

As a follow-up to the Spring 2023 Conference held in Layton, Utah, it has become necessary to address certain incidents that occurred during the conference and add this to the official conference history.

June 13, 2023

An Open Letter to the Covenant Body:

Thank you all for joining us for the Spring Conference in Layton last month. As a conference planning committee, we look back on the experience with appreciation and awe. The focus of this conference was “The Answer to Prayer for Covenant as an assignment from the Lord: Love One Another as I Have Loved You.” As we have reflected on what we have learned, it has become clear that the work is not complete. We have yet another opportunity to practice what we have learned. This letter today is intended to address some specific concerns that have been raised.

The Spring conference planning committee has become aware that a few individuals felt they had been tricked or compelled to participate in the prayer at the end of the Saturday session of the conference. Our united desire was always to focus on loving one another as He has loved us and to build a spirit of love, understanding, peace, and community during the Saturday sessions. Having achieved much of that, we were grateful that the people desired to share some of those feelings with the Lord and to offer sentiments of humility and meekness in approaching Him in prayer.

The entire conference, including the prayer from the body, was not then and is not now about the Statement of Principles, which is a very small part of the instructions we were given in the Answer to Prayer for Covenant. We clearly explained in the Q&A section of the website that we had no plans to address the Statement of Principles, so to do so would have been to go back on our word. To be clear, we never intended for the Statement of Principles to be the focus of the meeting or the prayer, and we are pleased that so much of the day and the elements that were included in the prayer focused on the intent of the conference and not other topics. The conference and the prayer were directed at the higher law the Lord repeats over and over in the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, which is the greatest of the commandments: loving one another and the Lord.

Regarding the ongoing discussions about the Statement of Principles, it is the custom amongst us that anyone can call a conference at any time; therefore, if anyone feels there is a need for a Statement of Principles conference, they are welcome to organize one.

Sadly, acknowledging our hopes, expectations, and intentions—and even considering our shortcomings—is not enough. We also must address some of the behavior that was on display at the conference. Some attendees had strong feelings about the preparation and presentation of the prayer and subsequently acted out on those feelings in an inappropriate manner. It is this subsequent **behavior** that we take issue with. Raised voices, verbal attacks

on committee members, and obscenities being yelled through the hallways are improper, unacceptable, and unfit actions for covenant holders to engage in, and these behaviors should not continue to be tolerated within the culture we are seeking to establish.

Many within the covenant body witnessed these unfortunate things happening or heard about these sad incidents later. Some of those who witnessed the events were new to our group and shocked by behaviors such as this. Others have indicated that they are no longer interested and/or willing to attend future covenant events where these kinds of behaviors could be exhibited again. We need to take care to not drive away the gentle, the meek, the new, and the most vulnerable among us for the sake of tolerance or out of fear that we may be deemed an accuser. It is to this end that we denounce these un-Christlike behaviors and seek to be united as a people. Our hearts **can** be united amidst disagreements, even large disagreements. We do not need to agree on everything, but **we do need to treat one another with respect and kindness.**

We learn in the *Glossary of Gospel Terms* that,

The more one contends with others the more he is taken captive by the spirit of contention. Everyone becomes subject to the spirit they submit to follow. Those who are prone to contention become more contentious as they listen to that spirit. Eventually they are overcome by that spirit, and it is a great work involving great effort to subdue and dismiss that spirit from the heart and mind of the victim.

...The more contention and disputation there is with one another, the better the people become at contention. Rhetorical skills are polished. That spirit of contention can take possession, and when it does, one is hard-pressed to be a peacemaker with others. (Glossary: Contention)

As we seek the Lord and to do His will, may we control our tempers, eradicate contention, and learn to become more self-aware of our behaviors, how they can negatively impact other individuals, and how the body at large may be subject to the destruction of peace.

Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess. (T&C 157:19)

We plead with all our covenant brothers and sisters to pray for one another as we learn how to kindly and respectfully work out our disagreements with each other. We have so much to gain if we can but learn to be obedient to the words of the Lord concerning His law to love one another. His love is unconditional. We can dwell together in peace, harmony, and respect toward one another, despite our differences.

Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren, and on to the victory. Let your hearts rejoice and be exceeding glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who has ordained before the world was that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prisons, for the prisoner shall go free. Let the mountains shout for joy and all you valleys cry aloud, and all you seas and dry lands

tell the wonders of your eternal King. And you rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord, and you solid rocks weep for joy. And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy. And let the eternal creations declare his name for ever and ever.

And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from Heaven proclaiming in our ears:

Glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life, Kingdoms, Principalities, and Powers.

Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand, and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap, and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter Day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. (T&C 151:18-22)

Signed by Spring 2023 Conference Committee:

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