

THE

LIVING

CHURCH NEWS

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Growth Through Servant Leadership

Dear Brethren and Friends,

The unity and enthusiasm of our people all over the world at this most recent Feast of Tabernacles celebration has been reported to be absolutely outstanding. The living Christ is obviously building within the Living Church of God a strong “base” to prepare the way for a *much greater Work* ahead—if we continue our unity, our dedication and our love. This year’s Feast attendance, worldwide, turned out to be more than 8,000 in total—a new record for the Living Church of God. A number of really fine “new” ministers are now coming along and a number of them gave outstanding sermons and are providing very good leadership for the Church. We are very thankful for these newer men and the dedication and service they are providing.

Over the last several years, we have had an increasing emphasis on *Servant Leadership*. In Matthew 20, Jesus Christ describes this kind of leadership—which I preached upon extensively both in Panama City and in Branson at the Feast sites there. After describing the “Hitlerian” type of domineering leadership so often found among the Gentile rulers, Jesus said, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26–28). In Revelation 5:10, God’s Word describes how He has “made us **kings** and **priests** to our God; and we shall *reign on the earth*.” Brethren, we really do need to *take this seriously* and genuinely prepare to be those leaders whom Christ can use in His soon-coming Government!

In 1 Corinthians 6:1–6, God inspired the Apostle Paul to describe the importance of His people both *learning* and *practicing* the biblical form of government. Paul stated, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the

world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3). The type of hierarchical government Christ directed His servants to employ throughout both the Old and New Testaments is the **exact form** of government we will soon be teaching and practicing in Tomorrow’s World. Yet some of our confused brethren in other fellowships think Christ has “led” them into instituting other types of “democratic” governments into their church governance! This is pitiful and very sad indeed—as it can only lead to division and confusion and a profound **lack** of understanding and training in the form of government these people ought to be learning before Christ returns.

Brethren, Jesus Christ is “the **same** yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). So Christ will always use the *hierarchical* form of government in His Kingdom and in His Church. In ancient Israel, God led Moses to “**select**” able men to help him (Exodus 18:21), and to “**appoint** judges and officers in all your gates” (Deuteronomy 16:18). God has **always** shown by circumstances and by the “fruits” the one **He** will use to lead His people.

In the New Testament, after praying all night, Jesus “called His disciples to Himself; and from them He **chose** twelve whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:12–13).

Later, the Apostle Paul “chose” Silas and began to use him in the ministry. Then, still later, Paul instructed the evangelist Titus to “set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint** elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5). Clearly, in God’s inspired word, His government was **always** hierarchical—government from the top down by those whom God had designated as leaders.

There is no exception to this God-ordained form of government in all the Bible! And the living Christ will **never**

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lead anyone to act contrary to His inspired word! So we should all sincerely *thank God* for His form of government! We should appreciate the impressive **unity** that it has given us for so many years. And we should **all**—from the greatest to the least—learn to administer *our part* in God’s government with **love** and **humility**, and with the approach of *Servant Leadership* which we have been teaching for so many years.

Even though some in other groups have **mis-used** the hierarchical form of government in a cruel, harsh, even “Hitlerian” way, we must learn **never** to “throw the baby out with the bath water.” Any form of government may be misused. However, over the long haul, God’s form of government will **always** prove to be the best—especially for those who are Christ-centered and using *His* form of government *His way*. And when we do things *God’s way*, He does give us extra help, guidance and unity. So we must truly learn to “live by every word of God” in everything we think, say and do—including Church government. It is difficult to fathom how some of our separated brethren think that they can—within a very few years—*teach* a form of hierarchical government which they have **never** learned to practice in their own church organization! So, as we learn to study and to teach and to practice God’s form of government, it is vital that we truly *think through* the implications of this—including the fact that we will very soon be **teaching** this very form of government in Christ’s soon-coming Kingdom on this earth.

Truly, Christ is coming soon as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 11:15). His government will be a **real** government, in which today’s Christians will serve if we overcome in this lifetime, and qualify to assist Him in ruling over **actual** cities. Christ, our High Priest, will be the ultimate King, and we under Him will serve Him as kings and priests.

Every kingdom has a king, territory, laws and subjects. In the Millennium, here on the earth, Christ will be the King of kings, God’s law will be the law of the land, the whole world

will be His territory, and the entire population of the world will be His subjects. Christ, with the saints assisting Him, will be the supreme servant leader, giving fully of Himself to make available to every human being the full opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit, to overcome self (remember, Satan will be restrained for most of the Millennium, and society will be free of most of today’s ungodly influences), and ultimately to join the God Family forever.

This wonderful destiny is part of what we picture each year at the Feast of Tabernacles. From time to time throughout the year, we should go back and *review* the notes we took during the Feast from the excellent sermons given. We should **meditate** frequently on this, and let the **reality** of God’s coming government be uppermost in our minds, being sure that we constantly follow the Apostle Paul’s inspired instruction, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of

God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1–2).

As I have stated before, I strongly encourage all of you to begin to genuinely **study** the statutes of God as revealed in the Old Testament. Certainly, the death penalty and issues concerning the “ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7, KJV) are not to be enforced by us under the New Covenant. However, since Christ indicates that the *entire Bible* is to be studied and followed as the “mind of God,” we should really be familiar with the *principles* of the statutes and judgments that the eternal God set forth in the Old Testament. These are the statutes and judgments which King David himself meditated on over and over (Psalm 119:15–16).

If we are to be kings and priests under Christ—and perhaps some of us directly under David—we had better *follow David’s example* in *studying* and *meditating* on the statutes and judgments of God. These statutes are found primarily in Exodus 20–24; Leviticus 16–27; Numbers 18–19, 27–30, 35–

If we are to be kings and priests under Christ—and perhaps some of us directly under David—we had better follow his example in studying and meditating on the statutes and judgments of God.

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EDITORIAL

Four Stages of Faith

By Roderick C. Meredith

Most of you brethren are no doubt aware that I have recently emphasized the importance of **faith** and the need for God's Church to have the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit to a much greater degree. As we reach out to the world more than ever, these spiritual gifts will be *vital* in helping people fully realize that God is *real*, and that He has *true servants* on this earth. So I hope that all of us will fervently seek for more faith—and learn to *exercise that faith* in God's service. As we read the book of Acts, we should understand how God's spiritual "gifts" were used—over and over—to help untold thousands recognize the reality of God and of His Truth. And we must remember, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

For we want to complete Christ's work in this age with **power** and with **effectiveness**, and we deeply understand that it must be by **God's** power, and not our own human efforts. So, we all need to *think* and *pray* about faith—and about how to **grow** in faith!

On this topic, the Apostle Paul was inspired to tell us about the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit. He wrote: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of **all**: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But **one and the same** Spirit works all

these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:7–11). It is **obvious** from Paul's description that each of us has different *types*—or sometimes we have different *degrees*—of the spiritual "gifts" of God. But they are all to be used to serve the *entire* body of Christ—the true Church of God. Nevertheless, faith is a "gift" of the Holy Spirit.

We must always keep in mind Jesus Christ's very encouraging statement in Luke 11:13: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" God is *more than willing* to give us faith if we **ask** Him and, of course, if we sincerely try to **obey** Him and *honor Him* in our lives. We must never forget one of the basic *conditions* of answered prayer: "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we **keep** His commandments and **do** those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22). For, contrary to sentimental Protestant "reasoning," the *entire Bible*—over and over and in example after example—makes it abundantly clear that God is **far more** likely to hear our prayers if we *obey* Him, *honor* Him and *walk* with Him with "all our hearts." This deep, personal, **passionate** relationship between us and our God is the ultimate "key" to answered prayer!

This close, loving **relationship** with God obviously produces tremendous **faith**. As the end of this age approaches, each of us truly *needs* to build this kind of faithful relationship with our God and Father. "For yet a little while, and He who is com-

ing will come and will not tarry. Now *the just shall live by faith*; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:37–39). A little later, the Apostle tells us: "But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must **believe** that He is, and that He is a **rewarder** of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). As we increase in Christian maturity, there are various "stages of faith" most of us go through. We should meditate on them, understand them and be sure we genuinely **grow** in faith, if we want to have a good reward in the Kingdom of God.

The *first stage* involves the first "reality" surrounding each little child. That is his or her **family**. For a child normally looks up to his father, mother or other caregiver as the *ultimate authority*, and the one in whom to place his **trust**.

As a person grows older, the authority figures in his life also normally include his *church*, and his pastor or other religious teachers. Most young people will look up to and accept these religious "authorities," and—to varying degrees—put trust in them. This is the *second stage*.

The *third stage* normally involves—for most people—a larger group of "believers." People in this confused world often speak about the "community of believers." They will learn a bit here and a bit there from different religious books, articles, pastors and religious teachers. They will "pick up" various ideas and concepts from the wider world

of religion. Gradually, they will begin to synthesize and put together their *own* idea of “true religion.”

Finally, the *fourth stage* is when one deeply *evaluates*, *meditates upon* and *internalizes* his concept of God—and of the right relationship he ought to have with his God. At this point, one should genuinely *prove* to himself the existence of the real, personal God, and *prove* that the Bible is the *ultimate authority*—the *inspired revelation* of that God to humans as the “Instruction Book” telling mankind how we ought to live. For a *true* Christian, this is absolutely *vital*! Then, as a genuine babe in Christ begins to drink in of the “milk” of the word, he will come to see—more and more—the *mind of God* and how it affects every phase and facet of his life. He will sincerely attempt to *surrender* his thoughts and actions to “live by every word of God” (Luke 4:4).

In 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul revealed that the Church of God at Corinth had *many* of the same problems that we sometimes have today in the Church of God! He said he could not speak to the Corinthians “as to spiritual people but as to *carnal*, as to *babes* in Christ” (v. 1). He demonstrated their carnality by describing the “envy, strife and division” among them and how they tended to use carnal reasoning in preferring one minister over the other, rather than looking to God who was to guide the Church overall. Paul explains how each of us will have our life’s work *evaluated* by God, “for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will *test* each one’s work, of what sort it is” (v. 13).

As with the Corinthians, it seems difficult for many of God’s people today to trust fully that **Christ** is, indeed, the living **Head** of the Church of God, and that **He** is guiding, leading and orchestrating His Church and His Work today.

People often “reason around” the spiritual instruction they are given, and sometimes “minister-shop” to get the

answers they prefer. Rather than looking to where **Christ** is obviously doing most of His Work, many will “church-shop” until they find a group where they can have their **own** way, or obtain some office. Some will strive to be a “big shot” by starting their own little group, even though this obviously *diminishes* and *greatly weakens* the opportunity to do a truly powerful Work of God through a **unified** Church, as during the days of the original Apostles!

All these attitudes describe a **lack of faith**, a lack of genuine *humility* and a lack of **fear** of the great God! It is obvious that God is not truly *real* to many of these people, and that they indeed have a very *limited* faith in **Christ** as the living Head of His Church.

Notice James 1:2–3: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” Certainly, each of us should be prepared for the “testing” of *our* faith. We should learn to see the “Big Picture” and know that **God** is ultimately in charge and that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

In Luke 17, the Apostles implored of Jesus: “Increase our faith” (v. 5). Jesus answered: “If you have **faith** as a *mustard seed*,” and went on to describe the attitude of **service** they would have if they had true faith in God as their Head and Rewarder. But notice the verses *just before* the Apostles’ request for faith. Jesus said: “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (vv. 3–4). It seems obvious that the Apostles realized the great need for *faith* that would be required if they kept *forgiving* their brother over and over. They would have to **trust God** to take care of it. They would have to *trust God* to help them have a truly forgiving spirit, and trust *Him* to deal with the other party

(whom Jesus’ instruction forced them to *forgive*)—even though they still might have hurt feelings over the matter!

Think about it, brethren! It does take a great deal of humility and **faith**, if we are to forgive one another genuinely, again and again, in spite of real slights and hurts. We must truly **believe** that **God** is *Judge*, and that He will make all things right in the end! There are many, many areas like this in everyday Christian living, where absolute **faith** in the *reality* of God is required. So if God is “not real” to some of us, we will continually *slip up* and **not** be able to forgive one another as we should. We will **not** be able to trust Christ to guide His Church, as we should. We will **not** put our whole hearts in His Work, as we should. We will always be looking for a *back-up system* to “take care of number one”—*just in case* God is not really there, and is not on the job as our **living** God and the **living** Head of His Church! Brethren, *please think on these things*.

God inspired Paul to tell us: “So then **faith** comes by hearing, and hearing by the **word** of God” (Romans 10:17). The more we truly “feed on Christ” (John 6:57), the more God becomes *real* to us, and the more we tend to reflect Christ’s attitudes of *love*, of *obedience* and of **faith** in every situation.

Although he was not *called* to understand all that we do about obedience to God and the full understanding of genuine Christian life, famous Protestant evangelist Dwight L. Moody did get it right in this colorful statement about building faith: “One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, ‘Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and Faith has been growing ever since” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, p. 4).

In Luke 18, Jesus gave the parable of the “unjust judge.” He described the poor

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Mercy, Longsuffering and Forgiveness

By Dibar K. Apartian

Have you ever seen two children playing peacefully, enjoying life, when one of them suddenly provokes a fight and shouts at the other: “I don’t like you! I will never talk to you again! I hate you!”? But what happens a few minutes later? They make peace. They forget their grudges and they forgive each other.

Can we grown-ups be like children? Can we learn a lesson from their example? We, too, fight—but usually we do not so easily forgive. In fact, some of us do not even know what real forgiveness is. In God’s Church, we especially concentrate our thoughts on forgiveness around Passover time. But God wants us to have the Passover attitude *all the time*.

I remember a man, years ago, who wanted to be baptized. He understood the Truth. He was ready and willing to keep God’s commandments, including observance of the Sabbath. But when we came to the subject of forgiveness, he stiffened. “I can never forgive my wife who ran away with another man,” he said angrily. “Nor can I ever forgive that man!” He could not understand that true Christians must be willing to forgive, no matter how deeply we may have been hurt. That is one of the major requirements for salvation.

It is not our responsibility to seek vengeance. Rather, we must seek forgiveness and reconciliation. We are to be merciful (Matthew 5:7; Luke 6:36). We are to be longsuffering (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2). We are to seek peace (Psalm 34:14; 1 Peter 3:11). Sometimes, however, we do not find peace. If a brother or sister offends us, God has given us a proven tool for addressing the offense (Matthew 18:15–17).

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

But we live in a world full of sin and evil. How should we react when no reconciliation seems possible? Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote: “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17–21).

Do we dwell on others’ evil deeds? Or are we willing to extend mercy, patience and longsuffering, always eager to forgive others? We know that salvation is a free gift of God. But it is free with conditions. One condition is our willingness to forgive. We often seem to overlook Christ’s emphasis on forgiveness in the pattern of prayer He gave to His disciples. He told us to pray to the Father, saying: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). In some translations, this verse reads: “as we *have* forgiven our debtors.” In plain

language, this means that God will only forgive us to the measure that we forgive others. This key point is repeated more strongly in the following verse: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15).

Most of us do not take this warning seriously. We bear grudges. For instance, when we meet someone who has done wrong to us, we immediately remember his sins, and are often unwilling to forget them. The Apostle Peter asked Jesus Christ: “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” (Matthew 18:21). Christ’s reply was: “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). In plain language, this means we must **always** be ready to forgive.

Some of us are satisfied by doing those things we know to be “necessary”—such as keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and paying our tithes. But is that all God requires of us? Is there more to being a true Christian?

MERCY

We know Matthew 23 as the chapter that deals with hypocrisy. The Pharisees presented themselves as law-keepers, but in a hypocritical way. Christ reproved them, saying: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23).

Time and again, I have heard non-members say that the members of God’s Church are too legalistic—that we emphasize the keeping of the law, but fail to express enough love and mercy. Why do we sometimes leave such an impression? Do we *really* know what mercy is? Do we realize that mercy goes hand in hand with forgiveness? Put simply, if we lack mercy, our religion is in vain. As Christians, we must endeavor to overcome our human nature. We must admit and recognize our faults—and repent. Lack of mercy is a very common fault, even in God’s Church. Think of it. Has God been merciful with you? Has He always given you the justice you deserve? Or has He been longsuffering, waiting for you to repent and turn to Him? What right do we have—you and I—to withhold mercy from others? Think of the parable of the unforgiving servant. He received mercy from his master, but demanded justice of a fellow servant in his debt (Matthew 18:23–35).

It is natural to want justice for ourselves—and we know that there is much injustice in the world around us. Can we truly forgive a grave injustice against us—one so serious that we cannot seem to forget it? Yes, we can! We can do it by following Christ’s example. Our God is a God of longsuffering, mercy

and forgiveness. Christ told us: “Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:35–36). Remember Christ’s words: “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:2). As Christians, full of mercy and longsuffering, we must always judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24).

THE RIGHT APPROACH

Consider again King David’s example. Often when we think of David, we first think of his adultery with Bathsheba. But that is not how God thinks of David. Notice what God Himself said about His servant David: “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22). David sinned much, but he also repented deeply. That is one reason why he was a man after God’s own heart. As God did with David, we too should rejoice in others’ repentance, rather than constantly remembering their faults (James 4:11–12).

And how about Job? Most of us think of Job as a self-righteous individual. Yes, he was self-righteous. So are you, at times, and so am I. However, God did not look at Job the way we often do. “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1). Notice that God did not say: “There was a man in the land of Uz, who was self-righteous, and I corrected him.” God did not dwell forever on Job’s sins; He praised Job, who not only withstood Satan’s temptations, but repented of his own sins. In allowing his trials, God knew that Job had enough faith and strength to resist Satan. In all probability, most of us would have fallen if we had been in Job’s shoes (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As Christians, we need to be able to look past the hurts and offenses against us. Consider Paul’s example. How would you have reacted if you were treated the way he was? After his conversion, when he began to live as a true Christian, serving God, he was blamed and accused—not only by outsiders but also by many in the Church. Did he become discouraged? No. Rather, he became the man who wrote 14 New Testament epistles, explaining what the true Christian attitude should be—how to be humble, how to show mercy and longsuffering, and how to forgive. Paul’s writings reveal how to fight our human nature, because he went through such fights in his own life. It was not easy for Paul to forgive those—even his own brethren—who were constantly attacking him. Still, he showed mercy and longsuffering, forgiving again and again. How could he do this? “By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering [willingness to suffer even though it hurts], by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (2 Corinthians 6:6–7). Notice that when Paul was wronged, he did not presume to seek

vengeance—as in the matter of Alexander the coppersmith, he was able to let go and trust in God’s judgment (2 Timothy 4:14–16). This is how we, too, should conduct ourselves.

We must also be careful of our anger. In Ephesians 4, a very revealing chapter, Paul explains how to be a true Christian both in word and deed. “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry and do not sin’” (Ephesians 4:25–26). Indeed, sometimes our anger plunges us into a sinful attitude. That is why Paul tells us not to “let the sun go down on your wrath” (v. 26). Do we follow his admonition?

When you carefully study Ephesians 4, you will have a better understanding of God’s nature—what He is, what the Church is and how true Christians can one day become Spirit-born sons and daughters of God. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,” Paul adds (v. 30). What does that mean? How can we grieve God’s Holy Spirit? We grieve it by yielding to our carnal ways. “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice” (v. 31).

SHOWING KINDNESS

Even if someone dislikes us and does evil against us, we should not speak evil against that person. Undoubtedly, this is very hard, and we all fall short in this respect. But this is the best way to start cleansing our hearts, and practicing the weightier matters of the law. Paul shows the next step: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted” (v. 32). How can you be kind toward those who hate you? You can let go, and ask God to deal with them in His way—in the way that He knows is best for them (Romans 12:19–21). We must never withhold forgiveness. We must be merciful and longsuffering, eager to be “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

One thing is sure. If we will not forgive, God will not forgive us, either. On the other hand, if we forgive, God will also forgive us. Jesus Christ made this very clear. In the midst of your trials, ask yourself: “If God acted the way I act, where would I be?” Then, be thankful to God that He does not act or think the way human beings do.

We can only overcome our carnal nature by following God’s law—as taught and magnified by Jesus Christ—aided by the Holy Spirit. The more we abide by Christ’s teachings, the easier it becomes to overcome our hostile attitudes. Colossians 3 describes the character of a Christian made new in Christ. Before we came into the Church, we could not totally understand what sin is. We did not fully understand what forgiveness is. But when we received God’s Spirit, our minds began to open to spiritual understanding. A converted individual is someone who grasps the spirit of the law—someone who abides in the law both in the letter and in the spirit. With this in mind, look at Paul’s exhortation: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (Colossians 3:12). These are the tools that can help us fight against our unforgiving feelings and attitudes.

We must be “bearing with one another”—instead of bearing grudges. “And forgiving one another,” remembering that, “if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, *so you also must do*” (Colossians 3:13).

We know these verses rather well; we have read them or heard them time and again. But do we really make serious efforts to live by them? Always bear in mind that forgiveness and salvation go hand in hand: we will not be forgiven if we do not forgive. We will not receive mercy if we do not give mercy. Rather than bear grudges or hate, we should follow Paul’s admonition: “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:14).

Look also at the example of the martyr Stephen. He was a courageous man. When called to preach boldly, he did not fear to tell the people their sins, even at the price of his own life (Acts 7:59). What were his last words? Surrounded by enemies who were stoning him to death, he proclaimed with a loud voice: “Lord, do not charge them with this sin” (Acts 7:60). Could you—could I—act like him? If Stephen could show such love for those who put him to death, how can we fail to show love to those who disappoint us?

Someone once told me: “We don’t have to forgive those who are not yet called, those who don’t have God’s Spirit.” What a foolish statement! What was Christ’s example? On the cross, when surrounded by people attacking and accusing Him, Christ prayed: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). Is this the way *we* think and pray? Do we want to see our enemies receive God’s forgiveness—or His condemnation?

Today, with so much violence in the world, we Christians can be targets for attacks and persecution. We may be tempted to think evil of people and to condemn them. But we must remember that God alone is Judge. We must do what Scripture says: always behave as true Christians, always merciful, always longsuffering, always eager to forgive. If something calls for God’s direct attention or intervention, we can have confidence that He will take care of it at the right time, according to His wisdom.

THE WAY TO PEACE

True conversion is a growth process. Gradually, we understand more and more of what the Bible teaches. Gradually, we see and understand more and more about how God works. Certainly, we repented at baptism to the best of our ability. But, as we grow, most of us will find that we gain deeper and deeper understanding of what true repentance really means. When I look back on my own life, I can see how poor my understanding was at the time of my baptism. When we bury the old man at baptism, the new man has God’s Spirit within, which enables him to understand and to live according to God’s will. God forgave us at baptism when we repented of our sins, but as we grow we will come to see ourselves more clearly, and we will continue to repent—and

continue to receive God’s forgiveness. The Holy Spirit helps us grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ, and helps us have the strength to be merciful and longsuffering in our dealings with others—even the unrepentant.

As Christians, we should not only seek peace, but pursue it. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” said Christ (Matthew 5:9). Yet, much too often, we fail to be peacemakers. We want to live in peace—to have peace around us—without ourselves procuring it. Actually, if you will not forgive your neighbor, you cannot be a peacemaker. Often, when seeking peace, we expect people to agree with us—to go along with our own thinking and desires. That is not the way to peace.

For example, suppose that someone did something really bad to you. His lies about you even caused you to be thrown in jail for several years. Could you forgive that individual? What would you do to him if, later in life, you happened to occupy a very high post? I have in mind the story of Jacob’s son Joseph. His brothers were jealous of him, because their father loved Joseph “more than all his children.” So, Joseph’s brothers hated him, and sold him to Midianite traders.

Joseph was forced to live in a strange country. He suffered much. He was falsely accused and even persecuted for adultery he did not commit. He was thrown in jail. But God knew Joseph’s heart and blessed him. Finally, Joseph became second under Pharaoh. We all know this story very well. What did Joseph do when he was reunited with his brothers? He forgave them. He showed mercy to them, while their guilty consciences caused them to fear for their own lives when they faced him. Joseph’s brothers did not know the meaning of forgiveness. But Joseph did. When he revealed himself to his brothers, his first question to them was: “I am Joseph; does my father still live?” (Genesis 45:3). His question shows concern, love and respect. His brothers “could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence... so they came near. Then he said: ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt’” (Genesis 45:3–4).

Rather than blaming his brothers, Joseph saw God’s hand in the circumstances. As Paul wrote: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). If we have such faith, and such a forgiving and loving attitude, then all things *will* work together for our good. Joseph’s example shows us what true forgiveness is. Joseph had witnessed God’s comforting hand during his trial, suffering and misfortune. What a great lesson for us to learn (Genesis 45:5–8)!

The Bible says: “The discretion [or “intelligence”] of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression” (Proverbs 19:11). Do you understand the meaning of this truth? It exhorts us to forget hurts, to forgive and to overlook our neighbor’s wrongdoing toward us. God tells us not to seek vengeance. “Do not say, ‘I will do to him

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The Miracle of Seeing and Hearing

By Dexter B. Wakefield

Many in the Church have found great encouragement and deeper faith through the miracles they have experienced and seen. We hear of cases where the lame have walked, and those with serious ailments have had their illnesses disappear completely. We watch as terrible trials are transformed into great blessings.

But have you ever experienced a miracle? Surprisingly, some Church members will answer “No” when this question is asked. But the fact of the matter is, there is one miracle that everyone in God’s Church has experienced—member and prospective member alike. It is a miracle we all should be aware of, and for which we should all thank God.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Pastors are excited to receive e-mail messages from Headquarters containing contact information of people who have asked to meet with a minister, and they try to respond to those requests as quickly as they can. Some new contacts have been studying Church literature since the time of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong; others have only watched a *Tomorrow’s World* telecast or two. If these new contacts are ready—if God is truly calling them—the ministry tries to help them come to repentance, and to develop a good understanding of God’s truth—and even to Church attendance and baptism, if God is truly calling them.

These new contacts can generally be divided into four categories, as Jesus Christ outlined in His parable of the sower:

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not

understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:18–23).

I have counseled many new contacts who seemed to be in the first three categories. Thankfully, however, I have also met many whose fruits showed them to be in the fourth category; they received seed on “good ground”—they heard the word and understood it. These contacts are very encouraging to the ministry; they keep us encouraged that God is still using His Work to call new people into His Church.

But notice Jesus’ words immediately before the parable. Most people, He reminded the disciples, will hear His words and not understand. But the disciples were different. Jesus said, “*But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (vv. 16–17).

Many have wanted to understand. But on their own power they could

not. Yes, hearing and understanding is a miracle from God! *We need to understand and appreciate how God has blessed our eyes and ears.*

WHY SOME AND NOT OTHERS?

Abraham was aware of future blessings that others in his day could not see. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but *having seen them afar off* were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13–16).

How did Abraham and these other heroes see? “By faith Abel... By faith Enoch... By faith Noah... By faith Abraham... By faith Sarah...” (vv. 4–40). They were *looking through the eyes of faith!* God said it, and they believed it. As a result, they saw what others could not see. Looking through the eyes of faith allows us to see **more**, not less! **Believing** God makes you wiser! He reveals what we cannot otherwise know. He gives us vital knowledge. Through eyes of faith we learn His plan for humanity, His way of life, and His standard of right versus wrong. We see events around us in their true context. We come to appreciate what it means that God declares “the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10). And we cannot know any of this unless we believe God. *Faith opens our eyes!*

LIGHT VERSUS DARKNESS

God's word illuminates our world, allowing us to see things we could not otherwise see. "To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; *to give light to those who sit in darkness* and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:77–79).

And again: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*" (John 3:19).

Most people accept the darkness of Satan's lies, instead of the light of God's truth, because they live in violation of God's divine law. Men have loved darkness, so God has allowed them to have all the darkness they want. In doing so, He has purposed to show the world a profound lesson, illustrating the contrast between the darkness of man's ways and the glorious light of God's ways that will be revealed to the whole world when Jesus Christ returns.

Notice these events prophesied to occur during the Great Tribulation: "Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain" (Revelation 16:10). But see how such darkness is contrasted with the great light of Christ's coming: "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

What will be seen at the throne of God? We read that "there shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5).

Christians today are illuminated by the light that the rest of the world will not see until the arrival of God's Kingdom. This is a miracle.

YOUR CALLING: A MIRACLE!

When people first begin to respond seriously to God's call, they sometimes wonder, "How do I know that God is calling me?" Repentant sinners, humbled by the knowledge of their sins and the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice, may even feel unworthy of God's calling. But a calling is not the result of our

Why are your eyes and ears open to God's Truth? Did you pray for God to open your eyes and ears? Did you seek God's intervention in your life? It was not your seeking that made the difference—it was the miracle of God's response to your sincere desire to know Him!

personal worthiness—it is a miracle from God! Even before God's Spirit is **within** those whom He calls, His Spirit works **with** them to help them see what others cannot, if only they will repent, believe—and then act!

When you were first called, did you excitedly try to share the Truth with your family members and friends? Many people do—and, when they do, most find that it is like they were "talking to a brick wall." Why does the Truth—which seems so plain and beautiful and obvious to you—make no sense to those around you? Why will they not understand?

Why are your eyes and ears open to God's Truth? Did you pray for God to open your eyes and ears? Did you seek God's intervention in your life? It was not your seeking that made the difference—it was the miracle of God's response to your sincere desire to know Him! No, it is not surprising that others do not understand the Truth. Yes, it is a miracle that you and I do!

Sometimes, however, when people are first called, they may get the idea, "God is showing me all this truth, and people around me just don't get it—this must mean I'm a super-spiritual person, unlike

the fools around me!" The biblical answer to this idea, however, is not so flattering. Notice one particularly powerful passage of Scripture in this regard: "For you see your calling, brethren, that **not many wise** according to the flesh, **not many mighty, not many noble**, are called. But God has chosen the **foolish things of the world** to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the **weak things of the world** to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the **base things of the world** and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the LORD'" (1 Corinthians 1:26–31).

God did not choose you or me because we are spiritually great. He chose us because He wants to put the "great" of the world "in their place" by calling those who are humble, to demonstrate that it is Christ who works in us, and that our part is to respond in faith and obedience to what He is doing. This is a miracle from God, that His ways—higher than ours as the heavens are above the earth—are being done in our lives!

WE HAVE A PART, TOO!

"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. *For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more*" (Luke 12:47–48).

God has done a miracle in our lives, allowing us to see and hear—but He now requires us to act on what He has revealed! For example, He has shown

His Church the modern identities of ancient Manasseh and Ephraim. But, now that we know how to identify the United States and the British-descended nations in prophecy, what should we do with that knowledge? Can we afford to hide it under a bushel basket?

Notice what God requires of those to whom He has given knowledge. In Ezekiel 33:1–11, we learn that when a watchman sees danger, it becomes his responsibility to warn others, lest he be held accountable for the suffering of those who go unwarned. Today, the Living Church of God is preaching *national repentance* to the House of Israel with all the resources that God puts at our disposal. As individual Church members with that same knowledge, we each do our part in supporting that effort.

Yes, we pray for faith, and it comes as a gift from God. But God requires that we put that faith into action. We must use it for works—living faith! Dead faith—faith that does nothing—is useless (James 2:18–20).

We pray for more of God's Holy Spirit, but God then holds us accountable to use the Spirit when He gives it. Will we quench it, or will we use it and seek even more? Remember the parable of the talents: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.... So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; *you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.* Enter into the joy of your lord.'... But [responding to the man who had received one talent and then buried it] his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that

I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and

God is watching what we do with what we have been given. Someone who has only a little faith, but acts fully upon it and produces great fruit, is pleasing God far more than the one who may have "great understanding" of God's Truth but who has done little or nothing with it.

gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:14–30).

Will a person who has only a little faith, but does a lot because of it, have a greater reward in God's Kingdom?

God is watching what we do with what we have been given. Someone who has only a little faith, but acts fully upon it and produces great fruit, is pleasing God far more than the one who may have "great understanding" of God's Truth but who has done little or nothing with it. Remember: "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

PROTECT YOUR HEARING; PROTECT YOUR SIGHT!

We have faith, and we pray for more faith, but do we put the faith we have into action? Do we exercise it? In the parable of the talents, Jesus said... "*you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.*" But the "flip side" is that if we fail to exercise the faith we have, God may

take it away. We need to stir up our faith—and to act on our faith!

Jesus Christ explained: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:5–8). Depending on how we respond, this may either be a sobering or an encouraging scripture.

Our faith gives us eyes to see and ears to hear. We have spiritual vision, because we believe what God reveals. People in the world assume that all they can know comes from the world around them. As Christians, however, we understand that "in Him we live and move and have our being..."

(Acts 17:28) and that the physical world is sustained by God. If we are to know spiritual things, God must *reveal* them to us (1 Corinthians 2:12). His revelation is the light that He shines on a world of darkness.

So, we must always remember to see with the spiritual vision that God gives. Each week throughout the year, we have on the Sabbath a reminder of that vision, and then at the Feast of Tabernacles we have an extended experience of it. But we do not have it because of our own effort to see and hear. It has come to us as a miracle from God—a miracle on which He expects us to act!

If you received a miraculous divine healing, would you take it for granted? Or would you treasure it deeply, thanking God profusely? Your calling—your ability to see and hear God's Truth—is just as much a miracle. "But *blessed* are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:16). Be sure to treat your calling as the miraculous blessing that it is! ■



More than 8,000 brethren around the world gathered to observe the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day at 46 Living Church of God Feast sites around the globe. Below are reports from many of those sites.

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Anchorage, Alaska was the location where 248 brethren chose to keep the Feast this year, and they were not disappointed. God's creation is made evident in Alaska in its majestic mountains, magnificent glaciers and abundant wildlife.

More important, however, was the spiritual Feast that everyone enjoyed. Mr. Martin Fannin gave two sermons titled "The Family of God" and "Turning Many to Righteousness."



Mr. Karl Beyersdorfer spoke on "The Restoration" and "Slavery" and Mr. Jim Meredith described "Four Traits of a Godly Priest" and "The Happiest Place Is Earth." Other excellent messages were given focusing on preparing for the coming Kingdom and our part in it. The special

music was truly "special," and the love and fellowship was as described in Psalm 133. There was a singles mixer and an all-terrain-vehicle ride and hike in the Chugach National Forest. The seniors had a luncheon where they were presented with bookmarks specially made for them by the children at the Feast. The teens had a get-acquainted mixer on the first day of the Feast, a challenging bike ride, and a pizza and pool party. The deacons and elders enjoyed a delicious brunch on the Sabbath during the Feast. The semi-formal family dinner and dance was well attended on Saturday night, where young and old alike enjoyed dancing to a variety of music.

Most of the brethren went on a scenic train ride along the beautiful Turnagin Arm to the glacial mountains near Spenser Glacier. Another large group activity was a wildlife/glacier cruise out of Seward on Resurrection



Bay. Brethren saw bald eagles, sea lions, sea otters and dolphins and feasted on an all-you-can-eat prime rib and salmon buffet. Family Day at Kincaid Park was another highlight of the Feast. The Alaskan brethren outdid themselves by planning a variety of activities and barbecuing wild Alaskan salmon (caught by some of our members) and serving it with delicious side dishes and dessert.

The attitude of service among the brethren was outstanding and the 2010 Feast in Alaska will long be remembered as an "Epic Success"!

BRANSON, MISSOURI

From all around the world, 700 enthusiastic individuals came together to enjoy the beauty of the Ozarks, observing the Feast of Tabernacles in Branson, Missouri, America's capital for family-friendly entertainment!

God's people met once again in the stunningly beautiful Presleys Theater and were blessed during the first half of the Feast with messages from Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith and Council of Elders member Mr. Rand Millich. Dr. Meredith left everyone "fired up" and excited with vigorous and compelling messages about how those who will serve with power in the Millennium need to learn to serve with passion now! Mr. Millich spoke powerfully about the inestimable joys awaiting those in God's Family and about how, in many ways, the Church experiences a foretaste of the Millennium today. For the latter half of the Festival, Messrs. Norman Aitchison, Wyatt Ciesielka and Wallace Smith rounded out the spiritual Feast, with messages about how the Millennium fits into God's overall plan and about how true blessings to the world will come with changes in laws and practices in finance, agriculture, human relations—even changes to geography



and nature itself. The sermons were complemented by remarkable sermonettes and two well-attended Bible Studies, and it was apparent to one and all that our Father in heaven had wonderfully blessed the messages!

The Church's luncheons for singles, seniors, and deacons and elders were well received. Our family activity, focused on serving the teens, was a lot of fun—with everyone enjoying pizza, ice cream, group video games, and a chance to reconnect with old friends as well as meet new ones. And our popular "Putt-Putt" miniature golf tournament was won by a family observing the Feast for the very first time!



The Family Day extravaganza was appreciated by all, young and old alike. With music ranging from "Big Band" standards to the "Pink Panther" theme, the dance floor was constantly busy, while others enjoyed special children's activities, having a family portrait taken, or viewing arts and crafts produced by church members. The buffet dinner was fantastic, with many members remarking that it was the best meal they had ever enjoyed at a Festival Family Day. All of this, plus the "fellowship-palooza" afforded by the Hilton's roomy exhibit hall made our Family Day unforgettable!

That God's name had been placed in Branson this year was obvious to everyone there, and we thank Him for giving all of us an absolutely stirring and inspiring Feast of Tabernacles.

COBLESKILL, NEW YORK

Dramatic fall colors welcomed 230 members to the Feast of Tabernacles in Cobleskill, New York. Cobleskill is set in a valley joining the Adirondacks and the Catskill Mountains. The farms and forests painted on the hillsides surrounding Cobleskill provided a millennial backdrop to the 2010 Feast of Tabernacles. The pleasant setting was complemented by the friendly smiles of the staff at the Cobleskill Best Western, who bent over backwards to accommodate our members. Our young people enjoyed the indoor pool during the "Pool and Pizza Party," and throughout the week. The bowling alley adjacent to the hotel complex provided an exuberant evening of entertainment for young and old. And Family Day, with games to mix and mingle with new and old friends, was a real success.



The highlight of our family fellowship at Cobleskill, however, was the Progressive Fellowship Luncheon. Members moved from one location in the hotel to another, meeting different people and enjoying food and fellowship

together. The physical food was complemented by a spiritual Feast, provided by sermons and Bible studies from Messrs. Bob League, Gary Ehman, Jonathan McNair and John Hunter. Sermonettes by a variety of men reinforced the meaning of the Feast, and the special music performances were uplifting to the whole congregation. After eight days of feasting in the beautiful Cobleskill valley, we truly had a foretaste of the peace and fellowship that all the world will taste in the Kingdom of God on earth.

HELEN, GEORGIA

"Difficult to get to, but worth it!" was the prevailing sentiment of 511 joyful Feastgoers at this mountain country site near the alpine Bavarian village of Helen, Georgia. The natural beauty of the Blue Ridge mountain forest provided generous millennial character to this first time Festival location.



Outstanding spiritual feasts were delivered by Dr. Meredith via DVD and our special guest speakers, Messrs. Lambert Greer and Rand Millich. Mr. Greer's stirring sermons during the first half of the Feast,

"Christ, King of Kings" described how Christ will establish His Kingdom, and "Evidence of the Final Empire" presented prophetic and historical proof of a final ensuing fifth Kingdom! Mr. Greer also addressed 58 deacons, elders and wives and fielded questions on doctrinal and administrative issues. Mr. and Mrs. Millich arrived for the second half, where Mr. Millich spoke at the Senior's Banquet and gave two exceptional sermons: "Tasting the Power of Tomorrow's World," and on the Last Great Day, "A Day of Hope and Life."

Additional messages also focused on the coming new era ruled by Jesus Christ and His saints: "The Kingdom of God or Bust!" and "To Infinity and Beyond!" by Mr. James Sweat, "God's Kingdom and Family—Forever!" by Mr. Ronald Poole, and "Christian Hope" by Mr. Dennis Chornomaz.

The secluded nature of this site together with plentiful outdoor space made it especially favorable to families with children and teens. Teens and other family members enjoyed a cookout at Smith Lake Beach, followed by a race through the complex web of turns at the North Georgia Corn Maze! Singles had the opportunity to get better acquainted at a buffet luncheon and a fun get-together that included photo theatre and karaoke! Kids' Corner was very popular and attended faithfully by the "little ones" on three occasions where the children made Feast-themed arts and crafts. Family Day was the most remarkable festival highlight in Helen! Activities tailored for families included a Table Tennis Tournament, Bingo, Capture the Flag, and Scavenger Hunt, followed by a side-splitting Fun Show and an unforgettable Family Dinner Dance!

An abundance of God's unifying spirit of cooperation and selfless service was, on the whole, prominent at this Feast. Our appreciation and gratitude goes out to our Father and elder brother Jesus Christ for providing us with the finest physical and spiritual banquet that made this Feast, unquestionably, one to remember!

PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA

Feastgoers were not surprised that the beautiful white sand beaches and emerald waters were unmarred by the Gulf oil spill; they had prayed for God to intervene, and He did! Sunny skies competed with the smiles of brethren who gathered at the Marina Civic Center, overlooking the Bay in Panama City, to rejoice before the Eternal. This scenic setting provided the backdrop for an average attendance of 1,156 brethren—from across the United States and Canada, Australia and even Zambia—who came to fellowship and partake of the spiritual food that God had prepared.



During his sermon, "The Kingdom Is Coming: Are You Ready?," Site coordinator Mr. Jack Lowe began to develop what turned into the theme of the Feast, "Why are we here?" Guest speaker Dr. Douglas Winnail spoke on "The Feast of Tabernacles and Government" and "Preparing to Rule." Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith energized the brethren with sermon topics of "Right Government" and "Our Destiny." Other sermon topics included, "Five Keys to Building Happy Families," "Children of God," "Dating, Marriage and Family" and "Christ's Message to the Rest of the World."

Brethren enjoyed a variety of scheduled activities, especially four cruises to watch dolphins frolic in the Gulf, where the dolphins put on quite a show, while seagulls ate Cheetos from the brethren's hands. The Family Day was outstanding, with 458 happy brethren bowling, skating and playing billiards. The all-you-can-eat pizza was surpassed only by the fellowship and laughter. The *piece de resistance* was the Family Dinner/Dance, where brethren danced the evening away after a scrumptious dinner.

Dr. and Mrs. Meredith were special guests at the Deacons and Elders Luncheon, where Dr. Meredith stood and spoke for 20 minutes, inspiring us to go all-out for God's Work and His people, never giving up! He thanked everyone for their hard work, and all left inspired to work even harder. God's Spirit was evident throughout the Feast in the unity, peace and spirit of service among the brethren.

PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

Nestled in the mountains of central Arizona, Prescott was the location where more than 350 of God's people kept

the Feast of Tabernacles. The beauty of Prescott and the surrounding area provided the millennial setting for the Feast. It was God who provided the inspiration as we glimpsed His plan of salvation for all mankind. The tone for the Feast was set by Mr. Sheldon Monson, who gave the first day's sermon, titled, "Feast Fellowship." The brethren took the sermon to heart as they made the effort to grow together in Christian fellowship throughout the Feast. The whole week was filled with inspiring sermons and sermonettes reflecting the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.



We were privileged to have Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames at Prescott for the last half of the Feast. Mr. Ames gave two sermons. His first sermon was entitled "Training to Teach the World." The second message entitled, "Salvation for the World," was given on the Last Great Day. Mr. Ames also addressed those attending the Deacons and Elders Luncheon.

Organized activities at Prescott included a Singles Reception, a Seniors Luncheon, Family Day Bowling and a teen outing to a zoological refuge followed by an evening of pizza and games. The highlight of the Feast was the Family Dinner Dance. We also had an impromptu movie night where we showed the videos *The Privileged Planet* and *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*.

The Feast of Tabernacles in Prescott, Arizona was a tremendous success in many ways. We are thankful to God for making the Feast in Prescott, as so many have commented, "the best Feast ever!"

NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS

Nearly 350 Feastgoers from as far away as England came together to the Texas hill-country town of New Braunfels to celebrate this year's festival. Even the normal Texas heat changed to cooler, "fall-like" temperatures to make outdoor activities such as a San Antonio River Walk dinner cruise for the singles more enjoyable.

Special guests Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames visited the first half, and Mr. Ames gave two sermons focusing on the Kingdom of God. Mr. and Mrs. Lambert Greer came for the second half, delivering two sermons and messages at the Deacons and Elders Luncheon and Seniors Luncheon. Site coordinator Mr. Phil Sena, assistant coordinator Mr. Ed Breaux and Corpus Christi assistant pastor Mr. Bob Parker gave the other sermons.

For the second year, members from the United States and Canada who were unable to attend the Feast viewed a



live video stream of each day's service, along with three Bible Studies. More than 190 unique log-ins viewed these messages throughout the entire festival, enabling hundreds to share in the New Braunfels experience.

Building on the previous year's successful interactive Bible studies, Mr. Sena conducted four more during this Feast. This year's topics included the challenges of being a Christian in the 21st Century, in addition to separate studies for teens, married couples and parents. Before each study, brethren were asked to find scriptures related to each topic. Many expressed that more time could have easily been devoted to these important study topics.

During the Feast, all ages and groups enjoyed separate activities tailored specifically for them. In addition, the majority of attendees attended a free Family Night activity that emphasized mixing by playing bunco and Pictionary. By the feedback received, it is obvious that once again God blessed our Texas celebration.

NEWPORT, OREGON

What makes the Feast in Newport, Oregon so spectacular? Is it the explosion of color as the sun meets the ocean at sundown and sunrise? Is it the power of the waves as they crash skyward against the boulders off shore? Is it the charm of a working fishing village on an incredibly picturesque bayfront? Is it the tranquility of the Pacific vista off each balcony? Is it the hope of seeing a whale breach?



Maybe it's the wonderful assortment of unique restaurants, or the seaside shopping.

Mostly, it is the camaraderie at a resort where most of the activities occur. After a breakfast at Georgie's restaurant, just down the hall, where every seat is taken by a Feastgoer, we congregate outside the salon for fellowship before services. No one is left out because of singleness, handicap or lack of transportation because so much takes place in the lovely surroundings of the Hallmark Resort. Whether it is the teens' pool party, the family dinner dance, the Fun Show, various luncheons or evening fellowship gatherings, one feels the togetherness. Do your children want to fly three dimensional kites on the beach—it's right there. Do the singles want to hang out at a seaside bonfire—it's right there. Want to organize a sand volleyball game? You guessed it—it's there. Nearby you can visit four different lighthouses, golf 18 beautiful holes, horseback ride on the beach, go dune bugging, surf, take a marine cruise, deep-sea fish—and the list goes on and on.

The spiritual food was indeed a feast—focusing us on the vision of God's Kingdom and our future as kings and priests. Messages reiterated our present mandate to warn our nation and the world of the tribulations ahead and our hope beyond.

Mr. Ben Whitfield was with us for the first half of the Feast; Mr. Glen Gilchrist and Mr. Harold Way each spoke twice, with messages added by dedicated servant elders.

One Newport highlight was the fellowship gatherings on the "D Deck" where a fireplace flickers and brethren play games or just chat in the evenings before bed. For Family Day, families meandered around the world-class Oregon Aquarium exhibits, stopping to visit with friends and meeting new ones. We were treated to animated poetry recitations, songs, instrumentals and a magic show for the Fun Show. A special treat was viewing the arts and crafts highlighting the amazing talents of fellow brethren. God blessed us again with sunshine and beautiful cloudscapes. Could we ever thank God enough?

WISCONSIN DELLS, WISCONSIN

Approximately 320 brethren met in the "Dome"—part of the Chula Vista Resort—for the 2010 Feast of Tabernacles. We had so much room available in the 90,000 square foot facility, we decided to "stretch our legs" by setting the chairs up "classroom" style.

It was a truly beautiful setting to watch the leaves change to the exquisite fall colors provided by the Creator. The weather throughout the Feast was truly blessed with unseasonably high (almost perfect) temperatures during the day and cooler temperatures at night.



As nice as the weather and the physical surroundings were, they were no match for the spiritual atmosphere! There was a tremendous spirit of love and zeal shown by the brethren for one another. We were practicing the "kingdom way" and it made our foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God very meaningful and enjoyable. The messages were encouraging and inspiring. Mr. and Mrs. Rod McNair and Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Fall spent the entire Feast in the Wisconsin Dells, providing a treat for all of the brethren present. The messages throughout the Feast wove so nicely together and provided a clear picture of what the coming Millennium will be like.

The singles and teens enjoyed an early opportunity for fellowship and food between services on the first holy day of the Feast. Later in the Feast, the singles and teens enjoyed an opportunity to ride a scenic trail by horseback. Deacons and elders and their wives enjoyed a luncheon on Friday, consisting of a delicious Italian buffet, with special guest speaker Mr. McNair. Friday night, Mr. McNair hosted an interactive Parent's Bible Study with lots of participation from the almost 200 brethren present. The seniors enjoyed a luncheon on Sunday afternoon with many of the teens serving the honored guests. Dr. Fall provided an inspiring

and humorous message to the nearly 100 seniors present. One of the many highlights of the Feast was the Family Dinner Dance on Tuesday night. This was a truly special evening enjoyed by all! To close out the Feast, we held our Family Day Fair at a nearby park where we enjoyed an old-fashioned barbecue along with “bouncy houses” and games for the kids.

This was a very special Feast with our Father and Elder Brother's presence evident in so many ways. What is the best way to describe the Feast in the Dells in 2010? One word: *fantastic!*

ORFORD, QUEBEC

Three days was all it took for God to turn the green leaves to a carpet of golds, reds and yellows to make ready for the Feast of Tabernacles in Orford, Quebec. The beauty of the fall colours were at their peak and provided a lovely display for the brethren to enjoy a millennial setting for a peaceful and spiritually rich Feast.



The sermons addressed topics such as seeking first the kingdom, holiness, zeal as a result of the Feast, the importance of family, change and transformation and a vision of the future. The 220 brethren truly enjoyed the richness of the spiritual food and the fellowship before and after services.

The Family Day, on Sunday, consisted of an excursion up Mount Orford in Gondolas. Normally, at this time of year, on a beautiful day many thousands of people would be present at the mountain and parking would be difficult. But God provided for His little flock. In the morning, clouds were over the mountain providing the image of what it might have looked like when the cloud of God was on top of mount Sinai. Then, as the activity was about to begin, the cloud lifted—and by the time we were at the top, God provided a clearing so that we could have a good view of the surrounding area. Then when those who descended the mountain on foot had nearly all arrived, God dropped back the clouds to hide the summit once more. This allowed the brethren to have easy parking near the mountain and to have all the pleasure of the beauty of God without the crowds buzzing around.

The Dinner/Dance, as well as the Senior Supper and the singles activity, were well received. The physical food was once again a delight. God blessed us tremendously. It is a privilege to see the family of God in action and to see the growth and warmth of the sons and daughters of God.



PENTICTON, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Beautiful fall weather greeted just over 200 brethren in Penticton, British Columbia as they rejoiced and reminisced at God's Feast of Tabernacles. Many remembered Penticton from years past as the first site in Canada and the big tent with about 6,000 attendees. Some remembered it as their first Feast site many years prior, while some attended the Feast in Penticton this year for their first Feast. For one lady, it was her very first Church of God service. She was baptized during the Feast along with two others.

Many commented on the warm fellowship, unity and inspiring messages as being the highlights of the Feast for them.

Evangelist Gerald Weston and Pastor Davy Crockett were the main speakers, expounding God's word with subjects ranging from the “Lessons From Haggai” to “All Things New.”

Other sermon topics were; “The Increase of His Government,” “Can You Hear the Music?,” “Millennial Misconceptions,” “A Place to Stay Forever,” “Feast or Famine?,” “Precious Seed” and “The Last Great Day of God's Great Plan”.

Singles enjoyed a Dinner Cruise aboard the Casabella Princess Paddlewheeler on Okanagan Lake while taking in some breathtaking scenery.

Family Day started with a ride aboard the Kettle Valley Railway, pulled by a steam locomotive from the early 1900's. A barbecue was provided, along with games for all ages. The highlight was a good old Canadian Hockey shootout between a retired Canadian hockey player and an American challenger, Mrs. Barbara Crockett. She redeemed the American Olympic team as her hidden skills vaulted her to the title in triple overtime, much to the delight of our American Brethren. Fun was had by all.

Fine food, fellowship and entertainment made the Dinner Dance enjoyable for all that attended. Entertainment ranged from vocal songs to an accordion piece to a graceful ballet by one of the young ladies.

Other activities included an inspiring Friday night Bible Study from Mr. Davy Crockett, two family boat cruises and a tour to three of the many wineries in the Okanagan Valley.

A Seniors Luncheon was graciously hosted by Mr. Eldon Davis and catered by the Ramada Inn. About 50 enjoyed one another's company and entertainment from the Church's talented performers.

The beauty of Penticton and the valley was recognized by all, but was overshadowed by the love, unity and friendliness of the brethren. It was truly a Feast to be remembered.



ROCKY HARBOUR, NEWFOUNDLAND

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24–25, KJV).

These incredible words became a sort of “battle cry” for those who attended God’s Feast of Tabernacles in Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland. Feastgoers were initially welcomed to the island by Hurricane Igor, which resulted in rough seas, turbulent air and washed-out roads. Yet, more than 130 brethren overcame these preliminary conditions to build their “spiritual house” on the “rock”—as Newfoundland is affectionately named. Progressively, the weather calmed—the days were cool and sunny and the sea breezes crisp and clean.

Approximately 7 percent were keeping their very first Feast and one member was celebrating his 44th. Many times over it was said: “What a wonderful Feast,” “Greatest Feast ever” and “I can’t wait to come back!” Why? The raw beauty of the mountains, the tranquility of the sea and the secluded locale directly focused us on the spiritual and allowed rejoicing to be its fruit—we truly, in every sense of the meaning, “came out of the world” for eight days. In Rocky Harbour, there are no box stores, no busy hustle-and-bustle streets, no traffic (not even a stop light) and no distractions—aiming us at the very intent of God’s Feast—the uplifting spiritual power of His Word, fellowship and the surrounding magnificence of His creation!

Uplifting messages were given by Messrs. Frank Best, Gary Ehman, Michael Elertson, Winston Gosse and John Strain. One premiere activity included a family boat tour across Bonne Bay with its dramatic cliffs and deep, clear ocean waters. And, as predicted, there were numerous moose sightings. One memorable event was the “Newfie Scoff” put on by our Newfoundland brethren with a small Church band serenading us with tunes of local flavor. The Fisherman’s Landing Inn treated us like royalty and stated on a number of occasions, regarding the brethren, “You people are ‘unreal.’” Rocky Harbour was two years in the making—it was abundantly evident that God placed His name there, and Jesus Christ (our true Rock), through the power of the Holy Spirit, was with us. As they say in real estate, “location, location, location”—this site genuinely embodied it all!



VICTOR HARBOUR, AUSTRALIA

Almost 250 Australians and seven brethren from the United States came to Victor Harbor to thank God for the opportunity to live and be bonded together in the truth.

We learned more about the mind of God and insights into God’s government in Tomorrow’s World from Evangelist Bruce Tyler, Australasian Regional Director, as well as Messrs. Ben Whitfield (visiting speaker from the U.S.), Rob Tyler (Festival Coordinator), Michael Gill and Mal Jennings.

There was a unifying music theme throughout the eight days. Music Director Mal Jennings blended the 35-voice choir to give us inspirational music. Other special music included a wide variety of instruments such as the trumpet, piano, clarinet, saxophone, recorder, cellos and violins. The Children’s Choir was outstanding and brought tears to the eyes of many.

The Talent Night gave many the opportunity to entertain their brethren, and all were delighted to see Evangelist Bruce Tyler play his accordion for the joyful sing-along, accompanied by the Adelaide Stringed Ensemble, to wrap up the evening.

The Formal Dinner/Dance was a great success. The floor was crowded with young and old as the live band played familiar ballroom music with Mr. Jennings adding melodious tunes with his trumpet and voice. The black and white theme was a great success and thanks go to Brian McKenzie and Russell Barnett and their wives.

Other successful highlights of the Feast were the bus tour to visit the regional Church office; the Seniors’ old-world horse-drawn tram ride to Granite across the causeway to see the fairy penguins, the Singles boat trip down the mighty Murray River which has started flowing again after the recent drought-breaking rains, an exciting Family Day at Greenhill’s Adventure Park, and a special geographical presentation of the Holy Land by Living University students Tony Leman and Lisa Sonders. The joyous spiritual atmosphere of fellowship was enhanced by Banquet Lunches served by the McCracken Country Club on the first and eighth days. Good and favourable comments were made about the exemplary conduct of the Living University students as well as the efficiently run Business Desk organized by Mr. Mark Mager.

Truly, the millennial environment of Victor Harbor is an extraordinary location for the Feast, where whales spout and cavort, where you can cuddle a koala and pat a kangaroo or two and feed the beautiful, colourful and varied parrots. Feastgoers experienced a magnificent vision of Tomorrow’s World.



CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS

One hundred and twenty-two beaming brethren from Canada, the United States and Trinidad and Tobago assembled in Christ Church, Barbados to rejoice before our God. God's blessings began days before the Feast actually started, as He sent the rain in preparation for some fine weather throughout the Feast.

The quiet and beautiful surroundings provided a good atmosphere for the reception of great spiritual food.



Our brethren were generous in expressing appreciation for the warmth, love and fellowship with each other. Dr. Douglas Winnail and his wife joined us on the

Monday morning, along with the site coordinator Mr. Fitzroy Greeman and family who came in on Sunday. Also present was Mr. Gary Stein and his family and Mr. George Webb.

We heard instructions on how to prepare for this real Kingdom, the characteristics God requires in us, the benefits of His righteous Kingdom, and encouragement to keep on heeding our calling. We enjoyed a Catamaran cruise, we danced, we played outdoor games, we feasted, we relaxed, we truly rejoiced before our God. What a great delight!

HYÈRES, FRANCE

More than 240 brethren gathered in the beautiful town of Hyères from countries around the globe, including the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Holland, Luxemburg, Belgium, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, South Africa—and, of course, France. Feastgoers heard inspiring messages from a variety of speakers, including Regional Director Mr. Rod King, Mr. Rees Ellis, Mr. Gene Hilgenberg, Mr. Ray Clore, Mr. Vincent Lardé and Mr. Ruben Lujan. To gain a flavour of the Feast here, consider these comments from Feastgoers: “I have many expectations when it comes to the Feast each year. The messages I prayed would be eye opening and inspiring, the location would remind us daily of God's awesome creating power and lastly that the site and overall festivities allow each person to fellowship regardless of language or background. Hyères was everything I had prayed for and so much more. I could not have been more thankful to be a part of such a dynamic Feast site with brethren representing numerous countries and yet all being able to come together as one made this Feast my best ever.”



Another report: “For me the Feast in Hyères this year was so enjoyable because of the large international congregation. It was an eye opener to see the various different approaches that we have with regards to communication, serving and the various habits, styles and senses of humour in this unique social environment. The location with all the potential activities and closeness of everyone being on one site definitely benefits the building of new, lasting friendships.”

And finally: “The Feast this year was an amazing experience, mostly because we were all on one site which enabled us as a family to be together much more and also to be with the brethren in one place meant we met and made so many new friends. The language differences were not an obstacle; we were all of one mind regardless of that. Having the catering done for us gave us more time to socialize with people and reflect on the messages we had heard. It was a ‘Fête des Tabernacles sans frontières’ in every way.”

QUETZALTENANGO, GUATEMALA

We celebrated the Feast in the city of Quetzaltenango, situated in the mountains in a cool weather. We had the presence of Mr. Mario Hernandez and Gabriel Ortega as well as brethren from Canada, United States, El Salvador and Costa Rica.

We had encouraging sermons to keep our eyes on the goal and to be strong in the narrow path that leads to eternal life abiding in the Vine and building upon the Rock.

The highlight of the Feast was the baptism of three people, one from Mexico, one from Costa Rica and one from Guatemala.

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

The Feast of Tabernacles meetings in Georgetown, Guyana this year were once again held in the Tower Hotel. Thirty-one Guyanese brethren came together with five international visitors to celebrate the coming Kingdom of God.

One highlight of the Feast was a Family Day at the nearby Splashman's water park. Feastgoers met for services in an open-air veranda overlooking the beautiful grounds and waterfront—a millennial setting indeed. Following services and a delicious lunch, younger members played in the water while the older brethren fellowshiped, watched the water-play and laughed. Many had the opportunity to take a short boat ride to a nearby farm containing groves of many types of fruit trees. The setting was a stark and refreshing contrast to the hustle and bustle of Georgetown.

Other activities included a visit to the national zoo and a visit to the national history museum.

Overall, the Feast was marked by encouraging spiritual food, delicious physical food and deep and heart-felt

fellowship. Christ noted that “...all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35)—a reality that was palpable among the Feastgoers in Georgetown. All were very appreciative of the opportunity to “come out of the world” for eight days and also for the opportunity to focus on the reality of God’s soon-coming Kingdom.

BATU, INDONESIA

The 2010 Feast of Tabernacles was held at Villa Tuti Resort in Batu, East Java. Batu is a resort city located in the highlands outside of Malang and is nearly encompassed by mountains. The temperatures are much lower than in the surrounding areas and the air is clean and sometimes quite crisp with temperatures ranging from about 17°C to 23°C overnight to 27°C to 30°C during the day. The area around Batu provides excellent fresh food and great opportunities for sightseeing and entertainment activities.

This year 20 brethren, including a couple from Australia, came together to celebrate the Feast and Last Great Day and to learn more about the wonderful future that their Creator has planned for them. The sermons and sermonettes covered topics such as “Have You Tasted The Feast?,” “Hope For Evil Men,” “Healing Is Coming,” “Christian Marriage,” “Jerusalem” and “Could You Rule a City?” Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the “Behind the Work” DVD with great excitement being displayed when local ministers were seen.

Activities during the Feast included visits to a nature museum, a games park for the children and young at heart, the spectacular waterfall at Coban Rondo and thermal hot springs and of course excellent fellowship with good food. There was also a talent show with traditional dancing and drama, a Bible quiz night and a games afternoon. Mr. Arius Nusantara conducted a baptism at the resort swimming pool and, after the laying on of hands, the brethren were enthusiastic in welcoming the new member into the family of God.

Truly it was the best Feast ever, and all the brethren are already anticipating next year’s Feast when once again God’s people will come together and celebrate the soon-coming Kingdom of God. We all look forward to the fulfillment of this Feast when we will be forever with each other and our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

MORTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

In the north coast city of Montego Bay, our island’s “Tourism Capital”—dubbed the “Friendly City”—brethren from Barbados, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Wales joined the Jamaican brethren to celebrate the Feast at the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort. The messages

received were positive, powerful, uplifting and encouraging, outlining the vision of Tomorrow’s World, painting a picture of what life will be like then and what we should be doing in order to be there. Love, warmth, fellowshiping and a sense of togetherness permeated the atmosphere at worship



services, the activities and at meal times. In spite of rain on Day 6—the Family Cook-out and Fun Day—more than 140 of the brethren braved the weather to enjoy mouth-watering local foods, games, rafting and fellowship (which was intensified because of

the rain) at the picturesque Martha Brae. Other activities at the Feast included a Teens’ and Singles’ get-together, Seniors’ Luncheon, Spokesman Club meeting, and a “Nite of Biblical Presentations.” Day 4 was designated a “tour day” and the worship service started earlier to allow the brethren more time to visit the local attractions.

Our registration record showed 207 persons—the highest attendance—on the weekly Sabbath. The lowest attendance was 177 on “Opening Night.” The average attendance was 191. Most of the comments from the brethren centered on the powerful messages, the friendliness of the Jamaican brethren, the excitement of what life will be like in Tomorrow’s World and the spirit of oneness that prevailed. All seemed to be spiritually renewed and prepared to face the challenges which lie ahead.

ISIBANIA, KENYA

Seventy-nine brethren kept the Feast this year in Isibania, Kenya, at the Border Point Hotel, in a quiet residential suburb toward the Kenya/Tanzania border. The well-maintained and picturesque beautiful garden scenery, sandwiched between a forest of bright flowers,



contributed to the refreshing and Millennial atmosphere as brethren savoured every morsel of the physical and spiritual blessings provided.

Brethren commented on the powerful meat and the diverse nature of the sermons and sermonettes, touching on such topics as prophecy, Christian life and the ultimate objective of being ready to fulfill our destiny in the Kingdom of God. Brethren were reminded to walk with Christ while training to be kings.



Sermons and sermonettes were given by the local elder, Mr. Simon Muthama, alternating with guest speaker Mr. Rick Stafford, with simultaneous translation provided for

Kiswahili-speaking brethren. Special music was provided at services by individuals and by a group choir. During the eight days of spiritual feasting, eleven baptisms were performed.

While the central focus was on the spiritual aspects of the Feast, physical highlights also included the nourishing meals (including the Seniors Luncheon at the Bush Bar) and the family-oriented activities. Families and little children enjoyed games as well as the coloring books and other gifts that were given out.

PENANG, MALAYSIA

The Feast of Tabernacles 2010 was held at the Flamingo by the Beach Hotel in Penang. Eighty-six members, comprising 79 locals and seven visitors from abroad, assembled to observe the last two annual festivals of God. We were privileged to have Mr. Dexter Wakefield from the United States as our visiting minister and his wife Marcia. During the opening night service, Mr. Rajan Moses, elder and site coordinator, warmly welcomed all the attendees, noting the enthusiasm written all over their faces. Occasional and isolated downpours were evident throughout the Feast but the activities were not affected. We were blessed with clear and fine weather when it was really needed.

Many commented on the spiritual meat provided to the brethren via the various live sermons, DVD sermons and sermonettes that were presented during the eight-day festival. The attendance at each service spoke volumes of the excitement prevalent among the brethren.



The power-packed performances of the festival and children's choirs proved to be a wholesome treat for the congregation.

Three combined luncheons and a barbecue night were organized this year, providing a wonderful opportunity to share meals together while fellowshiping. At other times, members were seen at numerous eating outlets around the hotel and in town, rejoicing according to the commandment in the company of like-minded people.

One baptism took place in the hotel pool and after the laying on of hands, brethren cheerfully welcomed Victor James into the family of God. The membership of the Church here is slowly but surely growing.

Numerous activities were held to cater to the various age groups of Feastgoers. While little children were kept amused and entertained in games, the youth found satisfaction at the bowling alley. The whole church also came together for some wholesome beach games.

The traditional Talent show saw the children and youth showcasing their many gifts and skills to enthrall the audience. There were a couple of solos and duets interspersed among

the Bible story sketches that were presented. Admittedly, there is currently no lack of talent in the Church!

The hallmark of the festival was plain for all to see. It was the intense and heartfelt fellowship of the brethren. There was not a day when groups of Church members were not seen together in fellowship. Many seemed to sense the seriousness of the times we live in and all are looking forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God and Christ's return.

MARTINIQUE

Seventy smiling brethren enjoyed the Feast of Tabernacles 2010 on the beautiful Caribbean island of Martinique, including 37 local brethren and 33 visitors from Australia, France, Ireland, Switzerland, the United States and the nearby islands of St. Lucia and Trinidad. The weather was warm with sunshine and intermittent showers. Mr. Dibar Apartian and other ministers spoke of the need for gentleness, kindness, peace, steadfastness, unity, appreciating and enjoying God's gifts, and also about the place of Jerusalem in God's plan, the realities of the spirit world, the human potential that will be realized in God's Kingdom, and our role in tomorrow's world as servant leaders.



The warmth and hospitality of the Martinique brethren was outstanding. They had prepared for months to welcome the English-speaking brethren by learning some basic English, as well as preparing a variety show featuring many native costumes, dancing and music. The visitors were able to take in some of the island's spectacular beauty on bus trips to leading attractions such as Mount Pelee volcano and the Balata botanical garden, as well as a boat trip around the perimeter of part of the island to Diamond Rock.

Fellowship among the Feastgoers was enhanced by buffet meals between services on the two holy days, and other meals that were shared throughout the Feast in a pavilion on the grounds of the les Cayalines residence, where most of the brethren were housed during the Feast. Services were alternately in French and English, with simultaneous translation into the other language.

Highlights of the Feast were the ordination of Mr. Joseph Edward of the Martinique congregation as a deacon, and the baptisms of Mr. Jean-Luc Hodebar of Martinique, and Mr. William Raphael of St. Lucia.

HIDALGO, MEXICO

Thanks to the Eternal, we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles where we had the opportunity to unite the ties of love and friendship with the brethren and to be able to

remember that we are pilgrims in this earth and to know that in the future we will be together in the World Tomorrow.

Services and activities during the Feast were cordial and taught us for our daily life, while we were among God's creation, helping us to be close to our Father and to contemplate the wonders He has done.

We praise God's name and wait for the opportunity to be again in this place next year.

NELSON, NEW ZEALAND

The 90 Feastgoers who met at Nelson for God's Feast were certainly aware of God's affirmation that He had placed



His name there. New Zealand had been afflicted by what forecasters called the worst spring storm on record with unseasonal snowfall, heavy loss of newborn lambs and road closures. This bad weather continued through the duration of the Feast—but not at Nelson, where God blessed us with fine sunny weather, which allowed all of our planned activities to proceed unhindered. Day after day, bad weather forecasts failed to eventuate as Nelson was protected as an oasis of good weather.

This was the first time the Feast of Tabernacles had been observed in Nelson; a beautiful, small city at the top end of the South Island. We were treated to blue skies and golden beaches against a backdrop of snow-capped mountains.

Services were held at a fine conference centre close to a range of accommodation facilities which allowed many Feastgoers to walk to services and also to fellowship easily throughout the Feast. On the first and last Holy Days all members were able to dine for lunch with a catered meal at our meeting hall.

Our visiting minister was Mr. Ben Whitfield of Wyoming who was with us for the first few days. He spoke to us of lessons God wants us to learn from His Holy Days, characteristics of God's nature we need to seek after and prophecy as news-in-advance which we will observe unfold in the years ahead. Members enjoyed fellowshiping with Mr. and Mrs. Whitfield at several activities which were organised to take advantage of their tabernacling with us.

Feastgoers were able to explore what for many was an area they had not visited before. One afternoon most of us toured the Ngarua Cave. This is in Takaka Hill which is a marble mountain with many caves, sinkholes and underground streams running through it. A Church Family Beach Day was held at Rabbit Island. We picnicked together and played softball and ultimate Frisbee. Many participated in orienteering through the pine woods. Teens and 20s enjoyed an evening of indoor soccer, netball and mini-golf. All ages

gathered one evening for ten-pin bowling. Young attendees organised skating and go-carting outings.

A wonderful spirit of harmony prevailed throughout the Feast. We appreciate God's kindness in providing us with a beautiful environment in which to worship Him. We are grateful for His solicitous care which enabled us to enjoy what He had provided.

WEWAK, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This year all of the members and visitors were accommodated at the Feast site in Wewak on the property of the local minister, Mr. Peter Devis. The brethren were delighted that the overseas visitors were also the first to do this, and all relished the experience, with the bonds of fellowship and friendship strengthened greatly.

The weather was hot and humid, but it did not detract from the enjoyment that everyone shared, with timely messages given by elders Peter Devis, Graeme Hemphill and Sydney deacon Ed Lever. Visiting Living University student Mat Taylor, from South Australia, gave a very informative lecture on the benefits of the university.



The youth took notes and later asked many questions about the study program.

One of the social highlights was a picnic at Wom Beach—a stretch of beautiful tropical coastline, full of visual delights and World War II history. On this day six baptisms were also performed, followed by hearty fellowship and delicious food prepared by the ladies, making it a most memorable Festival occasion.

The Feast was attended by approximately 70 brethren, many of whom are new in the faith. It was rewarding to see their enthusiasm to help preach the gospel and participate in this great Work. The children played constantly in the spacious park-like two hectares (five acres) of Mr. Devis' property.

During the Feast we had a visit from the leader of a sizeable group of people from Maprik (west of Wewak). They have been studying and following the Bible Lessons, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days and many want to be baptized. Circumstances prevented them from attending the Feast with us this year but the ministry is hoping to visit them in the not too distant future. Because of a lack of connecting road networks in this mountainous country and also the expense of travel, several members were unable to attend.

All were grateful for the generosity of both Peter and Carol Devis and their family in serving the brethren. There was much emotion as everyone said goodbye at the end of the Last Great Day. This Feast was memorable in so many ways

but the loving hospitality and zeal of the brethren of Papua New Guinea made an impression that will stay with all of us forever.

BAGUIO, PHILIPPINES

Two hundred thirty-one brethren from the Philippines, the United States, Australia and China, attended the Feast in Baguio City. This year's welcome change to brilliant fair weather from the dark, cloudy skies of Typhoon Ondoy last year, made it yet another "best Feast ever" experience.

Baguio's unique location, on top of the impressive 5,900-foot Cordillera Mountain Range, makes it an outstandingly attractive "Millennial" Feast site. At dawn the famous Baguio



pinos are often shrouded with mist which soon melts under the sun's warm eye. Afternoons become a marriage of cool air and the warm sun, with the sun's rays cascading

though the beautiful pines and other lush trees that abound in this whole city. The area is lush and green, with staggering views from several high vantage points that seem to overlook the world.

There were many differing activities for all age groups. Due to some afternoon rain, the singles' and youth's hiking activity was converted into an afternoon of indoor fun and games. Other activities, thankfully, were unaffected by the rains. Activities included a young children's party, a seniors' social, the youth Feast program, a sports day and the acquaintance / family dance party.

Perhaps the highlight activity was the Festival Show, an amazing event that had been in rehearsal in Manila after every Sabbath since July. The performers of all ages were decked out in a stunning array of beautiful costumes whilst performing well-choreographed dances and singing presentations. The performers were many, and their gift of giving of themselves to the appreciative audience was a tribute to our Great God who gives us the talents for such an enjoyable experience. The dedication and hard work of the brethren of all ages in putting the show together was much appreciated by all.

The spiritual food that was served at the Feast was extremely profitable, with a mix of messages from the Feast DVDs and sermons from Mr. Basilio Osillos, Mr. Jes Puzon and our visiting Regional Pastor, Mr. Dayrell Tanner, who spent the last three days in Baguio.

Truly, Baguio is a site that captures the meaning and spirit of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Filipino brethren this year came up to Baguio to grow more in the grace and knowledge and fear of the Lord, and to rejoice before our God, and they departed well and truly satisfied.

DAVAO, PHILIPPINES

The Feast in Davao was held again at Hope Mountain, a four-hectare (9.9 acres) facility owned by the Conservative Baptists. It is elevated above Davao and fresh cooling breezes sweep the area. It is being redeveloped as a Center for Transformation! The brethren were truly able to come out of the world, and be transformed, as they rejoiced before God and partook of the spiritual meat that was served daily. An average of 81 people attended each service.

Most of the brethren were housed on the fully self-contained site, with a communal dining and cooking area, comfortable meeting hall, undercover paved court for relaxing and exercise, plus quiet garden areas where brethren were able to retreat for privacy and fellowship. Others stayed at lodgings off the site, a short distance away. Everyone cooked and dined together, and before long became well acquainted with each other.

Mr. Felipe Casing, and elders Johnny Bolences, Jose Arendain and Benito Parbo, gave sermons adapted from the Feast DVDs in their vernacular. This enabled the brethren to fully understand the messages. Regional Pastor Dayrell Tanner spoke on "Becoming Heroes for God's Kingdom," with Mr. Casing translating into Cebuano.

Parents and children attended a Bible Study on "How to be Christian Parents." Seventeen seniors had a dinner together, with singing, humorous talk and a message from Mr. Casing. The singles' program was most enjoyable, with snacks, parlor games, and discussions about marriage and the careful use of cell phones. The younger children had games and a running race, and they answered Bible questions, finally filling up with snacks before they were given gifts. The ladies' program was "feminine-style exclusive," during which the men had time for some hearty fellowship.

A Feast Show was held one evening, with the youth and children playing a big part, singing, dancing, and reciting Biblical themes. It was most enjoyable.

There was a trip to a nearby beach, where the brethren enjoyed dipping in the sea. Games were played—volleyball, races and tug-o-war. A tour to The Sanctuary of Eagles enlightened all as to why the eagles have a craving appetite for monkeys!

At the Last Great Day night farewell program it was hard to say goodbye, but all knew it was their greatest Feast ever.

DON CARLOS, PHILIPPINES

This year the Don Carlos Feast site underwent some major improvements to the meeting hall, which was almost completely renovated, to become a bright, clean and cheerful place to hold services. Outside, the gardens looked beautiful—surrounding the building with fresh and lovely flowers that welcomed the Feastgoers. All this was made possible because of financial assistance from Headquarters, the working hands

of the brethren—and, above all, the guidance of the Almighty. We are so thankful for all that was done for us.

Don Carlos is in a very beautiful setting, surrounded by God-given natural beauty. Lake Pinamaloy, Musuan Peak, fresh-flowing water in different spring resorts, together with the pineapple and sugarcane plantations make this a peaceful and very eye-catching place where one can truly enjoy God's creation. Traveling by vehicle from Davao airport to Don



Carlos takes 2½ hours, and the scenery on the way is spectacular!

Accommodation is not a problem for the brethren. There are inexpensive lodging houses in the vicinity of the Feast Hall, and others stayed for free in the houses of brethren

living nearby. The hospitality shown by the local brethren by opening their homes up is an outstanding example of God's way of giving—one of the godly traits of the Filipino brethren.

The four-day presence of the enthusiastic Regional Pastor, Mr. Dayrell Tanner, and his wife Jeanette, meant a lot for the local brethren. They were our particularly special guests this year and everyone was very much cheerful in their presence. Each one was inspired by the Regional Pastor's message "Be Heroes for the Kingdom." It was translated into the vernacular by the local pastor, Mr. Freddie N. Benitez.

Sermons were delivered in Cebuano (the native tongue of most of the brethren) by elders Gideon Benitez, Freddie Benitez, Ben Redouble and Ely Catamco. Everyone rejoiced during the ordination ceremonies of three new elders (Messrs. Redouble, Catamco and Rivera) and two deacons (Messrs. Bayal and Camilotes)

Foreign and local visitors were entertained with folk dances, singing and variety shows. Three cows were butchered, along with goats and chickens. One cow was barbequed during the Barrio Fiesta. Plenty of native foods were also offered and shared by everybody. The festivity was indeed enjoyable! We will hardly forget this year's Feast.

MARANDING, PHILIPPINES

A strong desire and a determined passion to celebrate this year's Feast of Tabernacles were prime factors that motivated our brethren to keep God's Feast in Maranding, despite the reality of life's difficulties in terms of time management and finances.

Maranding is in an area renowned for its beautiful scenery—surrounded by rice fields and green mountains—and peace and serenity are ever present in this town.

Enthusiastic, excited, smiling, and spiritually filled members came from congregations scattered across central and western

Mindanao, with an attendance of 118 on the opening night, remaining steady all Feast with 120 on the Last Great Day.

Just prior to the Feast, a considerable amount of refurbishment was done to the meeting hall. New showers and comfort rooms were erected, and some work on the Wind House accommodation was completed thanks to the generosity from Headquarters,



and thanks to the hard work of many of the brethren. The brethren were really thankful and they enjoyed these improvements to the site.

Delicious foods were always present, which gave the brethren a great deal of appetite and energy to continue appreciating God's presence during the Feast. Different and nutritious spiritual meat was also delivered in the daily services, and this, combined with hearty fellowship, reinvigorated the minds and hearts of the brethren.

During the eight days celebration of the Feast, there were many different activities—a Youth and Singles Night, Seniors/Couples Night, Children's Night, Sports Day, Parents Bible Study, Bible Quiz Show, Barrio Fiesta/Cultural Night, Leaders Fellowship and a Picnic.

All of these celebrated activities served to motivate the brethren mentally, physically and spiritually, and enabled them to showcase and share their different talents and ideas. During the whole Feast the brethren relished the chance to mingle together, and all gained a special spiritual bonding with each other as a foretaste of the soon-coming glory of God's kingdom.

Other highlights of the Feast were the baptism of two new members into God's Church, and the ordinations of Mr. Feliciano B. Rivera as an elder and Mr. Herminio C. Camilotes as a deacon.

The Feast was indeed a success because of the teamwork and cooperation throughout, and the abundance of God's Holy Spirit motivating us to cherish one another.

STILBAAI, SOUTH AFRICA

Some 189 brethren kept the Feast in the coastal holiday town of Stilbaai, about 350 kilometers up the coast from Cape Town. The brethren adopted the town's motto of "Here we get to know our family" by fellowship from all over the country and the world, from the very first evening to the very last opportunity.

A record number of international visitors, including guest speaker, Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour and his family, came to share in the spiritual banquet God had to offer, as



well as to enjoy the picturesque scenery and natural beauty South Africa has to offer.

Feast messages included topics on how God has a place for each of us in His Kingdom, God’s Plan and its purpose, when Christ takes His power to rule, and other meat in due season.

The singles event was a fun, educational trip to Jukani Predator Park. There they met Grumpy the lion and other members of the cat family, including white lions and Bengal tigers. The group’s enthusiasm and warmth was contagious and lots of friends were made.

On the same day, the youth canoed up the river that runs through town and the senior citizens enjoyed a luncheon at the Botterkloof Resort just out of town. The traditional Family



Day Braai (barbecue) was held on the grounds of a local primary school, offering various activities, such

as volleyball, tug-of-war and an impromptu cricket match.

A great hit for everybody was a very entertaining fun show that included dance performances, skits, vocal acts, poems and even a mock fashion parade. The international visitors contributed immensely to make the evening memorable for all.

God blessed the brethren at the Feast in Stilbaai with an array of activities, but He kept our overall focus on the positive news that these temporary dwellings will soon be replaced by God’s glorious, eternal Kingdom.

SRI LANKA

Hungry for a foretaste of the Kingdom of God in the Millennium, brethren arrived at the Bentota’s Aida Hotel, a beautiful health resort on the banks of the Bentota River, about a two-hour drive south of Colombo, Sri Lanka’s capital. Feastgoers this year consisted of 25 local brethren, Colombo church pastor, Mr. Zig Svalbe and his wife Jennifer, along with another visiting member from Australia.

Brethren feasted on inspired messages, both live as well as on DVD, and as always “the days flew by before we could count them.” The Feast brought the joy of a baptism of a young lady, Stephanie White, who was warmly welcomed by all into God’s family. There was a wonderful spirit of unity as brethren ate, fellowshiped and worshipped together. An excellent example was set by the young people who were actively involved in many of the festival functions as well as organising the dinner dance evening.

Other activities included a very exciting cricket match, Spokesman Club Ladies night, two Bible Studies, a sing-along evening, a wonderful talent night and much more. Also, special thanks go to John Bastiansz and Kuma De Silva for coordination of the Feast this year.

The brethren at Bentota made a good impression with the resort staff who requested us to return.

After experiencing what we would call “the best Feast ever,” all the brethren in Sri Lanka are looking forward to next year’s Feast, but more importantly, His Kingdom and Tomorrow’s World.

Hopefully, many of you will celebrate the Feast with us next year in Sri Lanka.

CROWN POINT, TOBAGO

Eight overseas brethren and 83 locals gathered at Trim’s meeting hall in Crown Point, Tobago for Feast of Tabernacles 2010.

Although the weather was very hot, we were thankful to our great God for it, as in neighbouring Trinidad, rain fell on a daily basis and there was some flooding.

The sermons and sermonettes were practical and inspiring and kept us focused on the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Among the highlights was the Family Fun/Youth and Children Activity. It was attended by more than 70 brethren, who thoroughly enjoyed a number of outdoor fun games with some welcomed interruptions for food and drinks. At the end



the smaller children were treated to party bags of goodies.

A boat cruise along a section of the island provided some delightful adventure, especially for those who ventured to do some snorkeling and swimming with the turtles. Some wished they could talk to the animals, but there was no one there who knew Turtlish.

The dinner dance 2010 activity was a success, with 71 brethren turning out and participating. Everyone enjoyed a sumptuous meal, beautiful Arabic instrumental music and the décor created the mood for the evening. The brethren were treated with a talent show. The evening ended with the annual Festival Ball.



All activities were well attended with good participation and it was wonderful to observe God’s people enjoying themselves.

It was exciting to hear new brethren—some of whom were keeping the Feast for the first time—say that they were already looking forward to next year.

We are very grateful to our loving heavenly Father who kept us safe as there were no reports of any accidents or incidents during the Feast.

ORAP, VANUATU

Members in Vanuatu gathered near the village of Orap on the island of Malekula to welcome several visitors from New Zealand and the United States who joined them in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. There were a total of 96 in attendance.



Led by local elder Mr. Jerry Sam, ni-Vanuatu members had planned and prepared a memorable experience which visitors declared their best-ever Feast.

Surrounded by spectacular jungle, everybody lived together on-site, creating a wonderful atmosphere of fellowship and unity. Services were held in the Tabernacle which local members have built with their own hands. Communally prepared meals were shared in the new dining hall.

Mr. Sam delivered sermons in Bislama (the local pidgin). During the Feast, visitors became quite adept at understanding this new (to them) language. Live sermons were supplemented with topical and inspiring DVD sermons supplied by Headquarters. These gave an awareness of union with thousands of brothers and sisters all jointly involved in God's end-time work. A highlight for some was an informal evening singing hymns together with as much gusto as each could muster.



On two occasions members travelled away from the Feast site to visit local beauty spots. One boat trip was to picnic on nearby Rano Island, which offered a beautiful white sand beach with sparkling blue water, where vibrant tropical fish were in abundance. Another trip was around the northern coast of Malekula through coastal villages. Across the straits could be seen the large island of Espiritu Santo.

Some fond memories taken home from the Feast: waking to the crowing of roosters, bathing daily in the clear river, communally preparing and fellowshiping over meals, tropical fruits straight from the gardens. But most of all the warm, generous hospitality expressed by local members.

LLANGOLLEN, NORTH WALES, UNITED KINGDOM

The beautiful and spectacular Dee Valley in North Wales provided an ideal location for the Feast. Services were conducted at the Bryn Howel Hotel, situated outside Llangollen

in its own secluded grounds adjacent to the Llangollen Canal. The Bryn Howel served as a focal point for many social events including two delicious Holy Day buffets for the majority of members, a stirring performance by the Brymbo Male Voice Choir and an accomplished harpist, a Ceilidh (Welsh country dance), and an entertainment evening.



We were able to take full advantage of local amenities and historic places to visit: the more active among us were able to pay two visits to the local Leisure Centre for swimming, soccer, squash, badminton and children's activities. There were coach trips to Chirk Castle, Conwy Castle and Powis Castle, all remarkable examples of Welsh history and turbulent relationships with their English overlords. Trips also took place on the Llangollen Canal and Viaduct, and also on the Llangollen Steam Railway along the Dee Valley. One major highlight was a visit to Ruthin Castle Hotel for a Medieval Banquet, with Dr. Michael Germano ably serving in the role of Baron during an entertaining evening of Welsh singing and entertainment.

With a maximum attendance of 163, Feastgoers came from all over the U.K. and parts of Europe, as well as some 36 people travelling from North America and one couple from New Zealand. All experienced a wonderful atmosphere of unity and love with a lively spirit of enthusiasm, joy and gratitude.

The messages were timely and inspiring and focused in many different ways on the coming millennial rule of Jesus Christ with the resurrected saints. God graciously provided another memorable spiritual Feast with an authentic Welsh flavour, where His Spirit was much in evidence in warm and friendly attitudes, attentive audiences and loving fellowship.



—Compiled from reports by Marc Arsenault, Rosemarie P. Benitez, Gideon Benitez, Felipe Casing, Rohan De Silva, Michael Elertson, Rees Ellis, Lascelles Fraser, Diane Gilchrist, Fitzroy Greeman, Graeme Hemphill, Darrell Lovelady, Jack Lowe, Jonathan McNair, Rod McNair, John Meakin, Jim Meredith, Rajan Moses, Simon Muthama, Kinnear Penman, Rocael Ralda, Rod Reynolds, Jahra Midas A. Roxas, Phil Sena, Wallace Smith, Rick Stafford, James Sweat, Dayrell Tanner, Issachar Tenorio, Rob Tyler, Pieter van der Byl, Barry Walker, Ian West and Phil West.

Your Inerrant Bible!

By Wyatt Ciesielka

In our *Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs*, the Living Church of God explains: “The Bible is the inspired revelation from God to mankind. It is the true basis of all Church doctrine (Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:16). We believe the Bible is inerrant in its original manuscripts and is the authoritative foundation for all true knowledge (John 17:17).”

Scholars define biblical inerrancy as “the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical or life sciences” (Elwell, Walter A., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 156).

What do the facts reveal about the recording, preservation and canonization of Scripture? Does fulfilled prophecy provide powerful evidence of the Bible’s divine inspiration? What is the relevance of the different translations and ancient texts? And what does the Bible assert about its own trustworthiness and divine inspiration? The answers to these questions are vital to our lives as Christians.

PROPHECY FULFILLED!

Of all books, the Bible is unique not only in its prophetic claims, but also in the *fulfillment* of those prophecies (Isaiah 41:23–24; 46:9–10). As Dr. Douglas Winnail referenced in *The Bible: Fact or Fiction?*, “Other books *claim* divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the [Hindu] Veda. *But none of these books contains predictive prophecy.* As a result, *fulfilled prophecy* is a strong indication of the *unique, divine authority* of the Bible’ (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p. 13).”

There are numerous Old Testament prophecies about the first and second comings of Christ, as well as about other events that either have happened or will happen.

Old Testament promises of the Messiah’s coming were known from the Garden of Eden (the Seed in Genesis 3:15), the time of Noah (from Shem in Genesis 9:27) and the time of Moses (“The Prophet” in Deuteronomy 18:15–18). Messianic prophecies continued to be recorded up through the 6th and 5th centuries BC by prophets such as Ezekiel, Zechariah and Malachi.

Additional examples of *fulfilled* Messianic prophecies include:

- Born of a virgin and named Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
- A descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:16–17; Psalm 89:3–4; Matthew 1:1; 22:42–45)
- Betrayed at a price of 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12–13; Matthew 26:15; 27:9–10)
- Crucified and would have His side pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37)
- Lots cast for His garments (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35)
- Died with criminals and was buried in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9, 12; Mark 15:43–46)
- Resurrected after three full days and nights (72 hours) in the tomb, according to the “sign of Jonah” (Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40)

In addition to Messianic prophecies, numerous Old Testament *historic* prophecies have *already* been fulfilled. When coupled with an understanding of the precise and well-documented preservation of Scripture, these fulfilled prophecies are a very compelling argument for the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Here are five out of the many such fulfilled historic prophecies:

Isaiah wrote ca. 700BC, yet he prophesied very specifically about a **future king and a future conquest** of the city of Babylon. Written more than a century before the birth of Cyrus, Isaiah identifies “Cyrus” by name (Isaiah 44:28) and prophesies that his armies would enter Babylon by the “double doors” (Isaiah 45:1–3). This very specific prediction was indeed fulfilled in 539BC when Cyrus’ armies diverted the Euphrates River so they could enter Babylon under its double gates. The ancient historian Herodotus gives an account confirming the fulfillment of this prophecy in *The Histories*, written ca. 440BC (Book 1, 191).

In Isaiah 13, the prophet foretells **another attack on the city of Babylon** and prophesies that it will be destroyed by the Medo-Persians (Isaiah 13:17–19). This prophecy was fulfilled about two centuries after Isaiah’s time when Xerxes conquered Babylon and destroyed the city in 478BC.

About a century later, Ezekiel prophesied (ca. 590BC) about the great ancient cities of **Tyre and Sidon**. By the 15th century BC, Tyre had already become an important, fortified Phoenician city (Joshua 19:29). Ancient Egyptian texts likewise referred to Tyre as a prominent city (John A. Wilson, “An Egyptian Letter,” *Papyrus Anastasi I*, ANET, p. 477). However, Ezekiel prophesied that Tyre would be *destroyed and never rebuilt* (Ezekiel 26:3–14). Today, the ancient island-city of Tyre remains desolate, and only subsistence fishing happens where the great city stood long ago. It is now “a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea” (Ezekiel 26:5) exactly as Ezekiel prophesied. While Tyre was destroyed, Sidon was prophesied to be devastated by war, but to survive as a city (Ezekiel 28:22–23), and it does to this day.

In Ezekiel 4:4–9, we see demonstrated the “day for a year” principle (applying

one year for a Biblical “day”). God explains to Ezekiel that He has “laid on [him] a day for each year” of Israel’s iniquity and subsequent captivity and correction.

Applying the principle of “one day for one year” yields the *exact duration* from Israel’s captivity (721BC) to Alexander’s defeat of the Medes and the Persians in (331BC). With Alexander’s conquest of the Persian Empire, *Israel resumed migrating* (or “sifting”) through the nations. This was *exactly* 390 years from Israel’s initial captivity (Ezekiel 4:9)! This national migration (“sifting”) was the beginning of what the prophet Amos had foretold hundreds of years before Ezekiel (Amos 9:9).

A **fifth** Old Testament prophecy is of unique interest, in that at the time of its recording, it would have *three* yet-future fulfillments. By Jesus’ time, one of these fulfillments had occurred and *two* remained unfulfilled. By our time, two fulfillments have occurred and *one* remains yet unfulfilled.

In the “Olivet Prophecy,” Jesus cited Daniel’s prophecy about “the abomination that maketh desolate” (Daniel 11:31, KJV). He revealed that there would be a future fulfillment of this prophecy. But, by Jesus’ time, there had *already* been one historic fulfillment—an actual, physical, desecration of the altar—which occurred in 167BC when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed swine on the altar and set up a pagan idol in the sanctuary (1 Maccabees 1:7–54).

Daniel and Jesus both point to a *yet future time* of sacrilege immediately before Christ’s return, which the Jews of Jesus’ day recognized, as scholar Gordon McConville acknowledges: “The Jewish writer Josephus (in the first century AD) made a comparison between the sufferings of the Jews under Antiochus IV and under Rome: ‘In the very same manner; Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them’ (*Jewish Antiquities* x.276). In the same way, for the earliest Christian readers, the assurances initially made in connection with the Antiochene persecution could readily be extended into the

establishment of the kingdom of God through Christ. The reception of Daniel in the New Testament witnesses to this development. Mark 13:26–27 shows how the ‘son of man’ language and imagery was adapted to refer to Christ. And the same chapter anticipates ‘desolating sacrilege’ still to be set up ‘where it ought not be’ (that is, in the temple, referring to the Roman destruction of the temple in AD 70, and the rededication of the site to Roman worship); Mark 13:14. And the Book of Revelation re-uses motifs from the visions to depict the conflicts that must be endured in the time of the church before the final victory of Christ” (*Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets*, p. 131).

The desecration and abomination under Antiochus in 167BC was a terrible and tragic episode in Jewish history. The desecration and abomination under the Roman Emperor Titus in 70AD was even more tragic—not only recalling the terrible events of 167BC, but also putting an end to temple worship and relegating the Jews to decades of persecution, hiding, and guerilla warfare—leading rapidly to the destruction of the Jewish nation as a national and political identity. The Jews’ identity as a political nation would be lost until the founding of the modern nation of Israel in 1948 (Thomas D. Lea, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, 2nd ed., p. 26).

With the events of 70AD, temple worship ceased, and has not been resumed to this day. But the third and final fulfillment of this prophecy is yet to come (Daniel 11:31; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4; Revelation 13:11–14).

RECORDED AND PRESERVED

How did these prophecies come to be preserved? Moses (ca. 1400BC) was the first Israelite to record Scripture in written form (Exodus 24:4, 7). Moses was followed shortly thereafter by Joshua (Joshua 24:26). The recording and preservation of what became known as “the Law” or “the Pentateuch,” was not considered mere

human effort. On the contrary, what became the Pentateuch was considered *sacred and divine revelation* from God Himself (Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:24; Joshua 1:8). From the very earliest times, Scripture was recorded with awe and with great reverence.

The ancient Jewish scribes are famous for their meticulous care in preserving the ancient Law, Prophets and Writings that comprise the Old Testament. “In Judaism, a succession of scholars was charged with standardizing and preserving the biblical text” during a period extending from about 500BC to about 1000AD (McDowell, Josh., *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp. 73–77).

Many scholars believe that the Old Testament text (including the writings of the latter prophets such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (ca. fifth century BC) was fixed by as early as 150BC, but that the Pentateuch had been codified much earlier (H.H. Rowley. “The Old Testament and the Archaeology of Palestine,” in the Journal *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, p. 24). However, other evidence supports an even earlier date of codification—that “the Old Testament was completed in the days of Ezra the Priest and Governor Nehemiah, about 420BC” (“How Did We Get the Bible?”, *Tomorrow’s World*, Jan–Feb 2002, p. 26).

Minor variations between ancient Hebrew manuscripts do exist, but these variations are inconsequential. Furthermore, minor variations between the Greek *Septuagint* and the latter Hebrew *Masoretic* texts are likewise typically insignificant and do not generally impact meaning. Where there are variations between the *Masoretic* and the *Septuagint* texts there is general scholarly agreement that the Hebrew *Masoretic* text is truer to the original. The Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered between 1947 and 1956 in the Qumran area, and dating to the first century BC) have powerfully validated this consensus.

By New Testament times, it is evident from Jesus’ statement in Luke 24:44 that this entire corpus (the “Law, Prophets, and Writings”) was established, known, and codified. Jesus defends the understanding

preserved by the Jews (John 4:22). Paul echoes that the Jews were responsible for preserving scripture (Romans 3:2). As we read in *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*: “This remarkable expression, denoting ‘divine communications’ in general, is transferred to the Scriptures to express their oracular, divine, authoritative character” (p. 1144). In addition to the numerous New Testament quotations of Old Testament Scripture (e.g., Luke 20:42–43; John 1:23; Romans 10:15–21; 1 Peter 2:6–7), Jesus proclaimed the authority of *all* Scripture (Matthew 5:17–20; John 10:34–35).

There is strong evidence that the New Testament canon was seen as the inspired, authoritative word of God **during**, and **immediately after**, the lives of the Apostles. History records that within just 50 years of the death of the Apostle John, various writers such as Polycarp, Ignatius and Justin Martyr were all quoting from New Testament books! Furthermore, only decades later, the scholar Melito of Sardis journeyed to Palestine for the purpose of determining “both the order and number of books in the Hebrew Bible.” Melito’s list was created about 170AD, and his order and content correspond with modern versions of the Old Testament (Elwell, p. 155).

Melito’s credentials are highly attested. He was a Quartodeciman (he kept Passover on Nisan 14, in the tradition of Jesus and the Apostles), and an advocate for the divinity of Christ (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Chapter 28, Verse 5). He was also an associate and an ally of Polycrates of Ephesus, who was a disciple of the Apostle John’s disciple Polycarp (Eusebius, Book V, Chapter 24, Verse 5). Melito was eventually martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

The proclamation of the New Testament canon is again documented in 397AD, when the council of Carthage mandated that “nothing should be read in the church under the name of the divine Scriptures except the canonical writings.” The counsel was very precise in what they were referring to: “The twenty-seven books of the NT were

then listed as the canonical writings” (Elwell, p. 156). Similarly, in the fourth century Augustine of Hippo proclaimed the inerrancy of canonized Scripture: “I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error” (Elwell, p. 158).

TRANSLATIONS AND ANCIENT TEXTS

Scholarly consensus is that Scripture has been recorded, copied and preserved with great diligence and accuracy. Consequently, as one scholar writes, “we must reaffirm that the copies and the translations are also the Word of God, to the degree that they preserve the original message” (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 265). But, what about variations in modern translations?

The Church of God has long preferred the *New King James Version* or the *King James Version* as being more generally trustworthy. However, other translations such as the *Moffatt*, *RSV*, *NIV*, etc. can also be helpful, and occasionally are more accurate. It is important to understand that whether modern or ancient, Bible translations are just that—*translations*. And even the ancient manuscripts are copies of earlier works. However, it is equally important to understand that these translations have been preserved with the utmost diligence.

The esteemed *Authorized King James Version* and the *New King James Version* are primarily based on the ancient *Masoretic Text* and *Textus Receptus*, though they do at times draw on other relevant manuscripts such as the *Septuagint* and the *Vulgate*. The *Masoretic Text* is the Hebrew text of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (what we call the “Old Testament”), and was compiled by scribes between the seventh and tenth centuries AD. The *Textus Receptus* is the New Testament as it was preserved in Greek by Byzantine scribes.

The *NKJV*, a *KJV* update first released less than 40 years ago, also benefits from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls

and is more “readable” to a modern audience. For example, the *NKJV* uses modern pronouns (e.g., *you* instead of *thee* or *thou*) and discards obsolete verb endings (e.g., *-eth* and *-est*).

Variations between the *Masoretic* and *Septuagint* texts are largely limited to either “sound errors” or “sight-errors” that occur when the consonantal text is vowelized and punctuated (the transposition of a *y* and *w*, for example). There are also occasional differences in the forms of *abbreviations* used. Other instances of difference are where *idiomatic expressions* did not translate meaningfully from the Hebrew to the Greek. Psalm 47:9 is an example. The Hebrew *Masoretic* text reads: “The *shields* of the earth belong to God.” This idiomatic expression would have not translated meaningfully for a Greek audience and was altered in the *Septuagint* to read: “To God are the *mighty ones* of the earth.” The original meaning is retained, but the “shield” metaphor is replaced with a more meaningful expression for the Greek audience. Understanding these minor variations, there is no instance where a proper reading of either the *NKJV* or the *KJV* contradicts established doctrine.

Scholarly consensus concludes that, “Textual criticism is a sufficiently developed science that the number of passages in the Bible where the reading is in doubt is relatively small...” (Erickson, p. 265).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The Bible itself proclaims its historic, doctrinal and prophetic divine inspiration in many ways. Referring to *all* of God’s word, including Old Testament Scripture, Jesus calls God’s word “truth” (John 17:17). He affirms that it “cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus promised that those who would become the original Apostles would be *divinely inspired* by the Holy Spirit, “taught” what is to come and directed in what to “testify.” Jesus explicitly promises that this entire process would be *based on truth* and that His disciples would be *guided into all truth*

(John 14:26; 15:26–27; 16:12–14). This is a very profound promise!

Years later, Peter echoes Christ's bold promise that Scripture was indeed the product of "holy men" being inspired by God through His Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)! Peter even affirms that Paul's epistles are also "Scripture" (2 Peter 3:16). Consequently, based on the authority of Christ, the Bible asserts that the original Apostles and Paul would record *inspired* Scripture and that that inspired Scripture would be *truth*.

In doing so, they would be inspired by the same Holy Spirit that had "long ago" inspired the ancient writers (Acts 1:16). Jesus Christ affirmed that ancient King David also spoke by the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36). In addition to Moses, the Old Testament prophets also spoke and wrote under God's inspired divine direction (Acts 3:18; 1 Peter 1:11). Yes, both the Old and New Testaments can be trusted as divinely inspired and *inerrant* in history, doctrine and prophecy.

ARCHAEOLOGY AGREES!

Alongside the Bible's own proclamations of divine inspiration, archaeology also continues to verify the historic accuracy of the Bible. Mr. Richard Ames notes a few examples of archaeology confirming ancient Biblical testimony in his article titled, "Prove the Bible." One such example relates to the account of the

city of Nineveh and the ancient Assyrian Empire. "Back in the 18th century, critics even questioned the existence of the Assyrian Empire and the existence of the ancient city-state of Nineveh mentioned in the Bible." Yet, not long afterward, archaeologists found "overwhelming evidence of the historicity of this ancient empire as described in the Bible" (May–June 2010 *Tomorrow's World*).

From the Israel Stele (discovered in 1896) describing the military triumph of Pharaoh Merneptah over Israel and Syria, to the Tel Dan Stele (discovered in fragments between 1993–1994) providing incontrovertible extra-biblical evidence of King David and the House of David, archaeology continues to align with the truth the Bible has preserved for thousands of years!

TRUST GOD'S WORD!

The Bible is indeed unique. It was meticulously preserved. It speaks powerfully of its own divine authority. It contains verifiable fulfilled prophecy. From providing insight about pre-creation (John 1:1–3) to revealing the most eschatological of truths (Isaiah 9:7; Revelation 21:22–27), there is always truth and unity. There is never contradiction. No other books can make the same claims. With the Bible, "There is the potential, as we survey the whole of God's truth, of grasping its artistic nature. There is a beauty to the

great compass and the interrelatedness of the doctrines" (Erickson, p. 1252).

While the supporting evidence is overwhelming, ultimately answering these questions is a matter of faith. And faith remains "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the invisible God (Hebrews 11:3). By faith we overcome the world (1 John 5:4) and produce good works (James 2:26). In and by faith we labor together in the gospel (Philippians 1:27), enduring the trials of life through which we enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). And by faith, we understand and hold that Scripture is indeed God's preserved word, that God's word is truth, and that by His word we are called to be firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18).

It is helpful for us to understand at least a little about how the Bible was preserved and what the Bible says about its authority and divine inspiration. But more importantly, through earnest prayer and Bible study we must ask God to increase our faith (Luke 17:5; Romans 10:17) as we continue to grow within the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13). We can all do this. And, by doing this, we will develop the most powerful and most perfect faith possible; the faith and confidence of Jesus Christ living in us through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Galatians 2:20). ■

Four Stages of Faith Continued from Page 4

widow, who with her "continual coming" finally persuaded him to hear her case. Then Christ said: "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:6–8).

It is more important than many of us realize to focus on Jesus' description of the "elect who cry out day and night to him."

Most of us in God's Church today do not have a **passionate** desire to serve God, to *worship God* and to totally **surrender** our hearts and minds and wills to God in every possible way! We must come to the point of learning to obey *fully* the first and "great commandment." As Jesus stated it: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Then, we will build a genuinely *heartfelt* and even **passionate** relationship with God—as Abraham, Moses and King David certainly did. Then we will, indeed, "**cry out**" to Him day and night—truly "walking" with God, *fellowshipping* with

Him and **growing in powerful faith** in His word and in His promises.

At this point, each of us will begin to be more and more *empowered* by the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. And as we **grow** in this as a Church, the **power** of God's Spirit will be more fully manifest in every phase and facet of the Church, the Work, the ministry and in the manifestation of the "accompanying signs" of which Jesus spoke in Mark 16:20. May God help each of us to go *all out* to build this kind of **living faith** and an extremely close relationship with our Father and with our personal Savior and Head, Jesus Christ! ■

Mercy, Longsuffering and Forgiveness Continued from Page 7

just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work” (Proverbs 24:29). Yet, more often than not, we tend to render to our neighbor according to his work. Hurting others or seeking vengeance is *not* the way to procure and to pursue peace. *Not* the way to be Christian. *Not* the way to forgive. God is a God of mercy, and Christ told us to be merciful just as our Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).

GOD’S MOST UPLIFTING PROMISE

David was a man after God’s own heart, mainly because of what God saw in him. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven” (Psalm 32:1). Is our transgression forgiven? Yes! At the time of our baptism, all our past sins were forgiven, washed away and buried. Sadly, despite God’s own assurance, some of His people still dwell on their past sins. They have not learned to forgive themselves as God forgives. Ministers have to deal with this problem, especially at Passover time, when, while examining their hearts, some brethren keep condemning themselves for their old

sins—sins that had been forgiven once and for all. Some even nurture doubts in their minds about their own conversion. They forget that God cannot lie. If He says that He has forgiven your sins at the time of your baptism, what right do you have not to forgive yourself? “Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity” (Psalm 32:2). God stopped imputing our iniquity—our past sins—when we were baptized, and we must turn away from sin and live without leaven, spiritually speaking.

In His parable of the prodigal son, Christ clearly described three categories of people. First, the merciful father who forgave his prodigal son. Second, the prodigal son himself who, after deep and sincere repentance, returned to his father with humility. Third, the elder brother who apparently considered himself a good son. But was the elder brother really a good son? It is true that he did not waste his time and money with prostitutes. Rather, he chose to dwell with his father and—according to his own way of thinking—he led a decent life. But did he, really? Why was he unwilling to forgive his younger brother, who had returned home full of true repentance and clothed with humility? The merciful father did not

hesitate to forgive his prodigal son. But it was not so with the elder brother—the one who thought of himself as being good. He was angry. He would not even go into the house to welcome his brother. His father had to come out of the house to plead with him (Luke 15:26–28).

In your own way, are you like the prodigal son’s elder brother—or, are you a humble and merciful person? Do you cling to self-righteousness and think yourself better than others? Do you withhold forgiveness from those who seek it? Always bear in mind this basic principle: if you are not willing to forgive, God will not forgive you. Only the forgiving will be forgiven. And you must seek peace, before you can enjoy peace of mind.

Do we dwell on others’ sins? Or are we quick to show mercy, patience and longsuffering, always eager to forgive? What will God’s attitude be at the resurrection, when we are changed from physical into spiritual beings—literally born of God, into His Family? God will then bless us with an eternally comforting promise: “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

Let us all express our deep appreciation and gratitude to God by following His example—now! ■

Growth Through Servant Leadership Continued from Page 2

36; Deuteronomy 12–28. As you will see, if you really *study* them, being mindful of the principles of mercy taught in the New Testament and Christ’s magnification of God’s laws, you will see that they give a *basic foundation* of the way we—as future kings and priests—should judge things with the mind of God. Therefore, since Jesus Christ tells us that man should live by “every word of God” (Luke 4:4), let us truly *study* this part of God’s inspired Word and use it as a foundation for the way we judge things—since it reveals the way *God Himself* would judge things in a carnal nation apart from people’s opportunity for spiritual conversion. Brethren, all of us should zealously respond to the Apostle Paul’s challenge, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). As we are the *Living Church of God*, we must zealously do *our part* to prepare ourselves for the very real responsibilities we will soon be given to assist Jesus Christ in ruling this entire world!

Dear brethren and friends, the Work of the Living Church of God must absolutely *multiply* in its power and impact over the next several years. With Christ’s help—and with our approach of *doing things God’s way*—I am sure He will give us the increased power we need to have a genuine **impact** on the world. For we must truly reach “all nations” with the wonderful message of a coming World Government—*this government* directed by God the Father and by Jesus Christ *in person* here on earth.

This should give real *meaning* to our lives. This should help us have a real **goal** to aim for in our thoughts and prayers all day long and help us truly “walk with God.” In that way we will be prepared to walk right over into the Kingdom of God through our constant and daily communion with Jesus Christ, our living Head and Savior.

With Christian love,



LOCAL

CHURCH NEWS

Ordinations

Mr. George Webb was ordained an elder on Sabbath, September 4, 2010, by Evangelist Dibar Apartian and Area Pastor Gaylyn Bonjour. He serves the brethren in the Asheboro, North Carolina congregation.

Mr. Robert Galle was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Phil West. He serves the congregation in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Mr. Mike Kreyer was ordained an elder on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Sheldon Monson. He serves the brethren in the Minneapolis, Minnesota congregation.

Mr. Shannon Christal was ordained an elder on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastors Karl Beyersdorfer and Gene Hilgenberg. Mr. Christal

serves the congregations of Joplin and Springfield, Missouri, and Chanute, Kansas.

Mr. Jeff Stevens was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Sheldon Monson. He serves the brethren in the Merrill, Wisconsin congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill and Dorothy Olsen were ordained deacon and deaconess on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastors Karl Beyersdorfer and Gene Hilgenberg. Mr. and Mrs. Olsen serve the congregation in Springfield, Missouri.

Mr. Adrian Käfer was ordained a deacon on September 23, 2010, during the Feast of Tabernacles in Hyeres, France, by Regional Pastor

Rod King, Area Pastors Rees Ellis and Gene Hilgenberg, and Elder V.G. Larde. He serves in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Mr. Joseph Edward was ordained a deacon on September 24, 2010, during the Feast of Tabernacles in Martinique, by Evangelist Dibar Apartian. Mr. Edward, a native of the neighboring island of Saint Lucia, serves the congregation in Martinique as well as the brethren in Saint Lucia.

Miss Monica Cormier was ordained a deaconess on the Sabbath of October 23, 2010, by Presiding Evangelist Roderick C. Meredith and Evangelist Richard Ames. Miss Cormier serves in the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation.

Births

Bryan and Lisa Pape of the Columbus, Ohio, congregation are happy to announce a special blessing from God: a beautiful baby girl! *Sophia Noor Pape* was born on August 13, 2010. She weighed 7 pounds, 6 ounces, and was 20 inches long. Grandparents Mark and Jodie Pape of Ohio, and John and Linda DuBry of North Carolina, are overjoyed by the arrival of their granddaughter.

Mike and Lacie Dickson of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation are happy to announce the birth of their first child. A beautiful baby girl, *Selah Sariah Dickson* was born July 31, 2010, She weighed 8 pounds, 13 ounces, and was 20.5 inches long.

Anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Charles and Norma Boeckler celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 25, 2010. The next day, Sabbath, June 26, the Ocala, Florida congregation surprised them with a beautiful cake in honor of the occasion at a covered dish meal after services. Mr. and Mrs. Boeckler were both baptized in 1985 by Mr. Gerald Weston, in Asheville, North Carolina.

We want to hear more about the happy milestones in the lives of our brethren. If your family has had a birth, marriage or major anniversary, please ask your local pastor to send word to the *Living Church News*, PO Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010 (or to send e-mail to lcn@lcn.org).

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Ruth Morgan, long-time faithful member of the Monroe, Louisiana congregation, died November 18, 2009, after a long illness. She was born in March 1921, in Conway, AR. She is survived by six children, four of whom are Church members: Thomas McGaha, Larry McGaha, Kay Duke, and Rose McGaha; and eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Mrs. Morgan was dedicated to her family, a diligent worker, had a great sense of humor, and wrote poetry. Mr. Curtis Lambright conducted a memorial service for her on November 21, 2009.

Mr. Carrol D. Bryant died peacefully in his sleep on Sunday, May 9, 2010. His unswerving love for God was a living example of faith and courage during his bout with oral cancer. He was born April 30, 1941 and grew up on the family farm in Kansas. He was baptized into God's Church in April 1968 and was ordained a deacon in 1972. He was ordained an elder in 1981 and attended Ambassador College 1984–1986. Mr. Bryant served in the field ministry in congregations in Ohio, Colorado, Texas, and Louisiana. He is survived by his wife, Valerie; four children and their spouses: Lyrae and Gary Pinkston, Layne and Melissa Bryant, Isaac Powell, and LaTasha and Adrian Barrett; four grandchildren, and one great-grandson. He was preceded in death by one brother, one son, and both his parents. The brethren will remember Mr. Bryant for his loyalty, love for his family, and his loyalty, faith and trust in God, knowing "Everything Is Right on Schedule!" Mr. Dan Hall conducted his funeral on May 13, 2010.

Mr. Allen Sanders of the El Dorado, Arkansas, congregation died on July 2, 2010 at the age of 63. Even though he was in much pain during the last months of his life, he continued to attend Sabbath services as he could, setting a fine example for others in the congregation. He was baptized in 1986. He is survived by his wife, Barbara; one daughter, Elizabeth, and three sons, Allen, Jr., Joshua, and Kendrick; one sister and six brothers; four grandchildren and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Mr. Sanders was well known for his love for music and for discussing the Bible. His warm smile and pleasant greetings will be greatly missed. Mr. Donald Wood conducted his funeral service on July 9, 2010.

Mr. Gerald (Jerry) Patterson of Folcroft, Pennsylvania, died on Monday, July 5, 2010 at the age of 71. He was a faithful member of the Hammonton, NJ congregation. Mr. Patterson was baptized in 1970 with his wife Jean of 48 years, who survives him. He is also survived by their three children, Michael, Christopher, and Laura Wendt, eight grandchildren and three sisters. Mr. Patterson was a devoted husband and father and had a good sense of humor. He loved discussing God's word with the brethren and always looked forward to God's Kingdom. He will be missed by his family and friends until then.

Mrs. Winnie Mooney, of the Laurel, Mississippi, congregation, age 97, died Tuesday, August 3, 2010. She was baptized in 1989. Mrs. Mooney was the mother and mother-in-law of Verlee and Bill Williams, also of the Laurel congregation. Mr. Ed Breaux performed her funeral on Friday, August 6, 2010.

Mr. Eugene Willie Daughy, Sr., of Wedgefield, South Carolina, died August 7, 2010 at the age of 81. He is survived by his loving wife, Myrtle. They travelled a long distance faithfully each Sabbath to attend services in Walterboro, SC. Mr. Daughy retired after 30 years of service with the Philadelphia PA Electric Co. He was a talented musician who received many awards and much recognition for his music. He had a passion for life, photography, singing, gardening, lively conversations and making people smile. Besides his wife, he is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He will be remembered for his contagious smile and laughter and his positive attitude. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Mrs. Patricia Joan Klink, of the Hammonton, New Jersey congregation, died on September 17, 2010, after a lengthy battle with illness brought on by two strokes. She was ordained a deaconess, then served the church as the wife of elder Carl Klink. She was a dedicated member of God's Church since her baptism on July 26, 1956. Patricia is survived by her devoted husband, and by 5 children and 10 grandchildren, all of whom she always served selflessly. Her service to God, the Church, and all her neighbors speaks volumes about her radiant love.

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COMMENTARY

Being “Major League”

During September 1993, for all of the 1994 season, and for the first two months of the 1995 baseball season, I was a left-handed batting practice pitcher for the Iowa Cubs, the Triple-A affiliate of the National League Chicago Cubs, in Des Moines, Iowa. Before each home game, I would pitch one of the sessions to Cubs players who would work on their hitting skills for that day.

I can tell you, without doubt, that all the players on that team felt they should be in the major leagues. It was their calling. It was what they had been working toward all of their lives. It was their purpose in life—their destiny. In their hearts they knew they belonged—they just had not been chosen, yet. In reality, though, for most their destiny was to assist the very few who would be chosen—who would make it to the “Show.”

Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). Being chosen goes way beyond the realm of being called.

In *Your Ultimate Destiny*, Dr. Roderick C. Meredith writes, “God says only overcomers will be in His Kingdom. Only overcomers will join Christ in ruling the earth. We are told throughout the New Testament to become like God. Jesus said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)” (p. 6).

True Christians are to overcome their own human vanities and passions, overcome the world and its temptations, and resist Satan. The Apostle Peter concludes, in his last letter, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever” (2 Peter 3:18).

We know that we will not achieve perfection in this life, but we must be making real progress—for we are to grow in the very nature and character of God Himself.

The players I worked with spent hours and hours on the field, practicing their skills and honing their abilities, hoping to get the call to the major leagues. But most fell short of their dream. For whatever reason, they were not “chosen” to make that final step of getting to the “Show.”

As Christians, we must put every effort we can into fulfilling our ultimate destiny of being part of the first resurrection, as the “firstfruits” of God’s Kingdom. “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). The true saints are being trained through an entire lifetime of overcoming to join Jesus Christ in ruling over the cities and nations on this earth!

This means being “chosen” by God to rule with Him! This can be part of your ultimate destiny, if you will open your mind and heart to the calling God is offering to those who truly desire to be “major league” Christians!

—Richard A. Wilson