

# The Gospel News

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## ***Southwest Area Regional Conference*** ***May 4-5, 2024***

***By Sister Valerie Dulisse***

**A**s our region conference Sunday meeting opened, Brother Scott Griffith addressed us first, explaining that God was saying to us that now we must prepare ourselves for this Gospel to go forward. He asked, "Are we ready to have the people of the world coming inside the Church to be prayed for, and for miracles to become commonplace among us? We must position ourselves to say yes, God, to everything He has given a prophecy of. We need to break our mindset of any doubt and say, 'Lord, I believe you can do it.'"

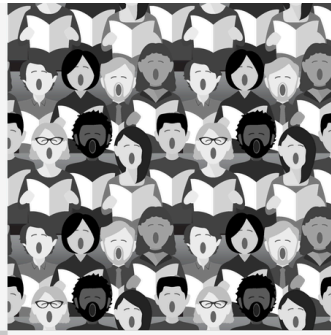
In the Old Testament, Joshua was taking over the reins from Moses after having watched Moses interact in the Spirit and lead a nation through wilderness to follow a promise. They followed and they believed. As the children of Israel were then, that is us today! God magnified Joshua. They had to cross over the river Jordan and were told to prepare themselves to go over. The Lord gave Joshua confidence and understanding that God would be with them; they were to be strong and courageous, and do all they were commanded in the Book of the Law, and not deviate from the Law, Joshua 1:8. We are at the banks of the river today. If we put God in front of us in our lives, HE will make a way for us. God is sanctifying us, like the children of Israel as they crossed over the river Jordan. God is taking us into a different plain—we are about to take that step. Things will not be perfect right away in the Promised Land, but we will be prepared and ready for challenges, just as the children of Israel were.

Our brother then shared an experience from the Imperial Branch, a vision of a wall that opened up, and an army arrayed in white, completely ready. The day comes in each of our lives when we need to decide to labor to bring the indigenous people to the knowledge of their Savior, Jesus Christ. Are we willing to take that step? The challenges that we are facing will help us to understand that God is real, and He can carry us through them. The right attitude for us to have, is that I will bear my burden and trust in you, Lord. He exhorted us, "Get ready today, Church of Jesus Christ, for great are the things that will come before you!" Brother Ramon Yazzie, Sr. spoke in the word of the Lord, saying, "My Word is before you; I have longed to fellowship with you." Brother Scott Griffith confirmed this. He spoke in the gift of tongues afterward and interpreted it as "The Word of the Lord."

**(Continued on page 4)**



"Before we move into the 'Unfinished Business,' portion of our meeting, does anyone have a hymn?"



*Jesus, Use Me and Oh, Lord, don't refuse me, for surely there's a work that I can do. And even though it's humble, help my will to crumble. Though the cost be great, I'll work for you.*

Who'd like to start?

"I've left a conflict with a family member unresolved, so I'd like to ask y'all to pray for me to be able to forgive."



"We are struggling with grief at the passing of our loved one. We need to move on in faith."



"I've let resentment build up over the last year for a member who's had many healings in their life, while I continue to suffer in pain."



"I see a sister in need, and I've told myself time and time again I should reach out to befriend her and help her, but I'm just so busy."

"I'm having trouble giving my job hunt over to God, but I can't see His hand moving, so I'm panicking."



To help you settle your personal Unfinished Business, read: **Philippians 1:6 and Deuteronomy 31:8** and know God wants to help you.



# BFTP Blast From The Past

*By Sister Kellie Speck*

## **Sopris, Colorado**

It was January 31, 1928, 85 years ago this month, when Apostle Ishmael D'Amico of Detroit arrived in Sopris, Colorado, to initiate one of the more profound evangelistic experiences in our Church history. Received by the Cerames, a husband and wife who had been baptized in Detroit a few months prior but since moved back to their home in Colorado, Brother Ishmael was met as well by a minister of another church, Paul Costa. Accompanied by numerous experiences before and during the trip, the Spirit so moved Paul Costa that when he invited Brother Ishmael to meet his own congregation he announced to them, "From this day on, it will not be my place to preach to you. This man is a man of God, and he will preach to us." Paul Costa and his daughter were soon baptized. Others followed, and in April of that year Brother Costa was ordained an elder and placed in charge of the new mission, set under the auspices of the Detroit Branch.

**Apostle Ishmael D'Amico**





## Purpose Statement

- To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

## Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America



## Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.



## ***“Yours, Mine, and Ours”*** By Brother Doug Obradovich

***“For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” (John 18:37)***

I have numerous early memories of God’s personal outreach to me (i.e., childhood healings) before I ever glanced His way. His declarations of love remain much more relevant than some regionalized devotion to a college football team. His relevance deserves our addressing it.

Testimony, in a natural setting (courtroom), is: “a statement given by an eye-witness while under oath,” so their assertions become the evidence. Testimony, in a spiritual setting (church, home, work, bus-stop, etc.), is: “an open proclamation of a religious conversion or experience.” Again, the result is that the testifiers become proof to the truth! Spiritual testimony includes 3 components:

- 1) WHERE one was before Christ
- 2) HOW one came to believe in and trust Jesus Christ
- 3) WHAT changes Jesus made in one’s life

The Word addresses this powerful tool: *“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord”* (2 Timothy 1:8), *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”* (Romans 1:16), *“Shew how great things God hath done unto thee”* (Luke 8:39), and *“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15).

Consider your conversion testimony (Where? How? What?). Do you maintain it and keep it alive? Have you moved it forward through upgrades & updates (added personal experiences)? Your testimony is not intended to lay dormant, so build upon the past with focus on the future. Your relationship with God began reactively to His love, but you can proactively enhance your relationship by developing it through praying, fasting, and meditating.

This more intimate relationship with your Savior will accommodate your identifying His expectations of you and your desires of Him, and help you realize all you desire from life. If your neighbor willingly touts their allegiance to some random professional sports team, how much more should you be “ready to give an answer” concerning the love of God? Your life, lived through God’s influence, is your T-shirt!

Most people’s allegiance is influenced by proximity. Consider the impact of your testimony on those around you. Example: You share your testimony with me, and “YOURS” becomes “MINE.” I share it with others, confirming it as “OURS!” “THEY” become “US,” and “WE” grows to be larger, as all of us become “HIS” ... all because you willingly shared your “Where,” “How,” and “What.”

They greet you from T-shirts, hats, and/or sweatshirts, as their owners remain enthusiastic about explaining their loyalty to these exhibitions. But you needn’t leave your home to see them, as just as many announcements of sports teams, social issues, and music groups are posted on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Passionate people publicly express themselves through these conversation starters, regardless of relevance.

Yet, there is nothing more relevant than the love of God. Often we are influenced about favorite teams through friends or family, but the love of God comes to us through an extraordinary invitation. John explains, “We love God because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). We might infer from John’s claim that without God’s loving extension to us, we may not be inclined to love Him. If that is the case, then He personally won each one of us over.



Brother Paul Liberto spoke next. He stated that the brothers in the ministry want us to be righteous. We don't need anything other than what we already have, to cross that river. We have everything we need through Christ and His Holy Spirit. He urged us to focus on all the good things we have; remember when we first came to the Lord, so happy to be part of God's family. Our brothers and sisters loved us! The brothers gave their all for us! We need to be of the mind that Joshua had—not to be afraid. We are living in Zion! First John states, "Greater is the Spirit that is in you, than he that is in the world." God can and will equip us for the battles through the power of prayer of the people of God! God has given us a greater understanding through the Book of Mormon. We said, together as a pledge, the words of 1 Nephi 13:37. We need to endure to the end.

Brother Pete Giannetti followed. He told the congregation that we have a perfect brightness of hope: that is unshaken faith and the love of God. The theme around the throne of God will be, the love of God! There was a series of gates to the tabernacle of the Lord in the wilderness, with the Holy of Holies at the center. No one could go in unless they were

sanctified of the Lord. The first set of gates were shut for 1,260 years when the priesthood authority of the Church was removed, until the Gospel came forth. Then the gates opened.

Another gate was right after Pentecost when the glory of God came down among the Apostles of our Lord. Peter at the gate Beautiful had received the gift of power that Jesus had promised to the Apostles.

God is letting us know that He wants us ready to give every man the reason for the hope that is in us; to SHARE this Gospel. The Lord wants us to become righteous. Brother Pete encouraged us to pledge that today, I will exercise faith in Jesus Christ. I will trust Him to fulfill His promises, even if that fulfillment is delayed. I will remember that the act of believing—and sustaining that belief over time—counts as righteousness.

Our conference ended with a beautiful time of fellowship with the saints from our region, and a renewal of hope for what God has in store in the near future for all of His people.

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## ***Flat Sonbeams Travel with the NAOC and IMOC***

***By The Quorum of 70***

**T**wo recent trips to Africa included a historic event for The Church of Jesus Christ's missionary efforts. The trips to Malawi and Zambia not only included four brothers, but four sisters and eight children. That's right, eight children between the ages of 4 and 12 years old! I am sure you are asking yourself, "How could the children make this trip? How could their parents allow them to go to Africa?" These children made the trip through participation in the Flat Sonbeam program.

The Flat Sonbeam Missionary program began in 2018 and is now under the oversight of the Quorum of Seventy Evangelists Youth Ministry. The mission of this program is to enable our children, ages 4 through 12, to experience missionary work firsthand through the ministry of The Church of Jesus Christ. This program will assist in encouraging and mentoring our children on the importance of the Church's commissions of outreach to The House of Joseph and all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. To date, over 50 children have "traveled" to seventeen different countries and a half dozen House of Joseph works.

How does this program work? It starts with the child creating their personalized Flat Sonbeam using the template

that is provided. A headshot photo is taken to make it complete. The Sonbeam is now ready to travel. When a trip is approved in the RIP System, the missionaries are contacted about taking a Flat Sonbeam with them.

The traveling missionary will receive a packet from the Travel Agent which includes the Flat Sonbeam and a Travelogue Journal. The missionary will take pictures with the Flat Sonbeam throughout the trip. Creative pictures with the missionaries, in-country members, scenery, signs, etc. are all encouraged. The missionary records a daily summary in the Travelogue Journal of the happenings during the trip to share with the Sonbeam back home. Pictures with descriptions can be sent back to the TCOJC Travel Agent during the trip. The pictures are posted on the Flat Sonbeam Facebook Page (**TCOJC Flat Sonbeams Going Abroad**) for the Sonbeams and Church members to follow.

This program creates an awareness of the trip to encourage members to support the missionaries in prayer. A devotional calendar with a daily scripture is posted on the Flat Sonbeam Facebook page mentioned previously. Periodic updates and pictures sent by the missionary are also posted to the site.

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## Is Hell For Real?

By Brother Josh Gehly

Good people can be found in every city and village. In any catastrophe, locals risk their lives to save others. Unbelieving doctors dutifully save the lives of their patients everyday. This world is filled with untold evils, wickedness and suffering, but it is also filled with atheists living paradoxically both unrepentant *and* "good". Do "good" people go to heaven and "bad" people go to hell? How can a good God permanently judge mankind for temporary acts of sin? Is hell a real place? The world struggles to answer such consequential concerns.

The Book of Mormon leaves no room for doubt—hell is real and referenced over 50 times. 2 Nephi 9 describes hell as a spiritual death and as a lake of fire and brimstone with flames that never end. Satan drags his children down to hell (see Alma 30:60). It is awful (see 1 Nephi 15:29; Alma 19:29; 54:7) and has no end (see 1 Nephi 14: 3-4). It has gates, meaning you can enter into it (see 2 Nephi 4:32; 3 Nephi 18:13), and those who enter are bound with chains (see Alma 5:7-10; 26:14) and tormented with pain (see Jacob 3:11-12; Alma 36:13).

Jesus Christ will be the just judge on our fateful judgment day (see 2 Tim 4:1; 3 Nephi 27:15-16). Many people ask the question today, "Are you saved?" or "Have you been saved?" For those baptized unto Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit, we answer with prophetic hope. *We shall be saved* is a phrase used 17 times in the New Testament and 19 times in the Book of Mormon. This penultimate judgment of Christ happens on the last day (see 1 Nephi 22:31; 2 Nephi 33:12; Alma 1:4; 3 Nephi 27:6).

Judgment lies with Christ, and not humanity. There will be no disputes or rebellion when we stand before the pleading bar of God. God does not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance (see Alma 45:16). Truly:

...no flesh...can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him... (2 Nephi 2:8-10)

Jesus Christ judges perfectly. He answers the ends of the law through His life and atoning sacrifice, which will allow all mankind to stand before Him for judgment. This is not a measurement of good versus bad in terms of human nature. Instead, a heavenly nature must dwell inside of us to allow us to inherit the divine. The measurement of salvation is Christ's name on our foreheads and in our hearts. The indwelling Holy Spirit seals us unto salvation. The fruits follow the faithful who endure to the end. Judgment will not be a measurement of who did the most good deeds relative to humanity. It will be an examination to witness the Spirit of God living inside of us, which propels His chosen to declare Christ Jesus and bring forth His Zion. Flesh cannot judge the Spirit for eternity, but the Lord will.

(Continued on page 6)

And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation; and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls. Amen. (2 Nephi 2:28-30)

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## ***Blessings in Mesa, AZ***     *By Sister Valerie Dulisse*

**W**e began our meeting today by singing, "A New Name Written Down in Glory." We have experienced 6 new souls coming to Christ so far this past year, Sister Cynthia Vargas, Brother Mike Green, Sister Alana Paster, Sister Marissa (Max) Bead, as well as Sister Brooke Begay, and Sister Sanaya Wilson, baptized at Wheatfields Lake, and Brother Manuel Guterrez baptized at Ganado Lake, both near the Tse Bonito Branch.

Brother Anthony Scolaro opened our meeting with the Luke 10:17, where the 70 evangelists had just returned from sharing the Gospel and preaching to people across the land. They were accompanied by the Spirit and Power of God; even the devils were subject to them through the Power of God. Jesus told them to not rejoice in that, but rather that their names were written down in heaven. Brother Anthony reminded us that the most outstanding thing that any of us can do is to share our testimony of how the Lord brought us to this point of salvation, with our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. That is the foundation, firm and constant, that we build our life upon, much more so than our education, skills, experience, or ability to financially provide, things that are only temporary. He then shared that, while the ministers were meeting this month at the General Church Conference, the Apostles shared an experience at their private conference meeting in which the Lord visited them while they were reading in Luke 9. The Lord told them: if you will obey my Word which I have been commanding my people, to prepare and purify yourselves, you will have the same power I gave to the Apostles recorded in the Gospel of Luke. God told the Apostles in the conference to convey this message to the Ministry of our Church.

Brother Anthony reminded us that we have many beautiful promises that the Lord has given to us, of which we will see the fulfillment in our future. Rejoice that by the grace of God, our names are written in Glory!

Brother Randy Lee, who is now a minister in our branch,

followed. He expressed that, when our name is written in glory, we gave our life to the Lord, began our journey to learn of Him and recognize all He is and all He's done. This God who made all things chose US and took us out of this world. God's ideas are beyond our comprehension; His love for us and for Israel is so great! Brother Randy spoke of God's plan that we, the Gentiles, should be adopted into His great plan—The Church of Jesus Christ. No other Church believes in The Bible and Book of Mormon only, and the restoration of Israel. He shared with us that we cannot stop proclaiming Jesus; we have seen the light of the precious Gospel going forth to Israel. The watchmen cannot hold their peace, day or night. We must lift His name up and proclaim it! Someday, every prayer offered by our ministry will be answered and healing will take place to show to the nations that God is sovereign and has the power to heal!

Next, Brother Randy spoke on feet washing, as today was our feet washing service. This ordinance is to rid ourselves of pride, to humble ourselves and be refreshed and be reminded of how much we must love one another. Christ is calling us all friends. He will not limit us, but gives us understanding and His Holy Spirit to lead us to be instruments in His hand for HIS honor and glory. How much more blessed are we when we do it HIS way, instead of our own, our brother reminded us. He has chosen us that we can bring forth fruit, and that it will remain. When our hearts are right, we can do so much more for the Lord! We can love more, and do more for God, serve Him the best that we can. He exhorted us to give of our very best to our Father in heaven. In aspiring to and accomplishing these things, we become the people that God has been asking us to become, through his many messages and revelations to the Apostles: to be purified and prepared for what is prophesied to come in our near future.

May God bless and bring us to a higher spiritual condition as we seek to be a more holy people, for His honor and glory!

## Becoming Who We Are *By Sister Ruth Gehly*

This year my grandson, Josiah, turned *seven* years old. *Seven* for him means that he is a second grader; he has achieved the art of balance and super hero speed on his new 20-inch bike; losing his front teeth was not as scary as he thought it might be; being able to read has opened a whole new world of adventure and having a little sister can be annoying, but she can also be pretty good company. At *seven*, these characteristics identify important things about him and the maturing process of his life's journey.

The number *seven* is symbolic of God's completion and perfection. At the March 2024 Fellowship Day, the Midwest Area Ladies' Uplift Circle dove into the Gospel of John, examining *seven* claims Jesus made about Himself that identified Him as the Messiah. Our goal: Understanding that the character of Christ (the Great I AM) changes who we are, thus aligning us more perfectly to the will of God for our lives and to the maturing process of our identity and spiritual journey as well.

*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*  
(Deuteronomy 32:4)

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* (Matthew 5:48)

Unpacking Seven Characteristics and Truths of Jesus Christ

### 1. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (John 6:36, 48, 51)

Reality: On multiple occasions throughout the gospels, Jesus fed the multitudes... seven loaves and two fish (Matthew 15, Mark 8)... He used the natural (things people could relate to) to open their spiritual eyes.

Spirituality: Through faith and belief in Him, we become spiritually satisfied; we also gain great hope in eternal life with Him.

### 2. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (John 8:12)

Reality: We live in a world that is filled with sin and darkness which clouds and distorts our natural and spiritual vision.

Spirituality: Christ came to be the light and life of men. His light exposes our sin and becomes life-changing—a guiding light that directs and orders the steps of all who choose to follow Him.

### 3. I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP (John 10:7, 9)

Reality: We are all led astray by the things that this world and Satan have to offer. The thief comes to steal and destroy.

Spirituality: No one can come to the Father except through Him. Whoever responds to the voice of Christ and follows Him and endures shall be saved and find peace in His pastures.

### 4. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10:14)

Reality: The relationship between the shepherd and his sheep is one of love, protection and guidance.

Spirituality: God the Father sent His only begotten son to be our Shepherd to guide us and point the way to His kingdom here on earth and His kingdom in heaven. His pursuit of us is grounded in pure love and life-giving affection for us.

### 5. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE (John 14:6)

Reality: Natural death is inevitable. No one is exempt from this reality. Eventually, our time on earth will come to an end.

Spirituality: Facing death with unwavering hope in the risen savior brings forgiveness and a newness of hope in everlasting life with Him.

### 6. I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE (John 11:25)

Reality: Today—anything goes and there is a call to tolerance. There are no absolutes. Truth is relative and based on whatever you believe.

Spirituality: Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. He was and is and always will be. He is the Way—because He is the Truth—because He is the life.

### 7. I AM THE TRUE VINE (John 15:1, 5)

Reality: Without a connection to a vine, the branch withers and dies and cannot bear fruit

Spirituality: We must be connected to (or abide in) the true Source of life and truth to receive nourishment for our souls. Abiding deeply allows Christ to emanate through us to the world.

So many spiritual truths to glean from! Any one of these seven identifiers is worth further “digging” and study time. Building our lives upon the “GREAT I AM” will change who we are so that we become a reflection of Him.

The Circle Sisters enjoyed precious fellowship during lunch. Based on the scripture “I am the true vine”, Sisters Christina and Nina DiCenzo coordinated a Paint and Praise activity. Each picture painted was beautifully unique and remains a reminder of the importance of nurturing our walk with the Lord, so that His character becomes ingrained into who we are... essential to perfecting our walk with Him.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* (Romans 12:1-2)



## GMBA Conference 2024 *By Sister Audrey Azzinaro*

This November, the GMBA held a blessed conference in Liberty, Ohio, hosted by the Liberty Branch. There was tremendous support shown from all of our area MBAs by members of all ages and enthusiastic participation from our youth! The GMBA worked diligently to plan a weekend of business, fellowship, and youth activities, all of which were blessed.

The weekend started off by singing praises to God on Saturday morning. Various young people took turns leading the singing and sharing their musical gifts with their instruments throughout the meetings. The ministry then took a short time to address the congregation and asked the question, "What can we do for God?" The brothers emphasized the importance of sharing our testimonies to those who are out in the world. They expanded on that idea by explaining that a testimony does not always have to be words, but rather we share our testimonies every day by how we live our lives. Sharing our testimony through our actions is how we can "shine our light," which became the theme of our weekend.

Following the singing, we broke for lunch and enjoyed eating and fellowshiping together. After we began the business meeting, where the officers and area presidents gave us a recap of the previous year. The GMBA had a successful year, holding the annual GMBA Campout, multiple youth summits at October and April General conferences, and two Youth in Action tours. In addition, the youth met, and continues to, every Monday on GMBA Youth Zoom calls where lessons are provided each week by the youth, the Q12, Q70, NAOC, Ladies' Circle, and more. The GMBA also grew a stronger presence on online platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and Instagram, through podcasts, videos, songs, etc. The area representatives also each shared about the activities they had hosted throughout the year. Activities that the areas shared included lock-ins, region camps, corn roasts, and traveling to other branches and missions together.

After a beautiful recap of the previous year, We began discussing and preparing for another blessed year for the GMBA. The meeting proceeded with the election of officers; many offices were reelected and some were passed on to new members. This year, after completing his term, Bro. Lucas Mortorana stepped down from being GMBA president and Brother Ryan McDonnell, the previous vice president, was elected as our new president. The current GMBA officers are Brother Ryan McDonnell (President), Brother Aaron Palmieri (vice president) and Brother Chuck Maddox (Chaplain). Also discussed in the meeting were announcements of the upcoming Youth Summits, the Spiritual Gathering in Mesa, AZ this coming January, possible Campout dates for 2025, as well as plans to manage funds going forward. Succeeding a productive business meeting, the members broke for dinner while the youth headed to an arcade to eat and fellowship!



As Saturday's events began coming to an end, we all gathered back at the Liberty Branch to have a night service together. The topic of "shining your light" continued in this service. Our ministry shared with us testimonies of times when they had "hid their light under a bushel" by not doing what the Spirit asked of them and encouraged the congregation to always listen when the Spirit speaks to us so we never miss the opportunity to shine our light to others!

**(Continued on page 11)**



**(Flat Sonbeams Travel with the NAOC and IMOC - continued from page 4)**

Once the missionaries return home, the Flat Sonbeam is sent back to the Travel Agent, and the completed Travelogue Journal is sent to the Sonbeam. When the Sonbeam ages out of the program, she or he will receive their Flat Sonbeam and a "Passport" from the TCOJC Travel Agent stamped with the places that their Flat Sonbeam has traveled.

There are many interactions between the missionary and the child through this program. It has not only been an enlightening experience for each child, but an uplifting one for the missionaries involved. Several parents of Sonbeams have been moved to tears to think that the missionaries would take the time to include their child in this experience. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Our goal is to show the importance of fulfilling the commissions of The Church of Jesus Christ: Our Divine Commission, to preach the pure Restored Gospel to the indigenous people of North, Central and South America, and the Great Commission to take the Gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

The Church of Jesus Christ has a glorious role to play in God's latter-day plan. Through the Q70, NAOC, and IMOC, we strive to follow the Spirit of God in preaching and teaching the Pure Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever He sends us. Jacob 5:71 states, "And the Lord of the vineyard said unto

them (his servants); Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might. For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which shall soon come." We can easily see that we are in the last days. Our desire is to labor for the Lord in His vineyard.

We continue forward in the face of opposition with confidence that the Lord will guide and protect us. We teach, through our experiences, the importance of fulfilling our commission through positive and negative circumstances. We trust in the Lord of the vineyard for our direction, strength, and protection, knowing that we are laboring that we may have joy in the fruit in the storehouse of our Heavenly Father.

What better way to pass along the missionary focused spirit to our children than while they are still young. Our prayer is that through their participation in this program, a seed of outreach to others may be planted in each child. If you are interested in participating in the Flat Sonbeam Missionary Program, please contact Sister Jessie Scaglione at [Jbsrls2@verizon.net](mailto:Jbsrls2@verizon.net).





## We Serve a Living God!

Dear Friends,

One year when it seemed like a lot of things had gone pretty wrong in my life, I kept coming to The Church of Jesus Christ, asking the Elders and Ladies' Circle members to please, please pray for me and my little girl. They did. I felt desperate many times, but I kept trying to do my life the right way according to God's guidance. I certainly followed God's laws to the best of my ability.

Later in that year, a very educated Social Worker commented to me that I had (what she called) a "magical life." Shocked, I started reminding her of all the trouble and things that had gone wrong, and all the trials and troubles we'd gone through. Looking very confused, she replied, "But everything worked out for you!" Yes, it did! I serve the one true God!

She was so right. With prayers and a grateful heart, troubles had worked out! In the Bible, we have a similar amazing story. In those old days, huge killing armies constantly attacked other countries to rob them of their gold and silver, anything of value. They also took families away to be sold as slaves.

There were no airplanes, bombs, guns, phones, or modern weapons yet invented. These huge armies fought with spears, swords, swift chariots, and by surrounding walled cities to cut off all food and starve the people so they would give in.

The King of the land was Hezekiah, a grandson of Jehoshaphat and King David. (See II Kings Chapters 17-20.) King Hezekiah had taught his people to serve our one true God. They did not worship statues or any horrible religion that hurt people. They followed the Ten Commandments, which teach us it is wrong to make carved images or statues of any kind and pray to them! God was pleased that His people did right. He heard their prayers, as He hears ours.

So, when the huge armies from the big

country of Syria marched to his city and threatened to kill, take captive, and murder everyone, Hezekiah and his people prayed! When the army demanded their gold and silver, they took all their silver and gave it to them. They pulled their gold off the columns and walls and sent it. But the Assyrians wanted more!

The big army sent a messenger and a letter saying how they had conquered all the other cities, no matter what gods they served, and they'd destroy these followers of God. They wanted to frighten the King and his people into giving up. But Hezekiah began praying and put on clothes for mourning. The other men of God and the prophets joined him. He took the letter to the Temple (Church) and laid it before God. (See II Kings 19:19.) He begged God to protect them so the whole world would know that there was only one God!

And God answered him and told him to tell the Syrian king's messenger, "I have heard everything you have said about me and seen your rage and plans to destroy this people. But I am telling you, King of Assyria (camped outside the walls with huge armies), You shall not come into this city, or even shoot an arrow there, or attack it with your shields... You will return home by the same way you came! I will defend this city to save

it, for My own sake and because I promised My servant David (so many years ago)."

And it came to pass that night, the angel of the Lord went out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand of the enemies! Can you imagine that terrible sight? They did not attack God's people!

So, Hezekiah's enemy, the King of the Assyrians, turned and rushed for home. He returned to the big city of Nineveh. And as he was worshipping one of his false statue gods, his own sons attacked him with a sword, killed the bad king, and escaped to another country!

And prayerful, good King Hezekiah and the whole city of people were saved by our one true, living God!

This is the great God that WE know, love and serve today. He is our friend who truly cares about us. God wants us to pray and talk to Him in the name of Jesus. Try it. Your bad year can become a blessed one when you look back on it! It's true!

With Care and Love,

Your friend and Sister In Christ,

### Sister Jan



GOD KNOWS EVERY DANGER ENEMY HEARTACHE AND HIS SON JESUS HE WANT TO LOVE GUIDE CARE FOR US EACH TRUST HIM

## What was a moment of Joy you had in 2024?

"There are three moments of joy that come to my mind right away: 1) My husband and I experienced the beauty of an Alaskan cruise and ran into Sis. Flo Benyola in Victoria, Canada! 2) My husband attended his first region conference with me in Irvine, and 3) Witnessing the ordinations of our Bro. David and Sis. Jenny Meyer in Idaho Falls. The Spirit of God was felt in all of these moments...praise God!" -Sister Dienna Rogers, Irvine, CA Branch

"While playing babies with my youngest granddaughter and watching her care for her baby, my heart was overjoyed! She truly earns her name, Scarlett Joy." -Sister Donna Repcheck, Levittown, PA Branch

"Celebrating my Mom's 100th birthday and 84 years in the Church. The Lord has truly blessed her life." -Sister KarenJo Pandone, Farmington Hills, MI Branch

"God's outpouring of blessings in 2024, including April showers for sure from SAMBA camp, my first April conference, baptism, GLUC fellowship weekend, October conference etc. I am truly grateful for our Lord Jesus Christ because, with Him, all things are possible!" -Sister Heather Escobar, Forest Hills, FL Branch

"Being a part of the Tse Bonito Tent meetings. What an amazing time! Especially sharing it with my two daughters." -Sister Kim Morle, Atlanta, GA Branch

### (GMBA Conference 2024 - continued from page 8)

Following the preaching, the ministry asked the youth to sing a song and then opened the meeting for testimony. At first, not many stood up to share their testimony, so we paused to sing a song before the ministry decided to open the meeting again to give everyone another chance to testify. After they opened the meeting back up, people continuously stood up one after another to give thanks to God. It was beautiful to hear the Saints tell of how God has and continues to work in their lives. When the night meeting concluded, everyone stayed to enjoy dessert and fellowship! Along with the sweets, Brothers Andrew Tenorio, Armand Gevannone, and Anthony Francione had prepared a Jeopardy game based on the Songs of Zion. The young people split into two teams and picked from categories like "on the mountain" or "the early morning" for various points. Each category correlated with a song that was played on the piano and the teams had to guess the song. This was such a fun way to help the youth become more familiar with the Songs of Zion!

On Sunday morning, we met one last time for a blessed service. The building was overflowing; we had to bring in more chairs—what a beautiful sight to see! Additionally, there were many musicians on guitar, piano, organ, flute, accordion, and drumset who did an amazing job in their efforts of praise! Our ministry continued to speak about the importance of Shining the Light



of Christ. Instead of hiding under a bushel, the call went out to light up the bushel so that others will see the Glory of God! It was preached that God sees our desires and our efforts to be more like Him, even if sometimes we don't feel like we are doing the best job. God can take our desires and magnify them for His honor and glory to help us shine brighter! The meeting then went into communion and the members participated in this humbling act of remembrance together. At the close of our meeting, there was a request to sing "This Little Light of Mine" which the musicians gladly improvised, and we must've sung it at least three times through! It was a blessing to attend this year's November GMBA conference, and I know that everyone who was in attendance would attest to this as well. A big thanks to the GMBA and the Liberty Branch for hosting a wonderful weekend for the Saints of God!



*"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; ..." Isaiah 62:10*



# Blessing Bits

## BB A Drop of Gold

After a beautiful preaching service that gave the saints much food for thought, our attention was turned to the anointing of many who stood in need. As the anointings began, I looked toward the chair and as I was closing my eyes, I saw what appeared to be a drop of gold being placed on the head of a brother as he was being anointed. After the anointings concluded, I hesitated to share the experience, unsure of the nature of what I saw. Overcome with conviction, I rose to my feet and shared the beauty of what I witnessed. As soon as I sat down, a brother popped up and stated that he heard within himself the words, "There is healing in that chair." We were all blessed that the Lord provided a comforting and relevant sermon to us that day and followed that by showing His exceeding love for His people. - Sister Karen Progar, Aliquippa, PA Branch

## BB An Unexpected Turnout

In the last few years, the Liberty Branch has grown smaller in size. When it was announced that we'd be hosting the Fall GMBA business conference, I thought, "But, Lord, we are so few. Who will help? Who will even come?" As the brothers shared with us the projected lunch count or Saturday, I remember thinking, "They must think there are more of us in the branch than there

actually are." On Saturday morning, I was asked to have the Communion table set for five ministers the following day, and again I thought, "Where are these people coming from?!" But they came! They came and they came! The Lord blessed us to be bursting at the seams, and He blessed our meetings to be seasoned by His Spirit! What a beautiful and unexpected blessing! - Sister Rachel Gensburg, Liberty, OH Branch

## BB A Season of Gratitude

As I look back on 2024, I'm filled with gratitude toward The Lord! In the summer, Brother Andrew Meyer and I attended our first GMBA Campout where we asked for our baptisms! We were baptized in July in Idaho Falls, and were recently blessed by the ordinations of Brother David and Sister Jenny Meyer in November. It has been such a blessing for our mission to grow in understanding and unity and to be encouraged by all of the saints that have come to support us. I'm so grateful for God's wonderful plan for our lives, and for the people He gives us to help us on our journey. I'm so excited to see what the future holds for the Idaho Falls Mission! I know that God's work is only just beginning to unfold here! - Sister Petra Christensen, Idaho Falls, ID Mission

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Answers to Question of the Month to [gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org](mailto:gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org).



### Question for this month:

What area of your spiritual life or service to God do you want to focus or improve on in 2025?



### Answer from last month:

Share a moment of Joy you had in 2024. It can be an experience, a time where you felt close to God, a meeting or event that you enjoyed, or anything that comes to mind that brought you Joy.

*Turn to page 11 for more answers.*



*"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; ..." Isaiah 62:10*