

Dear Independent Restoration Branch Members and Priesthood,

There has been much confusion and misrepresentation concerning the purpose of the Conference of Restoration, and its intent to organize the church. To be clear, the CRE's purpose and intent is not to organize or reorganize the church. While some leaders in the CRE in the past have made movements towards this, it has been consistently rejected by the elders meeting in conference.

The overall purpose of the CRE established in 1993 remains the same today; *To bring solidarity to a growing number of Restoration Branches--and Latter Day Saints in general--during this period of disruption and fragmentation.* (Source: Conference "Operating Guidelines" accepted 1996) The scope of this purpose is focused on offering ministry and support to any and all restoration branches and saints within the restoration branch movement that desire that support. *The Conference is not the Church, but a gathering of the Melchisedec Priesthood to share in testimony, prayer, legislation, and preparation to return to our branches better equipped and unified to perform our duties to minister to our brothers and sisters in Christ.*

Without going into detail, there is growing evidence that the Restoration Branch movement within the US is experiencing loss of branches and members through attrition, factions and other factors. It is in a general decline in terms of its effectiveness to offer ministry within, and out of the Church. While there is no question that God is in control and will accomplish the purposes of His church, the question remains, are we doing all we can to assist with the work?

As such, the coming together of a significant number of the Restoration branches for the purpose of conferring with one another to seek God's guidance on how to become more unified and engage with each other to assist with the work, is needed, and is something the CRE would support.

In a Statement to the 1998 Conference of Restoration Elders brother Vim Horn shared the following:

*The Majority of Ministry from the melchisedec priesthood is currently being provided within the Restoration Branches. We know and agree that the leadership of the melchisedec priesthood transcends the Branches and extends to the Church. However, because of our current scattered state, the ability to offer the extended ministry to the Church has been greatly limited.*

*If there is going to be an opportunity to offer coordinated ministry and leadership, **The Branches are going to have to desire to come together. The Branches need to determine initially how that coming together will be accomplished.***

*A courtship is taking place. If you can recall the first time you went out with your wife or sweet heart; remember how awkward the two of you were as you began the process of forming a relationship with one another. The tenuous steps you took to begin to form that relationship.*

*I believe that we, in the Restoration Branches, find ourselves in a very similar situation. I believe there is great desire on the part of the people, and consequently, the Restoration Branches, to come together and begin to become a part of one another. I believe that we are in that awkward time when we as Branches are beginning to court one another.*

*We are ready to take some tenuous steps to come together but we are not real sure how to do it, or if we are ready to commit ourselves to one another. Brethren, I believe the Branches and the people need some time to figure this out. To figure out that it is all right to come together and to do things with one another. That we are of one Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, restored for the last time on this Earth.*

*I believe that as the Branches begin to come together for worship, fellowship and other activities, the good spirit will be witnessed and an environment of love and trust will begin to develop.*

The Conference believes it is time for us to intensify this courtship. If we agree that our current condition will not bring about the vision, or hinders or weakens the work, then maybe it's time for us to do something different. We believe it's time for us to challenge the status quo of our condition. We believe it's time for all of us, in our individual branches, to engage in a soul-searching process—first, within each branch, and second, between branches.

It is the sense of the current Conference that the unifying of the saints can only occur with the active participation and support of the "Branches". This can only occur by priesthood in Restoration Branches faithfully magnifying their calling and preparing the Saints (Doctrine and Covenants 135:2b-c), and the Saints faithfully executing the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom. It is our understanding that the foundational element in all of this is that each individual, priesthood and member alike, must be fully converted unto Christ, must have a covenant relationship with Him, and must be committed to fulfilling His holy purposes. Only when our individual preparation is true, will a collective desire to be unified be accomplished.

The Conference remains committed to working with individual Branches, and Branch associations, to accomplishing the above. Doctrine and Covenants 136:3 reflects our hope.

*"The movements toward better understanding of ministerial responsibilities, duties, and goals, and toward unity of endeavor in teaching, preaching, evangelizing, and the perfecting of the Saints, are pleasing to the Lord.*

*Contentions, bickerings, and strife are unseemly, hinder the work of the church, and should not find place among the Saints. Only in the peace of fraternity and the unity of those caught up in the spirit of Zion can the work of the Lord be accomplished. To this task let the church devote its energies."*

It is our great desire that one day soon, the word of the Lord will say of us:

*The Spirit saith further unto the church: The Lord is well pleased with the advancement which has been made in approaching unity;...and though there may have been differences of opinion, these differences have been held in unity of purpose and desire for the good of my people, and will result in helping to bring to pass a unity of understanding. So be ye encouraged and press on to the consummation designed of God for his people--unity, honor, sanctification, and glory. Amen. (Doctrine and Covenants 129:9)*