

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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January–February 2012

Which “Armstrong” Do You Follow?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Tens of thousands of former Worldwide Church of God members remember Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. They know that he was *the leader* of the major Church of God movement of his day—and that he was the one used by God to inform the vast majority of new converts about the Sabbath, the Holy Days and all the basic Plan of God. He was *used mightily* by Jesus Christ—and no one can take away from that.

It is also true that many *hundreds* of “newer” brethren, coming into the Living Church of God through our telecasts and other media, do *not know* about Mr. Armstrong at all—or have barely heard about him, and have little or no recollection of anything he said or did. They are “brand new” people to the Truth. Those of us who are carrying on the Work that Christ began through Herbert and Loma Armstrong are able to reach them—and *should* be reaching them—primarily in the *name of Jesus Christ, not the name of Herbert W. Armstrong!*

We have seen what happens when, every now and then, an individual or small group of individuals tries to upset others using *their* particular memories and ideas of what *they think* Mr. Armstrong did or taught. Leaders of our former association have tried to denigrate Mr. Armstrong, portraying him as a type of “Hitler” whose super-strictness hurt God’s people and even caused some to die for lack of medical treatment. They also dwell on what they consider the harsh approach he sometimes took to individual doctrines and situations. A few of them dwell on what they regard as some

of his major “sins”—often ideas for which they can give *no proof whatsoever*.

At the other extreme, there are those who virtually want to “worship” Mr. Armstrong—adulating him as though he were perfect. These people present *their* idea of him and his teachings as the *only* way—or the “superior” way—to worship God and do His Work.

Frankly, brethren, *either extreme is wrong!* As a servant who has been used by God and His Work now for more than 60 years—as the one Jesus Christ used to teach more Ambassador College Bible classes than any other person in this era—I feel that I can share with you an approach based on experience and wisdom in this regard. And I hope that all of you will **listen!** I knew Mr. Armstrong *very intimately* for 36 years—traveled with

him, ate *hundreds* of meals with him, and knew his sons very well. I got to **know** Mr. Armstrong much better than most of the older ministers simply because of my deep friendship with Dick Armstrong—and later a pretty good friendship with Ted, which lasted for some years until Ted’s “problem” began to come to the surface.

So I ate “Armstrong Special” in their home a number of times—“corn flakes”! And I ate out with the Armstrong family or groups of them *scores* of times over the years, as well as visiting in their home or my home. The main thing to realize is that Mr. Armstrong was a **man**. He was **not** a “god” or even a “demi-god.” God used him to teach more people the *basic Truths* of God than any other human being in our age. But he was still *very human*. As he acknowledged publically a number



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Volume 14, No. 1



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of times, “Herbert Armstrong has made *hundreds* of mistakes! And God has had to use me *in spite* of those mistakes and often *beat me down* to teach me the lessons He wanted me to learn!”

Mr. Armstrong realized his own humanity, and he did not cultivate the “idol worship” attitude that some seem to have toward him because of their skewed memories of what kind of person he was. Herbert W. Armstrong did **not** want to be worshiped! I well remember a sermonette given in the Ambassador Auditorium, where an elder was virtually **blasting** out his words about Mr. Armstrong being “**God’s true holy apostle**”! The speaker actually used this phrase five or seven times in his brief sermonette. And he was literally **yelling**!

Obviously, many in the audience found it offensive to see how this man was trying to get into an attitude of **worship** toward Mr. Armstrong. Worse, some who were pushing this attitude of worship toward Mr. Armstrong were using their over-the-top words to distract attention from their behavior, while they were quietly trying to take over the Work and put down those older ministers who *actually did follow* Mr. Armstrong and what he taught. Still, I did not go to Mr. Armstrong about this man’s “over-the-top” sermonette. So far as I know, no one else did, either.

Nevertheless, about a week later, a plane took off from Los Angeles International Airport, headed for a medium-sized city in the southern United States. The elder who had given the offensive sermonette was **on that plane**—being **sent away** from Pasadena! He never returned to Headquarters again in any capacity. Mr. Armstrong did **not** appreciate the kind of “HWA worship” this man and a few others were trying to promote. He **knew** it was wrong.

Sadly, today, we still find people “shouting” about how they are the only ones who are the “true followers” of Mr. Armstrong. I happen to know pretty well most of those who are doing this. And I know firsthand that **not one** ever really knew Mr. Armstrong intimately. They did **not** eat hundreds of meals with him, spend thousands of hours with him, and really *get to know him* the way I—and a few other of the early pioneer students—did.



These people have simply concocted their own imagined version of Mr. Armstrong, and of what *they* want to indicate that he said or did—which is often **dead wrong**!

The leader of one group has tried to convince people that Mr. Armstrong **never** talked about Jesus Christ being a vital part of the Gospel! This man teaches that bringing in the facts about Jesus Christ of Nazareth being our Savior, our High Priest and living Head in connection with the Gospel is wrong—and that it is actually preaching a **false gospel**!

Frankly, brethren, this is **weird**! As many of you know—if you are willing to read your own Bible and *believe what it says*—you can simply read 1 Corinthians 15:1–4: “Moreover, brethren, *I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you*, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Therefore, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul declared that the “Gospel” he preached had *everything* to do with Christ’s death and resurrection and ascension into heaven! This is, of course, **very good news**! All of us should be *extremely grateful* for God’s willingness, through Christ’s suffering, to forgive our sins and make us “at one” with Him. This is a **vital** part of the Gospel.

Yet, we also know that Christ’s life, death and resurrection are **not** the “only” part of the Gospel—as we have *always taught* in this Work, and as Mr. Armstrong taught. Though the early apostles emphasized *that aspect*, of Christ’s connection to the Gospel, throughout the book of Acts—*please read it for yourself!*—today we more often emphasize the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God or **Government** of God soon to be set up under Jesus Christ as King of kings (Revelation 11:15).

As you know, I have **always** emphasized that aspect of the Gospel—and anyone who says otherwise is a **liar**! All you have

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The *Living Church News* is published bimonthly by the Living Church of God, 2301 Crown Centre Drive, Charlotte, NC 28227. Subscriptions are sent without charge to all members of the Living Church of God.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to

The Living Church News • P.O. Box 3810 Charlotte, NC 28227

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EDITORIAL

Go Deeper in Conversion and Faith!

By Roderick C. Meredith

As I mention elsewhere in this issue, Mr. Herbert Armstrong often used to tell the Church of God that many among us were not truly “conquered” by God. Sometimes he also stated: “Only about *half* of you brethren are really converted.” Near the end of his life, Mr. Armstrong stated: “Perhaps only a tithe—only about 10 percent—of the Church is truly converted and conquered by God!”

In the years since his death, it has become obvious that these comments were essentially true. The Church of God since that time has been scattered and splintered, and many brethren have simply gone back to the world. Many thousands have stayed with the leaders of the greatest apostasy in modern times, rejecting nearly *all* of the basic truths that distinguished us as the Church of God. Can we understand and *learn* from what has happened to so many of our former brethren? And what about us? How can you and I avoid falling for the same types of false ideas coming from Satan? Even though we in the Living Church of God are sincerely trying to restore the *genuine* Christianity of Christ and the Apostles, are we coming up short?

Let us be honest!

As the well-known American philosopher and essayist George Santayana wrote: “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” It is truly *vital* that we meditate on and learn from the lessons of the past. We also need to realize how terribly *weak* so many of us are, and not kid ourselves about it.

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Even though we in the Living Church of God are sincerely *trying to grow*, are we—perhaps unwittingly—comparing ourselves with one another, or perhaps

with weak individuals we know in other groups? Remember, our *real* comparison ought to be with *Jesus Christ Himself!* When we make *that* comparison, we all come up very, very short!

Dear brethren, as the end of this age is surely approaching, I deeply feel that we must “get with it” beyond what we have ever done before. I am sure God wants us to deepen our spiritual growth far more than we ever have before.

INFLUENCED BY THE WORLD?

As one of the Church’s leading evangelists stated many years ago, God’s people tend to be heavily influenced by the general attitudes and moral levels of the world around them. We need to fully grasp this fact. We need to realize that many of the Western nations are descending into a “moral sewer,” and that we as Christians must virtually “rescue” one another from this and reach a *much deeper level of conversion!*

In Deuteronomy 4, we read of God’s warning to our forefathers: “When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell” (vv. 25–28). We as Christians must *not* assume that we are “okay” just because

we are somewhat above the moral level of the modern Israelites who are on the verge of going into the *greatest tribulation* in human history!

God told our forefathers that, *after* they had been taken captive, “from there you will *seek* the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you *seek* Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the *latter days*, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice” (vv. 29–30).

Brethren, I am sure that we would much rather “seek” God with *all* our hearts now rather than having to do this *after* we have entered into *slavery!* We must *not* watch the same type of television shows, movies, Internet productions and other forms of entertainment that our friends may think are “just fine.” We must *not* indulge in the *same kind* of drinking, partying and joke-telling that our worldly neighbors do, for we are supposed to be Christians! We are supposed to have Jesus Christ living *in* us through the Holy Spirit! We are supposed to be truly “different”! Yet, without realizing it, many of us are not really that different—are we?

We all need to go back, from time to time, and review Jesus Christ’s own stern requirements for being His follower as set forth in Luke 14:25–35. Many of us may have had this passage expounded to us at the time of our baptism. Remember? Jesus said: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate [love less] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (vv. 26–27).

Have we come to the point of genuinely hating—or “loving less,”

as it should be translated—*our own lives*? Are we, individually, willing to go through trials, tests and *severe* persecutions and “bear our cross” as Jesus Christ commands?

Do we truly *understand* Jesus’ command: “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake **all** that he has cannot be my disciple” (v. 33)?

GOD MUST LIVE IN OUR LIVES!

Even though this is not a time to sell our homes and possessions, as some early Christians did (Acts 2:44–45), *most* of us undoubtedly need to *give far more* of our time, our energy, our thoughts and prayers to fervently *serving* the living Jesus Christ and **surrendering** to let Him live **His life** in *every single phase* and *facet* of *our* individual lives! We need to have Jesus living within us in our family life, our sex life, our job or career, in the way we treat all those around us, in the way we respond to every situation and seek to honestly develop—through God’s Spirit—the “mind of Christ” in every situation. We need to **grow** in expressing the patience, the mercy and the loving kindness that Jesus expressed.

Otherwise, dear brethren, we may be “a little better” than some in the world around us, but fall **far short** of the example of Jesus Christ. Note that at the end of this passage in Luke, Jesus described the “salt” that had lost its flavor, and He stated: “It is neither fit for the land nor for the dung hill, but men throw it out. *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*” (v. 35).

A person who is truly “conquered” by God through His Holy Spirit—through Christ **ruling** his life in its every phase and facet—will hold back **nothing** from God’s direction! That individual has truly “crucified” the old self with its vanities, lusts, misdirected “hurt feelings” and general foolishness. We all need to ask ourselves: “Have I, *personally*, been truly **conquered** by God?”

Are there “hidden corners” in some of our lives that we definitely would not want others to know about? If we are truly “conquered” by God, this would not be the case!

Brethren, we **all** need to grow *much closer* to God than we have ever been in the past. Our goal should not be just to *get back* to where we may have been before Mr. Armstrong’s death, but to grow *closer to God* than we have **ever** been! For we all are supposed to keep *growing* throughout our *entire* Christian lives. So we must truly *devote* ourselves to a type of deep and earnest Bible **study**, continuous and fervent **prayer**, profound **meditation**, regular **fasting** and an *entire way of life* that is based upon genuinely “walking” with God! *This* will help us achieve the above objectives.

GOD WILL SHAKE THE NATIONS!

Even beyond this, I sincerely feel that **God Himself** will help us as He begins to **shake** the nations, the society around us and even **all** of the people in the various Church of God fellowships. In His wisdom and mercy, He will no doubt deeply **humble** every one of us and bring us to our knees and to a profound “awareness” of **His** intervention and **His** power in a way that we have never before experienced! If our attitude is right, we should begin to “see” God in the circumstances around us as He starts to intervene even more powerfully in human affairs at the end of this age. *This*, also, should help us truly “get with it” and *grow* spiritually beyond what we have ever done before.

Even after Jesus’ death, His Apostles were not fully converted. For the Holy Spirit did not come until the day of Pentecost. So during the 40 days after Jesus’ death, Peter and the other Apostles showed a number of weaknesses that would not have been manifested had they been fully converted. On one occasion Peter said: “I am going fishing” (John 21:3). From every indication, this was not merely a *casual* fishing outing. Rather, as a number of these men had been *professional* fishermen in the past, this would probably have been the beginning of something far more serious if Jesus had not dealt with the situation. “But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was

Jesus” (v. 4). In what may have been an overcast early morning, Jesus asked them if they had caught anything. He then commanded them: “Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. ‘So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish’” (v. 6).

The “disciple whom Jesus loved”—the Apostle John—was more spiritually sensitive and perceptive. Although Christ used Peter as the leader among the Apostles, and the book of Acts shows that he took the lead in most situations, John was obviously stronger in a certain spiritual “closeness” and sensitivity to the will of God. So it was in this situation. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’” (v. 7).

GOD IS IN CHARGE!

Often, we fail to recognize how **God** is in overall charge of events that are happening in the world—and even in our lives. Certainly, He *allows* many events to happen to the world that He may not directly cause. He is, as we know, *allowing* terrible storms, earthquakes and other events to humble people—and is *allowing* human beings to go their own way for the present 6,000-year age until Christ returns.

As we come ever closer to the final events of this age, we need to be very sensitive to God’s *direct intervention* in world affairs—and in our own lives. We need to be ever-mindful that, as Jesus said: “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29–31).

Our Father in heaven is in **total charge** of this universe, and He intervenes in any situation He chooses! As we are His own begotten children, He knows *everything* about us—even the thoughts of our minds and hearts! It is important that we develop a deep

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Do Not Limit God!

By Dr. Jeffrey Fall

God's power is unlimited. The Almighty God has created a hundred billion galaxies the size of the Milky Way, each composed of tens of billions—even hundreds of billions—of stars. Yet, human beings can limit His power! How is this possible? And what can we do about it?

While traveling across the western United States recently, my wife and I were amazed at the overwhelming beauty and magnificence of God's creation.

When we looked beyond our planet at night, we saw the stars, and a hint of the creation beyond. We were even more impressed by the creative powers of our great God who created such vastness, beauty, harmony and even a hundred billion galaxies the size of the Milky Way, each composed of probably a hundred billion stars!

DO WE LIMIT THE POWER OF GOD?

The power of our God is unlimited. Although we do not even begin to understand it, yet, in a way, we *can* limit the power of this Almighty Being.

For example, after God brought the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery, they quickly began to gripe and complain. They exhibited absolutely no confidence in God's leadership, judgment and care for them.

The Israelites provoked Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, "and *limited* the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:40–41).

Since there is no power great enough to interfere with, or defeat the plan and purpose of the Creator God, some might wonder how it can be possible for us to limit God. Yet, it is our own actions and lack of obedience that can limit the great God in blessing us.

As a loving and perfect Parent, God is always going to do what is best for us. And at times, what is best for us may be withholding certain blessings in our lives that we might otherwise receive in order to first learn our lessons. We need to develop more of the mind of God, and more of the reasoning ability of the great Creator, as preparation for our eventually being born into His Family.

That is God's purpose—His agenda for each of us individually.

PROMISES MADE TO ANCIENT ISRAEL

God had intended to lead the ancient Israelites directly into the land of Canaan.

What a future He had in mind for the ancient nation of Israel! God promised that He would bless them in the city and in the country. He also promised to bless the fruit of their body and the produce of the ground. He wanted to bless them with all the good things of life (Deuteronomy 28:1–14).

But receiving these great blessings was dependant on their obedience to God.

"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all the commandments and His statutes which I command you today that all of these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city and cursed shall you be in the country" (Deuteronomy 28:15–16).

If the Israelites cut themselves off from following the true God, various penalties would occur. God knew when to withhold His blessings so that Israel would realize that blessings come only through the great God and Creator.

God is now working even more closely with us than he worked with ancient Israel.

Unlike the Israelites, however, **we understand** His purpose. The stakes are much higher for us today. He is offering us as firstfruits in the family of God the potential to have eternal life. He must be able to fully trust us individually before we become born as sons of God.

EVEN JESUS FACED LIMITS!

Jesus Christ and His disciples came to Jesus' own country where He grew up. "And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?'" (Mark 6:2–6).

So they were offended at Him. They were familiar with His background. Sometimes, we make that same mistake. We do not honor some of those whom we should honor, because we are too familiar with them.

"But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives and in his own house.' Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching" (Mark 6:4–6).

Christ was lamenting for the people of Israel and Jerusalem through the ages. He said, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not



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willing!” (Luke 13:34). It was His intention to bless and bring prosperity to the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 28); yet, He said they were not willing.

“See!” Jesus said to the Jews of His day: “Your house is left to you desolate, and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Very clearly, we see that we actually can limit our God—at least as far as His intentions to bless us fully in our individual lives.

Let us consider *three ways* in which we may be limiting the great God. These three points are nothing new. You have read them many times, but think of them in this context today—limiting God’s blessings that could be ours if we were wholehearted, focused and vigorous in seeking our God.

DO WE SEEK GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY?

First, understand that when we lack confidence in God, this involves a lack of trust in His guidance. We can call this a lack of faith. One who feels this lack of faith should ask, “Do I fully trust God to guide my life, day by day?” If we are not trusting Him, we can be sure that we are acting on the wrong guidance.

“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (Matthew 6:26). He is the Creator, the Designer of all life, and He has programmed the birds of the field to take care of themselves. Our great God planned the genetic design and instinct of every bird and animal on the planet.

Also, He reminds us, “Are you not of more value than they?”

“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to your stature?” (v. 26). We might like to reduce a few inches horizontally, but we have got to do more than worry. We have got to do something about it.

And so, why do we worry about clothing? We do need clothing, but why do we make that the main focus of our lives—our financial security, our career—when our main focus should be on developing the very character of the living God. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin” (v. 28). They do not plan. They are genetically engineered, “and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory,” his finery, his coats and his gold, and even his crown, “was not arrayed like one of these” (v. 29).

The great Creator God put more thought, planning and genetic design in one lily than was put into the regal clothing of Solomon. It was God who designed the beauty, harmony and symmetry of a lily.

GOD TAKES CARE OF OUR NEEDS

So Christ’s message here is, “Do not agonize over the physical provisions of life.” Yes, we have our part to do, but ultimately God will take care of our needs. If we feel that our basic needs are not being met, it is time to focus on the great God and His provision for us. “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field,

which, today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you? Oh, you of little faith” (v. 30).

Matthew was pointing out the absurdity of not trusting our Creator. Think about it. We look at His creation. We see the intensity of the design and His loving care for His handiwork, and yet we are potentially the pinnacle of His creation, eventually to be full-born sons of God. And He says, “Oh you of little faith.”

Christ tells us not to worry. He said, “Therefore do not worry saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or, ‘What shall we drink’, or ‘What shall we wear?’” (v. 31). Yes, we plan and prepare, but we do not agonize over our financial future. We have a greater future than that. “For after all of these things, the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all of these things” (v. 32).

If we are His children, He knows it. He looks after us. He protects us. He will bless us if we trust him. “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added to you” (v. 33).

The character of the living God will be formed within us, and we will be developing the mind of God. He is continually working with us to accomplish this. Our God is “on the job.” He takes care of His children. He looks after all of us, even though there may be times when we might be concerned about where our next job—or our next meal—will come from.

TRUST IN GOD

But, if we trust the great God, we will go to Him continually. We will put God, His Kingdom and His Work first. He promises to provide our every need—if we trust Him. What an incredible blessing!

But there are times, to whatever degree we know the true God and have understanding and truth, that maybe our confidence in God wavers just a little. Or, maybe the bank account is a little low, or we lose a job; then our confidence in God delivering us wavers.

A father brought his young son to Christ. The boy was both deaf and mute from an unclean spirit. “So He asked his father, ‘How long has this been happening to him?’ And he said, ‘From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes’” (Mark 9:21–23).

Now “Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe, help my unbelief’” (v. 24). Think about that. The boy’s father said he believed, but then he asked Jesus to help his unbelief.

How often are we in that situation? We believe. We have a measure of faith and confidence in our God, but we do not have the supreme confidence in God’s response in our life, individually. Maybe we assume God is going to ignore us this time, or perhaps He has better things to do. Or, maybe he is not focused on our situation at the moment.

This is the time when we have to go to God. We need to trust Him and ask Him to help our unbelief.

ASK GOD TO STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

We need to ask God to strengthen our faith. More than that, we should beseech Him to give us more of the living faith of Jesus Christ. Christ had that ultimate faith—the full confidence that God would sustain Him, and even at the end of His life resurrect Him back to the glory He had from the beginning.

You and I do not have that level of faith or confidence. So, we ask God to give us more of the living faith of Jesus Christ, month by month and year by year, to strengthen our own faith, to give us a rock-solid unshakable confidence in the great God and His purpose in our lives.

When we ask for more of the faith of Jesus Christ, God will work out circumstances in our lives. Sometimes we will find ourselves needing God's intervention. It could involve our health, our finances or our family, but if we go to God and ask for a greater measure of faith, we can be confident that—in His way and in His time, one way or another—He will rescue us and sustain us. God strengthens us, encourages us—and sometimes performs miracles.

LACK OF EFFORT

A second key point is that, if we do not put our best effort into doing our part, we will be limiting God by preventing His blessings from pouring out on us. God may want to bless us in a difficult situation. But if by our conduct we are making ourselves unable to receive those blessings, we may need to address weaknesses and even sins in our lives before God can give us what we need to overcome and grow.

Our weaknesses may be hidden from those around us, even though we know we are holding on to some habit or situation that is dragging us down. On the other hand, we may have become so careless and self-satisfied that we have lost awareness of our own weaknesses.

Even after we have come a long way, we know in our growth as Christians that we have further growth ahead. Maybe we are proud of our adherence to the “letter” of the law (though consider James 2:10; we may not be as “perfect” as we like to imagine), but what about the spirit of the law? If we lose sight of the work that we must do, the effort we must put out to be doing our part fully, we may be limiting God, by telling Him, in effect, that we do not really want our lives to change for the better.

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that **He will not hear**” (Isaiah 59:2). We know that can apply to us, even small hidden sins in our lives. God, at times, is not able to bless us in the way He would like. He is just waiting for us to repent and change.

And, of course, God withholds blessings. “Your iniquities... and your sins have withheld good from you” (Jeremiah 5:25). If we are honest with ourselves, we all know that we still have areas where we ought to change for the better, even if we have been in God's Church for 30, 40 or 50 years or more.

GOD WANTS US TO SUCCEED

Our loving God truly wants us to succeed in every way. He wants to bless us with abundance—especially in spiritual matters. He is a loving parent. He is our personal guide, and He will work with us in whatever way will get our attention. This includes withholding blessings at times, especially when this will motivate us to seek His help. It is difficult to change our inner being—our very character. It is the most difficult thing to do in life! It is a struggle, but we have God's help.

Society programs us from birth. We are affected by our parents, by society and by Satan's system. We absorb the mindset of the world. The Apostle Paul said, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:23). That is the way we all are, naturally, without God's Spirit. Paul asks the question, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (v. 24).

Was Paul asking this in hopelessness? No! He answered his own question; he knew who would deliver him. “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 25).

OUR PERSONAL TRAINER

I think of Jesus Christ as our Personal Trainer. A personal trainer is very closely involved with us on a daily basis, helping us focus our energy on making the progress we need to make. As our Personal Trainer, Jesus Christ will guide us as much as we will listen to and follow His guidance. He will bless us when blessings will help us, and will withhold blessings when that is the best way to help us grow. We should never forget that when God withholds blessings, that can be a blessing in itself. “Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects” (Job 5:17). And also, “For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights” (Proverbs 3:12).

So, as God intervenes in our lives and gently corrects us, we come to realize we need loving, gentle correction. I like gentle correction. Most children do, too. Gentle correction—mid-course correction along the way—absolutely will benefit us, whether in our physical life right now, or in our spiritual life now and in the future, even forever.

Regrettably, we often think of correction as punishment. We worry that God will “let us have it.” But think about what parents do. They correct their children because they want them to learn and grow, and to stay out of harm's way. Parents know that they do not help their children the most by ignoring small problems until they grow and grow and become big problems. The most effective corrections are the small ones that prevent our children from running into the big problems later on.

When a plane is traveling toward a destination across country, onboard computers are constantly reading wind speed, altitude and barometric pressure, ground speed and other data. As a result, many small corrections are made that keep the

plane on course. Hundreds and hundreds of tiny mid-course corrections are needed. Without these corrections, the plane might end up who knows where? The same is true in our lives.

So, if we want to accelerate the blessings in our present life, we need to seek correction, to ask God for gentle correction in our own lives. We know His correction, given in His love, will benefit us. It is not punishment. It is a blessing that will keep us from harming ourselves, our loved ones and others.

When we ask for gentle correction, we know our loving Father is there for us. He wants what is best for us. He will not harm us. If we act on the correction we receive, the Holy One of Israel—the Creator of all life—will open the door for us to receive His blessings in our lives.

One primary blessing is that of having our needs met. And we know that God promises us that He will meet our needs physically, financially, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and in every way. However, there are also spiritual blessings that we cannot do without—such as acquiring more of the mind of God. We want to be blessed with more of the fruit of God's Spirit, which is described as love, joy, peace and longsuffering, as well as patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

We should not feel saddened or discouraged by correction. We should have joy in our lives. We know we are receiving correction in order to become part of the future Family of God. Our Father will see us through. As we develop the confidence to know that this is true, we will have a measure of peace, no matter what our circumstances. Things may not be perfect in our financial realm, or our health may not be good, but we can still have a basic peace of mind. We can know that God will see us through to His Kingdom.

As we grow in conversion, we will experience this more and more. A deeply converted person is very mentally stable, able to weather the “ups and downs” of daily trials. As we move closer to God's way of thinking and living, we will grow more and more in our capacity to have that blessing and more of it. God wants us to be stable and happy. He wants us to be open to His guidance and gentle correction, so it can bear fruit in our lives.

OUR PRAYER LIFE

A *third vital key*, if we want to be sure we are not limiting God's work in our lives, is to consider our prayer life, and how we approach the true God. Are we just putting in “clock time”—maybe praying ineffectually or ritualistically? Or do we put our whole being and our heart into our prayers, making them real and vital, knowing that we are speaking to a real Being, the God of the Universe?

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to mention that one of the fundamental weaknesses of God's people was not putting

their hearts into their prayers—not speaking to the true God with intensity, feeling and genuineness. Scripture promises us, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). And we know the inverse of that is also true. Superficial “sleepy-time prayer” accomplishes very little.

Jesus Christ warned in Revelation 3 that the majority of God's people at the end of this present age would be lukewarm. But that does not need to apply to us as individuals. We do not want to be lukewarm. We should want to communicate with the great God in a genuine, wholehearted way—not in a routine or lukewarm way. What will happen if we do this? God said, “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Our “wicked ways” may or may not correspond to those of ancient Israel. But we all need to draw closer to God in a genuine way, which begins with “getting real” in our approach to God, and in our communication and conversation with the great God.

It is not wrong to focus a part of our prayer, at times, on our immediate needs and desires. However, we must also do as

Paul instructed and continue earnestly in prayer for others, and about the Work and the “Big Picture” of God's Plan and what He is doing here on the earth. We should especially pray that God will open more doors for His Work, and call more laborers to the harvest (Matthew 9:38).

Are you asking God to open doors in your life? Are you asking God to open doors for His Work? It is God, and only God, who can open doors for the Work. We cannot do it of and by ourselves.

MORE BLESSINGS

We all have a greater potential than we have yet achieved. God has already blessed us much, and He would like to bless us more and more. But we need to allow Him to bless us as we grow in Philadelphian zeal—as we grow in faith, do our part to obey Him, and draw closer to Him in fervent and genuine prayer from the heart. As we do so, we will discover that as we align ourselves ever more closely with God, we will be removing the limits that we previously placed on His blessings. He will be more and more able to bless us, and we will see more and more blessings individually, as a Church, and as a Work.

Just as parents want to bless their own children as they grow, mature and prosper, God desires even more than that to bless us abundantly. So, let us be vigilant and not limit the power of the great Creator God in our lives! ■



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The Two Trees

If you were a member of the Worldwide Church of God in the early 1980s, you probably heard Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong talk about “the two trees” more than once.

Perhaps you can still picture the throng gathering in the Ambassador Auditorium for the traditional Friday night Bible Study. Mr. Armstrong would walk to center stage, and then sit down behind his desk. As soon as the audience recognized who would be presenting the Bible study, many would turn to their neighbors and whisper, “The two trees!” Sure enough, many times they had guessed exactly right as to the evening’s topic!

Back then, some members professed to be “tired of hearing” the “same message” from Mr. Armstrong so often. They thought they were wise and deeply converted, and they wondered why Mr. Armstrong kept harping on the same topic. Sometimes they would wonder, “Is it because he is so old and infirm? Doesn’t he know that we ‘get it’ already?”

Why did Mr. Armstrong so often return to the second and third chapters of Genesis? Consider the story of the pastor who kept repeating the exact same sermon, week after week. Finally, one of his congregants worked up the courage to ask the minister when he was going to move on to another subject. The preacher answered, “When you all come to understand what I am trying to teach you!”

Sadly, much of the Church did not “get it”—as became clear when Mr. Armstrong’s successors led tens of thousands of members on a radically different course—right out of the Church of God!

At one time, Mr. Armstrong lamented, “Brethren, I don’t think half of you are converted!” At least once he was heard to say, “I don’t think more than a tenth of you are converted!”

Certainly, most who heard Mr. Armstrong’s message about the “two trees” have scattered to the winds in the last 25 years.

Thankfully, any of you “old timers” who are reading this are likely to be among the few who actually did “get it”—who understood what Mr. Armstrong was teaching, and who acted upon it!



But—whether we heard Mr. Armstrong or not—what are we really doing with what we have learned? Are we really using the Holy Spirit to help us overcome Satan, society and self? Are we striving for the righteousness exemplified by Jesus Christ, and doing our best to let Him live that life within us? The answer may be found in how we grasp and practice the vital lesson of the two trees.

ADAM AND EVE CHOSE POORLY

After Lucifer’s pride led him to rebel against his Creator (Ezekiel 28:11–16), God rejuvenated the ravaged face of the earth, so the human beings He would create could live and flourish there. “The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:8–9).

Those two trees were to play a fascinating and pivotal part in God’s plan. The LORD was going to use them to see whether or not the first man and woman would obey Him.

God gave Adam the responsibility of tending and keeping the garden in which he and his wife were to live (v. 15). “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (vv. 16–17). This was not a divine suggestion or recommendation; this was a **command** and a **warning** of what the penalty would be, if the man disobeyed his Lord and Creator!

The garden was to be filled with living creatures. “Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him” (vv. 19–20). None of the animals had the spirit that was in man—the spirit that gave Adam this level of communication with his Creator.

So, “the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man” (vv. 21–22). Note that God did not take Adam’s toe—which could have implied Eve’s status as below the man. He did not take Adam’s finger, which could be used to make a fist or to point as in accusation. He chose a rib—indicating that the woman

would be close to the man's heart, and supportive by his side.

The plan was for Adam and Eve to repopulate the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:26–28). God had created Adam and Eve in the divine image—literally looking like God—and intended that these beings would eventually become full members of the Family of God. But God could not by fiat force Adam and Eve or their descendants to submit their wills to God's law. He could not impose on them a holy and righteous character that they did not want. Rather, He had to see whether they would be willing to live His way, instead of striking out as adversaries, as Lucifer had done when he became Satan. He had to see whether they would learn to reject the bad fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which they would consume to their great spiritual detriment.

By eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve had chosen selfishness rather than selflessness. They had chosen their self-will instead of yielding to God's will. The two trees symbolize selfishness vs. selflessness, or, as Mr. Armstrong put it, the way of get vs. the way of give. Mankind's way, turned away from God, is the way of selfishness. God wants His people to learn selflessness, as exemplified by the tree of life.

ANOTHER "GOD"?

Scripture describes Satan as the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). As ruler of the earth, Satan broadcasts his negative influence and evil ideas into the minds of human beings everywhere. He puts his stamp on the content of the movies and television programs we watch. He emboldens those who fill the Internet with pornography, slander and rebellion. He influences those who create music that stirs mankind's vilest passions.

The Messiah—Jesus Christ—will soon return to establish the Kingdom of God right here on planet Earth. In that

Kingdom, human beings will be able to live in freedom, no longer influenced by Satan's broadcasted temptations. Yet, even today, we as Christians can overcome his influence if we yield to Jesus Christ, allowing Him to live His life in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

You may have heard the saying, "Nature abhors a vacuum." When God first created the earth, He placed it under the rule of the archangel Lucifer. Lucifer's rebellion did not remove him from his position of rule; it led to the destruction and confusion described in Genesis 1:2, and to the earth coming under the sway of the being since known as Satan.

God's plan, however, was to re-establish His rule over the earth. So, Adam was created and given dominion over the planet (Genesis 1:26–28). But Adam failed to qualify to replace Satan. The task then went to the "Second Adam"—Jesus Christ. It is Christ—King of kings and Lord of lords—who will replace Satan. Until then, Satan's rule over the earth continues even now (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Before Christ began His three-and-a-half-year ministry, Satan tempted Him. He even offered Jesus Christ the rulership of the earth! "Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours'" (Luke 4:5–7).

Notice that Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim to rule the world at that time, nor his prerogative to offer Him its rulership. Christ knew that the world at that time belonged to Satan. Had Jesus chosen to worship Satan, He could right then and there have had dominion over the earth. But it would have been a selfish rule based on Satan's ways of evil, rather than a selfless rule based on God's way of good. Christ knew that He had to sacrifice His very life as a

sin-offering—not only to qualify as the rightful ruler of planet Earth, but also to make salvation available to billions of human beings.

Just as Satan sought to tempt Christ to take the "easy way" out to become the ruler of the earth, he and his demons also strive to influence the actions of blinded human beings (1 John 2:21–24). "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). In this world ruled by Satan, it is no wonder that so many false religions are led by demon-influenced men, and that governments are in the hands of base men who trust in themselves and ultimately in Satan, not knowing the true God.

WHY SUFFERING?

What purpose does suffering serve? Is God being cruel by allowing humanity to reap the bitter fruit of its rebellion? It is true that God has allowed Satan to deceive the whole world so that, generation after generation, men and women could have the lesson burned into their minds that disobedience and rebellion against their Creator is folly and ultimately leads to curses and eternal death. But this is for mankind's ultimate good. God is giving rebellious human beings an unfettered opportunity to do things "their way" without Him. When they are resurrected in the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–15), they will have to admit that the selfish results of "their way" led to evil and chaos. Having experienced the results of living without God, they will be that much more ready to embrace God's selfless way and experience its benefits.

Satan is filled with hate and jealousy toward human beings, to whom God has given an opportunity that he and his demons will never have. Satan is a spirit being, but can never

become part of the Family of God. Unlike the angels, human beings were created with God specifically planning to make them (us) part of His family, through the sacrifice of the Logos—the Word, who became Jesus Christ. Human beings in the Millennium and in the Great White Throne Judgment will be able to look back at the fruits of Satan's rule, in comparison to God's rule, and make the informed choice to live God's way.

Today's Christians, however, are living in a world ruled by Satan. We do not have a perfect world around us as firsthand proof of the value of God's way of life. Yet we, too, are meant to become full sons of our Father when we are born into the God Family upon Jesus Christ's return. At the first resurrection, the "dead in Christ" (1 Thessalonians 4:16), along with those still alive who have Christ living in them, will become born again as Spirit beings in the Family of God. And for those of us who overcome in this age ruled by Satan, God promises a special blessing. Ours will be a "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35). Today's Christians who have kept Christ's word, persevered and not denied His name (Revelation 3:8–13) will become the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7), and will reign under Him as kings and priests (Revelation 20:6).

Christ told us: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:27–30).

Notice! God the Father promises that His people cannot be snatched out of His hand! If we have yielded ourselves to Him—if we remain close to Him and obey Him and rely on Him—we can be confident of His protection. If we prefer rebellion, we may choose to leap out of the Father's hand. But if we trust in Him, He will never drop us or let us go!

THE WHOLE WORLD IS EVIL?

The Apostle John reminded us: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19).

To some, this may seem like an extreme statement. We may know many "nice" people outside God's Church. Perhaps we remember a kindly nun who sacrificed so much to teach generations of schoolchildren, or who spent her life in selfless service to the poor. We may think of a Protestant minister who always lived frugally so he could purchase more Bibles to send to the "mission field." We may have known Buddhists or Hindus who strove to live lives of great personal integrity, refusing to lie or cheat or steal and always humbly tried to serve others around them. Are all these people under the sway of Satan?

The scriptural answer, though shocking to some, is: Yes! Without the true God, even the greatest human righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Yet, we should not as Christians make the mistake of feeling "superior" to such deceived people. Many of them are, in terms of their own human character, "better" than we are. Once God opens their eyes to the Truth, they will take to it far more readily than many of us have. Although today's Christians have been given the extraordinary opportunity to become "firstfruits" in the Kingdom of God, we need to remember with humility that, in this present age, God is generally not calling the "best people" into His Truth (1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

We must also remember that God's own people can be swayed by Satan's lies. It is not just those practicing false religions who can be led into error; Satan also tries to pervert and "water down" the truth of God. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their

own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Yes, there will be false teachers even masquerading as true followers of Christ. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

God forcefully condemns those who teach falsehood in His name! "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isaiah 5:20–21).



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OUR CALLING AND CHALLENGE

To test their faith and conversion, true Christians—those who have Christ dwelling in them through the power of the Holy Spirit—daily face challenges from the world! "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1–5)!

We must turn away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and reject the selfish way of "get." We must

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Feast 2011: Rejoicing Before the Lord!



More than 8,900 brethren kept God's Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day at more than 45 LCG sites in 32 countries around the world. We hope you will enjoy the following brief reports from many of those sites.

BRANSON, MISSOURI

In beautiful Branson, Missouri, 570 Feast-goers assembled to enjoy the Feast of Tabernacles. We were very excited this year to welcome about 18 first-time Feast-goers, as well as about 30 visitors from other groups who kept the Feast with the Living Church of God. God blessed us with unity, wonderful and inspiring messages, warm fellowship and beautiful weather. God also blessed us with two miraculous and immediate healings!

Highlights were very inspiring messages by visiting evangelist Dr. Douglas Winnail and long-time pastor Mr. Bob League, as well as other ministers who all encouraged the membership to "catch the vision" about the soon-coming Kingdom of God. We were also very privileged to enjoy marvelous special music, which ended with a stirring rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus.

Feast-goers enjoyed a wonderful Seniors' Banquet, a beautiful Singles' Dinner Cruise, a festive Family Day and Fun Show, and a Teens' Activity at a beautiful state park. We thank God for the love and blessings that He gave us this year in Branson, for the joy and unity that He has blessed us with in His Church, and for the leadership that He has provided!



CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

Six hundred and twenty-nine joyful Feast-goers converged at the Chattanooga Choo Choo Resort Hotel for eight days of bountiful physical and spiritual banqueting! Chattanooga lies at the transition between the Cumberland



Plateau and the ridges and valleys of the Appalachian Mountains, making it Tennessee's most scenic city. Ideal weather and the natural beauty of the surroundings offered a glorious millennial backdrop for keeping God's Feast in Chattanooga for the first time since 1997!

Evangelist Richard Ames gave two sermons and also addressed 82 deacons, elders and wives, enjoining them to "point our people to the Kingdom of God" and the attitude of service we should have.

Additional messages by Messrs. Dan Hall, James Sweat and Ken Frank underscored the new era for mankind under Jesus Christ and His saints. Bonus spiritual nourishment was provided by three Bible Studies for Teens, Singles and Parents, plus a Family Bible Study for all.

Many family activities and attractions were available to brethren keeping the Feast in Chattanooga. On Family



Day, members were fascinated by the array of God's aquatic creation at the Tennessee Aquarium, then enjoyed a stunning 3D viewing of "Born To Be Wild" at the IMAX theatre. The next evening, Fun

Show performers brought the house down with entertaining music and side-splitting comedy, followed by a memorable Dinner and Dance! Kid's Corner, where children made Feast-themed arts and crafts, continues to be appreciated by the "little ones." Teens enjoyed fellowship with an evening of ice cream and games, plus an exciting afternoon of pizza and bowling. Singles spent time together cruising and dining aboard the Southern Belle Riverboat! A scrumptious banquet with entertainment was provided at the Seniors' Luncheon,

along with a presentation by Mr. Gerald Dulaney. One member stated, “All in all, there was more to do than time to do it, especially considering the tremendous spiritual food, which is why we are here!”

God’s people feasted heartily on the promise of His coming Kingdom with a unified spirit of love, togetherness and selfless service to one another. This year’s Feast in Chattanooga will rank high as one of the most memorable ever!

COBLESKILL, NEW YORK

The beautiful colors of autumn welcomed approximately 215 brethren to the Feast of Tabernacles in Cobleskill. Services were held at the Best Western Hotel where the staff was warm and friendly. Brethren traveled from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States to attend. The atmosphere was energized and each day was filled with opportunity and fellowship.

The messages were encouraging and motivating. Guest speaker Mr. Martin Fannin’s “Chosen Generation” message urged us to kindle a fire in our bellies and diligently keep our hearts in this end-time Work of God. His sermon on the Last Great Day gave us a glimpse into the truly awesome time after the Millennium when God will reach out to all of mankind, offering them the same living waters that we are being offered now. Other speakers included Messrs. Sheldon Monson, Jonathan McNair, John Hunter, and James Arnaldo.

The choir and special music were very uplifting. Brethren were also offered a Friday night Bible Study where Mr. McNair discussed the importance of family based on godly principles and how the godly family will be the core of a righteous society in Tomorrow’s World.

Activities included a pool party, mini-golf and go-carts for children and adults, Bowling Night, Singles’ Day at a local brewery, Children’s Corner, a Seniors’ Luncheon, and a Progressive Fellowship Afternoon. Some of the teens and young adults played flag football and soccer. The Dinner Dance was a highlight, with an elegant Asian theme, beautiful decorations, and a generous buffet meal.

Each day was closed by brethren singing hymns at our “Evening Reflection” gathering. It was a very profitable Feast, and brethren demonstrated godly character at every opportunity.

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, COLORADO

Four hundred and forty-eight Feast-goers joyfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in Glenwood Springs, nestled in a beautiful valley on the banks of the rushing

waters of the Colorado River. Bright blue skies, snowcapped (Rocky) Mountains and the striking fall colors—with leaves of gold, red and purple—served as a picture-perfect display of God’s beauty each day of the Feast.

God blessed us with fine weather, fantastic views, great activities, encouraging Bible Studies and a stirring “Bible Jeopardy” to challenge us! The special music was simply lovely, and the sermons and sermonettes inspired and spiritually focused, from opening night to the Last great Day.

The great examples of our brethren clearly showed they were indeed “seizing the moment” as brethren from many places in the United States and Canada collectively let their lights shine toward each other and in the local community. The Ramada Hotel staff also commented on the great attitudes and togetherness, stating that the Living Church of God was “just totally the best group of people we have ever had visit and stay with us.”

This wonderfully balanced, spirit-filled and like-minded body in Glenwood Springs unquestionably enjoyed their best Feast ever. Many thanks to all who served so diligently to make it work smoothly in this millennial setting!

NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS

The Texas hill country town of New Braunfels was once again host for 459 brethren celebrating God’s Feast. Members heard powerful messages that carried the themes of coming out of the world and preparing for the Kingdom of God in practical ways. Messrs.

Karl Beyersdorfer, Wallace Smith, Shannon Christal, Gene Hilgenberg and Phil Sena gave sermons. Four Bible Studies were also conducted during the week. Many commented on the spiritual food as the highlight of the Feast.

An estimated 100-plus members unable to attend the Festival watched a video stream of each service, Bible study and other activities through a link from the MyLCG Web page. This was the third year in a row that New Braunfels has provided live video to LCG members.

Activities catered to all, with many being free or economically priced. The teens had the opportunity to partake in a culinary class, while the singles enjoyed a relaxing dinner cruise on the San Antonio River Walk. Family Day activities included a variety show, a Texas barbeque dinner, and a Western



ball. Almost everyone took part in the free Bowl-a-Rama, where an entire bowling alley was reserved for Feast-goers.

A spirit of cooperation and joy pervaded the entire Feast, which became evident during services one day when power was lost in the New Braunfels Civic Center. Running on emergency back-up generators for reduced lighting, a karaoke machine was bought at a local electronics store to supply sound for the messages. The entire service, except special music, went on in its entirety. Everyone enjoyed the unexpected adventure, with a bonus of extra time to fellowship!

By all accounts, it was obvious that this year's Feast in New Braunfels was blessed by God.

NEWPORT, OREGON

Along the beautiful Oregon coast in the city of Newport, 240 brethren gathered to rejoice and observe God's Feast of Tabernacles.

Surrounded by beaches, sea life and quaint shops, and with the backdrop of the powerful Pacific Ocean, brethren truly rejoiced together. Enjoying the culinary delights of a small seaside town with its many and varied tourist options,



including a world-class aquarium, whale-watching tours and deep sea fishing, brethren experienced a foretaste of God's Kingdom in a millennial setting.

The sense of community was enhanced by the opportunity for brethren to stay in comfort and peace at the same establishment where services were held. Everywhere you turned you would see brethren, from the on-site restaurant to the hallways and parking lot, and even in the shops, restaurants and local attractions in town.

Although the physical attractions and experiences were exceptional, the spiritual rewards were much greater. Mr. Gary Ehman from Headquarters reminded us that we are to "radiate" Jesus Christ, and that we are lights. Mr. Rand Millich, Regional Pastor for the Mid west, instructed us to visualize the Kingdom and what families should be like in light of the Scriptures. Our Festival Coordinator, Mr. Harold Way, encouraged us to seek God's will and oneness through His Government. All of the spiritual food focused on learning to live God's way, so that we might be examples to a dying world and prepare for our role to serve humanity.

God blessed us with abundance in physical and spiritual delights. We are now prepared, through His uplifting inspired messages, to return to our normal routines and life as humble lights to the world.

PANAMA CITY BEACH, FLORIDA

Blue skies converged with blue waters of the Gulf at the Wyndham Bay Point Resort in Panama City Beach, Florida, welcoming brethren to the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles. We were blessed to have Dr. and Mrs. Meredith with us for the entire Feast.

Dr. Meredith gave the opening address live; then on the first day of the Feast he spoke on "Why Are We Here?" and then on "Our Ultimate Destiny" on the Last Great Day. Mr. and Mrs. Ames joined us at the middle of the Feast. Messrs. Ames, Jack Lowe, and Lambert Greer brought additional messages, and the spiritual food was truly a "feast."

As many as 1,306 in attendance came to rejoice before God, and rejoice we did! Panama City Beach offers many amenities. It has fine restaurants, hotels and condominiums in abundance, and beautiful beaches with the prettiest sunsets in the world. In addition to the inspiring messages, the brethren enjoyed many activities. There was a Singles' Sunset Cruise and a Dolphin Watch Cruise for everyone. The Dinner Dance was a hit, with Dr. and Mrs. Meredith showing everyone how it's done with the first dance. The teens enjoyed a great afternoon at the park with food, games, and tons of fun. Our Family Day was held at Rock-It Lanes again this year. About 600 brethren joined in the fun of bowling, skating, billiards, games, fellowship, and eating as much pizza as they wanted. God truly put His blessings on the Panama City Beach Feast site, and most

everyone thought it was the best Feast ever! Both physically and spiritually, it was certainly a "feast... of fat things" (Isaiah 25:6).



SANTA MARIA, CALIFORNIA

Three hundred and four exuberant brethren gathered in the town of Santa Maria, for the Feast of Tabernacles in 2011. Located three hours north of Los Angeles, Santa Maria is surrounded by verdant vineyards, coastal mountains, and the rolling Pacific Ocean. It is blessed with a Mediterranean climate, with morning and evening fog, ocean breezes and mid-day sunshine. Festival services were held at the historic Santa Maria Inn, built in 1917, an elegant landmark of the central California coast, made even more charming by a

helpful and welcoming staff who truly seemed delighted that we were there!

Messages were brought by Mr. James Ginn, Festival Coordinator Dr. Jeffrey Fall, Mr. Rod McNair and Mr. Norman Aitchison.

Planned activities included a Singles' Mingle, a Singles' Cruise on beautiful Morro Bay, Bowling Night, and a Teens' Mixer. Several dozen brethren took to the rolling dunes at nearby Oceano Beach for exhilarating ATV rides. Brethren were also delighted by an educational tour of the world-famous "Hearst Castle," located just an hour-and-a-half of picturesque driving up the coast from Santa Maria. The magnificent Mediterranean-style country house was built as a private retreat by the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst in the early 1900s. Besides the famous art and impressive antiques showcased, the home offers stunning, panoramic views of the surrounding hills and the nearby Pacific Ocean.

Family Day was held at Waller Park, a huge, peaceful, and tree-studded park just a few miles from the Santa Maria



Inn. Ideal weather made for an enjoyable afternoon of warm fellowship, with many brethren participating in badminton, horseshoes, and other games. A mouthwatering barbecue was capped off with ice cream and toppings! The highlight of the Feast

was the Dinner Dance, an elegant evening where everyone enjoyed dining, dancing, and musical entertainment provided by talented brethren, including a "name that tune" game that got everyone laughing and singing. Santa Maria, in 2011, was an inspiring and unforgettable Feast!

WISCONSIN DELLS, WISCONSIN

Once again, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin hosted the Living Church of God for the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles. Our third year of meeting in the "Dome," which is part of the Chula Vista Resort, offered the brethren the feeling of separation from the world as we felt God's Holy Spirit fill the dome and inspire the messages. Approximately 330 attended the Feast, traveling from all over the United States and parts of Canada. It was awe-inspiring to experience the beautiful fall colors and crisp, comfortable weather throughout the Feast.

There was a tremendous spirit of love and zeal shown by the brethren along with a "sense of urgency" as we navigate

through life at the end of an age. The sense of positive energy exemplified by the brethren was a true example of the "Kingdom Way" in action! The messages were encouraging and inspiring from the very start. We heard so many positive messages, which helped us all to paint a picture in our mind's eye of the reality of the soon-coming Kingdom of God!

Powerfully exemplified at this Feast was the overwhelming spirit of service that exuded from everyone who served. One could sense the desire to please God and serve fellow man made

evident from the team that God put together. It was truly an inspiration to witness.

Some of the highlights included a singles and teen mixer, a Seniors' Luncheon served by teen volunteers, and a Teens' Afternoon at the expansive Chula Vista Resort water park. There was a much appreciated Bible Study by Mr. Charles Ogwyn on "Teaching Children to Love God's Way," and an Italian Buffet for deacons and elders before services on the Sabbath. Family Day was on Sunday with a balloon twister and other entertainments for all ages. On Monday afternoon, many members enjoyed the unique "ziplining" activity at the Bigfoot Zipline, and Tuesday night was the always popular Family Dinner Dance, with a theme of "All Things Made New!" The final planned event was an open mini-golf activity on Wednesday. Many enjoyed the extra opportunity to fellowship in between services on the first and Last Holy Days with a buffet meal provided by the Chula Vista Resort.

Again, God's way of give was evident through all of those who gave of their time and resources to help ensure that others had a super Feast!

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI, CANADA

Eighty excited brethren assembled in Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province, for the Feast of Tabernacles. Feast-goers traveled to "The Island" by air, ferry or the thirteen-kilometer bridge which links it to the mainland and they were welcomed by an assortment of fall foliage and farms prepared for the spring planting seasons.

Highlights included sermons by Evangelist Gerald Weston and elders Frank Best, Dale Trennery and John Strain.

One lady who arrived on crutches was anointed before services on the third day. After services she was walking without her crutches, and later in the week she was on the floor dancing! There were also baptisms as four new members were added to the family of God. Activities included a luncheon for deacons and elders, an afternoon of bowling, and a Dinner Dance which followed an afternoon of dance instruction by one of the members from the Fredericton, New Brunswick congregation. Visitors included members from western and central Canada, along with some from the

United States and one member from Scotland. Once again this year a definite spirit of fellowship, love and thankfulness permeated the Feast.

ORFORD, QUEBEC, CANADA

The Feast this year brought the shedding of leaves during a mixture of sun and rain in Orford, Quebec. Autumn provided a beautiful backdrop for the brethren to enjoy a peaceful, millennial, and spiritually rich Feast.

One of the subjects covered during the Feast was the power of the love of God, which was manifest in the fellowship among the 215 brethren present. Other topics covered, and applied very nicely by the brethren, included: Why We Are Here, God's Laws and Judgments, and Catching the Vision of the World Tomorrow. The importance of teaching children the benefits of living God's way of life was discussed during the Bible study. Evangelist Mr. Gerald Weston enriched the brethren with inspiring messages about the wonders of God's creation and what is to come. The brethren truly enjoyed the richness of the spiritual food.

The highlight of this year's Feast, as far as activities are concerned, was the Talent Show. Most of the family of God here gathered on Sunday night to enjoy and encourage the 18 different performers on stage. Brethren were impressed and fascinated by the variety of performances. For ninety minutes of pure pleasure, singers, guitar-, violin- and even spoons-players shared their gifts, and we had a lovely evening.

The Singles' and Teens' Activity was also very interesting. They were able to visit a copper mine that was in operation until 1907. There they learned of the harsh conditions of life in those days. Miners as young as 14 years old worked twelve-hour days, earning a dollar a day. Working without machines, they hand-dug the mine by candle light and in precarious conditions.

It was 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, CANADA

Surrounded by orchards and vineyards, Penticton is nestled between two beautiful lakes in the heart of the fertile Okanagan Valley. With a rich early history when thousands of God's people gathered to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles under a massive tent, the city again became the perfect setting for the Feast.

In a warm and comfortable setting, some 230 brethren and families gathered for a joyous reunion. People from lands as distant as Singapore, Australia, Switzerland and Barbados and as near as the United States and Eastern Canada united in brotherly love, "knit together" as one family.

Our spiritual feast began with an exploration of the coming Kingdom of God. As spiritual travelers we learned to rejoice at the Feast and draw refreshment from the word of God. After renewing our strength with biblical descriptions of our soon-coming responsibilities, we were treated to an informative Friday Night Bible Study on the progress and accomplishments of the Work.

Our days were filled with wonderful sermons on what it means to be spirit beings in God's Kingdom, and the spiritual planting and harvest of first-fruits. With a better understanding of the spiritual significance of the Feast, we were taught about the importance of meekness, gentleness and mercy that comes with servant leadership. After a foretaste of the Millennium, we heard an insightful exploration of the commitment, training and endurance required to become an "Ironman," the title granted upon successful completion of a grueling local triathlon. Applying the same principles and with Jesus Christ as our spiritual trainer, we can strive to become spiritual Ironmen.



On the Last Great Day we were provided with examples of deception and false doctrine that obscure the true meaning of the day, the hope of mankind, and the opportunity of salvation for those who never knew God or Jesus Christ.

Activities included delicious luncheons and a Dinner Dance with impressive entertainment, great cuisine and wonderful fellowship. A host of well-organized activities for families, seniors and singles provided outdoor adventures with breathtaking views. One-hour paddlewheel cruises on Okanagan Lake included a Singles' Dinner Cruise. A ninety-minute panoramic ride on the Kettle Valley Steam Railway to a trestle bridge above the canyon floor was followed by a tasty barbecue picnic. Winery tours offered visits to scenic vineyards and a sampling of some of the best wines in Canada. It was truly a Feast we will long remember!

BUXTON, ENGLAND

This year's Feast in the United Kingdom was held at the Victorian spa town of Buxton, set high in the spectacular Derbyshire Peak District of central England. Two hundred and forty-five brethren from the U.K. and Ireland, along with transfers from the United States and Canada, other European countries, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, all assembled together for a memorable and successful Feast. The

weather was mixed, with some cool temperatures and rain, but generally dry and sunny weather when we really needed it for activities. This somewhat remote town has a reputation for high quality, and with a broad range of accommodations and attractions, it was ideal for our needs.

We met at the four-star Barcelo Palace Hotel where many members stayed. Their magnificent and regal High Peaks Meeting Hall with its high ceiling and colourful decorations provided an ideal meeting place. Inspiring Feast messages concentrated on what God's future Kingdom on earth will be like, as well as what each of us must do in order to be a part of it. The stage was beautifully dressed with floral decorations in an autumnal, harvest theme. Special music was of the highest quality, appropriately complementing the messages. Some 30 to 40 people indicated this was their first LCG Feast, and there was one baptism at the Feast.

Messrs. Davy Crockett and Wayne Pyle were guest speakers from Charlotte, and Regional Director Mr. Rod King returned from South Africa to give sermons on the last two days. Mr. Will McLoughlin gave a memorable and moving sermon on Christ as our Elder Brother. Feast Coordinator Mr. John Meakin, also conducted the interactive Bible Study on "Teaching Children to Love God's Way." Mrs. Shirley Apartian, who travelled with the Crocketts and Pyles, was another welcome guest from our Charlotte headquarters.

Delicious buffet lunches were served on both Holy Days. Coach (bus) trips took members on a guided tour of the Peak District and to Chatsworth House, stately home of the Dukes of Devonshire. We enjoyed a Saturday Night Barn Dance and a visit to the local Poole's Cavern limestone caves. There were two opportunities to enjoy presentations at the renowned and opulent Buxton Opera House. And there was plenty of time for members to fellowship and share meals together. The overall feeling was that God gave us a very special Feast with timely and motivating messages. We plan to return to Buxton again in 2012.

HYERES, FRANCE

From 17 nations 255 exuberant brethren, 15 of them keeping the Feast for the first time, enjoyed a truly millennial setting at the Riviera Beach Club on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In the outskirts of Hyeres/Toulon, we were blessed with brilliant sunshine, balmy winds and glorious temperatures.

This was the scene for Messrs. Rick Stafford, James Meredith and Rees Ellis to baptize Htoo Wah (grandson of the late Mr. Saw Lay Beh) and Dah Bleh of the Burmese Karen people, now living in Europe.

Services were held at the centrally located auditorium with translations into French, English, Spanish and German. The Feast tone was set with an opening message by Mr. Ray Clore on the importance of starting the Feast right and leaving our

dirty shoes at the door. The next day the young men took his advice literally and graciously cleaned everyone's shoes before they entered the auditorium. We were also blessed with visiting elders David Wakefield, Rick Stafford and James Meredith. Mr. Jean-Louis Stein gave his first Feast sermon as a newly ordained elder.

Excursions were booked to visit one of France's renowned perfumeries, Moulinard, in the mountain village of Grasse. Cassis and Port Grimaud gave visitors the opportunity to discover the beautiful creeks and canals of these seaside villages. Other activities included early morning jogging around the salt pans, scuba diving, go-carting, tennis, swimming, aqua-gym, zumba warm-ups, and a sing-along.

Activity highlights included a Family Day and talent show, an amazing evening of performances. Mr. Ray Clore introduced artists of all ages to demonstrate skills with piano, clarinet, guitar and singing. Mr. Rees Ellis showed pictures of the brethren in Africa and the European Summer Youth Camp in Belgium. The family activity tested participants' skills with shooting, archery, mini-golf, table tennis, and various other challenges.

Since we arrived at the end of the French summer season, we had the whole resort to ourselves from Sabbath until the end of the Feast. Eating together, staying on-site and having the family activities together fostered a truly millennial atmosphere. In light of accelerating world events, most wondered if they would have this opportunity again and deeply appreciated the closeness and bonding of the brethren in this truly unique setting.

CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS

The Feast of Tabernacles in Barbados was held at the Barbados Beach Club in the parish of Christ Church. There was a maximum attendance of 179 persons from countries including Canada, U.S.A. and Trinidad.

A total of six elders served the brethren a sumptuous array of spiritual delicacies. The menu included many messages concerning how to become better teachers, build better families, and anticipate the coming reality of the Kingdom of God.

God's people also enjoyed a feast of physical activities such as a Seniors' Luncheon, Dinner Dance, Island Tour, Family Fun and Youth Activity and a Catamaran Cruise.

Seniors were treated to a buffet luncheon at the Barbados Beach Club. The Dinner Dance held in the meeting hall on the first floor of the Barbados Beach Club consisted of a short musical presentation by the Barbadian brethren, followed by dinner in the restaurant on the ground floor, after which everyone went back upstairs to dance.

For the musical presentation, Mr. Carlos Harding gave a 25-minute survey of the customs and language of Barbados, and the song "Beautiful Barbados" was performed by the Barbadian youth. The Barbadian adults sang two

songs, “Welcome” and “Island in the Sun.” Mr. Greeman then finished the presentation with a musical rendition of “Jamaican Farewell,” played on the harmonica.

The Island Tour focused mainly on a tour of Harrison’s Cave. This was a truly memorable activity travelling in a vehicle that took us about 120 feet deep into the heart of the earth to see stalactites and stalagmites that had been growing for centuries.

The Family Fun and Youth Activity was held at the King George National Park where members enjoyed an afternoon of food, drinks, fun and games for all ages.

The Catamaran Cruise was a highlight for many, and was fully booked. Boarding took place at 4:30 p.m., and we set sail out of the Bridgetown Harbour and along the western coast of Barbados. A number of familiar landmarks came into view and seven miles along the shore we stopped at Paynes Bay for our swim with the turtles. We started our return journey to the Bridgetown port with the cool evening breeze on our faces, and safely arrived in port at about 7:45 p.m.

All in all this was a Feast that provided a vivid foretaste of the coming Millennium.

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

Sixty people kept a hot, humid and very enjoyable Feast of Tabernacles at the Tower Hotel, on Main Street, Georgetown. There were visitors from Trinidad, the United States, and Barbados. The unity, friendliness and solidarity among everyone was truly amazing. Everybody was eager to serve in any and every way possible.

The messages pointed to the wonderful World Tomorrow and the Great God who has the power, ability and desire to bring it about for the whole world. The outdoor activities included an hour-and-a-half boat ride up the tree-lined Kamuni Creek to the Santa Mission, where an outdoor service was held with visitors from the Mission present. Lunch was served after the service. The Family Fun Day was held on the bank of the Madawani Creek at Splashman’s Resort, where another outdoor service was held with lunch and recreational games following. A visit to the zoo and a boat trip to Parika—a village on the Essequibo River—concluded the outdoor activities. A Seniors’ Luncheon was given where everyone was presented with a gift, and short speeches were made to everyone’s enjoyment.

The Feast in Guyana was most memorable, enjoyable and rewarding for all who attended, with an atmosphere of love, caring and oneness which permeated the entire Festival.

HAITI

Twenty-one brethren attended services and the Last Great Day. The brethren enjoyed a variety of delicious “all inclusive” meals. In spite of the rainy season, the weather was very nice, with warm temperatures that remained in the upper 80’s. Everyone took advantage of local historical tourist attractions, shopping,

and planned Family Day activities during the Feast. It was an opportunity for the brethren to spend time together as a family. The faithful little flock in Haiti used the Feast as a time to rejoice and hear inspiring messages of a brighter future to come.

MARTINIQUE

The 2011 Feast of Tabernacles was held at the Cayalines Hotel Resort on the beautiful island of Martinique. Of all the French-speaking islands in the Caribbean, Martinique is known as the “Island of Flowers.” The beautiful colors and quiet surroundings gave each member attending the Feast a preview of Tomorrow’s World.

The weather was pleasant with temperatures in the upper 80’s. Trade wind breezes and evening sunsets over the ocean made the Feast even more enjoyable. There were 55 brethren attending the Feast in Martinique, which included members from Guadeloupe, Canada, the United States, and Switzerland.

Brethren heard eye-opening and inspiring messages from a variety of speakers including Area Pastor Dr. Wilner Pierre, Mr. Roland Lecocq, and Mr. Marcel Ginier.

The family activities included a treasure hunt, tree parasailing, trips to the beach, and several visits to other tourist attractions, including a museum with displays of the French culture. One of the highlights of the Feast was an evening theatrical presentation of the story of Esther put on by the children of Martinique.

All the visitors enjoyed a buffet-style meal following the opening night service. The brethren also enjoyed an afternoon and evening catered meal following the Last Great Day, which has become traditional at the Feast in Martinique. The brethren from Martinique sponsored these special meals as a way to welcome and bid farewell to all the visitors from other countries.

Saying goodbye was extremely hard after spending eight days together as brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church brethren in Martinique say they are already looking forward to the 2012 Feast of Tabernacles.



MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

This year marked the third year for the Feast of Tabernacles in the resort town of Montego Bay. Brethren from Canada and the United States joined the Jamaican brethren

to celebrate the Feast at the Holiday Inn Sun Spree Resort. The attendance was the highest for the Living Church of God Feast of Tabernacles in Jamaica. Our registration record showed 323 persons, with a high attendance of 337.

The messages received were positive, uplifting, and encouraging, outlining the meaning of the Feast, why we are in temporary dwellings, painting a picture of what life will be like after Christ's return, and our preparation for that future event. A joyous atmosphere was evident and this was reflected in the gusto with which the brethren sang. Love, warmth, fellowshiping, and a sense of togetherness permeated the atmosphere at worship services, the activities and at meal times.

We had encouraging attendance at our premier activity, the "Family Cook-out and Fun Day." Two hundred and ten of the brethren were in attendance to enjoy mouthwatering local foods, games, rafting and fellowship at the grounds of picturesque Martha Brae Rafting Facility. Worship service started earlier to allow for maximum fun and fellowship. Other activities at the Feast included a Teens' and Singles' Mingle, a Game Night, a "Night of Biblical Presentations," a Seniors' Luncheon, and a Spokesman's Club meeting. Day Four was designated a "Tour Day" and, as with the "Fun Day," worship service started earlier to allow the brethren more time to visit the local attractions.

Most of the comments from the brethren centered on the messages, the warmth and friendliness of the Jamaican brethren, the spirit of oneness that prevailed and the excitement of life in Tomorrow's World. Most believed that FOT 2011 was truly a foretaste of what life will be like when that world is a reality.

TOBAGO

Eleven brethren from the United States and 85 locals gathered at Trim's Meeting Hall in Crown Point, Tobago for the Feast of Tabernacles this year.

The opening night message was given some natural sound effects with a heavy downpour and the trend continued during the rest of the Feast. We were thankful, however, that, unlike in neighboring Trinidad, there was no flooding. We were even happier to hear that no members' homes were affected by the rains, even though they lived in flood-prone areas.

The sermons and sermonettes were very inspiring and "easy to digest," as they not only explained in greater detail aspects of God's Plan through these days, but also what our attitude should be as we prepare for His Kingdom. A definite highlight at the Feast this year was the fact that 17 persons, including some families, were keeping it for the first time!



The planned activities were started off by the Game Night. Brethren enjoyed Bible board games, and there were some "minute-to-win-it" games such as "Ready Spaghetti," "Double Trouble" and "Stack Attack" for the adventurous. The games rounded off with "Ring Toss" for some hard-earned and edible prizes.

The Dinner Dance was a grand affair with a live band performing. The more than 70 brethren who turned out thoroughly enjoyed the sumptuous meal and the good fellowship. The evening ended with a brief annual Festival Ball.

The Seniors' Appreciation Evening was well attended and those present were treated to good musical performances of various genres, poetry, words of encouragement and gratitude as well as a delicious meal.

The Family Day was also a success with some fun games for all ages, like treasure hunts and sack races. Again, the food was great and at the end there was still time for a dip in the ocean and some cricket.

New brethren were already beginning their plans for next year's Festival after realizing how



seriously God views these days. They expressed "no regret" about coming and said that they were already learning about ways to better handle certain problems when dealing with their family and with others.

We are very grateful to our loving heavenly Father who kept us safe throughout the Festival.

VICTOR HARBOR, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

With its clear blue skies, glistening waters surrounded by sandy beaches and a hop, skip and a jump to the local Fleurieu Peninsula wineries, it is no wonder that Victor Harbor was once again chosen as the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles site in Australia.

Like last year, services were once again held at the McCracken Country Club and we were very honoured to have brethren and visiting members from several areas around the world. Our average daily attendance stood at 210, with most of the brethren lodging in and around the Victor Harbor region. We heard messages by our Regional Director, Mr. Bruce Tyler, Area Pastor Mr. Glen Gilchrist, who shepherds the north-west area of the United States, Mr. Mal Jennings and Mr. Rob Tyler, as well as from our visiting deacon from the Netherlands, Mr. Frans Peeters.

On the first day, the brethren shared a banquet luncheon together before returning for the afternoon service. In the evening, the singles and young married couples mingled

and enjoyed a scrumptious dinner at the Blues Restaurant. Throughout the Feast, we enjoyed messages and Bible Studies filled with great encouragement and reminders about our purpose in God's grand Kingdom. Many of the brethren attended a presentation by Mr. Tony Leman, who took us on a journey to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land using computer animation.

Everyone enjoyed a themed Dinner Dance where we stepped back into the 1940's and 1950's era. With the hall beautifully decorated, many of the brethren dressed up for the evening and put on their dancing shoes.

Other activities included a Youth Day with team challenges for the teens. The seniors visited the Urimbirra Wildlife Park, where they hand fed koalas and kangaroos and see some other Aussie wildlife. Many of the local brethren demonstrated their skills and musical talents at the Talent Night. We were also blessed to have a Bible Study by Mr. Gilchrist.

For many, this year was their first Feast in the Living Church of God and they expressed their gratitude for welcoming support from all the brethren and the opportunity to worship God. With this year's Feast behind us, we look forward to next year and to the final fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for all mankind.

NELSON, NEW ZEALAND

Nelson, a seaside city on New Zealand's South Island, again hosted God's people for the Feast of Tabernacles. One hundred and ten members and their families came from across New Zealand and Australia to keep the Feast in this beautiful environment. One visiting ministerial couple, Gaylyn and Leona Bonjour, joined us from Charlotte, North Carolina.



In the southern hemisphere, the Feast occurs during the spring season and we were blessed with good seasonal weather. Distant mountains were snow-capped, and although there was an occasional shower, temperatures were moderate and invited us to explore God's magnificent creation.

Services were held at the Tahunanui Conference Centre and many members were accommodated at the adjacent Holiday Park, within easy walking distance of services. This made for a relaxed time with plenty of opportunity for fellowship. The Feast was imbued with a wonderful spirit of joy and brotherly love which many visitors remarked upon.

Visitors were treated to messages from traveling elders such as Mr. Dan Love from Queensland, Australia and Mr. Bonjour. Area Pastor Kinnear Penman also emphasised our need for joy and fear of God, and urged us to look forward to "The New Jerusalem."

Nelson provides many opportunities to enjoy recreation at the Feast. Our young people enjoyed cycling up a former railway line and then down the coast for a swim at the local aquatics centre. Everyone was able to visit Rabbit Island for a family afternoon which included orienteering, softball, French cricket and a number of novelty races. Other formal activities included go-karting and a Seniors' Lunch at a local restaurant. Another restaurant outing was arranged for those who had been baptised since the last Feast. Other activities included a boat ride out to a natural boulder-bank which protects Nelson Harbour, a walk to an old lighthouse, a helicopter ride, hiking, and beach barbeque picnics.

The Feast was again a wonderful opportunity for God's people to anticipate the Millennium together, worshipping God and learning many lessons which will prepare us to serve Christ and humanity in His coming Kingdom.

WEWAK, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Feast in Wewak, in the East Sepik province of Papua New Guinea, was once again held at the property of Mr. Peter Devis. Attendance on the first Holy Day was 67, which included a number of new people from the growing Church area of Maprik (about 160 kilometers west of Wewak).

The meeting hall was lovingly decorated by the brethren with sago palm branches and wild flowers, which created a wonderful millennial ambience. Mr. Devis has built several huts on his property, to which he had internal partitions added to accommodate the brethren who travelled from Maprik, and also the village of Passam.



Tropical heat by day, with a golden-red full moon by night and occasional thunderstorms accompanied the warm and hearty fellowship enjoyed by the brethren. Several sermons and sermonettes were given by Area Pastor Graeme Hemphill and elder Peter Devis, on such subjects as the three resurrections, principles of tithing, and Godly leadership. Most afternoons included lively Bible Question and Answer sessions held under shady mango trees on the property. Mrs. Devis and a

team of helpers prepared and served delicious meals during the afternoons. Mrs. Jan Hemphill led the ladies and children in learning new hymns, creating an harmonious blending of voices singing a capella.



A highlight of the Feast was a picnic day at nearby Wom Beach, where swimming activities were enjoyed by children and adults alike, and a vigorous game of volleyball was played between the married ladies and the teenagers. Mr. Devis baptised Julie Danto in the warm ocean

waters, and both he and Mr. Hemphill performed the laying on of hands. Afterwards, Mrs. Devis once again organised a sumptuous lunch, which included a colourful variety of tropical fruits such as pineapples, bananas and paw paws.

When services concluded on the Last Great Day there was a very emotional, tear-filled farewell from the dedicated and zealous brethren of Papua New Guinea.

STILBAAI, SOUTH AFRICA



Straddling the Goukou River, the quiet coastal town of Still Bay hosted God's Church for a second year. Mr. Rod King, the Regional Director for Africa, and his wife enjoyed the first part of the Feast with the 182 brethren attending in South Africa. Visitors were from the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

Sermons and sermonettes focused, amongst other points, on what to pray for during the Feast, the temporary nature of our earthly tabernacle, and how to be close as a family in the Church. Mr. King spoke about Christ as the Lion of Judah and that, as priests in the Kingdom, we would be of the priesthood of Melchizedek. He also sketched a graphic picture of what the Holy Land would look like during the Kingdom.

Youth and Singles' Activity and the Seniors' Luncheon took place on the Friday after the first Holy Day. On Sunday the annual Family Day barbeque had families taking part in volleyball, rugby, and an "Amazing Race." Sunday evening the deacons and elders had a meeting where Messrs. King and Van der Byl discussed matters of importance and got input on how to do God's Work more effectively. On Monday Mr. King had to return to the

United Kingdom to join brethren keeping the Feast there and bade us a touching farewell.

The Last Great Day came all too soon, and Mr. Pieter van der Byl gave an inspiring sermon encouraging us all to take our calling seriously so that we can be in the Kingdom to help and love all of mankind. The unity, love and teamwork of all the brethren, inspired by God's Holy Spirit, ensured yet another very happy and blessed Feast of Tabernacles.

ISIBANIA, KENYA

Eighty brethren (including 20 children) enjoyed a reflective Feast in Isibania, Kenya—a frontier town on the Tanzanian border. A little less than half attending were from Tanzania. At the outset we set twin themes of learning and rejoicing. These were well accomplished. For brethren from Eastern Kenya where severe food shortages are affecting our people, the Feast was a double blessing. We were joined by two Ugandans, two Canadians and two members from Ireland.



LAGOS, NIGERIA

The Feast of Tabernacles this year in Nigeria was observed by our small congregation at the Lagos International Trade Fair Motel. It was a Feast site which the Church of God in Nigeria has used on five previous occasions, including one in the mid-1980s. The location was serene, accessible and picturesque.

The highest attendance at the Feast was 16, which was maintained for the most part of the Feast—including two little children. The brethren were enthusiastic, joyful and inspired by the spiritual nourishment they received from the DVD sermon tapes sent from Charlotte, as well as by two Bible Studies presented locally. Highlights of the Feast included special music and a sing-along organized by the young adults.

The motel manager mentioned that, "I like the style of you people." Her remark was prompted by the genuine love and friendship demonstrated by the brethren as well as the way the brethren calmly coped with some of the physical difficulties at the location.

IMPHAL, INDIA

Thirty-five brethren attended the Feast at a place 25 kilometers north of Imphal in the foothills of the Royal Ambassadors' Academy.

We received DVDs and Audio CDs, and although there were some technical difficulties with the DVDs, we were

thankful that the audios worked. Our Feast programme closely followed the Malaysia schedule with some customisation.

There was rain on the last day and the management of the facility, a Baptist minister, was apologetic. However, we reassured him that God most likely sent the rains as a blessing for those who kept His Feast! Without the rains, our brethren in Manipur could go into the winter season with a water shortage.

Activities enjoyed included hiking, fishing, games, talent shows, and paintings. The coloring books were an instant hit with the kids and many appreciated that the Feast site also featured in the activity book.

Understanding the background of the Feasts and looking into how Israel and Judah declined because they failed to keep them, helped reinforce why the Feasts are relevant even today and will be kept in the World Tomorrow. We took time for Bible Studies on ecology, economy, government, agriculture, construction and health aspects. It helped participants think of themselves as “kings” sitting down to plan, and to meditate on some bigger perspectives.

We plan to have the same site next year, then change it to West Bengal the year after.

BATU, INDONESIA



Twenty of us gathered in the city of Batu and stayed at a scenic resort in the East Java province.

We were blessed with cool and fresh summer weather for the entire eight days. The brethren commented that the sermons provided much spiritual food and the time spent together during the activities was invaluable. Bible Studies were also given on how to rear children in a toxic, Satan-influenced world.

Mr. and Mrs. Ian (Jennifer) West, from Australia, kept the Feast with us again this year. They were a tremendous inspiration and encouragement for the local brethren. The brethren now realize, more than ever, that they are not alone and that God's people all over the world have been commanded to follow the same way of life and keep the Feast of Tabernacles in unity. The Wests' visit has greatly motivated the Indonesian brethren to improve their spiritual lives and understanding.

Now that the Feast has come to an end we must once again return home and continue our mission to preach the Gospel to the entire world.

LANGKAWI ISLAND, MALAYSIA



The Feast of Tabernacles 2011 was held at the Bayview Hotel in Langkawi Island in Malaysia. The 99 islands of Langkawi stand firm and majestic above the waters of the Straits of Malacca, off the north-western shore of the Malaysian Peninsula. By far the largest of the islands is the eponymous Pulau Langkawi with a population of some 64,792, the only other inhabited island being nearby Pulau Tuba.

A total of 70 locals and seven visitors from abroad assembled together to observe the last two annual Festivals of God. We were privileged to have Mr. and Mrs. Michael Gill from Adelaide Australia, as well as brethren from such diverse places as Mauritius, Indonesia and Australia.

The theme for the Feast in Langkawi was “Prepare to meet the King.” It was truly a Feast of God's wonderful truth about His soon-coming Kingdom, with inspired and inspiring messages not only from headquarters, but also from Mr. Michael Gill and the Festival Coordinator Mr. Rajan Moses, as well as a deacon and other local brethren.

Throughout the Feast the brethren were treated to a variety of fun and interesting activities that took advantage of what Langkawi has to offer, including a tour to the Langkawi Skybridge, as well as a terrific afternoon of island hopping, feeding eagles and swimming at a deserted island.

Two baptisms were conducted at the swimming pool of the hotel this year. After the ceremony and the laying on of hands, brethren joyfully welcomed Shalini Ramona and William Dass.

Another highlight occasion was the Spokesman Club Ladies' Night, where five members successfully completed the twelve lessons in the Spokesman's Club manual—Paul Palanny, Joseph David, Jason Babu, Ronald Moses and Jerry John. A very special certificate with Dr. Roderick Meredith's signature was presented to the club members by our visiting Mr. Gill. This year marks the first time ever in the Living Church of God that anyone in Malaysia has graduated from Spokesman Club.

Other highlights were the barbeque/sing-along featuring delicious food and serenades from some of the members, and the Talent Night which featured fine and hilarious acts such as sketches, songs and card tricks.

All the brethren enjoyed wonderfully inspiring meat in due season, great fellowship and family atmosphere, laughter, fun and love for all. This was truly the best Feast ever!

BENTOTA, SRI LANKA

This year 23 local brethren and six visitors from Australia and the United States kept the Feast at the AIDA Hotel, Bentota. This was the second consecutive year at this beautiful, tranquil resort. The brethren were blessed to dwell in a garden setting with fountains and a swimming pool on the banks of the Bentota River, with a two-minute walk to services. Every day an elephant would pass by on the way to the white sand beach, which could be reached

by a ten-minute leisurely walk.

The spiritual food through live sermons by Pastor Zig Svalbe and also DVDs from Charlotte were inspiring and focused on the

coming Kingdom of God and the greatness of our Creator. The hotel management and staff were particularly friendly, treating everyone in a very special way and hoping we would return again next year.

Activities consisted of a Talent Night, Family Day, a Dinner Dance, Seniors' Luncheon, a photography competition and Ladies' Night (Spokesman Club). The brethren enjoyed a number of boat rides on the river and through tunnels of mangroves where they enjoyed connecting with nature in a millennial setting. Many people got the chance to view and photograph colourful birds, giant lizards, a fully grown crocodile and even hold a tender baby crocodile.

The brethren in Sri Lanka were also excited to have two visitors who are interested in attending regularly, which is an answer to many prayers for growth in this part of the world.

Next year this same Feast site is being pencilled in so that many more visitors from overseas may enjoy the relaxing tropical atmosphere as they focus on the coming Kingdom of God.

THA SONG YANG, THAILAND

The Feast in Thailand was held at a small, pleasant resort in Tha Song Yang. Twenty-six attendees enjoyed daily services, shared meals, and plenty of fellowship. Other activities included children's games, hymn singing, and a Sabbath Bible Study.

Most members do not understand much English, so this year they were excited to hear messages presented in Thai, with translation into Burmese. Messages included titles such as "What Will the Millennium Be Like?" "What Will We Be Doing During the Millennium?"

"The Role of Israel during the Millennium," "Gog and Magog: What Lessons Can We Learn Today?" and "What Will We Do for Eternity?" Since we did not have any sermonette speakers, we also took the opportunity to read though the book of Deuteronomy, which helped us all learn even more.

We all look forward to meeting again next year, and even more to the time when God's Kingdom will be established on earth!

BAGUIO CITY, PHILIPPINES



Joy—it has always been the resounding symphony from Feast-goers all around the world, and this year's Feast is no exception. The crisp Baguio air rejuvenated all the Feast-goers from the teeming metropolis of Manila, and gave those from the Provinces a beautiful place to get closer to God through His creation, as King David of old did. With a total of 258 in attendance, including visitors from Switzerland, the U.S.A., Australia and China, everyone was prepared to make this year another "best Feast ever" experience.

Rounds of feasting and fellowship with old friends and new acquaintances ensued during the acquaintance party which was held after the first day. Many personal invites were sent out, and the Philippines' largest congregation, in Quezon City, making up more than half of the total attendees, met with other members from other parts of the country and the world.

The Dinner Dance, Seniors' Social, Youth and Singles' Activity, the Children's Party, the Sports Day, Festival Show and Ladies' Night were all a source of enjoyment for the brethren.

Most of all, the Feast was a most edifying experience, with inspiring sermons and lessons from Mr. Freddie Benitez from Mindanao, Luzon Pastor Basilio Osillos, Area Pastor Dayrell

Tanner, and a host of DVD sermons from Headquarters. During this Feast we all learned a wonderful lesson in being united in our efforts to serve one another and to serve God. At the same time, we have learned many valuable lessons that have brought us together in a way that reflects the coming Kingdom. An atmosphere was developed in Baguio which showed everyone was learning what it takes to be a part of God's family. It is inspiring to see how God works with us through His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of peace and harmony.

As brethren all around the world grow in the grace and knowledge of God, the brethren in the Philippines eagerly await the coming of our King of kings and Lord of lords to set everything right, and let the world know what true peace and happiness really is. All of this was commemorated in type at the Feast of Tabernacles in Baguio City.

DAVAO, PHILIPPINES



This year's Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated by 85 brethren from different parts of Mindanao, the Visayas, and Luzon. It was held at Lantaw Bukid Park Resort. About twelve kilometers from Davao International Airport and ten from the city proper, Lantaw Bukid offers lots of entertainment, such as boating, swimming pools, basketball and volleyball courts, ping pong and more. Mt. Apo, the tallest mountain in the Philippines, can be seen on a clear day, especially during noon time. The place was very significant to our celebration since a mountain represents the Kingdom of God that we look forward to.

The brethren dwelled together with unity and camaraderie, sharing their insights about God's word and meditating on it. During the opening night Mr. Felipe Casing, the Festival Coordinator, welcomed the brethren at announcements and the opening night message was given in the vernacular. Throughout the Feast the brethren enjoyed hearing the sermons given by Regional Pastor Dayrell Tanner, elders Jess Puzon, Jose Arendain, Johnny Bolences, Benito Parbo and Felipe Casing. The English sermons were translated to local dialect so that the people could clearly understand.

During the Family Night, brethren from six to eighty-six showcased their different God-given talents for singing, dancing and poetry. On the Family Day, brethren enjoyed family sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton

and ping pong. The brethren visited the Philippine Eagle Sanctuary at Calinan, Davao City, and loved watching the breathtaking beauty of different species of eagles. The people admired God's wonderful creation and meditated on how great God is for taking care of us even more so than the fowls of the air. The seniors had their fun, too, as they shared their different trials and experiences. It was amazing to see those who have passed through difficult trials still live in faith.

This year's Feast of Tabernacles was a shift away from the world and its cares, into the reality of the Kingdom of God. During the departure the brethren gave each other hugs and kisses and with tears of joy in their eyes, said, "We did it and can't wait till next year's Feast. Our prayer on our trip back home is, 'Thy Kingdom come!'"

DON CARLOS, PHILIPPINES

Don Carlos saw 152 attendees for the Feast this year. Local members came from different areas in central Mindanao, and elders came from Manila and from some of the other congregations in Mindanao. It was great to have a pulpit exchange program in place to allow the visiting elders to experience other sites outside their local Church areas, and for the brethren to experience different speakers. The messages throughout the Feast were delivered in local dialect and in English.



The messages were very inspiring and relevant, and the physical foods were delicious. Dr. Meredith's opening and closing messages were translated into the vernacular for the benefit of some brethren who speak Visayan.

The Don Carlos Feast Hall was donated to the Church some years ago by the late Pastor Mr. Encardio Benitez. It was upgraded last year, and is now a very pleasant venue for the Feast, having beautiful grounds with lovely flowers, which are maintained by the members who live nearby.

One of the highlights of the Feast this year was the special day at Waig Crystal Spring Resort. In the morning everyone boarded large trucks or other vehicles, and rode to the Resort where services were conducted. The hall for services was spacious and was fully air-conditioned, which was much appreciated by the brethren. After services, brethren enjoyed a delicious luncheon in the dining area. As it was not the Sabbath, most of the brethren and children went to the beautiful spring-

fed swimming pools. To top the day off, four ladies from the Mauswagon Congregation were baptized in the pools.

The leaders' "Goat Together" on Friday evening at Freddie Benitez's residence included our special guest elder Jes Puzon and his family, from Manila. Tasty foods were served, and of course at a "Goat Together" freshly butchered-on-site goat was also served. The leaders also enjoyed a special event, which was held at the Battle Field Function Hall in the town of Maramag, the next town after Don Carlos. We enjoyed dances and a variety of talent acts. Mr. Gideon Benitez delivered a message about the importance of leadership.

All who attended Don Carlos this year were much uplifted and excited to take what they learned at the Feast back home, and to put it into practice in their daily lives.

MARANDING, PHILIPPINES



The gathering of God's people to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles was once again commemorated in His chosen Feast site in Maranding. Brethren coming from the Claveria, Cagayan de Oro City, Iligan City, Maranding, Sindangan and Bogabongan congregations welcomed each other with genuine smiles, expressing the inner happiness they felt that once again they could meet to celebrate God's Feast—a Feast truly designed to renew and nourish our faith by feeding with the spiritual food of God's word.

There were visiting ministers, their families, and members from their respective areas, namely Mr. and Mrs. Jes Puzon from Luzon, and three members of his family, Mr. and Mrs. Felipe Casing with four Church members from Davao City, Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Bolences from South Cotabato, and Mr. and Mrs. Elesio Catamco from Bukidnon.

Activities such as Children's Night, Youth Night, Couples' Night, Singles' Night, Seniors' Night, and Leaders' Fellowship Night were among the special activities organized for different brethren, so that they could mingle with other brethren from different congregations. They were able to fellowship and to express and share their God-given talents through presentations. A special Children's Bible Study was also organized. All these activities helped the brethren to see how each individual is special in God's eyes, and that we all have roles to fulfill, so that we may walk with God towards righteousness. A special Bible quiz was conducted for the brethren to evaluate their personal knowledge of the Bible.

Sports, picnics and the farewell party were some of the other physically exhausting activities that taught our brethren the spirit of sportsmanship, cooperation, and unity, and helped the brethren bond spiritually.

These eight days spent celebrating God's Feast strengthened our faith and fuelled our spirits to move on and be ready to take on another year of challenges. The brethren went home with cherished memories, gratitude, joy, contentment, inner peace and tranquility. Each individual was filled with God's spiritual nourishment, bringing out the inner strength and courage needed to face the world and to fight life's obstacles and adversaries with God's help.

ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

Incredible and majestic: Old Colonial Antigua, nestled between three volcanoes, greeted 96 brethren coming from the United States, Mexico, Central and South America. All in attendance grew in the wisdom and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from start to finish. The differing languages posed no barrier, as Philadelphian love permeated every aspect of this year's Feast. The abundance of love, giving and service surely ascended to God's throne as a sweet aroma.



Thank you to everyone who participated in making this Festival in Antigua the best Feast of Tabernacles yet!

COSTA RICA

This year, for the first time in Costa Rica, the Living Church of God celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast site at Hotel Brilla Sol was a few minutes from the international airport. The small hotel was enough for lodging 31 participants from the United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia and Costa Rica.

The sermons and sermonettes were very inspiring for everybody, and we all felt pleased with the spiritual nourishment. Besides that, we enjoyed excellent food, comfortable rooms, and a spacious meeting hall. There were several family activities as well as



a trip to a national reserve park that showed the different animal species in Costa Rica, and three different climates from the country.

Something to highlight was that it rained 100 percent of the time. We have never experienced such a situation. On the contrary, it has always been notorious that during the Feast it has not rained on our country. Nevertheless, no one got sick and all the planned activities were carried out, with the exception of a visit to a volcano.

Services were only in Spanish, but we hope in the future to have translation into English available for the brethren.

HUATUSCO, MEXICO



More than a hundred brethren celebrated the Feast with cordiality and harmony in Huatusco, a city in the beautiful state of Veracruz. We appreciated the presence of elder Gene Hilgenberg, along with his wife and daughter, who visited us from Tulsa, Oklahoma in the United States.

We were able to see the fruit of Spokesman Club through several local men who gave sermonettes and even split sermons. Throughout the Feast we appreciated the warm fellowship as brethren enjoyed activities such as a children's fiesta and a traditional Mexican Night with food, mariachi and a dance. Mr. Hilgenberg gave one Bible Study on Ladies' Night and another along with a sports activity. He encouraged us to be thankful to God for His mercy and for the opportunity to observe His Sabbaths.

We felt a spirit of unity, and saw how the messages and events were helping us prepare for the coming Kingdom of God and the Marriage Supper with Jesus Christ. After the Last Great Day we parted, with sadness, but thankful that our lamps had been filled with oil and that we had been given the seed that will let us bring forth good fruit for next year's Feast cycle.

OXAPAMPA, PERU

Ninety-two enthusiastic members from Peru, the United States, Bolivia, Colombia, Switzerland, South Africa, El Salvador and the Canary Islands attended God's Feast in Oxapampa, Peru. Settled by Germans, Oxapampa is nestled in the Andes Mountains 8,000 feet above sea level. Everyone stayed at the Trapiche Resort and enjoyed fellowshiping and meals together. The setting was millennial!

We began with an eleven-hour bus trip from Lima winding through the scenic Andes mountains. Crossing the pass about 14,000 feet above sea level was quite challenging. Those from Cerro de Pasco traveled about six hours by bus.

In addition to Mr. Meredith's inspiring messages on the first and last days and the insightful "Behind the Work" DVD, members were treated to live sermons by Mr. Paul Shumway from the U.S.A. and Mr. Armando Orrego from Colombia. It was a real blessing to have two translators for the messages.

Members were treated to traditional dances by the Cerro de Pasco and Lima brethren. Costuming and choreography were superb. A real highlight was seeing the very young children take part. The internationals were especially inspired and deeply moved by the teamwork and professionalism of the dancers, and the young children absolutely stole the hearts of everyone present!

Nearly everyone went on a challenging hike in the mountains to an elevation of over 10,000 feet. We hiked to a lovely waterfall where several swam in the fresh, cool water. Again, truly millennial!

Some internationals brought suitcases of clothing, Bibles, Bible markers, crayons, watches, and other items for the local brethren. Seeing God's children of all ages wearing their new outfits at services on the following day was a real joy! The love, gratitude and warmth built an endearing bond.

About 20 percent of those present attended their very first Feast with the Living Church of God—a true blessing! Some lives were dramatically changed at the Feast and we pray that all will continue with us on God's wonderful path to His Kingdom! God certainly blessed His people in Oxapampa and we had a truly outstanding Feast!

NECOCHEA, ARGENTINA

Well down the South Atlantic coast of Argentina, at the beginning of the Patagonian Peninsula, is the resort town of Necochea. South of Necochea is a stretch of wide beach with a pine forest park full of trails and sand dunes. Near this park is the *Cabanas del Pinar* (The Pine Cabins) where about 50 brethren from South America, the United States and Australia met for the *Fiesta de los Tabernáculos*. We had the small, neat facility to ourselves, which added to the intimacy of the fellowship among the brethren. The South American brethren received the foreign brethren with joy and enthusiasm. In Argentina, the greeting rituals can take quite a while—and pleasantly so. Many South American brethren are isolated, and the connection with other brethren from around the world is very important to them.

Spiritual food was provided by Mr. Dexter Wakefield, an elder visiting from the United States, and by Argentine elder Mr. Aaron Bravo, along with strong video messages from Headquarters. Translations were provided by Mr. Milton Acosta, a native of Uruguay now living in Tasmania, Australia.



The South American brethren greatly value God's Truth, and were glad to have several extra Bible studies in addition to the sermons. The physical food

was hearty Argentine provincial fare—which means *lots of beef*! The Argentines are quite serious about their *asados*, the Argentine version of BBQ. Our member from Tierra Del Fuego on the southern tip on the continent, Sr. Enrique Cattaneo, brought not only his family of seven, but also 20 kilos of local lamb. That, along with a side of beef cooked on a grill over wood coals, made for quite a feast one evening.

The Argentines also love their horses. There was a ranch, a few hundred meters down the road from our *cabanas*, where the rancher had ten well-trained horses available for a modest

price. On three afternoons, the owner took the brethren on a ride up the long, deserted South Atlantic beach nearby. Those who wanted to could gallop up and down the remote beach, or just ride with their brethren enjoying the beauty of God's creation. That creation included not only the pounding surf but an occasional seal as well.

The South Americans greatly appreciated seeing their brethren from abroad, and it was mutual! We hope it will not be long until we can see each other again.

—Compiled by William Williams from contributions by Marc Arseneault, Rodger Bardo, Gideon Benitez, Felipe Casing, Wyatt Ciesielka, Frank Dickinson, Rees Ellis, Lawdi Ferreira, Fitzroy Greeman, Bernie and Mara Hoffman, Jack Lowe, Ruben Lujan Jr., K. Sani Mao, Jonathan McNair, Rod McNair, John Meakin, Joseph Moses, Rajan Moses, Arius Nusantara, O. Akin-Ogundeji, Kinnear Penman, Wilner Pierre, Jahra Midas A. Roxas, George Schaubeck, Phil Sena, Paul Shumway, James Sweat, Dayrell Tanner, Rob Tyler, Marcela Vazquez, Dexter B. Wakefield, Phil West and Bill Whitaker

The Two Trees

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turn toward the tree of life, and choose the selfless way of “give.” Yet, God is not asking us to do this on our own strength. He has given us His Holy Spirit, through which we can use God's own strength to draw closer to Him. God does not want us to fail—and He has given us what it takes to succeed! Our calling gives us the opportunity—and the ability—to come out from under the tree of darkness and death, into the life-giving shade of the tree of life!

Although the task in front of us may sometimes seem daunting, even overwhelming, we should not let ourselves become discouraged. God Himself “has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:12–14).

WHERE ARE YOU?

By examining our fruits, we can determine which tree we are seeking. The tree of the knowledge of good and

evil produces fruit that looks attractive and at first seems desirable (Genesis 3:6–7). However, that fruit contains a poison deadlier than any toxin known to science! That poison is the “way of get”—a self-directed orientation that works slowly into every aspect of life, sapping our spiritual strength, warping the body and the mind, and ultimately leading to death. How can we recognize the symptoms of eating from this deadly tree? Paul gives us a helpful list: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21).

Where we find these symptoms in our lives, we can know that we have been eating from the forbidden tree. Thankfully, there is an antidote. When we repent, and we rely on God's Spirit to bring about a real change in our spiritual “diet,” we can overcome the deadly effects of our past sins.

What happens when we rely on God's Spirit instead of the fruit of self-

will? Paul listed some symptoms that we should be able to find in our lives: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no [penalty of the] law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–25).

Brethren, we cannot afford to wait until “later” to make the needed changes in our lives. We do not know when our lives will end. Every moment God has given us is precious, and not to be wasted. As Paul wrote: “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:11–14).

This is the lesson of the two trees. Are we applying it in how we spend our lives?

—LCG Editorial Staff

Go Deeper in Conversion and Faith!

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sensitivity and awareness to that fact! It is vital that we truly “commune” with God on a regular basis—**far more** profoundly than most of us have been doing. It is vital that we constantly ask ourselves: “What would Jesus *really* do in this situation?”

Jesus Christ said to His disciples—and to **us**: “If anyone desires to come after Me, *let him deny himself*, and take up his **cross**, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24–25).

In our present “me” generation, it is difficult for us to fully comprehend what it means to “deny” oneself or to “take up one’s cross” and follow Christ. But we need to focus on these verses more than ever. For some of us will be called upon to *leave everything*—perhaps even our own lives—during the next several years!

You and I normally desire to “save” our lives, in the sense that we want a continuing stream of “good things,” pleasures, friends and a nice

“comfortable” lifestyle. But Jesus calls us to grow to a profound spiritual awareness that we *really are* “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” as God’s *true* saints have always been (Hebrews 11:13).

Therefore, we must develop a genuine “fellowship” with Christ and with the Father (1 John 1:3). We must soberly heed John’s statement: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (vv. 5–6).

AVOID THE DARKNESS

Many of us allow areas of “darkness” to enter our lives all too frequently. We allow a “watering down” process to enter our thinking, and often manage to reason our way around the **total commitment** we should have to our great God! I say this as one weak human being who experiences *my own* weaknesses, brethren! I have to *fight myself* every minute of every hour of every day as, I am sure, all of you do. It is *so easy* to allow our human minds

to make “excuses” for the lower level of love and obedience that we often display in our walk with God.

However, as this world continues to suffer all kinds of convulsions, terrorist activities, disease epidemics, drought, famine and earthquakes, it is vital that we *see* that God is truly intervening in **exactly** the way He prophesied, and that it is truly time to *put our house in order*! May God help every one of us do this! And we must fully realize that it is **only** through Jesus Christ living in us that this may be possible. We must *always* remember Jesus’ statement: “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*” (John 15:5). Only through *His* strength may we truly overcome and grow spiritually to the *high spiritual level* that God wants—“to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). We all need to experience this *true overcoming and growth*, which will only come as you “**seek** the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you **seek Him** with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29). ■

Which “Armstrong” Do You Follow?

Continued from page 2

to do is listen again to my scores of taped sermons and telecasts, and read the *hundreds* of articles I have written over the years. I and those with me in the Living Church of God *do emphasize* the Gospel of the Kingdom of God—especially as it is more “current” in its application today just before Christ’s return. This is very different from the worldly churches, which do not understand **at all** the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and who greatly misunderstand Jesus Christ’s role in the Gospel.

Brethren, there is a big danger for those who get this wrong. It goes beyond people’s misunderstanding of Mr. Armstrong’s teachings. The big problem I want to address here is the human desire to “worship” another human being—to make another person a sort of infallible “champion” and even look to him *instead* of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Remember the Apostle Paul’s urgent plea to the Christians at Corinth, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same

judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Then later Paul wrote, “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ’” (vv. 11–12). Today, a number of people—whether they even realize it or not—are virtually saying “I am of **Armstrong!**” These people are forgetting that Mr. Armstrong himself taught that all of us should be “of Christ”—worshiping **Him** and God the Father whom He came to reveal! You should not look to **any** man—including me—in an attitude of adulation. To do so is **wrong**. It is **idolatry!**

The **real** Mr. Armstrong spoke about the vital importance of *worshiping* Jesus Christ, and recognized that His life and death and resurrection are a **vital** part of the message we should be preaching. I remember Mr. Armstrong devoting an entire sermon to that topic at our Headquarters in Pasadena. He said, in effect, “Brethren, most of you know that I have constantly emphasized the message about the Kingdom of God—the **Government** of God—and talked very little about Jesus Christ. I may have been responsible for misleading you in this, simply because the message about Christ and His Person has been dwelt upon so much by the Protestants and

that they have *totally neglected* the message Christ brought about the Kingdom of God. But I realize that **either** extreme is wrong and that we *must not leave Christ out* of our preaching about the Kingdom of God or the true Gospel. For Christ will soon be the **King** of that coming Kingdom. We must *worship* and honor Him as a **vital part** of our message and **not** neglect that aspect of God's true message to mankind!"

Brethren, though I am paraphrasing, the above is **very close** to the essence of what Mr. Armstrong said during that sermon. Many hundreds of people were there—no doubt a number who are still living and will recall Mr. Armstrong making those statements. He said many similar things over the years in various ministerial meetings, in classes and on other occasions where I was able to hear him *personally*! Anyone who suggests otherwise is *dead wrong*!

Dear brethren, I have in front of me at this moment **three** examples of how Mr. Armstrong not only spoke but **wrote** about the Gospel. The first one is an old co-worker letter from June 9, 1947. Mr. Armstrong writes:

"THIS is the TRUE GOSPEL—the Good News of the Kingdom of God, its Message of the right way to live, its Message of redemption thru Christ, and God's gift of eternal life! Yes, THIS is the KINGDOM OF GOD which Christ revealed over 1900 years ago—THIS is the true NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL—the TRUE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!"

The *second* quote from Mr. Armstrong—*among many others*—is this letter he wrote from Palm Springs on December 12, 1958:

"We do not seem to stress sufficiently CHRIST as SAVIOR—faith in Him, and then His faith in us (living faith which is inseparable from obedience). We must remember that the orthodox fundamental worldly churches and evangelists stress almost solely just CHRIST, and FAITH in Him, and accepting Him as personal Saviour. Our more or less general omission of this leads many automatically to assume we preach the gospel of EARNING salvation by WORKS. To a world accustomed to hearing almost altogether about CHRIST and a 'born-again experience' (which of course they do not understand), we put ourselves and God's TRUTH in a wrong light. Instead of speaking of being CONVERTED—CHANGED—by real repentance, surrender, FAITH in CHRIST, and receiving God's Holy Spirit, we speak of 'coming into the TRUTH.' A man may 'come into the TRUTH'—that is, let a certain amount of truth into his mind, and still be totally unconverted. We must not lead people to gather that we believe only in Commandment keeping (which to them means SATURDAY-keeping) and EARNING salvation by WORKS."

We must stress the WHOLE TRUTH more—repentance, surrender, CHRIST AS SAVIOR, being CHANGED by God's Spirit

as God's GIFTS, by GRACE, following our conforming to His conditions of repentance and FAITH IN CHRIST—the CHANGE from carnality to Spiritual-mindedness—being BEGOTTEN—and THEN the overcoming and enduring and GROWING life of obedience and living faith, with Christ living His LIFE in us. Let's not leave CHRIST and GRACE out of our speech and letters."

The third is from Mr. Armstrong's article in the January 1970 *Tomorrow's World* magazine:

"We must BELIEVE the Gospel, and that means also believing on JESUS CHRIST, the KING of the Kingdom of God, and coming KING of kings over all the families of the earth. It means believing in Him as personal SAVIOUR, as High Priest now, and as coming KING" ("What is the True Gospel?," p. 7).

So, it should be clear and **plain** that Mr. Armstrong, consistently over the years, preached about Jesus Christ as a *vital part* of the Gospel. I heard him do so, again and again. *Thousands* of the older brethren heard this for themselves. Frankly, this should not be a point of debate in any way, except for those who want to cause division, or to provoke an argument that will help them justify themselves—perhaps in *appointing themselves* as ministers of God or exalting their own position in some way.

Nevertheless, the *key issue* is that we must look beyond man—**always**—and look to Jesus Christ as our Savior, our living Head and our coming King. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God **does not exclude Him**, as He will be the King of that coming Kingdom! If we deny this, in effect denigrating Christ's own office, we are simply hurting ourselves and even reducing the *degree of reward* we will have in the coming Kingdom of God, or forfeiting that reward entirely.

Dear brethren, we must not be deceived by those who have invented a false "Armstrong" to advance their own agendas. We must follow the true teachings of the Herbert Armstrong whom God truly used to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, including the awesome role of Jesus Christ in our salvation through which we can become part of that Kingdom. And we must **never** adulate or *in any way* worship any man—especially putting *our imaginary ideas* of what a man would say or do in place of what the Bible clearly says. Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'" (Luke 4:4). We must obey God and not follow man in any way contrary to what God's clear word instructs!

With Christian love,



LOCAL

CHURCH NEWS

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Joshua (Jenny) Penman, of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter **Katherine Elizabeth Penman**. Little Kady arrived punctually on her August 25 due date, weighing a petite 5 pounds 9 ounces. Big brother Jack is excited to have a little

sister. Kady is the fourth grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Kinnear (Carolyn) Penman of Auckland, New Zealand, and the second grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Laurence (Diana) Marshall of Helena, Montana.

Mr. and Mrs. David (Exie) Meredith, of the Charlotte, North Carolina

congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their second daughter. **Keeley Kara Meredith** was born October 29, 2011. She weighed 8 pounds 10 ounces at birth and was 20.5 inches long. She was welcomed home by her excited big sister, Brenna.

ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald (Wanita) Bertrand celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on September 12, 2011. The Lafayette, Louisiana, brethren honored them during a congregational meal with a special reception and anniversary cake and Pastor Rod Reynolds presented them with a gift of remembrance from them all. The Bertrands were baptized into God's Church 41 and 43 years ago respectively.

Ordinations

Mr. **Lonzo Ernest** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of August 27, 2011 by Pastor Harold Way. Mr. Ernest serves the Fresno, California, congregation, which expressed great joy on the occasion of his ordination.

Mr. **William Briner** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of October 1, 2011 by Regional Pastor Lambert Greer and elder John Riehm. Mr. Briner serves the Louisville, Kentucky congregation.

Mr. **Alfredo Carvajal** and Mr. **Sergio Sepulveda** were ordained deacons on the Last Great Day 2011 at the Feast site in Chile. They serve the brethren in Santiago, Chile, and were ordained by Regional Pastor Mario Hernandez. All the brethren were very happy and deeply moved by the ordinations of these dedicated and faithful servants of God's people.



LCG's Council of Elders met from November 14-16, 2011. Seated (left to right): Evangelists Bruce Tyler and Richard Ames, Presiding Evangelist Roderick C. Meredith, Evangelists Douglas S. Winnail and Gerald Weston. Standing (left to right): Regional Pastors Rand Millich, Rod King and Lambert Greer, Elders Martin Fannin and Rodger Bardo, Regional Pastors Jeffrey Fall and Mario Hernandez, Elders Bob League and Sheldon Monson.

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Mary Vielle, a faithful longtime member of the Great Falls, Montana, congregation, died on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread 2011 at the age of 76 years. She was baptized into God's Church in the 1960s. She is survived by Bert, her husband of 53 years; daughter Laurel; sons Thomas, Michael and Paul; two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Laurel and Michael are LCG members in Great Falls. Mrs. Vielle always noticed and took care of those in need, exemplifying laying

down one's life for one's friends. She especially befriended the lonely who needed it the most. She was a rock to all in terms of doctrine, often sharing stories of what she learned in the early days of her conversion. These anecdotes contained relevant lessons for the matter at hand, reminiscent of Proverbs 25:11—"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." She will be greatly missed by all until the resurrection.

Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 5:30 p.m. ET; Monday–Friday, 3:00 a.m. ET

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 a.m. ET

WORD: Sunday, 7:30 p.m. ET

<u>WGN Air Date</u>	<u>Broadcast Title</u>
January 1	2012 in Prophecy
January 8	The Fight Over Hell
January 15	The Real Jesus
January 22	The Sabbath Controversy
January 29	Could You Be Deceived?
February 5	Satan's Dangerous Deception
February 12	Can You Trust the Bible?
February 19	Why Believe in God?
February 26	Restoring Original Christianity

Schedule subject to change. For additional stations and times, check the Television and Radio Log on page 31 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

Donner Lake Picnic 2011

Forty-eight brethren from the Reno, Nevada and Sacramento, California congregations gathered on Sunday, September 11, 2011 at the majestic and beautiful Donner Lake in the High Sierras near Truckee, California. The weather was refreshingly pleasant with some rain in the afternoon.

The warm fellowship and activities were enjoyed by young and old alike. The highlight of the gathering was a

cookie-baking contest for the men. This proved to be highly entertaining and fun for all. Prizes of aprons and spatulas were awarded. The delicious and interesting cookies were well appreciated.

The beautiful scenery, excellent food, and the joyous camaraderie of God's people combined to make this event a delight for everyone!

—Mark Kruse

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COMMENTARY

Wonderfully Made

Look at your hand. Once it was only a small bit of code in a DNA sequence. Now, it is a fully operational marvel of design, engineering and construction. And so is the rest of your body. Mankind is only beginning to understand some of the secrets of the processes of prenatal development.

The body's manufacturing system and processes are way beyond any automated and state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques known by man. It is molecular-level biological manufacturing. Mankind has sought for decades to crack the manufacturing secrets but it has only begun to scratch the surface. There is no rival to this incredible process.

There are many parts, and many systems, and each alone is a marvel. There is a cardiovascular system, a gastrointestinal system, an endocrine system and a reproductive system. Eyes and ears are marvelous creations. Muscles, nerves, various organs and the incredible human brain. Each is overwhelming in its complexity, design and detail. And it all starts with a tiny single-cell embryo, packed with an incredible amount of information in a microscopic structure which determines what the baby will be—sex, eye color, hair color, innate talents, etc.

Several thousand years ago, the psalmist David marveled at this process. He said, "For You formed my inward parts; you covered me [the *New International Version* renders it as

"knit me together"] in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and **wonderfully made**; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Psalm 139:13–16).

The book of Genesis tells us, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26). It also explains that God "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). The prophet Isaiah describes God as "your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb" (Isaiah 44:24). And we read: "As you know not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so you know not the works of God who makes all" (Ecclesiastes 11:5).

Yes, as amazing as the physical creation of humanity may be, the "works of God" and the purpose for our creation are even more astounding. Our booklet *Your Ultimate Destiny* will help you understand it as never before. If you have not already read it, please do. It may change your life.

—Roger Meyer