



Stewardship

imparting our Life

Finance & Stewardship Committee Report to
the 2024 International Assembly

Orlando, Florida

INTRODUCTION: STEWARDSHIP - HEART MATTERS

1. Every believer begins the journey of biblical stewardship when we give our hearts to Christ and desire to live according to His word. According to Richard Niebuhr, “Stewardship is everything we do after we accept Christ. It is all about life.”¹
2. “Our relationship with the Lord is always begun and maintained by the heart. Of course, to contact the Lord is a matter of the spirit, but this must be initiated and maintained by the heart, for our heart is the gateway of our whole being.”²
3. It is in our hearts that transformation and real change begin, and it is the ongoing, daily transformation of our hearts that will lead us to a life of stewardship as God designs.
4. **Proverbs 4:23** tells us, “**Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it**” (NIV).
5. Stewardship is, therefore, all about our lives as believers in the kingdom of God that is founded on the core principle that all that we are and all we have are God’s.
6. God designs every believer to be a channel through whom all kinds of resources flow into the kingdom to enable His work on the earth. The availability of resources that we have in our local churches is, therefore, dependent on how we use and apply the resources that we have received. Whether or not we make these resources available and how much of it we make available will reflect where our heart is in Christ.
7. Is our heart’s perspective one where we consider that what we have is never enough for ourselves? Therefore, the provision we receive from God is used only for our own daily needs or is stored up for future needs. None flows to others or the kingdom. When this is the perspective of our hearts, we effectively become clogged pipes with our financial resources, and we have no impact in the kingdom of God. One’s view is that we will never have enough to satisfy our own needs and to flow to others.
8. Or is it that our heart’s perspective is that there is enough provision to meet our needs, and we may allow a small amount to flow to others? The more we receive, the more we consume it for ourselves, and very little flows to others. Our perspective is that the supply of resources is limited so we must use all we can for ourselves. Regardless of how much we receive, it is never enough. Our impact on the kingdom of God is therefore limited as our priority is meeting our own needs, whether they be at a personal, local, state, regional, or national church level.
9. Wouldn’t we rather be at a place where our heart’s perspective is to use the financial resources that we have received not just for ourselves, but always seek to identify outlets or channels to allow those resources to flow to others? A believer whose heart is set

¹ Richard Niebuhr, quoted in R. Scott Rodin, *Stewards of the Kingdom: A Theology of Life in All Its Fullness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 73.

² Witness Lee, *The Economy of God* (Los Angeles, CA: The Stream Publishers, 1968), 75.



towards God in this manner knows and understands that God is the source of all provisions and is secure in the knowledge that He will meet all our needs simply because He is the sovereign Lord who loves us. We know that our God has an infinite supply of resources and that there is always enough to meet our needs. One's heart is, therefore, always to give first as we know that we can never use all the resources that God entrusts to us for ourselves.

10. As we give, God honors His word, **“Give and it shall be given to you, a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over...” (Luke 6:38)**. This is a heart that will always experience overflow as the more we give resources through the channels we identify or develop, the more resources we will receive.
11. What we value above all is the satisfaction of knowing that the needs of others are being met and that the kingdom of God is being impacted for His glory. Jesus reminds us in **Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**
12. It is time to check our hearts toward stewardship. What is our heart towards that which we have received as individual believers, local, state, or national church level? Is it being used only to satisfy our needs? Is it being stored up just for our own future needs? Or have we developed or identified channels through which these resources can flow to bless others in the kingdom? The increases in our ministries and churches will come only when we do the latter—only when we give first. It is only then that the many needs in our churches, states, and nations can truly be met. It is only then that even greater amounts will flow to us to manage.
13. It requires us to first give ourselves to the Lord as the Macedonian church who, out of their deep poverty, gave beyond their ability.
14. Oh, for hearts that are truly transformed: hearts that truly know that our God is the source of all we need, that His supply is limitless, and that we are the only channels God has through which He makes provision available in His kingdom. Then giving of our time in service in our local churches and communities will be motivated by hearts set on God and His kingdom. Giving our time and resources to missions in our local areas and around the world will be motivated by hearts that are set on seeing the gospel being proclaimed and the world being reconciled to Christ. Giving our tithes and offerings at all levels in the church (individuals and local churches) will be motivated by hearts set on honoring God with our substance (which is His) and seeing the growth of His kingdom on earth.
15. As believers and as a church collectively, we are being called back to remember who we are in Christ and to check our hearts toward being stewards of that which the Lord has given to us. Our stewardship of who we are and what we have received is a matter of where our heart is set. **“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 NKJV)**.



16. The rich blessings of the Lord will come to those who are faithful in this regard. **“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).**

SECTION 1: REVISION OF THE DECLINE COMPENSATION FORM *(Information Only)*

17. The Decline Compensation Form was amended in response to some questions submitted to the committee and to adapt to changing circumstances. These amendments are made to improve this document's effectiveness, enhance its clarity, and rectify any inconsistencies or shortcomings. Ultimately, the purpose of amending this document is to ensure its relevance, accuracy, and applicability in the present context, and to promote fairness, compliance, and optimal outcomes for all parties involved. As a committee, we noted that this document may have been ambiguous in that it could have been perceived as an allowance to be changed every month. This would be exhausting for bookkeeping on a local church level and could lead to misappropriations. Furthermore, it could have become cumbersome to adhere to on a local level while complying with the national/regional/state office.
18. **NOTE: The following was passed in the 2022 International Assembly, and the revised form can be found as an appendix to this report.**

Administrative Action for Section 1

19. *When a pastor has an occupational position or other means of financial support and desires not to receive remuneration from the tithe paid into the local church, the church should operate as follows:*
- 1) *A document should be drafted (an example is provided in this report) and submitted to the church conference for recording in the minutes that the pastor has declined the full tithe or a portion of the tithes given by the local church. It should clearly state that for the present pastor only, the tithes now belong to the local church for distribution in other areas of ministry.*
 - 2) *The local church treasurer shall send the 10 percent portion of tithes the pastor would have paid had the pastor received those tithes to the national/regional/state office. This would ensure the national/regional/state office receives the funds necessary to assist their respective work in equipping churches in their jurisdiction.*

SECTION 2: BUDGETS *(Information Only)*

20. Today, the church does business in a culture that demands greater accountability. As leaders, we must not ignore whole-life stewardship that builds trust. The diminishing trust of people toward organizations is a clear indicator that accountability is critical.



21. To assist our churches and national/regional/state offices to be more transparent and have more accountability, a budget is a must. A budget creates openness to a growing vision, defines priorities in planning ministry needs, builds constituents' confidence and trust, and leads to a recognition that the ministries of the church are worthy of their support. It also builds confidence in the leaders and their management of the church's resources. The benefit for the church or national/regional/state office is that a budget gives you an administrative tool to evaluate your current work, look for solutions to envision your ministry needs, and assist in accomplishing the mission of God in your ministry location.
22. At the 2022 International Assembly, one of the sections presented by the Finance & Stewardship Committee was on budgets. We stated that local churches and national/regional/state offices should prepare a budget for each fiscal year. Since then, with consultation and research, we realized that previous Assemblies had already discussed and approved budgets for each level of our church.
23. In 1984 at the 79th General Assembly, an Assembly decision was made regarding all levels of the Church—general, state, and local—to operate within a balanced budget.
24. The Assembly action states the following:

The study by the Ways and Means Committee in the past two years has revealed that certain economic indicators concerning our cash and expenditure flow need attention. There is growing evidence that more and more of our churches are having financial difficulties, which are, in part, due to over-extending themselves. No people can live beyond their means. Faith in God does not necessitate over-extension that leads to deficit spending, which threatens the very thing it is trying to build.

We therefore recommend that general, state, and local churches operate within a balanced budget, said policy to become effective as of October 1986.³

25. In the minutes of the 94th International Assembly in 2006, the Finance & Stewardship Committee stated:

We the Finance and Stewardship Committee, recognize the need to reaffirm in this General Assembly the balanced budget decision made in the 79th General Assembly in 1984.⁴

³ "Balanced Budget Concept," Section 4, *1984 Assembly Minutes of the 79th Church of God of Prophecy World-Wide Annual Assembly*, 133.

⁴ "Balanced Budgets," Section 2, *2006 Assembly Minutes of the 94th Church of God of Prophecy International General Assembly*, 182.



26. In the Fiscal Responsibility section of our current Present Financial System Journal, it states:

In order to maintain accountability before the local church communities, the local church, the churches in the nation/region/state, and the International Offices, each level of the Church should prepare a yearly budget with full accountability of how the Church finances perform against the budget presented to the local conference, national/regional/state convention, or International Assembly, as is applicable.⁵

27. Our report also stated that each church/nation/region/state should send financial statements to their area of supervision. The Journal continues,

Additionally, the national/regional/state offices will submit to their respective general presbyter's office a copy of their annual financial statement that is reported to their national/regional/state convention within 30 days following the said convention.

This financial statement is to reflect at a minimum, the following information:

- 1) National/regional/state offices budget for the previous and current convention years (with columns showing items budgeted, actual and variances);
 - 2) An income and expense statement; and
 - 3) A balance sheet report showing the total assets and liabilities.⁶
28. With this information, the current Finance & Stewardship Committee would like to reemphasize this important ruling of the 79th Assembly and encourage all local churches and national/regional/state offices prepare an annual budget as a management tool and financial accountability report. At the end of their fiscal year, a Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet), a Statement of Activities (income and expense), and a budget report showing actual versus budget should be submitted to the national/regional/state office and encouraged by all local churches.

SECTION 3: ASSEMBLY EXPENSE OFFERING ***(Information Only)***

29. The International Assembly continues to be a blessing to our church and the world globally. With our members' and supporters' faithful giving we have been able to walk away with recent Assemblies with expenses paid in full. What is so very exciting and encouraging in every area of our church world is participating and experiencing the blessings that come because of giving.

⁵ "Fiscal Responsibility," Section 5, *The Journal of the 100th International Assembly*, 108.

⁶ "Fiscal Responsibility," Section 5, *The Journal of the 100th International Assembly*, 108.



30. One area the Finance & Stewardship Committee wishes to encourage is each local church receiving an Assembly Expense Offering annually. In the 2016 International Assembly, the following was presented by the Finance & Stewardship Committee and approved by the International Assembly:

We therefore recommend that consideration is given to implementing an Assembly Expense Offering, to be received by every local church globally on the third Sunday of January, or an annual budgeted amount. Each local church should feel the flexibility to receive this offering on a date before May 1 should it work better in their overall budget process. The May 1 date will give adequate time for it to be sent to the National/Regional/State Office and then to the International Office before the end of the fiscal year.⁷

31. Implementation of this Assembly ruling has proven that the date set for the offering is not practical in every local church. So, the Corporate Board (previously Administrative Committee) met and, in accordance with their delegated authority as outlined in the 96th International Assembly, they amended the date for each local church to receive an Assembly Expense Offering or budgeted amount anytime during the period January to May annually. Additionally, funds can be submitted to the International Office (United States), or International Account (all other nations) in June of each year.
32. The Finance & Stewardship Committee wishes to express sincere thanks to every local church that has participated in this fundraising effort. We encourage all local churches to support this effort, as these offerings play a key role in subsidizing the Assembly expenses. Furthermore, this opportunity for heartfelt giving enables all our members worldwide to participate in and bless our International Assemblies.

SECTION 4: CHURCH PLANTING INVESTMENT

Rationale

33. This committee recognizes the paramount importance of our evangelistic mandate to preach the word of reconciliation to the world. Biblical history teaches us, and current statistics corroborate, that planting new churches is the most effective method to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, church planters today face many challenges from the moment they accept the calling to plant to the moment they can celebrate the birth of the new church. One of these challenges is the financial burden that often keeps new churches planted from investing more resources to reach their communities. These financial constraints can often be exacerbated when a church plant transitions to become an organized local church.

⁷ "Consideration to Offset International Assembly Expense," Section 1, *Ministry Policy Manual*, 152.



34. Under our present financial system, a mission (a congregation that has not yet been organized as a church) retains all funds and does not participate in the financial reporting system of the Church of God of Prophecy. They, however, are required to submit reports periodically to national/regional/state offices for accountability and for the records.

Assembly Action

35. This committee understands that when a new church is planted or a mission is established and transitions to an organized local church, more time may be needed by the newly organized local church before it is expected to fully participate in the Church's financial system.
36. Given the foregoing, and the present policy of allowing a mission and a new church planted not being required to submit funds to national/regional/state and International Offices, this committee recommends that a newly organized local church during its first year of operation also be allowed to retain all funds in the local church for a twelve (12) month period. This would allow for more funds to be readily available to meet the needs of the new congregation. During this period of not sending funds to national/regional/state and International Offices as mandated in the financial reporting system, the local church will be required to submit monthly reports to their national/regional/state offices for accountability and for the record.
37. After twelve (12) months in operation, the newly organized local church will be required to become fully compliant with sending in all funds and reporting to national/regional/state and International Offices as required by the financial reporting system.

SECTION 5: THE GLOBAL STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

38. The Finance & Stewardship Committee enthusiastically supports the Global Stewardship Initiative (GSI) outlined by our executive director of Finance & Administration. His visionary approach aligns seamlessly with our organizational ethos, emphasizing the transformative power of our core value of biblical stewardship in everyday life.
39. The GSI is poised to revolutionize our approach to stewardship, fostering a culture of joyful accountability and empowering leaders to transcend conventional boundaries. With its three strategic pillars—Rediscovering the Biblical Concept of Stewardship, Increasing Stewardship Capacity, and Creating a Stewardship Community—the initiative seeks to equip our community with the tools and mindset necessary to thrive as kingdom stewards.
40. As we eagerly anticipate the realization of this vision, we stand ready to offer our unwavering support and commitment. Together, we will serve to bring the GSI to fruition, ensuring that our collective dedication to stewardship becomes not just a principle, but our practice in life.



SECTION 6: THANK YOU

41. The Finance & Stewardship Committee would like to express deepest gratitude to Bishop Paul Holt for his service as Executive Director of Finance and Administration. What Bishop Holt thought would be a short tenure of ministry at the International Office became 16 years of stellar service to the Church of God of Prophecy. He began his service as the assistant to the Executive Director of Finance & Administration. He was then appointed as Executive Director of Finance & Administration, serving with distinction for 13 years.
42. While his investment of skill, wisdom, and detail will be missed, his influence at the International Office level will last much longer. Thank you, Bishop Holt, for serving from “the integrity of your heart and the skillfulness of your hand” (ref. Psalm 78:70-72).
43. We commit you to, in your words, “*follow God to the next classroom.*” The state of Tennessee will be enriched by the ministry you and Barbara bring. Our heartfelt thanks to you both.
44. We also wish to thank Daniel Felipe for his service on this committee for the past eight years. We are committed to serving alongside him in his newly appointed position of Executive Director of Finance & Administration. Thank you, Daniel, for your willingness to accept this appointed responsibility.

Humbly Submitted,

Nathaniel Beneby
Clarence Berry
Scott Gillum, Chairman
Clint Knowles

Cynthia Lawrence
Ryan Napalo
Rupert Neblett
Paulette Wilbanks





DECLINE COMPENSATION FORM

Name of Local Church: _____

Address of Local Church: _____

Date: _____

Pastor _____ has agreed to not receive the following in salary for serving as pastor of the local church at _____.

TO NOT RECEIVE:

- 100 Percent of Tithes
- _____ Percent of Tithes
- \$ _____ Per Month in Tithes

The local church treasurer is to forward 10 percent of tithes to the International Offices and the designated amount required by the national/regional/state office. Also, since the pastor is not receiving the tithe, 10 percent of what the pastor would typically receive should be forwarded to the national/regional/state office.

Pastor's Signature: _____

Treasurer's Signature: _____

Date recorded and submitted to the local church conference: _____

Note: A signed copy of this document should be provided to the national/regional/state bishop, pastor, and the original should be kept in the church files. Once this document is recorded in a business conference, the tithes received will be used at the discretion of the local church, finance committee, or board of directors.

Note: We suggest this form be adopted at a business conference at the beginning of the church's fiscal year.

Note: A pastor may reverse compensation decline in a business conference if an event escalates the need to do so. However, we strongly advise against monthly and quarterly adjustments.

