



Office of the International *Presiding Bishop-Elect*

BISHOP PAUL S. MORTON, SR.
International Presiding Bishop

BISHOP JOSEPH W. WALKER, III
International Presiding Bishop-Elect

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This correspondence is in response to my comment about the major Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship (FGBCF) recruitment efforts that will take place in 2014 with one of our focuses being on women in ministry, I felt lead to share my heart with you. The vision of the FGBCF is to "CHANGE A Generation". Our first principle is to 'Challenge Denominational Traditions'. We believe because the Holy Spirit offers these gifts to the believer - **without regard to gender** – the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship affirms the role of **Women in Ministry**. These roles include women as pastors, preachers, elders, teachers, and bishops. This is one of the many traits we have that makes us unique.

There were a number of women who were invited to our meeting in Miami Gardens, FL. however due to their ecclesiastical commitments, many were unable to attend. Their names were not listed out of respect for what could be perceived as a conflict of interest. This meeting was not a FGBCF agenda setting meeting, it was one of many recruitment efforts we are having around the country. Those who joined me in Miami are womanist allies, all affirming women in ministry and consistently advocating for the advancement of women in various arenas.

Women have always been celebrated and invited to be a part of the Tiers of Leadership. Women in ministry are represented on the transition team as well as on the Bishop's Council which consist of 21 members. The transition team will work in collaboration with the Bishop's Council and ultimately finalize the agenda for the fellowship. One of my reasons for connecting with Full Gospel was its inclusion of women in ministry.

Again, I felt lead to respond to this matter because I do take to heart the plight of women in ministry. In the 147 year history of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, of which I pastor, was the first to ever ordain and license woman in ministry. Currently, we have well over 30 women who are licensed and/or ordained with many more to follow. I am so grateful to Bishop Paul Morton and Pastor Debra Morton for creating a blue-print and culture within the Fellowship where women, from the pulpit to the pews are empowered, affirmed and celebrated.

As an academician, I would be remised not to use this as a teaching moment. Please know that as a 21st century leader, I welcome critique and healthy dialogue. Remember, it is critical to ask questions before making assumptions. Nonetheless, I am encouraged by this discussion because it reveals that many feel Full Gospel is significant, relevant and positioned to be on the forefront of impacting the Kingdom. I look forward to more dialogues with anyone who is genuinely interested in seeing this Fellowship succeed. The SHIFT is inclusive, it's progressive and it's now!

Sincerely,



Bishop Joseph W. Walker, III
Presiding Bishop-Elect