

The General Conference

SPRING MEETINGS

Here is a report from our General Conference (GC) spring meetings, praising those things that are praiseworthy and speaking against those things that are not. It is always easy to criticize, but this is not our work.

“Satan will seek earnestly to intercept [interrupt in progress] every ray of light coming from the throne of God, and will place his own darkness for light. It is he that prompts the keen criticism, the satanic accusing. But it is the love of Jesus cherished in the soul that will overcome every opposing force. It places the man wholly on the side of Christ; for it brings him into harmony with the principles of the law of God.”—*Review and Herald, February 23, 1897.*

Call to Order

In the call to order, we were given the mission, method, and vision of the Church, followed by the declaration of our belief in the Bible, Spirit of prophecy, and a commitment to the fundamental beliefs.

Our Mission: Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels’ Messages in preparation for His soon return.

Our Method: Guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventists pursue the mission of making disciples through Christ-like living, healing, serving, proclaiming, teaching, and training.

Our Vision: In harmony with Bible revelation, Seventh-day Adventists see as the climax of God’s plan the restoration of all His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righteousness.

We Affirm: Our belief in the Word of God as found in the Holy Bible. The Word of God is inspired and inscribed with divine authority. As such, it is timeless, trustworthy, and the sacred guide for our faith and practice. The Word of God reveals His nature, His character, His will, and His redemptive works—especially in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our belief in the Spirit of Prophecy is manifested in the inspired ministry and writings of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and, in harmony with the Word of God, provide the Church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. We believe this prophetic gift is a great blessing to help the Church in the last time of earth’s history and leads all to the greater light, being the Word of God.

Our commitment to the Fundamental Beliefs officially adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church are based on the Word of God and supported by the Spirit of Prophecy. We are united in our faithfulness to the Word of God and our focus on the Spirit of Prophecy. Through

the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and in harmony with our fundamental beliefs, we are committed to the mission of making disciples throughout the world.

Please note: Our mission statement, the General Conference Bylaws, were updated to specifically reference them in the appropriations section.

In his opening statements, Elder Ted Wilson praised the 28 fundamental beliefs, stating that they “anchor” our doctrinal beliefs. “All those beautiful 28 fundamental beliefs are centered in Jesus Christ our salvation.”

Please note: The word, anchor, is a metaphor. Just like a ship needs an anchor to stay grounded and not drift away, our faith needs solid truths to remain steady and secure.

So when Ted Wilson says the 28 beliefs “anchor” our doctrinal beliefs, it means that these 28 beliefs serve as a foundation for what we believe as a Church. They hold us steady in truth, especially in a world with many confusing and changing ideas. They unify believers around a common understanding of Scripture.

The 28 fundamental beliefs have been written in a way to conceal some very important light. This cannot be argued; yet they still reveal truth as it is in Jesus. These statements do reflect what the Bible teaches. However, we have inspired words from our prophet on this topic:

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of [peer reviewed] science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”—*Great Controversy, 595.1.*

What does the Bible say our anchor is? The promises of God:

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed [provided evidence] it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”—Hebrews 6:17-20.

Auditor's Report

2 GC Net Assets ending on December 31, 2024: \$596 Million. It was reported that the net worth increased by \$27 million.

Please note: It was specifically stated that “tithe and offering” are invested. Invested where? During the treasurer’s report, Elder Wilson remarked that he was glad the report didn’t take place after the week’s stock market dropped. Some people may not have a problem with this statement. The parable of the talents refers to a man who buried his talent in the dirt instead of increasing it. This parable is often used as an excuse to invest in the world; and, in so doing, the talent is proverbially (commonly spoken as) buried in the earth. God doesn’t care about filling the bank; He cares about filling Heaven.

It was reported that 80% of funds go to program services while 19% goes to office operating expenses. This is a really healthy number. The auditor mentioned that he usually sees numbers close to 70%-30%. *I considered this good news. I was under the impression that they spent a lot more on operating expenses.*

Expenses increased: Other than the basic inflation cost increase, the largest expense increase was from the category “other programs,” which, specifically, are distributions from “donor advised funds,” where money is donated for a specific purpose.

This caught my attention: Elder Ted Wilson interrupted the beginning of the treasurer’s report, to request attendants to give Jeffrey Straus and Elder Ken Denslow a round of applause. These were the gentlemen responsible for the auditor’s report. I am somewhat acquainted with the stories of Elder Ted Wilson not approving of clapping in the past. It was an interesting development. And no, I don’t believe it shows his character. Character is not determined by one action; therefore, it cannot be judged by one action. Motives weigh with God. They stamp the actions with character, and we cannot discern them in others.

Treasurer's Report

It was reported that the financial position of the GC is strong: \$338 million in net assets, with 94% in cash and investments.

The Tithe Parody agreement was discussed, which moves the NAD from contributing 5.85%-3.85% while other divisions move from 2%-3% contribution to the GC. Despite this change, the GC is doing well.

Offering has increased and now accounts for 55% of money received while tithe is down to 45% of money received.

This is an accurate statement: Tithe in 2024 was \$86 million while the offering was 107 million. The base year for comparison was 2019. Tithe is down \$2 million from the comparison year while offering is up \$30 million. That’s a remarkable amount of offering increase.

The following is a breakdown of the GC’s spending habits:

- 41% mission strategy and support: \$74.9 million
- 9% educational institutions: \$15.8 million
- 14% media and publications: \$24.5 million
- 18% leadership development and accountability: \$33.7 million

- 18% other: \$32.6 million

The GC has 11.6 months worth of operating liquid assets. This means they can operate on available money for 11.6 months.

Global tithe: 2024 saw a total of \$3.03 billion with a decrease of \$88.2 million from the last year.

The Church operating cap is \$3.3 million under budget. This means that they spent \$3.3 million less than they had planned to spend.

To close: Before voting to accept the report, Marcos Bomfim, the General Conference Stewardship Ministries director, expressed his thankfulness that the Church was receiving more offerings than tithe. He shared his expectations that liberality would increase as the time of the Second Coming draws closer.

God has inspired His people with a generous heart.

Tithe-Sharing Report

Stewardship: The divisions are doing well. Only three divisions of the thirteen have not reached the ability to support themselves.

The financial strength of the GC was stressed. The following are the three submitted reasons why the GC should be financially strong:

- It must be positioned to financially support the Church’s global strategic [essential] priorities.
- It must be capable of surging [rapid increase in getting] resources to meet emergencies and address unusual opportunities.
- It must be seen as a model of financial strength and stability even during times of economic uncertainty.

Three tithe-sharing reports revealed a projected deficit (lack) in the GC budget by 2031. To maintain the financial strength of the GC, the following strategies were recommended:

- Increase the minimum available liquid assets, from 9 to 12 months, as recommended for the GC.
- Affirm the current tithe-sharing policy for all world divisions to forward 3% of gross tithe from their territory to the GC by the year 2030.

There was a motion to accept both strategies.

Someone recommended that we trust God’s blessing. Another person recommended an amendment. At this point, Elder Wilson weighed in and strongly encouraged people to accept the motion. He also encouraged people not to recommend an amendment but, instead, vote against it. The motion passed with 30 against and 120 in favor.

More recommendations:

- Amend the policy, to allow the NAD, beginning in 2026, to retain the additional .85% in tithe contributed to GC provided that:

A. NAD is not eligible for audit subsidies from the GC until after 2040.

B. NAD will no longer receive an appropriation toward the tail of its defined benefit retirement plan.

This amendment also passed.

The appropriations (means setting aside specific amounts of money for particular purposes) and allocations (expenditure guidelines for stated purposes or programs) study group reported that 59% of money is

spent through appropriations and allocations. This led into the final recommendations:

- Implement a method, in 2026, for calculating appropriations that takes into consideration the financial strength and mission focus of world divisions with a phase-in period to end in 2030.

- Provide limits on the use of appropriations for administrative expenses based on the financial strength of world divisions.

- Prepare a road map, in consultation with the particular world division, toward the classification of being in a strong financial condition by 2030. On a case-by-case basis, assist with additional financial resources in order to bring this road map into effect.

- Provide appropriations to world divisions in the money currency of choice that will allow them to avoid the potential depreciating effects because of exchange differences.

- Coordinate all the resource designated activities from the GC, to ensure they are being administered in a manner that is consistent with the prevailing method for appropriations to world divisions.

- Identify a metric (standard measurement) of what represents financial strength for the GC and, starting in 2026, distribute any surplus for the year as follows:

 - 50% for SP&B to make a collective decision on a strategic mission priority

 - 50% for world divisions to apply toward their priorities that are aligned with the I WILL GO strategic plan of 2025-2030

- Update the current wording regarding appropriations in the GC Bylaws to reflect long-standing practice and reference the use of a method that aligns appropriations with strategic priorities. (The strategic mission priority is listed in “Our Mission.”)

Motion passed: Record receipt of the appropriations study report and recommendations as presented.

Sharing the Gift of Light

A new plan to translate 16 core (the most important parts) Ellen G. White books into 54 priority languages was announced. Additionally, they plan to translate up to three Ellen G. White books into 352 languages. They are focusing on *Steps to Christ*, *Great Controversy*, and the *Desire of Ages*. They plan on using AI (Artificial Intelligence software) to accelerate the process.

Motion passed: Record the translational plan of Spirit of Prophecy Committee as presented.

Praise God that more people will have access to these beautiful books!

Independent and Supporting Ministries

Mark Finley spoke about supporting ministries. It was stressed that they have their roots in Scripture. 1 Corinthians 12 specifically speaks about the body of Christ. He stressed how Acts 18:3 speaks of an example of self-supporting ministries and the need for ministries to be independently funded. He described the four basic purposes that helped ASI (Adventist Laymen’s Services and Industries) form and the criteria they expect of those who join them:

- They look for institutions committed to Christ and

the Adventist message.

- They look for institutions that will cooperate with mission. He stressed that ministries critical of the Church, or people who thought the Church needed correction, are not supporting ministries. (*More on this later.*)

- They look for institutions that will communicate with leadership.

- They look for institutions that will cooperate and work together on projects.

Mark Finley invited Michael Ryan, newly appointed assistant to the Church president for strategic planning, to the microphone; and Michael expressed how much everyone loved laypeople before inviting Steve Dickman to speak. Steve Dickman, who is the president of OCI ministries (Outpost Centers International, with a total of 360 ministries), also expressed his thoughts on laypeople:

“We are all laypeople to a degree. We may hold a position; we may work for the church; but, in essence, we are the laity of the church.”

Laity definition: Laity refers to the unordained members of a religious organization, excluding the clergy. His statement is an oxymoron (a combination of contradictory words, such as “cruel kindness”).

He was then invited to speak about OCI ministries requirements and the difference between independent ministries and a supporting ministries.

OCI requirements

- “The governance structure must be separate from governance structure of the Church.”

- “Their governance structure must maintain and be managed by members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in good and regular standing.”

- “Besides the governance structure, we require that anyone who applies for OCI membership not be accepting tithe from any Seventh-day Adventist Church member.

- “These ministries have to covenant [agree] to work in support of the doctrines as well as the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We don’t want anyone speaking adverse doctrinally to the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and be a member of OCI.”

Steve Dickerson then spoke about independent ministries in these words:

“When I hear the term, independent ministry, it just kinda makes me feel a little bit like these people are not with us. They’re not doing the same thing we are; they are independent in nature. And, when I see that, I see characteristics of people or ministries who are critical of the Church, who may have even accepted into their governance structure people who are not Seventh-day Adventists. And maybe they are even accepting tithe; and so those things would be adverse to the work of working together. And so, for those ministries, if we can identify them, and we find them within the membership of OCI, we have some counseling sessions with them. (He chuckled and placed his hand on the shoulder of Michael Ryan.) We try to help them get on track; and, if they are not members, we will not accept them. “But, uh,

4 I told a group recently, I said, if you are not fulfilling the requirements of the membership of OCI, we can start divorce proceedings.” (He chuckled.)

There were definitely some comments made in poor taste. I don't know why anyone would joke about divorce unless they haven't experienced it. Due to the humor that the term "counseling sessions" held, it can be concluded that they are more serious than simply counseling.

Andi Hunsaker, the president of ASI, was introduced. She also listed their rules:

- “Anybody that joins ASI, we ask that they are truly supportive of the message, the mission, and the leadership. You will not find anyone at ASI criticizing the [Church] leadership, which we believe that God ordained.

- “ALL members must not accept tithe. If we find out that there's a member that is taking tithe, they are uninvited from their membership. Also, upon dissolution [ending] of the membership [she misspoke and corrected herself] of the ministry, the supporting ministry, [she is choosing words. Her lips form an 'R' for require?]. Then her lips form a 'Ma' [for definitely make?]; we ask them to include in their documentation that they donate all of their assets, 100% of their assets, to a qualified charity owned and controlled by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and they must do this; otherwise, they cannot be members.”

Andi misspoke; she was not saying that ASI forces people to dissolve (end) their company if they accept tithe. I called ASI about this and was directed to their webpage that specifies the rules that ASI requires its ministries to put in their bylaws:

- *A statement of support for the mission and message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*

- *A requirement that all board members and officers be baptized Seventh-day Adventists in good standing*

- *A requirement that the board shall have a minimum of five members, three of whom are unrelated to each other by blood or marriage*

- *A dissolution clause stating that, in the event the organization ceases to function, any remaining assets will be transferred to another Adventist owned 501(c) (3) organization [a nonprofit organization recognized by the IRS as exempt from federal income tax] of the members' choosing*

You will note that she did not say that uninvited ministries must be dissolved. What she said is clearly outlined on their web-page, when the fact she misspoke is taken into account. This is actually a very wise clause that ensures money is recycled in the cause of God.

(Disclaimer: Harvestime Books is not a member of OCI or ASI.)

Does the Bible support independent ministries?

“There are differences of administrations [literally, service figuratively, aid], but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations (or work), but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”—1 Corinthians 12:5-6.

While an independent ministry may be independent of earthly leadership, it is not independent of God's leadership. Paul, in this chapter of 1 Corinthians, uses the human body to describe the Church working together. It seems that the conference may have forgotten who the head is. The brain controls every portion of the body, not the stomach, nor the mouth, nor the foot, nor the eyes. Each of these members supports the others in one way or another, but each one does not control all of them. It would seem that the conference thinks that, because a ministry is not under its control, it is not a member of the body. That isn't how it works.

“As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”—1 Corinthians 12:12-13.

The Church organization is important, but it is not to bring every ministry under its power for the purpose of unity. Unity is not about being under human leadership, but it is about being under God's leadership through the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us about unity in Ephesians:

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace....

“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 fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—Ephesians 4:1-3, 13-16.

Paul gives us the idea that the body is joined together by the gifts he mentions; and when properly working, they grow together in love into the fullness of Christ, in the unity of the faith and the Spirit. The Church is “en-

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feebled and defective, needing to be reprov'd, warn'd, and counseled"; it needs correction. It is not within the best interest of the Church to have ministries that have said they will not speak about the corrections that need to be made. This is literally what leprosy looks like in the human body. The protests of our nerves are important for our health, just like the protests of the laity and ministries are important for the health of the Church. God did not make the body to be silent under abuse.

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."—Isaiah 58:1.

God does not want us to be evil surmisers, criticizers, or backbiters. He wants us to call sin by its right name in the right spirit and for the right reason. There is certainly a difference!

What does Ellen White say about independent ministries?

"The sixth chapter of Isaiah has a deep and important lesson for every one of God's workmen. Study it with humility and earnest prayer. The first and second chapters of Ezekiel should also be carefully studied. The wheels within wheels represented in this symbol was confusion to the finite eye. But a hand of infinite wisdom was revealed amid the wheels. Perfect order is brought out of the confusion. Every wheel works in its right place, in perfect harmony with every other part of the machinery.

"I have been shown that human beings desire too much power. They desire to control, and the Lord God, the mighty Worker is left out of their work. The workmen feel qualified to hold the highest place. Let no man attempt to manage that work which should be left in the hands of the great I AM, and who is in His own way planning how the work shall be done. Know that God is the Instructor of His servants, and He will work through whom He will."—*Christian Leadership* (1895), 26.

"There is need of a most earnest, thorough work to be carried forward now in all our churches. We are now to understand whether all our printing plants and all our sanitariums are to be under the control of the General Conference. I answer, Nay. It has been a necessity to organize Union Conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences. The power vested in the Conference is not to be centered in one man, or two men, or six men; there is to be a council of men over the separate divisions.

"The showing by the past leadership of the conference is not after God's order. There has been a work done of a character that has not been approved of God. The result we have before us in the ruins where once stood that large printing plant, with its expensive facilities.

"The divine statutes have been set aside. The time will soon come when God will vindicate His insulted authority. 'The Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain' [Isaiah 26:21]. 'But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?' [Malachi 3:2].

"In the work of God no kingly authority is to be exercised by any human being, or by two or three. The representatives of the Conference, as it has been carried with authority for the last 20 years, shall be no longer justified in saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.' [See Jeremiah 7:4.] The men in positions of trust have not been carrying the work wisely.

"The Lord calls for wise men to preside over His work and to be faithful shepherds of His flock. He has a work to be done in every city. The General Conference has fallen into strange ways, and we have reason to marvel that judgment has not fallen, showing, 'by terrible things in righteousness' [Psalm 65:5], that God is not a man that He should lie."—*14 Manuscript Releases*, 279-280.

Trying to bring everything under the mold of one man is not after the order of God. Many believe this is what Ted Wilson is doing. I have not found evidence that Ted Wilson controls everything like a king, at least not evidence that is free from the taint of assumption and accusation. If it is truly happening, it will be revealed in time; God is well able to vindicate His authority.

"The Lord has instructed me that, from the first, the work in Huntsville and Madison should have received adequate help. But instead of this help being rendered promptly, there has been long delay. And in the matter of the Madison school, there has been a standing off from them because they were not under the ownership and control of some Conference. This is a question that should sometimes be considered, but it is not the Lord's plan that means should be withheld from Madison, because they are not bound to the conference. The attitude which some of our brethren have assumed toward this enterprise shows that it is not wise for

every working agency to be under the dictation of conference officers. There are some enterprises under certain conditions that will produce better results if standing alone.”—8 *Manuscript Releases*, 202, par. 3.

Ted Wilson on House Churches

“Organization of the church itself is a key factor in whether or not we officially call them a house church.”

He stated that the basic framework of guidelines given is not policy, and it is also not going in the *Church Manual*, though some people suggested it be added.

There was some discussion on what exactly a house church, and other groups, are. Elder Wilson defined them:

- House groups (Christians gathering in homes to worship on Sabbath) also known as house churches.
- Small groups (small groups of people meeting throughout the week but not on Sabbath).
- Companies (an organized body without a church)
- A Church (an organized body with a church).

Elder Wilson stressed the importance of knowing the difference. He stated house groups and house churches are used interchangeably.

Elder Wilson also stressed that everything should be connected to the local conference or mission; there should be no exception. It appeared that his focus was not on the U.S. but on foreign countries. He stated his concern that people will make their own churches and demand representation at constituency meetings.

Rules of Order

• This document has been made “gender neutral,” when appropriate. There was only one place it was deemed appropriate:

“It is the usual procedure for the chair to accept the referral.”...

“The chair may accept the referral at his or her discretion.”...

Please note: The chair being referred to is the chair of the nominating committee which can be a woman or man. It actually excludes every other gender except him or her, meaning **in modern society that it is gender exclusive!** Imagine that.

• More power was given to the chair regarding points of order or of privilege. Specifically, notice these two things: the ability to reconsider points of order or of privilege, if the chair puts the question to a vote of delegates.

A question or point of order is not to be used to debate pending motions or gain the floor ahead of other delegates. If someone does this, they must immediately state the basis for the question of privilege or point of order. If they do not state the basis after a warning, the chair can decline to recognize the speaker.

Please note: This was passed in order to keep people from rambling without a point or abusing the process to get what they want.

ADRA

The previous president of ADRA spoke about lies and misinformation going around. Ultimately, I don't feel inclined to write much on this subject. He addressed

some information about the idea that he had a seven figure income. He said that, if he made that much, he would be at a beach and not the spring meetings. I have heard people misconstruing this statement and using it as proof to support the accusation that he only works because he loves money. This is hateful and offensive to God. He stated that, if he made the money, he would be living like it, a fair argument. I would like to point out that the update to the current wording regarding appropriations in the General Conference Bylaws should effectively stop anyone from using appropriations to do things that do not spread the Three Angels' Messages and the gospel. Personally, I think this was specifically changed because of what happened with ADRA. *Please note:* This was not voted into practice yet.

Personal Reflections

I have learned that the only way to accurately discover what is going on in the Church is by going directly to the source. The spring meetings have revealed a fault-finding critical spirit in many ministries and people in the Church. There were also some misunderstandings; even I had some that needed to be worked out. I praise God for helping me to find the truth of the matter. Too many people are waiting for anything that can be wrested from its context and misconstrued to be something bad. The Church has enough problems without people making up more!

I see God's hand working to guide the Church back to Him, and I see people resisting it. The wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the wicked servant and the faithful servant—there will always be two classes of people till the end of time.

Tithe

The topic of tithe has been foremost in many minds, including those of the leadership. There has been strife, accusation, and misuse of the tithe in the conference AND in independent and supporting ministries. Yes, supporting ministries receive tithe; I know they do. Long ago, I gave my tithe to supporting ministries without marking it as a tithe. This practice is not good; it is a double-sided curse. The tithe is misused by the ministry because they don't know it is tithe, and the person who donated it is held responsible by God. What then should we do with tithe?

“God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means. That there may be no haphazard work and no error, He has made our duty on these points very plain. The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord's work.”

“God has shown honor to men in taking them into partnership with Himself in the great work of redemption. The minister should, by precept and example, teach the people to regard the tithe as

sacred. He should not feel that he can retain and apply it, according to his own judgment, because he is a minister. It is not his. He is not at liberty to devote to himself whatever he thinks is his due. Let him not give his influence to any plans for diverting from their legitimate use the tithes and offerings dedicated to God. They are to be placed in His treasury and held sacred for His service as He has appointed...

“God will judge for these things. One reasons that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others would reason that canvassers and col-porteurs should be supported from the tithe. But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used—the support of the ministers. There should be today in the field one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one.”—*22 Letters and Manuscripts (1907), Manuscript 33, pars. 9, 10, 14.*

Are there no exceptions to this? I have found none, except in the definition of ministers, and the channels through which the money may be sent. *We will discuss this in greater detail soon.*

This is the most enlightening letter on Tithe from Ellen White. When she speaks of “special instruction,” she is referencing this letter:

“I send you this morning a letter written for America, and sent there yesterday morning, which will show you how I regard the tithe money being used for other purposes. This is the Lord’s special revenue fund, for a special purpose. I have never so fully understood this matter as I now understand it. Having had questions directed here to me to answer, I have had special instruction from the Lord that the tithe is for a special purpose, consecrated to God to sustain those who minister in the sacred work as the Lord’s chosen, to do His work not only in sermonizing but in ministering. They should understand all that this comprehends. There is to be meat in the house of God, a treasury well supplied, and it is not to be diverted to other purposes. There is to be special labor given to awaken the people of God who believe the truth, to give a faithful tithe to the Lord, and ministers should be encouraged and sustained by that tithe.

That there will always be a temptation to divert the tithe money to other channels, we know; but the Lord has guarded this, His own portion, to be sacredly used for the support of the gospel ministers. There may be such measures taken as shall reduce the working force that bears the message of truth, as is being done, and in America has been done, to meet the measurement of the tithe in the treasury; but this is not the Lord’s plan, and if entered upon and continued will reduce God’s blessing to the churches that work upon such a plan. There may be a great dearth of means if there is a departing from the Lord’s plan.

The Lord regards the tithe as His own, to be used for a certain purpose, and it is an easy matter, in the place of practicing the self-denial that

we should, to help in educating students, or in the temporal matters, as providing conveniences for the church, which is necessary, to dip into the Lord’s consecrated portion which should be used only to sustain the ministers in new fields as well as in other places. And this should not be done in a niggardly (ungenerous, stingy) way. All the inconveniences that the laborers must wrestle with in these new fields should be taken into consideration. The expense of living is greater in some localities than in others.

Special efforts should be made for those who are where fruit is scarce, for they could live so much cheaper if they were where they could get fruit. When they are sent to fields where they are deprived of nearly everything because of the expense, a careful consideration should be made of these matters, and the lack should be supplied as far as possible, but not by withdrawing from his salary for these extra things. Those who are more favorably situated should share their prosperity with those who are in need of the very things that they are so abundantly supplied with in their locality.

We shall become very narrow, conceited, and selfish if we are not guarded and do not watch against the foe we have to meet and contend with. I shall do something for Brother Robert Hare. I will supply some things which will relieve the situation of want of fruit. I will get a couple of hundred pounds of grapes, and make [them] into jelly, that they can use on their bread. Now see what others can do. Each can do a little, and send to Brother Hare. When you visit the place, you can take some things, and we will prepare some things and send them before that time. We will make this a thank offering to God because we are permitted to live in localities where we can obtain these things and enjoy them. I think the Lord would bless us in doing this.

Now in regard to educating students in our schools. It is a good idea; it will have to be done; but God forbid that in the place of practicing self-denial and self-sacrifice our individual selves, to do this work, we should subtract from the Lord’s portion, specially reserved to sustain the ministers in active labor in the field, and...to [keep] at work those who are already ordained for the work. We can easily consider these matters, how much it requires to support our own families according to the members of that family. Then let those whose business it is act in accordance with this rule. Look not upon our own things but upon the things of others. Let us practice the golden rule, and do unto others as we would that they should do unto us were we in like circumstances.

The fibrous roots of selfishness will root themselves wherever they are given a chance. We want to cut out and exterminate every fiber of the root of selfishness.

If one is appointed to a field where he is de-

prived of many things, and is sent into that field by the decision of the conference, that same power is to bear its share of the burden of making this messenger of God in that field as nearly as possible as comfortable and as pleasantly situated as the members of this power are in their several localities. The Lord will bless all such love expressed toward His workers in hard places.

But there is not that careful, tender regard that thoughtful discrimination, in such cases, as there ought to be. If all who have anything to do with these matters would let the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine fully into their hearts, they would open the windows on heaven's side and then diffuse in every way possible the light to others, in a variety of ways.

All these things are to be done, as you propose, to help students to obtain an education; but I ask you, Shall we not all act in this matter unselfishly, and create a fund, and keep it to draw upon on such occasions? When you see a young man or a young woman who is a promising subject, advance or loan the sum needed, with the idea that it is a loan, not a gift. It would be better to have it thus. Then when it is returned, it can be used to educate others. But this money is not to be taken from the tithe, but from a separate fund secured for that purpose. This would exert a healthy uprightness and charity and patriotism among our people. There must be thoughtful consideration and a skillful adjustment of the work in the cause of God in all its departments. But let there be no meager, stingy plans in using the consecrated portion for the sustaining of the ministry; for then the treasury would soon be empty."—*13 Manuscript Releases, 284.2.*

It is important to note that Ellen White made a distinction between sermonizing and ministering. Many "pastors" today feel that their only duty is to sermonize, but Ellen White says that ministers should understand all that word comprehends, and so should we. Please also note that Satan is actively trying to divert tithe from its true use. He hates the gospel and does not want it to be supported. There are good, true pastors in God's Church; there are also wolves in sheep's clothing. The tithe is not to be hoarded by a minister so he can spend it upon sinful indulgences and self-gratification. It is for those who need it, and certain people qualify to have more of it than others due to living expenses and location.

Another letter that has valuable words about tithe:

"You ask if I will accept tithe from you and use it in the cause of God where most needed. In reply I will say that I shall not refuse to do this, but at the same time I will tell you that there is a better way.

It is better to put confidence in the ministers of the conference where you live and in the officers of the church where you worship. Draw nigh to your brethren. Love them with a true heart fervently, and encourage them to bear their responsibilities faithfully in the fear of God. 'Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' [1 Timothy 4:12]. Read Philippians 2:1-16.

There are many things that I am bidden to bring before our people. There is a great work yet to be done, a work that calls for the sanctification of all our powers. This message must be preached in the highways and the byways. The efforts put forth for the recovery of souls must be greatly increased. Justice and the love of God should mark the lives of His workers. We are too far advanced in this world's history to indulge in ease and idleness. And none should think to hoard their means for future years, but let them invest their means to create new interests in places where the need of truth is felt. If all the professed followers of Christ had followed this course, great changes would have been wrought in our cities. If they had been in earnest, and had worked as laborers together with God, many souls would have been convicted and converted who now are ensnared by the wiles of the enemy. The wickedness of the wicked is increasing; Satan's efforts are not lessening. But the love of many believers is growing less, when it should be increasingly revealed in untiring labor for lost souls."—*12 Manuscript Releases, 271. 4-272.1.*

This can be some hard information to accept, but I want to encourage you; it is better to obey God than follow our emotions and desires. Here are the exceptions:

The Channels

There is an obvious balance in her statements about tithe. The ideal is that the tithe and offerings are sent through the regular lines.

"The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work. For a long time the Lord has been robbed because there are those who do not realize that the tithe is God's reserved portion."—*9 Testimonies, 249.*

The treasury is something that the gospel laborers must have access to. She was specifically speaking of the conference treasury. This was considered the "regular lines":

"Now from the light that I have, as it was presented to me in figures: There was a narrow compass here; there within that narrow is a king-like, kingly ruling power. Here the outlets are blocked. And the work all over our field demands an entirely different course of action than we have had. We have

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heard enough, abundance, about that 'everything must go around in the regular way.' **When we see the regular lines are altered and purified and refined, and the God of the heavens mold is upon the regular lines, then it is our business to establish the regular lines.** But when we see message after message that God has given has been accepted, but no change, just the same as it was before, then it is evident that new blood must be brought into the regular lines. The leaders of the regular lines, they must have an entire change, an entire new organization, and to have a committee that shall take in not merely half a dozen that is to be a ruling and controlling power, but it is to have representatives of those that are placed in responsibility in our educational interests, in our Sanitariums, that are working, and the life in them, constantly at work, constantly adding, constantly giving to the field the talent that has come from it."—*Spalding and Megan Collection, 163.*

In this statement, found in her correspondence from the late 1890s, Ellen White uses the term, "regular lines," to refer to the established administrative and organizational structures of the Church, particularly those connected with the General Conference and its appointed channels for funding, decision-making, and personnel deployment. This message was one of several delivered around the time of the 1901 General Conference Session, during which White gave passionate calls for reorganization of Church administration. These appeals led to the creation of union conferences, intended to decentralize authority and improve responsiveness to local needs.

During the 1870s-1890s, as the Church expanded—particularly with the establishment of institutions like sanitariums, publishing houses, and colleges—financial management became more complex. Ellen White began to warn against the dangers of centralized control, where a few men at the "heart of the work" (the General Conference) held too much authority over finances. She observed instances of poor financial decisions, including tying up funds in expensive buildings while neglecting mission fields and gospel workers.

Ellen White emphasized that the regular lines—the Church organization—should receive and administer the funds for the gospel ministry. This was the normative expectation. Tithe, and most offerings, in the 1900s went through these regular lines; and Ellen White did not universally condemn such actions when done in good conscience and for neglected parts of the Lord's work.

In times of crisis or neglect, she recognized that

God's work was not to be hindered by bureaucratic failure or oversight. She herself would send tithes and offerings outside of the regular lines of the conference, directly to needy ministers. And she set a precedent showing that not only ministers or pastors were entitled to tithe:

"There are ministers' wives, Sisters Starr, Haskell, Wilson and Robinson, who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive their wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions shall be reversed. The Word says, 'The laborer is worthy of his hire' [Luke 10:7]. When any such decision as this is made, I will in the name of the Lord, protest. I will feel it in my duty to create a fund from my tithe money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls. I know that the faithful women should be paid wages proportionate to the pay received by ministers. They carry the burden of souls, and should not be treated unjustly. These sisters are giving their time to educating those newly come to the faith, and hire their own work done, and pay those who work for them. All these things must be adjusted and set in order, and justice be done to all. Proof-readers in the office receive their wages, two dollars and a half and three dollars a week. This I have had to pay, and others have to pay. But ministers' wives, who carry a tremendous responsibility, devoting their entire time, have nothing for their labor. This will give you an idea of how matters are in this conference. There are seventy-five souls organized into a church, who are paying their tithe into the conference, and as a saving plan it has been deemed essential to let these poor souls labor for nothing! But this does not trouble me, for I will not allow it to go thus."—*Spalding and Megan Collection, 117.*

Ellen White supported the Spirit's leading, even when it meant bypassing faulty systems, provided the cause remained aligned with the purposes God had laid out for tithe. She warned against using distrust of leadership as an excuse for unfaithfulness in tithes and offerings.

"Some have been dissatisfied and have said: 'I

will not longer pay my tithe; for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work.' But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right."—*9 Testimonies*, 249.

She upheld that tithe should support ministers, but she acknowledged cases where individuals rightly directed funds outside of regular channels (the Church organization) due to conference neglect. She also spoke about God working outside of the regular lines near the close of the work.

"Unless those who can help in—are aroused to a sense of their duty, they will not recognize the work of God when the loud cry of the third angel shall be heard. When light goes forth to lighten the earth, instead of coming up to the help of the Lord, they will want to bind about His work to meet their narrow ideas. Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness. Those who are accounted good workers will need to draw nigh to God, they will need the divine touch. They will need to drink more deeply and continuously at the fountain of living water, in order that they may discern God's work at every point. Workers may make mistakes, but you should give them a chance to correct their errors, give them an opportunity to learn caution, by leaving the work in their hands."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 300.

Please note that this does not speak of God changing the purpose of the Tithe, nor does He say organization is not essential. In fact, I will close this section with a quote about the importance of organization:

"Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And, in order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together."—*9 Testimonies*, 258.

Organization holds people accountable; and, in the work of God, accountability is incredibly important. We are here to support each other and encourage one another, so none of us falls into the trap of Satan. The command is not to draw apart, but to draw together. Read *Philippians 2:1-16*.

Ministers

"This tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls."—*Spalding and Megan Collection*, 117.

Tithe can be used for those who are working in the same line as ministers. This is evidenced by Ellen White's protest, where she gave tithe to women who were doing what she classified as work in the same line as ministers. Here was her criteria: "devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts" (*Daughters of God*, 106). You will find this to be her criteria for ministers too, with the exception that she only speaks of men in those referenced quotes. This gives evidence that one can be paid tithe *without being a minister if they are doing the work of one*.

"Every minister should make the most of the priceless opportunities placed within his reach, and should have a high and holy trust in God. He should increase by proper use the talents intrusted to him, and then his powers for doing good will increase; and he should make it his special work to win souls to Christ."—*Review and Herald*, February 22, 1887.

"It is not great and learned men that the ministry needs, it is not eloquent sermonizers. God calls for men who will give themselves to Him to be imbued with His Spirit. The cause of Christ and humanity demands sanctified, self-sacrificing men, those who can go forth without the camp, bearing the reproach. Let them be strong, valiant men, fit for worthy enterprises, and let them make a covenant with God by sacrifice."—*Counsels on Health*, 558.

"The Lord calls for workers, not sermonizers, for men who will do real work. The time is coming when we shall take a retrospective [meditation on past events] view of the work that we have done in this life. Then every man's work will appear at its true value. Those who have souls to show as the result of their labor will receive recognition from God. And I have been instructed that not a few, but many souls will be saved through the labors of men who have looked to Jesus for their ordination and orders. Such men have taken up work in the hardest parts of the field and have labored successfully for the Master."—*Review and Herald*, April 21, 1903.

"But there have been solemn duties neglected in accepting ministers to labor in word and doctrine who can only preach. They do not watch for souls as they that shall give an account. They sermonize; but the work is left undone which the

sheep and lambs need to have done for them. And this half kind of work has been done all through America, and money paid to men employed, when they should have been dismissed to find work less responsible and care taking. In sending men to foreign fields, let there be great caution used. Those who have been accepted as preachers, and have not been educated to watch for souls as they that must give an account, are not the men to enter new fields as missionaries. If there is any corner of the world where churches can be built up and kept in a prosperous condition by sermonizing, while they neglect personal labor, I have yet to learn of this. Men who are accepted to preach, and not to minister, should not go into foreign countries. Better have one thorough shepherd who will care for the flock as a faithful shepherd should, than to have twenty sermonizers who will excuse themselves, saying, 'It is not in my line to visit; I cannot visit the church in their families.' Then let there not be a moment's hesitation in telling them, 'We do not propose to accept you and give you credentials. You cannot labor.' But educate yourself to do a shepherd's work, to care for the sheep and lambs, and you will not be like Ephraim, "a cake unturned." You will give full proof of your ministry.' Those who can only preach, are not missionaries, and never can be, until they learn the skill, the watchful, tender compassion of a shepherd. The flock of God have a right to expect to be visited by their pastor, to be instructed, advised, counseled, in their own homes. And if a man fails to do this part of the work, he can not be a minister after God's order.... The churches that have such labor are disorganized, weak, and sickly, and ready to die. The sermons are not vitalized by the Spirit of God, because the blessing of God will not rest upon any man who is neglecting the flock of God."—7 *Letters and Manuscripts, (1892) Letter 50, pars. 5, 6, 7.*

"The ministers of the Word are God's chosen agency to spread the knowledge of His will; but there is too little of a missionary spirit, even among our ministers. After preaching the Word, some confine themselves almost wholly to reading and study, to the neglect of other and vitally important duties. While it is right to devote some time to study, every minister should feel a deep interest to do all that it is possible for him to do for the salvation of souls for whom Christ died. He should visit the people, and with care and wisdom seek to interest them in spiritual things."—*Review and Herald, July 10, 1883.*

"After a camp meeting, let the young men work in connection with experienced laborers who will pray with and for them and will patiently teach them how to work. It should be kept before the youth that there is no work more blessed of God than that of the gospel ministry. The highest of all work is ministry in its various lines. It is not great and learned men that the ministry needs; it is not eloquent sermonizers."—14 *Letters and Manuscripts (1899), par. 82.*

The above quote gives evidence that the ministry of the gospel is not only about visiting and praying with people, nor sermonizing. There are other lines of ministry that can be pursued. **These other lines are not all to be supported with tithe** as she made plain in some of the statements about tithe previously discussed. Here are some forms of ministry:

Gospel minister: It is not merely preaching; but, it is laboring, hunting, and fishing for souls. Ministers should be men who cannot sit at home and relax but feel a burden for the lost, men who will visit their flock and seek to interest them in spiritual things. They should have words for the backsliders that will restore them to the faith. They will be willing to look out for others instead of themselves—self-sacrificing. These, of course, qualify to receive tithe, while mere sermonizers . those who only preach sermons, are not qualified. Bible workers can fall into this category if they have a missionary spirit and meet the requirements laid forth by Ellen White.

Medical missionary work: Ellen White is clear that this is a work that should be practiced by ministers.

"It is because of the directions I have received from the Lord that I have the courage to stand among you and speak as I do, notwithstanding the way in which you may look at the medical missionary work. I wish to say that the medical missionary work is God's work. The Lord wants every one of His ministers to come into line. Take hold of the medical missionary work, and it will give you access to the people. Their hearts will be touched as you minister to their necessities. As you relieve their sufferings, you will find opportunity to speak to them of the love of Jesus.

God will help those who love the truth, who give themselves, heart and mind and strength, to Him. God will work mightily with His ministers when their hearts are filled with love for the poor, lost sheep of the house of Israel. Hunt up the backsliders, those who once knew what religion was, and give them the message of mercy.

The story of Christ's love will touch a chord in their hearts. Christ draws human beings to Himself with the cord which God has let down from heaven to save the race. The love of Christ can be measured only when this cord is measured.

Medical missionary work, ministering to the sick and suffering, cannot be separated from the gospel. God help those whose attention has been aroused on this subject to have the mind of Christ, the sympathy of Christ. God help you to remember that Christ was a worker, that He went from place to place healing the sick. If we were as closely connected with Christ as were His disciples, God could work through us to heal many who are suffering."—*Counsels on Health, 534.2.*

This alone does not qualify people to receive tithe; there are many medical missionaries that convert people to natural remedies but not to Christ.

Literature evangelism: Canvassers and colporteurs are not to be supported with tithe because their

12 work supports them. They are still working in a field of ministry. They have many opportunities to lead souls to Jesus, but they do not meet the qualifications and Ellen White warns specifically about supporting them in a previous quote.

Teaching and educational work: Ellen White has counsel that Bible teachers with the divine ministerial credentials (a missionary spirit) qualify to be paid from tithe (*6 Testimonies*, 134-135).

Publishing and press work: The tithe is not for bills or for buildings, it is specifically for ministers (*Counsels on Stewardship*, 102). Certain work in the publishing ministry does qualify:

“In commissioning His disciples to go ‘into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ [Mark 16:15], Christ assigned to men the work of spreading the gospel. But while some go forth to preach, He calls upon others to answer to His claims upon them for tithes and offerings with which to support the ministry and to spread the printed truth all over the land.”—*4 Testimonies*, 472.

“The press is an instrumentality by which many are reached whom it would be impossible to reach by ministerial effort.”—*Review and Herald*, July 10, 1883.

Publishers have a unique advantage in certain fields, such as prison ministry. They can ship silent preachers (books) to prisoners, where they will be counseled and shepherded in their cells. Pastors or family cannot give them books but publishers can. I don't know many pastors that visit prisons. This opens a wide range of opportunities to reach people in a largely unworked field. Additionally, through correspondence, publishing companies are able to instruct, advise, and counsel; to draw alongside and encourage. They actively seek to interest prisoners in spiritual things through labor for individuals. Not all publishing companies use this to their advantage because prisoners cannot pay for the books they receive. Not all publishers have a missionary spirit. When in doubt send tithe to the regular channels.

Home and neighborhood missionary efforts:

This is a work that every true Christian is expected to do; yet, without proper pastoral care, it will remain undone. If a church will be awakened to their duty, they must themselves be labored for. Obviously this does not meet the requirements for tithe, but is an expected result of the gospel in our lives.

Industrial and practical trades as missionary tools: Christ's method alone will bring true success in the field of ministerial efforts. There are many skills that, when consecrated to God, can be used for the salvation of souls. The science of soul winning is a simple one, learned by trial and error. It can be summed up in a simple way: Do unto others what you would want

done to you, then bait the hook to suit the fish, cast your bread upon the waters. A-lot of people fear rejection, but If you never cast, you will never catch. If you can be like Paul and support yourself it is better than relying on Tithe. As a general rule this is the case.

Final Thoughts

To trifle with tithe is to trifle with God. It is always best to follow the ideal, if possible. God is bigger than the problems in the Church. But if we cannot conscientiously do this, we should make sure to support the gospel with our tithe. The tithe is God's money, and our faithfulness with it does affect our salvation.

“That which has been set apart according to the Scriptures as belonging to the Lord, constitutes the revenue [financial support] of the gospel, and is no longer ours. It is no better than sacrilege for a man to take from God's treasury in order to serve himself or to serve others in their secular business. Some have been at fault in diverting from the altar of God that which has been especially dedicated to Him. All should regard this matter in the right light. Let no one, when brought into a strait place, take money consecrated to religious purposes, and use it for his own advantage, soothing his conscience by saying that he will repay it at some future time. Far better cut down the expenses to correspond with the income, to restrict the wants and live within the means, than to use the Lord's money for secular purposes.”—*Gospel Workers* (1915), 224.2; *9 Testimonies*, 246-247.

It is a positive duty to give not only tithe but also offerings. We must rid our hearts of the poisonous weed of selfishness. We are too far advanced in this world's history to indulge in ease and idleness. And none should think to hoard their means for future years. Invest in your home in heaven with the same selflessness that Christ showed when He invested His life in you.

Lastly, I would like to clarify that Ellen White never turned away people who sent her tithe; she always made sure it went to the right place. If it had been a sin to send tithe outside the regular channels, she would have said so. It is not the ideal, it is not encouraged, but it is permitted.

For a finished work



Jonathan Taylor

Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35

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