to better position Zion Assembly.
2. Completed foundational tasks for the establishment of the Bible College.
3. Made all decisions in line with our future fulfilling the requirements and process by which the Bible College could have approval from the state of Tennessee to grant degrees and future accreditation.
4. Worked with the Presiding Bishop and others in the planning of the expansion of headquarters. Met with contractors, architects, bankers, etc. to determine building plan, funding and execution.
5. Developed course listings for first degree plan that will be offered.
6. Built the Bible College website.
7. Installed the back office software for online classes.
8. Installed online meeting software for both live and recorded classes.
9. Started registering new students for the Bible College. Assisted our National Overseers in the process as the priority.

10. Updated the Zion Assembly website monthly with the current Sunday School literature.
11. Updated the Zion Assembly website with all the General Assembly Minutes.
12. Updated the Zion Assembly website with other various updates and news as needed.
13. Coordinated with the Missions Department regarding new contacts.
14. Continued to adapt online content creation plan for Zion Assembly. Emphasizing the best way to represent the church online.
15. Began streaming services online to our You tube channel.
16. Attended and instructed at the School of Ministry in Southern California and in Tennessee.
17. Attended and preached at state conventions in West Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama and Tennessee.
18. Attended the regional youth camp, Camp Jubilee, in Tennessee.
19. Attended the Youth Convention in Cleveland, TN.
20. Visited 8 Zion Assembly churches. Conducted 1 revival. Preached several special services.
21. Preached a youth service in a non-denominational fellowship camp meeting.
22. As pastor of Zion Assembly Church of God in Cleveland, TN, I preached weekly and worked to build the local congregation.
23. Attended Executive Council meetings in Pigeon Forge, TN and Cleveland, TN.
24. 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*  
 Director of Education and Media

# General Treasurer's Report

## Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly

To God be the glory for all that has been accomplished in Zion Assembly. I find myself humbled for God allowing me to be a part of this glorious work which He has begun in us. He will help us complete our task and to go forward in the work of the LORD.

I want to commend the pastors and churches for your faithfulness to support the work of the church through the International Offices. Because of your hard work, the church has had a profitable financial year. At the end of this fiscal year, we have seen our vision of expanding our International Ministries Complex come to reality. The loan was secured and construction work on site has begun. Praise the Lord!

The General Treasurer's responsibility is to receive and record all funds sent to the international offices; manage daily transactions and record-keeping; accounts payable and payroll accounts; reconcile on all bank accounts; disburse approved mission allotments; prepare various monthly reports for the presiding bishop; provide reports for international staff; attend staff meetings, and close out the fiscal year along with preparing a yearly financial statement. I have fulfilled all responsibilities related to this office to best of my knowledge and ability.

It has been an honor to serve the church in the capacity of General Treasurer this year. I would like to express my appreciation to all the church for your prayers and support.

Respectfully Submitted

*Pamela Jones*

Zion Assembly Church of God  
16th Annual General Assembly  
Financial Summary  
July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

<b>Summary of Accounts</b>						
<b>Accounts:</b>	<b>Balance Forward</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Account Transfers-In</b>	<b>Account Transfers-Out</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Ending Balance</b>
<b>United Community Bank</b>						
Checking Account (Operating)	88,188.07	464,800.35			402,958.09	150,030.33
IPBF (fka College & Tabernacle Funds)	68,579.06	84,056.19	34,086.20		35,000.00	151,721.45
Paypal Account	479.64		1,757.90	2,024.05		213.49
( Note: IPBF Expenses of \$35,000.00 consist of \$33,800.00 for the Architect Fee & \$1,200.00 for Engineers Fee)						
<b>Accounts: Smart Bank</b>						
	Balance Forward	Deposited	Transfers In	Transfers Out	Expenses	Ending Balance
Smart Bank (ME - Mission Funds)	0.00	1,917.22	57,670.34		57,997.98	1,589.58
<b>Account: Misc.</b>						
	Balance Forward	Received		Transfer to Paypal	Expenses & Fees	Ending Balance
Paypal on Line	775.42	1,062.78		1,757.90	28.49	51.81
Petty Cash	0.00	151.69			114.58	37.11
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>\$158,022.19</b>	<b>\$551,988.23</b>	<b>\$93,514.44</b>	<b>\$3,781.95</b>	<b>\$496,099.14</b>	<b>\$303,643.77</b>

<b>Fund Balances in Checking Account:</b>					<b>Income Statement</b>
Fund	Balance Forward	Income	Expenses	Ending Balance	Year ending June 30, 2019
Bible College Operating Fund	0.00	0.00	180.06	-180.06	<b>Total Contribution:</b>
Emergency Fund	6,390.10	4,269.93	300.00	10,360.03	\$551,988.23
Ladies Retreat Fund	10,726.22	17,085.00	15,829.50	11,981.72	<b>Less Actual Expenses:</b>
IYC Retreat Fund	0.00	3,716.00	2,633.07	1,082.93	\$406,366.65
Missions Fund	39,176.22	181,568.19	172,986.60	47,757.81	<b>NET INCOME:</b>
School of Ministry Fund	5,381.98	11,189.75	8,060.05	8,511.68	<b>\$145,621.58</b>
Spanish Voice of Zion Fund	1,418.39	0.00	1,418.39	0.00	Note: Actual Expenses = Expenses
Sunday School Fund	11,367.24	19,521.47	10,200.00	20,688.71	PLUS Acct. Transfer Out LESS Acct. Transfer In.
Tithe Fund	0.00	206,881.04	171,438.35	35,442.69	
Voice of Zion Fund	1,494.07	9,562.39	6,762.27	4,294.19	
Youth-Media Fund	12,233.85	11,006.58	13,149.80	10,090.63	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$88,188.07</b>	<b>\$464,800.35</b>	<b>\$402,958.09</b>	<b>\$150,030.33</b>	

# International Sunday School Director

## Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly

It has been an honor to serve in the capacity of Sunday School Director since April 2019. All glory and honor be to the Lord for sustaining the Sunday School Program and helping us advance the kingdom and build the church.

Since April, I have communicated with Brother Bruce Sullivan regarding our monthly Sunday School literature. Brother Sullivan is responsible for choosing the topics of study each month, choosing the writers for the adult, teen, and children's lessons, editing the content and communicating with the Spanish translators so every lesson is available in English and Spanish. I have also communicated with Brother Anton Burnette who is responsible for putting the Sunday School lessons on the church's website for everyone's access. Once I have confirmed the new lessons are available online, I send a notification via email to approximately 107 people. We have repeated past Sunday School lessons for the first time in ten years. As Brother Phillips pointed out, since we began writing we have never repeated the lessons and now have a new crop of children and teens to educate.

After speaking with our Presiding Bishop regarding the importance of receiving Sunday School quarterly reports from our local churches, I designed a report book which was printed at headquarters with the help of Sister Pam Jones to be given out to all the local churches. The Sunday School online report remains available for those who prefer the electronic method of reporting. Each local church's Sunday School Superintendent is responsible for submitting a quarterly Sunday School Report to the International Sunday School Director, as well as reporting to their local church during the quarterly business conference.

Three churches were awarded for giving the most in Sunday School offerings this past year to support the orphanage ministry. The first place was Greenville, SC for sending \$2,209.06. The second place was West Mobile, AL for sending \$1,521.08. The third place was Cleveland, TN for sending \$1,306.00. The total amount received for the orphanage ministry from all the local churches was \$19,521.47.

The Sunday School program is enabling us as witnesses and servants of God to spread the gospel and teachings of Jesus so that the world will know and believe in Him. "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: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." (Eph 4:13-15)

Respectfully submitted,  
*Mandy Thompson*  
International Sunday School Director

# **International Ladies Ministries Director**

## **Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly**

### **Eastern Region Ladies Retreat:**

Attendance: 90

Directed by Kim Erwin and Pam Jones

Location: Pigeon Forge, Tn

### **Western Region Ladies Retreat (Pacific Coast):**

Attendance: 71

Directed by Rosie Rameriz

Location: Oxnard, CA

### **Nigeria Women's Convention**

Attendance: 300+

Directed by Kemi Oladele

## **Eastern Ladies Retreat Report**

Ninety ladies from fourteen Zion Assembly churches came together in Pigeon Forge, TN where attractions, restaurants, and retail stores abound. Though much was enjoyed in this part of TN, including the scenic views of the Appalachian Mountains, these ladies came seeking “the better part,” and certainly experienced it. From the opening service Friday evening to the concluding service Sunday morning, the Spirit of the Lord moved and was powerful. No one could deny the presence of the Lord in that place, for everyone could feel Him and see Him in the glowing countenances of those overtaken in the spirit of worship and prayer. Even the instruments and the singing rang out the glory of God. Encouraging testimonies about God’s healing touch were given by Ruth Tingler and Ruth Smith.

The theme of this year’s retreat was taken from the real-life experience of two sisters, Mary and Martha, as recorded in Luke 10:42, “and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” In her mini-sermon Friday night, Lanny Carter from Roanoke, VA got everyone’s attention in mentioning a disease called “Martha-itis,” the ailment of being overtaken in the lesser things in life. Sister Carter encouraged the ladies to do as Mary and avoid the disease by maintaining a humble position before Christ, “at His feet,” and taking in His Word. Following Carter, Mandy Thompson of Okolona, MS delivered a thought-provoking mini-sermon in bringing out the danger of a bad or inappropriate attitude, as Martha had when confronting the Lord. In contrast to Martha’s bad attitude, she encouraged all to take the high ground, “the good part” that as Jesus said, “shall not be taken away.”

After enjoying a lumberjack's breakfast Saturday morning, Stephanie Ferrell of the Crossville church blessed the ladies in telling a portion of the story of Christian, the main character in the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. She gave us all a huge helping of courage when telling us what Christian did when he heard the roar of vicious Lions coming from the direction in which he was headed. Did he cower? You will have to read the book or ask a lady who attended the retreat. After the devotion on courage, it was easy for Alice Jones to lead us in an entertaining activity where we learned interesting and unusual facts about each other. It was as Psalms 126:2, "...our mouth was filled with laughter." Immediately following, Wanda Busbee gave a class on "the good part," in that *We're Better Together*." She spoke on what it means to be the "light of the world" and a "city set on a hill."

The Presiding Bishop, accompanied by Bishop Lanny Carter, Joe Steele, and Scott Neill, gave the evening message Saturday Night. After Dale Phillips addressed the ladies and gave encouraging words, Bishop Phillips preached under a mighty anointing, proclaiming that Christ forgives, but He also delivers. The message brought on a strong desire for the ladies to seek God for deliverance. A healing line was formed, and young and old went through the line crying out to God. A young sister prayed intensely for over an hour with others gathered around to help her pray as she sought deliverance unto salvation.

Wanda Busbee, *reporter*

### **Pacific Coast Ladies Report**

The Lord blessed us with an exceptional retreat this year. God's Spirit was felt throughout the weekend of January 25-26, 2019. Priscilla Pompa was used greatly, leading the women in worship in a way that was quiet and serene yet pleasing to the Lord. Everyone was moved by His sweet Presence. Two of the sisters blessed us with their testimonies and words of encouragement. Noemi Diaz blessed us with a special Spirit-filled song, and Maria Avila delivered an edifying message filled with words of encouragement using Proverbs 3.5-6, reminding us not to lean on our own understanding but to trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

Saturday morning the Lord blessed us with another inspirational service, allowing us to feel His presence strongly. Naomi Diaz led the worship service and the Lord used her to help us open our minds and hearts to worship with "all that is within us." Barbara Rivera and Maribel Fermin brought words of encouragement with their messages on being a fountain of living water and the bread of life. After the morning service, we had time to fellowship with each other and shared what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do for us if we wait upon Him. Some sisters chose to go to the beach, or shopping or to enjoy the many good restaurants available in the beautiful town of Oxnard.

God's beautiful Spirit accompanied us in our Saturday night service as we continued rejoicing. We all were being edified, strengthened and comforted with Spirit-filled songs, and a message by Daisy Abrego. During the last session on Sunday morning, one could see God's blessings on the women's faces. A peaceful

and loving spirit was evident because of what God had done for everyone. There was much emotional and spiritual healing and encouragement. Everyone seemed to be encouraged to continue in the Lord. Josefina Ortega brought a message filled with good instruction and spiritual illumination for us to keep strong in the Lord and to continue our journey until the end.

We appreciate our director, Rosie Ramirez, for her willingness to step in at a time of need so that God's work is carried on. May the Lord greatly bless her and everyone who contributed to making this Ladies' retreat a success!

Honoraria Garavito, *reporter*

### **Nigeria Ladies Retreat**

The theme for the women's convention held on July 12-14 was "The Valiant Woman." It opened with a film titled, *Ara ile keji* ("People from the next home") that depicted how a valiant woman deals with problems. She builds her house upon a rock, and that Rock is Christ.

The second day of the convention was consumed with an edifying and instructive seminar on marriage anchored by Mrs. Janet Adebowale. Her speech was titled, 'How to build your house as a valiant woman', emphasizing points of wisdom recorded in Prov. 9.13-18.

On the last day of the convention, the women were dressed in beautiful attire, praising and thanking God for His many blessings. The choir was directed by Mrs. Victoria Adekunle, mother of Bishop Yomi Adekunle, Mrs. Falade sang three special songs. The sermon for the day was delivered by Pastor Babatunde Aderibigbe. He said a valiant woman is one that fears God, and walks according to the commandments of God. She is an example in Godly charity, holiness, and good works. He listed ten traits of a valiant woman:

1. She fears the Lord. Prov. 31.30; 8.13.
2. She is faithful and trustworthy. Prov. 31.11, 12.
3. She works willingly with her hands without complaint. Prov. 31.12; Titus 2.3.
4. She is steadfast and consistent. Prov. 31.13.
5. She dresses with dignity and godliness. Prov. 31.22, 1 Peter 3.3; 1 Tim. 2.9.
6. She honors God and submits herself to her husband. Judg. 4.4; Ruth 3.11; Eph. 5.22; Prov. 31.28.
7. She teaches and trains up her children in the way of the Lord. Prov. 22. 6, 28.
8. She gives herself to prayer and consecration. Romans 12.2; 1 Pet. 3.1-6.
9. She chooses to be on God's side. Josh. 5.14.
10. She is hospitable. Gen. 18.2-30.

Finally, he noted that valiance comes from the deepest part of a woman's heart---a

Respectfully submitted,  
*Kimberly Erwin*

# International Shepherding Ministries Director

## *Greetings to the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly*

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

I attended Mid-East Couples Retreat; was the guest speaker at the Mid-East Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge, TN; attended and spoke at the Mid-East Regional Convention; attended the opening service of the School of Ministry; visited 12 local churches; corresponded by letter three times with pastors and by phone and letter with the Regional Overseers. I served as local ladies ministries director and assistant Sunday School superintendent for my 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 have been entrusted to our care and especially to the pastors who have responded to the call for help in raising the money for our Emergency Fund this year.

Respectfully submitted,

*Wilma Carter*

### **An effective shepherding ministry must be:**

1. Comprehensive [include all of the members]...
2. Rational [The sheep must know their shepherd and the shepherd his sheep]...
3. Must include 4 shepherding functions: *knowing, feeding, leading and protecting...*
4. Accountable [Elders must hold one another accountable to accomplish this work.]
5. Prayer [We are completely dependent on the Lord for his direction and blessing on the work.]

---*Timothy Witmer*

## International SYNC Ministries Director

### *Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly*

*“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”. Isaiah 2:3.*

This verse has virtually come alive in Zion this year. I feel so very blessed to be living in this exceptionally exciting time in history especially the history of the church.

It has been an honor to have worked with the Presiding Bishop and the international staff, as well as with our pastors and churches. I appreciate those who have allowed me to come to their churches this year to boost the work.

I give honor and praise to our precious Lord and Savior for the things He has allowed me to accomplish. I helped get the tract ministry off the ground. It has been incredibly gratifying to have been able to work in this new ministry, and to watch it grow and develop.

Due to the high costs of postage in making the *Voice of Zion* readily accessible to other countries, I sent out requests to all the churches for financial assistance. The response was remarkable. Six churches donated \$1240.00. These were Bayou La Batre, AL; Cleveland, TN; Dallas, OR; Goshen, IN; Idamay, WV; and Wilmington, NC. Our anointed magazine contains a life-giving manna that is needed for this day and hour.

I sent out various letters, reminders, and a Christmas card of thanks for those who signed up for *SYNC* and the *Voice of Zion*. I oversaw the organization of the *SYNC* luncheon again this year. We put up the decorations, purchased and wrapped gifts, and sent out invitations for annual event. The luncheon could not have been accomplished without my faithful family and my church family working together. I have the utmost appreciation for each one who worked so tirelessly.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Glenda Major*

## **International Youth Director**

### ***Greeting to the 16th Annual General Assembly.***

Psalm 9:1-2 *“I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all they marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.”*

I count myself blessed to have worked with such a wonderful group of youth in Zion. They have great talent and commitment for Christ and His church, This past year they have grown in their walk with the Lord. Many of our youth joined the church this year and are working in their local churches. They are seeking deeper experiences in the Lord and receiving boldness to reach out to others. I see victory on top of victory for Victorious Youth Ministries in the days to come.

I organized and conducted two Youth Conventions this year. The Western Regional Convention was held in Rialto, CA on Friday and Highgrove CA. on Saturday. There were 150 in attendance. The Eastern Regional Convention was held in Cleveland, TN with 159 in attendance, of there 100 being young people. The theme for both conventions was “Higher Ground” Micah 4:1-2 The “Higher Ground” theme continued through the year with an emphasis on the Qualities of The Mountain Climbers. These were Dependable, Determined, Disciplined, Devoted, Driven, Diligent, and Dedicated. I used Philippians 2:5 as the basis to urge the youth to be equipped with the mind of Christ in order to be a successful climber, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

In addition to conducting the Youth Conventions, I taught a class at International Youth Camp, and assisted Kim Erwin with the Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge, TN. I directed the Senior Camp held at Camp Jubilee in Tennessee. I also assisted Glenda Major with the Gospel Tract Ministry, which was promoted during the youth conventions. Zion Youth are blessed to help support this tract ministry. I organized the youth program and alter-glow in the 2018 General Assembly.

I want to thank all State/Regional youth directors, along with local youth leaders and pastors for their support, prayers, and dedication to Victorious Youth Ministries.

Total Youth-Media funds raised this year was \$11,006.58. We give special recognition to the following local youth groups who raised the most funds: Greenville, SC - \$1,059.83; Cleveland, TN - \$1,157.35; Goshen, IN - \$1,678.38. We want to thank everyone who helped to support our Youth-Media fund.

Personal statistics as follows: Messages preached – 11; Offerings received - \$1,961.72; Miles traveled – 2,264; Air miles traveled – 3,877.

To God be the glory for what has been accomplished in Victorious Youth Ministries. I encourage Zion Youth to become witnesses for God with great expectations to spread Word of the Kingdom of God and to build Zion Assembly Church of God.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Pamela Jones*  
*International Youth Director*

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## **International Children's Ministries**

### ***Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly***

I organized the Children's Program and taught 3 classes at the Eastern Youth Convention.

3 assistants and 23 children attended.

Attended the International Youth Camp as a staff representative for my region.

Planned and organized International Children's Day on June 2, 2019 and planned the program at my local church.

Attended with my husband and served as the Junior Camp Director, for the Mid-Central and Tennessee regions.

Planned the Children's Program at the Mid-Central Regional Convention and taught 2 classes.

Planned the Children's Program at the General Assembly and organized 7 class sessions.

Appointed 7 teachers and 10 assistants. There was a total of 23 children in the class sessions.

Faithfully submitted,  
*Kayla Graves*  
*Children's Ministry Director*

## Senior Ambassadors' Director

### *Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly*

Conducted a senior meeting in February.

The subject was: "A heart set apart for God". Dinner was served.

Visited nursing homes.

Traveled out of town to visit hospitals and homes of the sick.

Spoke at a community seniors group outside our church.

In April scheduled meetings in my home on each Thursday night to fast and pray for a revival with Bishop Pete Sarry.

August 11, conducted services at Roanoke.

Bishop Jones spoke on his life in the ministry for many years, Vernon Johnson spoke as well.

August 22 had a meeting at my home with a cookout.

The weather didn't agree so we gathered inside my home 31 attended a great time of fellowship.

Called all the overseers and regional leaders concerning their work.

Attended our regional convention in Idamay, WV. in June.

Attended faithfully for 9 months an international Ladies Bible study group.

Respectful submitted,  
*Ruth M. Fingler*

# School of Ministry Institute Director

## *Greetings to the 16th Annual General Assembly*

It has been my privilege to serve the Lord as the director of SMI. I also served as pastor of West Pelzer, SC; member of the Executive Council; Chaired the Doctrine Committee and acted as editor of the Sunday School Literature.

Prepared and preached approximately 100 sermons as well as preparing and teaching approximately 90 Bible Studies and SS lessons.

Worked with the Presiding Bishop in establishing the classes to be taught in each school.

Wrote, prepared, and taught 3 new classes for the Schools of Ministry as well as modified and revised 1 other course on World Religions.

Taught 2 classes in the West Coast SMI and worked with Daysi Abrego to coordinate the Western school

Taught 4 classes at the Cleveland SMI and worked with Marie Crook, Renetta Kelton, and Pam Jones as well as the Presiding Bishop and Anton Burnette in preparing the East Coast SMI.

## **SMI REPORT**

This Report includes only the United States schools

There are other SMI's operating in Nigeria and in various parts of the world as possible.

Total Students – 76 full-time students, numerous part-time students,

Daily Visitors, 15 staff members

Tuitions Received - \$4529 plus expenses

This does not include the SMI operated by Yomi Adekunle in Nigeria or the Various Schools conducted at various times around the world – Daron Miller will be teaching soon.

I want to thank so many people who make our SOMI so successful.

Daysi Abrego and HER STAFF. Also

**Translators** – Norie Garavito, Mauricio Martinez, Daysi Abrego and others

**Interpreters** – Robert Lopez, Norie, Henry Rodriguez, and the sisters

Robert Ramirez, and those who opened their homes

**My Daughter-in-law** – Sarah Sullivan

**International Office Staff** - Pam Jones, Renetta Kelton, Marie Crook

**Instructors** – Anton Burnette, Wade Phillips, and Wanda Busbee

**My Church and the Church in Cleveland** for loaning myself & Anton Burnette to do the work.

**My Wife** – Babs Sullivan

*Continued on next page*

## **California School – April 7-12, 2019 – Rialto, Ca.**

Sister Daysi Abrego -Director

44 full-time students  
8 part-time students  
12 visitors  
15 staff  
14 of the students were new  
6 graduates  
Total Attendance was 79

### **Classes Taught**

A Vision of the Church and Theocracy – Wade Phillips  
The End Times – Anton Burnette  
Greek & English Pronunciation – Wanda Busbee  
Perseverance of the Saints and Eternal Security – Bruce Sullivan

### **Graduate Class**

The Bible Church and the Necessity for the Vision of the Church – Wade Phillips  
Water Baptism, Communion, Feet Washing, Membership Requirements, & Church Discipline – Bruce Sullivan

We had one to join the church, Sister Thelma Ocampo from the church in Oxnard, CA became a member of the Church on April 12, 2019!

2 Attendees from Mexico  
\$2334 – Tuition minus expenses

76 – full-time Students  
20 – visitors and part-time students

Although most of the brethren who attended drove from far and close directly from work or school to the SMI, everyone had a very blessed time in learning the word of God and they wanted to continue learning more.

We were blessed to have had sister Barbara Rivera from San Jose, CA and brother Daniel Lucero from Fresno, CA join us in Southern California since they decided to combine Northern & Southern California SOMI this year.

We also had Francisco Gonzalez Lopez from Tuxtla Chiapas Mexico, Marta Urcadiz from Ensenada Mexico and Donnie Burnette from Cleveland Tennessee visit us this year.

We are very grateful for all the churches that donated the dinners, sodas, waters and snacks and we are also very thankful for everyone who donated their time and service for the Lord. It was beautiful to see the unity of God's people working together.

*Continued on next page*

**Cleveland First Week – May 5-10, 2019 – Headquarters, Cleveland, TN**

12 – full-time students w/ some visitors

3 – teachers

Classes Taught

Class 1 - Bible Church – Anton Burnette

Class 2 - Epistles of Paul – Bruce Sullivan

Class 3 - Millennial Kingdom – Wade Phillips

Class 4 - Church vs Independence & Denominationalism – Anton Burnette

Class 5 - Evangelism – Bruce Sullivan

**Cleveland Second Week – May 12-17, 2019 – Headquarters, Cleveland, TN**

12 – full-time students w/ numerous visitors

8 – post graduate students w/ numerous part time students

4 – teachers

Class 1 - Perseverance and Eternal Security – Bruce Sullivan

Class 2 - Greek & Communications - Wanda Busbee

Class 3 - A Vision of the Church and Theocracy – Wade Phillips

Class 4 - End Times - Anton Burnette

Class 5 - World Religions & Christianity – Bruce Sullivan

**Graduate Class**

A Vision of the Church and Theocracy – Wade Phillips

Perseverance and Eternal Security – Bruce Sullivan

Field Trip to various sites where historic events took place which shaped our tradition.

Hamburger and Hot Dog dinner at the Presiding Bishop's home.

Overseers from several countries attended.

32 – full-time students – Week 1 & 2

\$2195 – Tuitions received

Total Students – 76 full-time students & numerous part-time students & daily visitors,

15 staff members

Tuitions Received - \$4529 plus expenses

We try to make these classes fresh and informative. Our students sacrifice to be there and we want to make it worth their while and equip them to share the gospel and teachings of Christ with the world.

Everyone needs to come to the SMI – It is good for you! – You need the knowledge and the fellowship.

So many have opened their homes to make it as inexpensive as possible.

Respectfully submitted

*Bruce Sullivan*

*SMI Director*

## **2019 ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

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

### **Section I Exhorter's License**

After careful review, we recommend that the “Exhorter’s Certificate” replace the “Lay Minister’s Certificate.” Those set forth with an Exhorter’s certificate must be saved, and either be sanctified and baptized with the Holy Ghost (with the evidence of speaking in tongues or fervently seeking these experiences). In addition, the prospective evangelist should be a member of the church consecrated to the calling of the ministry, faithful to his/her local church in attendance, tithing and giving, and spends time in prayer, fasting, and the study of God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Exhorter is overseen by the local church and the general presbytery, and should report monthly to the International Office and quarterly to the local church (via online form or report book). An annual evaluation should be made by the local church pastor in consultation with the state/national overseer in order to monitor his/her spiritual growth.

The Exhorter is not permitted to perform marriages, ordinances, or receive new members into the church, except with special permission by the general presbytery---the Presiding Bishop and national/state overseer.

We further recommend that the Exhorters certificate be issued from general headquarters to ensure uniformity.

### **Section II Minister's Tithing**

As outlined in the Scriptures, God finances His work through His people in the form of tithing and giving. Tithing is 10% of our income (“increase”), “first fruits”, and is brought “into the storehouse (church treasury)” for proper distribution (Malachi 3:10). In order for the church to be able to function properly, tithing should be practiced by all who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

In setting an example for the church to follow, ministers especially should be faithful in tithing and giving. Income earned in the ministry, including pastoral allotments and love offerings is to be tithed to International Headquarters, and sent in with the monthly report. Income earned secularly should be tithed to the local church.

We feel it necessary to remind the ministry to be faithful in tithing, recalling the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in 2004 and thereafter. If a minister fails to tithe, or falls behind in his tithing, the committee further recommends the leadership of the church (i.e. national/state overseer, and presiding bishop) should provide counseling to the minister to remedy the disorder. If a minister continues not to tithe faithfully after counseling, the presiding bishop in consultation with the regional/national/state overseer, should discipline the minister by either suspending or revoking his/her license.

## **Section III**

### **Modest and Appropriate Dress for the Minister and Member**

In recent years, we have seen a trend in modern Christianity that promotes a relaxed and common dress for the ministry and Christians in general. In some cases, it has become sloppy and indecent. We feel it necessary to encourage our ministers and members to be always aware that we represent Jesus Christ and His church everywhere we go, whether it be within the house of God or in public.

Additionally, we feel it wise to remind the members of the church, as well as the ministry, of our teachings concerning “Outward Adornment” and “Walking Circumspectly” (see *Abstract of Faith*). The teaching “Outward Adornment” reads as follows: “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 of 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).”

Concerning “Walking Circumspectly,” the Abstract of Faith states: “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 us as hypocrites. 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; 1 Thessalonians 5:15-23).”

## **Section IV**

### **Emergency Fund**

We recommend that Emergency Fund dollars be set on the basis of the fiscal year – July 1 through June 30 – rather than on the calendar year – January 1 through December 31. We further recommend this change be applied retroactively to July 1, 2019. Contributions intended for calendar year 2019, however, may still be applied accordingly.

In addition, we recommend clarifying what it means for a local church to be 100% in the Emergency Fund.

The number of members will be set as of July 1 of each year, regardless of how many additions and/or subtractions a local church has throughout the year.

For example, if a local church has 30 members as of July 1, 2019, this local church would be considered 100% paid if the local church submits \$360.00 (30 X \$12.00) by June 30, 2020.

In attempting to reach the 100% threshold for Emergency Fund dollars, a local church must receive \$12.00 for each member of the church. However, it should be noted that non-members can participate and pay \$12.00 toward the Emergency Fund (and this is also encouraged). In reaching the 100% threshold, a church can meet its “membership” number by any combination of members and non-members. In other words, the church should think of the 100% threshold as the total amount due, not necessarily how many members actually pay their Emergency Fund dollars.

For instance, if a local church has 30 members, it is considered to be 100% if 20 members and 10 non-members each pay \$12.00 toward the Emergency Fund. In this instance, this local church is 100% when \$360.00 is received, not necessarily when 30 members pay their \$12.00.

## **Section V**

### **Ordinances of the Church**

We fully endorse Section II of the Presiding Bishop’s annual address, titled, “Reflecting on and Reevaluating the Ordinances of the Church.” We commend his leadership and constant guidance into deeper spiritual understanding. We understand the ordinances to be rites that furnish the church with something material or tangible to help build and sustain the spirituality of the individual believer and the corporate identity and fellowship of the church universally, as well as the local churches. Ordinances point to the hidden mysteries of the Gospel in Christ. As such, they have practical value as well as spiritual value, that is, they give witness to the outside world of the intrinsic, dynamic power of the Gospel working within the church, and in the same instant help to identify the visible church and to solidify and edify her corporate union and fellowship.

The ordinances thus have several essential characteristics or traits. We have seen that they 1) were instituted or affirmed in Christ during His earthly ministry; 2) serve as signs of the very “mystery” of the life and transforming

power of the Gospel; 3) symbolize the mysteries of the Gospel; 4) memorialize the mysteries of the Gospel; 5) provide tangible aids to reenact [“show forth”] the mysteries of the Gospel; 6) provide channels or mediums for forgiveness, cleansing, reconciliation, and consecration. We see these characteristics in baptism, the Lord’s Supper, footwashing, marriage, the ministry, reading of and proclamation of the Word of God, anointing with oil, laying on of hands, etc. [Jn. 13.8-10; Acts 10.44-48; 1 Cor. 7.9-16; 11.27-33; Eph 5.26-27; Heb. 4.12; Jas 5.14-15]; and, thus, we should expect to see a symbol of cleansing represented in any divine ordinance of the church; 7) finally the observance of the ordinances by the church is commanded by the Lord and the apostles (Mt. 26.26-28; 28.19-20; Mk. 16.16; Jn. 13.14-15; Acts 12.38; 10.48; 1 Cor. 11.23-25; Jas 5.14-15).

Therefore, we recommend that the church accept, in addition to Water Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Feet Washing, the following four ordinances: “The Church,” “Ministry/Ordination,” “Marriage,” and “Public Reading and Proclamation of the Word of God.” We further recommend that the Doctrine Committee prepare elaborate explanations of these additional ordinances and bring them before the 2020 General Assembly to be included in the *Abstract of Faith*.

## Section VI

### Funds

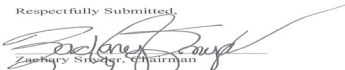
We recommend that we continue to operate the same financial system for this upcoming Assembly year, and that funds be transferred between accounts to bring all funds into a positive balance.

## Section VII

### Nominations for International Executive Council

We fully endorse the nominations of the Presiding Bishop to serve with him on the International Executive Council for the 2019-2020 Assembly year: Scott E. Neill, Bruce Sullivan, Joseph A. Steele, Rick Ferrell, L. W. Carter, and Anton Burnette.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Zachary Steiner, Chairman

J.J. Davis, Secretary

  
Kevin Clary

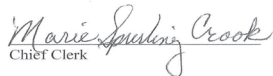
  
Tod Deakle

  
Ricky Graves

  
Jim Orange

  
Elijah Wafuta

  
Presiding Bishop

  
Chief Clerk

# Doctrine Committee Report-2019 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.

**Note: Doctrine committee authorization signatures on following page**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

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

**Wade H. Phillips**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wade H. Phillips".

*Presiding Bishop*

**Marie Spurling Crook**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie Spurling Crook".

**Chief Clerk**

# *Presiding Bishop's Annual Address*

Cleveland, TN  
September 7, 2019

## **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.

## **Section I**

### ***"Ye are My witnesses, saith the LORD [Jehovah]" The Story of Christ and the Church***

*"Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD [Jehovah], and My servant whom I have chosen that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I am the LORD, and beside me there is no savior: I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed when there was no strange god among you: therefore, ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, I am God" (Is. 43.10-12).*

*"Thus saith the LORD . . . I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them . . . Ye are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any" (Is. 44.6-8).*

*“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me . . . I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things . . . Tell ye . . . who hath declared this from ancient time? Have not I the Lord? And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Is. 45.5-7, 21, 22).*

*“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure. Calling a ravenous bird [that is, the Persian king, Cyrus, 44.28, whose name and actions God predicts 150 years before he was born]. . . the man that executeth my counsel . . . yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it . . . I bring near My righteousness . . . My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory” (Is. 46.9-13).*

What we see in these prophetic passages and a hundred more like them is that the LORD [Jehovah] desires to be known and honored as the one and only true God: and worshipped for His mighty acts--miracles and gracious providences; but especially for His infinite wisdom, mercy, compassion and willingness to forgive and save His people from their sins and wickedness. He indeed punished them for their iniquities, but He did not utterly forsake them and cast them away; rather He brought them to repentance through chastisement and much suffering to restore and reconcile them to Himself with joy and victory. This is the story of God and His people, of Christ and the church.



*“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove [test] thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep my commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou also shall consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee” (Deut. 8.2-6).*

Jehovah is a savior! He is not like any other imagined god. There is in fact no god like Jehovah: and no God but Jehovah! And there is no story like the one

between the LORD and His people. He has proven Himself to His people that He is a Rock: one who can be trusted. He keeps His covenant and mercifully endures His people's stumbling failures to save and redeem them! Through all Israel's backslidings, He continued to love them and intercede for their salvation. Even His heated wrath and chastisements were to train and discipline them--to reconcile them in His righteousness and restore a right relationship with Him: to perfect them in love, holiness and truth!

Make no mistake, however; God is no pushover. [***“He is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness”***] (2 Pet. 3.9). He in fact warns those who continue to adamantly disobey Him and rebel against His will and purpose, saying,

*“Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you . . . For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that [if you do evil and corrupt yourselves] ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it . . . And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen . . .”* (Deut. 4.23-27).

The Good News is that the LORD is always working to redeem and save His people: to bring them back into a right relationship with Him:

*“But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them (vv. 29-31).*

See, this is the wondrous story of God and His people, from ancient times till now. There is no other story like it in all the earth! No other religion or nation or tribal people has a story like it.

*For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other; whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth*

*he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else . . .”* (vv. 32-39).

God’s purpose from the beginning was to call and transform for Himself a peculiar people with whom---in the image of a husband and wife---He could have the most intimate relationship. In Isaiah’s prophecies, the LORD is saying to His people: **You are My counterpart** in the world. *I AM the Shepherd, you are My fold; I AM the King, you are MY queen* [Ps. 45.9-13]; *I AM the Vine, you are the branches; I AM the Head, you are MY body; I AM the Husband, you are MY wife; I AM the Captain, you are My army; I AM the Governor; you are MY holy nation; I AM God, you are My temple, MY habitation, My dwelling-place, My house, My dove, My beloved, My spouse, My bride!* (Song 4.1; 5.1-2; Rev. 19.7-8).

There is coming a time when our opponents and critics will acknowledge that we are His witnesses, His special people. The prophet says: **“The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending [bowing] unto thee; and they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, the city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One”** (Is. 60.14). Again the ascended Christ Himself said, **“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee”**. The inspired prophet also declared that the onlooking world in astonishment will one day ask, **“Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”** (Song 6.10).

See here; God desires to be known; for to know Him is to love Him and those who love Him highly exalt His name and deeply reverence and worship Him. And the more deeply we learn to love the LORD, the more deeply we admire Him and praise and exalt His name.

He loved us from eternity---having foreknown and foreseen all things, including the fall of man in Eden and his restoration by the grace of God, and the formation of His people into one body of Christ. Thus, the apostle Paul wrote,

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted in the beloved**. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; **Having made known unto us, the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; That in the dispensation of the***

*fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him . . . **that ye may know** what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints . . . And hath put all things under [Christ's] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1.4-12, 17-23).*

*“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . 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 now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be **known by the church** the manifold wisdom of God. According to **the eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3.4-11).*

But how was the LORD to do this? What was the divine strategy to bring about the desired end for Him and His people? Only one way according to His infinite wisdom: namely, through trials and tribulations and judgments! One historical and prophetic step at a time our fathers in the faith learned who Jehovah is. He progressively revealed Himself to them which culminated in the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is Himself *Jehovah*: for the whole Godhead [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] is embodied in Him (Col. 2.9).

*“Now Moses . . . came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb [Sinai]. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God . . . And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Ex. 3.1-6, 13-15).*

## Significance of the name *Jehovah*

*“And God spake unto Moses, and said . . . I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan . . . wherein they were strangers”* (Ex. 6.2-4)

Now observe; Almighty God, the Creator [*El Shaddai, Elohim*] “*came down*” to us as *Jehovah* God [Ex. 3.8; Gen. 11.5] a name implying a deeper and more intimate revelation of Himself to His people [note, the significance of the prophet *Eli-jah’s* name, the combination of *El/Elohim* and *Jehovah*]---a revelation which culminates finally in Jesus, that is, God has “*come down*” to us in the flesh in Christ [*Emmanuel*, Mt. 1.23; Jn. 1.1-3, 14; Phil. 2.5-8; Col. 2.9; Heb. 1.8; Rev. 1.8]. In great wonder and magnanimity of His person and mission in this world, the prophet exclaimed His name shall be called “*Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (Is. 9.6).

See, the LORD was working from the dawn of creation to prepare us to be His special witnesses---*Jehovah’s Witnesses*. There is a group out there who call themselves “Jehovah’s Witnesses” who according to their own testimony prove they have no idea who Jehovah is. They deny, like Mormons and Muslims that Jesus is God Almighty (Rev. 1.8); and they deny, like Hindus and Buddhists, that He is with the Father and the Holy Spirit the one and only true God! (Mt. 28.19-20; Jn. 10.1; 17.20-23; Col. 2.9).

It is for this reason that the two questions posed by Jesus in Mt. 16.13 and 22.42---“*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” and “*What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?*” embody in their significance the very purpose of the whole Bible---the history of God being revealed to His people, and His people proclaiming that revelation to every nation under heaven!

Though Jesus was God in the flesh, still His deity remained hidden from men: for the things of God are “*spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor. 2.14). Natural men cannot see nor hear the hidden things of the Spirit (Jn. 3.3-8). And why is this? That our “*faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God*” (1 Cor. 2.5).

The revelation of Christ’s deity and Godhead came only by special disclosures from the Father Himself. Thus when Peter declared, “*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God*” in response to Jesus’ question---“*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am*”, the Lord said, “*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee but My Father which is in heaven*” (Mt. 16.17; see also the special disclosures to Thomas, Paul, and John (Jn. 20.24-29; Acts 9.1-6; Eph. 3.4-11; Rev. 1.1-3; 21.2-3, 9-10), and the disclosures to the whole church collectively (Jn. 7.17; 15.15; 16.12-15; Eph. 1.4-12, 17-23).

## The Story of God and His People Jews and Gentiles grafted together in one Body

The witnesses of Jehovah are a growing body of believers, visibly incorporated together by covenant and a prophetic vision [revelation] that has been disclosed one step at a time through history, rooted in the Old Testament and more clearly manifested in the New. It is the story of Christ and the church! Zion Assembly is heir to this glorious legacy. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses and the prophets are our fathers in the faith (1 Cor. 10.1-5; Heb. 11.1-12). A foundation for the church in type and shadow was laid down in these elders (Gen. 28.10-22; 1 Cor. 10.1-6; Col. 2.17; Heb. 3.5-6; 8.5; 10.1; 11.1-7). It is a single story rooted in the Old Testament and unfolded more gloriously in the New as the door was opened for the Gentiles to become part of the “old, old story.”

Hear what the Lord says, [“I have disclosed Myself to you in many ways. I have **‘declared’** [revealed] Myself to you; I have **‘saved’** [redeemed] you; I **have ‘showed’** [caused you to discern, perceive], caused you **‘to know’** and **‘believe’** and **‘understand’ the truth and Who I AM. I caused you to hear.** [“You have lived out the story with My guidance and direction”]. [Note. Jer. 18.1-6: **‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My Word’**], that is, I will providentially put you in a place to help you hear My voice and know My will. **“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant!”** (Ps. 25.14; see also Prov. 3.32; Jn. 7.17; 15.15-16; 16.13-15). But He especially reveals His secret to His prophets and ministers (Amos 3.7; Gen. 6.13; 18.17-19; Eph. 4.11).

[“You have heard My Word, felt My power and seen My glory! You have been with Me from way back, even in Egypt: and even before that on the other side of the Flood (Heb. 11.1-7)! You are through faith and covenant the descendants of the **‘ancient people’** [Is. 44.7]. By faith and sacred pledge, you were incorporated into the story of God and His covenant people [Ex. 19.5-8; Is. 41.14-16, 22-24; 42.6-9]. There, in the beginning your fathers witnessed My mighty works and have passed on to you the wondrous story and made you a part of it!” Hear what the psalmist says,

*“I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing unto generations to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That in the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, but keep his commandments”* (Ps. 78.2-7; see also vv. 12-72).

God's peculiar people saw the plagues upon Egypt . . . hail, frost, hot thunderbolts, lice, frogs, flies, death . . . and the "snakes" of the Egyptian magicians, Jannes and Jambres, being devoured by God's miraculous power [Ex. 7.9-13; 2 Tim. 3.8]. They witnessed the crossing of the Red Sea/ the crossing of the Jordan River/ the miracles in the desert---manna from heaven, water out of a rock, clothes and shoes that for forty years in the wilderness never waxed old nor wore out! (Note: Deut. 4.32-37; 8.2-6; Ps. 78.12-48; Is. 43.15-17). God has done it over and again through history for His people (Is. 43.19-21): and He will continue to do it *with whomever* [Jew or Gentile] is willing to call upon the name of the LORD and to "show forth His praises" (vv. 20-21): and this will continue right on up to the Second Coming of Christ and the glory of the Millennial Kingdom (vv. 20-28; 44.1-8). We are His witnesses. A faithful remnant has always been raised up to perpetuate God's plan and purpose (Is. 1.9; Rom. 9.29; 11.5; Rev. 12.7). It is now the story of every believer, Jew or Gentile, who has been incorporated together with other believers by covenant as one body in Christ (Eph. 2.11-19; 3.5)!

The LORD says, ["I made you to know and understand. The knowledge of Me has been handed down to you. It has been bequeathed to you as a sacred deposit (Ps. 78.1-72; 1 Cor. 10.1-12). You are My witnesses! **You are My 'Israel!'** (Rom. 2.28-29; 9.1-8, 27-33; Rev. 2.9; 3.9; Gal. 3.16, 29; 6.16). You are My body, My people, the ["body of Christ"]. And we are to pass on this special knowledge, this divine revelation, and our special relationship with the LORD to others (Ps. 78.3-6; 2 Tim. 2.2); incorporating the converts of the nations into this glorious story (Is. 49.1-12; 60.1-5; Mt. 28.19-20)!

## **Called Out to be a "Peculiar People" Compliance with the 'Royal Law' of Christ distinguishes God's People**

We are transformed by the Lord to be a "peculiar people" united with Him and one another in a visible and corporate fellowship (Ex. 19.5-8; Eph. 3.9-10; 1 Pet. 2.9); distinguished as the "people of God" according to the law of God: in spirituality, in looks, dress, manner of speaking faith, and our walk [conduct] through life. We are taught by the Lord and formed together by His laws and principles (Ps. 78.1-7). The Old Testament saints were such; and so also the New Testament saints according to the laws and principles of Christ (1 Cor. 9.21; Jas. 1.21-25; 2.8, 12).

Today people want to be called a peculiar people without being peculiar! See, it is the laws and principles of the Lord regarding how we look, dress, and behave ourselves that make us unique. We are not to think like, look like, talk like, walk like, nor act like the "Egyptians" and "Canaanites"---peoples who stood as symbols [poster peoples] for worldliness (Ex. 23.2, 23-24, 32-33; Lev. 10.10; Deut. 7.1-9; Is. 3.16-18; Ezra 9.1-4; Rom. 12.2-5; 1 Tim. 2.8-10; 1 Pet. 3.1-5; 1 Jn. 2.15-17).

We are not to conform to the fashions and lifestyles of this present age (Is. 3.16-24; Rom. 12.2-5). Significantly, the "daughters of Zion" in Isaiah's

prophecy signify all the inhabitants of Zion---male and female. For the whole church as a bride is depicted in the feminine [note Is. 3.25-26 and 32.9-20]. Humility and meekness must mark the children of Zion in distinction from the pride and snootiness of the children of men (Is. 3.16-24; 1 Tim. 2.8-10; 2 Tim. 3.1-9; 1 Pet. 3.3-12).

Notwithstanding the plain admonitions of the LORD, the church often in history backslid and fell away from a right relationship Him and began again to look and act like the world. But a remnant always arose to purify and restore the standards of holiness (Is. 1.9; 37.31-32; 46.3; Rom. 9.27-29; 11.7, 14-23); so that God would have a true witness in the earth, a lighthouse shining out in a dark world!

See here: the holiness standards of the LORD not only bring the haughty down from their prideful and fashion-setting spirit but raises up the penitent from their slouchiness and the vulgarities [commonness] of the world around them. It pulls the haughty down from pretentious pedestals and pulls up the lukewarm and shabby-looking from the gutters (Rev. 3.14-20). Accordingly, God's people are called and spiritually conditioned to be "peculiar" (Ex. 19.5-8; 1 Pet. 2.9). "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2.15).

There is a big difference between saying, "Hey, look at me as an ambassador and representative of Christ" and just saying "Hey, look at me!" Our plainness and modesty will show forth God's glory in holiness!

We are not like other peoples: worshippers of dumb idols strange "gods that witness against themselves" (Is. 44.9-20): gods that are blind, deaf, lifeless and "profitable for nothing." The "new-age" gods are more philosophical and psychological, but still conjured up in vain imaginations: products of Scientology and Eastern mysticism! Our God, the God of the Bible, is not so: He is a "living God!" He hears, speaks, thinks, and acts; and His church is His witnesses. Hear Peter's declaration, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*" And Jesus' answer, "*Upon this rock I will build My church!*"

**Unbelieving Jews "cut off":  
Believing Gentiles "grafted" in by Faith  
Called to be one Body in Christ  
[Eph. 2.11-19; 3.5]**

See here: only those who have a revelation of Christ and believe in Him are now justified and are being called together to form His church. It is true that the story began with the Hebrews [Jews] and that Jesus desired to continue the story with them under the New Covenant. That's why He commissioned His Twelve Apostles at first to "*Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and to any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!*" (Mt. 10.5-6). But when the Jews as a national entity rejected Christ as their Lord and Savior, the door was opened to the Gentile nations (Acts 10.34-47; 13.44-46; 14.27; 15.6-28).

The Jews who refused to believe were **“cut off”** from the story (Mt. 21.33-46; Jn. 1.11; Rom. 10.1, 21; 11.18-24); and the Gentiles who believed were **“grafted into”** the story (Rom. 11.1-5, 20-24). A **true “Jew”** and the **true “Israel of God”** are now defined and identified by faith in Christ and obedience to His Word and His government [Rom. 2.29; 3.1-12; 9.1-26; Gal. 3.16, 29; 6.16; Rev. 2.9; 3.9]. The true **“Israel of God”**, the church, is now identified under the terms of the New Covenant. Note: Is. 43.18-28; 44.1-8; Rom. 9.25-26; 1 Cor. 10.1-13.

**“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?”** (Rom. 3.1). It is this: the Jewish nation [with roots in Abraham] was established by the LORD to lay an historical foundation for the true faith, which came to be embodied first in the LORD’s Zion under the Old Covenant then in Christ more intimately and efficaciously under the New Covenant! (Is. 2.2-4; 35.10; 51.3-11; 52.1-8; 60.14; Mt. 21.33-44; 1 Pet. 2.4-9; see also Ps. 2.6-8; 9.10-11; 20.2; 48.2-14; 87.2; 102.13-16; 132.13; 149.2). The Jewish nation is distinguished in history on this basis. But what does Judaism now profit any natural Jew outside of Christ and saving faith. When the Jews in the time of Christ on earth refused to believe on Him and accept the Gospel they became as nothing in the sight of God! (Mt. 8.12; 21.43-44; Jn. 1.11-12; Acts 13.44-46). They were **“cut off”** and the believing Gentiles were grafted in (Rom. 9.25-33; 11.23-26). Religion without Christ profits absolutely nothing! (Eph. 2.10-22; 3.1-11; Col. 2.6-23; 3.1-11). It was thus that John the Baptist warned the Jews,

*“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said to them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”* (Mt. 3.7-8).

Believers are grafted in by faith and covenant to be the people of God, beginning in Abraham [family kingdom of God] and thereafter incorporated together as God’s holy nation [*“church in the wilderness”*] by mutual covenant at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19.5-8; 24. 6-8; Acts 7.38; 1Pet. 2.9). Significantly, believers must stand in agreement together in a church covenant to be rightly identified as His church (Ex. 19.5-8; 24. 3-8; 2 Kg. 23.1-3; Jn. 14.6, 8, 14; Heb. 9.19). Yes, we must publicly pledge ourselves [covenant together] to keep the Book of the Covenant, the Bible. There is no other way to form the church of the Bible.

## **Walking with God**

Accordingly, we walk hand in hand with God. We walk with Him, and He walks with us. Hear the LORD through the prophet, “How can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3.3). You are only truly God’s church “if you continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . .” (Col. 1.23); and again, “But Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we, “if” we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb. 3.6). That was the covenant deal that God made with His people from the very beginning. Remember the covenant He made with

our fathers at Mt. Sinai: *“Now therefore ‘if’ ye will be obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, ‘then’ ye shall be a peculiar people unto Me above all the people: for all the earth is Mine”*: and the people all stood to the covenant (Ex. 19.5, 8). This **“if”** and **“then”** is everywhere found in the Scriptures.

Thankfully the LORD does not easily “cast away” His people (Deut. 4.23-31, 37-40; Rom. 11.1-5). They sometimes go astray, but as a “Good Shepherd” the Lord seeks to save and restore them (Is. 43.12; 45.5-8, 22; 48.12-17; Amos 3.1-2, 11-15). As pointed out above “a remnant” always emerged to restore the church to God’s good graces and thus to preserve and perpetuate the prophetic vision of the church [Amos 3.12; 5.3, 13-15]: to bring it finally to Christ under the New Covenant: so that *“every man [may be presented] perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Col. 1.28)!

## Stepping Out of the Story

Hear what the LORD says, [“I’m bringing all this evil upon you to bring you back to Me---back into agreement with Me”] (note Ps. 78.30-72; Amos 4.1-12; 5.1-14; Hab. 1.5-11; 3.2-19; Deut. 4.23-27). Look! You can’t be in your right mind [i.e., of sound mindedness] and just walk out of your covenant with the church, without displeasing and straining your relationship also with God. You can’t commit sedition and make a schism in God’s house and remain justified. You can’t change His laws and pervert His government and discipline without offending Him! One may stumble in the covenant [or while in covenant with the church], but you can’t stumble out of it. No! to leave the church is a conscious and deliberate act of rebellion against the Head of the church and His governors and elders appointed to rule and guide His church (Acts 15.2-4, 6-28; 16.4-5; 1 Thess. 5.12-13; Titus 1.5; Heb. 13.7, 17). To rebel against duly established authority and the government of God through anointed leaders is a work of the flesh---sedition, heresy, schism, dissensions, with self-serving ambitions (Gal 5.20; see also Rom. 16.17-18; 1 Cor. 1.10; 12.25).

We are living in a day when the great majority of “Christians” have stepped out of the prophetic story of God and His people revealed in the Bible to write their own story. But this is nothing new: it is exactly what happened to the Jews in old times (Ps. 78.9-11, 30-41, 59-63), and later in the centuries leading up to the coming of Christ, whom John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles sharply reprovved in their days (Mt. 3.7-10; Mt. 23.1-39; Jn. 8.31-59; Acts 15.1-28). The Jewish leaders perverted “the old, old story” and began to write their own. Again, it is precisely what happened to the New Testament church beginning in the second century and culminating in the fourth. The Roman Catholic tradition turned from the story of the church in the Bible and began to write its own story in the days of Constantine the Great. That era has been rightly called “Constantinian Christianity.” The divine government, doctrine and discipline of God laid down in the Bible were supplanted by Emperor Constantine and the doctrines and traditions of men.

It is also the tale of the denominations that emerged out the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Each denomination or sect wrote its own story and even admitted that its origin was in the sixteenth century or seventeenth, as the case may have been. They failed to see themselves as part of a single story beginning at Mount Sinai, rooted in Abraham, and continuing through the prophets unto the coming of Christ. The exception to this were certain “radical” Anabaptists in the sixteenth century who claimed to be seeking to restore the church based on the story of God and His people revealed in the Bible. But in the final analysis they failed to fulfill the prophetic vision which they had at first embraced.

Today there are tens-of-thousands of independent churches that have no identity nor affinity with the church of the Bible nor continuity with the story of God and His ancient and prophetic people. The great majority seem to believe that God’s church just spontaneously combusts into existence here and there at the whims of men. They even irreverently name their “churches” and “sects” after themselves---“Jake Jr.’s ministry”, “Linda Lou’s ministries”, “Copen-Haglin Family ministries”, etc.

There are also some members in Zion Assembly who have learned a lot about themselves while being tried and tested. They learned they really didn’t believe or understand the government and discipline of the church of which they were a part. And thus, when “proven” by various conditions and circumstances, they departed from the government and discipline of the church; being carried away by seducing spirits and false teachers into heresy and spiritual perversion. Hear what the apostle John says: ***“they went from us [because] they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us”*** (1 Jn. 2.19).

The Good News is that the door is open for those who desire to make restitution and come back home to the Father’s house. And wondrously and victoriously they often come back with a better understanding and a deeper conviction of what the church really is. This is the lesson we learn from the “prodigal son” in Luke 15. After having wasted his inheritance on “prostitutes” and “riotous living” and ending up in a hog pen, he “came to himself.” [This expression by Luke, a physician, may well be meant in a medical sense, indicating that the prodigal was somewhat in a coma and “*came to himself*” and repented]. In any case, he said [*paraphrase*, “I will go back to the stability and security and discipline of my father’s house!”]. And this was cause for great rejoicing, music and dancing!

### **“Thru the flood, and thru the fire”**

Men and women transformed by the power of God and incorporated together by sacred covenant and holy “ordinances” are the *true witnesses* of the Lord! We who are truly “born again”, sanctified and Spirit-baptized and pressing forward to fulfill the prophetic vision of the church, laboring together also in the yoke with Christ . . . we are His true witnesses!

“Tis the old ship of Zion,  
the hope for the lost and dying  
It’s been thru the flood and been thru the fire  
But one of these days the church is gonna move up higher

“It’s the church triumphant oh Lord  
and it’s built by the hand of the Lord  
“Been thru the storm but the wind couldn’t turn it  
Been thru the fire but the fire couldn’t burn it  
Fed to the lions but the lions couldn’t eat it  
Been thru wars but never defeated

Well it’s the church triumphant oh Lord  
and it’s built by the hand of the Lord”

Behold the mercy and mystery of the LORD: We are His witnesses through trials and tribulations; through chastisement; through suffering; through difficulties and hardships; through redemption and more redemption; through restorations and reconciliations (Deut. 4.23-31; Ps. 78.2-72; Is. 44.21-28; 45.5-13). God is in control! We are His people, on a journey with Him through many perils and pitfalls; being purged along the way and being tried and tempered in the fire; delighting ourselves in Him---the blessed People of God: whom Jesus said shall “. . . **endure to the end!**” (Mt. 24.13). But hear the prophet:

*“But who may abide the day of His coming? And who stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant [pleasing] unto the Lord, as in the days of old and as in the former years. And I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers . . .”* (Mal. 3.2-5).

Now observe, He is speaking here of the church under the headship of Christ, not under the headship of Moses. This is precisely the same message that John the Baptist preached in preparation for the purging ministry of Christ which was imminent, being ushered in even as John preached.

*“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all of Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”* (Mt. 3.5-9).

John warned the Jews:

*And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (vv. 10-12).*

God’s church didn’t just pop up on Burger Mountain in June 1903 or at Barney Creek in August 1886; nor at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost; nor even on Mount Hattin with Jesus and the Twelve (Mk. 3.13-16; Lu. 5.12-17). No, this story began in Abraham [family of faith] and his descendants who were later incorporated as a holy nation [“the church in the wilderness”], “a special treasure” unto the LORD at Mount Sinai [Ex. 19.5-8; Acts 7.38; 1 Pet. 2.9].

See here; The moment you were saved and afterward publicly accepted the Bible as God’s Word and agreed to live in harmony with the government and discipline of the church, you were grafted into this holy nation and became part of the story of God and His “ancient people” [Is. 44.7]---a 3500 year-old institution and tradition! We [“who were not a people . . . are now the people of God!”] (Is. 42.6-7; 49.6; Hos. 2.23; Acts 15.16-18; Rom. 3.29; 9.25-30; 1 Pet. 2.10). God is your Father and Jesus is your Lord and the Holy Spirit your Guide; and Moses and Elijah and Elisha and Samson and Rachel and Rahab and Naomi and Ruth . . . are your brothers and sisters. You are in the same church they were in! You have been grafted into the incomparable story---“the old, old story” that began 3500 years ago, and with roots deeper than that: a glorious story conceived in mystery in the mind of God before the foundation of the world! (Eph. 1.4-6; Rom. 8.28-30; 2 Thess. 2.12-17; Rev. 13.8).

See, there has been no “god”, no sorcerer, no diviner, no philosopher, no historian, no founder of any religion that ever conceived or told such a story as this. For no story could be so rich and profound in wisdom and knowledge as this story. Hear what the LORD says,

*“For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed [tried] to go and take a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, by wonders, and by war; and by a mighty hand, and by an stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightiest to know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him” (Deut. 4.32-27).*

It was the revelation of this very mystery that moved the apostle Paul to lift his pen in exultation and exclaim:

*“O the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”*  
(Rom. 11.33-36).

## One Church for All!

Paul is speaking here particularly of the mystery of Jews or Gentiles being grafted in by faith together into the same olive tree. See, there are not two stories as the dispensationalists hold---one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles---but one glorious church for all. Israel under the Old Covenant was the “*church in the wilderness*” and the church under the New Covenant was established first with twelve Jews who worshipped and followed the Lord. So the church is still the “*Israel of God*” and every believer is added to it by faith and covenant. In Christ the “*middle wall of partition*” in the temple was broken down and both Jews and Gentiles were called into **one body!** (Rom. 11.13-24; Eph. 3.6). All who are saved are justified only by “*the blood of Christ*”, and it is His will that all blood-washed believers be incorporated together in one visible body of Christ! (Jn. 10.16; 11.49-52; 17.2-23; Eph. 1.10; 2.11-22; 3.6).

Yes we may be in one sense, essentially, baptized [immersed] by the Spirit into this story but not without also being incorporated together instrumentally into one body by covenant! Thus, Paul says, “***I have espoused you to one husband, that I present you as a chaste virgin to Christ***” (2 Cor. 11.2; see also Ex. 19.5-8; 24.3-8; 2 Kg. 23.1-3; Is. 62.5; Jer. 50.5; Ezek. 16.8; Hos. 2.19-20; Eph. 5.23-32; Rev. 19.7-8; et al).

By the grace of His Spirit we have been quickened and transformed and “*made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” [Eph. 2.6]; we have “*tasted of the Word of God and the powers of the world to come*” [Heb. 6.4-6]; and continue steadfastly in “**the apostles doctrine and fellowship**”, holding to the faith “**once delivered to the saints**” [Acts 2.42; Jude 3]. We are now fellow heirs with the ancients---our fathers and mothers who came out of Egypt by a mighty hand; who crossed the Red Sea on dry land, and survived a waste howling wilderness filled with beasts of every sort, thirsty, hungry, and weary: but delivered by the almighty hand of God and enabled to cross the mighty Jordan River to inherit the promised land!

This is our story and our song! A story rooted in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and continued through the Judges and Kings amid struggles and imperfections; a story continued in the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities and the Restoration of Jerusalem and on through the 400-year interval between the Old Testament and the New; a story foreseen through the inspired prophecies until the descendants of the ancients came to Christ! And since then, the story has continued universally,

being lived out by believers established upon the terms of the New Covenant laid down by Christ and the apostles and prophets. Yes there have been backslidings and apostasies [“dark ages”], but these things also formed part of the story: for the church always rose from the ashes purged and renewed according to the testimony of God; with a newly inspired zeal and illumination to fulfill the prophetic vision of the Lord’s Zion (Ps. Is. 37.32; 46.3; Amos 5.15; Zech. 8.12; Ezra 9.8; Neh. 1.3; Rom. 9.27; 11.5; Rev. 12.17).

## **Living out the Final Chapter**

We here today are the generation *“upon whom the ends of the world are come.”* It may very well be that we are especially called to live out and fulfill the final chapter of the story. Be that as it may, it is certain that “the old, old story” has been bequeathed to us in Zion Assembly, and we must go and tell it to every nation on earth!

“I love to tell the story. . . Of Jesus and His glory  
. . . It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do  
I love to tell the story, ‘Twill be my theme in glory,  
To tell the old, old story Of Jesus and His love”

We are heirs of a deep and on-going relationship with the Lord: one that has been forged historically through trials and tribulations, high moments and low moments, and struggles; but also of glorious victories and times of rejoicing, having been sanctified and baptized by the Spirit together in expectation of being *“presented to Christ as a chaste virgin!”* (2 Cor. 11.2; Eph. 5.27; Rev. 19.7-8). One prophetic step after another has brought us to where we are: and going forward we will surely see “the mystery” ever more clearly and learn more deeply who JEHOVAH is, and who we are---His glorious bride in-the-making (Rev. 19.7-8; 21.2-3, 9-10)!

What an infinitely rich legacy has been handed down to us! We can look back in the sacred record 3500 years and see the beginning of our story, and even 6000 years ago and witness the planting of the first seeds for the old, old story--back to Adam and Eve and Able and Enoch---and, being carried away in the Spirit with the great apostle, we can see ahead the bride, the Lamb’s wife in her glory! Accordingly, we are called to preach “this gospel” in all the world---to be witnesses of Jehovah unto all nations; *“and then shall the end come.”*

## Section II

### Reflecting on and Reevaluating the Ordinances of the Church

#### Historical Development

Our pioneer fathers and mothers in the very beginning of the restoration of the church in 1886, under the oversight and guidance of R. G. Spurling, taught and practiced three divine ordinances---baptism, the Lord's Supper, and footwashing [the latter also referred to as "washing the saints feet"] (see R. G. Spurling, *The Lost Link*, p. 44). Later under the general oversight of A.J. Tomlinson (1903-1943), and still later under the successive tenures of M. A. Tomlinson (1943-1990), Billy D. Murray Sr. (1990-2000) and Fred S. Fisher Sr. (2000-2004) the church continued to teach and practice these three ordinances (see Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, pp. 332-340). Since 2004 Zion Assembly has continued to teach and practice these three ordinances.

It is noteworthy that in adopting these ordinances in 1886 we were following in the radical tradition of the Reformation that had begun in the sixteenth century. In doing so, we were standing in contradistinction of the Roman Catholic tradition on one side and the mainline Protestant tradition led by Luther, Calvin and Zwingli on the other. Thus, our early pioneers were identifying with the tenets of faith and practice of certain Anabaptist groups---Mennonites, Brethren, Dunkers and other marginalized and persecuted groups (see *Quest*, pp. 323-332).

The Roman Catholic Church [and later most of the Greek Orthodox Churches] adopted a system of seven "sacraments" beginning in the fifth century, particularly under the guidance of Augustine (354-430) which culminated in the thirteenth century under the influence of the scholastics [schoolmen], particularly Peter Lombard [ca. 1100-1160] and Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274]. The seven sacraments of Roman Catholicism are "baptism", "confirmation", "Eucharist" [Lord's Supper], "penance" [reconciliation], "anointing the sick" [extreme unction], "marriage", and "holy orders" [ordination]. Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli in the sixteenth century based their reformations on only two sacraments---baptism and the Lord's Supper [Eucharist]. Zwingli and his followers [Swiss brethren] differed however with Luther and Calvin in holding the Lord's Supper to be merely a "memorial" of Christ's death and accordingly denied the "real presence" of Christ in the Lord's Supper and the doctrine that sacraments confer grace upon the recipients.

In studying the historical development of this subject in our own tradition, it is obvious that our forefathers in Zion Assembly in the nineteenth- and early twentieth century did not give much thought to the nature, characteristics, and number of church ordinances. They simply accepted the status quo handed down from the sixteenth- and seventeenth century radical reformers. I can still recall as a young minister in our Bible Training Institute in the early 1970s asking the

question, “Why three ordinances---why not two as some groups teach or seven as some others teach?” The instructor admitted that he did not know but said he would get some counsel on the subject and get back with me. He never got back with me.

I have considered for many years now---beginning in the late 1970s---that understanding the nature and number of the divine ordinances of the church is fundamental to our faith and therefore of paramount importance. Accordingly, it would seem wise for us make a careful study of the Scriptures on the subject. Since I was not in a position during most of my ministry [in our former fellowship] to impose upon the church my thoughts on the subject, I remained relatively quiet speaking only on occasion with a few friends on the subject. In my capacity as Presiding Bishop since 2004 the subject has continued to agitate my mind and spirit so much so that I believe it is time for the church to look more deeply and thoroughly into the Scriptures on the subject.

I am sure a fresh and thorough study of the ordinances will be profitable for the church, especially the ministers, and we all will be illuminated and strengthened by any additional light received on the nature and number of the ordinances. Any additional light can do nothing but add weight and support and a deeper sense of worship and reverence for the very doctrines and institutions that we are endeavoring to restore and establish in these last days: for example, the authority and infallibility of the Bible; the nature, authority, and government of the church and its ministry; and the sacred and indissoluble bond of marriage. We may discover that we have several teachings and practices in the church that should be raised to the level of divine ordinances, and incorporated as such into our worship, practice, and discipline.

Since the ordinances are foundational to the very nature and function of the church, both for internal edification and to give light and witness to the outside world, we will do well to search for additional light to more perfectly carry forward God’s perfect plan and order.

## **Nature and Characteristics [Traits] of the Ordinances**

Denominations and various Christian groups have differed with each other on the nature, character and number of the ordinances [“sacraments”], but they have generally held through the centuries that the ordinances were instituted by Christ during His earthly ministry and practiced thereafter by the universal church under the apostles’ oversight and guidance. Our forefathers in the Church of God did not dispute this viewpoint, nor have we in Zion Assembly. We hold therefore that the ordinances of the church were instituted by Christ either in word [explicitly or implicitly stated] or by example during His earthly ministry and afterward were given further emphases and clarity by the apostles, and, accordingly, practiced by the New Testament churches.

The ordinances belong properly to the church; however, in the present dispensation of God’s unfolding plan, when most regenerate believers [“other

sheep”] have not received the light on the Bible church and remain scattered in denominationalism and independent churches (Is. 60.1-5; Jn. 10.16; 17.20-23; Eph. 1.10; 4.11-16), the Lord is patiently accepting the imperfect observance and administrations of the ordinances until the “perfect day” comes: “*For the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*” (Prov. 4.18; see also Num. 11.26-29; Is. 60.1-5, 7, 10, 14; Mk. 9.38-41; Lu. 9.49-50; Acts 18.24-28; 1 Cor. 3.1-2; Eph. 1.10; 2.11-18; 4.11-16; 5.26-27). Accordingly, Zion Assembly invites believers outside the church to receive the ordinances under its administration on condition that they “[*show*] forth fruit meet to repentance” (Mt. 3.8; 1 Cor. 5.1-12), that is, have openly confessed Christ as Lord and Savior and have given evidence of a life changed by His grace and power.

(Note: The exception to this is marriage: for marriage is a holy and honorable estate even if the man and woman [the covenant partners] are not spiritually regenerated and sanctified. The inspired writer of Hebrews says, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13.4). In other words, marriage symbolically sanctifies procreation and the sex act between those duly married before God and recognized as such by the church. It is not salvation therefore that sanctifies procreation and the sex act but the ordinance of marriage. The apostle Paul says, “*What? Know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh*” (1 Cor. 6.16). Significantly, the Greek word translated here “joined” is perfectly equivalent to the Hebrew word translated “cleave” in the original marriage in Gen. 2.24. Again, the apostle emphasizes and strengthens this point by indicating that children born of unsaved parents are made positionally holy and clean by virtue of marriage (1 Cor 7.14) and again, “*it is better to marry than to burn [with passion]*” v. 9; see sub-topic “Marriage” below).

We thus stand in Zion Assembly between “open communion” and “closed communion” on a “guarded communion.” This means that we do not carelessly invite everyone indiscriminately to participate in the ordinances, but neither do we restrict participation to Zion Assembly members only. Accordingly, the overseers and watchmen over God’s house are responsible to give biblical counsel and guidance in spiritual matters and to make certain judgments before administering the ordinances to those who present themselves: for we are called and ordained to “bind” and “loose” and “remit” and “retain”, that is, to judge and discipline God’s people (Mt. 16.19-20; 18.18-20; Jn. 20. 23; 1 Cor. 5.1-12; 6.9-11; 2 Cor. 6.14-18; 1 Tim. 4.13-16; 2 Tim. 2.14-26; 3.1-5, 14-17). We counsel our pastors and ministers, however, to use love, wisdom, and discretion in refusing to administer the ordinances to known fornicators, adulterers, extortioners, idolaters, drunkards, thieves, revilers, etc.

There is no single word that perfectly captures the meaning of an “ordinance”, for each ordinance has certain peculiar traits. Still, however, there are several common traits that may be deduced from passages that deal

with specific ordinances enabling us to identify and define them as a collective body. These common traits are not equally prominent, that is, one trait may be more pronounced in one ordinance than in another; for example, the symbol of forgiveness and cleansing is more pronounced in baptism than in footwashing; but the symbol of humility and servanthood is more pronounced in footwashing than in baptism. Again, baptism and marriage are normally observed but once in the lives of believers, whereas the Lord's Supper and footwashing are expected to be observed often by believers. It comes within the purview of the church's responsibility therefore to identify and define the ordinances and develop a sound theology of them.

The ordinances are rites that furnish the church with something material or tangible to help build and sustain the spirituality of the individual believer and the corporate identity and fellowship of the church universally, as well as the local churches. Ordinances are thus outward "signs" or "witnesses" with sacred and deeply held spiritual meanings---signs that point to the hidden mysteries of the Gospel. In another sense they may be considered "*helps*" and "*governments*" that unite and nourish the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19).

It is critical that the church holds to the symbolic view of the ordinances rather than to the idea that in the act of administration the elements [bread, wine, water, oil, paper and ink, laying on of hands, etc.] somehow have an independent and intrinsic power of their own---a self-inducing power to regenerate, sanctify, and heal believers. The error in this doctrine is especially pronounced in religious traditions that hold to baptismal regeneration [that somehow regeneration happens when one is sprinkled or submerged in water by a duly appointed minister], or that saving grace is bestowed upon the recipient of the Eucharist because somehow the elements of bread and wine are miraculously converted into the real flesh and blood of Christ in the act of administration; or that the "real presence" of Christ is in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper [Eucharist]; or that in the case of footwashing the element of water somehow efficaciously produces humility and cleanses the recipients; or that the power of healing is intrinsically present in anointing oil; etc. Rather the ordinances and their elements are symbols and "signs" that have no efficacy of grace within them nor any real objective virtue except in their divine design as **signs, symbols** and **memorials** of the Gospel mysteries.

**Ordinances signify ["sign-ify"]**, that is, point to the hidden mysteries of the Gospel in Christ. In this sense they may be "a means" to confession, consecration, and strengthening grace, that is, the Holy Spirit may use the ordinances as vehicles or channels to do a supernatural work in the heart of believers. As such, the ordinances give occasion and opportunity for confession and consecration and for the Holy Spirit to bless and reconcile and strengthen believers: and they serve at the same time as visible witnesses to an onlooking world of the invisible grace and power of Christ. It is important therefore to maintain that the ordinances do not have any redemptive grace and quality in and of themselves. They do not work *ex opera operato*, as Roman Catholicism teaches, that is, they do not have any intrinsic or peculiar power within themselves to work independently of the Holy Spirit to change a recipient's heart. To put it another way, ordinances

["sacraments"] are never the "cause" of redemptive grace and salvation; thus the observance of an ordinance is not necessary to obtain justification [regeneration] and sanctification: for spiritual transformation is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit through personal faith on the part of the believer. The repentant thief on the Cross in Luke 23.43, the Spirit-baptized believers in Acts 10-44-47, and the believers before Abraham's time provide indisputable evidence of this truth.

**Ordinances symbolize** divine principles and mysteries that are vital to the church's worship, unity, and outward structure. As such, they have practical value as well as spiritual value, that is, they give witness to the outside world of the intrinsic, dynamic power of the Gospel working within the church, and in the same instant help to identify the visible church and to solidify and edify her corporate union and fellowship. Inward spiritual experience calls for an external witness! It is important to maintain, therefore, that the mysteries signified by ordinances are essentially in the operations of the Holy Spirit not in the elements of the ordinances [water, bread, wine, oil, flesh and blood, etc.] nor in their administrations and performances, nor in their administrators and dispensers. That was the powerful deception that gradually led to Constantinian Christianity in the fourth century that plunged the church into darkness and apostasy!

Since the ordinances have symbolic meaning as well as practical, they are ceremoniously observed [some more so than others, as in the case of baptism, the Lord's Supper, footwashing, and marriage]. In this way, though the very essence of ordinances is spiritual in significance the outward observance of them gives witness to the outside world and serves at the same time as channels through which grace by faith may be ministered to the church--to the "*members in particular*". They are therefore signs and symbols but also acts of obedience in conformity with the divine order of Christ for the church on earth. This is important to grasp, for otherwise--since we hold that the elements [water, bread, wine, oil, flesh and blood, etc.] of the ordinances symbolize rather than embody the "real presence" of God--the ordinances would fade in significance and inevitably cease to be observed. It is incumbent upon God's church therefore to establish a proper biblical estimation of the ordinances as well as to correct any overestimation of them. In other words, we should not exalt nor idolize the "baby" [the elements and ceremonial exercises], but we should be just as careful not to "throw away the baby with the bath water".

The ordinances thus have several essential characteristics or traits. We have seen that they **1) were instituted or affirmed by Christ** during His earthly ministry; **2) serve as signs** of the very "mystery" of the life and transforming power of the Gospel; **3) symbolize** the mysteries of the Gospel; **4) memorialize** the mysteries of the Gospel; **5) provide tangible aids to reenact ["show forth"]** the mysteries of the Gospel; **6) provide channels or mediums** for forgiveness, cleansing, reconciliation, and consecration. We see these characteristics in baptism, the Lord's Supper, footwashing, marriage, the ministry and proclamation of the Word of God, anointing with oil, laying on of hands, etc. [Jn. 13.8-10; Acts 10.44-48; 1 Cor. 7.9-16; 11.27-33; Eph. 5.26-27; Heb. 4.12; Jas. 5.14-15); and, thus, we should expect to see a symbol of **cleansing** represented in any divine

ordinance of the church; 7) finally **the observance of the ordinances** by the church **is commanded** by the Lord and the apostles (Mt. 26.26-28; 28.19-20; Mk. 16.16; Jn. 13.14-15; Acts 12.38; 0.48; 1 Cor. 11.23-25; Jas. 5.14-15).

## **“Ordinance” preferred over “Sacrament” or “Mysteries”**

Several terms have been used in Christian history to identify what we refer to now as “ordinances.” Included among these are “mysteries”, “sacraments”, “ceremonies”, and “witnesses.” By the third century the term “sacrament” became the predominate term in the Latin-speaking churches, whereas the Greek-speaking churches preferred the term “mysteries”. Among the radical reformers in the sixteenth century the term “ordinance” came to be preferred over against “sacrament” because the Early Church soon after the passing of the apostles began to corrupt the meaning of a sacrament.

“Sacrament” is derived from the Latin *sacramentum* [“vow”, “oath”, “pledge”] and was substituted in lieu of the biblical word, *mysterion*, “mystery”, e.g., in Eph. 5.32. The term was not offensive at first and was even helpful so long as it implied simply the element of a sacred commitment as it was originally used in military circles in the Roman world. In those days it signified a solemn pledge to duly appointed authority and principles, and in that sense was an appropriate and fitting term to encourage a sober and sacred pledge of consecration and commitment to the government of Christ and His church in the observances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. But once the term was perverted to mean that the mystery or hiddenness of the Gospel was infused into the recipients of the sacraments, for example in Communion via the priest claiming to act in the person of Christ and invoking and “calling down” the Holy Spirit to miraculously change the elements [bread and wine] into the body and blood of Christ, making them thus inherently efficacious, then the term and the whole sacerdotal [priestly] system was to be rejected.

These ideas were kernels of heresy sown in the early centuries that eventually germinated, took root and grew up to corrupt and divide the church. Augustine in the fifth century, following in the steps of Tertullian and other second- and third century Church Fathers, lent his powerful influence to the developing sacramental and sacerdotal system, defining a sacrament as “the visible form of an invisible grace”, and, after the manner of Greek Mystery religions, thought of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as initiatory rites into God’s kingdom and church. The door into the Dark Ages was thus thrown wide open. Thomas Aquinas, following in this tradition in the thirteenth century, defined a sacrament as a “Sign of a sacred thing in so far as it sanctifies man”. The church of the Dark Ages thereafter increasingly believed that the “sign” and “visible form” of the sacrament automatically and mechanically bestowed grace upon the recipients. It was thus that the dynamic and spiritually powerful church that we see operating in the New Testament--- “*a habitation [dwelling place] of God through the Spirit*”

(Eph. 2.21), whose ministers were quickened and sanctified and charged with the power of God (Acts 1.8; 2.1-4, 15-18, 31-33, 37-47; Heb. 1.7), became a static organization composed in large part of empty forms, Christ-substituting rituals, and spiritually dead [unregenerate] members (Mt. 5.20; Col. 1.21-23, 27-29; 2.4-15, 18-23; 3.1-6; 1 Tim. 4.1-3; 2 Tim. 3.1-8; 2 Pet. 2.1-3, 14-19; Jude 3-8, 11-19; Rev. 1.9-11, 20; 2.5, 13-17, 20-23, 26-29; 3.3-6, 11-13, 15).

Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Anglican churches agree today that some form of “transubstantiation” takes place in the administration of the Eucharist [Lord’s Supper]: that is, that the elements in the Lord’s Supper are somehow mysteriously changed into the real body and blood of Christ; and others, e.g., Lutherans, teach that the “real presence” of Christ is in the elements of the sacraments, particularly in the Lord’s Supper.

As early as the second- and third centuries, certain Church Fathers [Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Ambrose, Methodius, et al.] began imagining that the effects of the “*Paschal Mystery*” of Christ---His suffering, death, and resurrection---were somehow conferred upon the recipients of the sacraments through duly ordained priests speaking “consecrated words” invoking the Holy Trinity and transforming the elements into “another reality.” The mysteries or “hidden things” of God were thus believed to be infused into believers through participation in the “sacred rites”. It was in this way that, soon after the passing of the apostles, old pagan temple rites and superstitious concepts became mixed with Christian teachings and found their way into the church.

We have noticed that the infusion of Greek Mystery religion with its forms of magic and superstition had begun to be associated with baptism and the Lord’s Supper very early in the worship and practice of the church in the second- and third centuries and was later more fully developed in the Roman Catholic tradition. During the Middle Ages, Roman Catholic scholars [scholastics/schoolmen] in the eleventh- through the thirteenth century had come under the influence of Aristotle’s philosophy, particularly his metaphysics, and accordingly developed a crafty and sophisticated distinction between “matter [substance]” and “form” in an attempt to defend and explain the mystery of “transubstantiation”. As such, it is said that the “substance” of the bread and wine in the Eucharist is mysteriously converted [“radically changed”] into the real body and blood of Christ while the “accidents” of the bread and wine [their weight, texture, color, shape, etc.] remain the same. Moreover, the celebration of the Mass began to be perceived as a “sacrifice” early on in Christian history [third century] but was more craftily developed during the scholastic period. In the process the priest was exalted as one acting in the person of Christ to “make” the “sacrifice” effective! The “miracle” happened as the priest lifted upward the “host” [bread] and uttered the Latin words, *Hoc est enim corpus meum* (“for this is my body”).

We should pause here to say that, though the Roman Catholic Church propagates many doctrinal distortions and a great deal of practical corruption, there were during the Dark Ages, even as there are now, many wonderful and dedicated Catholic Christians in the world---believers whose hearts God has

touched and transformed by grace through faith in spite of the corruption of the institution of which they are a part. We can be thankful moreover for the many good works that has been done [and is being done today] in the name of the Lord among Roman Catholics. Accordingly, we are not judging the hearts nor the sincerity of Roman Catholic individuals nor the individuals of any religious group (only the Lord can do that); but we are divinely instructed to discern and test through the Holy Spirit the “spirit of error” and judge right and wrong by the rule of God’s Word in Holy Scripture (Mt. 22.29; Jn. 20.9, 23; 1 Tim. 4.13-16; 2 Tim. 3.15-16; Rom. 15.4; 2 Cor. 5.1-13; 6.2-5; 2 Pet. 1.16-20; 1 Jn. 2.18-19; 4.1-6). Further, we should pray for our brethren in other religious groups that their heads and not their hearts may be charged for any errors and deceptions and intercede for them with our Lord in saying, *“Father forgive them for they not what they do.”* And we can hope and pray that they will hear that prophetic *“voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”* (Rev. 18.4).

During the early Middle Ages, the superstitions associated with transubstantiation and priestly powers captured the imagination of lay Catholics and ordinary people everywhere in the Western World---especially in European states and in the British Isles. This phenomenon was the more enhanced by the priests administering the sacraments in Latin idioms [a language spoken and understood almost exclusively by educated priests]: for it seemed to the average person---in an age of widespread and prevailing illiteracy---that the sacramental ceremonies were performed not only under peculiar mystical powers but under a transcending sacred canopy---“the Holy Mother Church”. Liturgies spoken in Latin provided a convenience which the institution tended to manipulate to control the people.

Many “miracle stories” associated with the Eucharist were fanciful and sensationalized. Theologians and priests described the Mass in fantastic and metaphorical ways, for example, the priest washing his hands at the altar supposedly reflected Pontius Pilate washing his hands of the judgment of Christ. Though the priests had no power to manufacture deity nor to “call down the Holy Spirit”, yet it was made to seem so especially in the imaginations of the biblically illiterate and ill-informed. The faithful were taught to tip their hats in reverence and “gaze adoringly” upon the host [bread] as the priest performed the mysterious ceremony. It was not uncommon for people to run from church to church to capture the moment in the Mass when the priest lifted up the “host” and the chalice [wine cup], for it was commonly believed that beholding the Eucharist helped to preserve youthfulness and heal the sick. There was also a proliferation of Masses privately celebrated for the dead and for wealthy recluses. Remains of the consecrated hosts [Communion bread] was often held back and given to the sick, based on the popular superstition that the bread, having been consecrated by the priest, contained miraculous healing powers.

Since we know that such *“hocus-pocus”* does not actually change the bread, how then is such a practice not plain and simple idolatry? For the bread has no more deity in it than did the wood and stone idols of the Egyptians, Canaanites,

and Babylonians (Is. 44.9-20). The “blest bread” can no more see, hear, and speak than the graven images and dumb idols of pagan Persia, Greece and Rome. For transubstantiation or salvation is not in the hands and words of priests but in the souls of believers who receive into their hearts and confess with their mouths the Lord Jesus Christ: having been quickened to newness of life by grace through faith and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3.3-8; Rom. 4.17; 5.5; 8.9-11; 10.6-10; Eph. 2.8; Col. 1.13). Accordingly, what needs transformed is not the bread and wine but the person observing the ordinance as he/she recalls the symbolic meaning of the bread and wine.

The Roman Catholic Church continues today to teach that Jesus’ one bloody sacrifice on the Cross is repeated over and again in an “unbloody manner” so that every generation of Roman Catholics can miraculously have the full benefits of Christ’s historical death and resurrection in present space and time. Accordingly, Christ is offered up as a sacrifice thousands of times on any given day--an irreverent fiction and heresy contradicted plainly by the Scriptures and reason (cf. Rom. 6.9-10; Heb. 9.24-28; 1 Pet. 2.24; Rev. 1.18; see also Is. 53.4-12). But the more subtle danger of this teaching is that it inevitably tends to substitute the sacrament and its priestly administration for the dynamic ministry of the Holy Spirit and personal, regenerating faith on the part of the participating professing believer.

*“Beware lest any man spoil you [take you captive] through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [principles] of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2.8).*

The doctrine of “transubstantiation” was taught in the Lateran Council in 1215, reinforced in the Council of Trent in 1551/1562 and reaffirmed in Vatican Council I (1869-1870) and Vatican Council II (1962-1965). It continues today to be a cardinal teaching of Roman Catholic faith and practice, and a primary pillar of that ecclesiastical institution (cf. Mt. 15.3, 6; Mk. 7.6-9, 13; Col. 2.6-8 Thess. 2.7-12; 1 Tim. 4.1-8; 2 Pet. 2.1-3, 10, 14, 17).

## Salvation Plain and Simple

It was thus that the plain and simple teachings and practices of Jesus and the apostles regarding how salvation is received were superseded by the doctrines and practices of the sacramental and sacerdotal [priestly] system of Roman Catholicism during the Dark Ages, and spread thereafter through the East by the Greek Orthodox Church after the “Great Schism” in 1054, and throughout the British Isles and the American Colonies by the Anglican Church in the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries. The whole of Western Civilization was thus permeated with a sacramental and sacerdotal view of Christianity.

In contrast to this sacramentalism and sacerdotalism, the simple Bible steps to justification and spiritual transformation which were taught and illustrated by Jesus and the apostles are as follows: **1) by the anointed proclamation** of the Gospel via preachers, lay witnesses, and/or directly by the Holy Spirit speaking

to one's conscience (1 Sam. 3.4-10; Is. 52.7-8; Jn. 10.16; Acts 1.8; 2.36-37; 9.4-5; Rom. 1.15-16; 10.8-9, 14-16; Eph. 4.11-16; Titus 2.11-12; Heb. 4.12); **2) by outwardly and inwardly hearing the Word of God** (Acts 2.37; Rom. 10.8-9, 14-17; Gal. 3.2-5); **3) by being convicted [reproved] by the Holy Spirit** of one's sinfulness (Jn. 16.8; Acts 2.36-37); **4) by sensing the guilt** of one's transgressions (Ex. 34.7; Deut. 21.9; Lev. 5.3-5; Ps. 51.1-4, 6-10; Acts 2.36-37; 7.51-54); **5) by "godly sorrow", confession and repentance** (Mt. 3.1-2; 11.21; 12.41; 26.75; Rom. 10.9; 2 Cor. 7.8-10; 1 Jn. 1.9; 2 Sam. 12.13); **6) by opening one's heart** to receive Christ (Rom. 10.8-10; Eph. 4.18; Rev. 3.20); **7) by regeneration ["born again"]** (Jn. 3.3-8; Titus 3.5; 1 Pet. 1.22-23), that is, **by personally receiving Jesus into one's heart by "grace through faith"** as Lord and Savior, **being transformed thereby into a "new creature" in the image of Christ** (Rom. 8.9; 2 Cor. 3.18; Eph. 2.8; Col. 1.13; 3.10).

It is of paramount importance to maintain that these steps may be taken and salvation experienced fully without priest or sacrament (Jn. 1.12-13; 3.5-8; 5.24; 6.29; Acts 10.44-47; 16.30-31; Rom. 8.8-11; 10.8-11; 2 Cor. 5.17; Gal. 3.26; Eph. 2.8; Col. 3.10; 1 Jn. 1.9; 4.7-9). This is not to discount the importance and place for an ordained ministry and ordinances in the church, but simply to put things in proper biblical perspective. As such, pagan superstition and "any-thing-goes" liberalism may be avoided on one hand and legalism and rigid religiosity on the other.

It was inevitable that the "*doctrines of demons*" and "*damnable heresies*" embedded in sacramentalism and sacerdotalism would be substituted in lieu of a true and efficacious transformation of one's life through faith and the Word of God: for natural [unregenerate] man desires salvation without true spiritual transformation (Mt. 23.23-29, 37; Mk. 8.34-38; Rom. 1.16-32; 1 Cor. 1.18-31; 2.1-16). Sinful men desire justification without regeneration; religion without righteousness; glory without suffering; heaven without holiness. It was thus that, according to the prophecy of the Holy Spirit, religious *forms* [sacraments, etc.] were instituted to fill the vacuum of the absence of the dynamic and supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men.

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils [demons]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron . . . If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things . . . Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands by the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear before all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing so thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee"* (1 Tim. 4.1-16).

And again,

*“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be . . . covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers . . . unholy . . . Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof . . . Ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith . . .”* (2 Tim. 3.1-8).

The heretical illusion that somehow the Paschal Mystery of Christ transforms a believer through a sacred sign or “visible word” and material element administered by a priest led Jerome in the fifth century to purposely render the Greek term *mysterion*, “mystery” as *sacramentum* in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (see Eph. 1.9; 3.2-5, 9-10; 5.32; Col. 1.26; 1 Tim. 3.16; Rev. 1.20; et al). But, as noted earlier, *sacramentum* was first substituted for *mysterion* by Tertullian in the third century and this led later to the corruption of the “sacraments” and ultimately to the fall of the church in the fourth century.

### **Zion Assembly stands between Two Extremes**

Some of the radical reformers in the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries---after they had been awakened to the evils of the sacramental and sacerdotal system---gave a great deal of thought to this subject but tended to overreact against the Roman Catholic view of the efficacy of the sacraments as inherently containing grace and being able to bestow grace upon the recipients. In many cases these reformers either completely spiritualized the sacraments or abolished them altogether [e.g., certain Anabaptist groups led by men like Hans Denk, Jacob Kraus, and Hans Bunderlin, and later George Fox and the Quakers], while others like Zwingli and the Swiss brethren maintained the need for sacraments but saw them as mere symbols. On the other hand, Pilgram Marpeck [d. 1556] of the South German Anabaptists insisted that the ordinances should be observed but that they were more than “mere symbols” [in contrast to Zwingli], yet they did not “contain” nor especially “produce” grace [in contrast to Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy]. He developed a theology of the ordinances that gave the observance of them deep meaning yet denied that they contained and/or produced grace and salvation. Accordingly, the “real presence” of the Lord could indeed be experienced in the life of the believer during the administration of the ordinances, but not automatically or in any mechanical sense nor as a natural consequence of the observance; rather it was through faith and reverent obedience to the divine order of things appointed by the Lord. The ordinances simply provided the form, the Holy Spirit and the faith of the believer produced the spiritual dynamic and divine blessing. Thus, without the active agency of the Holy Spirit and the faith of the recipient the ordinances were merely external acts, empty forms, without any real meaning---mere perfunctory bodily

exercises (cf. 1 Tim. 4.6-8; 2 Tim. 3.5-7; Titus 1.16; and cp. Amos 5.21-26).

Marpeck maintained that Communion [Lord's Supper] was basically a memorial meal and held "for the renewal, strengthening and comfort of the soul, and for nothing else." The members of the church were to examine themselves earnestly to see whether they stood in love and harmony with their brothers and sisters in Christ, and if they were loving their enemies and loving the Lord enough to be willing to give up their lives for Him. As such, the ceremony of Communion is to give place for consecration and for reconciliation, if need be, both for the individual member and for the members of the church collectively. Ultimately, the aim of a disciplined observance of the ordinances is to cultivate and maintain a pure church.

## **Ordinances Distinguished from Commandments**

The divine ordinances of the church are distinguished from and contrasted with commandments, precepts, and statutes. In the broad sense, the meaning of "ordinance" is almost synonymous with "law" and "commandment" (Ex. 18.20; Lev. 18.4; Num. 9.12; Eph. 2.15; Col. 2.14). But in the stricter traditional sense ordinances came to signify religious rites that represent and symbolize the most vital and fundamental principles of the church. As such, they are foundational pillars of the church and less in number than commandments and statutes in general. Another distinction is that ordinances involve two or more persons or members of the church, whereas commandments, precepts, and statutes apply axiomatically to each member or believer individually; and thus, as already noticed, the ordinances belong properly to the church as a corporate body [though, as noticed earlier, are observed and administered imperfectly outside the church].

There is also a distinction of things that may be said to have sacramental traits yet lack the status of an ordinance and accordingly should not be celebrated as such: for example **1) personal and corporate [communal] prayer** [Mt. 6.5-15; 1 Cor. 16.15, 19]; **2) church covenant** [Ex. 19.5-8; 24.6-8; 2 Kg. 23.1-3; Mt. 18.18-20; Jn. 17.6, 8, 8]; **3) anointing with oil** [Ex. 29.21; Lev. 8.12; 14.18; Ps. 92.10; Mk. 6.13; Jas. 5.14-15]; **4) right hands of fellowship** [Gal. 2.9; see also 2 Kg. 10.15; Ezra 10.19]; **5) assembling together** [Ps. 122.1; Mt. 18.15-20; Lu. 4.16; Acts 1.13-14; 2.42; 15.2-4, 6-19, 22, 25; 1 Cor. 1.10-13; 5.4-13; Heb. 10.25]; **6) laying on of hands** [Num. 8.10; 27.18; Mk. 5.23; 16.18; Acts 6.6-7; 8.15-17; 9.17; 13.3; 19.6; 1 Tim. 4.14; Jas. 5.14]; **7) holy kiss/kiss of charity** [Rom. 16.16; 1 Cor. 16.20; 2 Cor. 13.12; 1 Thess. 5.26; Acts 20.37]; **8) devotional covering/veiling** [1 Cor. 11.1-16], **9) singing of hymns and spiritual songs** [Ps. 95.1-2; 96.1-4; 98.1-2; 105.1-2; Eph. 5.19; Col. 3.16]; **10) fasting** [Neh. 9.1; Ps. 35.13; Joel 1.14; 2.12, 15; Mt. 6.16-18; 9.15; Lu. 2.37; 2 Cor. 6.5; Jas. 4.9]; **11) solemn thanksgiving** [Ps. 1.14; 95.2; 105.1-2; 106.1-2; 1 Thess. 5.18]; etc. It will be noticed that most of these practices are observed in connection with the church as the ordinance proper.

The following institutions and practices seem to bear all the marks of an ordinance [sacrament] and therefore should perhaps be recognized and observed as such. Among those to be considered are: **1) the church itself** [see below]; **2) ministry/ordination** [see below]; **3) marriage** [see below]; **4) public Bible reading** [see below].

## Number of Ordinances

We have seen that **baptism, Lord's Supper, and footwashing** were accepted in the very beginning of the restoration of the church in 1886 and have never been questioned; and therefore need not be reviewed here. The question is: are there other ordinances that we should be practicing and celebrating? If so, how many? In my estimation there are at least seven common practices of the church that should be considered and possibly recognized as divine ordinances. I raise this point not to create controversy nor because we have nothing better to do, but because I can see where these practices might significantly stabilize and nourish the church and enhance her ministry and outreach to the nations. And, further, it may help support our claim that God directed our actions in 2004 and raised up Zion Assembly to be the prophetic "*city set on a hill*" to shine forth the light and truth of Christ to the nations (Is. 2.2-4; 49.6, 23; 60.1-5, 14; Mt. 5.14; Eph. 5.14; Phil. 2.12-15; 1 Tim. 3.15; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.2-3, 9-11).

## The Church

Foremost in our consideration and reevaluation of divine ordinances should be **the church** itself. For the church is not only a divine institution but **bears all the marks** of an ordinance. First, the *mysterics* of the Gospel are embodied in the church, the "body of Christ", and are proclaimed [preached] by the church (Mt. 29.18-20; Jn. 17.6-14; 2 Cor. 3.23; Eph. 1.2-9, 15-23; 2.11-22; 3.6, 9-12; 4.1-16; 5.24-32). The church is therefore a visible *sign* and *witness* to the world of the grace of God and His transforming power, and a *channel* through which that grace may be obtained (Song 6.8-10; Is. 60.1-5, 14; Mt. 5.13-14; 2 Cor. 3.2-3; Eph. 3.3-6, 9-10; Heb. 11.7; 1 Tim. 3.15; Rev. 12.1-17; 19.7-9; 21. 2-3, 9-11).

Second, the church owes its life and being to the *mystery* of the Incarnation of Christ: for as **Eve** was formed from the rib of **Adam**, so the church came from the broken side of Christ and was **purchased by His blood** (Jn. 19.34-37; 20.27-29; Acts 20.28; 2 Cor. 11.2-3; Eph. 1.14; Col. 1.26-28; Heb. 9.11-17; 1 Pet. 18-23). Indeed, the church is crucified and resurrected with Christ, and "[sits] in heavenly places in Christ" (Rom. 6.4-6; Eph. 1.3; 2.5-6; Phil. 3.20; Col. 3.1-2). In one sense the church is an extension of the Incarnation (2 Cor. 3.2-3; Col. 1.24), which is *symbolized* in the metaphors "*Body of Christ*", "*City of God*", "*House of God*", "*Temple of the Holy Spirit*", etc. (Mt. 5.14; 1 Cor. 6.19; 12.24-27; Eph. 1.23; 2.16, 21-22; 3.6; 4.4, 12-16; Col. 1.18; 2.17-19; 1 Tim. 3.15; Heb. 12.22; et al).

Third, to more impactfully emphasize the **mysterious union between Christ and the church**, the apostle compares it to the divine institution of marriage, saying, *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”* (Eph. 5.31-32).

In that the church embodies in its very soul and spirit the “real presence” of Christ, it may be said that the church is the most fundamental ordinance [“sacrament”] for mediating salvation (Gen. 28.10-22; Is. 49.1-6; 60-1-5, 14; Mt. 18.17-20; Jn. 17.20-23; 1 Cor. 12.12-27; 2 Cor. 3.2-3; 5.17-20). For the very life of Christ is reenacted through the life and experiences of the church, that is, the church is dead [crucified] with Christ; suffers with Him; is resurrected with Him; labors together with Him in the ministry; will ascend with Him in the Rapture; will return with Him in the Second Coming; and will rule and reign on earth with Him in the Millennium (Dan. 7.14, 18, 22, 27; Mt. 19.28-29; 20.23; Lu. 19.12-19; 22.29-30; 1 Cor. 6.2-3; 2 Tim. 2.12; 1 Pet. 2.21-25; 3.14-18; 4.1; Rev. 2.26-27; 5.10; 12.5; 19.11-16; 20.1-6).

What the apostle Peter said of obedient wives regarding unbelieving husbands therefore may be said of the church as an ordinance: *“that if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the [chaste conduct] of the wives”* (1 Pet. 3.1-2), that is, the embodiment of Christ in the church is a powerful witness to a watching world. Indeed, the Word of God lived out is sometimes more powerful than preaching! (cf. 2 Cor. 3.2-3). The apostle Paul speaks along these same lines, saying, *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy”* (1 Cor. 7.14), that is, the church may serve as a channel as well as a sign and symbol of the grace of God. Again, Paul says in 1 Cor. 14.23-26 when *“the whole church be come together into one place”* in an orderly fashion and *“all things be done [in an edifying way]”*, and one comes into the meeting who is an unbeliever or unlearned he will be convicted and judged by all that he sees and hears and *“the secrets of his heart [will be] made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”*

We have stressed that the ordinances do not contain nor especially produce grace in and of themselves. It is so also with the church. The Roman Catholic view that sacraments are effective *ex opere operato*---that is, as valid and efficacious works of saving grace in and of themselves---therefore cannot be maintained. As we have noted elsewhere, the ordinances cannot be effective except on the bases of personal faith and the dynamic operations of the Holy Spirit working within the recipient believers. The presence and power of the kingdom of God working within the church is necessary and of paramount importance to validate and energize the church as a vehicle or channel for grace (Lu. 17.20-21; 22.18-20; Jn. 3-8; 20-23; Acts 1.6-8; Rom. 1.16; 8.16; 14.17-18; 1 Cor. 2.1-5, 7, 10-16; 4.20; 1 Thess. 1.5; Rev. 2.5, 17. It was thus that Jesus, upon making His famous declaration, “. . . **upon this rock I will build My church**” then immediately emphasized, **“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt**

***bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven***” (Mt. 16.18-19). The obvious implication is that the church’s actions on earth must be in harmony with the will of God in heaven. The “binding” and “loosing” by the church on earth is authorized and validated only by the headship of Christ working through the Holy Spirit in accord with the Word of God (Jn. 14.26; 15.26; 16.7, 12-15; Acts 1.8; Rom. 8.1, 10-14; 1 Cor. 2.7-10, 12-13; 12.3-11; 2 Cor. 3.17-18; Eph. 2.17-23; 4.1-7; Col. 1.12-29; et al).

## **Ministry/Ordination**

The ministry of the church was divinely instituted by Christ during His earthly ministry: in fact, at the very founding of the church under the terms of the New Testament (Mt. 5.1-7.28; 10.1-5; Mk. 3.13-16; Lu. 6.12-17; 10.1). It is noteworthy that the ordination of the Twelve Apostles served as a symbolic representation of the twelve tribes of Israel, “*the church in the wilderness*” (Acts 7.38), which was founded at Mount Sinai under Moses (Ex. 19.3-8; 24.3-8; Deut. 4.5-10; 26.17-19; Is. 2.1-4). As such, Jesus simply brought the Old Covenant church to terms under the New Covenant (Jn. 1.1-5, 14-18; Heb. 3.1-16; and compare Ex. 19.5-8 with 1 Pet. 2.9): and then purchased it “*with His own blood*” (Acts 20.28). The “Sermon on the Mount” (Mt. 5.1-7.28) was virtually an exposition of the teachings and principles of the New Covenant upon which Jesus newly founded the church in contrast with the teachings and principles of the Old Covenant that had been established under Moses (Heb. 3.1-6; 8.1-9.28; Col. 2.6-15).

A significant part of Jesus’ work on earth was to establish the authority and divine nature of the ministry of the church; which significantly formed the very foundation of the church, Christ himself serving as the “*chief cornerstone*” (Mt. 16.15-28; 18.15-20; Mk. 13.34; Jn. 20.23; Acts 2.42; 1 Cor. 3.9-15; 12.28-31; Eph. 2.20; 4.1-16). As such, the ministry is “set apart” for special services, having been planted in the womb of the church by the very seed of God. Divine authority and ordination are thus derived essentially from God himself (Mt. 28.19-20; Mk. 13.34; Rom. 13.1-3). Still, it is important to maintain that there is no sharp separation between the “clergy” and “laity”. This was in fact a grave error fostered by the apostate church of the Dark Ages, which led to extravagant views of ecclesiastical power. After the passing of the New Testament apostles, the church began to “*fall away*” and “*depart from the faith*” (Acts 20.29-31; 2 Thess. 2.1-12; 1 Tim. 4.1-3; Jude 3; Rev. 2.4-5; see also Is. 60.2). Gradually the church espoused and maintained that God had bestowed upon the ordained priesthood the power to forgive sin and to open and close at will the gates of heaven. Further, this priesthood morphed into a pyramidal hierarchy of authority that ascended into the solitary office of the pope, whom it was claimed was by virtue of his office “the supreme head on earth of the universal church” and “vicar of Christ”. Accordingly, the pope often exercised authority and made declarations that contradicted the headship of Christ and His teachings.

Significantly, many of the church fathers in the second- and third centuries opposed the idea of an exalted distinction of overseers, bishops, and priests over

against the laity---for example, Hippolytus [d. ca. 236] and Cyprian (d. 258). They emphasized the connection of the ministers with the whole community of faith and the whole church's involvement in the selection and appointment process of overseers and ministers. Nevertheless, the view of ministry as a static institutional structure won out in the long run over against an anointed, gifted, and Spirit-guided ministry.

This apostate view of the government and discipline of the church is why our forefathers in the Church of God in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century established a rule of order in which a candidate for the ministry is first recognized and endorsed by the local church of which he/she is a member, and thereafter is examined by the presbytery [the representatives of the universal church], composed of the presiding bishop and national/state overseer [and on occasion a whole body of assembled elders with the people of God] (see, e.g., Numb. 8.9-14). Further, only after the presbytery is fully convinced that the candidate is spiritually fit and divinely gifted (1 Tim. 5.22), is he/she fully endorsed and "set apart" for ministry by the "*laying on of hands*" (Numb. 8.10; 27.18; Acts 6.3-6; 9.11-17; 13.2-3; 1 Tim. 4.14). Accordingly, the church simply recognizes the gifts and callings of God upon the men and women whom He has sovereignly chosen (Mk. 3.13-19; Lu. 6.12-16; 10.1-11; Jn. 17.6-19; 1 Cor. 1.1; 12.18). Thus, just as the church proceeds from Christ so also does the ministry.

Remarkably, the church shares in the very priesthood and kingship of Christ; mediating salvation, disciplining believers, and ruling and reigning with Christ in His throne (Is. 49.1-6; Dan. 7.22, 27; 12.3; Mt. 10.1, 8; 16.18-19; 18.18-20; 19.28-29; Lu. 9.1-2; 19.12-27; Jn. 20.23; 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 3.21; 20.4-6). Ministers are indeed not only "*laborers together with Christ*" and "*ambassadors for Him*" on earth in this present age (2 Cor. 5.19-20; 6.1), but, astonishingly, "*kings*" and "*priests*" of God and "*joint heirs with Christ*" of all the glorious promises of God in the Gospel (Rom. 8.17; Rev. 2.26; 3.21).

As such, the ministers of the church are channels for salvation and divinely gifted instruments appointed "*for the perfecting of the saints*" (Eph. 4.11-16). Thus Paul could say, "*I have begotten you through the Gospel*" (1 Cor. 4.15) and again "*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you*" (Gal. 4.19); and yet again, "*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which . . . now is made manifest to his saints . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*" (Col. 1.25-28).

We see then that the church---the very "*apple of God's eye*" (Deut. 32.10; Zech. 2.8)---cannot be formed nor nourished nor perfected without the various gifts and offices of the ministry: overseers [elders/administrators], evangelists, pastors-teachers, and deacons (Acts 20.28; 1 Cor. 12.28; Eph. 4.11-16; Col. 1.28; 1 Tim. 3.1-13; Titus 1.5-9). We are admonished therefore to "*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine*" (1 Tim. 5.17) and to "*know [recognize/honor] them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their works'sake*" (1 Thess. 5.12-13); and again, "*Obey*

*them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they must give account . . .*" (Heb. 13.17; see also vv. 7, 24).

Recognizing and maintaining a biblical view of the ministry as an ordinance of God is necessary for the formation and discipline of the church. This has perhaps never been truer than it is today in view of the universal resistance to duly established government and authority, secular and religious. There is indeed a spirit of "lawlessness" in the air. As God's church--- "*a city set upon a hill*", we are to set the example of how to govern and to be governed with grace and harmony and in love, holiness, and truth, manifesting disciplined lives, individually and corporately as God's "*holynation*" and "*the body of Christ*" (Ex. 19.5-6; Lev. 10.10-12; 20.22-26; Deut. 4.5-8; 26.17-19; Is. 2.1-5; 1 Tim. 2.15; 1 Pet. 2.9; Rev. 20.4-6).

## Marriage

Marriage is a holy institution ordained by God for the benefit and sustenance of humankind (Gen. 2.18, 22-24; 5.2; Mal. 2.14-16; Mt. 19.4-6; Mk. 10.2-12; Eph. 5.23-33). God is its author both for the mutual benefit of the covenant partners and for an orderly rule in the church and the whole of human society (Gen. 1.27-28; Heb. 13.4). Jesus honored and exalted the institution of marriage by attending with His disciples the celebrated marriage at Cana and performing His first miracle there. He thus honored it with His presence and participation (Jn. 2.2-11). The apostle Paul indicates that the very "mystery" of marriage points to the Gospel and one's initiation into the very life of God (Eph. 5.29-32).

Matrimony has three primary objectives in the divine wisdom: **1)** To reflect in the sacred union of man and woman the divine image of God; which is to say, the union of the genders [masculine and feminine] reflect together the wholeness of God; but also marriage reflects the union of God with His people. This is why the Lord calls His union with His covenant people a betrothal/marriage (Deut. 20.7; 22.23-27; Jer. 3.14; 31.31-33; Ezek. 16.8; Mt. 1.18-25), an image that is perpetuated and perfected in the New Testament under the sacred union between Christ and the church as bridegroom and bride (Jer. 31.31-33; Eph. 5.22-32; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.1-2, 9-10). **2)** To create a divine order in which the genders [male and female] mutually edify and sustain one another: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually; for each is the counterpart of the other (Gen. 1.27-28; 2.18, 22-25; Mt. 19.4-6; Mk. 10.6-9; Eph. 5.23-33). **3.** To establish a hallowed and pure way to populate and perpetuate the race of man on earth--- "*be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth*" (Gen. 1.28; 2.22-24; Mal. 2.14-16; 1 Cor. 7.2-5, 9-11; Eph. 6.1-4).

It is not our purpose here to explain and defend our view of the sacredness and indissolubleness of the marriage bond [covenant]: for this has been well established among us in our tradition of faith. We believe that death alone dissolves a marriage which has been ordained by God and recognized as such by the church (Mt. 16.19-20; 19.8-12; 22.23-30; Mk. 10.6-9; Rom. 7.2-3). What we are endeavoring to do here is establish that the divine institution of marriage bears all the marks of a holy ordinance of God and therefore should be adopted as such by the church.

The sacramental traits of marriage include the following: **1)** a biblical marriage is a reflection of the sacred unity within God himself (Gen. 1.27; 2.22-25; 5.2; 1 Cor. 11.3, 7-12; Eph. 5.22-32); and is a symbol of the sacred union between God and His people as bridegroom and bride (Ex. 19.5; Song 5.1; 6.2-9; Is. 49.14-18; 62.5; Ezek. 16.8; Jn. 3.29; Mt. 22.2; 2 Cor. 11.2-3; Eph. 5.25-32; Rev. 19.7-8); **2)** Jesus and the apostles honored and exalted marriage as a divine institution and sacred ordinance. The apostle Paul intimates in fact that the very “mystery” of marriage points to our spiritual union with Christ in the Gospel and our corporate union together with Him in the church (Eph. 5.23-32; see also Mk. 10.6-9; Jn. 2.2-11; 1 Cor. 12.12-28; Heb. 13.4); **3)** it is entered into by a sacred covenant between two eligible persons [male and female], God himself authorizing and witnessing to the sacred union (Gen. 1.27; 2.22-25; 5.2; Mal. 2.14-16; Jer. 3.14; 50.5; Is. 62.5; Ezek. 16.8; Mk. 10.2-12; 1 Cor. 7.2); **4)** it is sustained by grace and a sacred commitment [*sacramentum*] (Gen. 2.24; Deut. 10.20; 11.22; Jer. 13.11; Mal. 2.14-16; Mk. 10.2-12; Rom. 7.2-3; 1 Cor. 7.2-5, 10-14); **5)** it is a universal witness of God’s divine order for the human race (Mal. 2.14-16; Mt. 19.4-5; 1 Cor. 7.2-5, 14; Heb. 13.4; Eph. 5.22-32; Rev. 19.7-8); **6)** it is a channel through which the human race, and more particularly the church of God, is divinely ordered and sustained in holiness, truth and divine order (Mk. 10.6-9; 1 Cor. 7.14-16; Eph. 5.22-32); **7)** it is universal in its scope, expected to be entered into and honored by all men (Gen. 1.27-28; 2.22-24; Mk. 10.6-9; 1 Tim. 5.14; Heb. 13.4; Rev. 21.2-3; 9-10), excepted only by those who by “*the gift of God*” remain unmarried and celibate [born as such “*from their mother’s womb*”] and others “*which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake*” (Mt. 10-12; 1 Cor. 7.7-9).

## **Public Reading of the Word of God**

The Bible, the written Word of God, is a visible sign and witness pointing men to the Gospel of Christ. It is inscripturated prophecy centered on the work and glory of Christ (2 Pet. 1.19-21; 1 Tim. 4.1-3): for “*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Rev. 19.10; see also Lu. 24.27; Jn. 5.39). The Bible is thus a sacred record or witness of Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and on-going intercessory work in unity with the Father in His heavenly throne (Acts 7.55; Rev. 3.21). The sacred Book is a written revelation of the saving work of God in Christ, and thus analogous to God’s Word inbreathed into the hearts of believers.

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

Note the contrast in this Pauline passage between the Word of God written with “*ink*” in v. 3 and “*engraven in stones*” in v. 7 with the Word of God

written by the “*Spirit of the living God*” in the hearts of men in vv. 3, 6, 8. The apostle’s words thus reflect the words spoken by Jesus in Jn. 6.63: “. . . *the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (see also Gen. 2.7; Ps. 119.93, 130; Mk. 1.22; Lu. 24.32; 2 Tim. 3.16; Heb. 4.12; 2 Pet. 1.20).

Most professing Christians, including a great many preachers and teachers, read the Bible selectively: choosing certain scriptures to support some hobby horse or traditional bias. But God’s church is bound by a sacred covenant to read, study and obey “*every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*” (Deut. 8.3; Mt. 4.4; see also Ps. 119.6, 13, 128, 151, 160, 172); **1**) to proclaim “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20.27); **2**) to teach believers in all nations “*to observe all things whatsoever that [Christ has commanded]*” (Mt. 28.19-20; 2 Tim. 3.16.); and **3**) to “*rightly divide the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2.15).

Finally, the written Word in Scripture is a sign and witness of the living Word of God and leads us to the living Word (Jn. 1.1-3, 14). Thus, Jesus said, “*My doctrine is not mine but His that sent Me*” (Jn 7.16). It is the living Word of God through the Holy Spirit that brings conviction, invokes godly sorry and repentance, produces saving faith, and transforms sinners into saints (Jn. 16.7-15; Rom. 10.17; 2 Cor. 7.8-11; 1 Pet. 1.22-23).

“This Book contains the mind of God; the state of man; the way of salvation; the doom of sinners; and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy; its precepts are binding; its stories are true, and its decision are immutable. Read it to be wise; believe it to be safe; and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you; food to support you; and comfort to cheer you. It’s the traveller’s map, the pilgrim’s staff; the pilot’s compass; the soldier’s sword; and the Christian’s charter. Here is paradise restored; heaven opened; and the gates of hell disclosed. CHRIST is its grand object; our good its design; and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the laborer, and condemn all who trifle with its contents!”  
[Anonymous]

Where observed with sobriety, sincerity, and gravity the Reading of Scripture can produce revival, restoration, and reconciliation (Ex. 24.7-8; Josh. 8.34-35; 2 Kg. 23.1-20; Neh. 8.1-8, 14-18; 2 Cor. 5.18-20). As such, the reading and on occasion responsive readings of the Sacred Scriptures bear all the marks of an ordinance, and thus should be observed as a divine order of worship, ministry, and theocratic administration.

**Public Reading of the Word of God** is pure proclamation, allowing the Word to speak for itself (Ex. 24.7; Deut. 17.18-20; 31.10-13; Josh. 8.34-35; Jer. 23.29; Jn. 6.63; 7.16-17; Lu. 11.28; Acts 7.38; 1 Tim. 3.13; 2 Tim. 3.15-16; Heb. 4.12; 5.12; 1 Pet. 1.22-23; 4.11; Rev. 1.3). When asked about defending the truth

and reliability of the Bible, Charles Spurgeon once answered, [“The Bible is like a lion, it doesn’t need defending; just let him out of his cage and he will defend himself”].

The Reading of Holy Scriptures is commanded and encouraged in both Old and New Testaments, and otherwise taught by precept and example by Christ and the apostles and prophets (Deut. 31.10-13; Josh. 8.34-35; 2 Kg. 22.8, 10-13; 23.1-3; Neh. 8.1-8, 14-18; 9.3-6; Ps. 119.11; Is. 34.16; Jer. 36.6-8; Lu. 4.16-22; Acts 13.13-15; 17.2-4; Tim. 4.11-13; 2 Tim. 3.14-16; Rev. 1.3); and it was practiced in the New Testament churches (Acts 15.13-17, 21; Rom. 15.4; Col. 4.16; Rev. 1.3; 22.10, 18-19).

The significance and result of the act of Public Reading: **1) revelation** (Neh. 8.8; Ps. 119.27, 105, 130; Acts 15.6-8, 13-17, 21); **2) cleansing** [personal and corporate] (Ps. 119.1-2, 9; Jn. 17.17; Jn. 15.3; 17.19; Eph. 5.26-27); **3) consecration** (2 Kg. 23.1-3; Ps. 1.2; 119.11, 80, 88, 117, 156); **4) healing** (Ps. 107.20; 119.159; Lu. 4.16-22; 5.17); **5) edification** (2 Tim. 3.16; 2 Pet. 1.16-21; 3.1-2; Jude 17, 20); **6) comfort** (Josh. 8.32-35; 2 Chron. 34.30-33; Rom. 15.4; Eph. 3.3-10; Col. 4.15-18); and **7) corporate union** (Ex. 24.3-4, 7-8; Josh. 8.34-35; 2 Kg. 23.1-3; Acts 15.15-28; Eph. 4.4-6, 11-16; Col. 4.15-16).

The practice of public Bible reading and---as occasion may warrant---congregational responses is at the very heart of the Gospel of Christ; and therefore should be considered a sacred discipline of the church. It demonstrates a sober reverence for the Bible, the written Word of God, the latter being *“the record [documented witness/testimony] that God gave of His Son”* (Jn. 1.32, 34; 19.35-36; Jn. 20.31; 1 Jn. 5.9-13; Rev. 1.1-3).

In an age in which the great majority of professing Christians are biblically illiterate and falling away from confidence in the Bible as God’s infallible Word written in Scripture, and consequently from serious Bible reading and study, God’s church stands out like a *“city set on a hill”* holding forth the light of His Word! Like the noble Bereans over against the less noble Thessalonians, the ministers and members in Zion Assembly **1) “read”** the Word (Deut. 32.10-13; Is. 34.16; 1 Tim. 4.13; Rev. 1.3), **2) “hear”** the Word (Mt. 7.24; 13.16-20, 23; Lu. 11.28; Rom. 10.17; 1 Tim. 4.13; Rev. 1.3); **3) “believe”** and **“receive”** the Word (Jn. 5.24; 8.46-47; Acts 17.11; Heb. 4.2) **4) “search”** the Word (Jn. 5.39; Acts 17.11; Is. 8.20; 34.16), **5) “study”** the Word (Ps. 1.2; 119.11, 97; 2 Tim. 2.15; 2 Pet. 1.16-21); **6) “love”** the Word (Ps. 119.97, 113, 140, 159, 167); **7) “obey”** the Word (Deut. 11.27-28; Ps. 119.59-60; Lu. 6.46-49; Jas. 1.22-25).

## **Observing the Ordinances with Spiritual Peace and Joy**

It is expected that a sense of solemnity and gravity will attend the observance of the ordinances; yet since the ordinances are observed by members of the church and born-again believers who testify of being transformed by the grace and power of the Gospel, then it seems only fitting that they be celebrated

also with a sense of justified peace and sanctified joy. It should not be odd to witness the recipients rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and manifesting the very graces and spiritual gifts that the ordinances *signify*, *symbolize* and *memorialize*. Moreover, since the ordinances are *channels* through which the members are called to self-examination, consecration, and obedience (1 Cor. 11.27-33), which on occasion may involve repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing, we would expect to see a renewed spiritual awe for the Lord and the government and discipline of the church, with reverence, diligence, “vehement desire”, zeal and vindication! (2 Cor. 7.5-11). We may assume then that Jesus’ words spoken in the context of footwashing are applicable to all the ordinances: *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them”* (Jn. 13.17).

Finally, brethren, it seems certain that the significance and benefits of peering deeper into the subject of the sacred ordinances of the church and making any adjustments to our present system of government, worship, practice, and discipline will serve us to great advantage. For when it is realized that in observing these ordinances we are proclaiming [reenacting/ “showing forth”] in a unique way the Gospel of Christ, our ministers and churches will surely desire to commit themselves afresh to the Lord and the government and ministry of His church.

### **Section III**

#### **Future Ministers and Leaders**

Zion Assembly is blessed with enthusiastic and vibrant children and youth ministries. We can be thankful for every hour spent working with our young people and for every dollar invested in the education and training of the next generation. It is impossible to quantify the impact that these outreaches will have on the future of Zion Assembly.

*“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2.1-2).

We need a long-term plan of training and education to develop in our young people the fundamentals of our faith and especially an ecclesiological [“church”] consciousness: for many of the future ministers of Zion Assembly are currently in our youth and children’s ministries. The Sunday School students of today will be our Sunday School teachers in the next 5-10 years. The young people testifying in services today will be pastoring churches in the next 10 years.

I recall a commercial on television that ran for several months about sixty years ago. It was promoting the superiority of *Zenith* television sets. That one-minute commercial burned its way into my mind and has stayed with me through all these years. In the concluding few seconds of the commercial a powerful bolt of lightning shot in a flash and entered the television, branding the name “Zenith” onto the face of the frame as it entered. In the same instant a strong and majestic

voice declared, “The quality goes in before the name goes on!”

The quality of the church in the next generation depends almost entirely on the quality of the young men and women we are training today for future leadership in the church. A.J. Tomlinson wrote in his 1912 annual address:

“[The ministry] is the most important part of [our work] and should be guarded the most carefully. In the ministry is vested the very life of the church---a straight ministry, a straight church; a crooked ministry, a crooked church; an unwise ministry, an unwise church. Like priest, like people. A stream can never flow higher than its source. A church can never advance higher than its ministry.”

Since the enemy has not been able to weaken the resolve of us older ones here today who have taken a stand for the truth and refuse to compromise or give any ground to the adversary, he is turning his attention to the youth of this generation in an evil attempt to sidetrack the future course of the church.

***“There arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel”*** (Judg. 2.10).

We must commit ourselves therefore to thoroughly acquaint and instill in this generation of young people sound biblical doctrine and a genuine, transforming experience in the Holy Spirit. We need to breathe into our young people the spirit of courage and a resolute determination to continue to build the house of God according to the “blueprint” of our glorious Architect! (Heb. 8.5; 1 Cor. 3.10-15; Eph. 2.20). For God desires true worshippers, who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. The devil thinks we will fail to train and inspire the next generation. He thinks he can wait out the old guard and lay claim to our children and grandchildren. But he is self-deceived. For we are bound and determined to train up our children in the way that they should go; for we have been promised that when they are old, they will not depart from the basic teaching and training they have received (Prov. 22.6).

We are confident that our sons and daughters in this last days’ Zion will arise and prophesy (Joel 2.28-29; Acts 2.17-18). They will continue the restoration vision that we restored in 2004, that our fathers and mothers had dug-out and established in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, the foundation of which Jesus and the Apostles had laid in the New Testament (Acts 2.42; Eph. 2.20). They may well fulfill the great commission and be living witnesses of the Rapture “caught up” together with the “dead in Christ” to meet the Lord in the air---***“a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish!”***

## Section IV

### Finishing what we have Started

***“So Solomon built the house [temple], and finished it.”***

We rejoiced in announcing in the July edition of the *Voice of Zion* that the new addition to the International Ministries Complex was finally underway, after many years of dreaming, planning, and preparing. The construction crews had begun to move dirt and lay-out the foundation of the building on June 19th. This was the fulfillment of a vision that had been first cast in 2009 and more precisely planned out and perfected in the following years.

The building of God’s house in Solomon’s day was first cast in the mind and spirit of King David and was finally constructed under the oversight of Solomon. David had spent many years dreaming and planning the glorious venture, including collecting and preparing the building materials and raising funds for the massive project (1 Chron. 28.11-21; 29.1-9). We have done no less in principle than David and Solomon and in some sense our project is more grandiose and significant than the building of the Old Testament temple: for the church under the New Covenant is the true temple of the Lord---the very dwelling place of God (Jer. 31.31-34; 32.40; 33.14-16; 2 Cor. 3.2-3, 6-9; Eph. 2.19-22; Heb. 8.6-13; 9.1-15, 23-28). Still we have followed a similar pattern as the Old Covenant church in the sense of casting a vision, collecting materials, and raising funds and making financial arrangements for our noble project in this last days’ Zion. In fact, in the truest sense of meaning, we are involved in something much more glorious and significant than the building of the Old Temple: for we are building God’s house on the foundation of Christ and the apostles and the terms of a “*better covenant*” and a “*better sacrifice*” with “*better promises*” (Eph. 2.20; Heb. 7.22; 8.6; 9.23-26). Remember Jesus’ words to His disciples regarding the “buildings of the temple”: “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mt. 24.1-2).

On the other hand, this last days’ Zion shall be under the terms of the New Covenant gloriously “caught up” to meet Jesus in the air and dwell eternally with Him in the New Jerusalem. The glorious vision-casting that we will be doing in the facilities of our International Ministries Complex and the doctrine that we will be teaching will give life and spiritual power first to thousands around the world and then to millions and then to tens-of-millions. We will be teaching in the apostle words,

***“ . . . the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles [nations]; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”*** (Col. 1.26-28).

Solomon had been called and consecrated for the special task of building God's house and began the work 480 years after the children of Israel had come out of Egypt (1 Kg. 6.1; 1 Chron. 28.9-10, 20; 29.10-19). The house of God was seven years in construction. It's intriguing to note how many times the phrase, "*So Solomon built the house, and finished it*" is repeated (1 Kg. 6.9, 14, 22, 38). The significance seems to be that Solomon and the children of Israel were diligent to finish what they had started, and what God had inspired and commissioned them to do. Recall Jesus' admonition and warning in Lu. 14.28-30 in which He counsels us to [*"sit down first, and count the cost, to make sure we have sufficient to finish what we have started*"]. A careful study of the Lord's words here, however, shows that He has reference more to a heartfelt and willful commitment to the work of the Lord than to financial costs: the main point being that we must be fully committed to make the prophetic vision of the church become a reality: "*for where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.*" If your treasure is truly centered on fulfilling the church's God-ordained mission in this world, then there will be your heart also---and your money!

It was this glorious vision of the church---inspired and articulated by King David---that created the positive and cheerful attitude in the people of God to make the vision become a reality. He first passed on the vision and zeal for the house of God to his son, Solomon, and then to the people. He admonished Solomon, saying,

***"And thou, Solomon my son, [know God and serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all imaginations of the thoughts . . . Take heed now; for the Lord has chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it. Then David gave to Solomon . . . the pattern of the house . . . of God"*** (1 Chron. 28.9-12).

And he encouraged him again,

***"Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the [Jehovah] God, even my God, will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD"*** (v. 20).

It should not be overlooked that David had "set [his] affection" [his delight/pleasure] for the house of God so much so that he gave of his "*own proper good*", that is, his "*own special treasure of gold and silver*" (1 Chron. 29.3) which he had accumulated during his 40-year reign as king. It was an enormous fortune---a 100 tons of gold and 250 tons of silver! equivalent to about *10 billion dollars* in today's currency. His offering thus equated with his devotion to God; a sincere and heartfelt expression of his love and adoration for the Lord and His house.

And the leaders and people of God followed his example. Everyone gave liberally in proportion to how God had blessed them. David had admonished and encouraged the people, saying, *“the work is great, [and I have done all in my power to prepare for the building of God’s house] . . . who then is willing to consecrate [himself and his service] this day to the LORD?”* (vv. 1, 5). Then [the overseers and leaders of the people] *“offered [themselves] willingly [and gave of their talents and material wealth---gold, silver, jewels and precious stones into the treasury of the house of God”* [vv. 6-8].

Now notice carefully v. 9. This was the key to the success of building God’s house under the Old Covenant and it is the key today under the New Covenant.

*“Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.”*

King David’s exaltation of the LORD and prayer of thanksgiving in vv. 10-19 is amazingly insightful and worth quoting here in full: for it reveals more plainly the key that opened the door to God’s favor and blessings on that building program. And since we are assured that these things were written and recorded for our learning and example (Rom. 15.4; 1 Cor. 10.6; Heb. 8.5) we may be assured that the same Jehovah God who was with the people of God in the glory days of David and Solomon will enable us to build His house in these last days and reach the whole world [every nation] with the glorious Gospel of Christ. We just need a joyful attitude and a perfect and willing heart to serve Him and build His house. May the LORD grant it to be so!

*“Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, O LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee a house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O*

***LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their hearts unto thee: And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace [temple], for the which I have made provision”*** (vv. 10-19).

This whole prayer is an acknowledgement that all that we have materially as well as spiritually comes from the Lord and belongs to the Lord; and that He has given it all to us in expectation that a liberal portion of it be given back to Him---“*for all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee.*” In other words, we have nothing to boast of in our liberal giving, for all that we have has been given to us graciously by the LORD, that is, it all really belongs to the LORD. It is only fitting therefore that we give back unto the LORD cheerfully out of the abundance that He has given to us. Or to put in the words of David, to “*offer willingly*” with [*a perfect and affectionate heart and mind*] and to “*rejoice with great joy*” for the privilege of giving of our means to build God’s house (vv. 5-18).



# International Appointments

## 2019-2020

International Executive Council.....Wade H. Phillips, Scott E. Neill, L.W. Carter, Bruce Sullivan, Anton Burnette, Joseph A. Steele, Rick Ferrell [Council members were nominated by the Presiding Bishop and unanimously approved by the General Assembly].

World Mission Director.....Wade H. Phillips  
Assistant World Mission Director.....Daron Miller  
General Treasurer.....Pamela Jones  
Field Secretary.....Ricky Graves  
Department of Education/Media Ministries.....Anton Burnette  
Assistant Publisher.....Scott Neill  
Shepherding Ministries Director.....Wilma Carter  
School of Ministry Institute Director.....Bruce Sullivan  
Ladies Ministries Director.....Pamela Jones  
Sunday School Director.....Mandy Thompson  
Sunday School Literature Editor.....Bruce Sullivan  
Senior Ambassador's Director.....Ruth Tingler  
Youth Ministries Director.....Allen Thompson  
Children's Ministries Director.....Kayla Graves  
Camping Cordinator/Advisor.....Kim Erwin  
*Voice of Zion*/SYNC Booster.....L.W. Carter  
Tract Ministries Director.....Glenda Major  
Executive Secretary/Receptionist.....Wanda Busbee

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*Chairman:* Zachary Snyder  
Ricky Graves, J.J. Davis, Tod Deakle,  
Kevin Clary, Jim Orange, Byron Harris

## **Doctrine Committee**

*Chairman:* Bruce Sullivan  
Wade H. Phillips, Trevor Graves, Joseph Steele,  
Tom Brown, Jerry Reel, Yomi Adekunle,

## **Construction Committee**

*Chairman:* Wade H. Phillips  
L.W. Carter, Anton Burnette, Daron Miller  
Jim Orange, Dale Phillips, Alice Jones, Pamela Jones

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# National Overseers

<b>Africa (Central) Mission Rep.</b> .....	David Gomba
<b>Africa (Western) Mission Rep.</b> .....	Yomi Adekunle
<b>Argentina</b> .....	Jorge Estroz
<b>Bangladesh</b> .....	Suku Ranjon Sidker
<b>Benin</b> .....	Mark Agbonifo
<b>Bolivia</b> .....	Yum V. Munoz Quispe
<b>Burundi</b> .....	David Gomba
<b>Cambodia</b> .....	Sam Bureenok
<b>Cameroon</b> .....	Eyong Eric Eyong
<b>Canada</b> .....	Wade H. Phillips
<b>Chile</b> .....	Javier Diaz
<b>Costa Rica</b> .....	Eugenio Cespedes
<b>Democratic Republic of Congo</b> .....	Daron Miller
<b>Dominican Republic</b> .....	Saintaniel Hostelus
<b>England Mission Rep.</b> .....	Yomi Adekunle
<b>Ghana</b> .....	David Dordah
<b>Guatemala</b> .....	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
<b>Guinea</b> .....	Philippe Seraphin Gomez
<b>Haiti</b> .....	Saintaniel Hostelus
<b>Honduras</b> .....	Nolvin Hernandez
<b>India (South)</b> .....	V. Binoy Joseph
<b>India (Mid-East)</b> .....	Talari Padma Rao
<b>Ivory Coast</b> .....	Mark Agbonifo
<b>Kenya (North)</b> .....	Elijah Wafula
<b>Kenya (South)</b> .....	Joanes Oboo
<b>Liberia</b> .....	Mark Agbonifo
<b>Malawi</b> .....	Maliele Dzuwa
<b>Mexico (North)</b> .....	Danny Ramirez
<b>Mexico (South)</b> .....	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
<b>Mozambique</b> .....	Agostino Nkhwangwa
<b>Myanmar (Burma)</b> .....	Sam Bureenok
<b>Nepal</b> .....	Raju Pariyar
<b>Nicaragua</b> .....	Freddy Garcia

<b>Nigeria</b> .....	Yomi Adekunle
<b>Pakistan</b> .....	Daron Miller
<b>Paraguay</b> .....	Jorge Estroz
<b>Peru</b> .....	Yum V Munoz Quispe
<b>Philippines</b> .....	Domingo Resurreccion
<b>Rwanda (representative)</b> .....	David Gomba
<b>Sierra Leone</b> .....	Joseph Alabi
<b>South Sudan</b> .....	Elijah Wafula
<b>Tanzania</b> .....	David Gomba
<b>Thailand</b> .....	Sam Bureenok
<b>Togo</b> .....	Mark Agbonifo
<b>Uganda</b> .....	Maurice Ogada Odede
<b>United States</b> .....	Wade H. Phillips
<b>Uruguay</b> .....	Jorge Barrios
<b>Venezuela</b> .....	Bani Rangel Jimenez
<b>Zambia (Miss. Rep)</b> .....	David Gomba
<b>Zimbabwe (Miss. Rep)</b> .....	David Gomba

## National Overseers

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## International Churches/Missions

Nation/Provinces	Churches	Missions
Argentina	7	2
Bangladesh	5	5
Benin	10	1
Bolivia	1	0
Burundi	2	1
Cambodia	1	0
Cameroon	3	1
Canada	2	0
Chile	12	1
Costa Rica	7	1
Dominican Republic	21	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	31	6
England	1	1
Ghana	1	0
Guatemala	18	8
Guinea	2	1
Haiti	226	0
Honduras	7	10
India Mid-East	17	17
India South	29	1
India Central	(contacts)	
Ivory Coast	1	1
Kenya (North)	42	6
Kenya (South)	9	4
Liberia	1	1
Malawi	82	1
Mexico (North)	2	3
Mexico (South)	4	1
Mozambique	38	1
Myanmar	(contacts)	

Nepal	25	0
Nicaragua	8	2
Nigeria	52	2
Pakistan	(contacts)	
Paraguay	1	0
Peru	5	3
Philippines	11	10
Rwanda	0	1
Sierre Leone	1	0
South Africa	(contacts)	
South Kenya	10	4
South Sudan	3	1
Tanzania	44	5
Thailand	3	2
Togo	5	10
Uganda	2	2
United States	39	9
Uruguay	1	1
Venezuela	5	9
Zimbabwe	3	1
Zambia	(contacts)	
	802	134

**In addition to the above statistics, the church has 1051 ministers and 76,316 members in 48 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  
Dzuwa, Maliele Benesi  
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  
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  
Esse, Chritop  
Estacio, Mario  
Etta, Silas  
Everett, Patrick Meredith  
Eyong, Eric Eyong  
Felix, Kentangie John  
Fermin, Fernando  
Fikiri, Daniel

Fisayo, Nathaniel  
Floyd, Allen Wayne  
Fredic, Duniani Asukulu  
Gaba, Elias  
Galvan, Nestor  
Garcia, Alejandro  
Garcia, Ivan Freddy  
Garcia, Vincente  
Garcia, Vitalino Martinez  
Geda, Janes A.  
Gomez, Luis Orlando  
Gomez, Philippe Seraphin  
Gonzales, Arthur  
Gonzalez, Ruben Dario Fleitas  
Graves, Trevor  
Graves, Travis  
Gregory, Daniel  
Gregory, Jonathan  
Gwara, Tom  
Haleluya, Martin  
Hall, Jonathan "Corey"  
Harvey, Tommy John Jr.  
Hernandez, Leyre Josue  
Hernandez, Nolvin  
Herndanez, 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  
Mansilla, Leonardo Simon  
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Masese, Antonius Minira  
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Mathayo, Allex  
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Mellado, Luis Alberto Martinez  
Mendes, Feri Joel Martin  
Miduda, Vitalis  
Miller, Daron  
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Montecinos, Carlos Amador  
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Morinigo, Maria Sirila Acosta de

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Ndosh, Daudi  
Nkhwangwa, Agnostino Andre  
Nyanjerechi, Jeremia  
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Ochola, Simon  
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Oguntore, Samuel Bamikohh  
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Okong's Silas  
Okoth, Simon  
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Oldyede, Aderibgbe Babatumde  
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Olal, Michae Ngome  
Olawuyi, Adekunle  
Oloo, Almas Olouoch

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Oludare, Ayeni Moses  
Olufemi, Olagunju Issac  
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Ombalo, Michael  
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Onyango, Philip Tel  
Ooko, Agnes  
Opiyo, Lukas  
Orange, James  
Ornelas, Jr, Nazario  
Origi, John  
Orwa, George Ohola  
Osewe, Bernard  
Osobu, Dotun  
Otieno, Boaz  
Otieno, Francis  
Otieno, Okello  
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Ouyo, Julias Myrerere  
Oweri, Julias  
Owiti, Syprose  
Oyando, Eucabet  
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Tolentino, Jr, Fererico D.

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Valdez, Wilber Santos  
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Wagner, Ricardo Astorga  
Wale, Adeyemo Femi  
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Wasse, Teketel Zewde  
Wesley, Janga John  
Wilcox, Bruce  
Zuilenam, Quillermo Lionlaf

## **Female Evangelists**

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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  
Elizabeth, Alabi Opeyemi  
Erasto, Rose, Atieno  
Esther, Omotomilola Temitope  
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Fayokeye, Asummo Omotola  
Flores, Claudia Irene  
Folasade, Ajayi Cecilia  
Folasade, Osobu Paulina  
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Gonzales, Griselda Santiago  
Grace, Sanni Iyabo  
Gifford, Majorie  
Ilesanmi, Mercy Olawunmi  
Jandura, Memory D.  
Jones, Pamela Lynn  
Joseph, Dorkas  
Joselyn, Treva  
Kelton, Renetta Venise  
Kimble, Shirley  
Lwanba, Mwajuma  
Maciel, Olga Beatrice  
Michael, Issac

McKee, Ofelia  
Morgan, Susan  
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Olutunde, Adeyemi Joseph  
Oluwa, Adebowale Janet  
Omotunde, Durodola Adepeju  
Ortiz, Celia Waldina Hernandez  
Opakunle, Florence Tomi  
Owira, Grace Auma  
Periera, Rebecca  
Pinela, Margarita del Saez  
Quillen, Jeannie  
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  
Wilson, Nancy  
Woldemichael, Eyerusalem W.

## **Deacons**

Akara, Vincent O.  
Ashley, Dave  
Carasco, Sam  
Clary, Kevin  
Creary, Nevil Sena  
Davis, Clyde (Eddie)  
Davis, Jimmy  
Dickson, Ray  
Erwin, Todd  
Everett, Patrick Meredith  
Ezakiel, Paulo  
Gibson, Dewey Allen  
Green, Daniel  
Green, J.L.  
Jaramillo, Robert  
Llaneza, Robert  
Martinez, Luis Acberto  
Marwa, James  
Mapambano, Stivin  
Mlengera, Meshak  
Monday, Sam  
Moore, Larry Wayne  
Nyambaso, Kisyeri  
Odoyo, Alfanyo  
Okoth, Elisha  
Okomgo, Elphace  
Oombo, James Opany  
Omity, Makori  
Omwando, Peterson O.  
Onwaga, Joash Odongo  
Reid, William  
Spicer, Chad

## **Exhorters**

Powell II, Ryan Keith

# 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 article on *Man, Sin, Works of the flesh, Christian Perfection, Perseverance, and Antichrist* were added to the *Abstract of Faith* in 2011. The article on *Angels* was accepted by the 11th Annual General Assembly in proper order in 2014.

## 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).

**Angels**—The word angel means “messenger.” Scripture teaches that angels are heavenly or supernatural beings, but also creatures (Colossians 1:16; 1 Peter 3:32). As such, they were created to worship God and do His bidding (Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 26:53; Hebrews 1:6, 7, 14; Revelation 4:8). Their nature is incorporeal, and thus they are spoken of as “spirits” (Hebrews 1:14). They were created holy and with free will, and therefore some fell from their “first estate” (Jude 6). In regard to the time of their creation, we are not informed explicitly in Scripture, but a few passages indicate that they were created before man and were present at the creation of man (cf. Genesis 3:1; Job 38:7). In their role as messengers, they have been commissioned by God to minister in the affairs of man (Hebrews 1:13-14; Psalm 34:7). They exist in ordered ranks---“principalities,” “powers,” “thrones,” “dominions” (Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15), and also as “seraphim” and “cherubim.” The distinctions between seraphim and cherubim, however, are not made clear in Scripture (Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 10:1-3, 7-14; Isaiah 6:2, 6).

The “messenger ministry” of the angels can be seen both in the Old and New Testaments (Judges 6:11; 13:3; 1 Kings 19:5; Psalm 91:11; Luke 1:11; Matthew 1:20; 4:11; 28:5). The Bible reveals that angels are great in number (Deuteronomy 33:2; Daniel 7:10; Matthew 26:53; Luke 2:13; Revelation 5:11) and have great power and intelligence. Because of their great power, intelligence, and supernatural ability to move with great speed, man is said to have been “made a little lower than the angels” (Psalm 8:5). Notwithstanding, though angels are powerful, highly intelligent, and have great mobility, they are not all-powerful, all-knowing, nor omnipresent. (Angels, for example, do not know when the Rapture will take place (Matthew 24:36).

As created beings, angels have a beginning, but they never die nor cease to exist (Luke 20:36). Angels are not God or gods and, as such, man is forbidden to worship them (Colossians 2:18). In fact, the holy angels themselves [those who did not join in Satan's fall and rebellion] reject any attempt by man to worship them (Revelation 19:10; 22:8).

Angels cannot repent nor be redeemed from sin, and thus the fallen angels are doomed forever to damnation. Nor do angels act as Gospel evangelists in the work of Salvation, this ministry being assigned to born-again believers and more especially to the church (Acts 10:3-6). Yet angels assist the church in its mission (Acts 10:3-7; 11:13-14; 8:26; 5:19-20; Hebrews 1:14). Jesus informs us also that the holy angels rejoice at the redemption of sinners (Luke 15:10).

Scripture teaches that one-third of the angels followed Satan in a great rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:4, 7-9), and that they labor in this present age under Satan's rule to "steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10; Ephesians 6:10-12). These fallen angels are referred to as "evil spirits," "unclean spirits," and "demons," and thus Jesus spoke of "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41; see also Revelation 12:7). They have been sentenced to a realm of darkness, and they live with the dread of their final judgment in the Lake of Fire (Jude 6; Matthew 25:41; 8:29).

Unlike Adam and the human race, angels were not created as a race, and therefore when one-third of the angels fell under Satan's deception, all the angels did not fall with them. Each was created separately and fell by free choice independently. Nor did Satan transmit his sin to the other angels; but rather deceived one-third of the angels into a rebellion against God; thus each angel sinned of his own volition. Further, unlike the human race, angels do not have sexual desires and do not procreate or reproduce (Matthew 22:30); neither were angels created, male and female; and thus no angel in Holy Scripture is referred to as being female. It is important to understand also that Satan is not the God-ordained head of angels, but rather he assumed his position by deception and in rebellion against the will of God.

Finally, though men are clothed with heavenly bodies in glorification (1 Corinthians 15:48-53) and in that glorious state share some angelic characteristics (Luke 24:34-36), yet they do not become angels. The distinctions between men and angels will remain throughout eternity (Revelation 5:9-13).

**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; 1 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** 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

*Note: Four additional ordinances were adopted by the church in this Assembly; namely, Marriage, The Church, Ministry/Ordination, Proclamation and Public Reading of the Word of God. A brief description of these will be added to the Abstract of Faith in the 2020 Assembly Minutes.*

**Water Baptism** is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the Gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection, which are experienced in the life of the believer (Romans 6:3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate is actually born again (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8-10; 16:15, 16; John 3:22, 23; Acts 10:47, 48; 16:33). Water baptism is identified with spiritual regeneration; it is not the door into the church.

**Lord’s Supper** is a memorial meal, which calls to remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Jesus commanded

that this sacred meal be observed “in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. This sacred ordinance should be observed with holy reverence, only after careful self-examination (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17; 11:23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ’s covenant with the church (Luke 22:20).

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

## Divine Sanctities

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

**Sanctity of Marriage**—Jesus said, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13:4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for “whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church

(see Exodus 20:14, 17; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:15-20; 7:2, 3).

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

## Eschatology

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

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

**Eternal Life for the Righteous**—The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. “And these shall go away into

everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11-13).

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

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

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

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

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

church will restrain and prevent his rise to power and his full revelation.

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

## **Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline**

The following guidelines are explicitly revealed in the Scriptures or else shown to be consistent with biblical teachings. They are brought to our attention to enhance our relationship with Christ and one another, and to encourage us to live in a way that will bring glory and honor to the name of Christ and to support the witness of the church. We are admonished in the Scriptures: "...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12b). Jesus instructs us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

**Prayer**—Jesus' admonition to "watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41a) has never been more urgent than today. We live in "perilous times," and Christ and the apostles warned that the times will only worsen as we approach our Lord's return. Therefore, daily prayers and family devotions should be a priority in every church home. Maintaining a prayerful attitude is a key

to spirituality for every individual and local congregation. Again Jesus said, "...men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1a), and the apostle encouraged believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are also enjoined to "...pray one for another..." James 5:16a). Special prayers should be made for those in authority and for those who have given themselves in service to God and to the ministry of the Word (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called "the house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

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

**Church Attendance and Worship**—Worship and fellowship with believers of "like precious faith" is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4:23b; Ephesians 5:19). Each member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and thus the body will be hindered to the degree that one member fails to actively participate in its life and mission. Accordingly, members should actively support every function of the church, and participate as much as possible. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer is worthy of our careful attention: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much more as we see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyles and conversations. "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane" (Ezekiel 44:23a). A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry of God's Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the minister delivers the message, lest Satan come and steal the Word of God from their hearts (Mark 4:4, 15). God's love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should

govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

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

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

**Illicit Relationships**—Paul admonishes us to “give no place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). Forming too close an intimacy with the opposite sex, even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, creates an environment for temptation and gives opportunity for the “wiles of the devil.” Samson is a classic case of this unwise behavior, which led to his fall from grace (Judges 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation (Genesis 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, “Flee fornication” (1Corinthians 6:18). The words of James, the Lord’s brother, also come to mind: “Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death” (James 1:13-15). In view of these solemn admonitions, great care should be taken to avoid associations and situations, which could reflect upon one’s character and bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

**Outward Adornment**—Christians are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ in this present world (2 Corinthians 5:20). As such they should be careful to adorn themselves as befitting their Lord’s plainness and purity. Adorning oneself after a worldly fashion with facial paint, gold,

pearls, costly apparel, etc. is inconsistent with the testimony of one professing a life separated unto God. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel...But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:1-6; see also 1 Timothy 2:8-10; Isaiah 3:16-24; 61:10).

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

# Notes

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