

THE

# LIVING

# CHURCH NEWS

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## STAND AGAINST SATANIC DECEPTION!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We in the Living Church of God are among the very few people on the earth who really try to follow completely the teachings of the *entire* Bible. Yet we must not become vain about this, because it is God in His mercy who has chosen to open our minds to the Truth. As Jesus Christ Himself told us, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). Later in that chapter, John recounts Christ repeating that important spiritual truth, telling us: “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (v. 65).

How did Jesus’ followers respond to the “hard sayings” He had given them just before this? “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’” (John 6:66–68).

Brethren, it is not *easy* to follow *genuinely* the Jesus Christ of the Bible. To do so requires *faith* and *courage*. Most people in today’s society are more comfortable going along with the majority around them. *Very few* are actually willing to trust the invisible God and stand up against the prevailing opinion of *thousands* or even *millions* of people all around them.

Remember the example of Nicodemus—a “*ruler*” of the Jews. He came to Jesus “by night” because *most* of the Jews, especially the religious leaders, were contemptuous of Jesus—they rejected Christ and *despised* those who would

follow Him. Yet Nicodemus said, “Rabbi, we **know** that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2).

As God’s servant, I perceive that God is *right now testing* and *trying* those of us in the Living Church of God more than ever before, helping us to prepare more fully before He opens more doors for us to do the Work with **even more power**. We already are very productive in preaching the full Truth of God. We are grateful for that. But we want to do *much more* through Christ living within us, even though we are absolutely surrounded by a world that is being buffeted by an *immense onslaught* of ideas that are totally contrary to everything Jesus Christ and Almighty God stand for.



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*Most of you know this!*

For it can be hard at times for some of us to keep on growing in the genuine grace and knowledge of Christ and to “walk with God” at a time when this world is virtually “hell-bent” on demonizing anyone who stands against abortion, same-sex marriage and other vile, wrong practices that were recognized as obviously **wrong** even to most of the **secular** world just a few years ago!

It is almost amazing to see *how quickly* this change has taken place. When you understand, it should be clear that Satan the devil is *very involved* in this virtual **onslaught** of change, and the continued media blitz of ideas and concepts—legitimized by mainstream media, educators, politicians and even millions of professing Christians—trying to justify their unbiblical approaches and trying to **vilify** any of us who stand

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for the things of God! All of us, brethren, need to pray for one another, and to *think through carefully* how this flood of wrong ideas has come upon our society so quickly—and how we should respond and remain truly faithful with God’s help.

As the Apostle Paul makes clear, **Satan** the devil is the actual “god” of this present world. He wrote: “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). Elsewhere, Paul described Satan as “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). And the Apostle John was inspired to tell us, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and *Satan, who deceives the whole world*; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9).

So, we can understand that Satan has *deceived* the “whole world.” That should be obvious to all of us. Yet, thinking through the *real implications* of this is still difficult for many of us—especially some of our *young people*. For the young people today have grown up near the end of this age, and have been *absolutely bombarded* with the idea that it is being “unfair” and “unchristian” to disapprove of homosexuality and its various manifestations, to oppose same-sex “marriage” or to believe that abortion is **murder** rather than a woman’s “right”! We who are older need to realize that our children and grandchildren—and other young people—are *especially vulnerable*. We in God’s Church should do all we can to help them before they become “hooked” on Satan’s very clever and continuous onslaught of vile and perverted attitudes pouring out of the Internet, the mass media, radio, television and the entire “entertainment” industry.

I regard it as a distinct *blessing* from God that I have—as I write this—a total of 20 persons who have proceeded, directly or indirectly, from my own body. I have six children, ten grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. And I hope more will be “on the way” in the future! Yet with this blessing

comes responsibility. I need to do *my* part to help these young people, my direct descendants, grasp the fact that they truly are living in a world surrounded by Satan’s images, ideas and concepts. I hope I can help them to realize that their minds are vulnerable, and that even though it “seems” to make sense to go along with the majority, that way will lead to *death* (Proverbs 14:12). Each of us, in our own way, has this responsibility toward the young people under our care.

So, what should we **do** about this barrage of satanic confusion being so powerfully poured out upon us and upon our children and grandchildren? What *specific steps* should we take?

First, we should fully realize and *prove to ourselves* and our loved ones *why* our society’s many hedonistic ideas and practices are **wrong** and are totally condemned by the God of the Bible.

As part of this, we must deeply understand that human beings are **not** “born” to practice homosexuality! We

ought to do our research, and come to realize how so many abominable ideas and practices now being sold as “normal” were in fact cleverly introduced by clever Madison Avenue advertising techniques and devious psychological strategies!

In doing this, we must make ourselves and our loved ones *totally aware* of the actual **result** of these sinful practices. We need to be willing to face and to **act** on God’s direct promise and warning: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:7–8).

Brethren, I know that most of you already realize that the Bible *directly condemns* homosexual practices. The Eternal God of the Bible, the God of the Old Testament—Jesus Christ—told our forefathers: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul was *exceedingly*

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## DO YOU RELY ON GOD FOR HEALING?

Over the years, in God's Church, two extremes regarding health have often dominated the thinking of God's ministers and Church members alike. We should not make the mistake of acting at either extreme in our approach to the vital topic of divine healing.

In decades past, many felt that brethren were "weak in the faith"—or possibly even *sinning*—if they took **any** physical action above and beyond "fully trusting God." On the other hand, a growing number of ministers and brethren over the years have noted that God often did **not** supernaturally "heal" right away—and some people even died prematurely when proper medical care might have prolonged their lives.

Seeing this, many who let their faith be challenged began to forsake the plain biblical instruction given by James: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14–15).

Brethren, as we have confirmed again and again in our Council of Elders meetings, the Living Church of God teaches that *either* extreme is **wrong!** Doing "our part" and seeking appropriate physical care for an ailment is **not** mutually exclusive with our first and foremost having faith in God and trusting in the anointing we have received.

Even Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong received *full medical treatment* during the last few years of his life, as has been well documented. But he was **also** anointed, and he prayed that God—to *the full extent of His will*—would heal him and prolong his life.

Viewing carefully Mr. Armstrong's example, and *studying carefully* the entire Bible on the subject of healing, we see

that a "balanced" approach to this topic is both correct and more truly "Christian" than some of the extremes of the past. No, we do **not** want to "water down" our understanding that God is the only One who can truly "heal." **Only** God can supernaturally remove the penalty of broken physical laws that have contributed to our sicknesses, diseases and injuries. We *must never forget that!* Doctors, drugs and knives may remove or mitigate some of the "symptoms" of whatever illnesses we may be experiencing. But these methods nearly always cause "side effects" that are sometimes more harmful than the original problem.

Also, within a few years, massive disease epidemics will sweep across the Western world—often bringing terrible "new" diseases that will not respond to modern drug therapy! (Matthew 24:7). Where will you look for healing then?

When all this occurs, it will be *imperative* for God's true Church to **absolutely** rely on **Him** for divine healing and deliverance! But even when medical care is available, Scripture shows that we should *always* involve the great God who is our Father and our Healer. In *all* things, we need to heartily follow the Apostle Paul's instruction that "whatever you do in word or deed, do **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

### THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

God tells us to call for the elders, and to look to Him, when we are sick. Yet God's inspired Word also clearly describes Luke as the "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14). And the Son of God clearly stated: "Those who are well have no need of a **physician**, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17). Additionally, Jesus described the Good Samaritan as

"pouring on oil and wine" to assist the healing of the wound suffered by a traveler (Luke 10:34). The wine contained alcohol and other elements to kill the germs and help prevent infection in an open wound. The oil was a natural lubricant to aid in healing. Did Jesus do *wrong* in describing in a positive manner the use of these natural medicinal properties?

And what about Timothy? Paul writes that the "genuine faith" of his mother and grandmother resided in Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul also described Timothy as one with "proven character" in the service of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:22). Yet God allowed Timothy to have a stomach ailment and "frequent infirmities" (1 Timothy 5:23). And though the Apostle Paul certainly must have anointed and prayed for this outstanding young evangelist whom he regarded as a "son in the Lord," he *also* prescribed for Timothy "a *little wine*" for his illness. Red dinner wine contains a natural antibiotic similar to penicillin. It would have helped combat the bacteria Timothy often ingested from drinking the local water in that warm, Mediterranean climate.

So wine was used as a type of "medicine." Was Paul mistaken in giving Timothy this advice? *No indeed!* God's servants were *often* advised to use certain healing elements in dealing with sickness, injury or disease (Exodus 21:19; Isaiah 38:21). And God had this instruction preserved in the Bible for *our learning*. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

In retrospect, we see that ideas that have circulated through the Church and its ministry in decades past have not always been entirely consistent with

Scripture. There is a need for better balance and better wisdom on the subject of healing, medicine and health. Absolute faith and trust in God—in *every area* of life—is a *major* need (Matthew 9:29). *Where* we place our trust is also important (2 Chronicles 16:12). Obtaining *advice* from a doctor who is knowledgeable about the body and disease is not the same as putting blind trust in a medical practitioner. For the Bible says that there is “safety” in a “multitude” of counselors (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22).

The Bible itself offers several perspectives on healing. Healing is a prerogative of God. It is described as one of the *benefits* that God makes available to human beings (Psalm 103:1–5). It is also described as a *gift* from God (1 Corinthians 12:7–11). Healing is the forgiveness of sin (Mark 2:1–12). Man’s medicines and surgeries do *not* heal. At best, they merely treat symptoms—sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Remember, divine healing is *not* the same as working with physical means in repairing the body. But it is certainly *not wrong* to do our part and to try in every way we can to “glorify” God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20).

In the broader scope, God is not only concerned with healing our physical bodies; He also wants us to learn *every lesson* we need to learn in this physical life to prepare us for eternal life in His Kingdom. If our physical problems are removed or “healed” every time we make a mistake, we may not learn some of the vital lessons about life that we need to learn regarding how to manage our bodies wisely and live in harmony with physical laws. When we are sick, we are not only instructed to be anointed and look to God, but also to *examine our lives* and behaviors to see what we have done wrong—and to *repent* of those wrong actions (James 5:16). Healing is not simply a mechanism for automatically “bailing us out” of problems we may have brought upon ourselves. It is important that we try to *learn the lessons* of life—including the lessons of maintaining good health—so we can teach others in tomorrow’s world.

While prayer and faith in God have an absolutely vital place in restoring

health, we are also told that “whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments *and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*” (1 John 3:22). Those things “pleasing in His sight” involve *much more* than living generally good lives and avoiding unclean meats. They involve using our God-given minds to sincerely try to understand and “glorify” God in our physical bodies as He tells us to do.

### WORK WITHIN THE NATURAL LAWS

In decades past, Mr. Armstrong led all of us in trying to live an *entire way of life!* This way of life was focused on the fact that God and His creation are essentially “good”—that we must learn to *work within the natural laws* of His creation. So we came to realize that breastfeeding children is normally *far better* than the artificial means of using a bottle. Many articles have come out, in recent years, from doctors and hospitals *documenting* this fact. We learned that “natural childbirth” is, in most cases, *much better* for both the woman and child. Again, many medical doctors and other health authorities *now* recognize this fact. We learned that eating fresh fruits and vegetables and “natural” foods is *much better* than getting our nutrition from artificially manufactured “foods” packaged in cans and boxes. Mr. Armstrong told us to eat natural foods that will spoil, but to eat them *before* they spoil.

Years ago, I wrote a booklet (which some of you older brethren will remember) titled *The Seven Laws of Radiant Health*. In it, I detailed the basic laws of health, which *still apply*—and about which health authorities now write far more often than they did “back then.” Those laws are:

1. Eat a proper diet.
2. Learn to exercise regularly and, when possible, vigorously.
3. Get the proper amount of sleep and rest.
4. Ensure that you are getting enough sunshine and fresh air.

5. Practice cleanliness and wear proper clothing.
6. Avoid bodily injury.
7. Maintain a positive attitude.

In that booklet, I discussed each of these points in detail. They are obviously *very important* for maintaining proper health. For instance, you can keep *all* the other laws—yet become careless, step in front of a truck, and get yourself *killed!* So—especially you older brethren—be *very careful* while out walking or traveling, or when going up and down stairs. Being careful when involved in any potentially dangerous activity is vital for maintaining good health.

Also, as the old saying goes: “Your problem is not what you are eating. It is *what is eating you!*” In other words, you may get enough exercise and have a good diet, but if you allow *negative thoughts* of envy, resentment, bitterness or hate to dominate your mind, you may end up with ulcers, high blood pressure and even premature *death*. So, dear brethren, please *think on these laws*. If we truly want to “learn the lessons” that God wants us to learn, He will honor that. And He will honor us a lot more when we come to Him for healing if we have sincerely tried to do our part!

Remember also the *negative* effects of “running to the doctor” with every cold and flu, or other problem that comes along. God wants us to “get the facts” and to *use wisdom* in obtaining proper medical care. A noteworthy issue of the newsletter *Public Citizen* contained an article by Sidney Wolfe, M.D. A few of the points he brought out may be helpful in giving us the proper perspective:

- “Seventy percent of doctors treating Medicare patients flunked an exam on their knowledge of prescribing to older adults.
- The majority of physicians who were asked to take the exam refused, often giving as their reason that they had a ‘lack of interest in the subject.’

- Between 40 percent and 50 percent of drugs prescribed for older adults outside the hospital were overused.
- Forty-eight percent of patients taking three or more drugs were given drugs with one or more harmful interactions with other drugs.
- The fact is that there are far too many victims of drug-induced illness each and every day.
- Every minute, two people are hospitalized for adverse drug reactions (1,500,000 a year) and there's a death every five minutes and 15 seconds (100,000 a year). Every three and one-quarter minutes, someone suffers drug-induced or drug-worsened memory loss (163,000 a year). It is fortunately reversible if you know which drug was the cause."

### ERRORS ADD TO THE COSTS

In addition, medical errors are a major cause of death. "According to a 1999 report by the Institute of Medicine, as many as 98,000 Americans were dying every year because of medical mistakes. Today... a reasonable estimate is that medical mistakes now kill around 200,000 Americans every year. That would make them one of the leading causes of death in the United States" ("More Treatment, More Mistakes," *New York Times*, July 31, 2012). The annual cost of these mistakes is estimated in the tens of billions of dollars—and that is just the financial cost. The human cost in suffering is even greater.

Worse yet, hospitals actually make more profit when their surgeons make mistakes! Why? "Because insurers pay them for the longer stays and extra care that patients need to treat surgical complications that could have been prevented" ("Hospitals Profit From Surgical Errors, Study Finds," *New York Times*, April 16, 2013).

Many, many more quotes and statistics along this line could be included here, but this should begin to give you the idea. You need to be *careful*—as are many

doctors regarding *their own families*—and not just let any doctor who comes along prescribe some "new" or dramatic treatment for your body!

Brethren, as we have taught for many years, it is *up to you* to make *your* decision as to when and how much to seek medical help when you are ill or injured. Frankly, many health professionals realize that the most effective use of their skills involves repairing bodily injury. When you are hit by a truck, or have broken bones or crushed internal organs, medical doctors can often help you in a dramatic way! This must be appreciated, and we must give credit where credit is due. But, overall, you do need to take great care about the type of treatment in which you involve yourself. And you must exercise wisdom even when using "natural" products such as herbs and vitamins in an attempt to "cure" diseases or ailments. Some of these products can help the body heal itself of physical infirmity. Yet, ultimately, only God is the true Healer.

Therefore, as each year goes by, I pray that all of us *as a Church* will draw closer and closer to God, have our minds more fully aligned with the thoughts expressed in the Bible, and learn to "walk with God" *in every area* of life—not just in regard to healing. We must show God that we are trying, in every way, to "do those things" which are pleasing to Him. Then, when we have done the best we can, seeking proper counsel—having done our part—we can look to God to go above and beyond what man can do, and to *intervene* to deliver us or to heal us. He is our Father. He tells us: "I will **never** leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

### WE MUST GET OUR BALANCE!

Dear brethren, as we draw toward the end of this age let us *get our balance* in this subject of health and healing! Let us do all *we can* to "glorify God" in our bodies and in the way that we treat illness and injury. Let us learn to get *all the facts* and use real *wisdom*. But let us **never** leave out the vital approach of *trusting God* with all of our hearts, and ultimately looking to Him for His help and intervention.

Also, most importantly, we must not judge one another in how each one reacts when stricken by illness or injury. We do not know the exact details of the other person's body, his "heart," his approach to God or the way he is thinking. So we *cannot* properly judge any other individual in this manner. Jesus Christ commanded: "**Judge not**, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:1–3).

Please remember, brethren, that any of us who harshly "judges his brother" (or sister) about a decision regarding whether or not to use medicine, undergo operations, or take any other means of becoming well, is in grave danger of committing an even **greater** error. For our "judging"—and the attitudes of vanity and arrogance this may engender—may be *far worse* than a sincere person in God's Church reaching out for help when he is terribly sick or his very life is in danger! For Jesus Himself said: "But if you had known what this means, '*I desire mercy* and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7).

If any of you reading this have not already read our booklet on this topic, *Does God Heal Today?*, I urge you to do so. It explains all of this in much more detail. But even if you have read this important booklet, I want to be sure that all of us are thinking about this important topic, as we continue to pray for more healings throughout the Church. When fellow Church members are ill, they may or may not choose to employ various physical treatments, and we should refrain from "judging" them for their choices. As their brethren, our main duty is to *pray fervently* that God will help our ailing brethren to do **their** part properly, and that He will go *above and beyond* what any doctors can do, to supernaturally heal them in His time and way. This approach of *wisdom* and *mercy* should underlie all our thoughts and actions in the matter of health and divine healing. ■

# GROWING IN GODLY CHARACTER

By Richard F. Ames

*What are the keys to developing godly character? You need to know them, and apply them in your life!*

On an international trip, my wife and I arrived in London Gatwick Airport. Two days earlier, riots had erupted in London, and magazines and news agencies were filled with headlines. How severe were these riots? “The law-abiding majority suddenly saw that some of their compatriots were happy to torch cars and buildings, loot shops, and attack firemen and ambulance crews... In the absence of internal, moral restraints, external ones can only do so much” (*The Economist*, “Riots in London, Anarchy in the UK,” August 13, 2011).

What was missing in the lives of these rioters? What was missing that led to this anarchy? What was missing was “internal, moral restraints”! What was missing was godly character!

## INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER AFFECTS NATIONAL CHARACTER

How does our individual character affect the character of our nation? Moses summarized the mission of the ancient nation of Israel. He showed how individual character affects national character. He also showed how to avoid the national problems faced by the United States and other nations around the world today.

Moses wrote, “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deuteronomy 4:5–6).

That should be *our* national mission. “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?” (vv. 7–8).

That should be the national purpose of Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and all other nations around the world! A nation is comprised of its regions, its families and its individuals. What constitutes a *great* nation? Its loving relationship with the Creator!

Israel ultimately failed in its national mission. God has now called His Church to fulfill a mission. We are the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). As members of His Church, God has called us to be individual ambassadors, to be His servants,

His bond slaves who have godly character. Regardless of the circumstances around us, we can stand up for what is right.

## IMPORTANCE OF GODLY CHARACTER

Matthew 24 describes our day and age, and provides a warning for us. How are we going to stand up to ungodly influences? How will we avoid “growing cold” as Jesus Christ warned? “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). What is lawlessness and anarchy?

*Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary defines anarchy as “a state of lawlessness or political disorder due to an absence of governmental authority.” We know that lawlessness leads to destruction, and if it were not for God working with His chosen people, the whole world would end in cosmocide. “And unless those days

were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

We need to understand the importance of our role and of our calling, because God has called us to be the “salt of the Earth” and to preserve it—just like salt preserves! We are preparing to teach the world, as kings and priests, how to have true lasting peace!

## AFTER DEATH, CHARACTER REMAINS

When you die, what remains of your identity? Do you take something with you? You are not an immortal soul; the spirit in man and the Spirit of God are combined in you during your lifetime to record your individual character. After you die, God “stores” these while you await the resurrection. What He resurrects will depend on how you in this present life have cooperated with Him to create in you His holy and righteous character.

So, it is important to know what you are, who you are, and to ask the question, “What degree of human nature controls my thoughts and actions?” Think about that. How strong is your character to resist temptations?

God’s ministers exhort us to repent of sin—any sins we may be practicing. The Apostle John warns us, “Whoever does not *practice* righteousness is not of God” (1 John 3:10). “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” (1 John 1:5–6).

John is writing about our need to **practice** the truth. Keep that concept in mind when you think about developing godly character. What is the fruit of your daily routine and habits, and of your reactions to circumstances? What do you practice? You may stumble, and then repent. But you must not **practice** a lifestyle or *habit* of sin. If you *are* practicing sin, you need to *stop sinning*. You need to *repent* of sinning!

Those whose lifestyle reflects a way of sinfulness need to repent. Yet even those who have deeply repented will sin on occasion: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Christ is our Lawyer. He is our Intercessor. He is our great High Priest who intercedes for us when we repent of that sin and ask for God’s forgiveness. We read, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

We are human, and we are all going to sin. We all make mistakes, but we must always have a repentant attitude after we make those mistakes. When you are committed to maintaining a repentant attitude, you quickly acknowledge your fault when you sin, then you take action so you do not make a habit of that sin—so you do not practice sin.

### GROW IN GODLY CHARACTER

This world’s religions do not understand the need to grow in godly character throughout our lifetime. Why? Because of the false doctrine that says, “Once saved, always saved.” That statement is true, in a sense, **only after** we are born into the Kingdom of God. At that point, as a Spirit-born member of the God Family, you are always saved, but the way “once saved, always saved” is applied in mainstream Christianity is false, and is based on a wrong concept.

We are in the *process* of “being saved,” as we read in 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 2:15. And we know we must persevere: “But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). There is a past, present and future aspect of our salvation. We must continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Then, once we are reconciled to God, we must *continue* to grow in godly character during our lifetime. God does not want us to be weak in character.

### FAITH: AN ELEMENT OF CHARACTER

Faith is a strong element of character. Jesus was emphasizing this point, making it very clear when He said, “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, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:30).

Would you like Jesus to say that to you even now: “O you of little faith?” We know that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). We must diligently study Scripture, and grow in godly faith.

Jesus instructs us: “Therefore, do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (Matthew 6:31–32). God is infinite. He knows every hair

**We are human, and we are all going to sin. We all make mistakes, but we must always have a repentant attitude after we make those mistakes. When you are committed to maintaining a repentant attitude, you quickly acknowledge your fault when you sin, then you take action so you do not make a habit of that sin—so you do not practice sin.**

on your head. He knows all the atoms and molecules in the universe. He is in control. He knows all your needs.

“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (vv. 33–34).

### DEVELOP STRONG CHARACTER

How strong is your character? “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32). Here is a positive statement about people who have character, who can control their emotions. God says that if you control your spirit, you are greater than the great commanders and military leaders of armies throughout history.

Do we have the character to fulfill our God-given mission as a Church, to cry aloud, spare not and to fulfill the Ezekiel warning? Will we faint? God says: “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10). And are we fulfilling God’s will in our own lives? We need to have strong character. You may have heard of the “Seven Laws of Success.” Perseverance—“stick-to-it-iveness”—is part of the sixth law. This means never giving up! “For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again” (Proverbs 24:16).

We all have different personalities. We all have different emotional profiles. Even infants have differences in personality. But we must have the self-control to balance our emotions. “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Proverbs 25:28).

### EXAMPLES OF CHARACTER: WEAK OR STRONG?

The Bible gives us examples of some who had strong character, and others who had weak character. Esau was one who was weak in character. He sold his birthright for a morsel of food (Hebrews

12:16). He did not stand up for his responsibility and his blessing: “For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears” (v. 17). Esau gave up his birthright for some lentils. Reuben—Jacob’s eldest son—was also disqualified from a double blessing because of his sin (Genesis 49:3–4). Is your character stronger than theirs?

There are many biblical examples of men and women with strong character. The faith chapter, Hebrews 11, lists many. We also remember the Apostle Paul’s comment about the evangelist Timothy: “But you know his proven character” (Philippians 2:22). God described ancient King David’s character: “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22).

The biblical account of Joseph is a classic example of strong character. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. Yet he was conciliatory toward them when, years later, they came to Egypt to buy food—not knowing that Pharaoh had given their brother Joseph rule over all of Egypt.

Joseph said to them, “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:5–7).

And he was faithful. Joseph had experienced many trials. He was sold as a slave by his own brothers, and later his master’s wife falsely accused him of attempting to violate her. He was even sent to prison in Egypt. But he had strong character. How did he respond when his master’s wife tried to tempt him into committing adultery? “And it came to pass that after these things, that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what is with me in this house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’” (Genesis 39:7–9).

Note that the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” was in force before Mount Sinai, but Joseph was determined to resist temptation. He would not sin against God. He was strong in character.

We, too, experience trials and tests as we learn the lessons of life.

### TRIALS AND TESTS ARE NECESSARY

When I first learned about the Sabbath, I had just been hired by the American Automobile Association (AAA) of New York to be a traffic engineer. New York had the second-largest AAA organization in the United States, after Los Angeles. I remember telling them that I needed to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. I had not started working for them yet, since I was still in my

graduate class at Yale, but I remember that an AAA executive called me. He said, “Well, Dick, you said you couldn’t work any time during Saturday, but the AAA here in New York said you’d need to train on Saturdays. That means we can’t hire you.”

I went home that day with the most comfortable, wonderful feeling—that I had passed a little test. Then, later, God gave me a job that was even more challenging—and more inspiring—for having passed that test.

Some of our brethren have faced even more challenging tests seeking permission for their children to take time away from school to attend the Feast, or negotiating with an employer for time off to attend the Feast. They have learned to stand up for what is right, and trust in God for the outcome.

When we step out in faith, we learn important lessons, and God blesses us for our obedience to His will. This is one of the great lessons of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Remember: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm 111:10).

### KEYS TO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

What are the keys of character development? We have to *choose* between good and evil, between right and wrong. We grow in character when we make the right decisions. And, even when we make the wrong decisions, we should learn lessons that help us grow in character and make the right decisions the next time.

God has given us **free moral agency**—the privilege to choose! “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may *cling to Him*” (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

Do we cling to Him? “For He is your life and the length of your days, and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them” (v. 20).

We make hundreds of choices every day. Do we make the right choices? That depends on the degree of our spiritual character and our closeness to God the Father and to Christ! A fundamental key of national character and individual character is that of right relationships—most importantly our relationships with the Father and with Christ. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong called character development “The Supreme Creative Accomplishment.” That is also a subhead in *Mystery of the Ages* (p. 69). Mr. Armstrong wrote that there is one important quality that even God cannot create instantly by fiat. He cannot unilaterally, by Himself, create in us the same perfect, holy, righteous character inherent in both God and the Word. As Mr. Armstrong points out: “This kind of character must be DEVELOPED, by the choice and the intent of the one in whom it comes to exist.”

Mr. Armstrong noted that it takes a lifetime to grow in godly character, and we know that the history of the world is of continual



suffering and pain because of following Satan’s way rather than God’s way. One of the most inspiring and wonderful truths God has revealed to His Church is that those who were blinded in this age—those who were enslaved to Satan and sin—will have an opportunity to eventually develop godly character and receive the gift of salvation. Yes, the vast majority of humankind will have that wonderful opportunity in the White Throne Judgment.

### CHARACTER BUILDING INSTITUTIONS

Let us never forget another major key to godly character development: we must do God’s will, fulfilling the Great Commission and doing the very Work of God (John 4:34). In his *Living Church News* editorial, “What Do You Stand For?” Dr. Meredith wrote: “So we can, *in that light*, deeply relate to General MacArthur’s words: ‘Duty, honor, country.’ As we grow older as a Church and as individual members, let us *never* forget why we are here. Let us hold our heads high as we charge on day and night to do the Work of God with zeal, with dedication, with courage and with sacrifice. No military mission was ever so vital. No warfare was ever so important. And no reward was ever so magnificent as the one we will receive, if we overcome ourselves and Satan, and *if* we are zealous and faithful in proclaiming Christ’s Message to a world that has truly lost its way” (January-February 2003).

Ambassador College has been “characterized” as a character-building institution. Having completed an Ambassador College degree—I graduated with a B.A. in Theology in 1965—I can say from firsthand experience that, at least for me, it certainly did help me build character.

Mr. Armstrong, in his book, *Mystery of the Ages*, wrote about the effect of Ambassador College. He writes, “Jesus Christ through the Church built three colleges, two in the United States and one in England. The three campuses in material beauty have mutually excelled each other as a high character physical setting for the development of God’s righteous character in students. The beauty of godly character in these students has excelled the physical beauty of the campuses” (p. 140).

Now, that is quite a comment. And, we can also say that the spiritual beauty of godly character of our brethren around the world has also excelled any physical beauty of our environment.

Living University has as one of its objectives, “To enhance the individual development of character, personality and true values by fostering and maintaining an academic community emphasizing moral, social, ethical, cultural and spiritual standards.”

Dr. Meredith, the Chancellor of Living University, wrote in the college catalog, “At *Living University*, in all we do, we challenge each other to fulfill our motto, *Recapture True*

*Values*, by demonstrating our core values of leadership, service, commitment, integrity, excellence, culture and creativity. These values are embedded in God’s way of life as detailed in the Bible.”

### CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Developing godly character is extremely important. It is why we are here. We are learning about the character of Christ, the divine nature, and we are learning about the very character of God our Father. We are learning to be like Him. We must also teach our children godly character.

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deuteronomy 11:18). Some Jewish people do that in a physical way, with literal pieces of paper in boxes called phylacteries or *tefillin*. But God wants us as Christians to do it spiritually.

“You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth (Deuteronomy 11:19–21).

From Mr. Armstrong, we learned four steps to character development that are instructive as to how we can grow in godly character. Those steps to building godly character are:

1. The willingness and the ability to determine and to understand right from wrong.
2. The commitment to choose living righteously and allow God to create godly character by our own volition.
3. Resist all temptations to compromise once we have made the decision to do what is right.
4. Practice righteous living until it becomes a habit and is internalized.

As we follow these steps, we internalize God’s way of life into our own. We go from merely knowing, to actually *doing* what we know. We are aware of the Holy Days. We understand God’s Plan of Salvation. We know about the Ten Commandments. Based on what we know, we know the right way to go. We must practice and live God’s way of love (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4).

Colin Powell, the former U.S. Secretary of State, speaking at the White House Conference on Character and Community, stated: “Character means having a conscience, a conscience that is always present, that is always acting, that is always guiding



you. It's an internal moral compass that is always pointing in the true direction, always keeps you on track, gives you the strength to stay away from the temptations that come along" (June 19, 2002).

There is an anonymous quotation that says, "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions because they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny."

In *Mystery of the Ages*, Mr. Armstrong wrote, "I repeat, such perfect character must be *developed*. It requires the free choice and decision of the separate entity in whom it is to be created. But further, even then, it must be instilled by and from the Holy God who only has such righteous character to endow" (p. 69). He then continued: "But what do we mean by righteous character? Perfect, holy, righteous character is the ability in such separate entity to come to discern the true and right way from the false, to make voluntarily a full and unconditional surrender to God and His perfect way, to yield, to be conquered by God, to determine even against temptation or self-desire to live and to do the right" (pp. 69–70).

We can see incredibly strong character in many people who are handicapped or disabled, who nevertheless overcome and push forward. They produce, they have determination and they persevere. So should we.

However, we do not do this on our own. Godly character requires the gift of the Holy Spirit. "And even then, such holy character is the gift of God. It comes by yielding to God to instill His law, His right way of life with the entity who so decides and wills. Actually, this perfect character comes only from God as instilled within the entity of His creation, and upon voluntary acquiescence even after severe trial and test" (p. 70).

### GOD'S GRACE NEEDED

As we grow in godly character through tests and trials, we experience God's grace, which is His unmerited pardon but also His loving favor. The Apostle Peter instructs us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

The Apostle Paul relates faith and grace to our character development in this inspiring exhortation: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Romans 5:1–5, RSV).

As we persevere through trials, suffering and tribulation, we grow in godly character, on the foundation of grace and faith.

The Apostle Paul ends several of His epistles by stating, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" or "be with you all." We want the grace of Jesus Christ. We want the Father's grace. Grace is God's favor and mercy. The very last verse of the Bible gives us this magnificent blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21). Never let anyone tell you that it is wrong to put an emphasis on God's right application of grace. We need that grace.

### IT TAKES A LIFETIME

Our calling is to be conformed to the very nature, mind and character of Christ, but it takes a lifetime. We all have different personalities, talents and abilities. We rejoice in the incredible variety in the human family. God has indeed put a variety of personalities and talents into the members of His Church, but we all must have His spiritual character as a foundation. We all must be conformed and transformed into the nature and character of Christ. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be *conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

Brethren, as we grow in godly character, we need to pray as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

We are called to set a right example to this world. As the end of this age approaches, anarchy and lawlessness will abound. Immorality and violence will spread, but God has called us to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. And, because there is an elect—we who are now growing in godly character—God will save the world from utter destruction. So, as we continue to serve, endure and grow, we must remember our Creator: "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

God has called us His nation—His citizens. We are the Israel of God, and our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). We are spiritual Israel, destined to rule with Christ. As Dr. Meredith has exhorted us, let us "hold our heads high as we charge on day and night to do the Work of God with zeal, with dedication, with courage and with sacrifice."

We must *continue to grow* in godly character—day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month, and year-by-year—in preparation for our part, under Christ, in helping to bring peace, happiness and prosperity to all of humanity.

That is our calling, brethren, and that is our destiny! ■



# CONNECTING THE DOTS

By Gerald Weston

MANY CHILDREN LIKE TO PLAY A GAME CALLED “DOT TO DOT.” BY CONNECTING CORRECTLY THE DOTS ON A PIECE OF PAPER, THEY CAN DRAW SIMPLE PICTURES OF ANIMALS, PEOPLE, CARS AND JUST ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE. THE EXPRESSION, “CONNECTING THE DOTS,” IS NO DOUBT DERIVED FROM THIS FAMILIAR CHILD’S GAME AND IS ALSO USED TO DESCRIBE CONNECTING FACTS AND CLUES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND SOMETHING.

“Dot to Dot” is a simple game where children have a piece of paper, and they have little dots on it. The dots are numbered, and the child is to follow the sequence from the beginning, whether the series starts with a number one or a symbol, like a star.

The child draws a straight line to the next dot, and then he draws a straight line to the other numbers in the sequence, steadily creating a continuous line that eventually completes the picture, whatever that picture turns out to be.

## DOTS AND FACTS

Although the pictures are usually not complex, sometimes quite a few dots have to be connected for you to see what is actually being drawn. Other times, after only a few connections are made, the picture starts to become evident.

Of course, if you miss one of those dots or connect them out of sequence, the picture is flawed—which is quite often what happens when you connect facts and figures in the wrong way as well!

Using this analogy, we can paint a picture of where “political correctness” is leading this world’s society. We can see where the trend is heading, and we can decipher where we are in today’s world by correctly connecting the dots.

## EZEKIEL’S WARNING MESSAGE

The book of Ezekiel was written approximately 130 years after the House of Israel had gone into captivity and at this time, the city of Jerusalem was being besieged (Read Ezekiel 4:1–3). However, many of the things that were written apply very directly to the descendants of both the houses of Israel and Judah today.

Ezekiel wrote prophecies that applied to the city of Jerusalem. He was told to, “Lay siege against it, build

a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around” (Ezekiel 4:2).

When I was a child, we used to play with small green plastic army soldiers that came in all different poses and states of equipage. We would play “army” with them and shoot rubber

**Do all of us understand that we have a job to do, and that God has not commissioned His Church to be a “social club?” And yet some people have become comfortable with churches that function just that way: a small group with a Web site, a church that seeks only to “get by,” without preaching a powerful warning message to a besieged nation.**

bands to knock over our friend’s soldiers. The last one to have a soldier standing was the winner.

This is kind of what Ezekiel was doing. He was portraying a war game with battering rams and all kinds of things around a model city of Jerusalem: “Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the House of Israel” (Ezekiel 4:3).

Note carefully those crucial words at the end of verse three which are almost universally missed by readers of Ezekiel: “This will be a sign to the House of Israel.” This prophecy was not recorded for the Jews of that day only. It was given as a sign for the House of Israel for a time long into the future. This is a point missed by virtually all commentaries, but the book is absolutely clear on this point. Notice carefully chapters 2 and 3: “And He said to me: ‘Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children. I

am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ As for them, whether they hear—or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them” (Ezekiel 2:3–7). Five times chapter 3 refers to this stubborn and rebellious house as the House of Israel.

The prophecies of Ezekiel were dual and they apply to our nations today, and to the Work of God. “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 33:7). God’s ministers are told to “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). As we do that, we are going to come into conflict with this world!

That is our job now. Do our people understand? Do all of us understand that we have a job to do, and that God has not commissioned His Church to be a “social club?” And yet some people have become comfortable with churches that function just that way: a small group with a Web site, a church that seeks only to “get by,” without preaching a powerful warning message to a besieged nation.

God’s Work, however, as shown by the scriptures, has an all-important commission to preach Ezekiel’s message to the modern-day descendants of Israel.

## WHO WILL GOD SPARE?

In Ezekiel’s vision, six men who “had charge” over the city were told to arm

themselves with deadly weapons. Then suddenly six men came with battle-axes, but one man among them was clothed with linen, and had a writer's inkhorn at his side (Ezekiel 9:1–2).

“Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’” This is a positive mark (Ezekiel 9:3–4).

The first six men were commanded: “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.’ So they began with the elders who were before the Temple. Then He said to them, ‘Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!’ And they went out and killed in the city” (vv. 5–7). “So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left alone; and I fell on my face and cried out and said, ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?’” (v. 8). Then verse 9 declares that this did not apply to the Jews of that day only. It declares, “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great.”

The slaughter that is eventually coming is an awful thing that will happen to the Israel-descended nations: the United States, Canada, Britain and the others. As Ezekiel watched this taking place in his vision, he wondered if anyone would be left.

When we look at our world today, we see bloodshed everywhere. The murder rate in the U.S. alone is horrendous. We love it in our video games and on our television. We entertain ourselves with it, and it is all over this world, but God says the sins of His people are “exceedingly great,” and that we have filled our lands with perversion and bloodshed (v. 9).

Not only that, but the people now, as then, are described as being unconcerned, and unafraid of God: “...for they say, ‘the LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!’ And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.” (vv. 9–10). It was at this point in Ezekiel's vision that the man returned whose job it was to place the mark on the foreheads of those few who were dismayed at Judah's sins (v. 11).

We ought to be “sighing and crying” for the abominations that he speaks of, because if we are sighing and crying over these abominations, then we will have that protective mark, and be spared by God.

### WHAT KIND OF SEX EDUCATION?

One of Canada's top magazines, Maclean's, printed an article entitled, “You're Teaching Our Kids WHAT?” The article describes how Toronto schools invited women from an “adult” bookstore to teach sex education to children: “The latest buzzword in High School Sex Ed Class is pleasure—not everyone is pleased” (Maclean's, 2009). Their idea was that kids hear too much about diseases, so they should be taught about pleasure instead. And, the person running this “adult” store brings in all kinds of gadgets to teach children sex education in a way that is supposed to be “exciting and interesting” to them.

In another incident, two homosexual-rights activists, Murray and Peter Corren, filed a human rights complaint to ensure that whatever written material was presented to Vancouver public school students would be “gay friendly.” As a result, the Vancouver Board of Education now tells parents, “No skipping ‘gay friendly’ classes.” The Vancouver Board of Education plans to enforce a policy that prevents parents from pulling students out of classes that deal with “alternative” (e.g. bisexual, transsexual, transgender) sexuality. The policy allows parents to pull their children out of sensitive

health class lessons because of religious or family beliefs, but does not let them opt their children out of “gay friendly” lessons in other classes.

### SINS OF SODOM

Toronto will host “World Pride 2014” after winning a vote in Florida by leaders of homosexual organizations around the globe. The festival will take place in Toronto—with tremendous support and excitement! This world event will be hosted simultaneously with Toronto's “Pride Week” in the summer of 2014. The program for this festival includes a parade of nations as part of the opening ceremony and, a Human Rights Conference.

They claim more than a million visitors come to Toronto for “Pride Week” each year. This is not only people who take part in that lifestyle, but also those who just came out to see the show.

God brought Israel out of Egypt as a single nation, but several centuries later they became two nations. Then, after Israel had fallen and Judah was in the process of going into captivity, Ezekiel 16:49 makes this incredibly accurate description of one lifestyle choice of our day: “Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride...” Yes, pride is the very word that modern-day sodomites use to describe their movement; and this was written nearly 2600 years ago! It also describes other conditions of modern life that have led to these problems: “fullness of food, and abundance of idleness” (Ezekiel 16:49–56).

That's our society today. We have more than enough to eat, and plenty of time on our hands for entertainment. And we have lots of pride, one of the hallmarks of “Pride Week”— and the lifestyle it celebrates.

However, as many reading this realize, the time has come when we cannot speak entirely openly about that subject. Already, one specific scripture and other whole parts of the Bible have been labeled as “hate literature” by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. In Canada, we have to be careful about what we say when we

refer to various scriptures. And we do not even have to quote it; merely referring to it is enough to get one in trouble with a human rights tribunal.

God's word tells of the nation of Israel coming into the Promised Land. It lists one after another of lifestyles, of choices, and of particular sins involving human beings in relationship to sex. It involves men with men, and women with women, incest with family members, and beasts with human beings: "Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife [adultery], to defile yourself with her. And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:20–22).

Continuing, God warns: "Nor shall you mate with any animal... nor shall any woman stand before an animal... Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants" (vv. 23–25).

God told us to keep His statutes and His judgments, and not to commit any of the abominations found in the book of Leviticus. God said that if the land is defiled by these abominations that it would "vomit out" the Israelites just as it had the nations before them (Leviticus 18:26–28). Now it lists adultery, fornication, incest, and homosexuality, and says those who practice them would be "cut off" or destroyed. Yet, today, we must be careful even in how we proclaim the plain words of Scripture, lest we be taken before a tribunal, without the normal protective rights of a common criminal, for alleged "hate speech." But make no mistake; we will preach Ezekiel's warning message and the truths of scripture! We are to fear God rather than man (Acts 4:19, 5:29).

**PERSECUTION PROPHESED**

Connecting a few dots here, Luke 21:12 says, "But before all these things,

they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake." In other words, before God's punishment comes, the "watchmen" are going to be singled out for obeying God's instructions.

When God began to work with me, I could not imagine how this Scripture could come to pass. I could not imagine that in the U.S. and Canada—or in England where I had lived for a couple of years growing up—our own neighbors could be so angry with us that they would haul us before magistrates and judges.

I knew that the Bible was right, but what could be so offensive in our modern world. Would it be somebody saying, "Eat that pig, or you're going to court." That didn't seem likely. Yet Scripture says that we "will be betrayed even by parents and

Jesus Christ, who revealed these passages to John, says: "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot'" (Revelation 3:14–15).

It is easy to think of someone who prays, studies, keeps the Sabbath and Holy Days and is excited about the Bible as not fitting this description. But what if he has one foot in the world? Is that not being "hot and cold"?

What if we are not all the way in the world, but just dabble in it? Maybe we just like the world's entertainment. Christ says, "So then, because you are lukewarm," [you are not really totally with Him], and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth" (v. 16). He repeats the

**God says that, at the end of this age, when the world is facing imminent tribulation, the majority in the Church will be lukewarm. Does that make sense? You would think that, as the end nears, God's people would really become excited. Instead, God warns that the last era of the Church is lukewarm and apathetic.**

brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death" (v. 16).

What is it that God is talking about here that would bring us into conflict with authorities?

Can we not now understand by connecting the dots that preaching the whole truth—preaching morality, preaching against the sins of this world—will definitely bring us into conflict.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAODICEAN CHURCH**

In the Book of Revelation, we really need to connect dots to get the "big picture." Any one dot by itself may not tell us very much. With just two dots on the page, if you connect them, you have a straight line—without much picture. But when we look at the end of the age, and we connect all the dots, we should see more clearly what God is telling us.

point, saying He will vomit them out of His mouth because they say: "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" (v. 17)—yet do not know that they are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (ibid.). The Laodiceans do not see their own condition.

God says that, at the end of this age, when the world is facing imminent tribulation, the majority in the Church will be lukewarm. Does that make sense? You would think that, as the end nears, God's people would really become excited. Instead, God warns that the last era of the Church is lukewarm and apathetic.

I have seen how difficult it is for some today to stay motivated and take God's word seriously. At a time when you would think that people would really become serious, they are following the course of this world instead of following God's laws and His ways fully. Sadly, there are far too many baptized members of the Church of God who have violated

one or more of the principles in Leviticus 18. It is frightening.

We are clearly living in a lukewarm age, an age of apathy. In this apathetic age, many cannot even connect the dots of where and how God is working.

### ISAIAH'S WARNING MESSAGE

Isaiah asks: “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isaiah 8:19). Isaiah then counsels us to connect two dots – light and law: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (v. 20). It does not say there is no truth in them. It says there is no light in them. Some televangelists are excellent speakers and entertainers and have some elements of truth, yet they teach by words or in practice against the law of God.

A mixture of truth and error is most dangerous. If you take a glass of pure water, wonderful, clean, delicious, refreshing water, and you put a few drops of strychnine or cyanide or some other poison in it, it will kill you. Why is it that we can connect these dots, but cannot connect the dots that lead to religious error?

Yes, they may have wonderful choirs and beautiful music. They may even quote from the Bible occasionally. But they do not speak according to the Word.

### A DIFFERENT GOSPEL PREACHED

The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians against preachers teaching a different Jesus, a different gospel, or promoting a different spirit (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Many televangelists preach about a Jesus who did away with His father's law and who was sentimental and sanctimonious. He is pictured with long hair, sometimes carrying little lambs underneath His arms, and always has a sad look on His face.

This is not the same gospel Paul preached, and there is a different spirit, and a different Jesus. They may understand part of the gospel about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, but they do not understand the Kingdom of God.

So we face a different gospel, a different approach to God's word entirely, which we are not to accept. But we have people who not only put up with it; they actually go out and look for it. And, like poison, sitting around looking for inspiration in all kinds of different religious messages will do no good to anyone.

### SATAN'S MINISTRY OF DECEPTION

Even as a child, I could see that many of the so-called televangelists looked like phonies—and they still look like phonies today. They put on all sorts of affectation: the way that they talk, their tone of voice and the way they hold their hands. This is not the way a normal person acts. But, they do it to make themselves “look religious.”

Not all of those people understand that they are deceivers. Satan is the great deceiver and a deceived person does not know that he is deceived. See the dangerous subtlety Paul warns against: “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).

Yes, Satan has a ministry! But people seem to think that Satan's ministers must be out there promoting Satan directly—by name, even.

### AVOID THOSE WHO TEACH FALSE DOCTRINES

John tells us, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him, for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds” (2 John 10–11).

So, why do we invite these people into our homes through television to

get inspiration from them? Some may say, “Oh, I really love this Work, but this other person, I really get inspiration from him”—not knowing that the inspiration comes with a little dose of strychnine.

Many recognize the identity of the Great Whore described in Revelation 17. But do they know who are her harlot daughters? Amazingly, many people cannot make that connection. They find it difficult to accept that everything they have believed in the past, and the very people they formerly followed, could actually be harlot daughters of the great whore, and ministers of Satan.

Personally, I know that when I first started attending services, I thought that one particular evangelist was really a good man, even though he did not teach exactly as the Church of God. I could not accept that he was a deceiver, and an instrument of Satan. Today I recognize that he taught a different Jesus, a different gospel, and promoted a different spirit. I learned over time to connect the dots.

### CONNECT THE DOTS!

Many of this world's ministers are giving in to the spirit of compromise. They are allowing themselves to be “put into a box” more and more. There is a spirit in many of this world's governments and judiciaries, where it is supposedly “OK” for us to believe certain things—about same-sex marriage, homosexuality, or even the identity of the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel—but they do not want us to have the freedom to say what we believe. There is an agenda that wants to define what we can and cannot say, and the “box” is squeezing tighter and tighter. And we know from Scripture that a time will come when those who preach the whole truth will be brought before courts and tribunals.

We are further along than we might ever imagine. We are coming close to that time. And we need to be able to “connect the dots”—in our own lives, as well as recognizing what is going on in the world around us—if we hope to endure to the end! ■

By D. Jerry Ruddlesden

In the next few pages, we are reprinting the 2012 financial audit conducted by Cherry Bekaert LLP. Each calendar year, we have a financial audit performed by an independent third party auditing firm to review our financial statements and financial internal controls. In the “Report of Independent Auditor” opinion section it states: “In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates as of December 31, 2012 and 2011, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.”

We reprint these statements in their entirety for your review. They follow a set format each year as determined by good audit practices and standards, which includes a notes section that gives more detail on specific areas of the financial statements.

As we review some excerpts, keep in mind that any financial report is a “snapshot” that compares 2011 and 2012. As such, it look back to show how the Living Church of God used its financial resources to pursue its goals.

In the expense section of the Consolidated Statement of Activities you will note that we categorize the expenses in three main categories. Preaching the Gospel, Feeding the Flock and General and Administrative. In 2012 we spent \$7,780,189—or 45.1 percent of total expense—on Preaching the Gospel. We spent \$8,292,364—or 48.1 percent of total expense—on Feeding the Flock. Just 6.8 percent—\$1,164,225—of our total expense went to the General and Administrative category. General and Administrative expenses include facility costs, accounting, legal, insurance and other costs that cannot be directly attributed to Preaching the Gospel or Feeding the Flock. Overall, total expenses for 2012 increased by \$2,218,932 with the largest increase (\$1,147,132) in Preaching the Gospel.

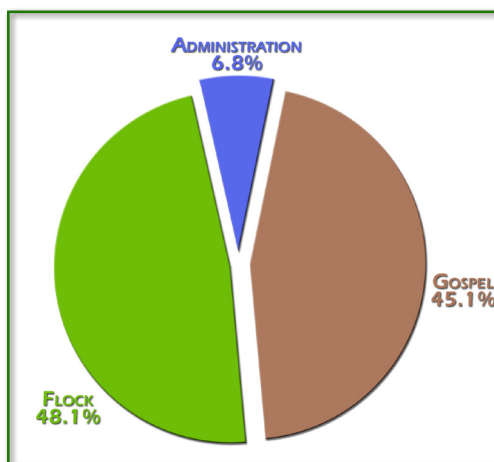
With regard to income, Mr. Dexter Wakefield, our Vice President of Finance and Operations, reports:

“I am glad to report that the regular income is now 1.1 percent above last year—and on an upward trend. Income in December 2012 was especially strong, and to the extent that it was the result of extra tax-related donations for the year-end, it resulted in the unusual dip in January/February 2013 income as compared to last year. For now, we are back to our normal income trend. The offerings for First and Last Days of Unleavened Bread—a good indicator of the trend for the year—were up 3.1 percent over last year, which is encouraging.

In 2012, the Church was blessed with an income increase of 11.9 percent, but some of that increase came from non-recurring sources

such as bequests from estates and special large offerings—which are not part of our normal tithes and offerings. We are extremely thankful for those special blessings. That extra income enabled us to add, among other things, more ministers, television stations and some much-needed equipment. For instance, the envelope labeler in the Mail Processing Department was an older machine that had been running well over 1 million pieces per year. It was on its last legs and the staff was constantly

nursing it to keep it going. We now have replaced the old machine with an industrial-quality labeler that can handle our growing volumes for years to come—and do it at a lower cost. We expect to



### NUMBERS BEHIND THE WORK

256,363	TELEVISION RESPONSES
187	TW PRESENTATIONS
4,479	VISITORS TO TW PRESENTATIONS
2,030,000	TW MAGAZINES PRINTED
36,000+	FACEBOOK UNIQUE USERS
9,071	FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE
8,147	AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE
366	BAPTISMS
1,350,000	PIECES OF MAIL SENT FROM MAIL PROCESSING

recover the cost of the new labeler in savings over its operational life. We have also acquired HD television cameras for our *Tomorrow's World* production, and our viewers will be seeing the high quality results soon.

As expected, the extra offerings and estate bequests are not being repeated at the same rate in 2013. Therefore, we are being very careful about our higher 2012 “baseline” of expenditures and have made adjustments to match our expected 2013 income trend, by cutting three television stations and postponing some expenditures. This is something for which we made contingency plans last year, and we look forward to replacing the television coverage soon, as income growth permits.

We greatly appreciate God’s generosity to His Work and the faithfulness of the brethren and co-workers in their tithes, offerings and bequests.”—DBW

As Mr. Wakefield mentioned, we received several large bequests in 2012, which allowed for several upgrades of equipment and expansion of Internet and television coverage. We are constantly evaluating Internet advertising and television coverage trying to find the right balance of cost per response. We take seriously the stewardship of your faithful tithes and offerings. In 2012, we more than doubled advertising expense over 2011 from 182,324 to 371,221. You will also note in the Asset purchases chart that we upgraded the main editing software for TV production and added a Tricaster system to prepare for multiple camera shoots of our *Tomorrow's World* program.

An added benefit to careful stewardship of the tithes and offerings is the ability to set aside funds for needed purchases or take advantage of savings. You will note that the replacement roof for the TV building and a portion of the remodel was part of the monies set aside for long term building maintenance. Our main building here in Charlotte was built more than two decades ago, and we began preparing for heating and cooling units, roofs, painting, carpet, windows and office expansion several years ago. If all those items were to need replacing at the same time it could greatly impact us financially. We have been replacing the heating and cooling units for several

### 2012 SIGNIFICANT ASSET PURCHASES

FLEET VEHICLES	159,024
REMODEL OF HQ BUILDING	132,578
WAVEJET PRINTER FOR MAILING	90,640
UPGRADE AVID TV EDITING SYSTEMS	45,930
REPLACE ROOF FOR TV STUDIO	23,937
TRICASTER SYSTEM FOR MULTIPLE CAMERAS	19,995
STAFF DORMS FOR LYC	8,225
MARK VII FOR MAILING	4,250
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$484,479</b>

years now and in 2011 and 2012 we replaced the roofs on the two buildings. It was logical to consider the carpet when we remodeled the back of the building to add the additional offices and we purchased the carpet in January of 2013 with installation being implemented in stages.

We also try and take advantage of savings while planning for long term needs. An item that was ordered in 2013 and paid for in January of 2013 was an upgrade to server space adding Terabytes of space to our capacity with a several thousand dollar discount because of the special offerings in 2012. We also were able to take advantage of a thorough analysis of fleet car usage and purchase several fleet cars which will save on lease costs.

A closer look at the breakdown of our support shows that in 2012 that donors and co-workers made up 15.6 percent of our total income. Members and prospective members made up the balance of 84.4 percent of the total income. It is personally encouraging to me as a father of two children to see that even many of our youth tithe faithfully on their part time jobs and other blessings.

I hope that we as Church members never lose sight of the important role that our financial support has in the missions



FINANCE/ACCOUNTING STAFF (L-R): LEHMAN LYONS, SUZANNE PYLE, JESSICA HALL, JEANNIE BRAZIL, HALEY RIEF, BONNIE BONJOUR, JERRY RUDDLESSEN, JOSHUA LYONS



of the Church and that we always keep our eye on the goal of preaching the gospel to every nation. The commission that Christ gave to his disciples applies directly to us today. Matthew 28:19 makes very clear that we are to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

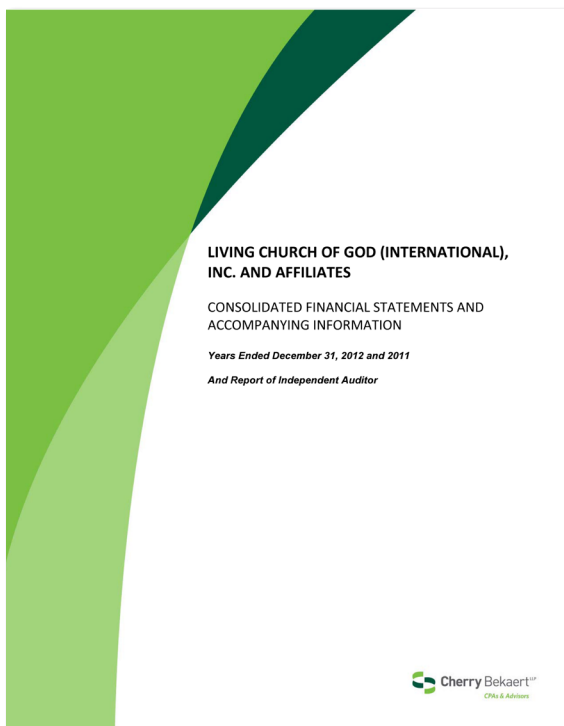
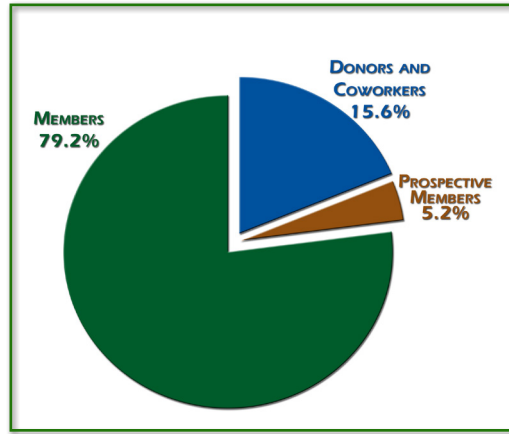
All this work that we do collectively is with those words in mind. Whether it is new high speed printer that can print addresses clearly for the thousands and thousands of letters, booklets and magazines, or a new camera to be able to shoot new television programs or even a reliable fleet car for a minister to be able to visit his congregations and anoint and council those whom God calls; these are all just pieces of an overall work for which your support of prayers, tithes and offerings keep us always moving forward.

When we allow the cares of this world to take away our focus it serves the purpose of taking our eyes off the goal. In the model prayer that Christ gave as an outline in Matthew 6:9–13, after acknowledging the Father, the very first thing that he focused on was the kingdom of God: “...Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name. **Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven**” (vv. 9–10). This is not just a bedtime prayer

suggestion. We are to yearn for the kingdom and we are to yearn to share the good news of the kingdom to every nation.

When you hear that statistics of the television response or number of magazines printed or even the number of visitors to a *Tomorrow’s World* presentation, do you rejoice? Your faithful tithes and offerings help to drive this Work forward—and your prayers that God would take those tithes and offerings, increase them and cause them to bear fruit are being answered. I have often asked the following rhetorical question: What is one person’s life actually worth? When we hear a brand new person or even a “lost sheep” coming back to us, can a price be set? The truth is that there is no price. The value is beyond price—they are *priceless!*

As you review the 2012 audit and as we all look forward to 2013 and beyond, let us all rejoice in the impact we are making together as collective body. Our message of warning has made, is making, and will continue to make a difference in the lives of people that it touches. Your example, your prayers and our collective tithes and offerings do make a difference. Isaiah 52:7 says it much better than I ever could: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bring good news, who proclaims peace, who bring glad tidings of good *things*, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘your God reigns!’” ■



LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES  
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## Report of Independent Auditor

To the Board of Directors  
Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates  
Charlotte, North Carolina

We have audited the consolidated accompanying financial statements of Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates (the "Church") (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the consolidated statements of financial position as of December 31, 2012 and 2011, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the consolidated financial statements.

### Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements.

We believe the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### Opinion

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates as of December 31, 2012 and 2011, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

**Other Matter**

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements as a whole. The information contained in the consolidating statements of financial position and activities (“Accompanying Information”) is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements. The information in the Accompanying Information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the combined financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the combined financial statements or to the consolidated financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information in the Accompanying Information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements as a whole.

*Cherry Bekaert LLP*

Charlotte, North Carolina  
April 18, 2013

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION**

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

	December 31,	
	2012	2011
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,021,035	\$ 2,704,467
Investments	315,389	291,751
Receivables, net	655,229	501,509
Inventory	507,512	364,021
Prepaid expenses	362,307	232,026
Deposits	14,820	13,580
Total current assets	<u>3,876,292</u>	<u>4,107,354</u>
Property and equipment, net	3,689,909	3,425,817
Other assets, net	682	1,425
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b><u>\$ 7,566,883</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 7,534,596</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$ 565,491	\$ 415,947
Accrued wages and other liabilities	334,522	271,368
Mortgage payable, current portion	95,088	118,605
Capital lease obligations, current portion	48,942	54,583
Total current liabilities	<u>1,044,043</u>	<u>860,503</u>
Noncurrent liabilities		
Mortgage payable	1,831,153	1,910,627
Capital lease obligations	16,151	65,094
Total noncurrent liabilities	<u>1,847,304</u>	<u>1,975,721</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b><u>2,891,347</u></b>	<b><u>2,836,224</u></b>
Net assets		
Unrestricted net assets	4,540,985	4,570,684
Temporarily restricted net assets	134,551	127,688
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b><u>4,675,536</u></b>	<b><u>4,698,372</u></b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b><u>\$ 7,566,883</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 7,534,596</u></b>

The accompanying notes to the consolidated financial statements are an integral part of these statements.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES  
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES**

YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

	Year Ended December 31, 2012			Year Ended December 31, 2011			
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted		Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted		Totals
		Totals	Unrestricted		Temporarily Restricted	Totals	
Revenue and support							
Tithes and contributions	\$ 13,696,783	\$ -	\$ 13,696,783	\$ 12,099,609	\$ -	\$ 12,099,609	
Holy Day offerings	2,992,456	-	2,992,456	2,719,080	-	2,719,080	
Investment return	2,469	-	2,469	(37,315)	-	(37,315)	
Other revenue	404,395	-	404,395	527,915	-	527,915	
Special project donations	-	49,304	49,304	-	48,964	48,964	
Tuition and fees	68,535	-	68,535	50,710	-	50,710	
	<u>17,164,638</u>	<u>49,304</u>	<u>17,213,942</u>	<u>15,359,999</u>	<u>48,964</u>	<u>15,408,963</u>	
Net assets released from restrictions due to satisfaction of restricted purpose	42,441	(42,441)	-	46,515	(46,515)	-	
Total revenue and support	<u>17,207,079</u>	<u>6,863</u>	<u>17,213,942</u>	<u>15,406,514</u>	<u>2,449</u>	<u>15,408,963</u>	
Expenses							
Feeding the Flock:							
Support of local congregations	6,391,074	-	6,391,074	5,585,665	-	5,585,665	
Assistance to the needy	1,418,469	-	1,418,469	1,305,607	-	1,305,607	
Living University	482,821	-	482,821	446,353	-	446,353	
Preaching the Gospel:							
Television and radio	5,159,312	-	5,159,312	4,163,355	-	4,163,355	
Publishing and editorial	1,156,897	-	1,156,897	1,034,675	-	1,034,675	
Mail processing and distribution	1,463,980	-	1,463,980	1,435,027	-	1,435,027	
General and administrative:							
Support services and other	1,164,225	-	1,164,225	1,047,173	-	1,047,173	
Total expenses	<u>17,236,778</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>17,236,778</u>	<u>15,017,855</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,017,855</u>	
Change in net assets	(29,699)	6,863	(22,836)	388,659	2,449	391,108	
Net assets							
Beginning of year	4,570,684	127,688	4,698,372	4,182,025	125,239	4,307,264	
End of year	<u>\$ 4,540,985</u>	<u>\$ 134,551</u>	<u>\$ 4,675,536</u>	<u>\$ 4,570,684</u>	<u>\$ 127,688</u>	<u>\$ 4,698,372</u>	

The accompanying notes to the consolidated financial statements are an integral part of these statements.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS**

YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

	Years Ended December 31,	
	2012	2011
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ (22,836)	\$ 391,108
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Depreciation and amortization	411,252	389,933
Net unrealized/realized losses on investments	5,189	45,277
(Gain) loss on disposal of property and equipment	(8,230)	2,948
Change in operating assets and liabilities:		
Receivables	(153,720)	(52,263)
Inventory	(143,491)	(101,367)
Prepaid expenses	(130,281)	4,607
Deposits	(1,240)	2,794
Accounts payable	149,544	210,006
Accrued wages and other liabilities	63,154	15,395
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>169,341</u>	<u>908,438</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchases of property and equipment	(732,066)	(250,964)
Disposals of property and equipment	65,695	56,853
Proceeds from sale of investments	-	98,880
Purchases of investments	<u>(28,827)</u>	<u>(41,019)</u>
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(695,198)</u>	<u>(136,250)</u>
<b>Cash flow from financing activities</b>		
Principal payments on mortgage	(102,991)	(113,901)
Principal payments on capital lease obligations	<u>(54,584)</u>	<u>(55,405)</u>
Net cash used in financing activities	<u>(157,575)</u>	<u>(169,306)</u>
(Decrease) increase in cash and cash equivalents	(683,432)	602,882
<b>Cash and cash equivalents</b>		
Beginning of year	<u>2,704,467</u>	<u>2,101,585</u>
End of year	<u>\$ 2,021,035</u>	<u>\$ 2,704,467</u>
<b>Supplemental disclosure of cash flow information</b>		
Cash paid during the year for interest expense	<u>\$ 67,092</u>	<u>\$ 76,192</u>

The accompanying notes to the consolidated financial statements are an integral part of these statements.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 1—Organization and summary of significant accounting policies**

*Organization and Nature of Activities* – The Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates (the “Church”), a North Carolina nonprofit religious corporation, is involved in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and providing for the spiritual and material needs of its members. The Church is primarily funded by unrestricted tithes and offerings. Its worldwide headquarters are in Charlotte, North Carolina.

*Consideration of Reporting Entity* – The Church is comprised of various legal entities in the United States. Entities controlled by the Church have been included in the accompanying consolidated financial statements. These entities include Living Church of God, Inc., Tomorrow’s World, Inc., Tomorrow’s World, LLC, El Mundo De Manana, LLC and Living University. Tomorrow’s World, Inc. and Tomorrow’s World, LLC are included in the financial information of Living Church of God, Inc. The operations of foreign affiliates are not included in the accompanying consolidated financial statements as they are independent entities in which the Church does not hold a controlling interest.

Living University (the “University”), its wholly-owned subsidiary, was established in 2007 to offer online course work for the development of the whole person by educating men and women in the skills, concepts, and values that lead to success in life, while helping them prepare for leadership and worthwhile service to God and humanity.

All significant intercompany balances and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation.

*Basis of Presentation* – The accompanying consolidated financial statements are prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Net assets and revenues, expenses, gains, and losses are classified based on the existence or absence of donor-imposed restrictions. Accordingly, net assets and changes therein are classified and reported as follows.

*Unrestricted Net Assets* - Net assets that are both undesignated and designated in nature. Undesignated unrestricted net assets are those currently available for use in the day-to-day operations of the Church and those resources invested in property and equipment. The Church may designate certain amounts to be utilized/invested to meet specific objectives of the Church.

*Temporarily Restricted Net Assets* - Net assets subject to donor-imposed restrictions that may or will be met by specific actions of the Church and/or passage of time. When a restriction expires, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the Consolidated Statement of Activities as net assets released from restriction.

*Permanently Restricted Net Assets* - Net assets that are subject to donor-imposed stipulations that they be maintained permanently by the Church. Generally, the donors of these assets permit the Church to use all or part of the income earned on any related investments for general or specific purposes. As of December 31, 2012 and 2011, the Church had no permanently restricted net assets.

*Contribution Revenue* – Tithes and offerings are recorded as revenue in the year the contribution is paid. Members of the Church practice tithing, the donation of ten percent of one’s income for the Church’s unrestricted use. These tithes (known as first tithes), plus unrestricted offerings given at each of seven annual Holy Days, comprise the majority of Church support and revenue.

In addition to first tithes and offerings, members save a second tithes for personal use to be able to attend the annual Holy Days. Those who are able give ten percent of this personal second tithes and/or excess second tithes to the Church. The Church uses these funds to help pay for expenses incurred by the Church to conduct the Holy Days and assist the needy members to be able to attend the Church festivals. These contributions are known as second tithes.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 1—Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)**

Members, who are financially able, also contribute a third tithes in the third and sixth years of every seven year cycle. These contributions are used first to assist widows, orphans and the poor; and secondly, for retirees and missionary support.

Restricted donations are received for the purchase of media time, the operation of the Church’s summer youth camps, buildings and facilities maintenance, disaster relief and assistance to foreign affiliates in need.

*Cash and Cash Equivalents* – The Church considers all highly liquid debt instruments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

*Investments* – Investments consist of equities, including precious metal equities, preferred stock and mutual funds stated at fair value. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are included as investment income in the Consolidated Statements of Activities.

*Receivables* – Receivables consist of contributions receivable, amounts due from foreign affiliates, employees, the state of North Carolina for sales tax paid and vendor receivables. Management’s determination of the allowance for doubtful accounts is based on an evaluation of the receivable, past experience, current economic conditions, and other risks. Accounts receivable are written off when, in the opinion of management, such receivables are deemed to be uncollectible.

*Inventories* – Inventories consist of various books and publications and are stated at the lower of cost (first-in, first-out method) or market. A physical inventory of the publications is taken semi-annually (mid-year and year-end).

*Prepaid expenses and deposits* – Prepaid expenses consist of television time, publications, vehicle leases, Church meeting hall rentals, insurance and other, which includes postage paid in advance. Deposits include funds to secure hall rentals, youth camp and festival sites.

Programming costs of television time are paid in advance of the scheduled air date. The expense is recognized in the month that the program is aired.

Prepaid church meeting hall rentals are expensed in the month the meeting is held. The majority of the church hall rentals are on a month to month basis.

Prepaid vehicle lease costs are paid at the inception of the lease and amortized over the term of the original lease, usually 12 to 48 months.

*Property and Equipment* – Property and equipment is stated at cost. Depreciation of property is computed on the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of 30 years for buildings and improvements and 3 to 5 years for office furniture and equipment. The costs of major improvements are capitalized, while the costs of maintenance and repairs, which do not improve or extend the life of the respective properties, are expensed when incurred. The cost and accumulated depreciation of property are eliminated from the accounts upon disposal, and any resulting gain or loss is included in the Consolidated Statements of Activities.

*Accrued Wages and Other Liabilities* – Accrued liabilities primarily pertain to amounts accrued for compensated absences, salaries and wages.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 1—Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)**

*Income Taxes* – The Church and the University are exempt from income tax under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and applicable state statutes. The Church’s assets are held in entities are non-profit organizations with no taxable activity. The Church and the University are liable for federal and state taxes on any unrelated business income, as defined in the Code. The Church’s policy is to record a liability for any tax position taken that is beneficial to the Church, including any related interest and penalties, when it is more likely than not the position taken by management with respect to a transaction or class of transactions will be overturned by a taxing authority upon examination. Management believes there are no such positions as of December 31, 2012 and 2011 and, accordingly, no liability has been accrued. Tax returns filed subsequent to the year ended December 31, 2009 are subject to examination by the tax authorities.

*Donated Services* – No amounts have been reflected in the consolidated financial statements for donated services. The Church pays for most services requiring specific expertise. However, many individuals volunteer their time and perform a variety of tasks that include assisting the Church with specific programs and service on various committees. Such donated services have not been quantified and do not meet the criteria for recognition in consolidated financial statements.

*Tuition and Fees* – The University charges tuition and fees for online study courses. Revenue is recognized pro-rata over the time that the online course is offered. Payments received for future study courses are reported as other liabilities in the Consolidated Statements of Financial Position.

*Programs and Support Services* – The Church sponsors a number of programs and support services. Those programs and services consist of the following:

*Support of Local Congregations* - Represents the cost incurred and paid by the Church at the local congregation level to provide for the spiritual needs of its members. Included are pastoral expenses such as salaries, health care, vehicles and other travel related costs, as well as weekly meeting hall rentals, mailing of DVD sermons, expenses to conduct the annual Holy Days, youth programs, the direct support of foreign affiliates and other support.

*Assistance to the Needy* - Provides for the material needs of Church members primarily as assistance for widows, orphans and the poor; including assistance to enable some members to attend the annual Holy Days. Assistance to foreign affiliates in need is also included.

*Living University* - Includes direct financial support, allocated facility costs, studio time and church employee personnel costs associated with operating the University.

*Television and Radio* - Primarily represents the cost of purchasing air time for the Church’s weekly television program, *Tomorrow’s World*. Also included are the production costs associated with creating the program and costs for video tape and answering service.

*Publishing and Editorial* - Includes editorial and publishing costs of the Church’s bi-monthly magazine, *Tomorrow’s World*, and an array of booklets, primarily intended for non-members. Also included are costs of printing all other Church materials.

*Mail Processing and Distribution* - Represents the costs of fulfilling literature, audiotape and compact disk requests generated by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God through television, radio and publishing. Computer support of mailing lists is also included.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 1—Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)**

*Support Services and Other* - Includes administrative expenses not directly attributable to specific programs. This includes the full cost of all finance, accounting, purchasing, human resources and legal support. It also includes general insurance and other miscellaneous expenses.

*Functional Expenses* – The costs of providing programs and other activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the Consolidated Statement of Activities. Accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among the programs and supporting services benefited.

*Advertising Expense* – Advertising costs are expensed as incurred. Total advertising expense for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011 was \$371,221 and \$182,324, respectively.

*Use of Estimates* – The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities at the date of the consolidated financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

**Note 2—Investments**

The fair value of investments at December 31 is summarized below:

	2012	2011
US equities	\$ 7,850	\$ 27,863
International equities	16,647	85,586
US mutual funds	1,443	1,600
Platinum coins	8,466	6,773
Silver shares	45,959	-
Gold shares	235,024	170,229
Total investments	\$ 315,389	\$ 291,751

Investment return on the accompanying Consolidated Statement of Activities consists of the following at December 31:

	2012	2011
Interest and dividends	\$ 7,658	\$ 7,962
Unrealized and realized losses	(5,189)	(45,277)
Total	\$ 2,469	\$ (37,315)

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 3—Receivables**

Receivables at December 31 are as follows:

	2012	2011
Contributions receivable	\$ 475,681	\$ 378,156
Other receivables	183,548	137,353
	689,229	515,509
Less allowance for uncollectible receivables	(14,000)	(14,000)
Total receivables	<u>\$ 655,229</u>	<u>\$ 501,509</u>

**Note 4—Prepaid expenses**

Prepaid expenses at December 31 consist of the following:

	2012	2011
Insurance	\$ 13,639	\$ 13,417
Vehicle lease	8,797	7,058
Building rent	135	1,080
Church hall rent	65,046	52,198
Television	228,280	141,696
Postage	36,500	11,308
Other	9,910	5,069
Total prepaid expenses	<u>\$ 362,307</u>	<u>\$ 232,026</u>

**Note 5—Property and equipment**

The following is a summary of property and equipment at December 31:

	2012	2011
Land	\$ 517,100	\$ 517,100
Land improvements	10,670	10,670
Building and improvements	3,179,538	3,143,675
Equipment, furniture and software	1,991,346	1,788,189
Vehicles	425,664	313,952
Construction in progress	170,153	11,059
	6,294,471	5,784,645
Less accumulated depreciation	(2,604,562)	(2,358,828)
Property and equipment, net	<u>\$ 3,689,909</u>	<u>\$ 3,425,817</u>

Depreciation expense, including amortization on equipment and vehicles under capital lease, was \$410,509 and \$389,189 for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011, respectively.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 6—Other assets**

Other assets include "The World Ahead" trademark and "Global Church of God" copyrights, other trademarks, trade names and all intellectual property rights. The intellectual property rights are amortized over 7 years. The costs and respective accumulated amortization follows:

	2012	2011
Copyrights and trademarks	\$ 34,601	\$ 34,601
Less accumulated amortization	(33,919)	(33,176)
	<u>\$ 682</u>	<u>\$ 1,425</u>

Amortization expense for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011 amounted to \$743 and \$742, respectively.

**Note 7—Capital lease obligations**

The Church leases certain equipment and vehicles under agreements that are classified as capital leases. These obligations require monthly payments varying from \$390 to \$652 and extend through April 2014. The cost of equipment and vehicles under capital leases is included as property and equipment and is summarized at December 31, as follows:

	2012	2011
Vehicles and equipment	\$ 251,716	\$ 251,716
Less accumulated amortization	(191,674)	(78,596)
	<u>\$ 60,042</u>	<u>\$ 173,120</u>

Required minimum lease payments as of December 31, 2012 are as follows:

2013	\$ 48,942
2014	16,151
	65,093
Less current maturity	(48,942)
	<u>\$ 16,151</u>

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 8—Mortgage payable**

The Church has a mortgage outstanding which is summarized below:

	December 31,	
	2012	2011
Mortgage payable - bank; variable interest rate based on 7/8% below the bank's prime rate to a maximum fixed rate of 6.375% and a minimum fixed rate of 3.375%. First year was an interest only loan with a payment of \$6,521. Starting in June of 2012, escalating fixed principal and accrued interest is payable in monthly installments through April 2015 with the final payment of the balance plus accrued interest, if any, due May 2015. The mortgage is collateralized by the Church's headquarters and studio located in Charlotte, North Carolina.	\$ 1,926,241	\$ 2,029,232
Less current portion	(95,088)	(118,605)
	<u>\$ 1,831,153</u>	<u>\$ 1,910,627</u>

Future maturities of the notes payable are as follows:

2013	\$ 95,088
2014	98,058
2015	1,733,095
	<u>\$ 1,926,241</u>

In 2012, the Church entered into an interest rate swap on a bank note. The economic substance of the swap agreement was to effectively convert the variable interest rate on this debt to a fixed rate of 3.03%. The notional amount outstanding under the swap agreement equals the scheduled principal amount outstanding under the debt, through the expiration of the swap agreement. Any payments made or received under the swap agreement are recognized when due as an increase or decrease in the related interest expense. At December 31, 2012, the fair value of the interest rate swap was considered immaterial to the financial statements.

Total interest expense for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011 was \$67,092 and \$76,192, respectively. The Church is subject to certain financial covenants under terms of this agreement and was in compliance with all such covenants as of December 31, 2012.

**Note 9—Temporarily restricted net assets**

Temporarily restricted net assets are restricted for the following purposes at December 31:

	2012	2011
Disaster relief	\$ 118,065	\$ 124,348
International assistance	16,486	3,340
	<u>\$ 134,551</u>	<u>\$ 127,688</u>

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 10—Commitments**

The Church leases fleet vehicles and equipment under various non-cancelable operating leases. These leases require monthly payments varying from \$327 to \$1,995 and extend through 2015. Lease expense for vehicles and equipment under various operating leases amount to \$139,200 and \$159,113 at December 31, 2012 and 2011, respectively.

Required minimum lease payments on items under operating leases as of December 31, 2012 are as follows:

2013	\$ 198,342
2014	143,494
2015	65,458
	<u>\$ 407,294</u>

**Note 11—Benefit plan**

The Church has a 403(b) Tax Deferred Annuity Plan for all eligible employees. Eligible employees may elect to exclude up to the maximum contribution permitted by the Internal Revenue Code. The Church does not contribute to this plan.

The Church has a Simplified Employee Pension Plan (SEP) covering all eligible employees. Matching contributions have been at the discretion of the Church and have been 2.5% of eligible participants' compensation. There were no contributions made by the Church for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011.

**Note 12—Contingencies**

The Church provides discretionary post-employment retirement payments and healthcare benefits to select ministers' widows and retired employees that meet certain objective and subjective criteria. Although one of the criteria includes an employee's years of service (with the Church and its predecessors), an accrual for these future benefits has not been recorded due to the Church's ability to deny payments at its sole discretion. For the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011, the Church expensed payments for this purpose totaling approximately \$237,000 and \$193,000, respectively.

**Note 13—Concentration of credit risk**

The Church places its cash and cash equivalents on deposit with financial institutions in the United States. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") covers \$250,000 for substantially all depository accounts. In addition, the FDIC provided unlimited coverage for certain qualifying and participating non-interest bearing transaction accounts through December 31, 2012; however, effective January 1, 2013, the FDIC discontinued the additional unlimited coverage. The Church from time to time may have amounts on deposit in excess of the insured limits.

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**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2012 AND 2011

**Note 14—Related party**

The Church has affiliated entities throughout the world that are related by some common board members. For the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011, the Church expended \$617,437 and \$587,320, respectively, related to these affiliates. In addition, the Church had accounts receivables of \$24,988 and \$57,747 due from affiliated entities at December 31, 2012 and 2011 (included in other receivables as described in Note 3).

**Note 15—Fair value measurements of assets and liabilities**

The Church utilizes fair value measurements to record fair value adjustments to certain assets and liabilities and to determine fair value disclosures. Under the fair value guidance, the Church groups assets and liabilities at fair value in three levels, based on the markets in which the assets and liabilities are traded and the reliability of the assumptions used to determine fair value. These levels are:

Level 1: Financial instruments with unadjusted, quoted prices listed on active market exchanges. The Church has Level 1 assets of \$315,389 and \$291,751 shown as investments in the accompanying Consolidated Statements of Financial Position at December 31, 2012 and 2011, respectively (see Note 2).

Level 2: Financial instruments valued using inputs that include quoted prices for similar assets and liabilities in active markets, and inputs that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly, for substantially the full term of the financial instrument. The Church has no Level 2 assets or liabilities at December 31, 2012 or 2011.

Level 3: Financial instruments that are not actively traded on a market exchange and require using significant unobservable inputs in determining fair value. The Church has no assets or liabilities subject to Level 3 valuations at December 31, 2012 or 2011.

**Note 16—Subsequent events**

The Church has evaluated subsequent events through April 18, 2013, in connection with the preparation of these consolidated financial statements which is the date the consolidated financial statements were available to be issued.

**ACCOMPANYING INFORMATION**

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

DECEMBER 31, 2012

	Living Church of God	Living University	Eliminations	Consolidated
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Current assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,859,530	\$ 161,505	\$ -	\$ 2,021,035
Investments	613,212	1,693	(299,516)	315,389
Receivables, net	636,354	25,471	(6,596)	655,229
Inventory	507,136	376	-	507,512
Prepaid expenses	362,307	-	-	362,307
Deposits	14,445	375	-	14,820
Total current assets	3,992,984	189,420	(306,112)	3,876,292
Property and equipment, net	3,549,244	140,665	-	3,689,909
Other assets, net	682	-	-	682
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 7,542,910</b>	<b>\$ 330,085</b>	<b>\$ (306,112)</b>	<b>\$ 7,566,883</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>				
Current liabilities				
Accounts payable	\$ 559,817	\$ 12,270	\$ (6,596)	\$ 565,491
Accrued wages and other liabilities	316,223	18,299	-	334,522
Mortgage payable, current portion	95,088	-	-	95,088
Capital lease obligations, current portion	48,942	-	-	48,942
Total current liabilities	1,020,070	30,569	(6,596)	1,044,043
Long-term liabilities				
Mortgage payable	1,831,153	-	-	1,831,153
Capital lease obligations	16,151	-	-	16,151
Total long-term liabilities	1,847,304	-	-	1,847,304
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,867,374</b>	<b>30,569</b>	<b>(6,596)</b>	<b>2,891,347</b>
Net assets				
Unrestricted net assets	4,540,985	299,516	(299,516)	4,540,985
Temporarily restricted net assets	134,551	-	-	134,551
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>4,675,536</b>	<b>299,516</b>	<b>(299,516)</b>	<b>4,675,536</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 7,542,910</b>	<b>\$ 330,085</b>	<b>\$ (306,112)</b>	<b>\$ 7,566,883</b>

See report of independent auditor.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC. AND AFFILIATES**  
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2012

	Living Church of God		Living University		Eliminations		Consolidated		Totals	
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted
Revenue and support	\$ 13,669,793	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 13,669,793	\$ -	\$ 13,669,793	\$ -
Contributions	12,992,456	-	-	-	-	-	12,992,456	-	12,992,456	-
Holy Day offerings	2,469	-	-	-	-	-	2,469	-	2,469	-
Investment return	590,844	-	590,844	-	(743,054)	-	404,395	-	404,395	-
Other revenue	49,304	-	49,304	-	-	-	49,304	-	49,304	-
Special projects and donations	17,262,552	49,304	17,331,656	652,140	(743,054)	-	17,164,638	49,304	17,213,942	-
Tuition and fees, net	-	-	-	-	-	-	68,535	-	68,535	-
Net assets released from restrictions	49,304	-	49,304	-	-	-	49,304	-	49,304	-
Other non-restricted purpose	(69,441)	-	(69,441)	-	-	-	(69,441)	-	(69,441)	-
Total revenue and support	17,352,963	6,663	17,331,656	625,140	(743,054)	-	17,292,079	6,663	17,213,942	6,663
Expenses										
Living Church of God	6,824,612	-	6,824,612	-	(443,538)	-	6,381,074	-	6,381,074	-
Support of local organizations	1,418,469	-	1,418,469	-	-	-	1,418,469	-	1,418,469	-
Assistance to the needy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Living University	-	-	482,821	-	-	-	482,821	-	482,821	-
Preaching the Gospel:										
Television and radio	5,159,312	-	5,159,312	-	-	-	5,159,312	-	5,159,312	-
Publishing and editorial	1,156,897	-	1,156,897	-	-	-	1,156,897	-	1,156,897	-
Mail processing and distribution	1,463,360	-	1,463,360	-	-	-	1,463,360	-	1,463,360	-
General and administrative:										
Support services and other	1,164,225	-	1,164,225	-	-	-	1,164,225	-	1,164,225	-
Total expenses	17,137,495	482,921	17,137,495	482,921	(443,538)	-	17,256,778	-	17,256,778	-
Change in net assets	127,498	6,863	134,361	142,319	(299,516)	-	(29,639)	6,863	(22,639)	(22,639)
Net assets:										
Beginning of year	4,413,487	-	4,413,487	-	-	-	4,413,487	-	4,413,487	-
End of year	\$ 4,540,985	\$ 134,551	\$ 4,675,536	\$ 299,516	\$ (299,516)	\$ -	\$ 4,540,985	\$ 134,551	\$ 4,675,536	\$ -

See report of independent auditor.

# Righteous Government: From Ephod to Ekklesia

By Wyatt Ciesielka

Jesus Christ revealed that the *entire* Law is founded on two principles: love toward God and love toward neighbor (cf. Matthew 22:36–40). Most of us are familiar with the principle that God’s very nature is expressed as *love* (1 John 4:8, 16), and love is *kind* (1 Corinthians 13:4). What some do not realize is that His nature can also be expressed as what in Hebrew is termed *tsēdaqah*, which carries the sense of “governmental righteousness”—as in Isaiah 9:7 and elsewhere. Godly government can thus be seen as an expression of *service* and of *love*, which is the clear model provided in Scripture.

This article will review *scriptural instruction* regarding God’s righteous government, found in both the Old Testament and New Testament, and will also demonstrate how righteous governance is something that Christians individually, and God’s Church as a whole, must practice *now* in preparation to *serve and rule in the coming Kingdom of God*.

## OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

That the **Old Testament** priesthood was established by God, that it was to be hereditary, and that the priests were appointed by God directly, or by those whom God had previously selected (Numbers 3:10, Joshua 4:4, 1 Samuel 3:10–21, Jeremiah 29:26), is beyond honest dispute. As one noted scholar summarized, “It might be useful to repeat and to emphasize as forcefully as possible that the priesthood was hereditary. The office of High Priest went from father to eldest son (at least in principle), in continuation of the precedent ascribed in Scripture, whereby Elazar succeeded his father Aaron, and Phinehas succeeded Elazar. The term of High Priest, again in principle, was for life...” (Samuel Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* 1978, p. 133).

In Numbers 1:50 and Numbers 3:10, God instructed Moses to appoint the Levites to their duties. They were to serve God and serve the people. There was not to be politicking, nor was there to be democratic selection by ballot.

Exodus 28:6–14 describes the ephod that Aaron and the High Priests were to wear. What was the significance of the ephod as relates to righteous government? The ephod tunic was beautiful. It was embroidered with gold, blue, purple and scarlet. This special ephod was worn *only* by the High Priest, who was a type of Christ (Hebrews 9:11). Neither ordinary priests, nor even the ancient kings could wear this special ephod (cf. 1 Samuel 2:18; 2 Samuel 6:14; 1 Chronicles 15:27). The ephod hung from the chest to below the loins, and the front and rear pieces were attached by straps that rested over each shoulder. Two large and precious onyx stones set in pure gold adorned these straps. The onyx stones rested on the High Priest’s shoulders, and engraved in these two precious stones were the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel; six names on one shoulder and six names on the other shoulder (Exodus 28:9; 39:6–7).

In ancient Israel, the ephod with the stones symbolizing the twelve tribes rested over the High Priest’s shoulders. Today, Jesus Christ is “Apostle and High Priest” of His Church (Hebrews 3:1). Furthermore, scripture reveals that in the coming Kingdom of God, the entire government of God will rest on His shoulders: including all nations and all people. Revelation 11:15 proclaims, “Then the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” Righteous government (*tsēdaqah*) has always been integral to the True Gospel. As Isaiah recorded in one of the many Old Testament prophecies about the ultimate role of Jesus Christ, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a

Son is given; *and the government will be upon His shoulder*. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). He will be King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16) as well as High Priest (Hebrews 4:14) in this everlasting *theocratic monarchy*, which will exist without end (Luke 1:33). And, as the physical ephod anciently pictured the High Priest both in service, and in authority over the nation of Israel, at the Second Coming, it will be Jesus Christ Who will fulfill the *entire* duty of Priestly King, and He will have full dominion and rule. He will rule Israel and *all* nations. Finally, again, the entire nation of Israel—all twelve tribes—will have the blessing of being ruled by the resurrected King David (Jeremiah 30:9), and Jesus Christ as King of kings. As God foretold through Hosea, because of their sins, for many generations Israel suffered *without a righteous king*, but “in the latter days,” referring to the Millennium, Israel would again seek *and find* David their king *and* the Lord their God *and* His ephod (Hosea 3:4–5), and Christ’s government will be “without end” (Isaiah 9:6–7)!

But what about *non-priestly* offices? What is the Old Testament example? In Old Testament times, the biblical example is also that non-priestly offices were to be established *by appointment*. Most are aware of the account in Exodus 18:17–22, where Jethro advised Moses to delegate some of his governmental duties to others so he would not “wear himself out.” Moses took this wise counsel and *selected and appointed* rulers to help him govern Israel. Moses did not call for a general election by the people, though he did listen to counsel (Exodus 18:17–19)—a biblical principle that all good leaders will follow (cf. Proverbs 11:14; 24:6). But, the appointments were nevertheless delegated by Moses. Israel existed under the leadership of High Priests from the time of Moses and



Aaron until the time of Samuel and Saul. When Israel rejected Samuel as their leader, God condemned them for actually rejecting Him as their ruler (1 Samuel 8:7). So, God then selected and personally appointed Saul to be physical king over Israel (1 Samuel 9:17). Saul was succeeded by David (Samuel 16:12), and then numerous kings, some of whom were generally righteous, but others of whom were very wicked.

The Bible records the long and often evil history of Israel during the monarch years when Israel time and time again (usually under the rulership of evil kings), acted like an adulterous woman who “looked to other gods” (Hosea 3:1). Israel’s continued paganism eventually resulted in the nation abiding “many days without a king or prince... without an ephod” (representative of holy governance) *and* even “without a teraphim” (representative of evil, pagan, idolatrous worship). This specific prophecy has been fulfilled throughout the past two-thousand-plus years, whereby all of the descendants of Israel (not just the primarily Jewish nation-state) has had no king, and no High priest sacrificing to God! But, again, as Hosea also prophesied, at the very end of this age (after the Great Tribulation), Israel would finally again “seek the LORD their God and David their king” (Hosea 3:4–5) and will find both Christ and king David at the Second Coming when Christ returns and king David is resurrected! “But, they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (Jeremiah 30:9), and “I [Christ] will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And, I the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken!” (Ezekiel 34:23–24).

Anciently, physical Israel was God’s Church “in the wilderness” (cf. Acts 7:38). But what about in God’s Church today? What is the **New Testament** example? Is it also clear? The New Testament reveals the *same pattern* of

God appointing those whom are to serve and rule within His Church. As Luke 6:12–13, Matthew 4:18–22 and Mark 1:16–20 demonstrate, Christ *selected and appointed* the original Apostles. Jesus then selected Saul, who became Paul, telling Ananias to make contact with this former enemy of the Church (Acts 9:17). Later, we see the apostles continuing similarly. The apostles never instructed or condoned politicking or democracy. Instead, they prayed, sought counsel from others, and *appointed* (ordained) qualified men to office (cf. Acts 6:3). Later, Paul continues this same pattern of

In the Old Testament, casting lots was to place one’s trust in God to direct the result. To cast a lot was to throw a type of dice, or wood or clay tablet, while trusting God to guide how it fell—which side landed “up.” Whether used to determine the division of land (Numbers 26:55, Joshua 18:10), or other important questions, casting lots was simply not voting, as nearly all reputable Bible scholars understand. As Proverbs 16:33 illustrates, “The lot is cast into the lap, *but the decision is from the LORD.*” The decision (*how* the lot fell—which outcome was selected), was entirely left to God—it was not

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**But, what about the Old Testament practice of casting lots, and the replacement of Judas Iscariot? Some believe this was some sort of ancient voting process. However, casting lots was *not* voting as can be easily demonstrated from scripture.**

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governance when he instructs Titus to *appoint* elders in every city (Titus 1:5).

The human positions of authority within the Church of God are appointed (or ordained) by the authority of the Father and under His Son, Jesus Christ, and are listed in Ephesians 4:11. They are in descending rank: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. 1 Corinthians 12:28 also refers to ranks within the Church. Hebrews 13:17 is just one of many scriptures that show that those appointed to serve in these capacities do have authority over those in the Church. One cannot appoint oneself as an apostle or a prophet or an evangelist, or pastor, or elder or deacon. It was Lucifer who said, “I will ascend” (Isaiah 14:14), but it was Jesus Christ who said, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

### WHAT ABOUT CASTING LOTS?

But, what about the Old Testament practice of casting lots, and the replacement of Judas Iscariot? Some believe that casting lots was some sort of ancient voting process. However, casting lots was *not* voting as can be easily demonstrated from scripture.

a matter of politicking or majority opinion.

So, why does the Church of God not cast lots today? Again, Scripture reveals the answer. First, of those men long known to the apostles, who had “accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us” (Acts 1:21), two men of good reputation were recommended (v. 23). In this account, just as in the account of Jethro and Moses long before, we see the application of wisdom and counsel. Two men were presented, and after prayer (v. 24), Matthias was chosen by casting lots (Acts 1:26)—appointed by God rather than by any man.

Why then does the Church of God not cast lots today? Again, Scripture makes the answer plain. After the Holy Spirit was made available to the apostles and the original Church (John 20:22, Acts 2:2–4), there is *never again an example of the Church asking for God to make a selection by the casting of lots*. Instead, God expects His ministry to pray, fast, receive counsel, and use the Holy Spirit in order to understand God’s will regarding who should be ordained. Whether the selection of the seven men in Acts 6:3, the instruction to Titus to appoint elders in Titus

1:5, or elsewhere; after the Holy Spirit was given, the casting of lots to select leadership within the Church of God is never given as an example.

### **RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT (TSĒDAQAH) IN MODERN TIMES**

In the modern era of the Church, the *appointment* to a position of authority and service remains the practice. This practice continued within the Sardis era of the Church of God under the leadership of Gilbert Cranmer (the late 1800s through 1903) and Mr. Cranmer's successors, including, A.N. Dugger. It was Ellen G. White who began to introduce numerous doctrinal changes, including an attack on the hierarchical, biblical government that had been generally practiced until that time. Ellen White claimed to be a prophetess, and supported the changing of various fundamental Church of God doctrines on issues ranging from the immortality of the soul to the trinity, but she also demanded a change in governance. Elder White and Ellen White promoted *congregational* governance. Consequently, a split occurred in the 1860s, resulting in the formation of the Seventh Day Adventist church. However, faithful leaders such as Jacob Brinkerhoff, A.F. Dugger, and A.N. Dugger retained the biblical practice of Church governance. As one historian notes, A.N. Dugger later wrote, insisting that “the Bible knew nothing of elections after the democratic fashion” (Elmer Clark, *The Small Sects in America*, 1949, p. 44).

It was into this form of church governance that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was called in the autumn 1926, and into which he was ordained in June 1931. It was biblical, hierarchical governance that Mr. Armstrong and the Church of God would practice until years after his death in 1986 (for more about the details of Mr. Armstrong's calling and ordination, please read God's Church Through the Ages, pages 47–48). As Mr. Armstrong wrote, “The government of God is of necessity government from the top down. It cannot be ‘government by the consent of the governed’” (*Mystery of the Ages*, p. 49).

It was into this form of church governance, practicing the same pattern that God demonstrated from the time of Moses through the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles, which the first five evangelists in the Philadelphian era of God's Church were ordained by Mr. Armstrong in December of 1952: Richard Armstrong, Raymond Cole, Herman Hoeh, C. Paul Meredith and Roderick C. Meredith. And, it is this type of government that the Philadelphian remnant of the Church of God will hold on to until the very end of the age (cf. Revelation 3:7). As Mr. Richard F. Ames noted in the March-April 2002 *Living Church News*, Dr. Meredith has reminded the Church numerous times that while preaching the “full truth” as Christ commanded His disciples (Matthew 28:16–20), and continuing in the work of God, which is the “Great Commission” of preaching the true Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God, remains the priorities of God's true Church, an additional top priority is “teaching and practicing the government of God” (“This is Only the Beginning,” p. 7).

Scripture makes the pattern very plain, showing that God appoints one, *through one already appointed by God*. Whether in the example of God selecting King David of ancient Israel, and having Samuel lay hands on him to appoint him as the king to succeed Saul, or whether it is the example of Christ personally selecting the apostles in the New Testament, or whether it is later examples in scripture, this is always the pattern. Within the Church of God, the biblical example is that one must be appointed by God and ordained by those of equal or higher rank. This has always been God's way of governing; from the top down (Exodus 18:21–26). But, again God's way of governing has also always been one of service and of servant-leadership, as should be especially demonstrated within God Church; His “called out ones,” His *ekklesia*.

### **PREPARING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Godly government and governance is good (Mark 10:18), perfect (Psalm 18:30) and just (Isaiah 9:7). Human governance

is all too frequently corrupt, dysfunctional and unjust. God may grant rulership to whomever He pleases (Daniel 5:21). But, this does not mean that the numerous competing approaches, organizations and myriad variant doctrines are His desire. On the contrary, this is confusion and He is not its “author” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Those in God's Church today who are striving to be “Philadelphian” (cf. Revelation 3:7–13) should also remember that in addition to practicing *brotherly love*, striving to *keep the commandments*, and being zealous to *preach the Gospel*, another characteristic of Philadelphia is holding fast to “the key of David,” which includes proper *church government*. As Mr. Richard Ames wrote, it “is Christ Himself Who is the Head of the Church and Who has the key. The key is, and will be, ‘upon His shoulder’ (Isaiah 9:6). He is the Head of the body, the Church (Colossians 1:18)... He is the Head of the body that is organized, and administers its responsibilities through the ministry (Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Corinthians 12:27–28; Hebrews 13:7, 17). The New Testament clearly defines and outlines government as applied to Church administration. Those groups that do not recognize Christ as having the ‘key of David,’ and who do not obey His instructions for Church organization and administration, will hardly identify with Philadelphia” (*Living Church News*, “Seven Eras, Seven Attitudes,” November-December 2009, p. 5).

While the book of Revelation reveals that there will be sincere and converted Christians *typified by more than one era* who keep God's law and who understand and preach prophecy (cf. Revelation 19:10), and who live at the very end of this age, Jesus Christ also clearly admonishes the *last era* of His Church to repent of lethargy and *self-righteousness* (Revelation 3:15–18), or He will *vomit* them out of His mouth for their own refinement (v. 16). This way of thinking can result in politics, and a tendency toward democratic Church governance; neither of which are pleasing to God. As the name and the context implies, those people (*laos*) who are dominated by a Laodicean attitude will be self-righteous, critical, and *judgmental*

(*dikē*). It is not guaranteed that one is a deeply converted Christian just because one understands righteous government, or because one is “in” a particular Church of God group. But, if Christians from *any* era allow themselves to be dominated by the *Laodicean* inclinations to murmur, be judgmental, and cast off authority, then those Christians—although perhaps good examples in other ways—put themselves in *dire jeopardy* of being vomited out of Christ’s mouth and ending up right in the Great Tribulation! Christ tells the church of Laodicea that He loves them, but that they need to “repent” (Revelation 3:19). This warning stands in stark contrast to the promise given to Philadelphia that God will protect them from the hour of trial that will come up on the whole world (Revelation 3:10), just as the Laodicean attitude stands in stark contrast to that of Philadelphia, which is typified as enduring and having zeal, but also of having the key of David, typifying proper, righteous Church government (Revelation 3:7–8).

Of course, even within “top-down” government, the people still have a choice—God sets before us choices (cf. Deuteronomy 30:19)—He does not choose to *make* us obey Him. We can *choose* to come under the form of government that scripture clearly reveals is God’s pattern, or we can choose *not* to. Certainly, there is much more to being a deeply converted, righteous Christian than just understanding and practicing godly government. The reality, however, is that those who refuse to come under righteous government *now*—those whose mantra is that they will “not be ruled by one man” or will “not be under ‘top-down’ government” *now*, are taking a dangerous risk by exchanging supposed freedom *now* for a terrible *future lesson*. The time is coming when “the Beast” will not only be given rulership over his empire, but also will be given authority to make war with the remnant of God’s people (the Saints, cf. Revelation 12:17; 13:7, 12–18; 17:12–13) who will be “given into his hand” during the period of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 11:11)!

Remember, Jesus Christ came preaching the “gospel of the coming

Kingdom of God” and numerous scriptures such as Luke 19:11–19, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation 2:26–27, Revelation 11:15 show us that in the future, Christ *will* return and will rule the entire earth as King of kings. But also notice that the resurrected Saints will rule under Him. As Revelation 5:10 makes plain, the Saints will be made “kings and priests” and shall reign under Christ, over the entire earth. Again, as is always demonstrated as God’s form of governance, it is God who selects and appoints those who will have authority. At that time, in Tomorrow’s World, those resurrected Saints who have been true Philadelphians and who have learned and loved *all* of God’s law, which includes proper Church government will then *practice* and *teach*

Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses” (Daniel 5:21). All authority is from God (cf. Romans 13:1). It is then up to man to learn and to practice righteous government. Not only does God give us a clear pattern to follow for our benefit and to please Him, but it is also vital that true Christians learn and practice righteous government because as Dr. Meredith has noted, the “hierarchical government Christ directed His servants to employ throughout both the Old and New Testaments is the exact form of government we will soon be teaching and practicing in Tomorrow’s World” (Dr. Meredith, “Growth Through Servant Leadership,” *Living Church News*, January–February, 2011, p. 2).

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**Human governance is all too frequently corrupt, dysfunctional and unjust. God may grant rulership to whomever He pleases (Daniel 5:21). But, this does not mean that the numerous competing approaches, organizations and myriad variant doctrines are His desire. On the contrary, this is confusion and He is not its “author” (1 Corinthians 14:33).**

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governmental righteousness, or *tsēdaqah*, for the rest of eternity! Describing the *theocratic monarchy* that will be established at Jesus Christ’s return, Isaiah prophesied, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robes of righteousness [*tsēdaqah*], as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10). At that time, ancient King David will also be resurrected and will rule Israel, under Christ (Ezekiel 37:24). And no wonder King David will rule over the house of Israel! Notice, God reveals that *tsēdaqah* was one of the qualities that King David practiced during his human life (cf. 1 Chronicles 18:14)!

### **RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT IS COMING**

As Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon learned, human government and governance is an extension of God’s dominion. The Almighty God is the author of righteous government, and ultimately, all government is subject to Him. “The

Godly government is coming. “Of the increase of His government [*tsēdaqah*] and peace, there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7). God’s government will be one of *governmental righteousness*, or in the Hebrew language: *tsēdaqah* (cf. Isaiah 9:7, 56:1, Psalm 103:6) because God’s “righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and [His] law is truth” (Psalm 119:142). Many powerful Scriptural promises such as those found in Daniel 2:34–44, Luke 1:33, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation 2:26–27 and Revelation 11:5–15 proclaim that in the near future, Christ will rule the entire earth as King of kings and the saints will rule the nations under Him. This is true godly government—a benevolent, omnipotent, loving Christ as King over the entire earth. Then, God’s royal and perfect law revealing His righteousness will emanate throughout the earth. Then, the earth and the entire universe will experience governmental peace and unity (Isaiah 9:7) founded on *tsēdaqah*, Godly “governmental righteousness.” Let us learn and practice godly government within God’s Church today, so we may teach it in Tomorrow’s World.

# Woman to Woman

By Shirley Young

## Women of Focus

How many of us as women have at one time or another found ourselves reflecting on stories of wondrous and powerful kings? Literature and legend is filled with these stories. So is history—our history. Let us focus on one such story.

Once upon a time there lived—and still lives—a great and powerful King. This King is supremely magnificent and dwells in beauty and unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). He is omniscient, omnipotent and vastly wealthy, owning all things (Psalm 24:1). He even has an excellent Son, His Spokesman. On top of having everything and owning everything, He has a great army of servants who do His will, constantly running to and fro (2 Chronicles 16:9).

And yet, despite all this, He still lacks and longs for something else. That “something else” is a large, loving, character-filled family of sons and daughters created in His own likeness and image and who will call Him “Father” (Jeremiah 3:19).

We who have been privileged to be called into God’s Church in this day and age of course understand that the One described here is our King and our God!

We well know that our God is no egocentric King who only wants to keep all His power and possessions for Himself. No, rather He is a loving, forgiving and giving God whose purpose is to strengthen and support His potential daughters and sons so that they can achieve the inspiring reason for their existence, which is to become part of His family and to “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7).

But how is this possible? How can we frail, flawed women and men, full of human nature and with Satan the Devil trying to influence us, possibly inherit so great a prize or gift? Is there a catch in it? Is it just like the deceiving phone calls that some people receive telling them that they have won lots of money or a cruise on the Mediterranean, only to find out that it is all a cheating lie or scam?

No! Our God is not like that. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and His word is truth (John 17:17). However, although His promises are absolutely valid, there is something that He expects of us. As women aspiring to enter this King’s Kingdom, we must focus on what He expects.

When Jesus Christ walked the earth at His first coming, He admonished us to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

And in regard to that great and final prize of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven,

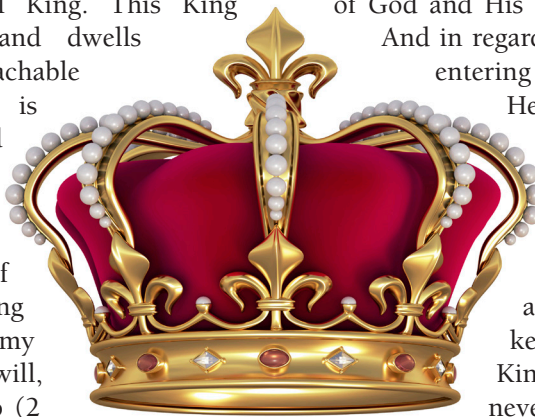
He said: “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). In other words, eager and forceful women (and men) keep a single-minded focus on that Kingdom (Matthew 6:22–24). They never become diverted from their purpose, despite obstacles along the

way. They never take their eyes off the goal and never lose their grip on it, just as Jacob did not give up when struggling with God (Genesis 32:26).

One way we can maintain our inspiration to achieve this wonderful goal is to reflect on the examples of those who have epitomized those traits, keeping their focus to achieve a wonderful goal. One such example can be found in the life of a woman named Elizabeth (Gurney) Fry.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Gurney was born on the 21st May 1780 in Norwich, England. She was born into a wealthy banking family, her father being a partner in Gurney’s Bank. Her mother also was part of the Barclay family that founded Barclay’s Bank, which is still operational today. They lived in a beautiful and spacious country house called Earlham Hall, which is now part of the University of East Anglia.

The Gurneys were a Quaker family with strong Christian values and at the age of 18 the young Elizabeth was deeply moved by the preaching of William Savery, an American Quaker. Motivated by his words she became convicted of the need to help the poor, the sick and those in prison, with special emphasis on women.



She began in a simple way at first by collecting old clothes for the poor. She visited the sick in her neighbourhood and then started a school in their summerhouse on Sundays to teach children to read.

Two years later, Elizabeth married Joseph Fry, also a banker and Quaker. But although Elizabeth lived in somewhat affluent circumstances (except for the four years when her husband's bank ran into financial difficulties) she never lost sight of her goal to serve and help the disadvantaged.

Mrs. Fry gave birth to eleven children and sometimes was not at all well after the births, but she nevertheless soldiered on with unfailing determination to perform her cherished tasks.

Due to the influence of a visiting fellow Quaker, Elizabeth began visiting prisons and was shocked to find them dark, dirty and dangerous places. In Newgate Prison she was especially horrified to find women and children living and dying in the most appalling conditions. This affected her so much that she firmly resolved to do something about it.

Sometimes she actually stayed the night in Newgate where her kindness and warmth of personality drew people to her to such an extent that she gained the confidence and friendship of the women. They then began to work and try to improve conditions for themselves. She also made strong recommendations to the authorities that women only should guard women prisoners and not men.

When touring a number of prisons, Mrs. Fry always went armed with food and clothing for the inmates. She followed this up by establishing schools for the children who were shut in with their mothers and insisted upon some education for the women, having them taught sewing and reading, with especial emphasis on the Bible.

In an age when it was unusual and even frowned upon for a woman to take the lead in such a zealous manner she was greatly criticized. People muttered against her but she nevertheless persevered against all opposition, campaigning tirelessly. In 1835 she actually became the first woman to testify before a House of Commons Parliamentary Committee established to investigate the state of gaols in England and Wales. She was the first penal reformer to devote her attention solely to the plight and improvement of women. Faith and prayer were her constant sources of strength, earning her the name “angel of prisons.”

Due to her position in society, she entertained frequently and encouraged other wealthy middle class women to take an interest and serve alongside her. In other humanitarian work she set up night shelters for the homeless, and began the Brighton District Visiting Society which arranged for

volunteers to visit the poor and provide them with any help and support needed.

Mrs. Fry also undertook rigorous tours of the European continent, endlessly promoting welfare change and humanitarianism and was so effective that she even impressed Frederick William IV of Prussia, who actually came to visit her while on an official state visit to Great Britain. The young Queen Victoria too so greatly admired Mrs. Fry that she granted her several audiences, donating generously to her charities. Victoria later wrote that she considered Mrs. Fry “a very superior person.”



ELIZABETH FRY VISITING WOMEN PRISONERS, 1813.

It is not clear how much Mrs. Fry understood of the Scriptures, but knowingly or unknowingly she adequately fulfilled the words of Jesus Christ:

“...for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me” (Matthew 25:35–36).

From the age of 18 until her death at 65, Mrs. Fry relentlessly pursued these ideals without faltering. She was indeed a *woman of focus*.

Today, in her honour, a prominent statue of her stands nobly in the Grand Hall of the Old Bailey in London (The Central Criminal Court for England and Wales). And, since 2001, her picture has been depicted on the back of Bank of England £5 notes. There, she is shown reading to women in prison.

Many other women down through the ages have worked hard to achieve their ends and goals and have never given up. Some have perhaps done so for personal political ambition, while others have striven for nobler causes. Yet all are examples demonstrating that one particular trait of determined, single-minded focus.

Of course, we in no way wish to diminish the contributions that these dedicated ladies have made to society. However, as Christian women, our goal and destiny so far outstrips and eclipses anything that has been available to these dedicated women of the world. We have been offered the destiny to be born again in the first resurrection and to become part of the Bride of Christ. So, how much more, of all people, should we have that same unswerving determination to achieve our God-given purpose. As we do so, we too will be known as *women of focus*.

Then shall the King say: “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

**Stand Against Satanic Deception!**

Continued from page 2

clear regarding God's opinion about men following their lusts. Paul wrote: "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Romans 1:26–27).

No matter what the Madison Avenue advertisers tell you, God calls these practices "vile" passions! Could anything be more clear?

Regarding the fact that *no one* is "born" to be a homosexual, the record is clear. Nearly *all* honest scientists and medical practitioners agree. Notice what respected pro-life activist Randy Thomasson said on this topic: "Without any reputable evidence, the entertainment culture, the uneducated media and homosexual activists have seduced today's teenagers, in particular, to believe that people are born homosexual," Thomasson recognizes. 'However, science has found no biological basis for homosexuality, bisexuality or transsexuality.' On average, says the pro-family group, the homosexual lifestyle has higher rates of cancer, sexually-transmitted diseases and early deaths than those found among heterosexuals. He also notes that the American Psychological Association has reversed its statement that people are born gay, admitting that there is no 'gay gene'" (*American Family News Network*, June 26, 2012).

Although a few people may be born with a "tendency" toward alcoholism, drug addiction, violent temper or whatever, they do **not** have to give in to those tendencies. They *can* "overcome" if they want to, and certainly if they seek God's help. For, as Paul reminds us, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,

but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As for the clever Madison Avenue advertising and psychological techniques being used to seduce people into believing homosexuality is good, notice this quote from one of the most powerful and helpful books I have ever read on this related topic, *The Marketing Of Evil*. Describing the leaders of this movement, researcher David Kupelian wrote:

"Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen put into book form the comprehensive public relations plan they had been advocating with their gay-rights peers for several years.

Kirk and Madsen were not the kind of drooling activists

mass hysteria of precisely the sort that has brought about public stonings and leper colonies since the Dark Ages and before....How can we maximize the sympathy and minimize the fear? How, given the horrid hand that AIDS has dealt us, can we best play it?"

The bottom line of Kirk and Madsen's master plan? 'The campaign we outline in this book, though complex, depends centrally upon a program of unabashed propaganda, firmly grounded in long-established principles of psychology and advertising'" (pp. 23–24).

As I emphasized earlier, let me state again that **each one** of us should be totally *aware*—and make our loved ones

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**Although a few people may be born with a "tendency" toward alcoholism, drug addiction, violent temper or whatever, they do not have to give in to those tendencies. They can "overcome" if they want to, and certainly if they seek God's help.**

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that would burst into churches and throw condoms in the air. They were smart guys—very smart. Kirk, a Harvard-educated researcher in neuropsychiatry, worked with the Johns Hopkins Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth and designed aptitude tests for adults with 200+ IQs. Madsen, with a doctorate in politics from Harvard, was an expert on public persuasion tactics and social marketing. Together they wrote *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s*.

'As cynical as it may seem,' they explained at the outset, 'AIDS gives us a chance, however brief, to establish ourselves as a victimized minority legitimately deserving of America's special protection and care. At the same time,' they warned, 'it generates

aware—of the end result of these sinful practices and ideas. We must be willing to acknowledge and act on God's direct warning: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars *shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Revelation 21:7–8).

May God *help all of us* to be willing to stand against this world's onslaught of satanic propaganda. May God help all of us teach our children and other loved ones what is just ahead. May all of us ask God for the **faith** and the *courage* to put our trust in Him and so be worthy of eternal life in His coming Kingdom. And let us all pray more fervently than ever, "Thy Kingdom come"!





# LOCAL

## CHURCH NEWS

### ORDINATIONS

*Mr. John Robinson* was ordained an elder on April 13, 2012 by Area Pastor Phil Sena. At that time he served in the San Antonio, Texas, congregation; he and his family have since moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where he works in the Editorial Department of the Living Church of God.

*Mr. Richard Grimes* was ordained an elder on September 15, 2012, by Area Pastor Jack Lowe. He serves in the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation.

*Mr. Robert Freeland* was ordained a deacon on September 26, 2012 by Area Pastor Glen Gilchrist. He serves in the Boise, Idaho, congregation.

*Mr. Paul Kearns* was ordained an elder on March 2 by Regional Director Bruce Tyler and Area Pastor Kinneer Penman. He serves in the Auckland, New Zealand, congregation.

*Mr. Chris Connelly* was ordained a deacon on March 26 by Presiding Evangelist Roderick C. Meredith and Area Pastor Darrell Lovelady. He serves in the Palm Springs, California, congregation.

*Mr. Glendon Driver* was ordained a deacon on March 26 by Area Pastor Anthony Stroud and elder Jim Burson. Mr. Driver serves in the Columbus, Mississippi, congregation.

*Mrs. Janice Lambert* was ordained a deaconess on March 26 by Pastor Anthony Stroud and Elder Jim Burson. Mrs. Lambert serves in the Montgomery, Alabama, congregation.

*Mr. Jerry Clevenger* was ordained an Elder on April 1 by Pastor Gary Ehman and Elder Robert Riggan. Mr. Clevenger serves in the Statesville, North Carolina, congregation.

*Mr. and Mrs. Marvin (Rebecca) Hill* were ordained deacon and deaconess on April 13 by Regional Pastor Rand Millich and elders Mike Kreyer and Errol Wade. Mr. and Mrs. Hill serve the congregation in Duluth, Minnesota.

### South American Ministerial Conference



Evangelist Dr. Douglas S. Winnail, Director of Church Administration, met from April 15–17 in Medellín, Colombia, with Living Church of God leaders from Central and South America.

## Births

Mr. and Mrs. Joshua (Ashley) Crockett, members of the Walterboro, South Carolina, congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, **Joshua David Crockett, Jr.** on June 5, 2012. The baby weighed 7 lbs. 9 oz. and was 19¾ inches long. He is the third grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. David (Margie) Crockett of the Hawkins, Texas, congregation and the first grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Scott (Jenny) Lyons, also of Walterboro. Parents and grandparents are thrilled with the new addition to the family.

Mr. and Mrs. Tad (Sarah) Walls are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter, **Tinsley Elizabeth Walls**, born June 17, 2012. She joins big brother Trip.

The Walls attend the Walterboro, South Carolina, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Bryan (Lisa) Pape of the Columbus, Ohio, congregation are happy to announce the birth of their first son, **Isaac Allan Pape**, born October 30, 2012. Isaac was 7 lbs. 9 oz. and measured 20½ inches long. Older sister Sophia is excited have gotten her new playmate at last!

After fifteen years of tears and supplications to our great God, the loving prayers of many were answered and Mr. and Mrs. Michael (Roslyn) Elertson joyously announce the birth of their firstborn, **Maxwell Timothy Elertson**, born April 4. The baby was 19½ inches long and weighed 7 lb. 9 oz. The

grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Jon Elertson of the Wisconsin Dells congregation and Neil Hart and Lynne McLeod, are also thrilled. Mr. and Mrs. Michael Elertson live in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, and he pastors congregations in both Canada and the United States.

Dylan and Toby King are happy to announce the birth of their second child, **Landyn Marshall King**. He was born on April 5 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Big sister, Johanna “Jo-Jo” Lynn, is excited about having a baby brother. The new addition to the King family hopes to join the family band soon, and daddy says he can choose whatever instrument he wants!

## Weddings

On February 24, **Debra Leigh Rand** of Kemp, Texas, and **Valentin Celan** of Frisco, Texas were united in marriage. Pastor Dan Hall officiated. The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David (Linda) Rand of Kemp. The bridegroom is the son of Mr. Romulus Celan of McKinney, Texas and Domnica Celan of Frisco. The couple honeymooned in Hawaii and resides in Frisco.

**Barry Laggar**, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Laggar of Cape Town, South Africa, and **Carolyn Vaghi**, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Luigi Vaghi of Port Elizabeth, were joined in marriage on

Sunday, March 3. The ceremony was conducted at a beautiful setting in Durbanville Hills, Cape Town by Mr. Pieter van der Byl. Barry and Carolyn reside in Durbanville Hills.

On March 10, **Melisa Ruth Burkinshaw**, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and **Peder Tedd Moluf**, of Overland Park, Kansas, were joined in holy matrimony. The ceremony was conducted in Albuquerque by Mr. Rodger Bardo. A reception was hosted for the newlyweds on April 7 by the brethren in Kansas City, Missouri, where the happy couple will be residing.

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

## Upcoming **TOMORROW'S** **WORLD** Telecasts

<b>JULY 4–10</b>	<b>THE SABBATH CONTROVERSY</b>
<b>JULY 11–17</b>	<b>SEVEN SIGNS OF THE ANTICHRIST</b>
<b>JULY 18–24</b>	<b>THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN IN PROPHECY</b>
<b>JULY 25–31</b>	<b>THE PROPHESED "BEAST"</b>
<b>AUGUST 1–7</b>	<b>PROPHECY AND YOU!</b>
<b>AUGUST 8–14</b>	<b>THE SOON-COMING UTOPIA</b>
<b>AUGUST 15–21</b>	<b>SEVEN KEYS TO ANSWERED PRAYER</b>
<b>AUGUST 22–28</b>	<b>WORLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST</b>

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

For stations and times, check the Television Log on page 31 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

## In Loving Memory

*Lois I. Geer*, 71, died February 24, at her home in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Mrs. Geer was born in Pineville, Louisiana. She married Gene Geer on February 21, 1959 and they were blessed with six children. Besides her husband of 54 years, she is survived by two daughters, three sons, ten grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and one brother. She was preceded in death by her parents, one son and one great-granddaughter. Mr. Brian Pomicter conducted the graveside service on March 1.

*Arnold Schutzman*, 92, of Regina, Saskatchewan, died March 21. Mr. Schutzman was baptized in 1957, years before there was a congregation in the province, and he was a long-time, faithful member and deacon in God's Church. He had many interests but mostly enjoyed talking about God's word. He was predeceased by his wife, Betty, and is survived by their two sons. He is lovingly remembered and greatly missed.

*Marlene Elizabeth Cook Ford*, 79, of Savannah, Georgia, died March 22. Mrs. Ford was born in Savannah in 1933 and graduated from high school there in 1952. She was a loving mother and friend, an "adopted mother" to many, always happy to help others. She is survived by a daughter and an aunt. The funeral service was conducted on March 27 by Mr. Lehman Lyons of the Walterboro, South Carolina congregation.

*Linda Westergard Smoak*, 66, wife of James E. Smoak, of Hampton, South Carolina, died March 24, in Charleston, South Carolina. Mrs. Smoak is survived by her husband, one daughter, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The graveside service was conducted by Mr. Frank Frye, of the Walterboro, South Carolina congregation on March 27.

*Donald Ralph Puntch*, 79, of Kannapolis, North Carolina, died March 30, after being in declining health for several months. He is survived by his brother, Leslie W. Puntch and his wife Gail, also of Kannapolis, and one niece and her husband. Mr. Puntch was a member of the Living Church of God in Charlotte, North Carolina, as are his brother and sister-in-law. He will be greatly missed by his family, all of his Church family, and other long-time friends. Mr. Bob League conducted the service on April 9.

*Mayola Lee Shrader Wilson*, 99, of the Bluefield, West Virginia congregation died April 8, just one month before turning 100. She was baptized into God's Church in 1972 and had made a multitude of friends from many congregations. She loved to cook and sew and used these talents to serve and help God's people. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Mrs. Wilson is survived by four sons, 23 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren. The funeral service was conducted by Mr. Paul Shumway on April 12.

**United States:** P.O. Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010, [www.TomorrowsWorld.org](http://www.TomorrowsWorld.org), Phone: (704) 844-1970 • **Australasia:** PO Box 300, Clarendon, SA 5157, Australia, Phone: (61) 8-8383-6288, Fax: (61) 8-8127-9667 • **Canada:** P.O. Box 409, Mississauga, ON L5M 0P6, Phone: (905) 814-1094, Fax: (905) 814-7659 • **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 2767, Auckland 1140, New Zealand, Phone/Fax: (09) 268 8985 • **Philippines:** PO Box 492, Araneta Center Post Office, 1135 Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, Phone: (632) 455-3699 • **South Africa:** Private Bag X7, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0028, Phone: (27) 58-622-1424, Fax: (27) 58-623-1303 • **United Kingdom:** BM Box 2345, London, WC1N 3XX, Phone/Fax: 44 (0) 844-800-9322.

# COMMENTARY

## CELEBRATING ORIGINS

The normal effect of a national holiday—especially one marking nationhood or independence—is a unification of the nation’s people. National pride in a country can unify a people in times of economic adversity or acts of aggression by a neighboring country. National pride can also be exploited by aggressive leadership. But is “national pride” necessarily evil? To answer this question, we must consider the Bible—the oldest reliable, credible source of information available to us.

National holidays may be civic, religious or both. Examples of civic holidays are the many “Independence Day” celebrations—such as July 4 in America, and Bastille Day in France. Since 1810 Mexico’s Independence Day has been celebrated on September 16. But Mexico’s Cinco de Mayo celebration is also very important, as it celebrates the victory of the Mexican army at the battle of Puebla, May 5, 1862, which was important in maintaining Mexico’s independence from European powers.

Virtually every nation has holidays marking significant historical events such as its founding date or its independence from foreign domination.

An example of a combined civic/religious holiday is the Passover of the people of Israel. The Passover celebration commemorates Israel’s liberation from Egyptian bondage and the Exodus toward a national homeland. It also is a memorial

of a covenant relationship established between God and the people of Israel—which Jesus Christ magnified for His people of spiritual Israel.

God is the author of “nationhood.” In Genesis 10:1–32, He reveals the origin of nations—families that have grown large enough to possess and hold a territory. Then, later in Genesis, we read the account of God’s promise to Abram: “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:4–8).

Regardless of our national heritage, we should thank and praise God for our liberties and our national blessings. It can be good for us to commemorate our national founding and origin—to remember our national roots.

—Carl E. McNair (1937–2004)