

ANNUAL NATIONAL ADDRESS
To The
90th Annual Bahamas National Convention
Of The
Church of God of Prophecy
By
Bishop Dr. Elgarnet B. Rahming, C.M.G., D.D., J.P.
National Overseer
Monday 14th March, 2011

INTRODUCTION

As I stand before you this evening to deliver my 12th consecutive Annual National Address, I am now more than ever before grateful to the Almighty God for His extended grace, mercy and love. My God has providentially sustained, strengthened, preserved and kept me in good health, with a sound and focused mind to do His work and His will in the earth. In my many travels at home and abroad, I am thankful to Him for divine guidance, protection and security. Moreover, I am indebted to Him for the wisdom, the inspiration, the illumination, and the revelation He gives to enable me to discharge my assigned ministry and duty to the praise of His glory, and to the progress of His work and people.

I celebrate, with thanksgiving and praise to our God, my faithful, dutiful, beautiful and conscientious wife and partner in ministry, Minister Jacqueline Rahming, who loves me unconditionally, and gives me constant, enduring encouragement and prayerful support. Similarly, I celebrate, praise and thank God for our four wonderful children, Pastor Jarenda, Psalmist Janeene, Jadeena and Elgarnet Jr. They all are good, virtuous and God loving children who love, pray for, and support their parents in all things. As children of Church leaders and, as children of God, they have been taught, from an early age, that they constantly are under the microscope of public critique, and are ever the object of the enemies attack.

Notwithstanding, they are encouraged to be strong in the Lord, at all times; and to be committed and faithful to Him regardless.

I take a brief moment of reflection to give God thanks for the life and times of my late father, Bishop Clifford Wenzel Rahming who went to be with the Lord at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, 10th March, 2011 at the age of 87 years. Bishop Rahming was all that his wife could ask for in a husband; all that his children could ask for in a father; all that his parishioners could ask for in a Pastor; and all that his community could ask for in a neighbor. He was stern, firm, faithful and loving. Dad was a good example to leaders and laity alike. He walked and witnessed the life of Christ for more than 70 years. He was the oldest and longest serving Pastor in the history of the Highway Church of God, McCollough Corner, shepherding that flock for well over 60 years. For what he meant to my family, and to me, and for all that he did to promote the Kingdom of God and righteousness, and to instill Godly principles, Christian values, and discipline in my siblings and me from our early upbringing, I am indeed truly grateful. May his soul rest in eternal peace!

As I close this introduction, I offer my gratitude to the wonderful people of this Church, and of the wider community who telephoned, emailed, texted, faxed, and visited expressing their love, prayer, sympathy, and support in our time of bereavement. Thank you for your comfort and encouragement. God bless you one and all!

LOOKING BACKWARD

Of necessity, we praise and thank God for blessing us with another good and fruitful year of ministry and service in His Vineyard. In our Bahamaland, this Church, to the extent possible, did as is mandated by Jesus Christ.

No, we did not build apartment blocks or buy a hotel. No, we did not buy stocks and bonds, or operated a bank, business or supermarket. No, we did not buy a limousine, yacht or airplane, though helpful they all would be to service and ministry. But, yes, we preached faithfully the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our 17 Island Districts and beyond. As a result, hundreds of lost souls were saved from a life of sin and despair, and are now accepted into the Kingdom of God. I am pleased to say that dozens of these new converts are now a part of our great organization by way of membership covenant. God is good, and we ought to praise Him.

David declared in Psalm 67, **“Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him”**. (Psalm 67:5-7)

It did my heart good to witness and to be a part of this wonderful spiritual turning that God is bringing about to grow, develop and mature this great work. This was so evident to me in Abaco, in North Andros, in San Salvador, in Grand Bahama, and, of course, right here in the capital during this Convention Year. While there remains those who see God as being too high, too far away, too inaccessible, too irrelevant, and too invisible to reach and touch, there yet is a remnant of persons who are hungry for the reality of the abiding presence and power of the living God in their lives. It is to the faith of such people that God responds. They came in droves, they sought and found God at the point of their need, and they were saved, blessed and baptized in water, and some in the Holy Ghost. By way of example, in Conch Sound, North Andros, it was good to see some 17 young persons baptized in water, 14 of whom were added to the Church by membership covenant. In the local Church here at this East Street Tabernacle, it was good to see some 17 young persons added to our fellowship by way of membership covenant in one sitting.

Similar reports were received from several of our Districts and local Churches during the year, for which we give our God praise.

Yes, we did as mandated by Jesus Christ. At all levels, National, District and Local, consistent ministry was given to the sick and the afflicted; to the aged and the shut ins, to those in hospitals and prison; to the poor and needy, to the widows and orphans, and to those distressed, dislocated and deficient due to hard times and natural, and other disasters. In particular, but among other ministries, our National Social Outreach Ministries stretched out, reached, touched and assisted numerous victims of fire and earthquake, including our people in Haiti, and others of the community here at home in the Bahamas.

By the grace of God, we are going and we are growing as we seek to do only those things we are divinely commissioned of God to do. We are on the move, and we must not allow anyone or anything to stall our forward progress, or to remove us from where we are positioned in God. Three new Missions were established on Bacardi Road (Creole) and at Hunter's/Mack Town, Grand Bahama, and George Town, Exuma (Creole). I express my appreciation to all of our many, many Haitian brethren for your commitment to, and for your loyal and faithful support of the work of the Church of God of Prophecy throughout the Islands of the Bahamas over the many years.

I thank you for all that you do, in your own cultural and special way, to diversify, and to build and strengthen this work, and to the glory and praise of God.

Several of leaders and people continue perseveringly in their pursuit of tertiary level theological education abroad to better qualify, equip and prepare themselves to face the many diverse challenges of this end time 21st century.

I am pleased to advise that the construction of our new Church building in Staniard Creek, Andros is just about complete, and the work is satisfactory. That building is planned to be dedicated in the coming Convention Year. Construction of the new Church building on 2nd Street, Coconut Grove is coming on well and is also nearing completion. If all goes well, that building will also be dedicated in the coming Convention Year.

To the hardworking team of our Executive Assistant, our National Field Director, our District Overseers, Senior Pastors, National Ministry Directors, Pastor at Large, Associate and Mission Pastors, other National Workers and our Bishops, Ministers, Deacons, and our faithful people everywhere, I offer thanks and appreciation for all that you have done to help to bring us to where we are today, by the grace of God. God bless you all!

ABOUNDING IN HOPE BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 15:13, “**Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost**”.

In these end times, as our world is beset by rising immorality and sexual perversion, by human trafficking, by the growing sex slave trade; beset by the escalation of crime, violence and murder; by struggling and failing economies, by the rising cost of living, by famine, poverty, pestilence and disease; by civil and political unrest as seen in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Iran and elsewhere, by terrorism and the ever lurking threat of terrorism; beset by major tornados, hurricanes, typhoons, volcanoes, earthquakes and killer tsunamis; and by the open boldness of the commission of spiritual wickedness in high places. In that challenging scenario, many in our world today appear to abound with the spirit of hopelessness.

Where once joy and peace flourished bountifully through faith - doubt, fear, and hopelessness now seem to abound. To the people of God, in hard times, hopelessness is not an option. The God whom we serve is the God of the mountain, and the God of the valley. He is God in the good times, and God in the bad times. He is the God of the day, and the God of the night. No matter what you may be going through, God promises to turn it around for you. His Word declares, **“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”**. (Psalm 30:5) Paul states, **“Now (in the midst of your adversity) the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”**. (Romans 15:13)

The omniscient God knows all things, and possesses all things. God therefore does not need hope. You and I need hope. And, because we do, God becomes the God of hope, or the object of our faith and hope, to fill us with hope as we are LED BY HIS SPIRIT.

In life's trials, calamities and adversities, the flesh, or carnal, sinful nature of man, shows us things just as they are in the natural. The flesh never shows how God can change and turn a situation around for our good, and for His glory. And so, that is exactly the purpose of the flesh; to bring despair, despondency and doubt to the people of God. You see, the flesh seeks to remove our focus from on God to on our situation and circumstance only. Romans 8:5a states, **“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh”**. When fleshly doubt takes over, faith disappears. And when faith leaves, we lose our hope, our joy, and our peace with God. Worst still, we are in danger of losing our eternal inheritance with God. And so, in these perilous times, I call upon the people of God, by the grace of God, to keep faith and hope alive in Jesus Christ. For Christ in you is the hope of glory. For you, today might be a bad day. But, keep faith and hope alive. With Jesus, tomorrow will be a better day. Jesus is our source. He is the lifter up of our heads.

We are lifted by His grace. In his dark moment of doubt and despair, the Psalmist asked himself, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him (in spite of, regardless to), who is the health of my countenance, and my God”. (Psalm 42:11)

People of God, be LED BY HIS SPIRIT that, in your dark moments, He will raise your praise to extinguish and stamp out all inclinations to doubt and disbelieve God.

SETTLE DOWN BAHAMAS!

Without question and prejudice, the Bahamas is the jewel and envy of the Caribbean Region. Over the years, by the grace of God, we have become a strong force in business, commerce and banking. We are a sought after prime vacation destination to many. We welcome six (6) million visitors annually who inject millions of dollars into our stable economy.

Our parliamentary democracy is strong, long and enduring. We are blessed with good, visionary and uncorrupted governance, and with a people who, generally, are gifted, talented, hardworking, religious, peaceful and law abiding. Because of these upstanding qualities and our unmatched visitor courtesy and hospitality, over the many years, we have been admired, respected and courted by others in countries and nations both near and far. Many potential foreign investors see the Bahamas as an ideal place to both invest and to make money, and to further develop the country and its people in that process. Some have done just that including our well to do billionaire friends from the far east. When God favors you, He blesses you, not only through individuals, but also through nations. Many Bahamians have done well themselves in investing in, and in building this great place we all call our home.

Notwithstanding our divine positioning on the globe, or our golden sun, pink sand, turquoise sea and other precious natural resources; or the warmth, kindness and hospitality of our people, or what we have offered and what this country continues to offer to us, there is yet an unacceptable degree of restlessness among some of our citizenry. This restlessness is not good for our country, for our economy, and for our future well being. You see, restlessness has a destabilizing effect in one way or another. As the restlessness manifests itself into other undesirable things, it sends the wrong message to our youth and children. Surely, the world that is watching, along with our youth and children, desires to see a more mature, a more reasoned, and a more patient, understanding and statesmanlike approach to dealing with the root cause of the restlessness. After all, life is all about giving and taking; all about winning and losing, and accepting some things that are what they are, for the good of all in our Bahamaland.

Yes, in a democracy, people are free to express themselves, their opinion, their perspective, and their passion. But they must do so in ways that are not offensive and harmful to others, and that are not in contravention of the laws of the land. We must all ensure to act in a lawful, respectable and responsible manner.

God is indeed good to the Bahamas. Wonderful things that speak positively to development and progress are going on all around our archipelago. They are clearly seen by all and sundry. Other necessary ambitious and progressive infrastructural works to be carried out throughout in several key islands, we are told, are in the pipeline. It is what it is, by the grace, goodness and hand of God. Things are getting better and we are moving forward with post haste in spite of the recession. This is not the time for people to become unsettled and restless. This is not the time for our nation to be exposed to negative reports in the international media. This is not the time to break down what took years to build up.

To the contrary, this is the time for all Bahamians, from all walks of life, to come together and unite in a special time of appreciation, praise and thanksgiving to God for the great things He has done, and is continuing to do in our beautiful and blessed Bahamaland. **SETTLE DOWN BAHAMAS!**

LOOKING FORWARD

In the way forward, with the Leading of the Lord, it is our hope to reinvigorate and revitalize the work of our smaller local Churches by way of a deeper commitment to cross sharing and support from our ministry leaders and larger local Churches. I believe that most certainly would be a blessing and help to the work.

In the coming Convention Year, we anticipate that we will give greater emphasis and focus to our Church's core values of prayer, the harvest, and leadership development as we are **LED BY HIS SPIRIT.**

By the grace of God, it is our plan to organize two (2) new local Churches during the coming Convention Year. We look forward also to a strengthening of the bond of unity of plan, purpose and fellowship that exists within our diocese.

In the way forward, and in this coming Convention Year, our National Social Outreach Ministries, under the Directorship of Lay Minister Patricia Bethel, so as to better serve and offer needed ministry to our various communities, are seeking to construct a suitable office building on our property at Palm Tree Avenue. In so doing, they will need all the help they can get. Help in terms of funds, building materials, and manual labor. And so, to that end, I call upon and encourage as many of you as possible to get ready to give of your time, your talent and your treasure, so as to bring into quick reality this highly needed community impacting project.

Remember, your home, your family, and your extended family, friends and relatives, along with others, form the community to which this ministry will reach, touch and bless in the time of need.

In this Convention, and in light of the cost of living, I intend, as an item of business, to have the relative Convention Committees present for your consideration a proposal to increase the quarterly amount paid to our Family Island Pastors.

In this Convention, as an item of business, I intend also to have the relative Convention Committees present for your consideration a proposal to pay retired and living National Overseers of the Bahamas a monthly allotment under certain stipulated guidelines.

Finally, in this Convention, being LED BY HIS SPIRIT, I shall appoint a special Task Force to investigate and study the feasibility of us implementing and operating a Pastors' Pension Plan. Such a plan would enhance our existing Provident Fund and would give our Pastors a greater degree of comfort and financial assurance in their time of retirement from office.

CONCLUSION

God is leading the Church of God. God is taking us where we need to go and be in Him. We must be willing to follow Him all the way if we are to remain in relationship and in fellowship with Him. Paul proclaimed, **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”**.

Church, I know that, because God is sovereign, having ways and thoughts that are higher than ours, we sometime get frustrated by not understanding the direction He gives, and the time He takes to have us reach and accomplish certain things. But, take courage, Church. God is God. And He does all things well.

People of God, let us wait on the Lord. And, while we wait, let us be of good courage, for God will strengthen our hearts. God has no equal. God has no comparison. God's way is the only good and right way. God's eternal purpose for us is far bigger than our earthly plans for ourselves. If we don't wait on God, we shall make a mess of ourselves. God will not fail you! God will not forsake you!! God will come through for you!!! There is no fainting or failing in God.

Isaiah declared, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint". (Isaiah 40:28-31)

May the God of all grace continue to bless the Church of God, and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas as they wait on the Lord.

AMEN!