

Dear brothers,

This letter is an update concerning the labor to increase the ratio of underrepresented believers within the local churches in America, specifically African Americans. In 2013, some senior co-workers in the United States initiated fellowship on how to increase the ratio of African Americans and those of African origin within the churches. As a result of that fellowship, we began to hold several gospel conferences in person and by Zoom. The purpose of these conferences is twofold: first, to encourage those of this demographic who already meet in the churches, and second, to raise proper awareness and prayer that would open the way for the Lord to increase the ratio of African Americans in the churches. We have held such conferences in Atlanta, Houston, New York, and Dunn Loring. In addition to these conferences, we have also visited saints in various areas of the United States.

Over the past few years, we have seen the Lord's positive response to our prayers and His blessing despite the enemy's continued opposition. On the one hand, we saw the Lord bring more believers of this demographic into contact with the saints in various churches. On the other hand, we observed a need for genuine and personal shepherding so that the Lord could gain these contacts for His interest. Consequently, we felt the need to adjust our way of handling the conferences in order to properly receive the Lord's blessing.

Practically, we have learned to take at least one of three approaches in our labor:

1. **Visitation:** Visiting scattered seekers in cities in the US or local churches where there are a few believers of this demographic to have fellowship and mutual encouragement.
2. **Smaller conferences:** Holding smaller conferences once or twice a year in cities or regions where there is a larger number of saints in this demographic.
3. **A larger conference:** Holding one larger conference open to all the churches in the US, instead of two a year, and sparing the resources we have for other kinds of conferences and visitation.

In 2023, we took the second approach identified above, visiting Brooklyn, New York, and Washington, D.C. The Lord's blessing was evident in both conferences. The smaller number of attendees made it much easier for the hosting locality to carry out the conference, and we were able to give particular attention and care to many of the newer ones who attended. This year, 2024, we held a conference of the same nature in Memphis.

This year, we plan to host the larger conference on the weekend of December 13-15 in Houston, TX. One of the changes to this larger conference will be the addition of Amharic language translation for the speaking and the outlines. We believe that this language addition will open the door to many first and second generation Amharic speakers and their children.

We covet your prayers and look to the Lord for His blessing as we continue to endeavor in this labor.

Willie Wise, Steve Watts, with the brothers