

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Jeremiah 23:5

the OLIVE BRANCH

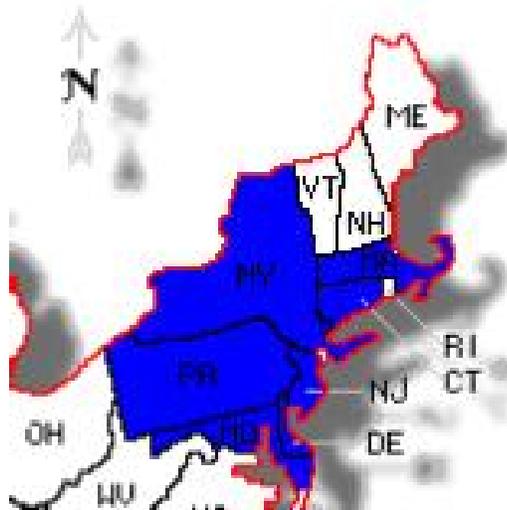
FALL
2011

As a new church year begins for the Northeast Region, it seems fitting to reflect on the rapid growth that has taken place in the last few months. This issue of The Olive Branch is dedicated to providing a snapshot of where the region is today and where, with God’s favor, is headed in the 2011-12 year.

What is happening?

Since the Northeast Region launched its website five years ago, (www.tcog-ne.org), we have received a number of visitors that were not affiliated

...State of the Region Issue...



Regional Churches

Newark, DE
Lawrence, MA
Pittsville, MD
New Rochelle, NY
Ford City, PA
Grove City, PA
Karns City, PA
Monongahela, PA
Philadelphia, PA
Uniontown, PA

Locations of other members/missions

Waterbury, CT
Baltimore, MD
Patterson, NJ

with The Church of God. Some of these visitors have been from other nations, mostly from Africa and Asia. Others have been from inside the states this region of The Church of God serves.

This latter group of visitors has led to the development of several new churches up and down the Eastern Seaboard over the last few years. There have also been several new

works established that are not quite large enough to be classified as churches to date.

“I have had my Cornelius moment,” Regional Overseer James Smith said of recently receiving two new members in New Jersey. He was referring to the book of Acts, in which the Gentile Cornelius and the Apostle Peter, a Jew, both

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INSIDE:

- Regional Overseer’s sermon
- contact The Church of God
- Regional Convention photos

Bulletin board...

John Johnson missed

Bro. John Johnson, 73, of Rimersburg, PA, died Aug. 6, 2011. He was a member of The Church of God at Karns City, PA and had served as a pastor, Sunday School superintendent and teacher, and as clerk and treasurer. He also played the guitar and sang at many church events.



Bro. John Johnson

He was born in Limestone, PA on June 22, 1938, the son of Edward A. and Bessie V. (Smith) Johnson, who preceded him in death, as did one brother. He

married Sis. Phyllis C. (Johnston), who survives, on March 5, 1958. The couple had five children – sons Carl (Leslie), John Wayne (Dorothy) and Gary Richard (Sue), Betty Mae Shelenberger (Mike Truitt) and Shelby Schwab (Bernie), all of Pennsylvania. He is also survived by three sisters, 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Bro. Johnson was employed with Pullman Standard until his retirement in 1984. He also served as the caretaker of the Brady's Bend Cemetery. Earlier in his life, he also served in the US Army Reserves during the Berlin crisis and the onset of the Vietnam War as a sergeant in the 323rd Chemical Co.

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2011-12 Calendar

April 1 – Eastern District Convention, New Rochelle, NY

April 15 – Western District Convention, Grove City, PA

May 4-6 – Ladies' Retreat, Camp Sunrise, Markleysburg, PA

May 11-12 – Youth Convention, Uniontown, PA

May 27-June 9 – Bible Training Institute (BTI), General Headquarters, Cleveland, TN

June 20-25 – Youth Camp, Mt. Chestnut Nazarene Center, Butler, PA

July 15-17 – Regional Convention, Uniontown, PA

Aug. 18-20 – International Youth Camp, Lutheridge Convention Center, Arden, NC

Aug. 21-26 – General Assembly, Ridgecrest Conference Center, Asheville, NC

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Contact us:

The Olive Branch is a publication of The Church of God–Northeast Region, serving churches and members in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, and new works throughout the greater area. It can be viewed online in English, Spanish and French at www.tcog-ne.org.

Reports and other submissions to the Editor for the WINTER 2011-12 issue must be received on or before Dec. 1.

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received visions from God that led to Cornelius' inclusion in the early Church.

The modern day Corneliuses were the Baez family, a husband and wife ministry team from Patterson, NJ. The couple were led to our regional website after their praying for the Lord to lead them to The Church of God they read of in the New Testament. They then contacted Bro. Smith, who gave them more information and literature on The Church and then visited them and received them as members in early September.

"The Baez's experience is representative of what God has been doing in recent months," Bro. Smith said. "People, many of whom have had no previous knowledge of The Church of God, have sought God for a place of doctrinal purity. God has led them first to our website, and then eventually into membership. We're hoping these new members will eventually lead to new churches in operation."

Bro. Smith said one key part of the website's role in reaching new contacts has been its multi-lingual nature. Beginning in 2009, the website began duplicating most English documents, including *The Olive Branch*, into Spanish. Many of the new contacts have, indeed, been Spanish speaking.

In 2011, work began on translating some documents on the website into French, as well.

"Some people might think becoming a multi-lingual website is something that only The Church's General Headquarters would need to do in order to reach people in other nations," Bro. Smith said. "But, it has turned out that becoming multi-lingual, or at least bi-lingual, has

been critical in growing The Church within this region.

"As with Peter and Cornelius, there were cultural if not language divisions. But, there was also a God at work who has designed one Church for all. That same spirit is working today and we are thrilled to be a part of it."

The newer churches, nearly all of which are conducting services either in Spanish or in a mix of Spanish and English, join several English-speaking churches that were established, in many cases, decades previously.

"It is an exciting time," said Bro. Smith. "The Church of God has a long history in the Northeast Region. Although our churches are still fewer in number than they were prior to an organizational split in 1993, we are growing once again and we are reaching a broader population.

"There are older flagship churches such as Monongahela, PA and newer missions such as that in Baltimore. There are veteran members who have been teaching the riches of God's word for decades and there are fresh members who are discovering and sharing some of these truths for the first time in their lives. There are many colors of faces in our pews and multiple languages spoken from our pulpits.

"It's been a joy to watch as all these segments of the region express their vision of The Church of God and labor to serve Jesus. I encourage all of us – old or new to The Church of God – to make this a year of reaching out to the Corneliuses of our small worlds. It is high time to bring "whosoever will" into the One Fold, The Church of God."

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From the overseer's desk...

That I May Dwell Among Them

Part 4 in the series: “His Glorious Church”

**“And let them make me a sanctuary;
that I may dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8**

As we have noted in our last two sermons this is the place where God first explicitly introduced His tabernacle/house of God/Church of God program. The patriarchs had seen God's plans “*afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,*” (Hebrews 11:13). We will return to the theme “*seeing afar off*” in a later sermon. Our text verse above describes God's first visible effort to bring His people to work together to provide a place where He might dwell among them.

To help understand its great significance, we have taken a panoramic view throughout the Old Testament of God's efforts to prepare for Himself a people among whom He might dwell. We considered as examples the special relationships God had with Adam and Eve, Enoch, Noah, the Patriarchs, the children of Israel, and David, as well as the prophetic visions He shared with the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.

We now will consider how this theme of God's grand purpose (to have a people among whom He might dwell) further matured in the New Testament, and is destined to be fulfilled completely, perfectly according to God's divine plan and purpose. Because this theme permeates the New Testament, as it did the Old Testament, we again must settle for a panoramic sweep of the Scripture. Several of the examples briefly considered here will be revisited in much greater detail in future sermons. Here we hope to convey how ALL Scripture contributes in some measure to revealing God's grand plan to have a people among whom He may dwell (tabernacle).

Why Christ Came to This Earth

We begin examination of our theme as revealed in the New Testament by considering the foundation that John presented in the opening chapter of his gospel.

John there introduces us to the One who was from the beginning:

John 1:1-2 (1) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

(2) *The same was in the beginning with God.*

The *Word* wasn't just anybody, simply one more prophet; this was the Son of God “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Having so introduced Christ as a member of the eternal Godhead, John then presents Christ's purpose and mission in coming to this earth:

John 1:10-14 (10) *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

(11) *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

(12) *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

(13) *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (14) *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.*



*Bro. James Smith,
Regional Overseer*

This brief passage introduces several major themes: **(1)** Christ came to a world that “*was made by Him,*” and yet it did not recognize Him. **(2)** More specifically, He came to “*his own*” (to the Jews), who should have been looking for and ready to receive Him – yet most of “*his own*” failed to receive Him.

Fortunately, this was not the end of the story. In a third theme, **(3)** Christ came in the flesh to this earth to bring mankind eternal life, including the “*power to become the sons of God*” to those who would receive Him. This theme: “*rejected by many, yet gladly received by many others*” recurs many times throughout the New Testament. One example, Paul and Barnabas declared to the unreceiving Jews and then to the Gentiles who gladly received the “*good news*” in Pisidian Antioch:

Acts 13:46-49 (46) *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the*

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word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. (47) For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. (48) And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (49) And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

God's Promise to David Is Answered

In addition to His coming to bring salvation to a lost and dying world, Christ had yet another great purpose to fulfill, as declared in John 1:14. This gives us the theme: **(4)** The Son of God, the *“Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”* and **(5)** sets the stage for the revelation of *“his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

From our previous sermon, the prophet Nathan, when speaking to David, had seen beyond Solomon's day and the earthly temple he built unto the coming of (not only the son of David, but) the very Son of God, who would build an eternal house (dwelling) for God:

1 Chronicles 17:12-14 (12) He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. (13) I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee (14) But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

At his dedicatory prayer for the house of God, Solomon inquired (2 Chronicles 6:18): *“But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!”*

John indicates in our text scripture that God has indeed responded affirmatively to that inquiry of Solomon. YES! (v.18) However, it could not be in just any house that He would abide. The building of that temple/house had been declared: *“He shall build me an house.”* God fulfilled that promise to David (v.12-14) through Solomon AND by sending His only begotten Son. Ultimately, it is Jesus who was destined to build and to occupy an eternal house – The Church

of God. Emmanuel (“God with us!”) truly would dwell among His people!

Thus Did Christ Build His Father's House

In **John 1:35-51**, the Lord, declared to be the Son of God by John the Baptist (v.34), commenced His *dwelling among* those who were to become His (v. 38,39). Christ was about to commence the one program that would remain after this current heaven and earth have passed away (Revelation 21:1-3). He therefore began that work with all night prayer to His heavenly Father. He laid the foundation of His eternal house/The Church of God – building upon “the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20) – with His call to those who were to become His apostles:

Luke 6:12-13 (12) *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* (13) *And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;*

The Gospels declare so many things that Christ did and taught over the next three years of His *walking* on this earth, and *dwelling* with His adopted people – *“thine they were, and thou gavest them me”* (John 17:6). He thus firmly established the foundation of His tabernacle. Too many are the examples that we could share here, as stated in

John 21:25 :*“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”*

Christ's Eternal House Is Dedicated!

Having completed His building of His eternal house in complete obedience (John 8:29) to His Father, Christ then dedicated that house to His Father in a prayer (read all of John 17). His prayer in many ways was similar to the prayer that Solomon had prayed in 2 Chronicles 6:14-42 at the dedication of the temple.

Christ here fulfilled several dedicatory roles: **(1)** As the King over the people with whom He would dwell, He prayed His dedicatory prayer in their behalf that they might experience a full and complete (glorious) relationship with Him -- consider one excerpt:

John 17:24 *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me:*

(2) As the High Priest (read Hebrews) of this eternal house, he offered up sacrifice. **(3)** He, the lamb

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without spot or blemish, was the first, last and only sacrifice of this consecration!

At the conclusion of Solomon's prayer and sacrifice, the Lord demonstrated His acceptance of the house Solomon built by sending His holy fire to consume the sacrifices, and His *Shekinah* glory filled the house:

2 Chronicles 7:1-2 (1) Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. (2) And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house.

So also was Christ's prayer and sacrifice accepted, as demonstrated by the tearing of the temple curtain to the temple's Holy of Holies, as recorded:

Matthew 27:51 "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."

Then, on the Day of Pentecost, God's glory in the person of the Holy Ghost with "cloven tongues like as of fire" filled the house His Son had built.

Acts 2:2-4 (2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. (3) And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Divine Purpose of the Church Declared

Not only John and the other gospels, but the entire New Testament echoes this divine purpose for which Christ came. Consider Stephen's words during his interrogation by the high counsel of his understanding of God's divine plan:

Acts 7:48-49 (48) Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, (49) Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

See also 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1; Acts 17:24

Years later, *The Church of God*, in concluding its first General Assembly, declared its understanding of this grand and glorious purpose for which Christ

came: to "build again the tabernacle of David" (v.16), and that He would "take out of them a people for his name." (v.14) "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called..." (v.17).

Acts 15:13-18 (13) And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: (14) Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. (15) And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, (16) After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: (17) That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. (18) Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Paul in several of his writings has clearly identified the membership (body) of the Church in its prophetic role as the temple of God in whom God would dwell as His holy habitation:

1 Corinthians 3:16-1:7: (16) Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (17) If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

2 Corinthians 6:15-16: (16) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said [see Leviticus 26:11, 12], I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

In particular note that Paul did not describe each individual as being a temple – for then there would be many 'individual' temples. That is, he did not say "Ye are temples" with each individual member being a 'one-person' temple of the Lord. To make his point clear, Paul stated the same point twice: "ye are the temple of God" and "which temple ye are" signifying ye are (the Church membership, plural) the temple (only one – singular).

God Has Truly Done a New Thing

In the Old Testament the *tabernacle*, and later the *temple* (physical structures), were distinct entity from the people who worshipped there. Because of their inability (Christ had not yet shed His sanctifying

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Regional leadership for 2011-2012

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V.L.B. *LuAnne Smail*
W.M.B. *Dolly Nathan*
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Ladies' Retreat *Angie Pitts*
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Youth/Family Camp..... *Alma Kelley*
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DISTRICT OVERSEERS

Eastern *Othniel Lunan*
Western *Thomas Kelley*

Auxiliary Themes

BTI – Doers of the Word – James 1:22
*VLB – Unmovable, Unshakable -
Colossians 2:6, 7*
*CPMA – Unity of Purpose, Having the Same
Mind - 1 Corinthians 1:10*
*Sunday School – Walk In The Light -
1 John 1:7*
*WMB – Always Abounding in The Work of
The Lord - 1 Corinthians 15:58*
ABM – One Goal – Luke 12:32b
Evangelism – Holy Ghost Revival
World Missions – The Great Inflow

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Regional photos...

In the late summer and early fall, several new members were taken into The Church of God-Northeast Region – most of them in locations in which we do not yet have a fully functioning church. On these pages you will see some of these new faces from these new works, as well as images from the Regional Convention at Uniontown, PA in July, other regional events and regional members attending the General Assembly in North Carolina in August.



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blood), and their unwillingness to live holy sanctified lives, the people therefore lived in fear of what God might have to do: "For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee." (Exodus 33:5) The tabernacle had to be pitched (set up) outside their camp (Exodus 33:7). They did not have free access to it, but had to stand afar off.

Contrast that arrangement to what Christ has wrought for the people of His house, His Church. Ephesians 2 presents a grand vision of God's new temple arrangement. Paul declared in panoramic fashion: "Now therefore ye are ... fellow citizens ... of the household of God ... an holy temple in the Lord: ... builded together for an habitation of God" (v.19-22).

Time and paper fails us in our study, even as it failed John (John 21:25), to elaborate the many relevant New Testament passages. We conclude with the points emphasized below – how so many times Paul, Peter, and John employed the terms *holy temple*, *household of God*, *house of God*, *tabernacle of God*, *church of the firstborn*, etc. to describe the Church:

Ephesians 2:13-22 (13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; (16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (17) And came and preached

peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (18) For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Hebrews 12:22-23 (22) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

1 Peter 4:17 (17) For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Revelations 21:2-3 (2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Can anyone deny the prophetic role that *The Church of God* has in the fulfillment of God's divine plan from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)? We've seen that God did indeed have a plan, and that its fulfillment rests with the Church. May God inspire all who hear His words to become part of this forever house, the glorious Church of God.

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