

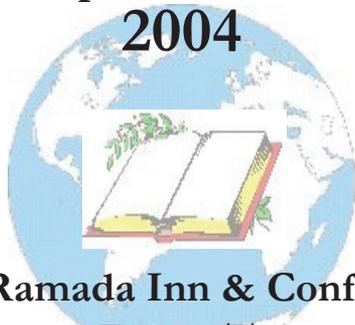
MINUTES

FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ZION ASSEMBLY CHURCH OF GOD

September 23-26

2004



**Held at the Ramada Inn & Conference Center
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee**

THEME

**“LET US RISE UP AND BUILD”
(Nehemiah 2:18)**

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Introduction

It may be helpful to preface these Minutes with some introductory history that led to this first General Assembly. Zion Assembly Church of God was set in order on April 20, 2004. This action was taken only after a remnant of ministers and members had exhausted every means possible—including solemn protests, scriptural admonitions, and tears—to turn the tide of a “falling away” that little by little affected its former fellowship—Church of God of Prophecy. This ‘falling away’ had continued until finally it was concluded that the fellowship had broken its solemn covenant and had consequently disqualified itself as the espoused bride of Christ. The dissidents believed its actions were in keeping with the spirit of restoration that had inspired its illustrious fathers and mothers in the late nineteenth century, the object of which was to restore the fullness of the Gospel of the Kingdom and to rebuild the New Testament church. The spirit of this restoration, however, extended further back into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly among the Anabaptist. Like the Anabaptists, the fathers and mothers of Zion Assembly Church of God maintained that the church in the New Testament had fallen in the third and fourth centuries (after the passing of the apostles), and, according to prophecy, was ordained to “arise” and come forth in the last days to fulfill God’s eternal purpose (Isaiah 60:1-5; Zechariah 14:7,8; Acts 20:29; 2Peter 2; Jude 3; Revelation 2; 3; 19:7,8; et al). These courageous men and women saw themselves, therefore, as instruments to bring about the fulfillment of this prophetic restoration.

A little more insight into the historical background of this tradition may be helpful here. A division in the former organization took place in 1923, when the General Overseer, A. J. Tomlinson, and a number of ministers and members believed the fellowship had adopted certain measures into its form of government and practices that again disqualified it from being God’s church. The new organization (Church of God of Prophecy), led by A.J. Tomlinson, therefore pledged itself to restore and continue in the original vision and spirit of the founders, which they believed were consistent with the teachings and practices of the apostles. God manifestly blessed this effort, and the church grew and prospered—spiritually and materially—in the ensuing years, establishing local congregations in every state in the United States and in more than 100 countries around the world.

Beginning in the early 1990’s, however, this body (now under new leadership) began to “slip” and “fall away” from the faith of the Gospel. Certain measures were adopted contrary to traditional agreements and duly appointed practices in the church and, more importantly (in the opinion of many), contrary to the teachings and practices of Jesus and the apostles. This led to a special meeting of concerned ministers and members in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee on April 18-20, 2004, which resulted in the re-organization of the church under a new government (as mentioned above). At this meeting the name of the new organization (Zion Assembly Church of God) was adopted, an abstract of faith and a system of government was agreed upon, a presiding bishop was selected, and other leaders were appointed and agreed upon. It was also agreed that the church should inaugurate a church paper as soon as possible. The name, *Voice of Zion*, was proposed for the paper and approved by this same body. Consequently, the first issue of the *Voice of Zion* rolled off the press in June 2004. It was resolved further in this meeting that the highest tribunal of authority in the church (under Christ) is the General Assembly, and that the first General Assembly in this new order should be set for September 23-26, 2004.

CHARTER MEMBERS OF ZION ASSEMBLY CHURCH OF GOD

Note: The following responded to the call to restore and reorganize the church under a new administration on April 20, 2004

Bacon, Agnes L	Hayward Jim, Sr.	Spicer, Chad D.
Barker, Charles D	Hayward, Molly	Spicer, Kara
Carter, Russell W.	James, William R.	Steele, Joseph
Chitwood, Donna	Jones, Teresa	Steele, Julie
Cole, Charity	Klayko, Stanley *	Steele, Joey
Collins, Katrina	Linn, Earl	Sullivan, Marie Spurling *
Cook, Tina	Major, Glenda	Swammer, Kathy A.
Cox, Lester	May, Lorraine M.	Swammer, Phillip
Cox, Wilma	May, John L.	Tinman, Etta Jean
Crook, William	McDonald E. A., Jr.	Walls, Amelia
Dodson, Daniel	McGill, Brain	Walls, Jason
Dodson, Haddie	Melton, James	Walls, Julie
Dorris, Earl	Melton, Heather	Walls, Keith
Dorris, Mary L.	Melton, Jane	Whaley, Keith
Dunn, Lisa	Merritt, Kenneth	Whaley, Wilma
Dunn, Talia	Monday, Samuel J.	White, Arlynn B.
Dunn, Timothy	Monday, Sherrita	Wilcox, Bruce A.
Foster, Bernice	Newberry, Josh	Wilcox, Misty
Glover, Bobby	Newberry, Karen Sue	
Glover, Jacob	Newberry, Kris	
Glover, Rachel	Newberry, Todd	
Glover, Matt	Phillips, Wade H.	
Glover, Tina	Phillips, Dale L.	
Graves, Ricky	Quillen, Jeannie	
Graves, Sherry	Quillen, Joseph	
Graves, Travis	Ray, Lena M.	
Graves, Troy	Reagan, Richard *	
Graves, Trevor	Reed, Carol	
Green, J.L.	Reid, Adam	
Green, Marcie	Reid, Bill	
Gregory, Charles R.	Reid, Deborah	
Gregory, Eunice	Reitler, Brenda	
	Schroader, Daniel	
	Snyder, Zachary	

NOTE: Those with an asterisk (*) by their names united with the church by covenant, after the declaration was made and accepted to separate this body from its former fellowship (Church of God of Prophecy). The church was reorganized on the basis of its present government and discipline.

ADMINISTRATION

THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Zion Assembly Church of God
September 23-26, 2004

Presiding Bishop (Moderator).....Wade H. Phillips
Superintendent of Operations.....E.A. McDonald, Jr.
Chief Clerk.....Carol Reed
Chief Usher.....Joseph Steele
Chief Registrar.....Marie Crook

ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Chairman..... E.A. McDonald, Jr.
Secretary.....Joseph Steele
Members.....A.B. White
Ricky Graves
Joshua O. Amara
William Crook
Zachary Snyder

Video..... Dan Howell
Sound Equipment..... Preston Parris
Photography..... Julie Steele

Note: The sermons and business sessions of this Assembly have been preserved on audio and video tape. These are on file in the church's library at the International Offices in Cleveland, TN 37323



Wade Phillips
Presiding Bishop

WELCOME

The first General Assembly of Zion Assembly Church of God has finally arrived. We have looked forward to this special time together with the Lord for several months now. The Assembly program has been prepared through many hours of prayer and planning. All that remains is for us to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit,” and to listen to what “the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Let us worship the Lord with all of our hearts, and transact the business of the church with diligence and reverence.

This Assembly offers a special opportunity also for us to show love and kindness one to another. Let us use this time wisely: to encourage and to build up one another in the faith; to strengthen our resolve to restore God’s church, and to fulfill His eternal purpose in this last day’s Zion. Amen.

ASSEMBLY PROGRAM
September 23-26, 2004

Thursday
6:00 p.m.

Worship — North Carolina churches
Official Opening of the Assembly— Presiding Bishop
Welcome — Ricky Graves
Appointment of Assembly Business Committee
Special Songs — Jim Melton
Assembly Expense Offering
The Victory Chapel Choir
Special Singing — The Wooten Sisters
Message — ***“Building On Biblical Principles”***
E.A. McDonald Jr.
Invitation — William Crook

Friday
9:00 a.m.

Devotional — Bayou La Batre Church
Special Singing — Zion’s Melodies
Message — ***“Be Thou Strong and Courageous”***
Gary L. Larsen (Bruce Wilcox preached this
message in the absence of Brother Larsen)
Special Song — Kari Snyder
Report of Assembly Business Committee
(This report will include a call to ratify the resolutions
of the April Conference)

Lunch Break

1:00 p.m.

Musical Interlude
Reports from Around the World
(Marching Music provided by Members of
The Bahamas Brass Band audio cassette.)

1:15 p.m.

Western Region-A.B. White — Overseer

California	Oregon	Montana
Idaho	Utah	Washington
Wyoming	N. Dakota	S. Dakota

2:15 p.m.

Southeast Region-E.A. McDonald Jr. — Overseer

Alabama	Mississippi	Florida
S. Carolina	Tennessee	Georgia
Kentucky		

3:30 p.m.

Mid-and Northeast Region

Ron Massey, Overseer

Maryland North Carolina New York
Indiana Ohio West Virginia
Wisconsin Virginia

4:15 p.m.

Southwest Region

Arizona Texas Louisiana

Midwest Region

Arkansas Oklahoma Kansas

4:30 p.m.

Countries

Kenya Virgin Islands } Wade Phillips
Tanzania } Joshua O. Amara Bahamas
Zambia Mexico } A. B. White
Philippines
Canada

----Supper Break ----

Friday Evening

6:30 p.m.

Special Singing – The Wooten Sisters
Boost for School of Ministry
Message – **“Ye Shall Be Witnesses”**
Joshua O. Amara, Overseer East Africa
(Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia)

Saturday

7:45 a.m.

Morning Prayer Service—Gene & Ruth Tingler

9:00 a.m.

Special Singing—Bahamian Brass
Message— **“Seek and Ye Shall Find”**—Danny Ramirez
Special Songs—Jim Melton, Doug Hogsten
Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

--- Lunch Break ---

1:15 p.m.

Special Singing—Crab Orchard Church
Report of General Treasurer
(Includes Report on International Office Building)
Special Songs—Darlene Miller
Message— **“Let Us Rise Up and Build”**—Ricky Graves

2:45 p.m. *Voice of Zion Program*—Joseph A. Steele, Managing Editor

4:00 p.m. Ordination Service

----Supper Break----

6:00 p.m. Special Singing—Victory Chapel Choir
Tony Ferguson Family
Assembly Expense Offering
Youth Program—Zachary Snyder, Director
Special Songs—Zion’s Melodies
Invitation—Adam Reid

Sunday

9:00 a.m. Special Singing—The Metz Trio
Message— *“Anointed and Challenged Leadership:
Rise Up and Build”*—A. B. White
Assembly Business Committee Report
Unfinished Business
Song—Darlene Miller
Appointments
Consecration Service

Business Sessions

GENERAL TREASURER'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 26, 2004

Prior to organizing Zion Assembly Church of God, a Trust Agreement was established by Wade Phillips, E. A. McDonald Jr., and Joseph Steele, for the purpose of receiving money, and investing in real estate which could be developed for future use, if and when the need arose. A building with approximately three acres of land at 5512 Waterlevel Highway in Cleveland, Tennessee was purchased on January 29, 2004. Although Zion Assembly Church of God was not officially organized until April 20, 2004, the following report includes all revenues received September 1, 2003--June 30,2004.

Zion Assembly Church of God has been in operation less than six months, therefore, funds received into the General Treasury have been limited. There was not an official financial system adopted in the organizational meeting (April 20, 2004) which defined the funds. Therefore, all funds sent to the General Treasury between September 1, 2003 and August 31, 2004 were placed in a general fund. These funds have been distributed by the General Leadership for the operational expenses and ministries of the general church. Funds were identified under different headings, but the expenditures have been dispersed from one general fund and reported as such.

FUNDS RECEIVED

TRUST FUND	\$69,260.00
TITHE	6,634.72
EXPENSE FUND	15,623.74
MISSION FUND	957.00
VOICE OF ZION	1,024.00
SPECIAL OFFERINGS	800.00
RENT ON BUILDING	1200.00

TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED **\$ 95,499.46**

Assembly Business Committee Report

Adopted by the General Assembly

September 24, 2004

Our commitment in Zion Assembly Church of God is to restore the New Testament church in these last days, by contending for the faith once handed down to the saints (Jude 3), and by working together with God for the “restitution of all things”(Acts 3:21).

Since divine love must be the guiding principle for this restoration, including the discipline of erring members (Matt. 18:15-20; Eph. 4:12; John 13:35; Gal. 6:1), we will embrace and cultivate among ourselves the principles of love, truth, holiness, unity, and Christian perfection.

Our aim is to build always upon the foundation of Christ and the apostles (Eph.2:20), and to walk together in the “apostle’s doctrine” (Acts 2:42). We realize that the church in the New Testament was imperfect (being in its infancy); yet the prophets and apostles envisioned the church in its glory and perfection (Haggai 2:5-9; Eph. 5:27; Rev.19:7-9). Therefore, the pursuit of perfect holiness (both for the individual and the church) is the goal of Zion Assembly.

We are further committed in Zion Assembly to obey Christ’s commission to the church by evangelizing the world (Matt. 28:19), and by teaching disciples “to observe all things” that Christ commanded (Matt. 28:18-20). This “full gospel” message includes “perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:12), and lifting up the standard into which all believers will be gathered together in one body: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13; see also Isa. 59:19; John 10:16; 11:49-52; Eph.1:10; 2:14-20; 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil 1:27).

It is with these purposes and goals in mind that we prayerfully and carefully present the following recommendations to this General Assembly for consideration.

SECTION I. BUSINESS PROCEDURES

THE WORD OF GOD (THE BIBLE)

The holy Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, and unchangeable Word of God. The truths of the Scriptures are taught by prophecy, type, precept, and example, and are revealed through the work of the Holy Spirit. We accept the whole Bible as the Word of God with the New Testament as our rule of faith and practice, government, and discipline. Walking in the light of God’s holy Word (the Bible) is the guiding principle upon which the church of God is built.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Zion Assembly Church of God is open to all born again believers whose new birth is evidenced by obedience to biblical truths and who are willing publicly to covenant themselves to walk in the light of God's holy Word. One becomes a member by accepting the following 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?”

All who become members of the church answer by saying, “I will by the grace of God”.

D. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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. The General Assembly, guided by Holy Ghost, is the highest tribunal of authority for biblical interpretation.

2. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The General Assembly is made up of all members in good standing in Zion Assembly Church of God in attendance at the annual gathering. All matters of faith, government, and discipline should be discussed before the entire church body (those in attendance at the assembly). All decisions are resolved by unanimous consent in harmony with the Holy Ghost and the Scriptures. Each male member has a voice in the decision making process.

Women played a vital role in the great commission the New Testament. Historically they have been and will continue to be indispensable to the progress of the church. We recognize the biblical role of women to be that of evangelists, missionaries, and work in supportive ministries associated with the great commission. However, women should not usurp authority over the man (1 Tim 2:12), and thus should act in the business of the church only where there are no males to conduct the business (1 Cor.11:8,9; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Cor. 14:34-36).

3. ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Annual gatherings for God's people are rooted in the Old Testament. Recent history of the church has proven beyond measure the value of annual gatherings to stay abreast with the needs of the international church, and to preserve unity, fellowship, trust, and respect in the body of Christ. We therefore recommend that the General Assembly be held annually, and that the dates for the Assembly be set by the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the General and Regional Leadership.

4. ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATIONS

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

E. CONVENTIONS

We recommend that the Regional Overseers conduct an annual convention to promote unity and fellowship among the ministers and laity, and to encourage evangelism and outreach in each state and nation. Conventions may be conducted in larger states/nations by the State/National Overseer, in consultation with the Regional Overseer.

F. LOCAL CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS

We recommend that each local church have a regular quarterly business meeting at the end of March, June, September, and December. A complete report should be given by the pastor, treasurer, committees and other leaders to inform the local congregation of the spiritual, physical, and financial condition of the church. All matters which are properly brought before the conference, relevant to the operation and spiritual condition of the church, should be discussed and given due consideration.

G. RESTORATION AND DISCIPLINE

Restoration must be the motive behind every action of discipline. Matthew 18:15-20 outlines the process by which a brother or sister who has committed an offense or has been offended should be restored. A private offense should be handled so

that individuals may be reconciled in fellowship with each other, and with God. Where trespasses are made public, the responsibility of the church is to make a prayerful effort to reconcile the individual to God and the church. When an individual refuses to be reconciled, the church has the responsibility, according to Matthew 18:18, to withdraw fellowship, and the individual is to be treated as a sinner. Offenses by ordained ministers should be handled by the presbytery. Restoring those overcome by sin should be the responsibility of those who are consecrated to God: “BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1; Matt 18:15-18).

SECTION II. GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

A. PRESIDING BISHOP AND ASSISTANT PRESIDING BISHOP

1. QUALIFICATIONS

Those who fill these offices must meet all the biblical requirements of a bishop. They should be ministers who have demonstrated leadership qualities and who have the trust and respect of their peers. It should be evident to the ministry and laity that they have the approval of God and the anointing of the Holy Ghost to fill these positions.

2. TENURE

Those selected should fill the offices as long as they continue faithful in the biblical requirements of a bishop. It is recommended that they should be affirmed by the Spirit of God, and by the General Assembly every four years. (Refer to #3. Selection Process)

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

3. SELECTION PROCESS

Bishops who, in the fear of God, feel impressed of God to submit a name to the Assembly Committee for the Presiding Bishop’s position should do so well before the presentation of the Committee to the General Assembly. Having consulted with the General Leadership and General Presbytery (all bishops), the Assembly Committee should present their selection to the General Assembly for consideration and approval. If, after prayer and counsel, unanimity is not attained on the Assembly floor, the selection process should be discontinued and those

dissenting should appear before the Assembly Committee to voice the reason for their opposition. If there is sufficient cause why the person nominated should not serve as Presiding Bishop, another name should be presented to the Assembly for consideration. If there is not sufficient cause, the Committee may take the original recommendation back to the Assembly floor for approval. The final decision should be made only as "...it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us..." (Acts 15:28).

After consultation with the General Leadership the Presiding Bishop will appoint an Assistant Presiding Bishop to be approved by the General Assembly.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

The Presiding Bishop is to have the general oversight of the church in consultation with the General Leadership. Some of his responsibilities are to implement the business acts of the General Assembly, act in behalf of the Assembly when it is not in session, make general appointments, set dates and moderate the General Assembly, appoint committees to serve the General Assembly, serve as ex officio member of general committees, and oversee the operation and maintenance of the general properties.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSISTANT PRESIDING BISHOP

The responsibilities of the Assistant Presiding Bishop are to assist the Presiding Bishop in carrying out all the functions of his office, and to act in his behalf when requested by the Presiding Bishop.

GENERAL LEADERSHIP

The General Leadership shall consist of the Presiding Bishop, Assistant Presiding Bishop, and Elders at the General Offices. The General Leadership is to sit in consultation with the Presiding Bishop on all matters relevant to the spirituality and operation of the general church, and to carry out all functions placed upon it by the General Assembly.

GENERAL PRESBYTERY

The General Presbytery includes all bishops active and retired. The Presiding Bishop should have a meeting with the General Presbytery once each year to discuss the welfare of the general church. All matters relevant to the spirituality and operation of the church should be discussed openly and freely, and resolved in one accord. Any matters needing Assembly approval should be referred to the General Assembly for consideration.

SECTION III. GENERAL PROPERTIES

Prior to organizing Zion Assembly Church of God, a Trust Agreement was established by Wade Phillips, E. A. McDonald, and Joseph Steele, for the purpose of receiving money, and investing in real estate which could be developed for future use, if and when the need arose. A building with approximately three acres of land at 5502 Water Level Highway in Cleveland, Tennessee was purchased on January 29, 2004. We recommend that this assembly approve and accept the proposal presented by the Zion Assembly Trust, to develop this Property for general offices and a school of ministry. This facility can also be used for worship by the local congregation, which could help support the operational expenses of the general offices.

SECTION IV. FINANCIAL SYSTEM

A. GENERAL FUNDS

Since the Zion Assembly Church of God is in its infancy, funds received into the General Treasury at this time are limited. We therefore recommend that all funds sent to the General Treasury for this assembly year be placed in a general fund, to be distributed by the General Leadership for the operational expenses and ministries of the general church. (All funds would be recorded for the purpose for which they are sent, but the expenditures will be dispersed from one general fund and reported as such.)

B. LOCAL CHURCH FUNDS

Each local church should select a Finance and Stewardship Committee to act as a steering committee for the finances of the local congregation. This committee should be chaired by the pastor, and the actions of this committee approved by the local church n business conference. All disbursements and matters related to the operation and management of the church properties and finances should be brought before this committee.

C. TITHING

1. Ministers should be examples in the practice of tithing and giving. Ministers receiving income (tithes and offerings) from the ministry should send ten percent (10%) of the income with his (her) monthly report to the General Treasurer. Tithes from income received as compensation on a public job should be paid into the church.

2. Each member of the church is encouraged to be faithful to the biblical teaching of tithing and giving. The Local Church Treasurer should send ten percent (10%)

of the gross monthly tithe to the General Treasurer after the last Sunday of each month, along with the Treasurer's monthly report.

3. Surplus tithes should be disbursed by the local church Finance and Stewardship Committee and approved by the local church in business conference. This disbursement should be made at the end of the fiscal year (June 30th). Churches are encouraged to give consideration to the pastor's ministerial expense. We encourage those with surplus tithe to also give some consideration to the operational expenses of our General Offices.

D. WORLD MISSIONS

1. We recommend that a mission offering be received by each local church on the second Sunday of each month. This offering should be sent with the Local Treasurer's monthly report to the General Treasurer to be used in support of the world-wide mission of the church.

2. We further recommend that each local church receive a special mission offering twice each year (March and October) to be sent to the General Treasurer for the support of World Missions. We suggest that the pastor appoint someone to boost these offerings at least one month prior to receiving them at the end of March and October. These offerings should be sent to the General Treasurer along with the Local Treasurer's March and October report. These offerings are in addition to the regular second Sunday mission offering.

E. MINISTERIAL ALLOTMENTS

We recommend that the General Leadership set the ministerial allotments in the United States, and that they be adjusted in accordance with the national governmental standard for each state and territory. The allotments will be adjusted August 1st of each year, and based on the increase of the latest annual cost of living index. The ministers will be notified of the allotment adjustment by the General Treasurer. We recommend that the allotment for this assembly year be set at \$750.00 per week where funds are available.

Allotments outside the United States will be set by the Mission Committee in consultation with the national overseer.

F. SPECIAL OFFERINGS

1. We recommend that each local church receive a special love offering for the pastor on the first Sunday of each month.

2. We recommend that a special overseer's expense offering be received on the fourth Sunday of each month. This offering will be sent with the Treasurer's

monthly report to the General Treasurer, and disbursed by the General Leadership to help defray the expenses of those supervising the work in various areas. The disbursements will be based on the expense reports of the overseers and according to funds available.

3. We recommend that a special offering be received on the third Wednesday of each month to support a school of ministry. This offering should be sent in with the Treasurer's monthly report.

SECTION V. CHURCH MINISTRIES

While it is necessary to departmentalize in order to involve the whole church in ministry, we should keep in mind that all departments of the church should be coordinated through the pastor. This will insure that each support ministry works in harmony with, and for the good of, the church as a whole. Each person selected to direct ministries in the local church should be members in good standing and possess high spiritual qualities. We recommend that each pastor in consultation with the undershepherds appoint leaders to have the oversight of the following ministries.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our heritage has taught us that Sunday School has been a valuable tool in helping to teach and instruct the congregation in the Word of God. Each local church is therefore encouraged to develop and maintain an interesting and informative teaching program on Sunday morning.

YOUTH MINISTRIES

1. Youth are vitally important to the success, growth, and future of the Zion Assembly Church of God. Active youth groups have been instrumental in training and preparing the youth for service to God and the church. In the past millions of dollars have been raised by the young people in the churches to help spread the Gospel of Christ through the printed page. We therefore encourage the churches to develop and support a strong youth ministry in each local church.

2. Each local youth group is encouraged to receive a monthly offering to be sent with the Treasurer's report to the General Treasurer in support of church publications. be sent with the Treasurer's report to the General Treasurer in support of church publications.

SHEPHERDING MINISTRIES

Pastoral care groups have proven to be invaluable in caring for the members of the local church. Pastors are therefore encouraged to place every member of the church under the care of an undershepherd. (The pastor should appoint these leaders with the approval of the local church.)

Leaders should be members who demonstrate leadership qualities and who have the trust and respect of those whom they are leading. Pastors are encouraged to have regular meetings with the undershepherds to discuss the spiritual condition of the church. Efforts to restore one who has fallen should always be a priority, and should be a joint effort of both the pastor and the undershepherd. We recommend that these pastoral care groups be called Shepherding Ministries.

Well planned shepherding meetings can be of great value in ministering to the needs of each member, especially for those who are unable to attend regularly scheduled church services. These services can provide an opportunity for members to show care and love one to another.

We recommend that offerings received in these meetings be used to swell the fourth Sunday Overseer's expense offering.

MISSIONS

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...” (Prov. 29:18). Our vision should always be on the white fields ready for the harvest (John 4:35). This vision in the past has resulted in sacrificial giving of one's self and means to promote the Gospel of Christ. Women and men have been instrumental in praying, going and providing funds to send ministers to the mission fields. While promoting missions is primarily the responsibility of the pastor, an appointment of a mission leader can be invaluable in

promoting and keeping the mission spirit before the local congregation. We recommend that each local church raise funds regularly, emphasize and promote the mission spirit.

SECTION VI. MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS

A. ORDER OF MINISTERS

After prayerful study, we recommend that the following order of ministers be recognized and licensed by Zion Assembly Church of God: namely, bishops, deacons, and evangelists. The duties and responsibilities of each order shall be specified on the certificate of license, and on the ministers application and questionnaire. The procedures and applications for the ministry will be developed by the General Leadership following this Assembly. Lay ministers should be set forth and issued a certificate from the local church recognizing his (her) calling,

until they have proven themselves in the ministry. This certificate will be furnished by the General Offices.

B. ACCEPTING FORMER CREDENTIALS

Ministers who wish to unite with the Zion Assembly Church of God, who currently hold credentials in good standing with other church organizations, will retain their ministerial status in Zion Assembly Church of God, based upon the following procedure:

1. They submit in written form a letter stating their desire to become a member of the Zion Assembly Church of God and to hold ministerial credentials in the same.
2. They fill out and meet the qualifications specified on the Zion Assembly Church of God ministerial examination.
3. They submit a copy of the letter of resignation to the organization in which they formerly held credentials.
4. They submit to oral examination by the presbytery.

C. APPOINTMENT PROCESS

1. REGIONAL AND STATE OVERSEERS

Regional Overseers will be appointed by the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the General Leadership. State/National Overseers will be appointed by the Regional Overseer in consultation with the Presiding Bishop. Those chosen to serve in the capacity of overseer should meet the standard and qualifications of a bishop before being appointed to this office. Those appointed should fill the office as long as they continue to meet the biblical requirements of a bishop, and are affirmed by the Spirit, and the ministry.

2. PASTORS

After much prayer and consultation with the local church, pastors should be appointed by the Regional Overseer (or State/National Overseer as the case may be). Those appointed should feed and care for the sheep, and serve as long as they are affirmed by the Overseer and the local church.

SECTION VII. SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

We recommend that a school of ministry be developed as soon as possible and that it be open to all those desiring to attend. The Presiding Bishop in consultation with the General Leadership will oversee the development of the curriculum in

harmony with the teachings approved by the General Assembly. We recommend that a director be appointed as soon as possible, and that the first term be conducted in the spring of 2005, if possible. The dates and place should be determined by the General Leadership and published in the VOICE OF ZION as soon as final arrangements have been made. We encourage your prayerful and financial support for this endeavor.

SECTION VIII RATIFICATION OF APRIL CONFERENCE

We recommend that the minutes of the April Conference in which Zion Assembly Church of God was organized, be ratified by this General Assembly by acclamation, and by standing in unanimous consent.

In the April Conference Brother Wade H. Phillips was selected as Presiding Bishop for Zion Assembly Church of God. We therefore recommend that this General Assembly affirm Wade H. Phillips as Presiding Bishop of Zion Assembly Church of God, and that this Assembly participate in this selection with a standing ovation.

The above stated recommendations were adopted in proper order on September 24, 2004 at the First General Assembly of Zion Assembly Church of God, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee held September, 23 - 26, 2004.

Signed: Wade H. Phillips _____ Date _____
Presiding Bishop

Eustice A. McDonald Jr. _____ Date _____
Assistant Presiding Bishop

Carol Reed _____ Date _____
Chief Clerk

ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following was read before the entire Assembly on September 26, 2004, and accepted by unanimous agreement.

INTRODUCTION

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

The ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to live and worship together in this “most holy faith,” to walk in truth, to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” and to cultivate among themselves the graces of love and holiness. They seek for the perfections of Christ in their fellowship, and by His grace and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ so completely that when He appears they shall be like Him (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:1-17; 1 John 3:32).

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

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

Church Membership

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

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

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

Prominent Teachings in the Scriptures

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

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

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

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

The Church—The church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated

by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Exodus 19:5-8; 24:3-8; Psalm 119:57; John 14:15; 17:6, 8, 14; 1 Peter 2:9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God's people (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:7; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and "false brethren" (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (John 3:3-8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13). One is "born" into the kingdom, he/she is "added to the church" (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:47). The church will succeed to proclaim the gospel into all the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16); will be perfected "with the washing of water by the word," and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Ephesians 5:26, 27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church for the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 16:4,5). The purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and fellowship among the saints, to search the Scriptures for additional light and understanding, and to resolve differences in interpretations which tend to be divisive among the ministers and churches. All matters of faith, government, and discipline are discussed before the entire body of the church assembled, and resolved in one accord with the manifest approval of the Spirit (vv.12, 22, 28), based on the precedent: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." All male members in good standing have an active voice in the Assembly. Women are a vital part of the church's life and ministry. In matters dealing with church authority, however, they voice their opinions through their husbands and church elders (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-17).

Salvific Work Of Grace

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

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

Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God. It is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is the act of God in forgiving the transgressions of a penitent sinner. Justification is the result of repentance and faith (Romans 8:1,2; 3:23-26; 1 John 1:7). The genuinely justified person has

“peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1,2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration is the act of God in creating new life in the heart of the believer through the Holy Ghost. It is a definite and instantaneous experience. Man is dead in sins and trespasses through Adam, and can be quickened or regenerated only through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2:1,4,5; Colossians 2:13,14; John 5:24). Regeneration is the same as the new birth (“born again” experience).

Born Again is another term for the new birth. The result of this experience is a new creation, in which the believer becomes a child of God. It is through this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23). The new birth is a prerequisite condition for the experience of sanctification.

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

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

Subsequent Grace

Sanctification is the second definite work of grace wrought in the regenerated heart by faith. In sanctification, the carnal nature is eradicated (“the old man is crucified”) so that the believer no longer has the inclination or propensity to sin; that is, in sanctification the desire to sin is removed (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12,13; Romans 6:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 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 (Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:2). God has called us unto holiness (Thessalonians 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” (Hebrews 12:14; see also Luke 1:74,75; 2 Co 7:1; Titus 2:11,12; Eph 1:4; 4:13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27; see also Psalm 45:9-13).

Practical Graces

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

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

Meats And Drinks. The prohibitions against certain meats and drinks in the Old Testament were not extended into the New Testament church. These ceremonial aspects of Mosaic legislation were “nailed to the cross” of Christ, and done away with in the covenant of grace (Colossians 2:13-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 9:8-11). What one eats or drinks (with the exception of intoxicating beverages) is now a matter of conscience, and does not violate the nature and principles of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction: “...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (see also: Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

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

Luke 11:42; 1 Co 16:2; 2 Co 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-21).

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

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2). Believers are admonished not to “...give place to the devil.” So-called moderate or social drinking certainly gives place to the adversary and thus believers should totally abstain (Ephesians 4:27; see also Isaiah 28:7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Much of what is said about intoxicating beverages is true also of drugs. The use of drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine, etc., impair the body and is not in keeping with the teachings and principles of Christ and the Scriptures. These things defile the body and are inconsistent with God’s call to soberness (2 Corinthians 7:1; Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31,32; Ephesians 5:3-8; James 1:21). Drugs used for medical purposes should be taken only under the care and direction of a physician, and then only in good conscience.

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

Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is an instantaneous experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to entire sanctification. In this baptism, Christ is the

agent, the Spirit is the element (Matthew 3:11). The baptism with the Spirit on the sanctified life is accompanied with speaking in tongues: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4; see also:10:44-47; 19:1-6). The baptism with the Spirit is a baptism of spiritual empowerment for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 1:8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:11-16).

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

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

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

Ordinances

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

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

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

Divine Sanctities

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

Sanctity of Marriage. Jesus said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13:4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for "whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery" (Matthew 19:9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church (see also Exodus 20:14,17; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:15-20; 7:2,3).

Sanctity of the Body. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:20-21). "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (3:16-17). We are also admonished to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1), and "...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31b).

Incest, same sex unions, and all homosexual and lesbian relationships are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. These practices are an abomination to God, though they may be sanctioned by a state or religious institution (Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 18:22,23; 20:10-21). Practices such as “body piercing,” tattooing, mutilating and disfiguring the body, are of pagan origin and contrary to the spirit of holiness and biblical principles. These practices should have no place in the lives of believers (Cf. Timothy 2:8-10; Romans 12:1,2; Isaiah 3:16-22; 1 John 2:15-17).

Eschatology

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

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

Eternal Life for the Righteous. The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 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 (John 3:15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is the “the second death,” and is a place of eternal torment. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8; see also 20:10-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14:15; Matthew 25:46; Mark 3:29).

Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline

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

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

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

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

Church Attendance and Worship. Worship and fellowship with believers of “like precious faith” is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4 23b; 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” (Hebrews 10:25).

Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyle and conversation. “And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane” (Ezekiel 44:23a).

A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry of God’s Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the minister delivers the message, lest Satan come and steal the Word of God from their hearts

(Mark 4:4,15)

God's love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

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

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

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

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

Corporate and Self-Discipline. Self-examinations to evaluate one's own faith

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

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

Introduction

It is difficult to grasp the circumstances that has brought us together like this here today. None of us could have imagined a few years ago that we would be separated from many of our brothers and sisters and friends, and reorganized under a new administration. Yet, we all know it was painfully necessary. We could not continue to walk with a church that had lost its desire to walk perfectly with God. God himself will not violate this principle. He asked rebellious Israel: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). God will not walk with a people who will not walk with Him. So here we are, saddened by what is behind us, yet excited by what is before us! Excited because we are free again to "press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). I want to take this opportunity to commend all the brave men and women here today for your stand for what is right and true. It has been costly. Many of you have sacrificed a great deal for the namesake of Christ and the truth of the Gospel. You have endured opposition, slander, and ridicule, but, like Nehemiah, you have resisted the "Sanballats" and "Tobiahs," and the "Arabians" in league with them; they have not been able to discourage you, or strike fear into your hearts and drive you from your posts of duty. You have said rather, "Let Us Rise Up And Build." I admire your courage and look upon you as heroes for Christ and the church in this present Restoration.

Paul's words to the church at Rome come to mind at this moment: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). And to the church at Corinth, he wrote, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

It seems the Anabaptists were right: suffering is a mark of the true church. It marked the New Testament church, and the church in the early centuries; and suffering marked the church that our fathers and mothers restored in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So we are in good company, being "compassed about with so a great cloud of witnesses."

Section I A Brief Reflection on Our History

In reflecting on the restoration of the church in the late nineteenth century, A. J. Tomlinson wrote that August 19, 1886 is "a day worthy of remembrance." He saw that day as being especially significant because it was the day that R.G. Spurling preached a powerful sermon that inspired a handful of Christians in Monroe County, Tennessee to take a bold stand to restore the church as it is revealed in the

Bible. Between 1895 and 1898, many of these believers were sanctified and filled with the Spirit, and a great revival followed. This revival then spread to several nearby counties and states, and thereafter the people began to emphasize holiness and the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Out of this powerful holiness-Pentecostal revival, Spurling organized in May 1902 the Holiness Church at Camp Creek in Cherokee County, North Carolina. This was the church that A. J. Tomlinson and four others joined on June 13, 1903. With these new additions, the “work revived,” Bishop Tomlinson wrote, “and took upon it a new impetus.” Thereafter the church moved its center to Cleveland, Tennessee, and, in the summer of 1908, it experienced another great outpouring of the Spirit. The result was that over 100 people united with the church. The revival then spread like a prairie fire across the southern United States, and hundreds united with the Church of God.

The flame of Zion then leaped across the waters between Florida and the Bahamas, scattered the fire throughout those islands, and then, like flaming cinders shooting from a rumbling volcano, Church of God evangelists and missionaries went forth everywhere preaching the Word, setting ablaze the mission fields in Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The church was like the “stone” in Daniel’s vision that “became a great mountain and filled the earth.” It was because of this great growth and manifest power that people began to say, “Like A Mighty Army Moves the Church of God.”

How exciting it is to read the opening chapters of the history of the last days Church of God. What heroic men and women came forth from the midst of this great move of the Spirit to restore the truth and power of the Gospel. They stood like ancient pillars, and weathered every storm that came against the church, remaining undaunted by threats, and unmovable in the face of even the most violent persecutions. Their tents were burned down, their buildings dynamited and destroyed, their cattle killed, the drinking wells poisoned; some were beaten with whips; some were shot; they were ridiculed, ostracized, spoken evil of, blackballed, brought before magistrates, and some were imprisoned. Yet, they stood like majestic oaks, filled with the power of God’s love, continued boldly to preach the truth, refused to retaliate evil for evil, and thereby the hearts of many of their persecutors were melted. As a result, some of their avowed enemies were converted and became pillars in the church. What grace! What spiritual passion! What a rich heritage of penetrating holiness and Pentecostal power that our blessed forbearers bequeathed to us! What a glorious vision of this last days Zion they instilled in us!

This is all even more glorious when we consider that they were, in the words of one historian, The Disinherited in the earth. They were nobodies—considered the dung of the earth!—yet called by God out from the ghettos of the cities, the backwoods of the mountains, and from small islands in the Caribbean, and transformed by the grace and power of the Spirit into the people of God! They were unknown in the earth, yet famous in heaven.

But Then...

This great heritage is precisely why the next few chapters in our history are so sad and grievous. These chapters reveal a people “drawing back” from their original convictions and commitments; of a people losing their vision of God, and becoming indifferent to their “first love.” They tell of a people whose vision of heaven had become eclipsed by the world. These chapters remind us of “backsliding” Israel: a people who lost their way and stumbled in darkness, who were once conquerors, but now lived in defeat and humiliation, in which the gains that were made by their fathers and mothers were devoured by famine and pestilence. And, like Israel, they denied their backsliding while they were in the very motion of it.

These chapters have been lived out and written by many of us present here today. In the midst of losing our college, then our ministerial assistance program, then our great tabernacle, then many of our historical monuments, then our publishing house interests and bookstores, our leaders told us that we were actually doing better than we ever had. In spite of the fact that our income into headquarters dwindled year after year from over eleven million dollars to less than half of that amount; and in spite of the fact that attendance to General Assemblies had fallen from well over twenty thousand to sixteen thousand, then to twelve thousand, then to ten thousand, then to less than seven thousand. In spite of this, they continued to say that things were better than they used to be.

And in spite of the fact that attendance in many of the state conventions had been reduced to merely a fraction of what they once were, and the once powerful meetings in the Holy Ghost had become a mere shadow of former times, yet they tried to cheer us up by saying the church would soon have a million members (according to some reports they were receiving from outside the United States)

Moving On to the Next Chapter

Now, I don't want to go further into this sad episode of our history. Neither do I want to lay all the blame on anyone in particular, because perhaps all of us in one way or another, and to one degree or another, were responsible. Rather, what I want us to realize here is that those chapters are now closed; they are in the past. So let us move on to the next chapter! I want us to focus on the fact that on April 20, 2004 we opened a new chapter in our history. On that historic day we decided to answer the call of the ancient prophets, who, moved by the Holy Ghost, lifted their voices, and declared, “Sing, O barren...break forth into singing, and cry aloud...” (Isaiah 54:1-2); “Awake, awake; put on thy beautiful garments...Shake thyself from the dust; arise...loose thyself from the bands of thy neck” (52:1,2); “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old” (51:9). Listen to Christ speak through Solomon to the church: “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away” (Song of Solomon 2:10). “Come with me, my bride,” up into the mountains (4:8). “Come, my beloved, let

us go forth into the field” (7:11). Yes, even before that historic day in April we had begun to hear the cry of the Spirit--the voice of God being carried in the wind down to our day, saying to this last days Zion, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion” (Jeremiah 3:14). “Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (Isaiah 51:11).

On April 20th of this year, we determined, being inspired by the Spirit, to step out by faith and reaffirm our commitment to God and His Word, and to move forward in faith to fulfill all that God had called the church to be, and to do in the world. Then and there, without fully understanding all that the Spirit was doing within us, we set out to restore the prophetic vision of the church, and to live our lives by the words of prophecy, rather than by the words of men!

These prophetic words of Scripture are exciting! Through them we can see into the next chapter of the church. And, behold, in this chapter, the prophets and apostles speak not merely of a million members, but rather multitudes and multitudes which no man can number.” And in these prophetic multitudes---called out and empowered by the Spirit---every man has his own wife, and every woman has her own husband. Nor are any of them bound by tobacco habits, or drugs, or “any such thing.” They all are holy and without a blemish! These multitudes are sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost, and “dressed in fine linen.” They shine forth with the light of His glory---“the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:1)---and walk in the beauty of holiness, and in the grace and power of Christian perfection. They are “adorned as a bride for her husband.” Christ, a thousand years before His incarnation, saw the bride in this perfect state, and declared, “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee” (Song of Solomon 4:7). This is why Peter also inspired by the Spirit admonishes us to “...be diligent that ye may be found of him without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14). Be found of Him without spot! It is plain here that sanctification happens on this side of glorification. Heaven is prepared for those who are perfected in His love! John, caught up in the Spirit, said, “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie...” (Revelation 21:27). Christ is going to present the church to Himself “glorious in holiness,” and fit to inhabit His Father’s house. Again, John says, “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). The Psalmist also, speaking in the Spirit, declared: “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: [and] the virgins her companions follow her...” (Psalm 45:13, 14).

It is this prophetic vision of the church that caused the Psalmist to lift his voice further in ecstatic utterance, and declare, “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined” (50:2), and “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion....Walk about Zion...Mark ye well her bulwarks,

consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following” (48:1,2, 11-13). Solomon also, inspired by the same vision, exulted, saying, “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (Song of Solomon 6:10).

The Prophetic Epilogue

This prophetic history of the church is thrilling beyond words! But what is still more thrilling is the epilogue. It tells of the church being raptured out of history into heavenly glory, where there is no more time (at least as we know it now); the former things have passed away, and there is just life and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, in a new heavens and new earth that is filled with the radiance of God’s presence. Indescribable glory! John, like the prophets of old was enabled by the Spirit to see into the throne-room of God and to behold this unspeakable glory:

I was in the spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald...and out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there was seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal...” (Revelation 4:2-6).

Later, he was “carried away” in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and there he beheld the church in her final abode in glory. He testified, “I John saw the holy city...coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband...Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (21:1, 9, 10). It is clear that what John sees in this vision is the glorified Christ shining out through the transparent walls of the church. The church has been perfected and raptured in glory, the wedding has been consummated, and now she is intimately one with her espoused Husband! The union is now perfect! Isaiah saw this same moment eight hundreds years before Christ, and wrote, “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee” (Isaiah 26:20). Yes, the honeymoon is coming! Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also” (John. 14:1-3).

The Nature of Our Restoration

Now this is what Zion Assembly is all about. We have been called out to restore the glorious experience of the Gospel—and this rests upon the vision of Christ through the Spirit! We talk about the need to restore the vision of the church (and this is true), but essentially we are endeavoring to restore in the church the

vision of God and the power of the Gospel! This is what our fathers and mothers were committed to: holiness and the anointing of the Spirit! They rose up (or rather were raised up) by the power of God, and came forth prophesying; and this prophecy was accompanied with dreams, visions, healings, miracles (powers), glory, revelation, and with tongues and interpretations. They fell under the power, danced in the Spirit, shouted for joy, and sang in tongues! They were not only a priesthood of believers, but a prophethood!—and even an apostlehood of believers! “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost,” and signs followed them! God poured out His Spirit—and “sons and daughters prophesied!” Everyone was called into the ministry; not all had the same office, of course, but all were anointed and spiritually empowered! And, like the church in the New Testament, “they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

This then is what we are primarily endeavoring to restore in the church: the freedom and preeminence of the Holy Ghost!—because the Spirit himself is the true witness of God in this world. Jesus said:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:13-15).

The Spirit was with the Father and the Son before the world was! And when Christ baptizes us with the Spirit, we become empowered also to witness to the glory of the Father! (John 15:27; Acts 1:8; 1, Corinthians 12:1; 2: 9-16). It is the Spirit who speaks and acts through us! This is the very essence of the church; it is a habitation of God through the Spirit! (Ephesians 2:20). He has called us to be His temple, through which the eternal glory of Christ may radiate out from us to a lost world! This is our calling: to be “a peculiar people” through which Christ lives and walks and talks (Jeremiah 31:31-33; 1 Corinthians 12).

We must not allow ourselves, therefore, to become isolated, with an air of exclusivity, going about bragging that we are the “it” in the Scriptures, because we do not wear jewelry, use only the King James Version of the Bible, embrace “29 Important Bible Truths,” and claim to be a theocracy. While some positive things may be said for these things, nevertheless, this kind of thinking in general can never restore the church that we see in the New Testament; nor especially inspire the church to become what God has called it to be, and to fulfill what He has commissioned it to do in the world: namely, to preach and embody the Gospel with such joy, power, and conviction that it will bring sinners to their knees, and Christians together “in the unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13).

We must discipline and commit ourselves to preach the Word, not tradition! The inspired Word must be the motivating and driving force behind Zion Assembly. While the “29 teachings” (properly understood) are important, and must be upheld as a part of our faith and discipline, yet the Bible contains hundreds of important truths, and thousands of promises! These cannot be contained in a creed or in a tract; they are rather manifested by the operations of the Spirit in our worship

and fellowship. We are called to be “the new and living way!” Paul said, we are “manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God”---“known and read of all men” (2 Corinthians 3:2,3). Like the manifestations of love, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness, the essence of all “important Bible truths” must be “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.” This is why a rigid creedal-type posture is self-defeating: because it limits the Spirit and tends to create “another Gospel.” Creeds tend to compete with the Spirit and resist His freedom; historically, they have superseded the Spirit’s immediate guidance and illumination to lead believers deeper into the mysteries of the Gospel. This is why creed-bound churches cannot fulfill what God has called the church to be, and what He has commissioned it to accomplish in the world.

If we become so unwise to fall into this old institutional rut, we will wind up being nothing more than a small group of disgruntled people, who have a critical spirit and a gloomy disposition, isolated from and suspicious of everyone who does our wave our peculiar flag, and struggling to prevent our inevitable extinction; and, like others who have unwisely taken this course, we will probably brag all the way to our graves that “we’re it, and you’re not!” If we allow this old self-defeating mind-set to find a place in us, we will become a research project for archeologists, rather than a living witness for believers who are hungry for the truth and freedom of the Gospel. Rather than transforming the world with the Gospel, the world will be digging up our bones in a few years trying to discover who we were, and what caused our extinction. We will become a column in Christian History rather than a special feature in Christianity Today. Right now, there are about twenty-five little groups out there---spawned by our own tradition—that are bound to wind up in this ecclesiastical bone-pile, if they do not “awake to righteousness” and become Spirit-filled witnesses to the Gospel! We must not allow Zion Assembly to become just another one of these little bands of hurt and disillusioned people, who are merely a reactionary body, rather than a pro-active force in the world, answering “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Again, this does not mean that the 29 teachings are not important, or that we should not hold up the standards of holiness in our dress and behavior, not at all. Doctrinal standards are important and must not be compromised; they form the skeleton of the body of Christ, so to speak; yet it is the Spirit that gives life to the body! Jesus said, “salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, it is good for nothing!” So also with doctrine: it is “the Spirit that giveth life.” I am merely pointing out here that the emphasis of our faith and discipline should be on the “weightier matters” of the Gospel—on brotherly love, mercy, goodness, Spirit-filled worship, and Spirit-anointed evangelism. If we will do this, we will have more success in winning the lost to Christ, attracting the “other sheep” to the fold, and bringing all of us together into “the fullness of Christ.” Nothing can take the place of joy and victory in the Holy Ghost! We can have “99 Important Bible Truths,” and all be as true as they can be, and yet the church be as lifeless and worthless as Ezekiel’s “valley of dry bones.” Let us then fulfill our calling to

be “lively stones built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5-9).

May the Lord help us to become “a holy nation, a peculiar people [to] shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Section II

What It Means To Be Saved

In regard to doctrine, it seems necessary in this address to elaborate only on the fundamental pillar that this Restoration is being founded upon: namely the doctrine of salvation itself. All of the other doctrinal issues—even divorce and remarriage ---are secondary to this. In fact, it is only by understanding the true nature and power of the new birth that one can accept and obey God’s laws in regard to marriage; for the grace of God imparted in spiritual regeneration empowers the believer to live consistent with the laws of God, even under the circumstances of a troubled marriage. In fact we believe His grace is sufficient to believers even in cases of abandonment and divorce.

It may seem strange to have to emphasize the doctrine of salvation in the Church of God, since for over one hundred years we have experienced the dynamic operations of the Spirit in our midst. Yet, it is the subtle corruption of this primary pillar of our faith that has in large measure brought about the need for this present restoration in the church. The truth and power of salvation itself is being compromised! We will endeavor in this address, therefore, to discover again the fundamental truths and effects of the new birth, and how the Spirit works through sanctification to bring about our final salvation. Beyond this, the Assembly Business Committee has prepared an Abstract of Faith that more fully reveals and explains the major doctrines and themes that we espouse in Zion Assembly. This document will be published in the form of a tract or booklet, and made available for use by the local churches, and for the purposes of public relations.

Now the subject of this section is: What does it mean to be saved? The answer to this question is critical in determining what kind of church we will be, and especially whose church we will be. We are now being tested; our true identity is being tried by a Heavenly Court; millions of spectators are awaiting the decision of this lofty Judiciary. They want to hear our answer to the question: “What must I do to be saved?” And they want to see if heaven approves of our answer.

The Relationship Between the Church and Salvation

A prominent bishop in our former fellowship sometime ago began advising the ministers not to get distracted with disputes over doctrines and other issues about the church, because thereby they would lose sight of the true objective of the church, which he emphasized was to get people converted or “saved.” While this counsel may seem sound and wise, actually it harbors within it a subtle error—the error being in misunderstanding the difference between the initial experience of

the new birth, and the need for believers to continue to persevere in the faith: for the Bible is clear that none of us are yet finally saved. This difference, in turn, determines how we understand the message and ministry of the church, and how the church factors into our life and faith, for the church has a prominent, even indispensable, role in our salvation. In fact, the church was established by Christ to give us guidance, discipline, order, and encouragement on our journey to be finally saved. So you see, if our understanding of the church is distorted, it will inevitably corrupt our understanding of salvation.

Salvation Is Ultimately A Goal Believers Must Persevere in the Faith

In a moment, we will explore the dynamic power of the new birth itself, but, first, we should know that regeneration is only the initial step toward finally being saved. Paul wrote:

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).

It is clear in the Scriptures that one may be “born again,” but that he must continue in the faith—and in fact “go on unto perfection”—in order to be saved (Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 3:6). The spirit of obedience must continue to work in us until we “grow up into him in all things.” Peter says “add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity...” (2 Peter 1:5-7). And he goes on to say, “For if these things abide in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful... Wherefore... brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (vv. 8-10).

The justified must seek to be sanctified; the sanctified to be empowered with the Holy Ghost; and the Spirit-baptized must continue to grow in grace “unto a perfect man.” In regard to the baptism with the Spirit, one of our veteran overseers years ago was asked if one had to have the Holy Ghost to go up in the rapture. He answered, “Why I wouldn’t go to the grocery store without the Holy Ghost.” The baptism of the Spirit is not so much a personal qualification for the rapture, but an empowerment—an anointing!—for service here and now. One of the signs of the present “falling away” is this very thing: uninspired leadership that lacks anointing and a clear biblical vision of the power and effect of the Gospel.

Salvation is a battle unto the end! It is a struggle, a constant warfare. For this reason, the great apostle speaks of the “hope of salvation” in the context of spiritual warfare, admonishing believers to wear this hope like a helmet, in order to overcome the principalities and powers that oppose our final salvation (Ephesians 6:11-17; 1 Timothy 5:8). Contrary to many of the preachers today (who are under

the spell of Calvin's doctrines), we can be saved today and lost tomorrow! This is why we must persevere in order to be finally saved. The Hebrew writer declared, "the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him...but we are not of them that draw back...but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:38, 39). And Peter says of the backslider, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:21,22). The apostles and New Testament writers speak with one voice, encouraging believers to persevere, and warning against "falling away" (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13; Acts 20:29-32; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:2-8; Hebrews 3:6-12; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 2:24-26; Jude 3-21; Revelation 2-3).

Salvation is a journey that must be taken to its destination. Paul says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (*italics mine*). Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he adds, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught in word and by our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15). Again Paul admonishes Timothy to study the Scriptures, for they are able to make one "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). These passages show that salvation is always a goal yet to be obtained—a hope which encourages one to press on until it is fully realized. The same apostle therefore admonishes the Romans to "awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

The verb *sozo* ("to save") has three basic tenses: I am saved---I am being saved---I shall be saved. This is why Jesus said one must "endure unto the end [to] be saved" (Matthew 24:13). And for this reason Paul admonishes that we should seek to be entirely sanctified, in order to "be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This is why we insist that sanctification is the whole purpose of justification, and moral perfection the purpose of sanctification. Perfect conformity to the image of Christ is therefore the purpose of the Cross, so that to deny the Cross the power to wholly sanctify the believer in this present world (even instantaneously) is to denigrate and corrupt the Gospel.

Section III **The Mystery and Power of the New Birth**

Now let's probe a little deeper here into the mystery of the new birth; for it is this very doctrine and experience that is being corrupted in the present falling away. Satan knows very well that, if he can erode the core substance of this pillar of our faith, he can eventually bring the whole house crashing down. This is why he is attacking the nature and effect of the new birth (and its relationship to our final salvation) so viciously. Make no mistake, the devil "cometh not, but to

steal, kill, and destroy.” He wants us to confuse confession with true repentance, water baptism with regeneration (“water salvation”), the Lord’s Supper with sanctification, and sacraments in general with actual salvation. He desires to breathe new life into old sin, and schemes to get us to water down the power and effect of the new birth; to get us to believe there is no instantaneous deliverance from the grip of sin in this present world. He wants us to accept the lie that we are bound to live with sin—and that even the Lord Christ himself is bound to co-exist with sin in the lives of believers as Luther under this same old dilution taught his followers. So also the Old Serpent hatched the lie that once a sinner is converted he is eternally saved even if he returns to his sin. In all of these cases, Satan is either supplanting the actual Power of the Gospel, or corrupting it.

See here: the new birth is not merely an intellectual decision---a “turning over a new leaf;” neither is it the same thing as confession, though confession is part of it. Contrary to the teaching of the popes, patriarchs, and bishops of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, the new birth is not obtained in a sacrament; nor is it obtained, according to many Protestant teachers, through a sacrament; nor yet does Christ experience it for us, as some others teach. We hold to none of these false teachings in Zion Assembly!

We hold rather that the new birth begins with the conviction and arrest of the sinner by the Holy Ghost. It is a personal experience, but not a private one. It does not happen in a little dingy confessional booth, mediated through a screen by a priest who is himself in need of repentance.

For my salvation must its doom receive,
Not from what others, but what I believe
—John Dryden

Catholic penance is not true biblical repentance! The new birth is rather a transformation (a deliverance!) that happens by the power of God. It is meant to be publicly confessed and manifested before the watching world, to the praise and glory of God.

Here is how the spiritual transformation happens more or less: the Spirit reveals to the sinner his sin against God, and pronounces his eternal judgment. The sinner then realizes his bondage, and becomes conscious of the everlasting consequences of his sin. He realizes that he is guilty of capital crimes, and that his just punishment is eternal death. Then, the moment he realizes his doom, the Spirit breaks in and announces the “Good News”: that Jesus Christ has purchased his pardon—and it is free! The sinner can hardly believe “the glad tidings,” because he knows he is not worthy, and because he believes there is no one in existence so gracious and powerful to pardon such a vile life as his own. It is because of the revelation of this very fact—that he knows he is not worthy of such a gracious Savior—that he smites his breast, and falls on his face before the Righteous Judge, saying, “Who art thou Lord!” And while the Spirit is still revealing to him his own exceeding sinfulness, and he begins to feel the weight of his sin and guilt, the

Spirit, at the same time, reveals the goodness and holiness of the Lord. The sinner begins to confess and repent, saying, “I believe, Lord; please forgive me!”

The sinner further surrenders and commits himself “to go and sin no more.” And when he has fully surrendered through this act of faith, he begins to sense through his entire being the pardon of his sins, and the power of the cleansing Fountain. He can hardly understand the transforming miracle happening in his own soul; but he knows that he is a new creature, that old things have passed away, and that, behold, all things have become new! This miracle of grace does not happen except the sinner is brought to the point of this crisis. The sinner is confronted by the Almighty God with the choice of life or death! Those who choose life are immediately liberated: their sins are washed away in the Crimson Tide and they experience the joy of forgiveness and washing!

This is why they cannot keep it quiet. It is meant to be shouted from the housetops! Even when Jesus commanded those who had been healed and delivered of demons “to go and tell no man,” the news got out. “He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet” (Mark 7:24, 25). This is why, like Christ, we require confessions to be made public, instead of in a little booth alone with a priest. Confessions are meant to mark the believer before the world—to identify him with Christ! This is why the Greek word, martyr, is translated in our King James Version of the Bible as “witness”: for many early Christians had to give their lives for their testimony. Open confessions glorify God, and open the soul to the forgiving grace and cleansing power of Christ!

But the new birth is no mere sentimental feeling or emotion; it is rather a redemptive power! It does not happen except the Holy Ghost probe into every pus pocket and infected thought of one’s sinful being and reveals to him the exceeding sinfulness of his sin. Neither is the new birth something done for you; it is rather something done within you! It is not the clearing of a court record, as Luther taught, and his followers still teach, but rather the creation of a new life.

Regeneration is not a legal concept; it is the impartation of divine life, by which we are made “partakers of the divine nature” (1 Peter 1:4). It is a quickening from the dead. No one is justified who has not experienced this spiritual transformation! (There is no justification without regeneration). “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17); and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). Even Jesus himself was “justified in the Spirit” (1 Timothy 3:16).

This is why we cannot join in the world movement to unify with this modern (or post-modern) “Babylon.” We refuse to prostitute the Gospel! We will not knowingly sit at the Lord’s Table with the unregenerate, and thereby, against the counsel of Christ, “put our light under a bushel.” We must not allow the world to think that we are willing to tolerate fornicators, adulterers, pedophiles, extortioners, thieves, liars, and the such, in our fellowship. To do so would be to reproach Christ and the Church of God. The church must clearly distinguish

itself from the world; for it was established and ordained by Christ to be a “city on a hill.” God has called us to “put a difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean” (Leviticus 10:10). Therefore, we will not stay on the same ship with officers and crew who knowingly violate God’s law and encourage others to do so!

“Godly Sorrow”

The new birth is instantaneous; one cannot grow into the new life, anymore than he grow out of the old one. It is not a repair job on an old building; it is the spontaneous combustion of something new! It works out of “godly sorrow.” Paul says, “Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10). The revelation of one’s sin—particularly the fact that he is treading under foot the precious blood of Jesus—touches somehow the heart of the sinner in a way that he becomes sorry for his rebellion against Christ.

Here’s what I believe happens in the new birth: the Holy Ghost in a great mystery causes the sinner to sense somehow the familial relationship that he had with God before the fall. He senses the love and holiness of the Father through the Son in the light and power of the Spirit. He is awakened to the fact—to the reality---that God is the Father whom he never knew; that he has been morally and spiritually separated from his heavenly Father, and that sin is the great separator! He realizes somehow that he has been lost, and suddenly becomes conscious that he is being called home!

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I’m found,
Was blind, but now I see*

This “godly sorrow,” working out of grace, creates in the sinner a desire to be restored to fellowship with God. He senses deep within his being God’s call to return to His love and affections! He begins to desire this fellowship—this restoration—more than life itself; he hungers and thirsts for it; loses sleep over it; ponders its possibilities; falls into a desperate hunger for it. He desires sweet peace and reconciliation! Jeremy Taylor once said, “A man may be damned for despairing to be saved.” The great Puritan divine, Richard Baxter, declared that no one will be saved except he love God above “father, mother, and even his own life.” This heavenly call is the gift of God working by grace: the pleading of a loving Father calling home His prodigal sons and daughters.

The Awesome Responsibility of Being Human

But the final decision is up to the sinner. Contrary to the teaching of Luther and Calvin, man must respond in faith out of the center of his own being—his

will—in order to be born anew and finally saved. Jesus said, “Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.” We answer the call of the pleading Nazarene—“Come unto Me”—as free moral agents, with the choice of accepting or rejecting His gracious invitation. God does not finally decide for us! We are “fearfully and wonderfully made” in His image, and, as such, must accept the awesome responsibility for our sinful condition, and the eternal consequences if we reject His cure in Christ! Though God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9), yet He does not ram salvation down our throats against our wills. Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof...For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their way, and be filled with their own devices” (Proverbs 1:24-31).

True Repentance Toward Perfect Christ likeness

Finally, repentance has a two-fold nature and purpose: confession on the one side, and forsaking sin on the other. No one has truly repented unless he desires to “go and sin no more.” Jesus requires it, and the Spirit of holiness compels it! Willful sin ends in regeneration (1 John 3:4-9; Hebrews 10:26). The truly regenerate person begins immediately to make things right—to make restitutions! ---with his neighbors. He turns from sin, and turns to righteousness. He now desires nothing more than to fulfill the will of God. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). But there remains the root of sin in the heart of the believer that must be uprooted and eradicated! The “old man” must be “crucified,” in order for the believer to remain justified (Romans 6:5-7; Colossians 3:1-10). He will not have perfect peace who has not been made free from the power and dominion of sin! The new birth therefore creates in the believer the desire to be sanctified, and sanctification deepens the desire of the saint to become more and more like Christ—to be transformed “from glory to glory” into His perfect image! The inner working of the Spirit in the life of the believer continues to deepen the desire to please God above every human concern. To be sure, without this burning desire deep within our being, we cannot be saved. For “without [holiness] no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Section IV

The Church’s Enormous Task: The Anointed Proclamation of the Gospel

As evangelists of this glorious Gospel, our work is to plow up the “fallow ground” of men’s hearts, cultivate the soil of their souls, sow the seed of God’s powerful Word, and pray for it to germinate and take root. We must create a spiritual atmosphere in which the Spirit can work to convict the sinner and reveal God! Through the anointed proclamation of the Word of God, we help to awaken

men's consciousness to the presence of the living God; to reason with them of His holiness and love; of His plan of reconciliation through His "only begotten Son," and the consequences of remaining in rebellion against His plan of salvation. As "ambassadors for Christ" we plead "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

God help us in this new Restoration to catch the fire, and rush into the fields like Samson's foxes with the power of this transforming Gospel! God help us to withstand the gainsayers, overcome the power of the present apostasy, and overturn the influence of false teachers. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16). We will conclude this section with the words of the former bishop, A. J. Tomlinson:

Oh for a million men and women to burst forth, with such holy ambition, with every unused power in full use, like mad-men to strike holy terror and fear to all half-hearted religionists of the day!...Shouldn't we be stimulated to the very highest pitch to fight in this glorious of battles? Now while we are in this last great conflict can we be satisfied to remain behind where we can see others trudging on in advance, or rushing heedless and reckless into the thickest of the fight? Rouse, ye people! This is the last great conflict! The battle is on! Rush into it to win or die on the field! Look ahead! See the red flag as it waves in the breeze! Behold the enormous possibilities in your breast!

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Managing Editor of <i>Voice of Zion</i>	Joseph Steele
General Treasurer.....	E.A.McDonald, Jr.
General Youth Director.....	Zachary Snyder
General Sunday School Secretary.....	Jeannie Quillen

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Mideast– Ron Massey

Western – A.B.White

East Africa – Joshua Amara
(Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda)

Ministers

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William Crook
Charles L. Fields
Ricky Graves
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