

Brother Paul Benyola

Personal Data *birth: 12/11/37; baptism: 12/31/56*
Ordinations *elder: 10/13/63; evangelist: 11/4/73; apostle: 4/23/89*
Leadership *Atlantic Coast District President: 1980-84; Chairman of General Church Committees: Development Committee (1982-1986), National Education, Missionary Foundation; GC Quorum of Seventy Vice President & President: 1983-86 & 1986-89*
Mission Work *Independence, Missouri; Dedham, Massachusetts*

Paul Benyola was born on December 11, 1937, in Hopelawn, New Jersey. Paul was the second child of Brother Joseph and Sister Margaret Benyola, an evangelist and a deaconess, respectively, in The Church of Jesus Christ.

Miraculous Recovery

At 12 years of age, Paul was a passenger in a vehicle that was involved in a head-on collision that took the life of a six-year-old boy in the other car. Paul, along with two cousins, was critically injured. When Paul's parents, Brother Joe and Sister Margaret, arrived home from a General Church conference in 1950 to hear the news of their son's grave condition, the doctor told them that it would only be a matter of a day or so before death came. Brother Joe anointed Paul and the other young men, and requested that the Church fast and pray for them. Five days passed and Paul still hadn't regained consciousness. The doctors hadn't even bothered to set his broken limbs, as they were certain he wouldn't survive the accident. Paul's parents stayed by his bedside and Sister Margaret had a vision in which she saw all the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven as a bouquet of flowers. This vision was truly from God, as the prayers were answered in a miraculous way. Paul finally regained consciousness and the doctors went to work setting his broken limbs and wiring his jaw. He couldn't eat solid food for about eight weeks, but by December, only two months after the accident, Paul was out sledding with his friends, totally healed. God had performed a miracle!

Drafted into the Army – Both Spiritually and Naturally

From 1956 to 1958, Paul served in the United States Army. In November of 1956, he was in basic training at Fort Devens, Massachusetts when the New Jersey Local hosted the GMBA Conference. Paul had looked forward to going home on leave and visiting with his friends and acquaintances in the Church, but because of a speck of dust on his shoes, he didn't pass inspection and was confined to the army base for the weekend. Sitting in the deserted bunkhouse that Sunday morning, Paul thought about the brothers and sisters meeting together in New Jersey. It was then that he remembered the Bible sitting in the bottom of his foot-locker. He took it out, opened it, and began reading the New Testament. When he reached Matthew 3:10, which read, "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire", something happened.

"When I read that verse" Brother Paul recalls, "I was converted immediately. I began to shed tears, which was the first and only time I have ever shed tears when reading scripture. I knew that I was going the wrong way, and I changed my life from that point on. I also became fearful and prayed to the Lord that He would spare my life until I could return home and be baptized. After all the opportunities to be baptized I had let pass me by, I now had to wait to be baptized."

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Meanwhile, back in New Jersey, the Spirit of God was moving upon those gathered for the GMBA Conference, and there were many who called for their baptism that day. Paul had to wait about six weeks, but he finally entered the waters of baptism with his natural father on December 31, 1956. It was the coldest day of the year and ice formed on his hair as he came out of the water, but he didn't feel the cold at all.

Brother Paul was given an honorable discharge from the Army in September of 1958. He married Dottie (Scheffler) Benyola on February 25, 1961. They had three sons, Joseph, Scott, and Paul.

Service to the Church

Brother Paul was ordained an elder October 13, 1963, an evangelist on November 4, 1973 and an apostle on April 23, 1989. Over the years he has served as presiding elder of the Hopelawn, New Jersey; Lockport, New York; and Levittown, Pennsylvania Branches, and was instrumental in starting the mission in Dedham, MA as his natural work took him to these various areas.

Calling into the Ministry

While contemplating on his calling to the ministry he had the following dream: He along with several other young men of the church were working side by side with ministers of The Church of Jesus Christ. They were in the process of finishing large foundations that he was led to understand were the foundations of Zion. The foundations were deep and strong but they were only a few feet above the muddy ground that was the construction site. The site was as far as the eye could see. Brother Paul understood the experience to be an affirmation of his calling to the priesthood, and that he would, along with the other brothers in his experience, be involved with building the foundations of Zion. The other brothers in his experience would also be called into the ministry. Brother Paul was ordained an elder by his father, Brother Joseph Benyola, on October 13, 1963.

Brother Paul did not reveal his experience to the other young men who were building the foundations of Zion until they were called into the ministry. The last brother in his experience was ordained in 1992. This experience took 30 years to be fulfilled.

Laboring for Zion

Under Brother Paul's direction as chairman of the General Church Development Committee, a missionary outreach program was organized in Independence, Missouri. Many meetings were held there and hundreds of contacts were made by elders, evangelist, apostles, and members who donated their time, money, and labor to support this missionary outreach geared toward other Restoration groups. Brother Charles and Sister Ilene Smith still maintain the mission at Independence.

During his tenure as President of the Quorum of Seventy, a program was implemented in which two evangelists were sent to each region at least once per year to hold special evangelists' meetings. Also, various committees were formed within the Quorum to research countries throughout the world and to investigate cultures, religions, and the possibilities of establishing the Church in those lands. These efforts served as a catalyst, helping the Quorum to take a more active role in the world-wide missionary efforts of the Church, which was later accomplished by placing the General Church Board of Missions under the

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authority of the Quorum of Seventy.

Brother Paul was elected Chairman of the newly established Missionary Foundation, which is now a major financial contributor to the spiritual and humanitarian needs of our missionary programs in various countries. He has also served as Chairman of the General Church Education Committee.

Calling as an Apostle

The passing away of Brothers Frank Calabrese and Rocco Biscotti had left two vacancies in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. When they gathered together at the April Conference in 1989, the Apostles were inspired to bring before them Brother Paul Benyola, as well as Brother Joseph Calabrese. While questioning them about this calling, the Power of God fell upon them so strongly that no one could utter a word. With this as a confirmation, the apostles voted unanimously to recommend their ordination as apostles to the General Church Priesthood for ratification. Brother Paul was ordained an apostle at the World Conference Center in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, on April 23, 1989. He currently serves the Quorum as its secretary.

Continued Missionary Efforts

In 1989, Brother Paul, along with Brothers Joseph Calabrese and Chuck Smith, held a three-day session with the apostles of the Temple Lot Church in Independence, Missouri. They discussed our faith and doctrine. They were in harmony on many points of doctrine, and agreed to meet at some future date to further discuss the areas where we differed in our beliefs.