



**SCHOOL OF
PRACTICAL**

and

ADVANCED STUDIES

First Term

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

November 3 – 6, 2011

Church of God of Prophecy – Eastern Canada

SOPAS REPORT

On Thursday, November 3, 2011, a group of excited, timid, unsure, yet expectant people arrived at the West End Worship Centre, located at 1344 Martingrove Road, Etobicoke, Ontario for the first term of the School of Practical and Advanced Studies (SOPAS). From the first greeting on Thursday, to the final goodbye on Sunday night at the graduation, we enjoyed exceptional teaching/preaching and organization.

Registration began promptly on Thursday, November 3, 2011 at 8:40 a.m. with Juliet Creacy as our Registrar. As stated before, we were unsure of what to expect; but as we arrived and saw who the members of the faculty were, we were reassured that it was going to be a memorable occasion. The faculty members were: Bishop Adrian L. Varlack Sr, Bishop Sylvester Smith, and Bishop Wallace Pratt. Most of us having never met Bishop Pratt personally, and most of us not having any knowledge of Bishop Smith, it was the familiar and beloved face of Bishop Varlack, a former National Overseer, that assured us of the stature of the event.

From Bishop Woodroe Thompson, our National Bishop's first greeting and introduction of the faculty, we knew we were in for a memorable feast, and we were not disappointed. In fact, we were like the queen of Sheba, in that "the half was never told" to us, concerning SOPAS. SOPAS exceeded our expectations.

We were blessed to have with us also, Bishop Compton Wharton and his wife, Margaret, who came all the way from Texas, and Minister Frederic Dieujuste from Montreal, Quebec. On **Thursday, November 3, 2011**, Bishop Varlack, the Church's historian, demonstrated why he was appointed to the position. From his presentation titled "*Ecclesial Identity*", we learned well-known and little known facts from that "walking encyclopedia" regarding the early history of the Church of God of Prophecy. To say we were enlightened re: our history is to understate the fact. From Bishop A.J. Tomlinson to Bishop Randall Howard, we saw a progression of leaders who desired to be led of God, and who led and are leading to the best of their abilities as God directed and directs. Thanks Bishop Varlack, for informing and reminding us of our great heritage, and present standing among the world's faith groups!

Friday, November 4, 2011

Every pastor, in and outside the Church of God of Prophecy needed to hear Bishop Smith's presentation, aptly titled "*Principles of Pastoral Leadership Development*". Bishop Smith presented some very cogent truths. Such as: *lead by example; one earns one's place as a leader over time; lead by serving; teach sound doctrine; make disciples and mentoring*. He addressed the pastor's inner life, and urged the pastors present to "Manage the church with integrity, accountability, sound business practices, and strategic planning. His was a dynamic presentation. In the evening, there was what was termed "**Practicum**". In it salient and relevant questions were fielded by a panel consisting of the three faculty members and Bishop Thompson. It was the end to a long, but very fruitful day.

On **Saturday, November 5, 2011**, Bishop Pratt kept us riveted by his passionate, but sound teaching, accompanied by his great sense of humour. He taught "Theology as a Movement". Were we to state all that he imparted to us, it would take several pages;

nevertheless, we will share some very potent truths and observations as espoused by Bishop Pratt. *1. The future is constructed, for better or for worse, by the mixtures of the past and present. 2. What we are building will affect the generations to come. 3. We are to grow wiser as we age. 4. There is a need to facilitate change, while alienating neither the young nor the old. 5. Morality is determined by the word of God.*

Although many of us were tired physically, all were refreshed spiritually by these three days of intense learning. As Paul stated it, “Although the outer man is dying, the inner man is being renewed.” It was a bitter-sweet moment when Saturday’s session ended.

Under the direction of Pauline Thompson, the graduation ceremony was just as inspiring as the previous days’ activities. The graduates were paraded in to the tune of “Land of Hope and Glory” taken from Edward Elgar’s Pomp and Circumstance march from “Last Night of the Proms”. What a thrilling feeling to hear that tune as the graduates marched in with the faculty and National Overseer/Administrative Bishopleading. Bishop Thompson warmly welcomed all, and the ensuing praise and worship time was inspiring led by West End Worshio Centre/COGOP. Sis. Audrey Palmer, *Specialized Ministries Director*, assisted Bishop Thompson with the acknowledgements and commendations. Pastors, Licensed Ministers, National Workers, Local Workers, Ministers in Training, Emerging Leaders, etc. were all a part of SOPAS.

Then the youngest attendees to the classes, Kyron Benjamin, Neisha Brown and Ceyanne Smith, addressed those assembled. The class representatives, Frank Douglas and Beverley Gibbons-Dawkins did the student body proud by their inspired and inspiring speeches. Bishop Varlack noted the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit, and then challenged the graduates to not sit on what they learned, but to go and do exploits for God and the Church.

The certificates were presented, followed by the Vote of Thanks. Sis. Pauline thanked all who helped in the preparation of SOPAS. Surely it was a team effort as it was very evident in the outcome. Bishops Pratt and Varlack then gave some final words. Following the prayer and benediction, a time of fellowshiping took place as the students bade their teachers/mentors, Messrs Pratt and Varlack, a loving and warm farewell. We left, already anticipating November 1-4, 2012, the date of term 2 SOPAS. To God be the glory!

Total Students = 114

Faculty = 3

*Report by Deacon Robert Lindo
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