



**PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO THE
PASTORS OF THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY
November 23, 2024, | Anaheim, California
Bishop Felipe A. Salazar**



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REVIVAL IS RENEWAL

Dear Presidents, International Delegates, Regional Supervisors, Bishops, Pastors, and Ministers of the Apostolic Assembly,

Praise the Lord.

This General Convention marks the end of the first two years of our administration and the ninety-ninth anniversary when our founding fathers celebrated our church's first general convention. The Apostolic Assembly was formally organized in 1925 in San Bernardino, California, by a group of committed believers who experienced a life-altering encounter with God during the famed Azusa Street Revival. At the founding of our church, our founders emphasized the baptism of the Holy Ghost and a return to the apostolic faith. This year marks the culmination of ninety-nine years since our founders gathered to examine our doctrine collectively and agreed to uphold and be guided by fundamental apostolic doctrinal principles that would unify and organize the Church. Next year, at our General Convention in Anaheim, California, we will be celebrating 100 years since that historic event.

NINETY-NINE YEARS

In the scriptures, the number ninety-nine represents something that is almost complete. This number is noted throughout the scriptures just before a time of fulfillment or completeness. In Luke 15:1-7, the Good Shepherd discovered that he was missing one sheep, so he left the other 99 sheep and set out to find the one lost sheep to complete his flock. The good shepherd did not return until the flock was complete. In Genesis 17, Abram was 99 years old when God appeared to him. He was already living in the

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land that God had promised to him, but he was still without the child through which the promises of God would be fulfilled. 99 years was a significant time in Abram's life because that was the time when God appeared unto him and confirmed his promises to him.

Twenty-four years before, Abram was 75 years old when God first spoke to him. In that encounter, God commanded Abram, ***"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house."*** Then, God made him a promise if he obeyed: He told him, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. " In that moment, God rolled back the curtain of time and allowed Abram, through faith, to see many hundreds of years into the future. God continued saying, ***"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered."***

There are four elements to God's promise to Abram. The first was an understanding that Abram's descendants were central to fulfilling God's plans to bless the world. In fact, God chose Abram because He knew that Abram would instruct his children after Him (Genesis 18:19). Future generations always matter in the plans of God. The second element was that God told Abram that He would make his name great. The third element was that God told Abram that He would bless the world through him. This was explicitly fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abram. Finally, God committed Himself to resist those who opposed His plans to prosper Abram and his seed.

From Genesis 12 to Genesis 17, Abram received a call from God, journeyed to Canaan, went down to Egypt, denied that Sarah was his wife, separated himself from Lot and then rescued him, had an encounter with Melchizedek, took Hagar as his second wife, had a son named Ishmael, and through it all, Abraham believed God, even though he and Sarah had not yet received the promised child, through whom God would fulfill His promise. Abram had faithfully followed God for twenty-four years, but the child of promise had not yet been born. Then, in Genesis 17, when Abram was 99 years old and his wife, Sara, was 90, God told him that in the 100th year of his life, He was going to give him the promised child. At their age, upon hearing God's declaration, both Abram and Sarah laughed. Some of God's plans are so far outside what is considered normal that they either make us cry or laugh. Then, as a constant reminder of His promises over his life, God changed his name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of many). Multiplication was in Abraham's future.

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4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

On that occasion, God commanded Abraham and his descendants to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant. At a time in history when a man's name bore great significance, Abraham's name would be a constant reminder of the multiplication God had promised him. By circumcision, his descendants would know, perpetually, that they were in a covenant relationship with God. The promised child, Isaac, was born within one year of this very significant moment.

Abraham's son, Isaac, represents God's faithfulness to His Word and the continuation of the promise in the following generations. The fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham was multigenerational. The spoken promise was given to Abraham, but it would be fulfilled through his descendants. Isaac's conception and miraculous birth to an elderly couple accentuated God's power over natural circumstances. Regardless of the conditions, God would fulfill His Word, and the entire world would be blessed through Abraham.

Isaac's conception in the 99th year was significant because he represents God's unwavering commitment to His purposes. Isaac was the promised child and the first in the line of descendants through whom the blessing of multiplication would come. Abraham and Sarah had faithfully waited and trusted in God's timing and power. Because they believed in God, the legacy of faith was established for future generations.

OUR HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH

Ninety-nine years after the celebration of our general convention 1925, the Apostolic Assembly is more vibrant and robust than it has ever been before. Since its founding, our Church has experienced growth. Our expansion, primarily driven by a passion for propagating the Apostolic message, a strong sense of community, and an appeal to Hispanic populations, has allowed our Church to become one of the largest oneness-Pentecostal denominations in the United States and in Latin America. God has walked with us and directed our steps these many years. The Church has flourished since its humble beginnings.

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At the beginning of our Church, our brothers and sisters held their first services in the homes of families and friends hungry for the truth of the Gospel. Their homes were their temples. As the Church grew, they moved into small church buildings. Then, in the early 1920's, the Apostolic Church in Calexico, California, bought the first building of the Apostolic Assembly. Today, 99 years later, the Apostolic Assembly owns more than 2,000 properties in the United States, with a total estimated market value of \$420 million. Our beginnings were humble, but God has been with us. God has been faithful.

The Apostolic Assembly's first convention was held in 1925 in San Bernadino, California. Around 177 brothers and sisters gathered for that historic event. The Lord blessed our newly formed church, which continued to grow. Our conventions eventually moved to larger venues and auditoriums as the Church grew. Today, we gather in convention centers, where thousands come together annually to celebrate Christ. The Lord has brought us a long way. He has prospered our way. Next year, our organization will celebrate its Centennial Anniversary of holding General Conventions, and we are planning a special celebration for that occasion. The year 2025 will be a time to celebrate our doctrine, the victories that the Lord has given us, and the progress we have made despite the challenges we have faced along the way. Our theme will be **"100 Years of Victory."**

100 YEARS: A TIME FOR RENEWAL

Studies have shown that when an organization reaches 100 years of existence, it faces a critical moment of reflection and opportunity for its continued longevity. For the churches that arrive at the first one hundred years of their existence, there are important challenges they must face. Some churches, by that time are showing signs of decline. Generational and cultural shifts, secularization, institutional rigidity, the loss of religious identity, and the rise of autonomy all contribute to the decline of denominations that were at once strong and vibrant. If the denominational leaders do not recognize these trends and seek renewal, they will begin a steady decline as their mission shifts from the Great Commission, given by Jesus Christ to His disciples, to other ancillary work that churches perform. For these reasons, many mainline denominations today are dealing with the problem of denominational decline.

Dr. Scott Thumma, a Professor of Sociology of Religion and Director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford International University, says that ***"in the next twenty years, we'll likely see half as many open congregations as we have now."*** Thumma points out that, ***"without innovative approaches to community and outreach, these institutions risk closure or repurposing."***

SEEKING RENEWAL AND PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

In the 99th year of our history, our Church is preparing itself for a great harvest and renewal. When I use the word **“revival”**, I mean renewal. Revival is not a feeling. It is not a great series of weekend services. Revival is founded on faith. It is purposeful. It demands an investment and persistence. Revival is a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost and a renewed interest in winning the lost, and making disciples. By revival, I mean a refocusing on the mission of the Church.

History relates the stories of the moments when the Church experienced renewal. In the book of Acts, driven by persecution, the Church scattered from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the world, renewing its commitment to the Great Commission. During the revivals of the 18th and 19th Centuries, God raised up men like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and Charles Finney to revitalize the Church through personal repentance and sanctification. Then, at the beginning of the 20th Century, God graciously poured out His Spirit upon the souls of those hungering after the move of His Spirit. Revival does not mean that someone, or a group of people, are dead. It simply means that they seek renewal, or to be refreshed, by the Spirit of God.

PREPARING FOR A MOVE OF GOD

I say we are preparing ourselves for revival because we have been endeavoring to reorganize ourselves, through the methodology of The Strategy of Jesus, for a greater harvest over the last seventeen years. A sustained move of God is the result of many things. It comes before all things because God, in His sovereign will has determined that it shall be so. His sovereignty is before all things. Nothing can happen until God determines or allows it.

An important question is: “How can we know that God is sending revival?”

The answer is, at least in part, that God’s desires are made manifest in His people. When God has determined to move on Earth, He begins to move the hearts of His people. First, God sends His mouthpieces, His spokesmen, to cast a vision of what is possible with the help of the Lord. Prayer and consecration (separation from sin) are landmark signs of revival. A hunger for a move of God (the lost being saved), together with profound introspection and repentance, are sure signs that God is on the move. Prayers are not just offered to God; they are aligned with the will of God – the salvation of the lost. Then, God’s people begin to organize themselves for a move of God. Old wineskins are discarded, and new wineskins are created because old wineskins cannot contain new wine (Matthew 19:17). A call for change arises. This call for change is never the cry of the majority at first. The visionaries, those who have seen the need for

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a renewal, will be the ones who cry out first. Then, others will follow until the refreshing touches the masses.

I believe the refocusing of the Apostolic Assembly, which began in 2007, is that realignment for our Church. Prayers for the lost, focus on evangelism and discipleship, and the restoration of the ministry of the saints (small group ministry) are the preeminent signs and foundational realignments we have been experiencing in preparation for a worldwide harvest and revival. The Holy Spirit is moving in the Apostolic Assembly.

CONTINUED GROWTH AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Ninety-nine years after its founding, the Apostolic Assembly is growing. We are growing numerically and expanding culturally. God is on the move.

A MEXICAN CHURCH WITH A WORLD VISION

Initially, the Apostolic Assembly began by focusing on reaching the Mexican community with the Apostolic message. The Azuza Street Revival, which began in Los Angeles, California, initially touched the English-speaking community. But God planned to ***"pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh."*** Soon after the revival began, many Mexican brothers were filled with the Holy Ghost. Some of those men who were filled with the Holy Ghost received the revelation of the oneness of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Some of these early converts, almost two decades later, paved the way for the formal organization of the Apostolic Assembly. Through its missionary efforts, our church grew to encompass many other Spanish-speaking countries and cultures. Our commitment to reach the world began with reaching our ***"Jerusalem"***, the Mexican community, and then it expanded to the world.

The Apostolic Assembly must always maintain its God-assigned role of reaching Latinos and its strategic position for reaching the Hispanic population of the world. We must become more effective and create strategies for reaching the waves of immigrants who come to our great country from time to time in search of a better life. Just as the nation of Israel was placed in a crucial geographic region, Palestine, to be a witness to the nations of the greatness of their God, the Apostolic Assembly has been placed in a prosperous land to give the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people who immigrate here. The Church must recognize its strategic place in God's plan and its mission to create effective strategies to reach our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters.

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS

With the Church's second and third generations of Apostolics, a call for change grew within our ranks. As a result, we started celebrating bilingual activities. Eventually, the first English-speaking congregations were formed. This movement reached its apex when we began celebrating our National Youth Conventions, which became our Church's most attended biannual bilingual activity.

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Because we are growing culturally, there has been renewed interest in the needs of the English-speaking Apostolic community in the last couple of years. Our Church needs to offer English activities, but the most urgent need of the English-speaking Apostolic community is for the leadership to organize and represent the needs of their constituents.

We understand that the Church's mandate to reach all people with the Gospel includes our investment in our children and their children. For God to **"make nations and kings come from him,"** Abraham would have to place great importance and attention on his descendants. Future generations have always been central to God's redemptive plans, and they continue to be. God's plans for Abraham were so great that one generation could not realize what God had in store. It would take almost 640 years for God to make an innumerable multitude of Abraham's descendants. Given this truth, we must prioritize the need to invest in the upcoming and future generations of English-speaking Apostolics in our nation. That means that the Church must fully embrace the cultural diversity that it is now experiencing.

Some years ago, President John Fortino started a commission to investigate the needs of the English-speaking Apostolic community. After an extensive investigation and study, the commission made various suggestions: They suggested the formation of English-speaking sectors wherever possible in the Apostolic Assembly. The formation of a National Presidential Commission would oversee the implementation of the English language in the Apostolic Assembly churches nationally. They also proposed long-term goals like implementing an English-speaking National Conference, the addition of a new General Board Member that will lead and represent the English-speaking ministry of the Apostolic Assembly, and the establishment of a permanent national leadership structure for the English ministry in the Apostolic Assembly. Some of these suggestions have already been implemented; others are yet to be realized.

GROWING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The 2023 Census of our Church highlights another area where the Apostolic Assembly has expanded culturally. The Apostolic Assembly is now a multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual church. The latest census shows that the Apostolic Assembly is now in 51 countries worldwide. Within the ranks of the Apostolic Assembly, the name of Jesus is being preached in more than 30 languages worldwide. In fact, the regions of the world where the Apostolic Assembly is experiencing its most rapid growth are India, Africa, and Asia. The Apostolic Assembly, more than ever before, is growing to include many cultures and people. We are committed to making the name of Jesus Christ great in all nations.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

The Apostolic Assembly is also growing numerically. In the United States, in 2023, the Apostolic Assembly grew at 4.9 percent. The goal was to reach a minimum growth rate of seven percent. We are now paving the way for those growth goals to be accomplished and surpassed. Although a noteworthy number of churches did not report their growth last year, from the numbers we did gather, we can say that due to the Apostolic Assembly's commitment to International Missions, our Church grew internationally at an incredible rate of approximately 95.66 percent! That means that, in 2023, the Apostolic Assembly grew at a rate of 61.03 percent worldwide. Ninety-nine years after our humble beginnings, the Apostolic Assembly is growing faster than ever globally.

RENEWING THE VISION:

A HOLISTIC GROWTH VISION FOR THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY

The Apostolic Assembly has a vision for expansion and continued growth. Eighteen years ago, God gave our leaders a vision for the future growth of our church: the Strategy of Jesus. Over the years, that vision has been discussed, debated, and even challenged. Recently, it has gained greater acceptance. Pastors whose churches are growing have implemented the vision in their local churches. The vision is the Strategy of Jesus, and it is producing results.

The General Board is also working to expand the vision to include a Road Map. Roadmap was given to the Church to focus on measuring certain aspects of church growth through the lens of spiritual healthiness. The idea is that healthy living things multiply naturally, and healthy churches grow naturally. During the next two years, we will integrate the Strategy of Jesus with Roadmap. The goal is to have, in the Apostolic Assembly, a 360° growth plan that includes strategies for evangelism, discipleship (The Strategy of Jesus) and church health (Roadmap).

This year we will introduce the second half of the plan to grow the Apostolic Assembly: a 360° Wholistic Growth Plan. The plan will comprise four major parts: evangelism, discipleship, healthy church leadership, and healthy local churches. Peter Wagner wrote in his book, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, the following: ***"The growth of a church is a natural byproduct of its health. When the spiritual, relational, and organizational dimensions of a church are in balance, numerical growth will inevitably follow."***

Around the month of January of 2023, a former President of our Church advised me to ***"focus on the Pastors of the Assembly."*** That is precisely what we will be doing. We are going to focus on the local church and its needs. The Pastor and his leadership teams are the most critical and significant members of the Church's leadership structure. If they are healthy, the Church will prosper. When a man starts a New Work, he preaches

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the Gospel to the lost, baptizes those seeking salvation, gives bible studies, prays for the sick, casts out devils, and does the work of the ministry. Then, as his church grows, he disciples others to do the work of the ministry while he envisions, plans, and organizes for future growth. Pastors and their leadership teams are crucial to the health of the Church.

As an organization, we embrace the principles of servant leadership, exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. Leaders in higher positions of authority serve and support the leaders under their supervision. This means that the National and District leadership work together to support the needs of the local church Pastor and his leadership team. That is how we envision our Church will be as we embrace the 360° holistic growth Plan together.

CONCLUSION

Ninety-nine years after our humble beginnings, our Church is ready for revival. New evangelism and discipleship strategies and the restoration of the ministry of the Saints (cell group ministry) are clear signs that revival is here. If we are to continue to grow and if future generations are to see a sustained move of God, we will need to move forward boldly. Just as our founders believed in God, planned and organized, looking to the future with hope and faith, we too must plan and organize and restructure for the future prosperity of the Apostolic Assembly.

I close with the words of the prophet Jeremiah to the people of Israel who longed for national renewal and restoration, ***“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*** As we, the leaders of the Apostolic Assembly, look to our church’s future, seeking national renewal, we declare by faith that our brightest days are before us. My desire, and the desire of the General Board, is that Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church, bless the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus. God bless the Apostolic Assembly!

In Christ,
Bishop Felipe Alvarez Salazar
President, General Pastor, AAFCJ

