

A PROPOSED PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

“How you proceed must be as noble as the cause you seek.”

Answer & Covenant, p. 2

10/26/2017

Background

We, the people, have been given an assignment to write a “*statement of principles*” to be “*added as a guide and standard for my people to follow to be included in the scriptures.*” However, there is no central body nor process for “*proceeding*” with this assignment or making decisions as a people. We have no king, ruler, chief, elder, captain, or prophet/authorized servant (whose hands are not tied) in this particular situation to assist. We are distributed geographically. Our numbers are not known precisely. There is mistrust, hurt feelings, and great differences of opinion as to the best way forward. There are concerns about setting up a strong man to accomplish this work and there are concerns about propping up a committee with power that could jeopardize equality. Some affirm that they have been called of God to accomplish this work, while others have concerns about the non-verifiability of such statements, and still others believe that “*if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work*” (*Teachings & Commandments*, JSH, Feb 1829, para. 3). Thus, there is deadlock over the various proposals and positions put forward. Even though there are several proposals on the table with the potential for helping us to resolve our current impasse, there is no universally accepted way to implement them and complete our assignment.

Synopsis

A process is described for using the scripturally supported method of drawing lots to assemble a small, limited, and provisional body of individuals to compose a *Statement of Principles*. A brief overview is first presented to provide an understanding of the overall process, followed by a more detailed background and explanation of the steps involved to carry out the proposed process, which closely follows the principles included in the Oct. 7th, 2017 “*United Proposal*” as well as the added light given in the talk in Dallas, TX on Oct. 19th, 2017.

Brief Overview of Proposed Process

1. Names of individuals meeting basic criteria are submitted to the Central Recorder.
2. Following the practice of drawing lots, the Central Recorder draws 7 names to compose a *Statement of Principles* during a publicly broadcasted meeting.
3. The Central Recorder verifies their qualifications, and ensures willingness and ability to participate.
4. The Central Recorder will collect any and all documents produced by those who have felt called to this work for consideration of the newly formed body of 7 to help inform and inspire their efforts.
5. The group begins their work, seeking the inspiration of the Spirit to compose a *Statement of Principles* based on those principles that we have already mutually agreed upon, found primarily in the *Answer & Covenant*, and supported by the words of Christ, as found in the holy scriptures that we have accepted as ours (which includes the Doctrine of Christ and the Law of Christ, as well as the teachings of the Lord’s current authorized servant) and staying as close to verbatim as possible to the Lord’s words (see *United Proposal*, Oct. 7th, 2017).
6. After the *Statement of Principles* is finalized, it is published for the entire body of believers and following a brief period of comment, it is presented to the Lord for His revision and approval.
7. When the Lord’s approval has been received, the *Statement of Principles* is presented for a sustaining vote and inclusion in the RE Scriptures.

Proposed Process

Beginning with the End in Mind

How do we get from where we are now to where we want to go? Let's fast forward in time and consider a hypothetical scenario in which we have successfully adopted a *Statement of Principles* and are now ready to present it to the Lord. A prayer we might offer to Him at that point might look something like this:

Our Most Gracious God and King,

We, the people who have entered into a covenant with you to keep your commandments, have labored diligently to fulfill the assignment you have required at our hands to 1) provide a suitable replacement for LE Section 20 and 2) write a statement of principles as a guide and standard of our faith. Although this process has exposed our many weaknesses as a people, we are thankful for the opportunity afforded to us to work together and learn how to love one another, that we may lay hold upon forgiveness and mercy. While we humbly admit that in our weakness we have not always been able to align our minds enough to find mutually agreeable words, we have indeed been able to unite our hearts enough to find 100% mutual agreement in faith and purpose as contained in the Holy Scriptures, which we use to correct our daily walk. Therefore, we proclaim to you this day, as a standard of our faith, that we both believe and accept the Doctrine of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Book of Mormon (RE 3rd Nephi 5:9) as well as His Law which was set forth on two continents (RE Matthew Ch.3, RE 3rd Nephi 5:10 – 3rd Nephi 6:6). Because there are others who are not yet acquainted with your word in our generation, we also present to you a statement of principles that is intended to bless, benefit, and inform our brothers and sisters who know nothing, as yet, of your work underway, which will guide them in their worship in fellowships. We now mutually agree to present this, the fruit of our labors, to you with the understanding that it may yet contain many errors and omissions and ask that you correct the document as needed to be worthy of canonization.

The intent of this proposal is to work backwards from the position of unity, as illustrated above, to where we currently find ourselves, in a state of disorder, contention, and confusion. So, assuming we have submitted a *Statement of Principles* to the Lord, how might we have arrived there? What process was followed to allow the body of believers to come together, united in heart, around a mutually agreeable set of principles, although we may not have completely agreed on the exact words used?

Let's look back (hypothetically) in time together...

How the Process Worked

- 1) For a limited period of time (1 week), each covenant holder submitted the names of adults (with phone numbers and email addresses) to the central recorder for potential service on this body. Although there was no limit to the number of names submitted by a given person, much thought and prayer went into the nominations, so that individuals nominated would be covenant holders who were guided by the Spirit and capable of completing this assignment with integrity, and in a cooperative, equitable, and humble manner. Some individuals also submitted their own names because they felt a particular desire to volunteer to serve in this capacity.
- 2) These recommended individuals had all met the following criteria:
 - a) At least 18 years old;
 - b) Baptized and baptism recorded with the Central Recorder;

- c) Had entered into the covenant, which was originally offered on September 3rd, 2017.
 - d) Had a willingness to agree to perform their labors according to the criteria of composing the *Statement of Principles* using primarily the words of Christ directly or through an authorized servant (ie, according to the guidelines set forth in the [United Proposal](#)).
- 3) The Central Recorder collated the submitted information into a spreadsheet, verified baptism (verifying whether someone had taken the covenant was not possible), removed duplicate submissions (to engender equality, each had 1 “lot”), and assigned everyone a unique number. Numbers were printed on “lots” of the same size and shape and deposited into a vessel of the Central Recorder’s choosing;
 - 4) The Central Recorder collected any and all documents produced by those who had felt called to this work for consideration of the newly formed body of 7 to help inform and inspire their efforts to complete the assignment.
 - 5) On a day shortly following the closing of the submission period, the Central Recorder arranged a date, time, and location for drawing lots and appointed a scribe. The event was open to the public and livestreamed/recorded. After prayer, the numbers were drawn. Because there was a chance that individual circumstances or minds may have changed, or people may have been nominated who did not wish to participate, the Central Recorder also drew another set of 7 numbers for individuals to serve as alternates. Others were invited to pray for the process to be pleasing to and guided by the Lord;
 - 6) The Central Recorder contacted the first 7 names drawn to verify that they met the above criteria and that they were willing to serve, giving them 24 hours to reply. If any of the first 7 did not meet the criteria or declined participation, alternates were added to the group accordingly.
 - 7) Once the 7 were determined, the Central Recorder posted a list of their names on the Recorder’s Clearinghouse website and sent an email to the 7, putting them in touch with one another;
 - 8) The body of 7 held a day of fasting and prayer and then began their labor with the understanding that if they could not unanimously approve the document within two weeks, they would disband and allow the selected alternates to undertake the same process. Once the initial *Statement of Principles* was completed, it was posted for the entire body of believers, followed by a brief period of time (3 days), for email submission of any errors or omissions to be considered by the body of 7.
 - 9) The body of 7 then made arrangements for the final *Statement of Principles* to be presented to the Lord through His servant for His revision and approval.
 - 10) Once approved by the Lord, the *Statement of Principles* was submitted back to the body of believers for a sustaining vote and then submitted to the scripture committee for inclusion in the scriptures and the body of 7 was disbanded.

The body of 7 were servants of all and exercised no authority over others. They determined how to divide their labors among themselves, with some doing the primary work of composing the *Statement of Principles*, while others served as independent reviewers (ensuring the words of Christ or His servant were used accurately, and that the language and formatting were consistent), and still others served to communicate progress to the body of believers, etc. If technical skills beyond those available on the body of 7 were required, they were permitted to seek a minimal level of outside assistance, but those individuals (as well as spouses) had no role or influence on the body of 7.

How Did the Body of Believers Overcome the Hurdle of Voting?

Having recently participated in a separate project involving what to include/exclude in the RE Scriptures, where some measures passed by slim margins, the body of believers had confidence that a simple voting process had worked and would work again to obtain the voice of the people on this matter. This understanding became the basis for obtaining the voice of the people through which the consent to move forward with the plan (i.e., this proposed process) was secured. Furthermore, upon agreement on narrowly defined criteria for the compiling of the *Statement of Principles* (i.e. the “*United Proposal*”), as well as the resolution to accept the document produced as sufficient to present to the Lord for His revision, it was determined that a sustaining vote was only necessary after an approval from the Lord was obtained.

One in Faith, One in Purpose, Not Necessarily One in Word

Before any words could be written to create a document that would be mutually agreeable to all, the entire body of believers needed to come to a unity of faith and belief in the Doctrine of Jesus Christ with a determination to live His Law. With that in place, the people had sufficiently satisfied the requirement to find “mutual agreement” and all that remained to be done was to draft a basic *Statement of Principles* on the structure and function of fellowships for those who were new to this work. While different words were preferred to describe what was already being done in various home fellowships, the people decided that one description was as good as the next so long as it stated clearly the principles the Lord had given them through an authorized servant in their day and all the necessary ordinances were stated accurately. This further light and knowledge came on Oct. 7th, 2017 in the form of a “United Proposal” and then again in Dallas, TX on Oct. 19th, 2017 through an authorized servant of the Lord, in terms of the mutually agreeable principles to include.

- Doctrine and Law of Christ (brief statement affirming our belief in these teachings as found in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at Bountiful)
- Tithing (collection and administration)
- Baptism (obtaining authority to perform the ordinance and the words to use, etc.)
- Sacrament (the use of wine and the words to use for the ordinance)
- Priesthood (private vs. public), ordaining, sustaining, and suspending, etc.
- Marriage between one man and one woman
- Obligation to teach our children the gospel

It was understood by all that a brief summary of these topics using the Lord’s own words or the words of His authorized servant in our day would be sufficient. Using the spirit and the scriptures to govern and correct themselves, the minutia of fellowshipping was determined by each fellowship. Additionally, the people realized that this additional information was a gift from God and pertinent to the content of the *Statement of Principles*, which caused many to realize that perhaps the original and August 5th documents may have had some previously unknown limitations or omissions. But how did they get to the point where they could come together in love and understanding with so many different ideas and initiatives of how to get the assignment accomplished? For that, it took a great deal of humility to try an old, yet familiar practice found in the scriptures.

A Proposed Solution: Drawing or Casting Lots

This method has been used since ancient times to arbitrate in situations in which there was no authority or other method to determine the outcome. This practice is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament, 7 times in the New Testament, once in the Book of Mormon, and twice in the Doctrine & Covenants. Anciently, lots were sticks, stones, paper, or anything that allowed God’s will to influence the outcome in a way that was fair and equitable to all involved by not requiring someone else to do the choosing. For example, lots were used to divide and assign lands (Num. 26:52-56; Josh 14-21 KJV), make assignments in temple service (1 Chr 24:5,31; 25:8-9; 26:13-14; Luke 1:9 KJV), and make other decisions regarding the governance of a people (e.g., Neh. 11:1 KJV). The sailors on Jonah’s ship cast lots to determine who had attracted God’s wrath (Jonah 1:7 KJV). Even the important decision of deciding on an Apostle (Matthias) to replace Judas was determined by lots (Acts 1:21-26 KJV). In speaking of using lots to make decisions regarding church leadership, Denver Snuffer has stated: “*It was a recognized way to choose someone (see, e.g., 1 Ne. 3:11)...Such a system was uncontrolled by man, done by lot, completely random, but produced the right person. Left to God, it obtained God’s answer. Did with the sons of Lehi, and with the vacancy in the Twelve in the Book of Acts, too. There is no reason why such a system wouldn’t generate the Lord’s choice today.*” (Prophet, Seer, Revelator, May 21, 2010). Of course, like most everything used for good, the practice of lots also has a Babylonian counterpart where people engage in games of chance for money (as the Roman soldiers did to divide Christ’s garments). However, if approached with humility, relying on God for the outcome, knowing that God desires that we fulfill the task He has required of us, we can have confidence that this method will work to allow God to guide the process and serve as a way to make God’s

will manifest. Proverbs 16:33 says “*The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof of the Lord.*” (KJV), meaning that the outcome or arranging of the lots is determined by the Lord. Additionally, Proverbs 18:18 says “*The cast lot puts an end to strife. And decides between the mighty ones.*” (NAS), meaning that using lots can help in situations to resolve contention and strong differences of opinion.

Summary

Imperfect as this proposal may be, we have attempted to demonstrate a possible future sequence of events that could lead to a final *Statement of Principles*. We believe that using the simple, scripturally-based approach of lots permitting God to guide the process, coupled with a fresh understanding of mutual agreement on the Doctrine and Law of Christ, and the use of Christ’s words to compose a *Statement of Principles*, offers a potential solution for the dilemma we now face. We believe that such a process will result in increased equality (e.g., **all qualified individuals are invited to participate; all submitted documents can be considered**; the body to perform this work is selected fairly in a manner that allows God to guide the process), allows Denver to remain uninvolved, and helps us move from the deadlock we now face. Additionally, since we already have *de facto* mutual agreement around the content of the *Statement of Principles*, the outcome should be somewhat predictable if the body of 7 confines the content of their efforts to what the Lord has stated in the *Answer & Covenant* as well as the scriptures/words of His servants, as verbatim as possible.

We do not wish to impose this particular proposal upon anyone. We are aware of and sensitive to the wide-ranging views and proposals that have been put forward, all of which have merit and come from valid places of concern and differing perspectives on the nature of the task at hand. Although all the labor, time, and resources spent on this endeavor has not yet resulted in an acceptance by the Lord, these noble and earnest efforts have been by no means a waste or a failure. All involved have learned much, drawn closer to the Lord, and cultivated new relationships. Although our individual experiences during the last few months have differed considerably, we all labor for the same Master. We desire to be united as a community of equals, seeking to be of one heart and mind. Our hope is that this process could serve as an acceptable option that will allow us to work together in greater harmony to fulfill the Lord’s assignments and commandments to us as a people. We believe that the Lord desires our success and will assist us as this process is approached with humility and love for one another.

The initial version of this proposed process was first drafted and submitted to the Guide and Standard website on 10/3/2017 under the title "*Proposal on How to Move Forward*" with the following contributors and supporters:

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This subsequent revision of the "*Proposal on How to Move Forward*" has been drafted by Jim O'Rullian and James Fargo with the help of many, many others and now replaces the first version. All involved only desire to see a resolution to our current predicament and to help move us forward as a people to fulfill our assignment from the Lord. We (Jim and James) will not submit our own names for the body of 7 or accept participation on the body of 7, but remain willing to serve in any capacity to see this assignment through. If you wish to have your name added in support of this proposal, you may do so via the [Names Submission Form](#). You may also add your name anonymously by contacting Jim O'Rullian at: jimorullian@gmail.com.

[A RUNNING LIST OF SUPPORTING NAMES \(UPDATED DAILY\) CAN BE VIEWED HERE](#)

Suggested Further Reading

Denver Snuffer on *Disputations about Ordinances*:

*“Christ is saying to keep the ordinances unchanged. And further, **don’t even begin to dispute them. They are off limits for argument, dispute and discussion. When you open the opportunity to dispute over the ordinances, you are allowing the devil an opportunity to influence the discussion and change the ordinances.** Disputes lead to contention, contention leads to anger, and anger is the devil’s tool. So don’t start down that road...The purpose of discussion is not to dispute, which leads to contention, which leads to anger. **When the Gospel and its ordinances turn into something angry and contentious, then the Spirit has fled, and souls are lost.** It is the devil’s objective to prevent you from practicing the ordinances in the correct manner. **But, more importantly, it is his objective to prevent you from becoming one.** When he uses arguments over ordinances to cause disunity, he is playing with two tools at the same time. First, changing the ordinances brings about cursings, and second, encouraging contention and anger grieves the Spirit, and prevents the Saints from becoming one. As a result, **disputes or discussions over ordinances, which could lead to changing them, should not be entertained.** As soon as the ordinances are open to dispute, reconsideration, alteration or to being changed, then you are opening the door to this whole process. It culminates in the souls of men being lost through apostasy. Once the ordinances are changed, the earth is cursed (Isa. 24: 5) and Israel is scattered rather than gathered (Jere. 31: 36).”* (3 Nephi 11:28-30, September 27, 2010)

Denver Snuffer on *Correlating the Chaos*:

*“Doctrinal differences sort themselves out by persuasion, pure knowledge and love. **Eventually, when the problem or confusion becomes acute and we need an answer, then we can all unite and go to the Lord in prayer, seeking mercy from Him for the dispute we cannot ourselves solve.** Then, through revelation, we can come to a consensus as we hear from Him. We don’t use that model very often.”* (*Correlating the Chaos*, May 8, 2010)

Denver Snuffer on *Disputations*:

*“It is hard for those whose hearts have been broken by abuse from an institution to begin to trust others in fellowship when they encounter yet another round of abuse, accusation, frustration and imposition at the hands of those claiming to be their brothers and sisters. I try to be a peacemaker. I try to avoid participation in conflict and to do my best to take abuse but never return it. I probably fail in this, but it is my honest objective and deepest intent. **We are facing the same kinds of conflicts that drove the saints to incur God’s condemnation early in the restoration.** I now rejoice only in the fact that we have made no effort to gather. The lesson I draw from this conflict is that everyone on both sides, as well as those who choose a side and work to amplify the conflict,—every participant would be a dangerous neighbor to have living alongside others in any New Jerusalem. **If we are not wise enough to avoid conflicts, then we should bear abuses and insults with grace, kindness and charity when they force themselves upon us. I do not know how we can be gathered if we are quarrelsome, accusing and insulting of one another. How can that please God? ... If it is possible for you to take the role of the peacemaker, please do. If you can help restore harmony, please make the effort. It will be worth the effort to try, even if you fail.** Thanks to each of you for all you have done and all you do to help bring this work along according to God’s desire for us all. Let us go on to defeat the jarrings, contentions, strifes and envyings among us. We have a perfect opportunity with this challenge to at least make the attempt. Do not let it pass you by without the effort to address it in a godly and meek way.”* (*Disputations*, June 22, 2015)