

Zion Assembly Church of God -
Minutes of the 20th Annual General Assembly
August 29-September 3, 2023
International Ministries Complex, 5512 Waterlevel Hwy
Cleveland, Tennessee 37323

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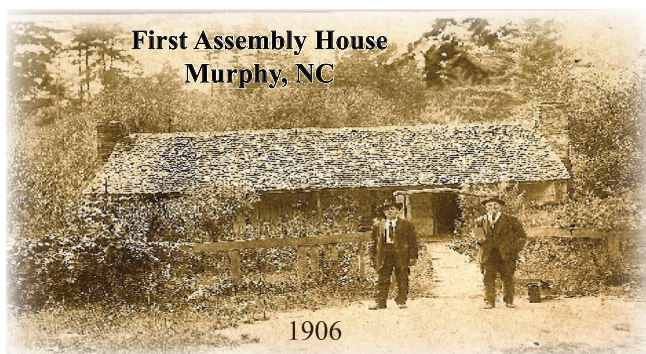
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Zion Assembly Church of God

International Ministries Complex



Historical Assembly Sites



1907



1908-1915



1919-1922



1919-1922



1923-1970



1972-1993

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



20th Annual General Assembly



Zion Assembly Church of God
August 29–September 3, 2023

THEME

**Proclaiming the Mysteries
of the Gospel**

International Ministries Complex

5512 Waterlevel Hwy

Cleveland, Tennessee 37323

Administration

Presiding Bishop.....Wade H. Phillips

Superintendent of Operations.....Scott Neill

Chief Clerk.....Wanda Busbee

Rose Snyder, Pam Jones, Mindy Newberry, Donna Pounders, Marie Llanaez, Brenda Reitler, Chrystal Martinez, Babs Sullivan, Judy Floyd, Kim Merrill, Billie Smith, Marie Llanaez, Rosa Nicholson, Stephanie Ferrell.

Chief Usher.....Tod Deakle

Chad Spicer, Vernon Johnson, J. L. Green, Joey Steele, Daren Childers, Henry Rodriguez, Jerry Nichols, John Bolin.

Chief Registrar.....Mandy Thompson

Shelby Ewin Gross, Holly Drake, Thea Ellison, Emma Erwin, Ally Thompson, Rachel McDonald, McKenzie Thompson, Avery Pounders.

Assembly Business Committee

Chairman.....Zachary Snyder

J.J. Davis

Joanes Oboo

Byron Harris

Tod Deakle

David Gomba

Video and Internet Streaming.....Julie Steele

Nathan Bonilla

Sound Equipment..... Alex Drake

Trevor Graves

Allen Thompson

Photography.....Julie Steele

Projection Director.....Isabella Nichols

Stage Manager..... Joseph A. Steele

Music.....Zachary Snyder / Kim Erwin

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

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



Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome Delegates

It is a delight to welcome every minister, member, visitor, and friend to this 20th Annual Assembly. We trust that you will be blessed and edified during this mighty gathering of the saints from around the world. May this week be a spiritual banquet of heartfelt praise and worship, Spirit-filled fellowship, and anointed preaching of the Gospel.

The General Assembly provides a forum for us to hear from God and proclaim His prophetic Word; to rekindle the fires of holiness and Pentecostal power; to fan the flames of evangelism; to stir our affections for fellowship with God and one another; to deepen our consecration; and to lay out a plan for the church as we go forward to fulfill our God-ordained mission in the world.

About the Theme . . .

“Proclaiming the Mysteries of the Gospel”

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” (1 Cor. 15.1-8, NKJV)



Scott Neill
*Superintendent
of Operations*

Greetings!

The General Assembly is a holy convocation before the Lord. Once a year our various fields of labor come together as one congregation to worship the Lord and do His business. Let us then enter this meeting prayerfully and with great expectations.

We want to remind our people to take special care to preserve the beautiful facilities the Lord has provided for us. This is your International Ministries Complex. Your faithfulness in tithing and giving has made this possible. We trust therefore you will feel “at home” and be always courteous and respectful toward your brothers and sisters in the Lord. The following instructions are offered to help ensure 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 Joseph Steele.
- 5) If you need to put pictures, scriptures, etc., on the projection screens, see Isabella Kelton.
- 6) Give soundtracks and media devices to the Sound Engineer before the session.
- 7) Observe all parking signs in the church parking lot and throughout Cleveland.
- 8) Kidz’ Convention schedule is posted in the Assembly program.
- 9) Please refrain from drinking and chewing gum in the sanctuary.
- 10) Be sure to register!

We trust you will enjoy your time in Cleveland and be abundantly blessed in this great 20th Annual General Assembly.

The Renfroes
Special Guest Singers



Preconception and Artistic Rendering
of Assembly Tabernacle



We are on schedule, with the help of the Lord and commitment of our faithful people, to pay-off in four years or less the present indebtedness on the two-story Educational Wing of our International Ministries Complex [IMC]. When this is realized, we will rejoice and celebrate together the accomplishment of such a monumental task. But we will not “rest on our laurels!” Once this great accomplishment is concluded, we will press on immediately to fulfill the vision for our IMC. The final stage laid out in the 2014 Assembly includes the construction of an Assembly Tabernacle. We appreciate the boldness of the vision and the enthusiasm and commitment of our people to make this great vision become reality!

Pre-Assembly Programs

Ministers' Meeting Tuesday, August 29, 2023 10.00 a.m.

The Annual Ministers' Conference will convene at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary of the International Ministries Complex. The meeting is open to all. Ministers and leaders are especially encouraged to attend and participate. The purpose of the meeting is to promote unity and understanding through prayer and discussion. The preliminary reports of the ABC and DC will be read, and the floor will be opened to discuss any issues that might need clarification.

Ministers and Companions Luncheon (Immediately following the Ministers' Meeting) 12:15 p.m.

All ministers and their companions are honored guests at the Ministers' Luncheon. This is sponsored by the International Offices. The luncheon will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the International Ministries Complex. Special singing: Zach and Kari Snyder. Special guest speaker: Dr. William Lamb. His subject, "Donkey Works." Comments and special presentations by Dale L. Phillips. Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for this occasion.

Assembly Business Committee Meeting Wednesday Morning, August 30, 2023 9:00 a.m.

The Assembly Business Committee (ABC) will meet at International Ministries Complex beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday to finalize its report to present to the 20th Annual General Assembly. The Doctrine Committee (DC) will meet at the same time in a separate room to finalize its report. 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.

Dedication of Phillips Library & Archives Wednesday, August 30, 2023 11:00 a.m.

It was resolved in the last Assembly that the new library [on the second floor of the Education Wing] be dedicated in honor of Bishop and Mrs. Wade H. Phillips for their service to the Lord and the church. The dedication will be held Wednesday morning at 11.00 a.m. in the foyer of the Education Wing. The program will conclude with tours of the new library and archives.

Assembly Program

Tuesday Evening

6.30 p.m.

High expectations for a dynamic, uplifting, Spirit-filled time in the Lord!—Henry Rodriquez, CA; Sam Ferrell, TN
Freddy Garcia, Nicaragua
Joy-filled Praise!—California Praise Team

Opening of the 20th Annual General Assembly:
Comments and Official Declaration

Multi-lingual Concert of Prayer:

—national overseers

Ladies Ministries Report—Pam Jones, director
Media Ministries Outlook—Nathan Bonilla, director
Voice of Zion/SYNC boost—L.W. Carter, director



Praise Reports—Pete Sarry, CA;
Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria

Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs—Becky Land

Message—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel"

(Ps. 40.9-10; Mk. 8.38; Rom. 1.16)—Ricky Graves, KY



[Note: **Kidz' Konvention** schedule: Wednesday 6:30-8:00 p.m.;
Thursday 1:30-3:00, 6:30-7:30; Friday: 9:30-11.15 a.m.;
6:30-8:00 p.m. Saturday: 8:45-10:00 a.m. 2:30-4:00; 6:30-7:30 p.m.

A special Children's program is scheduled for Sunday morning,
in the Main Auditorium.

Wednesday Morning

11:00 a.m. Dedication of the Phillips Library & Archives

—Scott Neill, in charge



Wednesday Evening

Note: *Kidz' Convention* 6:30-8:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m.

Sanctified Praise!—Crossville church

International Leaders' Reports:

Presiding Bishop

General Executive Council

General Treasurer's Report

[Note: All overseers and international leaders,
turn in your written reports to the Assembly Clerk]

Special Song—Vernon Johnson, VA

Senior Ambassadors' Program

—Donna Pounders, director



Assembly Expense Offering

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address Section I

Special Singing—Victoria Green

Message—"Mystery of the Incarnation" (Is. 9.6-7;
Lk. 1.35; Jn. 1.14; 1 Tim. 3.16)—Todd McDonald, TN



Thursday Morning

Note: **Kidz' Convention** today 1:30-3:30, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

9:00 a.m. Camp Reports—Kim Erwin,
Coordinator



Special Songs—Trevor Graves, KY

Message—“Mysteries of the Kingdom”

(Mt. 13.3-52; Jn. 3.3-8; 2 Pet. 1.11)—Pam Jones. KY



Praise Reports: Joannes Oboo, overseer of Kenya;
Freddy Garcia, overseer of Nicaragua

Evangelism Program—Bruce Sullivan, director



—Lunch Break—

1:30 p.m. “O sing unto the Lord

—Renetta/Isabella Kelton

In Memory . . .

Members: Jonathan Burnette, Faye Davis, Virginia Wilson, Ezekial
[“Zeke”] Ramirez, Ernesto Ramirez.

Friends: Wilma Jo Hamby, Toy Autry Good, Angel Ramirez,
Joseph Garavito

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

Special Singing—Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria

Message—“The Role of Ordained Elders in the Government of the Church”

(Acts 15. 2,6; 16.4; Heb. 13.7,17)—Rick Ferrell, TN



ORDINATION SERVICE

—Supper Break—

Thursday Evening

6:30 p.m. “Make a Loud Noise unto the Lord . . .”
—West Mobile church

School of Ministry Program

—Wade H. Phillips, Superintendent

Awards and Testimonies

Message: “Ever Learning, Never Able . . .”

2 Tim. 3.7; 1 Cor. 1.18-31; 2.7; Eph. 1.17-23

—Kris Newberry, TN



In Concert—The Renfroes

Assembly Expense Offering

Testimonies of Healings—TBA

Message—“The Gospel of Healing” (Is. 61.1-3;
Lk. 4.18; Mt. 10.1-5; Mk. 16.15-18)—L. W. Carter, VA



Healing Line and Prayer

Friday Morning

Attention: The annual SYNC luncheon will be held at 12:00
in the Fellowship Hall. L.W. Carter in charge. All SYNC members
and invited guests are encouraged to attend.

9:30 a.m. Exalt His Name!
—Alex and Holly Drake, KY

Message—“Mystery of the Resurrection”
(1 Cor. 15.1-8, 12-19; 1 Tim. 3.16)—Harris Gregory, KY



Special Songs—Kim Erwin, KY

Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address Section II

—Afternoon Break—

Friday Evening

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

All youth [12-35] meet at 7:30 in the Corridor for Youth March]

6:30 p.m. “Make a Joyful Noise”—Scottsville church

Shepherding Ministries Program

—Wilma Carter, director



Message—“Mystery of the Gospel Church”

(Eph. 3.9-10; 5.23-32)—Zachary Snyder, AL



In Concert: The Renfroes

Youth Program

—Allen Thompson, director



[Attention: Youth Afterglow immediately following Youth Program in the Fellowship Hall.

Kidz Convention in the morning 8:45-10:00 a.m.,
Afternoon/Evening: 2:30-4:00. 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Saturday Morning

8:45 a.m. Morning Prayer Service—

Daniel Green, in charge

9.15 “Let Zion Rejoice!”—Trevor Graves, KY

Message—“Mystery of God’s Grace” (Rom. 16.25;

Eph. 1.4-10; 2.7-8; 6.14-20) —Tom Brown, WV

Recognition of Special Guests:

—Assembly Choir—



Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address Section III

—Lunch Break—

Saturday Afternoon

2:30 p.m. Praise Him!—Kari Snyder/Alicia Harris

Special Singing—Sharon White, VA

Assembly Business Committee Report Doctrine Committee Report

—Supper Break—

Saturday Evening

6:30 p.m. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord”

—West Mobile church

Message—“Mysteries of Godliness . . .”

(1 Tim. 2.2, 10; 3.16; 4.8; 2 Tim. 3.5)

—Alicia Harris, MS



Special Singing—Henry Rodriquez, CA

Assembly Expense Offering

World Mission Program

Recognitions

Special Presentation: Crossville church

Message: “Mystery of Sin” (Gen. 3.1-13, 4.7; Is. 14.12-13; Ezek. 28.13-15; Jn. 8.33-36; Rom. 5.12)

—Leyre Hernandez, Field Secretary

—Parade of Nations—

In Concert—The Renfroes



Message—“Mystery of the Cross” (1 Cor. 1.18, 23-24)

—Nathan Bonilla, TN



Sunday

9:30 a.m. Sunday School Lesson—Stephanie Ferrell, TN



10:00 Proclaiming the Gospel in Praise!
—California Praise Team!

Sunday School Program

—Mandy Thompson, director



Children's Ministries Program

—Kara Spicer, director



—Assembly Choir—

Message—"And this Gospel Shall Be. . ."

(Mt. 24.14; Rom. 10.14-18; Gal. 1.6-10)—Scott Neill, SC

Announcements

Appointments

Consecration Service

Song: "Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All"
—led by Greenville Choir



Heaven will surely be worth it all.
Worth all the sorrows that here befall;
After this life with all its strife,
Heaven will surely be worth it all.

Assembly Appointments

2023-2024

International Executive Council _____

**See pp. 88-92 for Assembly
Appointments**

Field Secretary _____

Field Secretary _____

Field Secretary _____

World Mission Director _____

General Treasurer _____

Executive Secretary _____

Department of Education/Media Ministries _____

Assistant Publisher _____

Shepherding Ministries Director _____

School of Ministry Institute Director _____

Fishers of Men Director _____

Ladies Ministries Director _____

Sunday School Director _____

Sunday School Literature Editor _____

Senior Ambassadors Director _____

Youth Ministries Director _____

Children's Ministries Director _____

Camping Coordinator/Advisor _____

Voice of Zion/SYNC Booster _____

Tract Ministries Director _____

Committees

Assembly Business

Chairman _____

Doctrine

Chairman _____

International Properties

Chairman _____

General Trustees _____

National Overseers

1. Argentina _____
2. Bangladesh _____
3. Benin _____
4. Bolivia _____
5. Brazil _____
6. Burundi _____
7. Cambodia _____
8. Cameroon _____
9. Canada _____

**See pp. 93-103 for
International, National, and
Pastor's Contact Information**

10. Chile_____
11. Colombia_____
12. Costa Rica_____
13. Cuba_____
14. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)_____
15. Dominican Republic_____
16. Ghana_____
17. Guatemala_____
18. Guinea_____
19. Haiti_____
20. Honduras_____
21. India, Mid-East_____
22. India, South_____
23. Ivory Coast_____
24. Kenya, North_____
25. Kenya, South_____
26. Liberia_____
27. Malawi_____
28. Mexico, North_____
29. Mexico, South_____
30. Mozambique_____
31. Myanmar (Burma)_____
32. Nepal_____
33. Nicaragua_____
34. Nigeria_____
35. Pakistan_____
36. Paraguay_____
37. Peru_____
38. Philippines_____
39. Rwanda_____
40. Sierra Leone_____
41. South Sudan_____
42. Tanzania_____

43. Thailand _____
44. Togo _____
45. Uganda _____
46. United States _____
47. Uruguay _____
48. Venezuela _____
49. Zimbabwe _____
50. Zambia _____

State Overseers

United States:

- North Carolina/South Carolina _____
West Virginia/Virginia/Pennsylvania/Maryland _____
Indiana/Kentucky/Michigan/Illinois _____
Tennessee/Georgia _____
Mississippi/Alabama/Louisiana _____
Idaho/Wyoming _____
Colorado/Kansas/Missouri _____
Texas/Arizona/New Mexico _____
California/Nevada _____
Oregon/Washington _____

The General Assembly, Presiding Bishop, Chief Men of the Church [Elders], and Theocratic Government

The General Assembly is an extraordinary event because 1) it represents the universal [catholic] expression of the church in worship, fellowship, and decision-making; 2) it is a factor in the unity and progress of the church; 3) when in session, it is the highest tribunal of authority on earth under Christ in matters of faith, biblical interpretation, church government, practice and discipline 4) it is informed and guided by the presiding bishop and chief elders of the church (Acts 15.2, 6; 16.4; 21.17-20).

The **presiding bishop** is the chief elder among elders, *“bishop of bishops,” “first among equals”* in the hierarchy of the church’s governmental structure (Mt. 20.27). He presides over [moderates] the General Assembly. In counsel with the *“chief men among the brethren”* (Executive Council), he acts on behalf of the church when the Assembly is not in session. Even in the General Assembly, these elders [**presiding bishop** and *“chief men among the brethren”*] provide structure, order, and leadership in the discussions and decision-making process, and they also *“ordain the decrees for to keep.”* James, the Lord’s brother, was the presiding bishop, recognized as such shortly after Jesus ascended back to the Father, and he continued in this position until his martyrdom (Acts 15.13-20; 21.17; 1 Cor. 15.7; Gal. 2.9; Jas. 1.1). He thus held this position apparently for about thirty years. Besides the evidence given in Scripture, there is overwhelming evidence in the early church fathers who flourished between the end of the first century to the end of the fourth. Clement of Rome (probably the same Clement mention in Phil. 4.3), Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, Eusebius, et. al. all claimed that James, the Lord’s brother, was made Bishop of Jerusalem and as such *“ruled all the churches everywhere”* until his martyrdom. Even in the General Assembly, these elders [**presiding bishop** and *“chief men among the brethren”*] provide structure order, and leadership in the discussions and decision-making process, and they also *“ordain the decrees for to keep.”*

The General Assembly in Acts 15 was a special called event. Significantly, it was convened only one time in the New Testament at Jerusalem. It would seem a stretch to consider the meetings recorded in Acts 1.13-26 and 6.1-7 to be general assemblies. In our tradition of the faith in Zion Assembly, the General Assembly beginning in 1906 became an annual event. It represents the one time of the year [unless there is a special-called Assembly] that ministers and members from all over the world assemble in the name of Christ to bind and loose on earth what God has bound and loosed in heaven (Mt. 16.19; Acts 15.1–16.5). All present consecrate themselves to find the perfect mind of Christ in all matters of faith, government, and discipline. This is why in Jacob’s words the church is a *“dreadful place”* (Gen. 28.16-17); for it is at this special time that the church led by the presiding bishop and chief elders acts in an official capacity as God’s *ekklesia* [*“church”*] having been ordained and authorized by Christ to do so (Mt. 16.18-19; 18.18-20; Mk. 13.34; Lu. 19.13; Jn. 20.23; Acts 15.1-29; 16.4-5). In this special meeting, the ministers and members reason together with God and one another (Is. 1.18; Acts 15.6-19, 28); look judiciously into the Holy Scriptures (Acts 17.10-11; and compare Acts 15.15-18 with Amos 9.11-12); and seek diligently for the Spirit’s illumination until an understanding is reached in harmony [*“one accord”*] with the Scriptures and the presiding bishop and chief elders (Acts 15.28-29; 16.4). Then, having come to this understanding, all agree to *“walk by the same rule,” “mind the same thing,”* and have *“the same judgment”* (1 Cor.1.10; Phil. 3.16; Is. 52.8), that is, the whole body of the ministers and members commit themselves to live and walk together as one body in Christ according to the Scriptures and the decrees of the sacred meeting.

Because the Bible is the supreme objective authority of the church, the General Assembly correspondingly is “a judicial body only” in matters of faith, government, practice, and discipline, that is, the General Assembly does not legislate but rather interprets the Bible to understand the will and purpose of God. Since the decrees of the General Assembly are binding on the ministers and members (Acts 16.4; Rom. 16.17), they must be shown to be either explicitly or implicitly in harmony with the teachings of Christ and the apostles and elders.

Again, the biblical model for the General Assembly and our judicious process is found in Acts 15.1-16.5. Here the apostles and elders gathered with the whole church (vv. 1-4, 12, 22-23, 28), and prayed and deliberated with the help of the Spirit until all were able to ***“see eye to eye”*** in harmony with the guidance of the presiding bishop and chief elders, most especially the elders ***“who labor in the word and doctrine”*** (Acts 6.2,4; 1 Tim. 5.17)

The Assembly is thus led and guided by the ***“chief men”*** of the church (vv. 1-4, 6-17, 22-27). Thus, it is said that the decisions made in the council in Jerusalem ***“pleased the apostles and elders and the whole church”*** (vv. 22), and again, ***“for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us”*** (v. 28). Then on this basis, all agree to live and walk by the decrees ***[dogmas]*** of the Assembly which are ordained by the presiding bishop and the elders. And, accordingly, the churches are established in the faith and increase in number daily (16.4-5).

Corporate counsel is thus an underlying principle upon which the government of the church is established. The General Assembly is made up of ministers and members from around the world whom Providence has blessed to participate in the proceedings. The wise man wrote, ***“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety”*** (Pr. 11.14), and again, ***“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors, they are established”*** (15.22).

Every male minister and member of the church in good standing is invited to participate in the decision-making process; the women also contribute through prayer and in consultation with their husbands and elders (1 Cor. 14.28, 34; 1 Tim. 2.11-12). This is based on the premise that everyone in good standing is regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who leads and guides into all truth and righteousness (Jn. 14.26; 15. 26, 16.12-15; 1 Cor. 2.1-16). All stand together spiritually therefore as equals before the Lord (Gal. 3.28; Rom. 10.11-13; 1 Cor. 12.12-28; Col. 3.11). Even so, all do not stand on equal footing regarding the callings and gifts of God in the government, ministry, and decision-making. For

example, “novices” do not stand on equal footing with bishops and deacons (1 Tim. 3.6), and the roles of men are distinguished from the roles of women in the decision-making process (1 Tim. 2.8-14; 3.1-5). The bishops and elders are called, set apart, and enabled by God to lead and guide the church (1 Tim. 3.1-13), that is, bishops are qualified to **“teach,”** for they are called and ordained to **“labor in the word and doctrine”** (2 Tim. 3.17), and the deacons assist the bishops [pastors]. The elders are therefore set apart and distinguished for this purpose. Thus, Paul in his letter to the Philippians distinguishes the bishops and deacons from **“all the saints”** in his greeting (Phil. 1.11). It is a startling illumination to realize that in all the New Testament, there was apparently only one General Assembly convened, and it appears to have lasted for less than one day. This means the Apostles and Elders, and their successors ruled the church for more than fifty years without requiring a General Assembly. This revelation all the more exalts the eldership of the church, led by James, the Lord’s brother, Peter and John, and other chief men among the brethren. Accordingly, it puts great weight and responsibility upon elders to remain humble and consecrated through prayer and meditation upon the Word of God.

When Rehoboam was made king in the Old Testament theocracy, it is said that all Israel came to Shechem to make him king (1 Kg. 12.1). Moreover, it is emphasized that Rehoboam failed because he did not heed the counsel of the **“elders and the people”** in making decisions (vv. 6-15); but heeded rather a select counsel of the **“young men who had grown up with him”** (vv. 8-10), which signified that Rehoboam was partial in his decision-making and succumbed to the opinion of the young men who were actually opposed either wittingly or unwittingly to the will of God. Indeed, those young men typically were full of themselves: arrogant, boastful, and harsh in their judgments (vv. 10-14).

It will be noticed further, regarding the house of God under Rehoboam, that ultimately the will of God is all that really matters, and His will is best discerned and understood by the elders and men

and women who have consecrated themselves to the Lord. In any case, God always ultimately has His way—sometimes despite the leaders and the people. ***“Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord”*** (v. 15; see also v. 24). Tragically, Rehoboam’s actions caused the house of God to divide (vv. 16-20), but this division was foreknown in the divine counsel and prosecuted according to the will of God. See the prophet Ahijah’s prophecy (1 Kg. 11.29-39). God’s fixed purpose in and through David was fulfilled in Christ through the southern kingdom of Judah; nothing could prevent that! Likewise, God’s true church today is foreordained to succeed in her mission and purpose, nothing can prevent that! (2 Chron. 7.13-22; Is. 30.1-16; 60.1-5; Jer. 18.1-11; Ezek. 37-1.14; Mt. 16.18; Eph. 5.26-27). The church under the spirit and terms of the New Covenant operates as ***“the habitation of God through the Spirit”*** (Eph. 2.22). The ministers and members form the temple of God and are unified spiritually through the indwelling power and wisdom of the Spirit and the Scriptures. This is the key to theocratic government—the indwelling graces and gifts of the Spirit being allowed to prevail in the church in harmony with the Scriptures. Again, it should be emphasized that among the highest gifts in the church are the gifts to oversee [govern/rule] the church; to feed, nourish, discipline, and perfect God’s people (Mk. 13.34; Lk. 19.13; Acts 2.47; 1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1-2; 12.28; Eph. 4.7-16; Phil. 4.17; 1 Thess. 1.6; 2 Thess. 3.7-9; Heb. 13.7, 17).

Now observe: the apostle Paul, by his own admission, was ***“not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles”*** (2 Cor. 11.5; 12.11-12) and in a peculiar way was called and chosen by the Lord for a special purpose (Acts 9.11-16; 2 Cor. 11.5; Eph. 3.1-10); yet he saw the need to report to James and the elders in Jerusalem—men of ***“reputation”*** and standing in the church, in order to maintain divine order and unity (Acts 21.17-26; Gal. 2.1-2, 9). Even among the apostles there was thus a hierarchy of government and administrative authority. Timothy, Titus, and scores of other elders and ministers were subject to the oversight [rulership] of Paul. Paul was subject to the oversight

of James, Peter, John, and the chief elders at Jerusalem (Acts 12.17; 15.13-21; 21.17-26; 1 Cor. 15.7; Gal. 2.11-14), and James, Peter, and John were subject to God and the decrees of the General Assembly—that is, the resolutions adopted by the whole body of the church assembled in duly-ordained order (Acts 15.22-23; 1 Cor. 12.12-28). The role of the Holy Spirit in the government and divine order of the church is indispensable. He is the ultimate wisdom and power of the church, revealing the Headship of Christ and His ultimate authority. Thus, He does not speak for Himself but for Christ, who in turn speaks for the Father (Jn 5.19-43; 14.26; 15.26; 16.12-15). He creates a spiritual dynamic within the church that unites the ministers and members together intrinsically in one body of Christ. Even before the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the 120 were in *“one accord”* because they had been sanctified and were *“continually in the temple praising and blessing God”* (Lu. 24.53). The essential key to the spiritual unity and power of the church is therefore in sanctification and the anointing of the Holy Spirit; which enables us to maintain a consecrated devotion to Christ, and also enables every man to abide in his own calling in the divine order (1 Cor. 12.12-28). When everyone’s ego is crucified, then Christ is free to rule supreme—the kingdom of God prevails! Christ thus says in His prayer to the Father, *“Sanctify them through thy truth . . . that they all may be one . . . And the glory which you gave me I have given them . . . that they may be made perfect in one”* (Jn.17.17-23).

It is said following the day of Pentecost that *“the multitude of them who believed were of one heart and of one soul . . . and great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4.32-33). Likewise, the key to God’s glorious government in this last day’s Zion depends on our willingness to allow the Spirit and the revelation of the Scriptures to hold sway over us in matters of faith, practice, and government: and in the fulfillment of the church’s mission in the world. The apostle Paul understood this divine principle and encouraged the church to *“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4.1-3). He went on

to say, “[*For*] *there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all*” (vv. 4-6).

We see then that it is imperative to stir up the graces of Christ within us and labor in prayer to cultivate a heavenly atmosphere in the place where we meet to deliberate and act for God. The power fell on the day of Pentecost because the elders with all the brethren were together “*in one accord in one place*” (Acts 1.14; 2.1, 46; 4.24; 8.6; Phil. 2.7), and because they answered God’s call and humbled themselves until they were of “*one heart and one soul and great grace was upon them all.*”

Now you may be saying in your thoughts, this section of the address really exalts the elders. Precisely. Because the Scriptures tell us to do so (1 Tim. 5.17; 1 Thess. 5.12-13; Heb. 13.7, 17). In our history, we have tended to swing the pendulum of church government from one extreme to the other. In the beginning, in our first 25 years, we tended to embrace a democratic or congregational form of church government; and even tended toward an individualism. Then beginning about 1912 we began to exalt an episcopal form of government which led to the disruption of the church in 1923. Now, one hundred years later we can see by hindsight and experience a more perfect form of church government—a more perfect theocratic order. The elders indeed should be “*very highly esteemed in love for their works sake*” (1 Tim. 5.17; see also 1 Cor. 9.1-14; Phil. 2.25, 29; 1 Thess. 5.12-13; 1 Tim. 3.1-16; 5.1; Heb. 13.7, 17); but all the ministers and members should have a mutual respect, for all have the Holy Spirit who abides within us to teach and lead us in all truth and righteousness. There must be, therefore, a deep sense of humility that permeates the whole body of the church (Eph. 4.1-3).

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by

constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5.1-5).

Should we expect God's blessings to fall on this last day's Zion on the basis of anything less than that upon which He blessed the New Testament Zion? Surely not. It is an old principle that cannot be transgressed if we expect the blessings of God to be upon this last day's house: ***"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . for there the Lord commanded the blessing"*** (Ps. 133.1-3).

We fully expect the prophets' and apostles' vision of the last day's church to be fulfilled in Zion Assembly: ***"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, says the Lord . . . and in this place I will give peace*** (Hag. 2:9). ***" . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy an without blemish"*** (Eph. 4.4-16; 5.26-27).

—WHP

Assembly Sites

2004 - 2023

Ramada Inn & Convention Center, Pigeon Forge
Site of First Annual Assembly 2004



United Christian Church, Cleveland, TN
2nd, 6th, 7th, 10th, & 12th - 16th
Annual General Assemblies



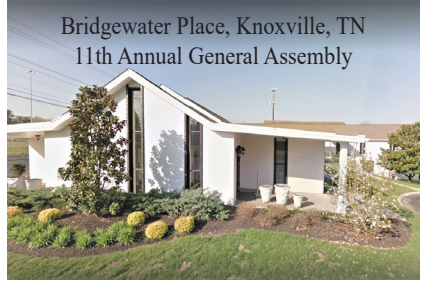
T.L. Lowery Center, Cleveland, TN
8th Annual General Assembly



Living Word Church, Cleveland, TN
9th Annual General Assembly



Bridgewater Place, Knoxville, TN
11th Annual General Assembly



Int'l Ministries Complex, Cleveland, TN
3rd-6th, 9th, 17th-20th Annual General Assemblies



—Notes—

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—Notes—

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Upcoming Events

Youth Conventions

Cleveland, TN	Nov 3-4, 2023
Rialto, CA	Nov 10-11, 2023
SMI, Guatemala	Nov 12-18, 2023

Ladies Retreat	Feb 23-25, 2024
Black Fox Ledge	
Pigeon Forge, TN	

Assembly Program Adjustments

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

*Note: The Presiding Bishop read the various sections
of his address throughout the Assembly.*

Administrative Adjustments

Additional clerks who served throughout the Assembly:
Tiffany Major, Vicki Neill, Sally Carrillo, Sarah Ellison,
Elizabeth Spicer, Haley Pigford, Juanita Pyles.

[Absent: Julia Massey, Sandy Morris,
Rosa Nicholson, Judy Floyd]

Additional Administrative assistance
Usher [Jerry Nichols and John Bolin, absent]

Tuesday

Praise Reports/Exhortation: Pete Sarry, CA [absent];
Added Jose Lozano, CA

Wednesday

In Memory: Added Scott Good of Taylors, SC

Thursday

Lunch Break started at 2pm instead of 1:30pm
Testimonies of Healings: Added Donna Pounders
Special Song Added: Snyder Family, "He'll do it Again"

Friday

Added: Special Song by Lee Brown
Added: Special Prayer for Ricky Graves

Saturday

Special Song: Sharon White, VA [absent]

Added: Covenant given to Davis Snyder by Bishop Zach Snyder

Message, “Mysteries of Godliness” preached

by Bishop Benigno Torrez of Bolivia [Alicia Harris, absent]

In Concert—The Renfroes [absent]

Sunday

Added testimony by Sister Urcadiz

Ordination of Ministers

Bishops

None

Deacons

Nevil Sena Creary

Evangelists

Alexis Alberto

Nathan J. Bonilla

Sally J. Carrillo

Wilma Joan Carter

Jose Gerardo Monroy

Fermin Ernesto Preza

Jared Thomas Spicer

Esther Urcadiz Cordero

Danny E. Wilson

Exhorters

Samuel Ryan Ferrell

Elizabeth Spicer

Healing Line: 119

Registered attendance: 236

Achievement Awards

2022-2023

October 2022 World Missions

Greenville, SC	\$21,560.00
Cleveland, TN	\$16,020.76
Hesperia, CA	\$ 6,556.00

March 2023 World Mssions

Cleveland, TN	\$15,379.03
Greenville, SC	\$14,200.00
Crossville, TN	\$10,090.03

School of Ministry Institute

Cleveland, TN	\$2,682.82
Greenville, SC	\$1,759.40
Idamay, WV	\$1,379.00

Sunday School

Greenville, SC	\$3,676.65
Cleveland, TN	\$3,477.15
Idamay, WV	\$3,398.39

International Staff Reports

Twentieth Annual General Assembly

Presiding Bishop's Report to the Twentieth Annual General Assembly August 29–September 3, 2023

“And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away . . . Casting all of your care upon Him: for He careth for you” (1 Pet. 5.4-7).

I have relied heavily on the comfort of this passage this year, and have found the Lord and His Word to be faithful.

Besides the normal day-by-day oversight of the ministers and churches connected with my appointment as presiding bishop, I served as world missions director, and four months as interim director of the School of Ministry and interim pastor of the Cleveland church. Regarding the mission work, I relied a great deal on our mission correspondence assistant, Renetta Kelton, executive secretary, Wanda Busbee, and the general treasurer, Tiffany Major. Regarding the pastoral work connected with the Cleveland church, nearly everyone graciously and responsibly chipped-in to assist.

Again this year I spent a great deal of time and energy writing regular articles and messages for the *VOZ*; materials for SMI; and two manuscripts that will be published in the next few months. I have also written about three hundred emails and letters to pastors and churches regarding the overall work of the church and issues requiring disciplinary actions.

Another area that consumed much of my time energy was overseeing and arranging for the maintenance of the International Offices and Ministries Complex. On this score, I owe a great deal to the assistance of our faithful members and friends in the Cleveland church, not the least being Jim and Mary Orange, Steve and Glenda Major, Alice Jones, Joe and Julie Steele, Wanda Busbee, Renetta and Isabella Kelton, Cody and Tiffany Major, Kris and Mindy Newberry, and others. And I would be amiss to fail to mention that the pastor and some in the Crossville

church have come over to assist on occasion in some of work on the international properties.

Regarding the upkeep of our property on the outside [about three acres], Steve and Glenda Major have been an exceptional blessing, not only in doing the work but supplying much of the finance. Glenda with the assistance of Alice have undertaken a gigantic job of decorating, furnishing and organizing the new library and archives. All of these faithful workers have taken to heart and fulfilled the passage in Ecclesiastes 9.10: ***“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.”***

To the degree that I have been able to fulfill these responsibilities and expectations, especially preeminently regarding the pastoral *“care [for] all the churches,”* I owe all to the grace of the Lord. With the assistance of our executive secretary, general treasurer, and mission correspondence assistant I answered all correspondence and calls that have come into the office (roughly 500 letters and e mails and hundreds of phone calls), and kept up a regular correspondence with the overseers and ministers. I served as editor-in-chief of our church magazine, the *Voice of Zion*; worked closely with the overseers and pastors in overseeing and building up the churches, nationally and internationally. I counseled and acted upon a number of disciplinary situations in several states and countries. These things always preoccupy much of my time: but are a necessary part of our work in overseeing God’s church. By the grace of the Lord, every disciplinary and administrative problem was addressed and solved to the best of our ability. Most of the cases were addressed in counsel with the assistance of the state or national overseer. In two cases the assistance of the Executive Council was needed. In five instances, a minister had to be removed from his position, and in four instances licenses had to be revoked. But in all the cases, it may be said in good conscience, in the Holy Ghost, we did our best to act responsibly in love and truth and with compassion in the best interests of the church and the persons involved.

I have mentioned the following on several occasions, including the last Assembly, but it seems needful to repeat here, that is, in regard to church discipline. I even considered making it a section of my general address: but after thinking and praying about it felt impressed rather just to address it again here in this report.

When the counsel and actions of the General Presbytery are called into question, and in some cases flatly contradicted, the whole church is negatively affected and often injured and even destroyed: for those who listen to the murmuring and complaining [and get caught up in the confusion] lose respect and esteem for the government, authority, and wisdom of the church. How important is this subject?: Of up-most importance. For where there is no trust in the church's government and authority there is no church. Those affected like this indicate they have no Bible vision or revelation of the church or else a very distorted one: for government and church are virtually synonymous terms.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Prov. 29.18).

This often misunderstood verse signifies that where there is no ***vision*** or revelation of God's law and government, the people ***perish*** [literally “**cast off restraint**”], and act only according to their personal and independent “wisdom.”

We are always reminded in this regard of the times of the Judges, before there was a ***king*** [i.e., **before there was government: for the head of the kingdom represented divine government**] in the church in the wilderness: for without a duly ordained system of government across the whole nation, “***every man did what was right in his own eyes***” (Judg. 17.6; 18.1; 19.1; 21.25; see also Deut. 12.8; Acts 15.1–16.5; Heb. 13.7, 17; etal.

It is so easy, even natural since the fall of man, to cast off government. “I love government so long as it does not try to instruct, correct, and govern me or my friends and loved ones.” The failure to deeply respect God's government [of which the church is the duly appointed representative in the earth] always ends in the “***works of the flesh,***” namely, heresies, divisions, schisms, seditions, disturbances, discontent, and unsettledness (Gal 5.20; 1 Cor.1.10; 12.25). Need I remind us here, brethren, that strife, confusion, and contention is of the devil!

It is grievous and regretful that these carnal characteristics or tendencies often take hold of some of our members, and even on occasion some of our ministers, and, as such, they begin to think and act more like the political and social governments of the world than the

government of God [theocracy] working in and through God-called and Spirit-baptized elders. It is so easy to fall into this deadly trap of Satan: i.e., to get “*puffed up*” and become unsettled and disgruntled against the duly ordained authority of the church (1 Cor. 4.18-21; 5.1-13; 2 Cor. 7.8-11). So I lay before you again this tragic tendency that has often injured members and on occasion destroyed local churches and even been the downfall of the whole church. When will we ever learn?

In concluding this most important topic, I will repeat again the counsel I have now given on at least three other solemn occasions in the General Assembly, namely, that we cannot have a biblical church without high esteem for leaders and the divine principles and institutions of theocratic government [namely, the church, marriage, duly ordained ministry, and the Word of God]. To undercut the wisdom and duly appointed authority of eldership and the presbytery, is to undercut and destroy the church herself: for the power, integrity, and legitimacy of the one rest upon the other. So, it makes us wonder when someone says, “I love the church.” For one cannot love the church and at the same time seek to destroy it, or to lend any influence to undercut its authority and esteem.

The General Staff and department heads and assistants are to be commended for their cooperation and hard work. If I mentioned all the names here, there would be about fifteen. Worthy of special mention is always the executive secretary, Wanda Busbee, because her office and official duties involve so much time and effort and “know-how.” Special commendations to the regional and national overseers and pastors are also in order here: for almost all have been cheerfully cooperative with the Presiding Bishop in the promotion of the work. I want to take this opportunity 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 served as president of SMI in our California and Cleveland schools; planned and moderated the 19th Annual General Assembly. My travels this year included trips to nine states [CA, AL, MS, FL, WV, KY, TN, NC, SC, some of these several times] to assist the overseers and pastors in the work and to scout out new fields for evangelism.

My work connected with SMI included helping to organize and plan materials; write and teach several lessons for the schools in

California and Cleveland. Also attended and participated in two regional and state conventions in the United States—AL/MSLA and TN/GA. I want to thank my faithful companion, Dale, for all her support and patience.

I praise the Lord for the progress made this year. Some of our ministers planted, others watered; but in every case *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..... 148
(includes written messages and lessons taught)

Converted 2
Sanctified 3
Holy Ghost Baptisms 2

Added to the church..... 2
Baptized in Water..... 1

Tithes paid..... \$5,230.00
Offerings given..... \$7,830.00

Miles traveled..... 19,450.00

Churches visited..... 14
Regional Conventions Attended..... 3
General Assemblies moderated 1

I wish to thank everyone for your prayerful support, kindness, and cheerful cooperation. So many of you have assisted me in so many ways to promote the work. The Lord has the record and will reward us shortly according to our works. May the Lord bless and keep you in His love and mercies.

Humbly submitted,



Wade H. Phillips

2023 Recipients

Presiding Bishop's Commendation Award

Josúe and Claudia Hernandez, CA
Joanes Okal Oboo, Kenya
Rose Snyder, WV

The following have been recipients of this award:

2012

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

2018

Charles and Mary Barker, IN
Clifford and Becky Kelton, MS
Robert and Maria Llana, NC

2013

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

2019

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

2014

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

2020

Dave & Deanna Sanner, WV
L.W. & Wilma Carter, VA
Jose Manuel Lazano, CA

2015

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

2021

Rick and Stephanie Ferrell, TN
Ambrosio "Roberto" Lopez, CA
James "Jim" Orange, TN

2016

Jeanette Surratt, SC
Donna Pounders, MS
Saintainel Hostel, Haiti

2022

Allen and Mandy Thompson, MS
Joseph and Julie Steele, TN
Lynn Weatherly, AL

2017

Ricky Graves, KY
Gavan McDonald, SC
Zachary Snyder, AL

*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.*

General Treasurer's Report

20th Annual General Assembly

From hard workers, knowledgeable individuals and fellow food lovers, it has been an honor to serve as the treasurer this past year. I appreciate the many friendships and the patience and love that has been shown to me and my family as we adjusted to the various aspects involved in relocating here to Cleveland. I would not be here without the continued support of my steadfast husband, our entire family, church family, our Crossville family and the many individuals who supported me, including Bishop Phillips, Wanda Busbee, Donna Pounders and so many more.

This past year has been full of challenges and changes for us all. I have continued appreciation for the generosity, dedication, and perseverance of those throughout Zion Assembly. It has been said that if you want to go fast, you go alone, but if you want to go far, you go together. It has taken all the members of Zion to get here today, and it will take all of us as a united church to further the Kingdom of God.

As your General Treasurer, it was my responsibility to manage the financial aspects of the church's international offices and to present the annual treasurer's report, showing the financial picture of Zion Assembly Church of God during the past year. Please accept the following document summarizing these accounts as part of this 2023 General Assembly Annual Treasurer's Report.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tiffany Major

Zion Assembly Church of God
20th. Annual General Assembly
Financial Summary
 July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Summary of Accounts						
Accounts:	Balance Forward	Income	Account Transfers-In	Account Transfers-Out	Expenses	Ending Balance
IPBF Money Market Acct. (closed 7/26/22)	175,301.83	0.00		175,301.83		0.00
Smart Bank (Operating)	531,595.03	1,023,281.86	175,301.83	213,416.83	865,388.98	651,372.91
Smart Bank (ME - Mission Funds)	755.83		36,553.34		35,257.23	2,051.94
Paypal Account	30.95		32,438.23	32,426.12		43.06
Accounts: <u>Misc.</u>	Balance Forward	Received		Transfer to Paypal Checking	Expenses & Fees	Ending Balance
Paypal on Line	886.01	29,301.64		29,401.96	659.86	125.83
Petty Cash	0.00				0.00	0.00
TOTALS:	\$708,569.65	\$1,052,583.50	\$244,293.40	\$450,546.74	\$901,306.07	\$653,593.74

Fund Balances in Checking Account:					Income Statement	
					Year ending June 30, 2023	
Fund	Balance Forward	Income / Transfer In	Expenses / Transfers Out	Ending Balance	Total Contributions:	
					\$1,052,583.50	
Emergency Fund	21,988.12	3,115.09	300.00	24,803.21	Total Expenses:	
Ladies Retreat Fund	8,799.15	14,081.45	13,701.72	9,178.88	\$901,306.07	
IYC Retreat Fund	1,361.63	1,217.72	53.66	2,525.69	NET INCOME:	
Missions Fund	227,179.32	236,416.92	230,740.48		<u>\$151,277.43</u>	
(20% Mission trf. out to IPBF Fund)			29,755.97	172,854.04		
(mission trf. Out to Tithe)			30,245.75			
School of Ministry Institute	28,335.28	12,491.43	14,242.51	26,584.20		
IPBF Fund (Income & Expenses)	112,558.96	405,358.72	343,710.27			
(IPBF trf in from 20% Mission)		29,755.97		203,963.38		
Sunday School Fund	48,250.04	23,118.79	26,800.62	44,568.21		
Tithe Fund	74,592.43	279,716.06	253,377.73			
Trf in from Mission		30,245.75				
Trf in fr. IPBF to Underwrite Loan Payment		17,507.44		148,683.95		
Voice of Zion Fund	7,196.49	9,239.94	3,690.54	12,745.89		
Youth-Media Fund	1,333.61	6,291.46	2,861.26			
Tfr. in from Tithes to Underwrite		701.65		5,465.46		
TOTALS	\$531,595.03	\$1,069,258.39	\$949,480.51	\$661,372.91		

Voice of Zion/SYNC Ministries Report

Greetings to the 20th annual General Assembly,

Psalms 118:24 states, “This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” I am rejoicing about what God is doing in Zion. Through our local church paper, we are spreading the good news of the Gospel.

I look forward to receiving it every month. When it comes, I sit down and read the entire paper. I rejoice over the messages from our great writers. We have some God-given writers who gladly allow Goad to use them to encourage us.

I want to thank each one who subscribes individually, as well as those who are SYNC club members and Len King subscribers. I am amazed at your faithfulness every year. I feel this is one of the strongest arms of the church by which we can spread the Gospel, as well as keep up with the progress of the church.

My prayer is this: God, continue to bless your church through the *Voice of Zion*.

The following list outlines my work to boost the *VOZ* this past year:

- Forty-nine sermons: 4 saved, 2 sanctified, and 4 baptized with the Holy Ghost.
- Organized one church in Puebla, Mexico with 29 members.
- visited 360 homes and drove approximately 12,000 miles
- Wrote four quarterly letters to pastors and regional overseers, as well as remained available for multiple phone conversations.
- Attended four executive meetings.
- Attended and preached at Mississippi’s and Alabama’s regional conventions.
- Attended one Christmas staff meeting.
- Attended the Eastern US Youth Convention.
- Attended one revival in an independent church in southern Ohio.

Sincerely Submitted, L.W. Carter

International Shepherding Ministries Report

It has been an honor and a privilege to have served as Intentional Shepherding Ministries Director this past year.

This year I visited six churches. I was also the guest speaker at the International Staff Christmas Banquet in Cleveland, TN. I attended several additional events, to include the Mid-East Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge , TN (Feb 24-26, 2023); SMI in Cleveland, TN (May 7-13, 2023; and the Ladies Retreat in Ida May, WV (April 21-22, 2023) as a speaker.

I assisted in the revival in Chillicothe, Ohio, July 6-8, 2023, with L.W. Carter. Additional work includes my serving as the Shepherding Ministries Director for my local church.

I sent letters to pastors and regional overseers three times this year to encourage each to be 100% in Emergency Funds and to have a special love offering for Bishop Phillips and his wife, Dale Phillips at the General Assembly.

Many thanks go to my husband, L.W. Carter, my family, and my local church for their love and support, and especially to Bishop Phillips for having confidence in me to appoint me to this position. My heart's desire is to be on the field visiting churches and trying to be a help to God's people.

Respectfully submitted,

Wilma Carter
Shepherding Ministries Director

International Sunday School Report

It has been an honor to serve in the capacity of Sunday School Director for another year. While in this role, I have promoted the Sunday school lessons on social media weekly and quarterly. I have communicated with Brother Bruce Sullivan, Sunday school editor, and the Media Ministries leaders to ensure the lessons are available on the church's website monthly for children, teens, and adults in both English and Spanish. I created the large print versions for the adult English and Spanish lessons which are also available online. I correspond with 104 individuals quarterly who have subscribed to the Sunday school email to notify them when the new material is available on the website. I monitor the Sunday school email to answer questions and add individuals to the Sunday school email list when requested.

This past year I have served as church minister in Amory, MS. I taught our teen Sunday school class and also served as worship leader. I served as Camp Director for the South Central Region's youth camp in West Blocton, TN. I attended and ministered at the Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge, TN. I attended the Youth Convention in Cleveland, TN, the Marriage Retreat at Fall Creek Falls in Spencer, TN, and the School of Ministry Institute in Cleveland, TN.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mandy Thompson

Top Three Churches Sunday School Offering

1st Place
Greenville, SC
\$3,676.65

2nd Place
Cleveland, TN
\$3,477.15

3rd Place
Idamay, WV
\$3,398.39

A total of \$23,118.79 was received in Sunday School offerings from all the local churches, realizing a gain of \$3,597.33 from last year.

“Fishers of Men” Assembly Report

Sermons Preached – 85

Bible Studies Taught – 45

Prepared lessons for SMI in Cleveland, TN and Rialto, California.

Taught in SMI in Cleveland, TN & Rialto California.

Held Revival in West Mobile, Alabama.

Served as evangelist at Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Youth Camp.

Wrote 12 articles called “Fishing Tips” for the *VOZ* magazine.

Served as Sunday School Editor – I repurposed and issued Sunday School lessons for the 2022-2023 year.

Served as Chairman of the Doctrine Committee and met with the Doctrine Committee both in Cleveland, TN and Pigeon Forge, TN.

Served as member of the Executive Council and met with the Presiding Bishop on multiple occasions.

Served as a part of the Education Committee.

Served as pastor of the church in West Pelzer, South Carolina.

In Christ

Pastor Bruce Sullivan

Senior Ambassador Report

God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wonderous works. Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Psalm 71: 17, 18

Greetings to the 20th annual General Assembly. It is my desire to be used by God in helping to proclaim the Gospel and bring others to Christ and His church in these last days. I am reminded of the chorus, Jesus use me, and oh Lord don't refuse me; for surely there's a work that I can do.

It is with those words in mind, that I give glory and honor to God for the opportunity to serve as Senior Ambassador Director again this past year. It has been a privilege to be apart of a ministry that acknowledges and utilizes the role of our older adults on both the local and international level. I look forward to the ministry's successful growth as we continue to facilitate opportunities for our older men and women to share their knowledge and experience within the Church and in proclaiming the Gospel message.

I would like to encourage our local churches to do their very best in sending in the Senior Ambassador Quarterly Reports. These reports enable me to get insight on local activities and stay connected involving our seniors, as well as provide information vital to my reporting to headquarters as to the work of the Senior Ambassador program in the church.

This year I sent numerous cards of encouragement, get well wishes and messages of gratitude to those within the Church as well as friends of the Church. I look forward to additional contacts as I begin receiving more reports.

As with every appointment entrusted to me, I appreciate our Presiding Bishop, Brother Phillips, for his confidence, kindness and prayerful support. I also appreciate the many prayers of my husband Cecil. His loving support and encouragement have brought me much comfort over the years.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Pounders
Senior Ambassador Director

International Ladies Ministries Report

Truly, it has been a blessing and privilege to serve as International Ladies Ministries Director of Zion Assembly this past year. I want to thank God for the opportunity to be in the service of our LORD and to work alongside our amazing women of God.

The main events for the Ladies Ministries Department are the Regional Retreats. To God be all the glory as our retreats went beyond our expectations in fulfilling the spiritual goals set forth! This year's theme was "Spiritual Checkup" with the scripture reference of Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart:

I attended and spoke at the Western Regional Retreat, held in Oxnard, CA on January 27-29, 2023. The California Ladies Minister Director, Sister Rosie Ramirez, did an excellent job conducting the retreat. Each speaker, worship, and prayer service were a blessing and everyone who attended was moved by the Holy Spirit.

On February 24-26, 2023 I attended and conducted the Eastern Regional Retreat, which was held in Pigeon Forge, TN. There was so much excitement among the ladies during this retreat. There were 115 in attendance, including 29 new attendees. Every session and each speaker were greatly anointed and we had experiences of salvation, sanctification, and baptism of the Holy Ghost. The fruit from this retreat is still being felt as many of the new attendees have connected with our local churches. We give God the glory for all that was accomplished and is still being experienced by all who attended.

I also had the privilege of speaking at the Ladies Conference conducted in Idamay, West Virginia. This conference was held April 21-22, 2023 and was conducted by Regional Ladies Director, Sis. Rose Snyder. The theme for the conference was "God Uses Cracked Pots" with the scripture reference of 2 Corinthians 4:7 "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us". It was a blessing to see so many ladies from our regional churches in attendance, along with ladies from the local area churches and community.

Through phone calls, messenger, texting, and emails I have made great effort to stay connected with ladies of Zion. Showing and ministering the love of God is crucial as we are facing these last days of our journey. Let us always be found seeking the LORD and His strength. 1 Chronicles 16:8-11 "Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works, Glory ye in His holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pamela Jones

International Youth Report

We had a fantastic 2022-2023 year. In the Church this year, many youth have accepted the call to preach from California to Tennessee. The youth rallies were packed with unique messages by spiritual brethren and sisters representing the Church's vision and mission.

The California convention was held November 4-5, 2022, in Rialto, CA. Attendance was outstanding at 102. Amazing testimonies, singing, worship, and messages transformed lives. Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and blessings poured upon those who sought the goodness of God. Nine were saved and three were baptized with the Holy Ghost.

The Tennessee convention was held November 11-12, 2022, in Cleveland, TN. The registration indicates that 98 individuals came to the convention. The numbers were down from 2021, but there was no lack of spiritual power. We witnessed many called ministers preach the reason to trust God and come into His presence. Holy Ghost, 1; Saved, 3

Report Numbers:

1. We have begun the first youth podcast and added ZACOG Ignited Youth Facebook and other social media outlets.
2. Instituted a group chat with all youth leaders and routinely communicated with the team.
3. Answered over 200 phone calls and possibly over 500 text messages with local youths.
4. Traveled to Kentucky, Tennessee, California, and Alabama for services. Plan to visit as many as would allow for the upcoming year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Allen Thompson,

International Executive Council Report

After the close of the 2022 General Assembly, the Council was fully represented at the Leadership meeting in Pigeon Forge in February 2023. We also met two times in the office of the Presiding Bishop. Once in March and once in May during the School Of Ministry Institute. The purpose of these meetings was to advise and discuss with the presiding bishop and regional presbytery through hours of deliberation and prayer, the disciplinary action against a fellow bishop.

Matthew 20:27-28, “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Acts 15:13, 19: “. . . James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 19 “Wherefore my sentence is . . .”

Proverbs 11:14: “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

Proverbs 15:22: “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.”

Acts 16:4-5: “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

The bishops on the International Executive Council are as follows:

Wade H. Phillips

Scott Neill

Joseph Steele

L. W. Carter

Bruce Sullivan

Rick Ferrell (Secretary)

It is our goal and purpose as set forth by the General Assembly to assist the Presiding Bishop through our collective council to generally oversee and rule the church. As we fulfill our duties this upcoming year and work with an eternal perspective to build the church of God around the world, we ask that you pray for the wisdom, discernment and spiritual fortitude of each member on this Council.

Respectfully submitted, Rick Ferrell, Secretary

Doctrine Committee Report

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Scripture makes it clear that man is more than a physical being. A human is a soul and spirit [or soul/spirit] housed in an earthen body (1 Thess. 5.23). When a man dies, his soul and spirit is ushered into paradise into the presence of God, leaving behind the physical body (Lk. 23.43). The Bible describes death as “giving up the ghost” or “spirit” (Acts 5.5; Acts 12.23). Thus, Stephen prayed as he was dying for Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7.59).

Paul wrote, to be “absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (1 Cor. 5.6-8). While we do not know all that awaits the saints upon their death, we do know that in the presence of the Lord there is “fullness of joy and at (his) right hand are pleasures evermore” (Ps. 16.11). Paul describes the existence of the saint in the presence of God as something to “gain” (Phil. 1.21) and is “far better” than anything we have experienced on earth (v. 23). Jesus described it as “paradise” which is described as a perfect or ideal place (Lk. 23.43; 2 Cor. 12.4; Rev. 2.7).

When Christ returns, the soul and spirit of the just/righteous will be reunited with their physical bodies in the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20.5-6) which is also called the rapture. All the righteous [those who die in Christ] will at that same moment, “in the twinkling of an eye,” be glorified and transformed into heavenly, incorruptible, immortal bodies (1 Thess. 4.16; 1 Cor. 15.52-53). We will then inherit the Kingdom of Heaven forever (Mt. 25.34).

While the soul and spirit of “just” men ascend into the presence of God, the soul and spirit of the “unjust” are sent to a holding place of fiery torment, awaiting the day of judgment (Lk. 16.22-23). At the final judgment, which has been called “white throne judgment” (Rev. 20.11-12), the bodies of the unjust are resurrected and reunited with their souls and spirits (Acts 24.15; Jn. 5.28-29). They are then judged by God and cast into an eternal “lake of fire” (Rev. 20.12-15) which is called the “second death” (v. 15).

THE INCARNATION AND VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

God is one Being (Deut. 6.4; Mk. 12.29) who exists eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3.16; 28.19; Jn. 16.13-15; Gal. 4.6; Col. 2.9). These three are equally God (Acts 5.3-4, 9; Phil. 2.6; Col. 1.17-19; 2.9; 1 Jn.5.8). Jesus is always affirmed in Scripture to be the Son of God (Mk. 1.1; Jn. 3.16; Heb. 1.8), and as such is God (Jn. 1.1-3; Heb. 1.8; Rev. 1.8). His identity was confirmed by the Father, the Holy Spirit, angels, and witnessed by supernatural power and the resurrection from the dead (Mt. 1.23; 3.16; Jn. 1.32-34; 1 Tim. 3.16; Rom. 1.4). He existed as the Son of God prior to His birth as a human (Mt. 1.23; Jn. 1.1-3, 14; 8.58; 17:5; Col. 1.17; 1 Tim. 1.17).

The word “incarnation” literally means “to become flesh.” This term refers to the eternal and invisible Son of God leaving the portals of glory and taking on human form to redeem the world and reconcile believers to God (Jn. 1.1-3, 14, 18; 2 Cor. 5.17-19; Phil. 2.6-7; Heb. 10.5, 7; 1 Pet. 2.22-24). This was accomplished by the miraculous act of the Holy Spirit who formed a body within the womb of a “virgin” named Mary (Is. 7.14; Mt. 1.23; Lk. 1.34-35; Gal. 4.4-5; Heb. 10.5,7). Thus, Jesus was fully God and fully man—one person with two natures [divine and human]. As such He is the only one of His kind: the “only begotten of the Father,” the God-man (Jn. 1.14; 3.16; 4.9; Heb. 1.5).

His physical presence among man was confirmed by those who saw him, heard him, and touched His body (Jn. 20.24-29; 2 Pet. 1.16-18; Jn 1.1). Scripture warns against the denial of the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. To deny His identity as God-incarnate is “antichrist” (1 Jn. 2.22-23; 4.2-3; 2 Jn. 7).

Jesus took on the form of sinful man, “yet without sin” (Rom. 8.3; Is. 53.6,9; 2 Cor. 5.21; 2 Pet. 2.22-24; 1 Jn. 3.5) prefiguring the Old Testament type of a spotless lamb offered up in sacrifice to make atonement for sin (Numb. 28.9-11; Jn. 1.29; 1 Pet.1.19). He tasted death for every man and through that means became a ransom for sin (Mk. 10.45; Gal. 4.4-5). Jesus was literally and physically crucified;

He literally and physically died for the sins of man (Mt. 27.35). His dead body was laid in a tomb (Lk. 23:55). Three days later, His body was literally and physically resurrected, and afterward in His glorified body He ascended to the right hand of the Father, now to intercede, mediate, and reconcile to the Father everyone who repents and believes the Gospel (Lk. 24.37-39; Acts 1.9; 1 Tim. 2.5; Heb. 9.15).

Assembly Business Committee Report

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

Section I

The Presiding Bishop's Annual Address, Section III:

We strongly support the Presiding Bishop's Annual Address, especially Section 2, titled The General Assembly, Presiding Bishop, Chief Men of the Church [Elders], and Theocratic Government. We believe that the General Assembly is a sacred gathering because 1) it represents the universal [catholic] expression of the church in worship, fellowship, and decision-making; 2) is a factor in the unity and progress of the church; 3) is the highest tribunal of authority on earth under Christ while in session in matters of faith, biblical interpretation, church government, practice and discipline; 4) and is informed and guided by the Presiding Bishop and chief elders of the church (Acts 15.2, 6; 16.4; 21.17-20).

We further believe as well that the Presiding Bishop is the chief elder among elders, ***“bishop of bishops,”*** ***“first among equals”*** in the hierarchy of the church's governmental structure (Mt. 20.27; Acts 15:13-19). He presides over [moderates] the General Assembly. In counsel with the ***“chief men among the brethren”*** (Executive Council), he acts on behalf of the church when the Assembly is not in session. It's also apparent to us that even in the General Assembly, these elders [presiding bishop and ***“chief men among the brethren”***] provide structure, order, and leadership in the discussions and decision-making process, and they also ***“ordain the decrees for to keep”*** (Acts 16.4).

We also share in the belief that for a more perfect theocratic order that leads the church to perfection, the church should not only believe but fully execute the Biblical teaching that the ministry indeed should be ***“very highly esteemed in love for their work's sake,”*** especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine (1 Ti. 5.17; see also 1 Co. 9.1-14; Ph. 2.25, 29; 1 Th. 5.12-13; 1 Ti. 3.1-16; 5.1; He. 13.7, 17). At the same time, the elders must also have a mutual love and respect for the membership.

There must be, therefore, a deep sense of humility that permeates the whole body of the church (Eph. 4.1-3; 1 Pet. 5.1-5).

We join with the Presiding Bishop in saying we fully expect the prophets' and apostles' vision of the last day's church to be fulfilled in Zion Assembly: ***"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, says the Lord . . . and in this place I will give peace"*** (Hg. 2:9). ***" . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy an without blemish"*** (Eph. 4.4-16; 5.26-27).

Section II

Social Media Funds

We would like to take this opportunity to commend all those who have helped in establishing and maintaining the Multimedia Ministries Department. It has been reported to this committee that the viewership of our social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) has grown to the extent that we are now receiving compensation from our "likes," "shares," and "views." Though the amounts are presently minimal, we fully expect this to grow in the coming months and years. Therefore, we recommend that at this time the funds received from this area of ministry be placed into the Youth/Multimedia Ministries Fund to be used for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Section III

Funds from Disbanded Churches

The following was adopted by the 2018 General Assembly regarding Local Church Properties. It reads as follows:

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

local property, any indebtedness shall be settled before any funds are distributed for other purposes.”

We recommend the following changes:

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

Note: This ruling mainly applies to churches within the United States. Those outside the United States should, in consultation with the Presbytery, develop a criteria to settle the affairs of the disbanded church under the national supervision of the overseer and counsel of elders.

Section IV

Church Trustees

We would like to bring to the attention of this Assembly the following 2018 ruling with regard to the reaffirmation of local church trustees on a yearly basis. It reads as follows: “Those selected [trustees] should be reaffirmed in the first business meeting after each General Assembly and serve as long as they retain the unanimous approval of the local church.” Again, the purpose of this is to ensure that confidence remains with the selected trustees and that harmony remains in the local church.

Section V

Acquiring Land for Assembly Tabernacle Parking

The following was adopted by the 2016 General Assembly regarding a Special Called Assembly. It reads as follows:

“In the event of a pressing issue in regard to an extraordinary circumstance (not related to a doctrinal matter or an administrative decision) that would normally be made by the General Assembly, we recommend that a special Called Assembly be called by the Presiding Bishop to resolve said issue. The decision(s) made in this Called Assembly will be considered an official resolution and will therefore have no need of ratification or modification by the local church or in the following General Assembly.”

In order for the Assembly Tabernacle to be built where it has been designated, we will need adequate parking space per state and local zoning laws. The property that we have currently is not sufficient to build and provide parking for more than a 500 seat building. At this time, we have the opportunity to possibly purchase land adjacent to our current property set aside for the Tabernacle. Because the sale of property often is completed faster than a Special Called Assembly could be organized, our recommendation is that the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the International Properties Building Committee and the Executive Council, be permitted to negotiate a deal for said property (or for any surrounding property that may come up for purchase) without a Special Called Assembly. We further recommend that the negotiated amount not exceed \$850,000.00.

Section VI

The Church Covenant and the Church’s Authority and Responsibility to Interpret Scripture

”We believe it is wise and useful that the authority and responsibility of the church to interpret Scripture be expressed in our sacred covenant of membership. We recommend therefore that the phrase “as interpreted by the church” be included in our church covenant. As such, the covenant formula reads:

“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 as interpreted by the church, 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?”

Section VII General Funds

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

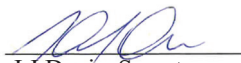
Section VIII Nominations for International Executive Council

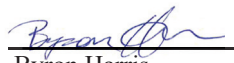
We nominate the following bishops to serve, along with the Presiding Bishop, on the International Executive Council for the 2023-2024 Assembly year: Scott Neill, Rick Ferrell, L.W. Carter, Bruce Sullivan, Joe Steele, Zachary Snyder, and Yomi Adekunle (alternate).

Respectfully Submitted,


Zachary Snyder, Chairman

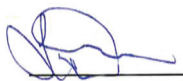

Wade Phillips,
Presiding Bishop

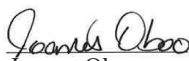

J.J. Davis, Secretary

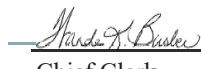

Byron Harris


Kevin Clary, Alternate


David Gomba


Tod Deakle


Joanes Oboo


Manda R. Duster
Chief Clerk

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

20th Annual General Assembly

August 29-September 3, 2023

Section I

For the Time has Come

Jesus and the prophets and apostles warned that the time would come when men and women in general would not accept the message of the transforming power of the Gospel and open their hearts to receive Christ and His teachings. Yet, like the Scribes and Pharisees, they warned that men would remain zealously religious. Again, Jesus and the Apostles warned that in the very last days people would militantly oppose the true Gospel message and go about promoting their own homespun religion which has ***“a form of godliness but [denies] the transforming power of the Gospel.”*** And so, they go about ***“deceiving and being deceived.”*** This is what the apostle Paul warned us of at 2 Tim. 3.1-9, 11-14.

Still in the next chapter, Paul says, ***“nevertheless, preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season”*** (2 Tim. 4.2). Instant in season signifies to preach the Word when all is congenial and acceptable (like at Berea—Acts 17.11); when opportunities present themselves; when doors are open, when people are receptive. But we must preach also when doors are closed, when people reject the message (like those at Thessalonica—Acts 17.11, like those at Capernaum and Bethsaida that rejected Jesus’ preaching—Lk. 10.13). Thus says the apostle, in all times and under all circumstances, ***“preach the Word.”*** Declare the true Gospel message of holiness and the hope and expectation of eternal life for those who remain faithful and obedient! Judgment is now imminent. Preach! Reprove! Rebuke! Exhort with all patience and longsuffering! Proclaim the truth! Warn the nations of the impending judgment of God coming upon the earth.

Certainly, we are living in an ***“out of season”*** time. Compare the time and circumstances when our forefathers in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries began the holiness-Pentecostal movement. The doors

of the people were open to the hope and transforming power of the Gospel. In many cases all you had to do was reach out and show pity and concern for the poor and deprived in the destitute regions of the mountains. The distribution of Bibles and Christian literature and clothes were gratefully and joyfully received. Many readily accepted our pioneers' invitations to read the Bible for them in their homes; to lead them in prayer and establish missions and churches! A great many without question readily responded to the message of holiness and Spirit-baptism!

But now the *“spirit and power of antichrist”* is sweeping the world. Lawlessness and rebellion, scoffers, and mockers are rapidly increasing. Recall what the apostle says further on in this passage:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim 4.3-4).

This is what He taught the Disciples for three years while He was here on the earth—and this is what He taught Paul out in the Arabian desert for three years. But see, false teachers and hypocrites negate God's commandments by their traditions. They make the commands of God of no effect by empty rituals and human legislation! (Mt. 15.1-9; Is. 29.13; Ezek. 33.31).

The apostle Paul warned at Gal. 1.6-10 of a powerfully deceptive replacement for true salvation, a substitute religiosity over against the transforming power of the Gospel of Christ. They preach and “worship” with their hands in their pockets and their shirt tails hanging out. They advocate for a casual Christianity. Coffee houses and the social Gospel has replaced the altar and prayer closet! The promoters of these trends are false prophets and teachers spreading the news of a deficient Gospel—literally *“another Gospel.”* It is a watered-down version of the true Gospel; not the one Jesus, Peter, James, and John and the apostle Paul preached and taught in the New Testament. The apostles got their message directly from Christ; these false and misguided teachers get their message from religious charlatans, pagan priests, philosophers, eloquent speakers who enshroud themselves with the appearance of piety and a pretentious righteousness. *“They deceive,”* says the prophet, with their *“smooth words”* and oratorical skills (Is. 30.8-9; 1 Cor. 2.5), and *“no*

marvel,” says the apostle; “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness . . .” (2 Cor. 11.13-14).

Today the world wants peace without surrender! Justification without repentance! Salvation without obedience. God’s acceptance at the Communion Table without holiness of heart! Eternal life without the new birth! Sanctification without crucifixion! Baptism without spiritual immersion into Christ! Heaven in the next life without consecration in this life! They want a Savior but not a Lord!

Ladies and gentlemen, the prophetic time Jesus and the Apostles and Prophets promised would come ***“has come.”*** It is here! This generation doesn’t want a preacher ***“sent from God”*** with a message ***“sent from God”***: namely, the message of true holiness and righteousness sent down from God. They come in the name of Christ but not with the message of Christ. They tickle and satisfy the ***“itching ears”*** of their hearers, sooth their consciences, preach a message that agrees with their ***“lusts”*** and evil desires. They desire to continue to live in the ***“pleasures of sin for a season than to suffer affliction with the people of God.”*** The old plague of hedonism has been revived and is flooding this generation. They say to their soul, ***“Soul . . . take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry . . . for tomorrow we die!”*** (Lk. 12.19; 1 Cor. 15.32). We are in the throes of a universal apostasy of Christianity. ***“Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.”*** A new Dark Ages is upon us! It’s slick religion: in which the confessors trick the priests in forgiving them. But they don’t fool God! It’s deluded religion that relies on the bread and wine of the communion Table and the baptism of water rather than the power of faith to give them a new heart! A heart that longs for justification and peace with God. Multitudes of preachers have fallen into the pit of this deception and give their hearers what they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear! **They are hirelings and phony prophets!**

Some years ago, I was participating in a course of study at Regent University. The heads of many Christian organizations were in attendance. The professor made a declaration, ***“It’s Jesus plus nothing.”*** And again, ***“Jesus is the whole message and the sum of all things!”*** Then he asked the 32 participants if they agreed with those statements. All but two said they agreed. I was one of the two. When asked on what ground I disagreed, I said, ***“Because there is a subtle deception in that declaration.”*** What

you really mean is, **“It’s Jesus minus something, namely, Jesus minus His teachings.”** They reject a Christ who has supreme authority over their lives and actions and who will ultimately judge where each one will spend eternity.

Peter and Jude compare these false teachers to **“natural brute beasts.”** They are **“wells without water,”** clouds that promise rain but are empty and dry; rebels like Korah and the 250 leaders in Israel who opposed Moses’ authority in the **“church in the wilderness.”** They are **“spots”** in our sacred feasts; like autumn trees with no fruit, **“twice dead and plucked up by the roots.”** They are like **“wandering (shooting) stars”** that jump their orbits, swallowed up into black holes out in the depths of space!

Again, hear the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah.

“That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers (the pastors/overseers); See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way (the way of the Lord) turn aside out of the path of righteousness.”

David said, ***“he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”***

There are two ways set before us: **the broad way** and **the narrow way**. This generation has chosen the **“broad way”** to destruction. They say, ***“Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us, i.e., don’t let Him lead you; follow after your own lawless desires”*** (Is. 30.9-12). They want to hear about a Christ who is negotiable. One with whom they can bargain and debate and negotiate salvation. One with whom they stand on equal ground, rather than the exalted One who sits on the throne with His Father. They despise and reject His supreme authority and uncompromising truth! Behold, Christ is the Almighty God (Heb. 1.8; Rev. 1.8) equal in holiness and power and wisdom with the Father, not a man that He should lie and break His covenant (Titus 1.2; Heb. 6.18-19).

Judgment is coming like a dam on the verge of cracking and collapsing—a judgment that will bring sure and sudden death and destruction upon the

world. It will be devastating and deadly (vv.13-14)! Sweeping over the earth like the flood in Noah's day. [***“For as the days were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark”, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be***] (Mt. 24.38-39; Lk. 24.34-37).

In 1972, near the first church that I pastored in West Virginia, there was a great disaster that made international news. A dam at Buffalo Creek that supported a coal mine operation gave way, killing 125 people and affecting thousands of others. It swept away everything in its path—houses, cars, property, people.

Near Bogota, Columbia about 40 years ago, I was the representative speaker from our international offices in our former fellowship for the national convention. A few days after I left, a mountain gave way. The powerful avalanche buried 25,000 souls beneath thousands of tons of rock and earth. The people were buried alive! It was a sudden and devastating judgment! There was no time to repent and make things right with God.

Another characteristic that marked the apostasy of Israel was trusting in “Egypt,” that is, relying on worldly politics, the arm of the flesh, instead of God. The Jews were being oppressed by the Assyrians. But they looked to Egypt for salvation rather than to cry out to God (Is. 30.1-8). They looked for salvation horizontally rather than vertically! They looked down and across rather than “up!” Jesus said, when you see these end-time signs, ***“Look up!”*** But Israel rather paid tribute to Egypt for protection. The prophet warned, “it’s a waste of money,” trusting in mammon, leaning on the arm of flesh—on worldly political, economic, and religious systems!

We are contending with the last day’s Babylon: a world of confusion, chaos, and moral disorder. People today say things have not changed. Everything now is as it has always been. Peter and Paul warned that men would say this very thing in the last days. Peter wrote:

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are

ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet. 3.3-11).

Yes, things have changed. When I was in Junior high school in the 1950s, the teachers were busy trying to keep students from doing such horrible things as talking out of order, throwing spitballs at each other, and scuffling at recess. Now they are overwhelmed with gun violence, drugs, alcoholism, mass shootings, explosives, the insanity of a hundred gender identities, rampant homosexuality, abortion, digging fetuses out trash cans and dumpsters, addictions of all sorts, bitter hatred, anger management, psychological disorders, transsexualism, and many old pagan habits and barbaric practices! It’s the prevailing spirit of antichrist in these very last days! Obviously, there have been monumental changes! What Paul said of the old apostate world is now prevalent in this present generation (Rom. 1.21-25). But the message of the Gospel has not changed! God has not changed! God’s true church has not changed!

Significantly, to emphasize holiness of life, *“the Holy One,”* or *“Holy One of Israel”* is mentioned more than 30 times in Isaiah. The prophet calls for holiness/righteousness/truth/consecration in the Lord. And thus, the apostle says, *“But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye in all manner of conversation [lifestyle]. Because it is written, “Be ye holy, for I am holy!” (1 Pet. 1.15-16). Note, “. . . in all manner” (v.15). Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His steps “who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth” (2.21-22).*

One specific aspect of holiness is **“government”** (1 Pet. 2.10; Is. 9.6-7; 18.15-20). A sign of the end-times is **“lawlessness!”** There is an ever-growing antagonism against authority and government, both in the civil world and in the realm of Christianity. Men **“despise government”** and refuse to yield to governors (dignitaries/dignities) and those in authority (Rom. 16.17; 13.1-7; 3 Jn. 9-10; Heb. 13.7, 17). Government is the offices and rulers by which one is governed! Both in civil and religious matters. It is a system ordained by the Lord (Rom. 13.1-7; 2 Pet. 2.13-16). There is a spirit of rebellion, lawlessness, arrogance, defiance, and headiness in the world today! So, we admonish you, brethren, do not be tainted with discouragement by all the backsliding and apostasy in these last days.

“Write the whole account of Israel’s rebellion in a table of stone, and note it in a book, that it may be for a time to come forever and ever” (Is. 30. 8).

Mark it plainly so as not to forget it. Remember God’s judgment against backsliding and rebellion. ***“I will hear what God the Lord will speak . . . but let them not turn again [turn back] to folly!”*** (Ps. 85.8).

Thankfully, the prophecy if Isaiah ends with a ray of hope for repentance, reconciliation, and redemption. Note ***“this word”*** (v. 12). The word of salvation but also the word of divine judgment! Do not despise prophesyings or the chastisement of the Lord. ***“These things were written for our admonition”*** (1 Cor. 10.11; Eph. 6.4). What was true then for that generation is true now for this one! Hear the Lord:

“In returning and rest ye shall be saved” (Is. 30.15, 18). Repent and wait for Me! I will be exalted in mercy! Mercy rejoices against judgment! (Jas. 2.13; Job 22.6-9; Prov. 21.13). God is exalted by all who have experienced His great grace and mercy. We praise Him for His lovingkindness and forgiveness: for He has chosen mercy over judgment! ***“. . . blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion . . . thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee”*** (vv. 18-19).

Section II

The General Assembly, Presiding Bishop, Chief Men of the Church [Elders], and Theocratic Government

The General Assembly is an extraordinary event because 1) it represents the universal [catholic] expression of the church in worship, fellowship, and decision-making; 2) it is a factor in the unity and progress of the church; 3) when in session, it is the highest tribunal of authority on earth under Christ in matters of faith, biblical interpretation, church government, practice and discipline 4) it is informed and guided by the presiding bishop and chief elders of the church (Acts 15.2, 6; 16.4; 21.17-20).

The **presiding bishop** is the chief elder among elders, “**bishop of bishops**,” “**first among equals**” in the hierarchy of the church’s governmental structure (Mt. 20.27). He presides over [moderates] the General Assembly. In counsel with the “**chief men among the brethren**” (Executive Council), he acts on behalf of the church when the Assembly is not in session. Even in the General Assembly, these elders [**presiding bishop** and “**chief men among the brethren**”] provide structure, order, and leadership in the discussions and decision-making process, and they also “**ordain the decrees for to keep**.” James, the Lord’s brother, was the presiding bishop, recognized as such shortly after Jesus ascended back to the Father, and he continued in this position until his martyrdom (Acts 15.13-20; 21.17; 1 Cor. 15.7; Gal. 2.9; Jas. 1.1). He thus held this position apparently for about thirty years. Besides the evidence given in Scripture, there is overwhelming evidence in the early church fathers who flourished between the end of the first century to the end of the fourth. Clement of Rome (probably the same Clement mention in Phil. 4.3), Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, Eusebius, et. al. all claimed that James, the Lord’s brother, was made Bishop of Jerusalem and as such “**ruled all the churches everywhere**” until his martyrdom.

The General Assembly in Acts 15 was a special called event. Significantly, it was convened only one time in the New Testament at Jerusalem. It would seem a stretch to consider the meetings recorded in Acts 1.13-26 and 6.1-7 to be general assemblies. In our tradition of

the faith in Zion Assembly, the General Assembly beginning in 1906 became an annual event. It represents the one time of the year [unless there is a special-called Assembly] that ministers and members from all over the world assemble in the name of Christ to bind and loose on earth what God has bound and loosed in heaven (Mt. 16.19; Acts 15.1–16.5). All present consecrate themselves to find the perfect mind of Christ in all matters of faith, government, and discipline. This is why in Jacob’s words the church is a **“dreadful place”** (Gen. 28.16-17); for it is at this special time that the church led by the presiding bishop and chief elders acts in an official capacity as God’s *ekklesia* [**“church”**] having been ordained and authorized by Christ to do so (Mt. 16.18-19; 18.18-20; Mk. 13.34; Lu. 19.13; Jn. 20.23; Acts 15.1-29; 16.4-5). In this special meeting, the ministers and members reason together with God and one another (Is. 1.18; Acts 15.6-19, 28); look judiciously into the Holy Scriptures (Acts 17.10-11; and compare Acts 15.15-18 with Amos 9.11-12); and seek diligently for the Spirit’s illumination until an understanding is reached in harmony [**“one accord”**] with the Scriptures and the presiding bishop and chief elders (Acts 15.28-29; 16.4). Then, having come to this understanding, all agree to **“walk by the same rule,” “mind the same thing,”** and have **“the same judgment”** (1 Cor.1.10; Phil. 3.16; Is. 52.8), that is, the whole body of the ministers and members commit themselves to live and walk together as one body in Christ according to the Scriptures and the decrees of the sacred meeting.

Because the Bible is the supreme objective authority of the church, the General Assembly correspondingly is “a judicial body only” in matters of faith, government, practice, and discipline, that is, the General Assembly does not legislate but rather interprets the Bible to understand the will and purpose of God. Since the decrees of the General Assembly are binding on the ministers and members (Acts 16.4; Rom. 16.17), they must be shown to be either explicitly or implicitly in harmony with the teachings of Christ and the apostles and elders.

Again, the biblical model for the General Assembly and our judicious process is found in Acts 15.1-16.5. Here the apostles and elders gathered with the whole church (vv. 1-4, 12, 22-23, 28), and prayed and deliberated with the help of the Spirit until all were able to **“see eye to eye”** in harmony with the guidance of the presiding bishop and chief elders, most especially the elders **“who labor in the word and**

doctrine” (Acts 6.2,4; 1 Tim. 5.17). The Assembly is thus led and guided by the “*chief men*” of the church (vv. 1-4, 6-17, 22-27). Thus, it is said that the decisions made in the council in Jerusalem “*pleased the apostles and elders and the whole church*” (vv. 22), and again, “*for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*” (v. 28). Then on this basis, all agree to live and walk by the decrees [*dogmas*] of the Assembly which are ordained by the presiding bishop and the elders (16.4). And, accordingly, the churches are established in the faith and increase in number daily (v. 5).

Corporate counsel is thus an underlying principle upon which the government of the church is established. The General Assembly is made up of ministers and members from around the world whom Providence has blessed to participate in the proceedings. The wise man wrote, “*Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety*” (Pr. 11.14), and again, “*Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors, they are established*” (15.22).

Every male minister and member of the church in good standing is invited to participate in the decision-making process; the women also contribute through prayer and in consultation with their husbands and elders (1 Cor. 14.28, 34; 1 Tim. 2.11-12). This is based on the premise that everyone in good standing is regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who leads and guides into all truth and righteousness (Jn. 14.26; 15. 26, 16.12-15; 1 Cor. 2.1-16). All stand together spiritually therefore as equals before the Lord (Gal. 3.28; Rom. 10.11-13; 1 Cor. 12.12-28; Col. 3.11). Even so, all do not stand on equal footing regarding the callings and gifts of God in the government, ministry, and decision-making. For example, “novices” do not stand on equal footing with bishops and deacons (1 Tim. 3.6), and the roles of men are distinguished from the roles of women in the decision-making process (1 Tim. 2.8-14; 3.1-5). The bishops and elders are called, set apart, and enabled by God to lead and guide the church (1 Tim. 3.1-13), that is, bishops are qualified to “*teach,*” for they are called and ordained to “*labor in the word and doctrine*” (2 Tim. 3.17), and the deacons assist the bishops [pastors]. The elders are therefore set apart and distinguished for this purpose. Thus, Paul in his letter to the Philippians distinguishes the bishops and deacons from “*all the saints*” in his greeting (Phil. 1.11).

It is a startling illumination to realize that in all the New Testament, there was apparently only one General Assembly convened, and it appears to have lasted for less than one day. This means the Apostles and Elders, and their successors ruled the church for more than fifty years without requiring a General Assembly. This revelation all the more exalts the eldership of the church, led by James, the Lord's brother, Peter and John, and other chief men among the brethren. Accordingly, it puts great weight and responsibility upon elders to remain humble and consecrated through prayer and meditation upon the Word of God.

When Rehoboam was made king in the Old Testament theocracy, it is said that all Israel came to Shechem to make him king (1 Kg. 12.1). Moreover, it is emphasized that Rehoboam failed because he did not heed the counsel of the ***“elders and the people”*** in making decisions (vv. 6-15); but heeded rather a select counsel of the ***“young men who had grown up with him”*** (vv. 8-10), which signified that Rehoboam was partial in his decision-making and succumbed to the opinion of the young men who were actually opposed either wittingly or unwittingly to the will of God. Indeed, those young men typically were full of themselves: arrogant, boastful, and harsh in their judgments (vv. 10-14).

It will be noticed further, regarding the house of God under Rehoboam, that ultimately the will of God is all that really matters, and His will is best discerned and understood by the elders and men and women who have consecrated themselves to the Lord. In any case, God always ultimately has His way—sometimes despite the leaders and the people. ***“Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord”*** (v. 15; see also v. 24). Tragically, Rehoboam's actions caused the house of God to divide (vv. 16-20), but this division was foreknown in the divine counsel and prosecuted according to the will of God. See the prophet Ahijah's prophecy (1 Kg. 11.29-39). God's fixed purpose in and through David was fulfilled in Christ through the southern kingdom of Judah; nothing could prevent that! Likewise, God's true church today is foreordained to succeed in her mission and purpose, nothing can prevent that! (2 Chron. 7.13-22; Is. 30.1-16; 60.1-5; Jer. 18.1-11; Ezek. 37.1-14; Mt. 16.18; Eph. 5.26-27).

The church under the spirit and terms of the New Covenant operates as ***“the habitation of God through the Spirit”*** (Eph. 2.22). The ministers

and members form the temple of God and are unified spiritually through the indwelling power and wisdom of the Spirit and the Scriptures. This is the key to theocratic government—the indwelling graces and gifts of the Spirit being allowed to prevail in the church in harmony with the Scriptures. Again, it should be emphasized that among the highest gifts in the church are the gifts to oversee [govern/rule] the church; to feed, nourish, discipline, and perfect God’s people (Mk. 13.34; Lk. 19.13; Acts 2.47; 1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1-2; 12.28; Eph. 4.7-16; Phil. 4.17; 1 Thess. 1.6; 2 Thess. 3.7-9; Heb. 13.7, 17).

Now observe: the apostle Paul, by his own admission, was ***“not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles”*** (2 Cor. 11.5; 12.11-12) and in a peculiar way was called and chosen by the Lord for a special purpose (Acts 9.11-16; 2 Cor. 11.5; Eph. 3.1-10); yet he saw the need to report to James and the elders in Jerusalem—men of ***“reputation”*** and standing in the church, in order to maintain divine order and unity (Acts 21.17-26; Gal. 2.1-2, 9). Even among the apostles there was thus a hierarchy of government and administrative authority. Timothy, Titus, and scores of other elders and ministers were subject to the oversight [rulership] of Paul. Paul was subject to the oversight of James, Peter, John, and the chief elders at Jerusalem (Acts 12.17; 15.13-21; 21.17-26; 1 Cor. 15.7; Gal. 2.11-14), and James, Peter, and John were subject to God and the decrees of the General Assembly—that is, the resolutions adopted by the whole body of the church assembled in duly-ordained order (Acts 15.22-23; 1 Cor. 12.12-28).

The role of the Holy Spirit in the government and divine order of the church is indispensable. He is the ultimate wisdom and power of the church, revealing the Headship of Christ and His ultimate authority. Thus, He does not speak for Himself but for Christ, who in turn speaks for the Father (Jn 5.19-43; 14.26; 15.26; 16.12-15). He creates a spiritual dynamic within the church that unites the ministers and members together intrinsically in one body of Christ. Even before the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the 120 were in ***“one accord”*** because they had been sanctified and were ***“continually in the temple praising and blessing God”*** (Lu. 24.53). The essential key to the spiritual unity and power of the church is therefore in sanctification and the anointing of the Holy Spirit; which enables us to maintain a consecrated devotion to Christ, and also enables every man to abide in his own calling in the divine order (1 Cor. 12.12-28). When everyone’s ego is crucified, then

Christ is free to rule supreme—the kingdom of God prevails! Christ thus says in His prayer to the Father, ***“Sanctify them through thy truth . . . that they all may be one . . . And the glory which you gave me I have given them . . . that they may be made perfect in one”*** (Jn.17.17-23).

It is said following the day of Pentecost that ***“the multitude of them who believed were of one heart and of one soul . . . and great grace was upon them all”*** (Acts 4.32-33). Likewise, the key to God’s glorious government in this last day’s Zion depends on our willingness to allow the Spirit and the revelation of the Scriptures to hold sway over us in matters of faith, practice, and government: and in the fulfillment of the church’s mission in the world. The apostle Paul understood this divine principle and encouraged the church to ***“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”*** (Eph. 4.1-3). He went on to say, ***“[For] there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all”*** (vv. 4-6).

We see then that it is imperative to stir up the graces of Christ within us and labor in prayer to cultivate a heavenly atmosphere in the place where we meet to deliberate and act for God. The power fell on the day of Pentecost because the elders with all the brethren were together ***“in one accord in one place”*** (Acts 1.14; 2.1, 46; 4.24; 8.6; Phil. 2.7), and because they answered God’s call and humbled themselves until they were of ***“one heart and one soul and great grace was upon them all.”***

Now you may be saying in your thoughts, this section of the address really exalts the elders. Precisely. Because the Scriptures tell us to do so (1 Tim. 5.17; 1 Thess. 5.12-13; Heb. 13.7, 17). In our history, we have tended to swing the pendulum of church government from one extreme to the other. In the beginning, in our first 25 years, we tended to embrace a democratic or congregational form of church government; and even tended toward an individualism. Then beginning about 1912 we began to exalt an episcopal form of government which led to the disruption of the church in 1923. Now, one hundred years later we can see by hindsight and experience a more perfect form of church government—a more perfect theocratic order. The elders indeed

should be ***“very highly esteemed in love for their works sake”*** (1 Tim. 5.17; see also 1 Cor. 9.1-14; Phil. 2.25, 29; 1 Thess. 5.12-13; 1 Tim. 3.1-16; 5.1; Heb. 13.7, 17); but all the ministers and members should have a mutual respect, for all have the Holy Spirit who abides within us to teach and lead us in all truth and righteousness. There must be, therefore, a deep sense of humility that permeates the whole body of the church (Eph. 4.1-3).

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5.1-5).

Should we expect God’s blessings to fall on this last day’s Zion on the basis of anything less than that upon which He blessed the New Testament Zion? Surely not. It is an old principle that cannot be transgressed if we expect the blessings of God to be upon this last day’s house: ***“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . for there the Lord commanded the blessing”*** (Ps. 133.1-3).

We fully expect the prophets’ and apostles’ vision of the last day’s church to be fulfilled in Zion Assembly: ***“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, says the Lord . . . and in this place I will give peace*** (Hag. 2:9). ***“ . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy an without blemish”*** (Eph. 4.4-16; 5.26-27).

Section III

Fulfilling our Vision for the International Ministries Complex

In the Assembly in 2014 a vision was cast for an International Ministries Complex [IMC]. The first phase of this vision was realized when we reorganized and restored the church in April 2004. Anticipating the need to take this solemn step, Brother McDonald, and I, in February of that year borrowed \$225,000 to purchase an old, abandoned IGA supermarket, ideally located on the four-lane Ocoee [64] HWY. In the next two years we remodeled this building [the same one we are seated in right now] to suit our needs at that point. We borrowed and paid off two loans—one for \$450,000 and another for \$200,000 to finance this project. The remodeling included laying out a plan to develop the landscape and the parking area with its twenty-one [21] islands. We did the bulk of this work ourselves led by Brother McDonald and me, but many of our pastors and faithful people jumped in and zealously labored to accomplish this monumental task.

It may be good to recall that, in the beginning, we had no buildings, no VOZ, no SMI, no support ministries [auxiliaries], no youth program, no children's program, no Missions program, no presence in the nations around the world except four little churches here in the United States, and no General Treasury in the church because we had no money, not a dime to our name. But what we had was a vision! And the vision as it turned out was more powerful than all our deficiencies!

Many of the faithful and dedicated men and women who joined together to help us accomplish this great task twenty years ago have passed on to their heavenly reward. I believe it would be in order here to mention some who contributed so much of their time and labor to make this vision become reality: Cliff and Becky Kelton (MS), Claxton Cook (MS), Cletus and Eunice Gregory (KY), Clyde and Faye Davis (SC), Kenneth Merritt (TN), Ricky Graves (TN/KY), Joe, Julie and Joey Steele, Jack Wilkerson (TN), Tim Pounders, Cecil and Donna Pounders, Sam Monday (TN), Tod and Sheila Deakle (AL), Jim Melton (WV), and there were others whose names are written in heaven.

This was all accomplished in the first few years of our existence. But as the church grew around the world, we began to feel the crunch for more room and adequate space to facilitate our growth and fulfill our mission. This led us to the 2014 Assembly, in which, as mentioned already, a vision was cast to expand our International Offices, develop an Educational Wing which would house and facilitate a library and archives, kitchen and fellowship hall, storage rooms, and classrooms for the School of Ministry and our envisioned Bible college.

After that Assembly we quickly began to move in that direction, having raised more than \$150,000 toward the vision and expansion. Many of you here today became a partner in that great enterprise, either by giving financially or giving of your time and labor, or both. In this midst of this endeavor, however, the property that adjoins ours, owned and operated by “Lloyd’s Used Cars Lot,” came available for purchase. Having had established a warm friendship with Lloyd, he gave us first opportunity to purchase the property without listing it with a realty. We finally agreed on \$160,000. (He has since said on several occasions he regretted selling it to us for such a low price: for the property is worth now about \$350,000. But I told him I thought the Lord had His way). The presiding bishop called for a special Assembly to consider the matter, and all with one accord recognized it as a God-sent opportunity and agreed to pause the development of the Education wing to purchase this valuable property. We paid off the loan in little more than a year and then focused again on the construction of the Education Wing. Architectural plans were soon drawn up, city and county licenses were obtained, and a new bank loan was arranged. The architect, licenses, bank loan, and other preliminaries amounted to about \$1.4 million. Work began in the spring of 2018 and was finished in the summer of 2020. Since then, this loan has been paid down to about \$650,000. More than half the loan has been paid off! I think it would be in order here to pause and give the Lord a sacrifice of praise for all He has enabled us to accomplish.

The financial plans that we agreed upon to finance our vision for the IMC is paying off. The first was the ***Prophets’ Plan*** inaugurated in 2011, then the ***King’s Plan*** in 2014, both of which were based upon biblical precedents (2 Kgs. 6.1-5; 2 Chron. 24.5-13), and both reflected *Moses’ Plan* in Ex. 30.12-16, which was designed to finance the Tabernacle in the

Wilderness and its maintenance and upkeep. Then in 2018 we decided to join these plans into one fund called the International Properties Building Fund (IPBF). At the same time, we added two other resources to this fund, namely, for the local churches to boost and collect a regular monthly IPBF offering and send it to the General Treasurer with the regular monthly report. We also agreed to send twenty percent [20%] of the World Mission offerings to be transferred by the General Treasurer to help make the IPBF sufficient for the need. Still, it should be borne in mind that the main source of revenue is the big offering we receive once a year during our Annual General Assembly, which is in accord with the three biblical financial plans mentioned above, and King David's plan in 2 Chron. 29.1-9.

Our aim now is to pay-off the existing loan completely by 2026, or sooner with the favor of God. In any case, as soon as it is paid-off, or nearly so, we will focus again on constructing the new multi-purpose building which will include an Assembly Tabernacle. This will fulfill our vision for the International Ministries Complex and enable us to more effectively evangelize and disciple the nations with the full Gospel message as we understand it in Zion Assembly.

In pursuit of this vision, however, we have run upon a snag. The city and county ordinances require us to have enough parking space per seating capacity for the Assembly Tabernacle. Presently our parking space would allow us to build only a 500-seat auditorium. To go forward on this basis would, therefore, seem to be shortsighted. What we envision is at least an 800-seat or even a 1000-seat auditorium.

To expedite this undertaking, I'm asking the Assembly to grant the presiding bishop and the construction committee the leverage to negotiate for property that adjoins our present property without having to call for a special-called Assembly. For if something becomes available, we will not want to hesitate to purchase it—especially as land and real estate is so much in demand right now and prices are soaring. Even now there may be a great opportunity at our door. The property that adjoins our property on our east side—"Thomas Metal Supply Company" has been on the market for sale now for almost a year, and no one has closed the deal.

The storage buildings and offices sit on more than two acres. It may be that we can purchase this valuable property for far less than the original

price of 1 million dollars. If this can be arranged, we would have plenty of parking space for a 1000-seat auditorium and could move forward with our vision for the International Ministries Complex.

To pull this off we would have to do what we did back in 2016, that is, put off constructing the multi-purpose building for a year or so until we can refinance the present loan and purchase the new property. If we could succeed along these lines our property would expand to over 5 acres. We might add here also that the property behind us—about nine acres might become negotiable, or at least part of it. However, the property owned by the “Thomas Metal Supply Company” is more situationally desirable. In any case, if either of these properties could be obtained, or both, we may one day soon be able to boast like David and say, ***“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion . . . the city of the great King”*** (Ps. 48.2) and again ***“Glorious things are spoken of thee, o city of God . . . and of Zion it shall be said . . . the highest Himself shall establish her”*** (87.2, 5).

Now let me conclude this section by emphasizing an important and necessary principle in this undertaking. Our vision for the IMC is directly connected and dependent upon our broader vision of the Bible church and her mission in the world. This broader vision encompasses ***“the faith”*** of the Gospel and God’s plan for the church—the prophetic ***“City of God, the Zion of the Holy One”*** (Is. 60.14). We will never fulfill the vision for the IMC without maintaining the broader and more important prophetic vision of the church, which includes fulfilling the great commission: namely, to evangelize and disciple all nations with ***“this gospel,”*** that is, the very same Gospel that Jesus preached (Mt. 24.14; 28.19-20). It includes the ***“all things whatsoever”*** that Christ and the Apostles commanded us (Mt. 4.4; Acts 2.42; 20.27; Eph. 2.20; 5.26-27), and in fact ***“every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”*** ***“This Gospel”*** as we understand it includes sanctification as a second definite work of grace and holiness as a lifestyle: by lifestyle we mean to show outwardly what sanctification looks like lived out.

But again, central to our discipleship ministry for born-again believers is the message of the church, which is God’s government for His people on earth. This includes perfecting believers [“saints of God”] and fitting and assimilating them in one visible body of Christ, that is, to incorporate them together under one government and discipline. Denominationalism and

Independency is a mockery of God's purpose for His people and thus a contradiction of our aims in Zion Assembly.

We labor therefore always with the purpose to unite all of God's children in one body of Christ. In the apostle's words, ***"I have espoused [betrothed] you to one husband"*** and labor to bring you all under one rule of faith, government, practice, and discipline, to present you to Christ as a ***"chaste virgin,"*** a fully prepared bride adorned with her wedding garment (2 Cor. 11.2-3; Col. 1.28; Rev. 19.6-7). This is clearly the testimony of Jesus as well as the prophets and apostles (Ex. 19.5; Ps. 45.9-13; Is. 62.5; Jer.2.2; 50.5; Ezek. 16.8; Hos. 2.19-20).

The perfection of the church, the espoused bride of Christ was Paul's goal, a goal of which, however, he could not meet in his lifetime and ministry. Notwithstanding, he handed it down for us to reach in these very last days. This is God's prophetic plan.

"For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11.2-3).

Now listen further to the apostle:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1.10).

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3.16).

Zion Assembly is therefore an ecumenical movement, an alternative to the ecumenical aims of the great Harlot that has been in the making for centuries throughout the world, even as we speak. She is preparing to mount the end-times ***"scarlet-colored Beast"*** (Rev. 17.1-18). She is a Babylon of whoredoms and vile wickedness outwardly ***"decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, and [she has] a gold cup in her hand full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication."***

Now the prophetic and apostolic call for the visible union of God's people will be fulfilled only by a people who have a vision of the church in the Holy Scriptures; who labor together with God to fulfill the apostolic commands to come together under the banner of love and holiness and who agree [covenant and pledge themselves] to walk together under one rule of faith, government, and discipline.

Listen for a moment to the commands and prayers of our Lord and the prophets and apostles:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (Jn. 10.16)

“Neither I pray for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (17.20-23),

“And one of them named, Caiaphas, being high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spake not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad” (11.49-52).

“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” (Eph. 1.10).
[Ecumenical miracle!]

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one [Jews and Gentiles], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he

might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (2.14-16).

[Note: Denominationalism and independent groups put up again the wall of separation that was tore down by the cross of Christ].

“And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints . . . 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” (4.11-16)

Now listen to the prophets:

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity . . . It is like the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Ps. 133.1-3).

“Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together” (Is. 52. 8-9).

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on thy left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded” (54.1-3; compare with Gal. 4.27). “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift

up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (cp. Jer. 4.27; 60.1-5).

“So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord” (59.19-20).

Almost all Christians say these passages depict sinners coming to Christ and the millennium. But that’s not true. The Bible says plainly these are believers already in Christ, and are coming to Zion, the city of God, looking for Jesus’ second coming. At Mount Sinai when Moses mediated the church covenant to Israel, the people were already in Abraham, that is, they were the seed of Abraham and, as such, were justified by faith and were designated the family of God. But under Moses they were incorporated together and became a *“peculiar people,” “a special treasure,” “an holy nation”* (Ex. 19.5-8; Heb. 3.4-6). Peter makes it plain that the church under the New Covenant is the continuation of that holy nation under the Old Covenant—the *“church in the wilderness”* (Acts 7.38). So do Paul and all the apostles (1 Cor. 10.1-11; Eph. 2.14-16).

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2.9).

Now observe: It is just as plain that this body, this nation formed under the Old Testament (Israel) at Mount Sinai was a visible, corporation—a holy nation! The Lord simply brought that body under the terms of the New Covenant (Mt. 5.1-7.29; Jn. 17. 6, 8, 14). He did not change the nature of its corporate design and purpose as a visible structure formed on the bases of a mutual covenant. The “invisible church” is therefore a man-

made myth: a cover up to explain away and justify denominationalism and independent mega-churches and small local independent groups.

The core of the New Testament church in the very beginning was made up of twelve Jews—for the Jews had priority. Jesus thus commanded the apostles, *“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Mt. 10.5). But then the Jews rejected Christ and His message, *“contradicting and blaspheming”* Him and the apostles’ message, and thus the doors of the church were thrown open to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas then waxed bold, and said to the Jews, *“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [the Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”* (Acts 13.46). And Jesus said regarding their rejection of the Gospel, *“Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof”* (Mt. 21.43; see also 3.9-12). At that point the Gentile believers poured in from all nations and were incorporated into the church, and the church became *“the Israel of God”* (Is. 54.1-3; Gal. 4.27; 6.16; Eph. 2.14-16; Zeph. 3.14).

The church is not some mystical or spiritual body of individuals in Christ. That is a misnomer for the kingdom of God. It is rather a visible body of believers joined together **horizontally**: incorporated together and formed by a church covenant, a sacred agreement (Ex. 19.5-8; 24.6-8; 2 Kgs. 23.1-3; Neh. 10.29-39; Is. 62.5; Jer. 3.1-20; Ezek. 16.8; Rev. 19.7-8). See how many times the Lord speaks of the believers’ horizontal relationship to *“one another”* (Rom. Jn. 13.34-35; 13.8; Gal. 5.13; Eph. 4.8; 1 Pet. 1.22). Paul’s illustration of the church as the body of Christ is a classic appeal to this concept. The church covenant is therefore not simply **vertical** between the individual and God; it is between God and believers together. *“And all the people said we will!”* (Ex. 19.5-8; Deut. 7.6). *“We are laborers together with God . . . ye are God’s building”* (1 Cor. 3.9)—**His temple, His house, His habitation, His city, His holy nation!** This is what he tried to get the Corinthians to grasp: that the church is many members in one body: and all God’s children are called into the unity of the church. It’s important to know what part you play in the body—**eye, ear, nose, hand, foot**, and then work and remain in that position and calling (1 Cor. 12.12-28).

See, the church is visible and set apart. It's not invisible or spiritual, that is, it's not comprised of born-again believers in all the denominations and independent churches, or no denomination. According to Isaiah's prophecy, there must be a *"thee"* and a *"they"* (Is. 60.1-5). Somebody must be the *"thee"* and others the *"they."* Yes, the Lord will at His appointed time shout it out, and the vision will be fulfilled. *"They shall hear my voice! . . . and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."* Do you still believe the Word of God, the Word of prophecy?

Now the fulfillment of this miracle is set for an *"appointed time."* So, let's live with the thrilling expectation of this divine promise: for *"at the end it shall speak and not lie; it will surely come!"* (Hab. 2.2-3). Do you believe that? Do you still believe in the "church of prophecy?" Our former fellowship—the Church of God of Prophecy once zealously proclaimed it, and even accepted the decree of the secular courts in 1952 to reflect their belief that they were the **"church of prophecy."** But now that body, like the other denominations, has quit believing and publishing it. They also now denounce what they once professed and embraced concerning restoration, that is, they deny the New Testament church gradually departed from the faith in the early centuries of Christianity and finally apostatized in the early fourth century under the influence and arrogant presumptions of Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperor, and as such, the Gospel church had to be resurrected and restored. But the prophetic Scriptures have not changed. Even the General Assembly in Acts 15 moderated by the Lord's brother, James, acknowledged that the church in their day under the Gospel was the continuation of the Old Testament church: and he quoted the prophet Amos to support that claim:

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up. That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (compare Acts 15.16-17 with Amos 9.11-12; see also Is. 54.1-2 and cp. with Gal. 4.27).

Yes, we still believe it in Zion Assembly and live in expectation that the prophetic miracle for Christian union and unity will soon be fulfilled: that the Lord will gather into one body all His children. And we have committed ourselves by a sacred covenant to be the core of that prophetic hope and

expectation. We proclaim that just as Lord ***“hissed”*** to the nations to bring judgment against Israel, He is also going to ***“hiss”*** to believers in every nation in these last days to come home to their ***“restingplace,”*** the New Israel under the Gospel (Is. 5.26; Zech. 10.8; Jer. 50.5-6). Just as the animals became docile and instinctively heard or sensed the call of God and were guided by the Holy Spirit into the ark, so God’s people will hear His voice and be gathered by the Holy Spirit into the church [the ark of God].

If the Lord could inspire 6 million unregenerate Jews to return to their homeland beginning in 1948. He can also more easily lead regenerate believers [***“other sheep”***] into the fold. If the Lord can resurrect millions of dry bones, put flesh upon them, and skin on the flesh, and breathe the breath of life again into them, is not a small thing for Him to ***“hiss”*** [whistle/signal] and call His saints together into one church? (Ezek. 37.1-14). Look, those ***“very dry bones”*** in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel were the ***“whole house if Israel”*** that is, the church under the Old Covenant!

So, if God can raise the dead in the twinkling of an eye in the ***“first resurrection,”*** which will include millions and perhaps billions of believers, and catch them up together into paradise along with the millions who will be alive on earth at that time, is it not a small thing in comparison for Him to bring together all His children into one body in Christ?

It is truly amazing when you think about what is involved in that glorious first resurrection. The dead in Christ of all ages will be raised first [Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, Samson, Samuel, Elijah, James the Just, Peter, Paul, Matthew, John, Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, Mark, Lydia, Phoebe, the Ethiopian eunuch, Urbane, Nymphas, Epaphroditus, Tychicus, Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos, Onesimus, Epaphras, and all the teeming millions who died in the faith in the dark ages, with all our fathers and mothers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: R.G. Spurling, A. J. Tomlinson, Mary Jane Tomlinson, Iris Tomlinson, F. J. Lee, H. L. Trim, Flora Bowers, Clyde Cotton, Virginia Wilson, Josephine Nash, Joy Thorton, Dorlan Queener, E. A. McDonald, Sr., Eula Mae McDonald, Gloria McDonald, and a million more believers who died in the faith, and rapture them away together with all the saints which are alive and remain.

This resurrection will be the greatest manifestation of God's power. Think of it! In a moment all the body parts of millions of deceased faithful men and women will be brought together by His power and wisdom; the dust of their dry bones and bodies will be restored and glorified in the twinkling eye, including all them that were buried on the heights of the mountains and in the depths of the valleys throughout world; it will all those who perished beneath millions of tons of rock and dirt, in earthquakes and landslides, and all those who were thrown overboard into the deepest parts of the sea, their remains scattered to the four winds and blown apart and mangled by war, disease, famine, and dispersed in animal dung; so it is a small thing in comparison for the Lord to unite His children in one church.

Our vision for the IMC is not a shortsighted project, that is, not for the benefit for those of us in the Lord's Zion right now; it is more so to facilitate the millions that are coming to Zion. ***"They shall ask their way to Zion!"*** (Jer. 50.5). ***"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising of thy rising. Life up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee . . ."*** (Is. 60.4-5) Already there is a small trickle coming to Zion, but there will be a great inflow! What you may see right now with the natural eye seems to be merely a cloud the size of a man's hand, but look again through the eyes of faith and prophecy, and you will see an abundance of God-ordained rain! (1 Kgs. 18.41-45).

Yes, the Lord is going to speak—to ***"hiss,"*** and true believers are going to instinctively respond, just like the animals did to God's call into the ark. All will be gathered into one body in Christ!

So, let's get ready to receive them, teach them, disciple them, prepare them, adorn them with holiness, and fit them for the wedding garment! This is an important and thrilling part of the Gospel message and our expectation in the church—and must be zealously embraced if we expect to fulfill our vision for IMC.

International Appointments 2023-2024

International Executive Council.....Wade H. Phillips (chairman)
Rick Ferrell (secretary)
Scott E. Neill
Zach Snyder
Bruce Sullivan
Joseph A. Steele
Yomi Adekunle (alternate)

[Council members were nominated by the Presiding Bishop and unanimously approved by the General Assembly.]

World Mission Director.....	Wade H. Phillips
Field Secretaries.....	Ambrosio “Roberto” Lopez Leyre “Joshue” Hernandez Yomi Adekunle David Gomba
General Treasurer.....	Tiffany Major
Director of Ed./SMI/Media Ministries.....	Nathan Bonilla
Shepherding Ministries Director.....	Wilma Carter
Assistant Publisher.....	Scott Neill
Fishers of Men Director.....	Bruce Sullivan
Ladies Ministries Director.....	Pamela Jones
Sunday School Director.....	Mandy Thompson
Sunday School Literature Editor.....	Bruce Sullivan
Children’s Ministries Director.....	Kara Spicer
Executive Secretary/Receptionist.....	Wanda Busbee
Senior Ambassador.....	Donna Pounders
Camping Coordinator/Youth Ministries Director.....	Kim Erwin

Youth Ministries Director.....Allen Thompson
Voice of Zion/SYNC Booster.....L.W. Carter
 Tract Ministries Director.....Glenda Major
 Mission Correspondence Assistant.....Renetta Kelton

Committees

Assembly Business Committee

Chairman: J.J. Davis

Byron Harris, Tod Deakle, David Gomba,
 Johanes Oboo, Jose Lozano, Kevin Clary (alternate)

Doctrine Committee

Chairman: Bruce Sullivan

Trevor Graves, Joseph Steele, Tom Brown, Kris Newberry
 Allen Thompson, Pete Sarry, Ricky Graves

International Properties Committee

Chairman: Wade H. Phillips

L.W. Carter, Nathan Bonilla, James C. Orange,
 E.A. McDonald, Cecil Pounders,
 Glenda Major, Kris Newberry

General Trustees

Wade H. Phillips, Alice Jones, Rick Ferrell
 Wanda Busbee, James C. Orange

State Overseers

United States

North Carolina, South Carolina.....	Scott E. Neill
West Virginia, Virginia Pennsylvania, Maryland.....	J. J. Davis
Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Michigan.....	Rick Ferrell
Tennessee, Georgia.....	Joseph A. Steele
Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana.....	Zachary Snyder
Idaho, Wyoming.....	A.B. White
Colorado, Kansas, Missouri.....	Joseph A. Steele
Texas, Arizona, New Mexico.....	Samuel Hernandez
California, Nevada.....	Jose Manuel Lozano
Oregon, Washington.....	Ambrosio “Roberto” Lopez

National Overseers

Africa East-Central (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	David Gomba
Africa West (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	Yomi Adekunle
Argentina	Jorge Estroz
Bangladesh	Skuku Ranjon Sikder
Benin	Saturnin Brice
Bolivia	Bonigno Torrez
Burundi	David Gomba
Cambodia	Sam Bureenok
Cameroon	Eyong Eric Eyong
Canada	L.W. Carter
Chile	Luis Alberto Martinez
Colombia	David Casanova De La Rosa
Costa Rica	Eugenio Cespedes
Cuba	Leyre Hernandez
Democratic Republic of Congo	Unduelo Byamungu Odo
Dominican Republic	Saintaniel Hostelus
England (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	Yomi Adekunle
Ghana	David Dordah
Guatemala	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
Guinea	Philippe Seraphin Gomez
Haiti	Saintaniel Hostelus
Honduras	Wilmer Santos
India (South)	V. Joseph Binoy
India (Mid-East)	Talari Rao Padma
Kenya (North)	Elijah Wafula
Kenya (South)	Joanes Oboo
Malawi	Maliele Dzuwa
Mexico (North)	Daniel Urcadiz
Mexico (South)	Javier Juarez
Mozambique	Maliele Dzuwa
Myanmar (Burma)	Sam Bureenok
Nepal	Raju Pariyar
Nicaragua	Freddy Garcia
Nigeria	Yomi Adekunle

Pakistan	Wade H. Phillips
Paraguay	Vidal Morinigo Chamorro
Peru	Benigno Torrez
Philippines	Domingo Resurreccion
Rwanda (<i>Mission Rep.</i>).....	David Gomba
Sierra Leone	Joseph Alabi
South Sudan	Elijah Wafula
Tanzania	David Gomba
Thailand	Sam Bureenok
Togo	Esse Christopher
Uganda	Maurice Ogada Odede
United States	Wade H. Phillips
Uruguay	Jorge Estroz
Venezuela	Bani Rangel Jimenez
Zambia (<i>Mission Rep.</i>).....	David Gomba
Zimbabwe (<i>Mission Rep.</i>).....	David Gomba

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Nation/Provinces	Churches	Missions
Argentina	7	1
Bangladesh	6	5
Benin	2	1
Bolivia	1	7
Burundi	2	1
Cambodia	1	0
Cameroon	5	3
Canada	2	0
Chile	7	2
Costa Rica	7	5
Dominican Republic	21	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	21	6
England	1	1
Ghana	1	1
Guatemala	21	10
Guinea	2	1
Haiti	234	0
Honduras	7	15
India Mid-East	17	16
India South	29	5
Ivory Coast	1	1
Kenya (North)	40	16
Kenya (South)	13	2
Malawi	112	7
Mexico (North)	2	3
Mexico (South)	4	2
Mozambique	31	1
Myanmar	2	4

Nation/Provinces	Churches	Missions
Nepal	26	1
Nicaragua	8	2
Nigeria	56	8
Pakistan	(contacts)	
Paraguay	1	0
Peru	1	1
Philippines	8	8
Rwanda	0	1
Sierra Leone	1	0
South Africa	(contacts)	
South Sudan	5	1
Tanzania	74	3
Thailand	4	12
Togo	1	1
Uganda	2	2
United States	40	8
Uruguay	1	0
Venezuela	12	1
Zimbabwe	3	1
Zambia	(contacts)	
	<hr/> 843	<hr/> 166

In addition to the above statistics, the church has 1,114 ministers and 76,119 members in 48 nations and missions. Some members exist in nations where no church has yet been established. The church is also supporting 468 orphans in 5 orphanages in four countries (India, Kenya, Thailand, and Nigeria).

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Bundgere, Daniel Eliaz
Bureenok, Surisak
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Carrasco, Jorge
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Childers, Daren
Christophe, Essee
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Conde Bello, Carlos Andres
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Everett, Patrick Meredith	Jaoka, Juma
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Fikiri, Daniel	Joseph, Okello Nabii
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Gaba, Elias	Kanydere, Simion William
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Garcia, Ivan Freddy	Kumar, Boddu Arunodaya
Garcia, Vincente	Lacorte, Jerry Seneres
Garcia, Vitalino Martinez	Lagos, Mario
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Gregory, Jonathan	Lwamba, Justin
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Gwara, Tom	Mabula, Paulo
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Hernandez, Leyre Josue	Maliyamungu, Paskal
Hernandez, Nolvin	Mamani Calle, Manuel Jonatan
Hernandez, Samuel	Moncada, Blas Efrain
Heunul, Juan Sergio (Paillaleo)	Mang'ira, Antinius
Ignacio, G. Benjamin	Mansilla, Leonardo Simon
Ignacio, Ernesto	Martinez, Luis Alberto
Ignacio, Melchor Gundran	Masese, Antonius Minira
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Israel, Koumako	Mathayo, Allex
Jaramillo, Alex Raymond	Mchura, Joseph
Jaramillo, Robert	Mellado, Luis Alberto Martinez

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 Monroy, Jose Gerardo
 Montecinos, Carlos Amador
 Morgan, Nigel
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 Morinigo, Maria Sirila Acosta de
 Moses, Adebayo Kayode
 Muga, William
 Murillo, Santos Fermin
 Myodonga, Frederick Ochali
 Ndosh, Daudi
 Newberry, Kris
 Nieto, Deivis Miranda
 Nkhwangwa, Agnostino Andre
 Nunez, Carlos Augusto
 Nyanjerechi, Jeremia
 Nyodongo, Frederick
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 Obiero, Mourice
 Obuntmehin, Nathaniel
 Ocando, Carlos Javier Govea
 Ochanda, John
 Ochola, Patrick
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 Odhiambo, Tom
 Odo, Unduelo Byamungu
 Odongo, Michael
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 Ogbebo, Franklin Emokpea
 Ogira, Ezra Ochola
 Ogla, Bernard Otieno
 Ogola, Lawrence, Oluoch
 Oguntore, Samuel Bamikohh
 Ogunleye, Peter Fowrunso
 Ojetunde, John Owseye

Ojwang, Peter Otieng
 Oketch, John Okoth
 Oketch, Joseph Ombajo
 Okeyo, Steve O.
 Okimyi, Kigina Daniel
 Okinyi, Florence Aoko
 Okode, Jane Akinyi
 Okong'o, Samwel O.
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 Okumu, Joshua
 Olaide, Adebayo Kehinde
 Oldyede, Aderibge Babatumde
 Olal, Moris Anyanga
 Olal, Michae Ngome
 Olawuyi, Adekunle
 Oliva, Daniel Gonzalez
 Oloo, Almas Olouoch
 Olubenga, Oyeyemi Gabriel
 Oludare, Ayeni Moses
 Olufemi, Olagunju Issac
 Olusola, Adeleye Jonathan
 Ombalo, Michael
 Ombeta, Paul Odonyo
 Omity, Makori
 Omondi, Fred
 Onesi, Matthew Bayode
 Onyango, Joshia
 Onyango, Philip Tel
 Ooko, Agnes
 Opiyo, Lukas
 Ornelas, Jr, Nazario
 Origi, John
 Orwa, George Ohola
 Osewe, Bernard
 Osobu, Dotun
 Otieno, Boaz
 Otieno, Francis
 Otieno, Okello
 Otumba, Julias A.
 Ouma, James Ng'anda

Ouyo, Julias Myerere
 Oweri, Julias
 Owiti, Syprose
 Oyando, Eucabet
 Oyediran, Timothy T.
 Owewale, Asifat
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 Ozuda, Isaiah Omonid
 Pailahueque, Jorge Enrique
 Pariyar, Raju
 Parker, James
 Pastran, Manuel Antonio
 Paulasa, Jorge Mario
 Perez, Gladys
 Perez, Leonardo Mendez
 Pounders, Bobby
 Powell II, Ryan Keith
 Prakash, Yannabathula
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 Quillen, Joseph
 Quiroz, Mario Antonio Acevedo
 Quispe, Yum Munoz
 Rajoro, Peter
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 Rangel, Ezequiel del Carme
 Rao, Nimmala Sanjeeva
 Rao, Talari Padma
 Rao, Yadia Mohan
 Ratnam, Sirra Mani
 Reel, Jerry
 Rodriguez, Carlos Rafael
 Ruben, Perez Dario
 Ruiz, Benitez, Juan
 Ruiz, Jose Dionicio
 Saez, Mario Alfonzo Flores
 Saka, John Onyango
 Sakwa, Dan Ouma

Sakwa, Jack Obimbo
 Sakwa, Jacob Obimbo
 Salazar Torrez, Noel Emilio
 Samson, Akinlolu
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 Sanchez, Antiono
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 Sandra Lourdes, La Cruz
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 Senapati, Gabriyel
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 Spicer, Jared Thomas
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 Tabares, Werner
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 Wagner, Ricardo Astorga
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 Wambogo, Janes Mbaga
 Wasse, Teketel Zewde
 Wesley, Janga John
 Wilcox, Bruce
 Wilson, Danny E.
 Zuilenam, Guillermo Lienlaf

Female Evangelists

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Alabi, Opeyemi Elizabeth
Alfredi, Maria
Antango, Jane
Arroyo Hernandez, Yerly
Atieno, Monica
Badmus, Esther Olufunmilayo
Bolanio, Adejane J.
Cardenas, Blanca Esperanza
Carrillo, Sally J.
Carter, Wilma Joan
Castillo, Viviana Carmen
Castilla Berrio, Maria Mercedes
Chicag, Ana Gladys Martinez
Daudi, Lensa
Dominguez, Dina Darleny Rodriquez
Dorcus, Oyediran Tunrayo
Daudi, Lensa
Duniani, Jeanne
Edward, Veline Nelson
Elizabeth, Ilesanmi Omodasola
Elizabeth, Alabi Opeyemi
Erasto, Rose, Atieno
Esther, Omotomilola Temitope
Erwin, Kimberly J.
Etando, Aziza
Faida, Rebecca
Fayoke, Asummo Omotola
Flores, Claudia Irene
Folasade, Ajayi Cecilia
Folasade, Osobu Paulina
Garcia, Irma Yolanda Martinez
Gonzales, Griselda Santiago
Grace, Sanni Iyabo
Gifford, Majorie
Ilesanmi, Mercy Olawunmi
Ion, Barbara
Jandura, Memory D.
Jones, Pamela Lynn
Joseph, Dorkas
Joselyn, Treva
Kelton, Renetta Venise
Kimble, Shirley
Lopez, Dilcia Noris Villeda
Lwanba, Mwajuma
Maciel, Olga Beatrice
Marolejo, Marely Miranda
Martinez Ramos, Faith
Matute, Gilma Leonor Dominguez
Michael, Issac
McKee, Ofelia
Morgan, Susan
Mojirayo, Taiwo Agnes
Motino, Santos Liliana
Obegoriola, Alarape
Obuyo, Damaris O.
Odhimago, Roseline Achiong
Ogonda, Joyce Adhiambo
Okumu, Elly
Olajumoko, Olaiya Olanike
Olu, Oladele Olukemi
Olufunke, Olujide Felicia
Olutunde, Adeyemi Joseph
Oluwa, Adebowale Janet
Omotunde, Durodola Adepeju
Ortiz, Celia Waldina Hernadez
Opakunle, Florence Tomi
Owira, Grace Auma
Perez, Gladys
Perez Herrera, Juana del Carmen
Periera, Rebecca
Pinela, Margarita del Saez
Quillen, Jeannie
Quezada, Erica Pilar Pinto
Ramirez, Odalis Margoth
Reitler, Brenda
Rigardiz Cumana, Marvis
Amarily
Rivera, Eva Yamileth Velasquez
Rivera, Yuliana Lizeth Velasquez
Rodriguez Buelvas, Karen Paola

Romo, Reina
Sadler, Florence
Sampayo Camargo, Flor Maria
Sanches, Marta Eloidina
Sandra, Lecruz Martinez
Sirrio, Janet
Snyder, Kari Elaine
Socia, Clarence
Stephenson, Tina
Suazo, Delmi Xiomara Matute
Suna, Susilia
Toro Garcia, Maria
Tovar, Maria De la Rosa
Thompson, Amanda Kay
Tomi, Opakunle Florence
Urcadiz Cordero, Esther
Valdez, Nidian Alvarez
Villafranca, Rosa Lidia Dominguez
Williams, Linda
Wilson, Nancy
Woldemichael, Eyerusalem W.
Zeballos, Maria Norma

Exhorters

Busbee, Wanda K.
Dodson, David
Eldridge, Carl A.
Estrada, Cesar Augusto Estrada
Ferrell, Jack
Ferrell, Samuel Ryan
Fields, Hayli
Floyd, Judi
Lupton, Kayla
Payton, Mitchell
Roberts, Tracy Leann
Rodriguez, Henry
Spicer, Elizabeth

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 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 (Ex. 19.3-6; Jn. 14.6, 8; Acts 2.42; Eph. 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 Thess. 2.1-12; 1 Tim. 4.1-3; 2 Pet. 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 (Rom. 8.29; Col. 1.1-17; 1 Jn. 3.2).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivate mutual love and care within the household of God, the ministers and members 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”* (Is. 52.8; 1 Cor. 1.10; Phil. 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”* (Eph. 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 (Mt. 28.19).

Church Membership

Membership in Zion Assembly 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 (Rom. 5.5; 15.16, 30; 2 Cor. 1.20; 5.19; Jn. 3.5; Eph. 2.18; Titus 3.5). The Father is God (Eph. 4.6), the Son is God (Jn. 1.1-3; 10.30; Heb. 1.8; Rev. 1.8),

the Holy Spirit is God (Jn. 14.17; 16.13; Acts 5.3; 1 Cor. 2.10), yet there are not three Gods, but one God (Deut. 6.4). The three persons of the divine Trinity work together in perfect unity for the salvation of man (Jn. 3.5; 6.44; 14.6, 16-17; 2 Cor. 5.19).

Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the “*image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1.15), and God’s “*only begotten Son*” (Jn. 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 Tim. 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*” (Jn. 1.29). He is also the head of the church and the savior of the body (Eph. 5.23).

Angels—The word angel means “*messenger*.” Scripture teaches that angels are heavenly and supernatural beings, but also they are creatures (Col. 1.16; 1 Pet. 3.32). As such, they were created to worship God and do His bidding (Is. 6.3; Mt. 26.53; Heb. 1.6-7, 14; Rev. 4.8). Their nature is incorporeal; they are “*spirits*” (Heb. 1.14), created holy and with free will. As such, some fell from their “*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 when God created man (Gen. 3.1; Job 38.7). In their role as “*messengers*,” they have been commissioned by God to minister in the affairs of man (Heb. 1.13-14; Ps. 34.7). They exist in ordered ranks—“*principalities*,” “*powers*,” “*thrones*,” “*dominions*” (Eph. 6.12; Col. 2.15), and also as “*seraphim*” and “*cherubim*.” The distinctions between seraphim and cherubim are not made clear in Scripture (Gen. 3.24; Ezek. 10.1-3, 7-14; Is. 6.2, 6).

The “*messenger ministry*” of angels can be seen both in the Old and New Testaments (Judg. 6.11; 13.3; 1 Kgs. 19.5; Psalm 91.11;

Lk. 1.11; Mt. 1.20; 4.11; 28.5). The Bible reveals that angels are great in number (Deut. 33.2; Dan. 7.10; Mt. 26.53; Lk. 2.13; Rev. 5.11) and have great power, intelligence, and supernatural ability to move with great speed. As such, 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. (For example, they do not know when the Rapture will take place (Mt. 24.36).

As created beings, angels have a beginning, but they never die nor cease to exist (Lk. 20.36). Angels are not God or gods, and thus man is forbidden to worship them (Col. 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 (Rev. 19.10; 22.28).

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; Heb. 1.14). Jesus informs us also that the holy angels rejoice at the redemption of sinners (Lk. 15.10).

Scripture teaches that one-third of the angels followed Satan in a great rebellion against God (Is. 14.12-15; Rev. 12.4, 7-9), and that they labor in this present age under Satan’s rule to “*steal, and to kill, and to destroy*” (Jn. 10.10; Eph. 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*” (Mt. 25.41; see also Rev. 12.7). They have been sentenced to a realm of darkness, and live with the dread of their final judgment in the Lake of Fire (Jude 6; Mt. 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 each fell by his 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 (Mt. 22.30); neither were angels created, like man, 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 Cor. 15.48-53) and in that glorious state share some angelic characteristics (Lk. 24.34-36), yet they do not become angels. The distinctions between men and angels will remain throughout eternity (Rev. 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 Tim. 3.14-16; 2 Pet. 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 Pet. 3.1-2). Walking in the light of God's Word is the guiding principle and commitment of Zion Assembly: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm 119.105).

The Church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Ex. 19.5-8; 24.3-8; Ps. 119.57; Jn. 14.15; 17.6, 8, 14; 1 Pet. 2.9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God's people (Is. 2.2-4; 9.7; Mt. 18.15-20; 1 Cor. 12.28). The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and *"false brethren"* (1 Cor. 5.1-13; Gal. 2.4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (Jn. 3.3-8;

Rom. 14.17; Col. 1.13). One is “*born*” into the kingdom; he/she is “*added to the church*” (Jn. 3.3-8; Acts 2.47). The church will succeed to proclaim the Gospel into all the world (Mt. 24.14; 28.18-20; Mk. 16.15-16); will be perfected “*with the washing of water by the word,*” and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Eph. 5.26-27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church for the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 1-16.4-5). 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/or church elders (1 Cor. 11.3, 7-9; 14.34-36; 1 Tim. 2.12; 3.1-17).

Man is unique in all of God’s creation. Only he was created in God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1.27; 5.2; Eccles. 7.29; 1 Cor. 11.7; Eph. 4.24), and therefore man has a unique relationship to God. His nature is composed of soul, spirit, and body (Job 32.8; Eccles. 12.7; Mt. 10.28; 1 Cor. 15.45; 1 Thess. 5.23; Heb. 4.12), though “*soul*” and “*spirit*” may be fully distinguishable only by the Spirit of God (Heb. 4.12 and compare Jn. 12.27 and 13.21). Of all the living things on earth, only man has God-consciousness and an immortal soul (Gen. 2.7; 1 Cor. 15.45). He thus has an everlasting destiny in heaven or hell, with eternal life or everlasting death and damnation (Rom. 6.23; Rev. 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 (Gen. 1.26, 28). This uniqueness is partly why the Psalmist

exults, “*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Ps. 139.14), and why he asks, “*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*” (8.3-4; Heb. 2.6).

Man was created *male* and *female* (Gen. 1.27; 2.18, 21-25) in order that the genders might come together under divine institution as husband and wife (Gen. 2.21-25; Mk. 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 (Prov. 18.22; Eccles. 9.9; Eph. 5.22-25, 28-31; 1 Pet. 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 (Mal. 2.14-16; Mt. 5.28; Mk. 10.7-12; Lk. 16.18; Rom. 7.2-3; 1 Cor. 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; Rom. 1.19-20; Jn. 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 (Josh. 24.15-25; 1 Kgs. 18.21; Ezek. 20.39; Lk. 13.35; Jn. 3.36; Rev. 22.17).

Man was created holy, in the moral image of God (Gen. 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 working through Eve, to disobey God. Because man is a race, unlike the angels, sin was transmitted to all men through Adam’s transgression (Gen. 3.6; Rom. 5.12; 1 Cor. 15.21). His redemption and reconciliation to God was made possible by the sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 5.15-19).

Christ is the second man Adam (1 Cor. 15.22, 45). He is therefore called the Son of Man as well as the Son of God (Mt. 12.8; 16.13; Lk. 1.35; Jn. 1.14; Col. 1.15, 19; Heb. 1.8; Rev. 1.8). In Him God and man exist in one person (Jn. 1.1-3, 14; Phil. 2.5-8). The first Adam failed and plunged man into sin; the second man Adam, Christ, lived triumphantly over sin (2 Cor. 5.21; Heb. 4.15),

making it possible for us also to triumph over sin and be saved (Is. 53.4-9; 2 Cor. 2.14; 1 Pet. 2.21-24). He that believes and repents and is born again shall be saved (Jn. 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 (Heb. 2.11; 10.10, 14; 13.12).

Sin is a real and expressed evil. It originated in Satan in heaven (Is. 14.12-14; Jn. 8.42; 1 Jn. 3.8; Rev. 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 (Gen. 3.6, 17). Sin is thus willful rebellion against the law of God (Ex. 35.19; Psalm 51.3; Heb. 4.7; 10.26; 13.18; 2 Pet. 3.5) It may be defined as *lawlessness* (Rom. 3.20; 4.15; 5.13; Gal. 3.19; 1 Tim. 1.9), *transgression* (Ps. 119.158; Eph. 2.1; 1 Jn. 3.4), *disobedience* (Rom. 8.7; Titus 1.16; 3.3; 1 Tim. 1.9; 1 Pet. 2.7-8), and *rebellion* (Psalm 78.8; Lam. 1.18; 3.14; Dan. 9.5). Sin exists also in unbelief (Jn. 3.18; Titus 1.15; 1 Jn. 2.22-24; Rev. 21.8).

Unlike the angels, mankind is a race; thus when the first man Adam sinned, sin was transmitted to all men through him (Rom. 5.12). All men are therefore born with the sin nature and therefore with the propensity to sin (Ps. 51.5; 58.3; Eph. 2.3; 1 Jn. 1.8). None are exempt, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3.23).

Sin exists in two forms: **1)** in the very being of man, in his rebellious nature (Rom. 6.6; Eph. 2.3); **2)** in actual acts of transgression (Eph. 2.1; Col. 2.13). Sin is conceived in the heart and is expressed in thought (Gen. 6.5; Mt. 15.19), word (Mt. 5.22), and/or deed (Rom. 1.32).

Death and everlasting damnation is the penalty that God imposed upon mankind for sin (Rom. 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 (Rom. 5.15-19; Heb. 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 (Rom. 3.28-30; 5.1; Eph. 2.5; 13-18); in sanctification, the

very nature of sin rooted in man's heart is uprooted and removed (Rom. 6.6; Gal. 2.20; 5.24; 6.14; Col. 3.3-10). The sanctified believer is thus made free from sin (Jn. 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*” (Gal. 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 Gal. 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 (Gal. 5.16-18, 24; 1 Thess. 5.23; 2 Thess. 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 (Jn. 8.36; Rom. 6.6; 8.1-6; Gal. 2.20;

5.24; 6.14; Eph. 4.22-24; Col. 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 (Gal. 5.16, 25; 2 Tim. 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 (Is. 6.1; Jn. 6.44; Acts 2.37-38). True repentance can be made only through the work of the Spirit in conviction (Jn. 16.7-15; 1 Cor. 12.3; see also Jn. 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 Cor. 7.9-10). Repentance is manifested by certain fruit “*meet for repentance*” (Mt. 3.8; Rom. 6.2). The act of repentance should be followed by water baptism [see page 19] (Mk. 1.4-5, 15; Lk. 13. 3; Acts 3.19; 5.30-31; 1 Jn. 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 (Rom. 8.1-2; 3.23-26; 1 Jn. 1.7). The genuinely justified person has “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom. 5.1-2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration 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 (Eph. 2.1, 4-5; Col. 2.13-14;

Jn. 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*” (Jn. 3.3-8; 1 Pet. 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 (Gal. 5.22-23). We are admonished in the Scripture to walk in the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5.16; Eph. 5.9; Phil. 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; Is. 53.4-5; Mt. 8.17; 2 Pet. 2.24; Jas. 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 (Heb. 10.10; 13.12-13; Rom. 6.1-6; 1 Thess. 4.3; 2 Thess. 2.13; 1 Pet. 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 (Mt. 5.48; 2 Cor. 7.2). God has called us unto holiness (Thess. 4.7). “*Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1 Pet. 1.15-16). “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*” (Heb. 12.14; see also Lk. 1.74-75; 2 Cor. 7.1; Titus 2.11-12; Eph. 1.4; 4.13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “*present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” (Col. 1.28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*” (Eph. 5.27; see also Ps. 45.9-13).

Christian Perfection—The perfection of the believer is the call and aim of the Gospel (Mt. 5.48; Jn. 8.36; 2 Cor. 13.11; Col. 1.22; Heb. 6.1; Jas. 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 (Heb. 10.1, 14; 13.21), both individually and corporately in the body of Christ (Mt. 5.48; Jn. 17.20-23; 2 Cor. 13.9; Col. 1.28; Eph. 1.10; 2.14-22; 4.11-16; 5.27; Rev. 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.

Christian perfection is not the same as absolute perfection, for only God is absolutely perfect (Ex. 9.14; 1 Sam. 2.2; 1 Chron. 17.20; Job 11.7; Mk. 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*” (Mt. 5.44-48; 1 Cor. 13.1-13; 1 Jn. 2.5; 4.12, 17). Love is in fact the “*bond of perfectness*” (Col. 3.14). Christian perfection is therefore essentially grounded in love and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit (1 Chron. 28.9; 2 Chron. 15.17; 16.9; 19.9; Rom. 5.5; Heb. 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 (Rom. 8.33; Eph. 4.26; Heb. 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 Cor. 3.18). Sanctified believers are admonished to continue to "*perfect holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Cor. 7.1). The Good News is "*we know that, when [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him*" (1 Jn. 3.2; Eph. 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 Tim. 2.3-4). Although the word "*perseverance*" is used only once in some translations of the Bible (for example, Eph. 6.18 in the King James Version) there are many other words that are closely related to it, such as *abide* (Jn. 15.4-5, 7-9), *endure* (Mt. 10.22), *continue* (Jn. 8.31-32), *steadfast* (Heb. 3.14, 1 Pet. 5.8-9, 2 Pet. 3.17), *patience* (Lk. 21.19), *overcome* (Rev. 2.11, 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? Phil. 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 (Eph. 2.8-9), and in another place 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 (Rom. 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 (Mt. 7.7-11, 21-27; Lk. 8.15; 11.28; Jn. 14.15, 23; Jude 24). Man's perseverance depends on his continued desire to walk with the Lord (Jn. 8.31; Col. 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 (Lk. 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*" (Is. 1.19) and "*willing to live honestly*" (Heb. 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 Jn. 9; 1 Jn. 5.12); therefore, the judgment for those who do not persevere is eternal damnation and separation from God (Mt. 25.41-46, Heb. 10.26-27).

Practical Graces

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken, or the satisfying of one whom otherwise has been wronged (Mt. 3.8; Lk. 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 (Rom. 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 (Hos. 2.11; Col. 2.16-17; Rom. 14.5-6; Heb. 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 (Col. 2.13-17; Eph. 2.15; Heb. 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 (Rom. 14.17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction: ". . . *whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor. 10.31; see also: Rom. 14.2; 1 Cor. 8.8; 1 Tim. 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 (Mt. 23.23). Tithes are to be brought to the house of God and properly distributed by the ministers having charge of the treasury (Mal. 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: Gen. 14.18-20; Lk. 11.42; 1 Cor. 16.2; 2 Cor. 9.6-9; Heb. 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” (Jas. 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”* (Mt. 5.34, 37; see also Ex. 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 (Mt. 15.18-19; Phil. 1.27; 3.20; 1 Pet. 1.15; 2 Pet. 2.7; Jas. 3.8-10).

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs—*“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”* (Prov. 20.1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Pet. 5.8; 1 Thess. 5.6; Tim. 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 (Eph. 4. 27; see also: Is. 28.7; 1 Cor. 5.11; 6.10; Gal. 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 Cor. 7.1; Is. 55.2; 1 Cor. 10.31-32; Eph. 5.3-8; Jas. 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”)—Zion Assembly is opposed to gambling in any form. Gambling brings with it a negative effect on society and is immoral (Ex. 20.17; 1 Tim. 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 Ex. 20.17; Ps. 10.3; 1 Cor. 6.9-10; Eph. 5.5; 1 Tim. 6.9-10; Heb. 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 Cor. 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 Cor. 11.2; Jer. 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”* (Jn. 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 (Mt. 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 (Lk. 24.49; Jn. 15.26; Acts 1.8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Cor. 12.12-28; Eph. 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 *“divers tongues,”* that is, in languages that are known to man

(Acts 2.6; 1 Cor. 12.10; 14.2). In either case, “*unknown tongues*” or languages known to man, and the manifestation of tongues and interpretations must always be consistent with the Word of God (1 Cor. 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 Cor. 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 (Mk. 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 (Mk. 16.17; 1 Cor. 12.12-31).

Ordinances

Water Baptism is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the Gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection, which are experienced in the life of the believer (Rom. 6.3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3.21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate

is actually born again (Mt. 28.19; Mk. 1.8-10; 16.15-16; Jn. 3.:22-23; Acts 10.47- 48; 16.3). 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 Cor. 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 Cor. 10. 16-17; 11.23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ's covenant with the church (Lk. 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*" (Jn. 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 Tim. 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.

Proclamation and 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. The Bible is 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). It 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.

God's church is bound by a sacred covenant to read, study, and obey the Word of God. Each member is to read, hear, believe, receive, search, study, and obey the Word of God. The church is

to proclaim “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20.27), teach believers in all nations “*to observe all things whatsoever that [Christ has commanded]*” (Mt. 28.19-20, and to “*rightly divide the word of truth.*” (2 Tim. 2.15).

The public reading of the Word of God is pure proclamation, allowing the Word to speak for itself. The Reading of Holy Scriptures is commanded and encouraged in both Old and New Testaments, and otherwise taught by precept and example by Christ, the apostles, and prophets.

The practice of the proclamation and public reading of the Bible demonstrates a sober reverence for the written Word of God. In an age in which the 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 the study, God’s church stands out like a “*city set on a hill*” holding forth the light of His Word!

The proclamation and public reading of the Word of God serves to reveal the mind of God; aids in personal and corporate cleansing of the believer; edifies the believer; comforts the believer; and encourages and strengthens corporate unity among believers. Where observed with sobriety, sincerity, and gravity the “Proclamation and Public Reading of Scripture” can produce revival, restoration, and reconciliation (Ex. 24.7-8; Josh. 8.34-35; 2 Kgs. 23.1-20; Neh. 8.1-8, 14-18; 2 Cor. 5.18-20). As such, proclamation, public reading, and 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.

Ministry / Ordination—The church recognizes the ordination and function of the ministry as an ordinance of God placed in the church to reveal Christ and demonstrate spiritual truth. Much like “Water Baptism,” the act of “*laying on of hands*” for ordination is the church acting instrumentally to physically demonstrate God’s spiritual calling and appointment of an individual as a servant leader in God’s church. By acting instrumentally under the guidance of

the Holy Spirit to ordain ministers, the church also reveals and demonstrates true theocracy.

Not only does the act of ordination demonstrate a spiritual truth, but the function of ministry has been ordained by God to serve as a revelation of Christ and His ministry to the world. Christ is the “Great Shepherd” (pastor) who lovingly oversees His flock (1 Pet. 5.1-4). He is the ultimate servant minister who came to “*serve*” (minister) and to be “*served*” (ministered to) (Mt. 20.28; Philem. 2.5-8). Christ has established and ordained the ministry to mirror and reveal His ministry. As the minister serves the flock, tends the flock, watches over the flock, and gives his life for the flock, the minister visibly demonstrates the heart and work of Christ. The membership practices this ordination and aids in this revelation by honoring the ministry and willingly submitting to those who have the rule over them (Heb. 13.7, 17) thus demonstrating the Christian’s honor of God and submission to God’s government (Col. 3.23-24; Eph. 5.22).

The Church is a divine institution and **bears all the marks** of an ordinance. It has been ordained by God to be the “*light of the world, a city set upon an hill*” (Mt. 5.14). As such it is designed to be the sacred embodiment of truth symbolizing and declaring the mysteries of God to the world through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the “*Body of Christ and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 12.27) all working together to be the physical representation of Christ in the world. It is the “*house of God*,” (1 Tim. 3.15) the “*temple of God*” (Eph. 2.21; 1 Cor. 3.16) consisting of “*living stones*” (1 Pet. 2.5) “*fitly framed together and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph. 2.21-22). By “*binding and loosing on earth what has been bound and loosed in Heaven*” (Mt. 16.19), the church serves as a revelation of both the invisible God and His invisible Kingdom. The church preaches the Gospel, teaches the doctrine, lives the truth, practices government, submission, and discipline. The church embodies the Gospel for it consists of members who act as witnesses of the transforming power of Christ and His Gospel. “*But ye are a chosen generations,*

a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light..." (1 Pet. 2.9). As such, the church serves as an ordinance. In fact, it is the ordinance which embodies and practices all the other ordinances.

Marriage is defined by God as a covenant between an eligible male and eligible female to become husband and wife and it is for life; as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women. The ordinance of marriage was instituted by God, reaffirmed by Christ, and given further emphasis and clarity by the apostles, and accordingly, practiced by the New Testament churches.

The first marriage ceremony was administered by God after the creation of man. Thus, marriage is the Genesis ordinance, the original ordinance. Marriage is an ordinance in that it acts as 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). It is also a channel through which the human race, and more particularly the church of God, is divinely ordered and sustained in holiness and truth. (Mk. 10.6-9; 1 Cor. 7.14-16; Eph. 5.22-32). Perhaps most importantly, the ordinance of marriage is a symbol of salvation and 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). Thus, God repeatedly uses marriage terms to explain His relationship with the church, a relationship which culminates in the Bridegroom coming to take His bride to the Father's house for the marriage supper (Rev. 19.7; Eph. 5.25-27; Jn. 14.1-3; Mt. 25.1-10).

The members of the church aid in and practice this ordinance by reflecting Christ and the church through their marriage relationships. The husband loves the wife and gives himself for her (Eph. 5.25-29) while the wife loves her husband and submits to his loving authority (Eph. 5.22-24).

Divine Sanctities

Sanctity of Life—Human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Gen. 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*” (Ex. 20.13). Whosoever sheddeth innocent blood will not be held guiltless before God (Gen. 9.6; Num. 35.30-31; Rom. 13.8-10; Rev. 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 not man put asunder” (Mt. 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is a divine institution between a male and female until death (Mk. 10.2-12; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7.39) and as such it should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women.

Marriage is for life, and therefore divorce for any reason, including unfaithfulness, cannot dissolve a marriage. (The “exception” to this rule mentioned in Mt. 5.32 and 19.9 will be explained below). Thus remarriage after a divorce (while the first companion is still living) constitutes the sin of adultery (see Lk. 16.18; Ex. 20:14, 17; Mal. 2.14-17; 1 Cor. 5.1-5; 6: 15-20; 7.2, 3).

While the Bible commends marriage, and sex within marriage, it clearly condemns sex before or outside of marriage (Heb. 13.4). This condemnation includes sexual relations which might occur between a couple while “living together” or “cohabitating” in a non-married state (see 1 Cor. 5.1- 5; 6. 15-20; 7.2, 3).

Marriage is between one man and one woman for life; therefore sexual relations are lawful only within a God-ordained and biblically recognized marriage. Adultery (which includes remarriage while one’s first companion is still living), polygamy, and fornication (which includes pre-marital sex and cohabitation) are therefore sinful practices that violate the law of God, and injure the home and family.

The meaning of the word fornication has been the subject of much debate. Fornication is sometimes used in Scripture in a broad sense to include all forms of sexual immorality. However, when fornication and adultery are used in the same text, fornication usually refers to unlawful sexual relations before a person has been joined in a biblical, covenant marriage. This is certainly the case in Mt. 5.32 and 19.9. In these references, fornication signified unlawful sexual relations during the ancient, Jewish betrothal period—that is, before the betrothed couple had consummated their marriage (confer Mt.1.18-25). Fornication in this context would include also, however, a single person who has married someone else's companion, that is, a divorced person. And it would apply also to an incestuous relationship—a sin of which the believers in Jesus' day were well aware (1 Cor. 5.1-9; Leviticus 18.6-20; see also Acts 15.29, for the reference here by the Jerusalem council seems to indicate this kind of fornication).

In any case, fornication includes a single person who has been joined to another unlawfully in marriage. This was the gross form of fornication in the Corinthian church that Paul so boldly reproved, and for which cause he demanded that the church withdraw fellowship from the violator—"To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5.1-9). It was in this context also that the apostle commanded that in order to avoid the sin of fornication, *"let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband"* (1 Cor.7.2; see also Mk. 6.16-18; 1 Cor. 5.1). In Gal. 5.19, both adultery and fornication are listed as works of the flesh, and the apostle solemnly warns that *"they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* For these reasons, those who are entangled in these sins and unlawful marriages are not eligible for membership in the Lord's church (confer 1 Jn. 3.7-10; 1 Cor. 5.11; 6.9-10).

Sanctity of the Body—Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Cor. 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” (Rom. 12.1), and “. . . whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 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 (Rom. 1.24-28; Lev. 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: Tim. 2.8-10; Rom. 12.1-2; Is. 3.16-22; 1 Jn. 2.15-17).

Eschatology

Scenario of Endtime Events

Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming Of Jesus—

Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Mt. 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 Thess. 4.16-18; see also 1 Cor. 15.51-52). All who are caught up in the first resurrection will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19.7-9). Christ will then return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years (20.4, 6; see also Zech. 14.4-5; 1 Thess. 4.14; Jude 14-15; Rev. 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 Dan. 12.2; Rev. 20.4-6; Jn. 5.28-29; 1 Cor. 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”* (Mt. 25.46; Lk. 18.29, 30; Jn. 10.28; Rom. 6.22; 1 Jn. 5.11-13)

Eternal Punishment for the Wicked—Those who reject or disregard the call to repentance and salvation are doomed to eternal damnation (Jn. 3.15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is *“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”* (Rev. 21.8; see also: 20.10-15; 2 Thess. 1.7-10; Jude 14, 15; Mt. 25.46; Mk. 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 Thess. 2.3, 8. John identifies certain *“false prophets”* and *“deceivers”* as antichrists (1 Jn. 4.1-3; 2.18; 2 Jn. 7). The prophet Daniel is in reference to this same spirit in his prophecy of the *“beast”* in Dan. 7, which corresponds with John’s vision of the *“beast”* in Rev., chapters 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 (Mt. 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 Thess. 2.3, 8) and the “*beast*” (Dan. 7.10-11, 25; Rev. 13.1). Jesus is in reference to this spirit of deception and lawlessness in Mt. 24.5, 24 and Jn. 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 Thess. 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 (Mt. 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 (Rom. 5.6-10). The Spirit of Christ indwells believers, enabling them to live their lives consistent with the law of God (Rom. 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 (Gal. 1.1-9; 2 Cor. 11.3-4). These are “*lying spirits*” set to deceive and destroy precious souls (2 Thess. 2.9; Rev. 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 Jn. 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 Thess. 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 Tim. 4.12). 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*” (Mt. 5.16).

Prayer—Jesus’ admonition to “*watch and pray*” (Mt. 26.41) 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*” (Lk. 18.1), and the apostle encouraged believers to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess. 5.17). We are also enjoined to “. . . *pray one for another . . .*” (Jas. 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 Tim. 2.1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called “*the house of prayer*” (Is. 56.7; Mt. 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 (Jn. 4.23; Eph. 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”* (Heb. 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”* (Ezek. 44.23). 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 (Mk. 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 Cor. 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”* (Jn. 13.35).

Walking Circumspectly—Children of God should *“walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time for the days are evil”* (Eph. 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 (Ps. 1.1-3; Phil. 1.27; 1 Thess. 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 Pet. 5.8; see also 2 Pet. 2.19-22).

Illicit Relationships—Paul admonishes us to *“give no place to the evil”* (Eph. 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 (Judg. 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation (Gen. 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, *“Flee fornication”* (1 Cor. 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”* (Jas. 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 both the servants and ambassadors of Jesus Christ. As His servants, our focus should always be to walk pleasing in His sight. God told Samuel *“. . . for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”* (1 Sam. 16.7). As such, our primary focus should not be on adorning our outward person, but the *“hidden man of the heart.”* We are informed that the

character traits of the inner man—“modesty,” “shamefacedness,” “sobriety,” and the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” etc., (1 Tim.2.9-10; 1 Pet. 3.3-4) are “*in the sight of God of great price.*”

At the same time, however, our outward appearance is viewed also by men and therefore the saints of God should reflect a Christ-like character and witness (2 Cor. 3.2-3; 5.20; 8.21). As ambassadors for Christ, we should dress in a manner which represents Christ and His values to the world. Those “*professing godliness*” should be holy in their appearance and should never adorn themselves in provocative, seductive, and gaudy clothing and/or cosmetics [lipsticks, eye shadows, etc.] which create a superficial beauty, and which tend to contradict and confuse the godly qualities of “lowliness,” “wholesomeness,” “holiness,” “sobriety,” “meekness,” “gravity,” “purity,” and Christ-likeness. For the Lord “[beautifies] the meek with salvation” (Ps. 149.4).

To be sure, our primary and most important emphasis should be on manifesting the inner graces of the Spirit which result from the new birth—love, patience, faith, hope, godly contentment, peace, gentleness, meekness, mercy, sobriety, gravity, etc.; but we are admonished also to adorn the doctrine of God (Titus 2.10), which includes the outward signs of salvation—“lifting holy hands,” “praying,” “praise,” “rejoicing” [“shouting,” “clapping of the hands,” etc.], “thankfulness,” “good works,” and a “meek and quiet spirit.” Further, it must include also dressing in modest apparel, which logically precludes the wearing of jewelry, gold, pearls, and costly array (1Tim. 2.9-10; Titus 2.3, 10; 1 Pet. 3.3-5).

It is true that there are many references in the Old Testament that show that God’s people under the Old Covenant adorned themselves with jewels and precious stones. But as we move from the Old Testament to the New, we find that these ornaments of gold and silver and precious jewels were symbolic of the inward graces of salvation. Thus, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels*” (Is. 61.10). In point of fact, the members of the church are themselves the “jewels” of God (Mal. 3.17).

We should seek therefore to cultivate the inner light of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in order to be a “*city set on a hill*” to manifest the light and glory of God’s holiness before a watching world.

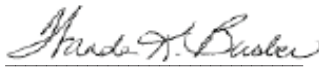
Both the inner graces of the indwelling Spirit and our modest outward dress and behavior give witness to the attributes and fruit of believers who have been transformed by the grace and power of Christ, and who have been informed in regard to His teachings and have fully committed themselves to reflect His holy image.

Corporate and Self-Discipline—Self-examinations to evaluate one’s own faith and spirituality are healthy (1 Cor. 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 (Mt. 18.15-20). (A harsh spirit of criticism is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of both the critic and the one receiving the criticism: Mt. 7.1-5; 2 Cor. 2.1-11; Gal. 5.14-15; Eph. 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 Cor. 5.1-7; Gal. 6.1-5).

These 20th Annual Assembly Minutes
were approved and verified by

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wade H. Phillips", written over a horizontal line.

Wade H. Phillips,
Presiding Bishop/Moderator

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wanda H. Busbee", written over a horizontal line.

Wanda Busbee, Chief Clerk

