

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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January–February 2016

Pray for Our Financial Growth!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

I can honestly and sincerely tell you that this recent Feast of Tabernacles celebration was the most unified and inspiring Feast many of us have *ever* experienced. A number of our brethren and ministers have reported on the inspiring sermons and activities of the Feast this year. Also, as a number of our “updates” have reported, Almighty God intervened at least *several times* in acts of divine protection and direct *healing* that took place at Feast sites all over the world. *Thank God!*

My youngest son, Jonathan, drove me to the Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Feast site where I gave four sermons, plus a talk at the Seniors’ Luncheon. In spite of bad weather all around the site, our heavenly Father blessed us with much less rain and bad weather than many other areas nearby. So the weather did not stop our meetings, or hurt the warm fellowship we enjoyed. Having talked with *several* of our Headquarters ministers and brethren who attended Feast sites literally all over the world, it was encouraging to hear their reports about the genuine excitement and encouragement and *blessings* God gave at the Feast this year.

But, I want to encourage *all* of you to keep this “spirit” of the Feast going in our personal lives. *Pray fervently* to Almighty God for the continuing inspiration and guidance to help each one of us be genuine “bond slaves” of Jesus Christ in every way. As we encouraged you at the Feast, genuinely *study* and “feed” on Jesus Christ in a deeper way than perhaps many of you have done before. Make the lives, the examples and the faith of Abraham, of David, of Paul and of course of Jesus Christ

“come alive” in *your* personal lives. Then, *take action*, by helping other brethren that you know have needs and difficulties. Then help *others* in your community, neighbors, colleagues and others so you can also be “lights” to this confused world. Let us all pray together and beseech Almighty God to *pour out upon us* the “spirit of **faith**” above and beyond what we have ever had! Ask Him to begin to give us—according to His will—the “gifts” of healing and the other gifts of the Spirit more than ever as we truly **cry out** to Him!



Brethren, as the end of this age approaches, and as the power of our Work increases, there will undoubtedly be *great persecution* in the years just ahead. Each of us needs to beseech God to grant us—and *all* of our brethren—the *faith* and the *courage* to keep going and growing! We need to encourage one another in this and help each one to “buckle up” for the rough ride ahead! Again, as I have reminded you over the years, *always* keep your mind on the “Big Picture” of God’s great Plan and how He *always* tries and tests each one of us before we are made full sons in His soon-coming Kingdom. One special prayer that I would ask all of you to join me in praying is this: let us *all together* beseech God to grant us in this Work at least **half** of the financial increase that He gave Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong for about 35 years! For, as Mr. Armstrong explained many times, God gave the Work under his direction about 30 percent increase year by year for about 35 years.

Near the end of his ministry, with personal problems and sins growing throughout the Church, those blessings were taken away or cut back. But the fact remains—as I can testify, having

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been in the “inner circle” of the Work for so long—God *did* give the Work that type of blessing for more than three decades. So, let us together *beseech* God, as this terrible society around us deteriorates more rapidly, as the wars and violence and weather upsets and earthquakes increase, that He would grant us much *greater power* to do the Work by giving us such a financial increase.

Perhaps none of us have the tremendous personalities and magnetism that the Armstrongs had. But God Almighty is *still alive*, He is *working* through us right now, and—as these terrible end-time events approach—we really need to **shake** the world with the knowledge of His Kingdom far more than we have ever done. Remember, brethren, we are only “beginning to fight.” We have **not yet finished!** So again, since Jesus told us: “ask and you shall receive,” we can with faith ask God to give us at least **one-half** of the financial increase He gave His Church all those years when Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong were still alive and doing the Work. That would be a *15 percent financial increase* of this Work year by year. I hope all of you will sincerely and zealously *do your part*. But I am not going to “press you” on that. For that is *up to you* and between you and God as you “walk with Him” in the fear of God. But I feel that God would want us to **cry out** and ask Him for the blessing that I have already indicated. Then, we could go on *far more* television stations, *greatly* increase our impact over the Internet—which is certainly the “wave of the future”—increase our personal appearance campaigns and “grow” the Work in every possible way.

When I first began this present Work back in 1992, I was a little embarrassed to ask for money. For all those years I was helping Mr. Armstrong—even as Second Vice President for about twelve years—I did not have the responsibility to *directly* ask for money. Mr. Armstrong did. So he wrote truly *powerful* and *stirring* co-worker letters in those days. If you read some of the old co-worker letters today, as many of you brethren have kept some of them, they were almost “hair-raising” in the power they had! It might be offensive to some of our newer brethren in our more liberal, worldly society today. But because this world so desperately **needs** what we have to give, I urge you to *join me* along with our top ministers in *beseeching* God to grant

us at least 15 percent increase in our financial resources year by year and therefore enable us to really **get going far beyond** what we have yet done so this world will have a powerful “witness” of the Plan of God, of the **reality** of the soon-coming Government of God over this earth, and a *genuine understanding* of the **true**

Dear brethren, some of you may wonder why I am coming on so strong at this time. But I hope that many of you—as I did—have taken the sermons and the wonderful experience we had at the Feast home and had the time to think and pray about how close we ought to be to God, about what we really ought to be doing and how this world so desperately needs the full Truth.

Jesus Christ of the Bible. May God inspire all of you to get involved in this way!

Dear brethren, some of you may wonder why I am coming on so strong at this time. But I hope that many of you—as I did—have taken the sermons and the wonderful experience we had at the Feast home and had the time to think and pray about how close we ought to be to God, about what we **really** ought to be doing and how this world so *desperately needs* the full Truth. Down through history, as you know, many of God’s leading servants went through periods when they **cried out** to God for special help and blessings. **Remember** the time when Daniel came to realize the tremendous **need** for God to intervene as he began to fully realize that the 70 years of desolation of Jerusalem were almost over: “Then I set my face toward the LORD God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, ‘O LORD, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments’” (Daniel 9:3–4). He described his concern for “all Israel”—both near and far—who had been driven to countries all over because of their unfaithfulness to God and their spiritual weakness (v. 7).

Many of you older brethren realize that something similar has happened to the Church of God today! After Mr. Armstrong’s death, God’s Church came apart in many ways. We have been truly **scattered** into many different groups and denominations. The power

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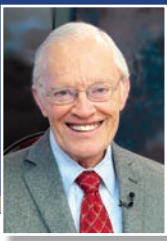
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WILL YOU SUFFER FOR JESUS CHRIST?

Brethren, with the entire panorama of prophetic events surging ahead more than ever, I deeply feel that I should once again give you “proper warning” about what to expect in the years ahead. We often emphasize the *blessings* and the *opportunities* we will surely have in God’s Work—and, later on, in Tomorrow’s World. Our reward will be *awesome*. However, it is *very clear* in the New Testament that many true Christians *will be persecuted—even before* the formal Tribulation begins. So it is imperative that you understand this, pray about this, and are not “shocked” or disillusioned if the world begins to *savagely turn on us* at some point before the end of our ministry!

After describing many of the major catastrophes that will strike even before the Tribulation, Jesus Christ stated, “All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another” (Matthew 24:8–10).

May God help *all* of us to draw truly close to Him in fervent prayer and fasting, and thereby receive the spiritual *faith* and *strength* to go through the trials ahead. Our eternal reward depends on this! For a time of trial and testing is beginning to come upon the United States in a way it has probably never experienced before. Our British and Israeli allies, as well as other peace-loving peoples, have not escaped and will not escape the terrorists’ wrath.

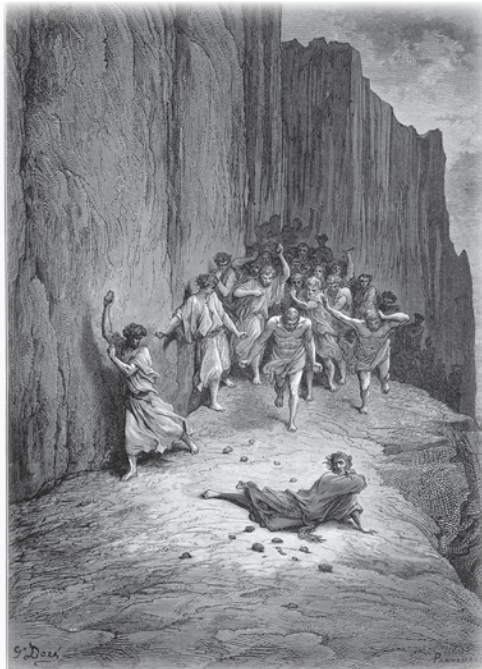
It is obvious that mankind cannot solve the problems of human nature—vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. It seems the U.S. is destined to continue as the most visible target for cowardly terrorist attacks since it is now, almost by default, the enforcer of whatever world peace and stability there is. But what about *spiritual* Israel (cf. Galatians 6:16)—the true Church of God? Will we

somehow escape all the madness and be “whisked off to safety” with nary a scratch or a bruise?

No, indeed!

Even apart from the true Church, professing Christians around the world are suffering increased persecution. News reports tell us of more and more horrifying instances of their being tortured, killed, raped or even sold into slavery in many non-Christian lands.

And now there is a movement in many European countries to crack down on virtually all religious groups that are not in the “mainstream.” These groups include Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and others. Clearly, as the Living Church of God gains worldwide recognition and prominence for doing the Work of God, we too will be restricted—maybe banned!—and eventually *persecuted* in many nations around the world.



TRIALS AND TESTS AHEAD!

Although Christ’s *zealous* and *faithful* servants will be taken to a Place of Safety at the very *end* of this age (Luke 21:36; Revelation 12:14), Scripture makes it quite clear that we *all* will have trials, tests

and at least some degree of *real persecution* before this deliverance. For God inspired the Apostle Paul to warn us, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:12–13).

In Mark’s account of the Olivet Prophecy, Jesus cautions us, “But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to

death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. **But he who endures to the end shall be saved**" (Mark 13:9–13).

Therefore, we should thoroughly **prove** to ourselves *what* we believe and *why*. Then, we will be able—through God's Holy Spirit—to exercise the *faith* and the **courage** to "endure to the end!" As prophesied world events increasingly hurtle toward the traumatic developments at the end of this age, I encourage



all of you to "count the cost" and to be **sure** of what you believe. Truly, we all will need to "stand tall" against the storms of criticism, hatred and persecution that Satan will hurl at us, both from within and from without.

For Satan will attempt to "break" us. He and his untold legions of demon spirits (Ephesians 6:11–12) will try to divide us, pitting brother against brother, even in God's Church! He will attempt to discourage us profoundly, through repeated attacks, accusations and persecution. Eventually, after his "frontal assault" on God fails, Satan will "come down to you, having **great wrath**, *because he knows that he has a short time*" (Revelation 12:12).

Will *you* be ready? The time for us to be bickering, competing and accusing one another must quickly come to a close, brethren! For we have a **far greater** enemy in the "prince of darkness" than many of us may fully realize. And we will need all the love, encouragement and support of our brethren that we can possibly have during the trials ahead.

As British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said in the dark days of the London Blitz during World War II, "*if it is to be a war of nerves, let's make sure our nerves are **strong!***"

A few years ago, in Dr. James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* magazine, there appeared a very moving article by Mr. Charles Carroll, who lived and studied in Berlin just as the Holocaust was beginning. Carroll described how the Jewish family he was rooming with had cyanide available in case they were captured and sent to the death camps. Behind each of the glass panels on their entrance door they had placed steel plates—probably to give them enough time to flee through some other exit.

Carroll describes how—imperfect as they were—those who professed Christ made up the primary backbone of the resistance against Hitler. At that time, and in that political climate, a great deal of moral and physical courage was required. "People minimize that today," he says.

Carroll cites a letter from Helmut von Moltke, grandnephew of the famous 19th-century Prussian field marshal of the same name. He wrote these words to his wife just before he was to be executed by the Nazis: "I was not being tried because of an attempt on Hitler's life, which I did not make, nor because I was a great land owner, nor because I was of the nobility, but because I was first and foremost a Christian."

Where will you and I stand when this kind of terror directly faces us and our families? We will never resort to poison as these persecuted Jews were ready to do; we know we can turn to our Savior, if we are walking with God and staying close to Him always.

Again, dear brethren, I beseech you in Christ's name to thoroughly **prove** what you believe and why. Genuinely **study** your Bible regularly. Fully grasp the fact that we are **restoring** the true faith of God and following the direct teaching and examples of Jesus Christ and His apostles! Then you will better understand the **reality** of Almighty God and His Word as the trials and persecution of God's people intensify in the years to come!

Remember, God has promised that He will **never** leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). But we must do *our part* to **seek** Him and walk with Him (Jeremiah 29:13). And we must *strengthen ourselves* and be willing to go through every trial and test necessary—**give our lives**, if need be, in the service of our Savior Jesus Christ, just as surely as He *literally* laid down His life for us!

STOP PLAYING CHURCH!

The time for "half-hearted" Christians who "play Church" is over! We must truly seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. And we must want to be in God's Kingdom so much that we can "taste" it. Therefore, we must be willing to *totally surrender* the self, lose (if need be) part or all of our families, friendships and physical possessions, and literally "forsake all" to gain eternal life in the glorified Family of God. As Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24–26).

Let us *daily* give our lives to God as living sacrifices. And let us so walk with Him and with Christ in living **faith** that at the end of our physical lives—*whenever* or *however* that may be—we may say what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7–8: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." ■

THE REVEALING

By Gary F. Ehman

Several decades ago, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote a booklet entitled *A World Held Captive*. In this remarkable booklet, he showed clearly that human beings, for the most part, are completely ignorant of who and what they are and what their future will be. Satan and the flawed societies that developed from following his ways now hold the human race captive, in complete and total ignorance.

This brings the Church of God—and we who are members of it—to the forefront of importance regarding the future of all mankind. This is a wide-ranging statement, but *it is a true statement*—and we, as the Church, must come to grips with this in this end-time.

Satan the devil has done a job on mankind. He has basically destroyed any knowledge of truth, whether by outright pagan perversion or by subtly diverting the truth just a little when it suits him. It is interesting to note that the biggest enemy of the true Church of God is not paganism—it is perverted Christianity.

Because of Satan, humankind has lost and forgotten the purpose for which God created us. As Mr. Armstrong wrote: “God’s PURPOSE is to reproduce himself through man—reproduce the GOD FAMILY from the human family. It is vital to bear in mind that God possesses perfect spiritual character. Character is ability to choose the true values from the false, right from wrong, and to WILL to do the right—even against self-desire.”

This is something God has revealed to His Church today. People in the world do not want to hear this, but it is their only hope. They desperately want to believe the lie, and they will even try to kill true Christians, thinking as they do so that they are actually *serv*ing God! We need to bring fully into focus this picture of hope: just who we are—and not just *our* hope, but the hope of all mankind.

A starting point is for us to fully understand what has taken place and what is taking place in us due to our conversion. The Apostle Paul drives straight to that point: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from

the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [that] dwells in you” (Romans 8:9–11).

Christians are defined as ones who are led by the Spirit of God in them. The entire eighth chapter of Romans—following Paul’s near-hopeless-sounding self-evaluation in the preceding chapter—provides the hope for the Christian through the Holy Spirit. One should never read chapter seven without continuing on with the entirety of chapter eight, which clearly shows that Christians do not walk in the flesh, but in the Spirit (vv. 1, 4); setting their minds on the things of the Spirit (v. 5) and therefore are not carnal, but spiritual (vv. 6–9).

OUR FAMILY

This very plain fact links us as God’s family here on earth: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did

not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption [sonship] by whom we cry out ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (vv. 14–16).

Why is this family concept so important for us to understand? The answer is embedded in two of the most remarkable verses in the Bible: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (vv. 18–19).

Why is this so remarkable? Look at the two words “revealed” and “revealing.” The Greek Paul used is *apokalupto* [ap-ok-al-ooop’-to], to take the cover off or disclose; and *apokalupsis* [ap-ok-al’-ooop-sis], made bare or laying bare, made naked or making naked, all regarding a disclosure of truth or instruction crucial to the entirety of creation based on the “sons of God.” And this very creation has an earnest expectation for that revealing; it is, in fact, eagerly waiting for it. Whoa!

Just what is Paul implying in verse 18? Paul is clearly stating that true Christians are at the center of God’s plan for humankind. In fact, when one looks at it from God’s perspective, we who are Christians *are* His plan of salvation. We are the working demonstration models, who, through His Holy Spirit, are able to function in the flesh as Jesus did when He (first) came in the flesh. This truth *will* be



made known—revealed—to all mankind when we, Christians, are revealed as the sons and daughters of God.

Does Scripture prove this revealing? “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1–2). John uses a different word for “revealed”; it is *phaneroō* [fan-er-o’-o], to become known, to be plainly recognized, thoroughly understood, who and what one is.

Paul confirms this and adds further significance to the event: “When Christ *who is* our life appears [*phaneroō*], then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). We will be recognized in the glory of Jesus—having the very glory of God. The word “glory” is *doxa* [dox’-ah], and contextually means majesty, which pertains only to God. Mere mortals claiming to be kings and queens usurp the descriptive bearing of the heavenly when they insist on being called “his or her royal majesty.” There is nothing majestic or “glorious” about mortal man. Truly, Christians are to *become* majestic, *glorified*, even as the Father and Jesus are now majestic.

Back in the book of Romans, Paul clearly explains that the process of the revealing of the saints links them directly to the Godhead: “The Spirit... bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:16–18). Are you picking up on the impact of this? What does “glorified together” mean? The phrase is *sundoxazō* [soon-dox-ad’-zo], or to exalt to dignity rendered glorious *in company* with Jesus. As our Presiding Evangelist, Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, often states: “Wow!”

OUR DESTINY

Now review what we have read so far. Because of who and what we are today in this flesh, the children of God—His designated plan of salvation for all of mankind—it will be our job to help Christ deliver mankind into the Kingdom, identifying to them the very name of God through our glorified appearance with Jesus at His return to this earth. Wow, indeed!

The Church rehearsed all this in the Feast of Tabernacles this past fall. God is concerned about the entirety of His creation: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37). While the Feast involved us, it was not *just about* us. The Feast foretells the soon-coming fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation that will be revealed in and through us, as is pictured by the opening years of the coming millennium. God certainly looks at Israel, as well as the rest of the world, as His children.

This should give us a much clearer understanding of what Paul was trying to communicate to Church members in Rome: “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [true sonship], the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:19–23). This is an event that will have universe-wide ramifications. Go back and put this into context in reading verses 16–23. That involves *you*, even as you read the words of this article.

But the question, is—or should be—glaring to us: what sort of individuals should we be in regard to living in a holy manner, reverencing and respecting God, that He would use us in such a way? The Apostle Peter gives us the full scope of that: “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in *all* your conduct, because it is written, ‘BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time *of* your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:15–19). Whatever it is we must do, it must be total. Peter says “*all*,” *pas*, nothing held back, everything concerning it. Take a look at that word “conduct” for a moment. It is *anastrophē* [an-as-trof-ay’], your manner of life or how you live; *everything* in regard to it.

God says through His Spirit the Christian is holy. There is a thread of thought that Peter weaves regarding that concept of holiness: “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (vv. 18–22).

OUR HOLY CONDUCT

Will all of this yielding to God, loving and serving the brethren in His Church, have a result? When we are revealed, we will glorify God because of our conduct now: “...having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your good works* which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

Peter, in these last reviewed Scriptures, used “conduct” (*anastrophē*), four times. It is important for us to understand

the need to be holy and all that it entails. Peter stated: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22).

This is something we must do, but we can only do it through the Spirit in us. The idea of “purifying our souls” is not unique to Peter; the Apostle John hammers home the thought process: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2–3). The word “purifies” is *hagnizō* [hag-nid’-zo], and means to make clean morally from a spiritual or ceremonial point of view—and John plainly lays the burden on the individual Christian to do so.

Again, it is our holy conduct as we, in our flesh, are revealed to others: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6). We must be aware of who we are: “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Thessalonians 3:12–13). That idea of being “blameless in holiness,” may appear to be a bit daunting. The Greek is *amemptos* [am’-emp-tos] *hagiōsunē* [hag-ee-o-soo’-nay], without fault or defect in regard to our Christian, godly character.

That is what Mr. Armstrong stated about character in the opening part of this article: “Character is ability to choose the true values from the false, right from wrong, and to WILL to do the right—even against self-desire.” This, too, will be revealed—made apparent—as we live out our lives here in the flesh.

The Apostle John makes that very clear: “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous... In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:7–10). The word “manifest” is *phaneros* [fan-er-os’], plainly recognized, **publically** made apparent. We are what people see us as being. The contrast is between good and evil.

The comparisons are revealed by our actions. The Spirit of God makes it evident to those around us that we are the children of God. Notice this again: “The Spirit... bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:16–17). The Spirit “bears witness”—or, in other words, *reveals* this understanding that we are the children of God.

The word “glorified,” again, is *doxa*, meaning majesty, an attribute pertaining to God. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians:

“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12). This is exemplified in context beginning in verses 10–12.

OUR CHALLENGE

The word of God clearly provides the task at hand for us: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out

Because of who and what we are today in this flesh, the children of God—His designated plan of salvation for all of mankind—it will be our job to help Christ deliver mankind into the Kingdom, identifying to them the very name of God through our glorified appearance with Jesus at His return to this earth.

your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). This is not always easy, but it is doable for the Christian: “...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (v. 13).

Our success is based on the word of God, the word of “truth.” Jesus told us that we shall know the truth and it shall make us free (John 8:32). This word, the truth, sanctifies us, makes us holy. As stated earlier, it makes us *amemptos* [am’-emp-tos] *hagiōsunē* [hag-ee-o-soo’-nay], without fault or defect in regard to our Christian godly character through the Holy Spirit.

One final thought about all of this, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3–5).

Did you notice that you, (put your name here), are kept by the power of God because of what you do and believe and that you will be saved and revealed at the very end?

Kept by the power of God? One last bit of Greek: the word “kept” is *phroureō* [froo-reh’-o], protected by watching and guarding for the protected one to gain something, as in, “that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (vv. 7–9).

Are you ready to be revealed in that glory? ■

In God's Image



By Wallace G. Smith

Of the many beautiful biblical doctrines taught by God's Church, some are mistakenly thought to hold little practical value and to be more "academic," or of only theoretical concern. However, this is far from the case! Every truth the Church teaches from God's Word is a tool He can wield in surprising ways to transform our lives, bringing us closer to Him and to His purpose for us! One example of this is our long-standing and well-established teaching that man is made in the image of God.

In this article we will consider the biblical teaching on this topic, often taken for granted in some ways and not considered thoroughly enough in others. We will also consider the implications of this beautiful truth in our daily choices, our relationships with each other and our relationship with our Creator.

TRUE FROM THE BEGINNING

As is so often the case, the best perspective is gained when we start from the beginning. Having stated in Genesis 1:20–25 that He made all the animals of the earth after *their* kind, God makes an astonishing statement concerning the human race on the day of its creation:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in *Our image*, according to *Our likeness*; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26–27).

Unlike the animals that surrounded man, each made after its own kind, man was made to resemble God—humankind is made after the God-kind!

True, God is Spirit (John 4:24), and we are flesh, and there is a fundamental difference. However, the importance emphasized by God here is not our differences from God, but our *similarities* with Him.

For instance, humankind receives the “breath of life” as a gift directly from God (Genesis 2:7) and possesses a human spirit distinct from and superior to anything possessed by the animal kingdom (Ecclesiastes 3:21). That spirit empowers the mind of man and causes man to mirror and resemble his Creator in ways that no animal on earth truly can (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11). It is that spirit that enables us to be a moral, spiritual creature—to have a relationship with the Creator and, united with God's own Holy Spirit, to grow in the very *mind and character* of that Creator, as well (1 Corinthians 2:10–16)! Such aspects of our design are vital parts of God's very purpose for man: to see us become fully formed children of God in the resurrection to eternal life!

When God said that He was making man in His own image and after His own likeness, surely this similarity to our God was a part of that design and purpose. In light of our existence as beings with moral capacities, seemingly limitless creativity, intelligent and insightful minds, etc., God the Father stated that He and Jesus Christ made us “in Our image.”

IN FORM, AS WELL

As amazing as that is, the resemblance to our Creator does not stop there. As God's people, we want to accept His word as plainly and clearly as we can—not failing to consider Scripture mindfully and intelligently, and yet, at the same time, not willing to compromise with the integrity of His Word simply to satisfy the academic accusations of others.

An example of this is our belief that we resemble God not only in these spiritual, moral and intellectual characteristics, but that we resemble God in *form and shape*, as well.

The passage in Genesis concerning God's image and the creation of man has been completely “spiritualized” away by many, but the words—understood for what they say—simply do not allow much room for other alternatives. There is a reason the *Moffatt* translation of Genesis 1:26 says, “Let Us make man in Our own likeness, *to resemble Us*.”

The Hebrew word rendered as “image” in the NKJV translation of Genesis 1:26 is *tselem*. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* defines *tselem* to mean a statue, image or copy—something in the representative shape of another thing. For instance, in the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar’s statue—which all Babylonians were to worship—was called a *tselem*, or image (Daniel 3:1). When plagued with tumors and rats while they possessed the Ark of the Covenant, the Philistines made *tselem*—images—of the tumors and rats in an effort to appease the God of Israel who burdened them (1 Samuel 6). The word “image” in Genesis 1:26, understood plainly and as used in the rest of God’s Word, refers to a “representative shape.”

Similarly, the word for “likeness” in the New King James translation of Genesis 1:26 communicates related meanings. The Hebrew for the word is *demuwth*, and it is used in this way in many places in the Bible. For instance, the animal statues under the bronze Sea in Solomon’s temple were made in the “likeness” (*demuwth*) of oxen (2 Chronicles 4:3). In the first chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet attempts to describe in a detailed fashion the appearance and likeness of the spirit beings he saw in vision. The Hebrew word used consistently for that “appearance” and “likeness” is *demuwth*.

There really is no need to debate or puzzle over the meaning of “image” and “likeness” in Genesis 1:26. Their meaning is elucidated very well in the rest of Scripture. In fact, only a few passages later in Genesis, itself, we read that “Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own *likeness*, after his *image*, and named him Seth” (Genesis 5:3)—and it says this only two verses after reiterating that man is made “in the likeness of God” (v. 1).

To say that God means some sort of “spiritualized” similarity in one place in Genesis but, later, means something very *literal* in another—in a passage that parallels the exact same phrasing, with the exact same words, and only two verses after the word is used *again*—is to twist and contort the Scriptures to fit our own desires and concerns. Better to accept the beautiful truth being expressed: Man exists in the very *shape* of God.

CAN GOD HAVE A SHAPE?

To be sure, it is the universal testimony of the Bible that God does reveal Himself to possess a shape of some sort. Some reference verses 12 and 15 of Deuteronomy 4 to say that this cannot be, since Moses says that the people of Israel “saw no form” when God spoke to them, and that they “only heard a voice.” However, a careful reading shows that these words, taken plainly, do *not* indicate that God *has* no form, only that the Israelites did not see it. Moses highlights in those verses that God spoke to them “*out of the midst of the fire.*” Exodus describes that scene in detail, revealing that God was obscured from the sight of the people by a “thick cloud on the mountain” (Exodus 19:16) and that His presence was known before His voice boomed from the mount by the flames billowing out of the furnace-like smoke, and that the mountain was “completely in smoke” (v. 18).

Moses’ admonition was not that God does not *have* a form—only that God’s people should not be tempted to reproduce His form in idols because they were not allowed to *see* such a form.

In fact, many other passages are explicit about God’s form. Consider the famous passage of Exodus 33, in which Moses boldly asks to see God in His glory, without concealment (v. 18), to which the Eternal responds that Moses cannot see His face, for his own safety, but would be allowed to see His back (vv. 20–23). God said He would make this possible by placing Moses in the cleft of a rock—limiting his field of vision, concealing his sight with God’s own hand—then withdrawing His hand when only His back was visible, so the prophet would be protected from accidentally seeing God’s face.

Attempts to make this passage a “metaphor” or something merely symbolic—as if it never happened—make a mockery of the passage! Everything about this passage reads as though it is as literal as any other portion of the book of Exodus! To attempt to “spiritualize” it away while treating the *rest* of the book as literal is untenable, and represents a grasping at straws. The plain meaning of the passage is that the God of Israel has a face, back and hand, and that Moses saw some of these features of the Eternal—just as He promised the prophet He would.

Actually, many passages of Scripture describe individuals seeing and interacting with a very human-shaped God! Abraham dines with the Eternal, in person, as recorded in Genesis 18, where He is described as looking like a man (v. 2). The divine Commander of the Army of the Eternal appears before Joshua, and stands before him in the form of a man (Joshua 5:13–15). At Sinai, the elders of Israel are described as eating on the mountain in the very presence of God, where we are told in starkly plain language: “Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and *they saw the God of Israel.* And there was *under His feet* as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. *So they saw God,* and they ate and drank” (Exodus 24:9–11).

How plain!

It is true that some passages of the Bible speak of God in poetic and metaphorical terms. For example, God’s “outstretched arm” did not literally and physically lift up the Israelites and deposit them outside of Egypt as described in Deuteronomy 7:19. However, many passages cannot be written off as symbolism or metaphor. To deny these verses say what they *clearly do say* would require abandoning any hope of taking the historical narrative of God’s Word seriously.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Some people experience difficulty when confronted with the biblical evidence that God possesses a shape in this universe He has created, but there is no need for such difficulty. And, there is

no need to cower in the face of those who mock our plain stand on Scripture. Proverbs 28:1 tells us that “the righteous are bold as a lion,” and when standing on the truth of God there is never a need to shrink in the face of opposition! With clear thinking about what the Bible says and *does not* say in this regard, as well as a mature understanding that there will always be more to learn on the *other* side of the resurrection than we can ever comprehend now (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12), we can face questions with confidence.

For instance, some have wondered *how* God can have a shape like humankind’s when God asks in Jeremiah 23:24, “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” Yet, that passage is clearly speaking of God’s ability to perceive and to be active in all parts of His creation—as the first part of the passage makes clear: “Am I a God near at hand,’ says the LORD, ‘And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?’” (vv. 23–24).

The answer lies in a related passage in Psalm 139, where David asks in verse 7, “Where can I go *from Your Spirit*? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” It is through the power of His Spirit that God actively accesses every cubic millimeter of His Creation, seeing all things and having a presence in all places—the very Spirit by which He lives in converted Christians (Romans 8:9).

Others may ask why God *has* to have a shape. Our shape makes sense given our limitations in the world—the need for arms to reach for things far away, or the need for a mouth to eat. If God can do all things through His Spirit, why would He need an arm? If He does not need to eat, why would He need a mouth?

It is true that while the Eternal may *choose* to eat (e.g., Genesis 18:1–2, 8), as did the glorified Jesus to make the point that He was not merely an apparition (Luke 24:41–43; John 21:12–13), God certainly *needs* nothing to continue living. He is the Ever-Living One! The Creator of all things is not limited by His own creation as we are.

However, is God, who created all time and space, not allowed to inhabit that which He created? Just as a man who builds a house can choose to dwell in that house, was God not allowed before Creation to plan on existing in that very creation, Himself?

The question of whether God “has” to have such a shape represents a distraction. The question for us is not whether God *must* have such a shape, or whether He is *required* in some way to have such a shape. Rather, the question is whether or not God’s Word *reveals* that He has such a shape—and as we have shown plainly, He does!

Who would deny God the right to have a place in His own creation?

Let those philosophers and skeptics who see no place for revelation in their reasoning argue all they would like. But, as Paul

states boldly, “let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4)!

We can speculate about the details—the “whys” and “whens” and “hows”—but all speculation must occur within the plain boundaries of Scripture in the fear of God, the only sure foundation of knowledge and wisdom (cf. Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).



BOTH MAN AND WOMAN?

Some could ask, further still: Are both man *and* woman are made in God’s image and likeness? After all, as we may note, to a certain extent man and woman have differences in their shapes, and—as our brethren in France might say—*vive la différence!*

Yet the Bible answers this very plainly. The word “man” in Genesis 1:26 is the Hebrew word *adam*, from which Adam, as the progenitor of all humankind, takes his name.

However, the passage is not saying that only the male Adam is made in God’s image, while the woman, Eve, is not. The word *adam* is a word for human beings and humankind, in general. In fact, in Numbers 31:40 the word *adam* is applied to a large group of maidens who “had not known a man intimately” (v. 35). Like the word “mankind,” *adam* can speak to all of humanity, both male and female.

The fact that man and woman are made in God’s image—and are both referred to by *adam* in Genesis 1:26 on Day 6 of the creation—is made clear by the later passage in Genesis 5: “In the day that God created man (*adam*), He made him in the likeness of God. He created *them* male and female, and blessed *them* and called *them* *Mankind* (again, *adam*) in the day they were created” (vv. 1–2).

The Bible is plain: On the sixth day, the day “*adam*” was created in His image and likeness, God called *both* man and woman “*adam*.”

Actually, as truly appreciated as the physical differences between man and woman may be, those differences are relatively small compared to the rest of creation and the animal kingdom! The words “image” (*tselem*) and “likeness” (*demuwth*) of Genesis 1:26 are more than broad enough to encompass the gender differences in our “kind.” After all, the idols that archaeologists have uncovered throughout history, which the Bible calls “images” (*tselem*) are often very twisted versions of humanity, with impossibly thin legs, multiple breasts, grotesquely huge bellies and the like. Yet the form of such images is still clear enough to identify them as *human-shaped* idols.

Consider the experience of viewing a person on the other side of a wall constructed of privacy glass. Though the details are blurred, and you may not be able to make out a face—or even if the figure is a man or a woman—you will clearly note that it is a *human* and not a *cat!* The relative trivialities, as appreciated

as they may be, between the shapes of male and female are no reason to turn our backs on the beautiful truth that all mankind, men and women, bear the image and likeness of their Creator.

Note that this also answers the questions many skeptics pose on this topic, asking whether God must have a belly button, whether His earlobes are attached or detached, or whether those with physical handicaps also reflect His image. The truth is that a range of physical characteristics remain within “His image.” Just as the “name” of God encompasses far more than a mere collection of syllables, the “image” of God is not one and only one anatomically specific human body to which all must conform.

A TRUTH WITH HEAVY OBLIGATIONS

When we embrace the fullness of what God has done in the act of creating humankind, we see that it is a beautiful truth to behold! In creating us as physical beings to reflect, as fully as possible though on a cosmically smaller scale, the reality of His existence as a spiritual being—in moral faculty, intellectual possibility, emotional richness, spiritual capacity, and in actual shape and form—God is communicating one of the deepest truths of the Bible: We are destined for *more!* We are crafted to be able to become His divine children for all eternity—meant to be transformed when we meet the returning, glorified Jesus Christ, finally unveiled before our eyes, to fully bear the image of what we shall see (1 John 3:2)! “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Corinthians 15:49). What an inspiring and glorious purpose!

Our existence, designed in the image and likeness of God, is meant to convey the hope-infusing purpose that will be fulfilled in the next life—and it is meant to have an impact on our actions, choices, and daily lives *now, in this life.*

For instance, after the flood God gives Noah very clear instructions: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; *for in the image of God He made man*” (Genesis 9:6). That is, the fact that killing an animal is not the same as murdering a *man* is grounded by the Almighty in the fact that, unlike the animal, man is uniquely made in the very image of God, Himself!

Just as God addresses murder—the literal, physical killing of another human being—James, the brother of Jesus, discusses God’s condemnation of the *spirit* and *attitude* of hate and murder in the same way. Speaking of our seemingly untamable tongue, James says, “With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, *who have been made in the similitude of God.* Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:9–10).

When we curse other men or women—call them names or disparage them, gossip about them, spread stories about

them, or in any other way wield our tongue against them like a weapon—James’ words come back to us like God’s to Noah to remind us “these things ought not to be so”! Why not? Because we are tearing down one made *in the similitude*—or likeness—*of God!* James saw the act for what it was and judged it accordingly.

Apart from God, humanity has no real reason to encourage its members to treat each other well—beyond self-interest and unfounded “humanistic” values and reasoning. Why deal honestly with your fellow man and show him respect if you can gain more by lying to him and disrespecting him? In the animal kingdom, it is the strongest creatures who rule, and no animal truly owes another animal anything at all.

SEEING EACH OTHER THROUGH THE EYES OF GOD

Yet God demands that we look at each other through *His* eyes! And what He sees in the face of every single human being on earth—men and women of all ages, of all races, of all nationalities—is the face of one crafted in His very image! He sees a human being for whom Jesus Christ gave His life and for whom He has crafted a plan to one day, according to His own will and the wisdom of His own timing, add him or her to His family, forever!

When we see each other as beautiful creations, shaped by the very hand and radiating the very image of our sovereign and loving Creator—albeit in however a diminished manner the flesh may allow—there is no room for demeaning our

brother or sister. There is no room for seeing someone else as somehow “lesser” or “inferior” when their very form and likeness reminds us of their Creator—the One who has a plan of glory and honor for that individual and who *demands* that we see in him or her a potential Child of God, living by His side for all eternity!

Seeing our Father’s very own image and likeness reflected in the people around us helps us to fulfill the command of the Apostle Paul towards them, that “in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3).

Ultimately, seeing ourselves as we are—small, weak and very physical, but crafted to resemble our Creator—challenges us to do our part to help God *finish the job.* It reminds us that we were not meant for an animal-like existence, but a God-like one, and that we must continue to work hand-in-hand with our Creator to allow Him to fashion in us His own very character and goodness over the course of our lives.

It reminds us that if we yield ourselves to the hand of God in these physical lives we live today, then—at our birth into the lives we will live tomorrow—we may have the blessed opportunity to embrace face-to-face the One whose image we now bear. ■



However, I would like to present you with a conundrum. Here we are, focusing on our rejoicing in the Feast, an approach that follows the expressed will of our Father; but we also recall Jesus Christ's assurance: "**Blessed are those who mourn**, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

So, how can we connect these two apparent opposites—mourning and rejoicing? What lessons can this teach us as Christians?

When we think of mourning, an immediate picture that comes to mind is of someone grieving—a common usage adopted in our current dictionaries. Grief can result from the loss of a loved one; over a broken relationship, a lost employment opportunity, or some other factor such as the onset of old age and the inevitable changes it brings. Or it may be caused by some other cruel event that can so easily overtake us and disrupt our lives. There is something inherently *wrong* with that imagery. Grief in the main can be healed, jobs can be replaced, relationships can be made well again or new relationships established, old age has its limits and life has an interesting way of providing new opportunities. Grief as we normally understand it is transitory—we may mourn and then feel the loss for a long time, but we live in hope of our future. As we endure, comfort can be provided through the help

of those who care, and—of course and above all else—through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit.

Comfort is available to those who grieve. Paul, writing to the Corinthian brethren, assured us: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn...

By Peter Nathan

We have just celebrated the Fall Festivals—a time of great rejoicing and excitement, no matter how far one had to travel. Being able to spend the time in the company of God's people—His family—is an uplifting experience. The Feast was intended to be a time of rejoicing, when we could express thanks to our Heavenly Father and His Son for their blessings. Highlights of the Feast are probably still a focus of our conversations with others. Elsewhere in this magazine, you will read uplifting accounts of the wonderful Feast experiences shared by our brethren.

Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:3–5).

But how can we harmonize this view with this Beatitude? Clearly, our Father does care when we suffer in this life. When we examine the other Beatitudes, they all must be part of our lives on a consistent and continuing basis until the end. They are not short-term events. They become part of our real character or occur because of the character being created within us. We should never cease to be poor in spirit, meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers or to hunger and thirst for righteousness. As a result, with that character developing within us, we will be persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

So, when Christ spoke of mourning, did He have in mind something larger and more continuous for our human lives than just grief?

Let us consider this, and see how relevant this is to us as we reflect on the Feast we have recently celebrated.

THE DEEP SORROW... OF REPENTANCE!

Turn a few pages more into the gospel of Matthew and consider something Jesus said to the disciples of John the Baptist. They had come to ask why the disciples of Jesus did not fast as they did. John the Baptist had been imprisoned by this point (Matthew 4:12), which had been a real disruption in their lives. We read: “And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast’” (Matthew 9:15).

Even His disciples were going to mourn. Jesus was very aware of the disruption that was to occur in their lives with His crucifixion. But that grief was short-lived, confined to those three days and three nights before He was resurrected. Their mourning became joy. So, why mourn now?

Maimonides, a noted medieval Jewish thinker and writer, made this comment about the blowing of trumpets on the Feast of Trumpets: “It is not so much a call to war as to the repentance of soul.” For the Jews, the concept of repentance is deeply embedded in the Feast of Trumpets as well as the days leading up to the next Holy Day—Atonement. Those days, known to them as the Days of Awe, are days in which observant Jews will fast to midday. They are to be a time of repentance and judgment.

We can dismiss that as inconsequential and of no concern for ourselves. We see the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings

and Lord of lords associated with the Feast of Trumpets and the removal of Satan as the god of this world portrayed in the Day of Atonement. But repentance is a requirement for each of us if we hope to have a part in the founding of the Kingdom of God on this earth, as shown by these two Holy Days. It is a requirement of us right now! As the Apostle Peter wrote: “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ 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 4:17–19).

How do we judge ourselves? We do not issue report cards each semester. It is largely a personal responsibility.

And, when we judge ourselves, we find aspects of our life that are not in accord with the expressed will of our Father, so we need to repent. Repentance, therefore, does produce an element of mourning in our lives. We see ourselves as deficient, lacking in what we think we need. It is a process of seeing ourselves as being nothing—of no consequence without the power of the Holy Spirit given by our Father. Paul gave this exhortation to the Corinthians when he had to correct them for their tolerance of sin in their midst. “And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:2). Note that the Greek word here translated as mourn (*pentheo*) is the same term used in the Beatitudes.

James also laid this out as one of our responsibilities as followers of Jesus Christ: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:7–11).

James, like Paul, was addressing his words to Church members. Just because we are in God’s Church does not mean we are safe. We must maintain a constant state of willingness to be repentant as we find manifestations of the world in our lives. We cannot separate ourselves from that approach—or feel that we “have it made.” To the Corinthian brethren, Paul wrote of how this attitude had been present in his life: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I



have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

To ignore such a repentant approach classifies one a likely Laodicean, of whom was written: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:15–19).

So the necessity for change in our lives requires a sense of mourning—we are not yet perfect. We must have a sense of repentance about us at all times.

WHAT DOES REPENTANCE BRING?

Repentance should bring clarity to our understanding that this world is held captive by Satan. The God family does not yet rule it.

The Jews understand the need for repentance—but too late, after what will be the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings. The rest of humanity is presently blind to the need, yet they will have to mourn, as we will see.

But before we go there, let us continue to focus on ourselves. It is not only our repentance that should generate a sense of mourning in our lives. Ezekiel recorded a vision that he experienced that has relevance to us as well: “Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, ‘Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand.’ And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer’s inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. 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.’ To the others He said in my hearing, ‘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” (Ezekiel 9:1–7).

Because of our calling, we have a responsibility to see this world, its systems and its values (or lack thereof) from a Christian perspective. That is why people, even at the very altar of God, should be “sigh[ing] and cry[ing] over all the abominations that are done.” If I am sighing and crying, would I not be in a state of mourning?

What was the Apostle Paul doing when he wrote to the brethren in Rome? “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [result] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:1–4).

Was Paul not mourning over their spiritual ignorance?

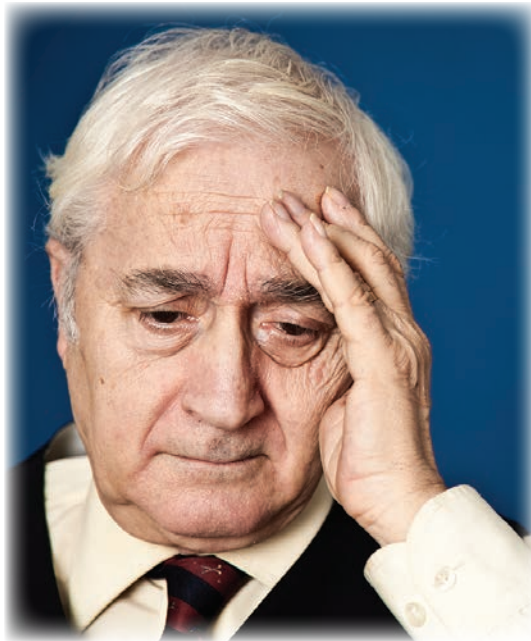
A similar case can be made today because of the abject lack of biblical knowledge that exists even among people who consider themselves Christian. A recent article entitled, “Surprised? Shocked? Saddened?” addressed a survey of “evangelical Christian” people in their 20s. The survey found a total lack of understanding of any standards that the Bible establishes. The lament that Hosea was inspired to write comes to mind: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6). False religion and mistaken beliefs are just one problem that demands our mourning.

The Babylonian-inspired system that controls this world’s commerce, as well as education, should also produce within us a sense of mourning right now.

By way of example, about three years ago, a major fire occurred at the airport in Nairobi, Kenya, which closed the airport. Immediately, the flower growers in Kenya were alarmed, as this meant they could not send fresh flowers to Europe. Flowers are perishable. They cannot sit in the hold of an aircraft for days until the airport gets reopened. The anxiety of the flower shippers was easily understood.

So what, you might ask?

One-third of the fresh flowers sold in Europe come from Kenya, so it is a major export by air. That may mean little to us but let me express it in another way. Kenya is to flowers what Bangladesh is to cotton clothing or China is to electronics. It is one of the cheapest places on earth to grow flowers. But to grow



them that cheaply requires relocation of people into shantytowns to earn a pittance of a wage. Then the run-off of nitrogen-rich water from the flower farms into lakes and waterways chokes the lakes with weeds and impairs the fishing, a natural resource that the local people have relied upon for protein and employment.

Where fishing is still possible, the local people are priced out of the market, as the price for those fish in Europe is so much higher than can be obtained locally, so the fish is frozen and sent to the supermarkets in Europe. Now I am not saying that the brethren in Europe should not buy flowers to decorate their homes, or buy Nile Perch or Tilapia from Kenya. That is an exercise in futility. The whole system needs to change. But, we need to realize that we live in a corrupt system, based on greed and profit where people are simply inputs into the system. They are enslaved, often by their own leaders, who seek profit irrespective of the cost to the country.

That itself is a reason for us to mourn today.

The Apostle John described the end of this world's systems with a consequence of mourning for those who have profited from it. Regarding the destruction of the Babylonian-inspired system, he wrote: "And the merchants of the earth will weep and **mourn** over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore" (Revelation 18:11).

That mourning will not be passive. Rather, it is described a few verses later as **wailing**. "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.... They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and **wailing**, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate'" (Revelation 18:15, 19).

They mourn because of their personal loss. The mourning that Jesus is enjoining us to do is not for ourselves. It is not inward looking but focused outward on the needs of others. It is because of what humanity, cut off from its Creator and Savior, and totally blinded and deceived by Satan, is doing to itself. Do we view the world that way? If so, we can mourn for humanity—day in, day out—until the return of Jesus Christ.

Paul understood this situation, not in terms of flowers and fish, but in his ability to see the world in which he lived from a Christian perspective. Writing to the Romans, he made these comments about our world and humanly created problems: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now" (Romans 8:18–22).

How does the earth groan?

Isaiah goes on at length about the problems the physical environment will face at the end of this age and the grief it

will create for those who seek to live by those resources (Isaiah 19:5–10). He prophesies the mourning of the land: "The earth mourns and languishes, Lebanon is shamed and shriveled; Sharon is like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits" (Isaiah 33:9). Hosea likewise addresses this problem: "Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away" (Hosea 4:3).

As a consequence of human destructiveness, the earth suffers. Let us consider again Paul's statement in Romans 8, because it also pertains to our situation, providing a useful echo of Ezekiel's vision: "Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (vv. 23–25).

COMFORT IN CHRIST'S RETURN

Our mourning should end with the comfort of the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. The establishment of the Kingdom of God with His righteousness will herald a change within this world, which will lead to the removal of evil and the evil consequences that humanity suffers. It will be a time of rejoicing for us as the old Babylonian world order comes to an end. The comfort we are promised in the Beatitude will finally have become a reality.

If the comment of Jesus to His disciples was relevant then, how much more relevant will it be when the Bridegroom returns? Remember His statement to the disciples of John: "And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?'" (Matthew 9:15).

Consider the state in which the friends of the bridegroom are no longer just friends but part of the bride, being accepted and cared for by her groom.

Our young people may consider that they are too young for such a spiritual solution. So let me put it another way. Youth can be idealistic. They can often see the physical problems that exist and desire to change them. The Kingdom of God is a place where that idealism can have full rein—based on the knowledge of the Law of God. Consider how the Kingdom of God can change those problems and the part you could play in that change. That should shape your planning for your future. Are you prepared for that role?

When we travelled to the Feast of Tabernacles, we experienced a Feast of great comfort—not just in terms of the mattress provided wherever we stayed, but in terms of appreciating the solutions to the problems that humanity and this world are currently subjected to.

Blessed are you who mourn, for you *shall* be comforted! ■

Woman to Woman

By Elizabeth Stafford

GODLY WOMEN

My daughter Margie and I were speaking one day about several special ladies who are outstanding examples for us. Margie turned to me and said, “Mom, they are really women of God.” I have often thought, since our conversation, that to become a godly woman is the most exciting, difficult and rewarding challenge I will ever face in my life. The choices I make now will eventually determine where I end up. We are all in the process of learning to make mindful choices that will help ourselves, and those we influence among our families and brethren, to “seek God’s Kingdom and His righteousness” as our first priority—instead of just going with the flow.

And, because we are learning to be consistently praying, studying and meditating on God’s Word, we should daily be coming more in tune with our godly calling and our purpose. Dr. Meredith has often pointed out that if we are Christians, we will be developing the very mind of Christ, as Philippians 2:5 states: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” That is why we have to be different than our relatives and neighbors, and we will not just do what feels good or seems right at the moment. In meditating on how better to be a godly woman, I have reflected on several character traits of the godly women from whom I am learning.

1. GODLY WOMEN ARE NOT EASILY MOVED BY PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure affects all of us when we allow ourselves to be too easily influenced by and overly concerned with what our family, friends or neighbors think or say about us. As we grow in becoming godly women, we are becoming more and more responsive to God’s Word, and His Spirit. While approval and being approved is important to every one of us, we have the awesome understanding as Christians that, as part of the very Church and Work of God, we already have the approval of our Father in Heaven! 1 Thessalonians 2:4 reminds

us that “...we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.” This understanding can give us great encouragement as godly women, helping us to stay true to our beliefs, and develop the inner strength to handle opposition.

We know that for every one of us, there will be daily pressures—whether from our families, jobs, friends or all types of media influence—to compromise our moral values. We, however, have spiritual backup! Our loving Father desires, as Ephesians 3:16 promises, that we can “according to the riches of His glory” be “strengthened with might through His Spirit....”

2. GODLY WOMEN UNDERSTAND THAT WHO THEY ARE IS NOT DEFINED BY WHAT THEY HAVE

Yes, there are people out there who think if they die with the most “toys” they will win. It is hard to imagine what they have actually won by spending their energies in getting, and then showing off their “stuff” in an attempt to feel important or make others envious. They, too, will end up in a box in the ground, or ashes on

the wind. We may not all have million-dollar homes, lots of cars, couture clothing and other material possessions. But, we know who we are, because the Bible shows us that we are future royalty, and heirs of the Kingdom of God. We now have the astonishing gift of being the daughters of the Most High Creator God, and part of the future bride of the King of all kings. This is described in wonderful detail in Dr. Meredith’s powerful booklet entitled *Your Ultimate Destiny*.

God does want us to have good things, and as Christ says in John 10:10, He wants us to have *life more abundantly*. We will often find that God will bless us, as He did Abraham and Job, more than we would ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Mr. Ames has also reminded us that we are to be recapturing true values, which includes having good quality food, clothing and homes as we are able.

By sharing some of what God has blessed us with in order to help preach the gospel, to help those in need, and



to show generous hospitality to our wonderful brethren, we are receiving blessings now. Malachi 3:10 describes how God will “pour out for you *such* blessing that *there will not be room enough to receive it.*” We can also look forward to the awesome future blessings we are promised in Matthew 19:29; “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall **receive** a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”

3. GODLY WOMEN DO NOT GOSSIP

Godly women do not spend their time and energy talking negatively about other people or situations. James 4:11 clearly teaches us: “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren,” and Proverbs 10:18 reminds us that, “whoever spreads slander is a fool.” So, women of God talk instead about what they are learning as Christians, and their goals, hopes and aspirations. If they are taking a Living University class, or reading helpful books (beginning with the Word of God), they will be sharing exciting and inspiring things they are discovering through their classes and readings.

As godly women, we will employ the teaching of the Apostle James, and we will occasionally share with one another the trials or difficulties we are experiencing, so that others can pray for us (James 5:16), and so we can obtain encouragement and counsel from our older or long-time members. We also will notice if other members seem lonely or discouraged, and we will make it a point to call or visit with them. Malachi 3:16 (*KJV*) says we will be speaking *often* with one another, if we want to be those godly jewels!

Many of our ladies also get together to discuss how they can serve by organizing the best way of sending food, and providing care for children of members who are sick or in the hospital. They plan activities for our children, and organize special church activities and decorations for church socials. Lots of us also discuss world news, and what is happening in our country, and we can help each other to watch world events and Biblical prophecies taking place around us (Matthew 24:42; 25:13). There are certainly more than enough interesting, exciting and very good things for us to be talking about as Christian women.

4. GODLY WOMEN DO NOT LISTEN BLINDLY

Sometimes it seems this whole society is Facebooking, tweeting and hash-tagging all kinds of things that may or may not be true based on partial or distorted information, and real or Photoshopped pictures. We who hear politically slanted newscasters and speeches on nearly every news network. Politicians try to stir up racial and religious hatred to gain votes or popularity. As godly women, we can use patience and wisdom in gathering many facts, **before** coming to a conclusion. We who have studied the Proverbs should remember that the person who answers a matter before hearing all of it is called a fool (Proverbs 18:13).

When a friend or family member comes to me with complaints or anger against other people or situations, I try to remember Proverbs 18:17: “The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.” Even though it is hard not to show favoritism or partiality to family and friends, you and I are in training to be kings and priests. So it will help to be studying and applying scriptures such as Deuteronomy 10:17; “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no **partiality** nor takes a bribe.” And also, Deuteronomy 16:19, “You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show **partiality**, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.”

I also strive to follow Paul’s instruction in Philippians 2:14 to, “Do all things without complaining and disputing.” As godly women, we know that if we fail to take the time to pray, study, meditate and learn more facts, we will not have spiritual understanding to see the big picture.

5. GODLY WOMEN DO NOT SEE A FAILURE AS A DEFEAT

Proverbs 24:16 tells us that, “a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again.” it helps a lot to remember that on the path to God’s Kingdom there are always bumps in the road. Because we have committed ourselves to following the straight path, and entering by the narrow gate leading to the kingdom (Matthew 7:13, 14), we will often be swimming against the current, and it will surely not be easy or fun all the time. It is encouraging to me to know that even the Apostle Paul said there were times when he did things he did not want to do as a Christian. It is also very encouraging to remember that, as Philippians 4:13 reminds us, we **can** do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

We are not alone when we are suffering a painful trial. Christ plainly told us that in the world all of us **will** have tribulation (John 16:33). The Apostle Paul also stated clearly in 2 Timothy 3:12 that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” We are called out together as “firstfruits” and those who are stronger are able to help bear others’ burdens (Romans 15:1) and support one another. God placed us in the body of Christ to support and help one another as we read in 1 Corinthians 12:26: “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

As godly women, we have repented and—having had the laying on of hands by Christ’s obedient ministers—we are now receiving God’s help and guidance through His Holy Spirit to change our thoughts and actions. This means that we need not waste our time in worry about future problems, or regrets for past mistakes. We can also be confident that God will complete His good work in us, as Paul mentioned in Philippians 1:6. And we, as women of God, will move forward, “**forgetting those things** which are behind and reaching forward to **those things** which are ahead”—and we will, with Christ in us, “press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14). ■

Festival 2015: A Year to Remember

The Feast of Tabernacles 2015 came as the exciting highlight of another year that God's people spent shining their lights by living His way in a troubled world. More than 10,500 brethren in 31 countries and 52 Feast sites around the world came together to rejoice before God and share their mutual hopes for the future. The reports below convey just a small taste of the joys and experiences we all shared as a family this year in the many places where Almighty God placed His name.

MYRTLE BEACH, NORTH CAROLINA



God's protection was faith-building this year for almost 600 millennial Ambassadors of the coming Kingdom of God in Myrtle Beach! Torrential rains spawned by several converging weather systems, including hurricane Joaquin, produced high water conditions and road closings north and south of the Feast site. With rain six of the eight days, Myrtle Beach sustained some local flooding on secondary streets and a "State of Emergency" was issued for South Carolina. However, roads leading to the convention site remained passable throughout the Feast. Just as the Last Great Day Service came to a close, God provided



His dramatic covenant sign of a beautiful rainbow over the eastern seashore! Certainly, God was mindful of His people and shielded His Feast site in Myrtle Beach!

While it was raining outside, indoors was beaming with God's Spirit as future kings and priests dined on bounteous portions of spiritual nourishment! Dr. Meredith gave four live and dynamic sermons highlighting our awesome future role in God's government, the restoration of truth, and on servant leadership, and continued to instruct all of us to focus on the "Big Picture" of our ultimate destiny! Dr. Douglas Winnail also gave two fascinating sermons on "Turning Points in History" and "Qualities of Great Teachers."

Additional speakers focused on the coming wonderful new world ruled by Jesus Christ and His saints: "Beauty for Ashes" and on the Last Great Day, "Love Wins" by Mr. Wallace Smith; "Seek First the Kingdom, and Never Look Back" by Mr. James Sweat and "Temporary No More" by Mr. Jason Fritts. Topping off the spiritual banquet, Bible Studies for families and teens were also presented by Messrs. Wallace Smith and Jason Fritts.

Some of the activities had to be adapted for indoors, but they were nonetheless enjoyed! Teens enjoyed an exciting evening together with food and games, plus a stimulating afternoon of "edu-tainment" at Wonder Works! Singles participated in planning their own Feast activities during a special Meet and Greet session with *hors d'oeuvres* and lively fellowship. The little ones also enjoyed two children's activity sessions creating Feast-

themed arts and crafts. A day at the beach was exchanged for indoor fun, games and fellowship, and later highlighting the evening, fun on the dance floor at the family dance!

A harmonious spirit of love, togetherness and thankfulness permeated the Myrtle Beach Feast site. Many thanks to all the volunteers who labored and gave of themselves selflessly in so many ways! Several served as department leaders for the first time—and very successfully! A COG visitor attending with us stated, “I am a spy—but when I return I am going to tell them this is the best Feast I ever had!” At a Festival site physically plagued with rain, that is a testament of the more essential spiritual sustenance, amplified by God and demonstrated by the shining example of God’s people!

LAKE OF THE OZARKS, MISSOURI

For the past four years God has placed His name at the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks in central Missouri and once



again God’s people have rejoiced at His Feast of Tabernacles. This year God blessed more than 640 of God’s family with beautiful weather and awe-inspiring scenery surrounding the lake. We were blessed this year with both Mr. Rand Millich and Dr. Douglas Winnail as our traveling speakers. Throughout the eight days we were inspired and motivated by messages that gave us a vision of Christ’s soon-coming Kingdom and how we can be prepared for it. Mr. Millich presented the Bible Study on Friday evening, “Why Rejoice at the Feast?” with nearly 400 in attendance. Most brethren commented on their surveys about the outstanding messages that were given by the ministry. Other speakers were Messrs. Daniel Friz, Robert Riggan, Hermie Brown and Festival Coordinator Mr. Gene Hilgenberg.

Other highlights during the Feast were the many activities for all ages and groups. Mr. Hilgenberg welcomed seniors to a luncheon with special musical entertainment and a short message of encouragement. Teen activities included an ice cream social with games and a swim party, and a Bible study answering different questions from the teens. Singles enjoyed a mixer and dinner cruise on the lake. Family activities included an afternoon lake cruise, Family Day carnival filled with games and snacks and a family dinner dance. Many commented that the dance was the best one that they had every attended. Those who



attended the DELS dinner appreciated a short message from Mr. Hilgenberg thanking them for their service throughout the year.

Feast-goers commented on the encouraging messages, God’s healing interventions, fabulous weather and warm fellowship. God’s people once again reflected Christ in all their activities.

GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE

For the second year in a row, brethren gathered at the River Terrace Resort in Gatlinburg for a very inspiring Feast setting



near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Although rain was present for most of the Feast, the spirit of God’s people was not dampened and most all activities went on as planned.

One of America’s largest tramways took 52 teens on a ten-minute ride to the mountaintop ski resort and amusement park of Ober Gatlinburg. The Singles’ outdoor activity began with a catered Italian meal at a pavilion in the National Park. Then most singles, led by Mr. Paul Shumway, made the 2.8-mile hike to Grotto Falls in the rain, many using the light green plastic tablecloths from the meal as ponchos—an impressive display of resourcefulness.

An excellent Family Dinner and Dance on Saturday evening, a special Seniors’ luncheon attended by 135, a DELS luncheon at the Park Vista Hotel, a Scavenger Hunt in the city of Gatlinburg, and a Children’s Activity were other events that were well attended and enjoyed throughout this year’s Feast.

The highlights for the 600 brethren in attendance were the sermons, sermonettes and the special music throughout the



Feast. Our first guest speaker, Mr. Richard Ames, gave two Feast sermons: “Jerusalem: The Capital of the Kingdom” and “The Character of Kings,” as well as a sermon on the weekly Sabbath before the Feast began. Mr. Dan Hall arrived for the second half of the Feast and provided two powerful messages, one on the meaning of the Last Great Day. Pastors Paul Shumway and Ron Poole and elder Mark Sandor gave additional sermons. Also, the Family Bible Study on Friday evening was attended by enthusiastic and appreciative brethren.

We would like to thank each person attending the Feast in Gatlinburg for the encouragement and wonderfully positive attitudes as God’s Spirit was displayed through warm fellowship, service and brotherly kindness throughout this special time together.

NAVARRE, FLORIDA



Cloudy skies and rain greeted happy Feastgoers in Navarre, Florida. This was the second time that this city of 30,000 has hosted the Feast of Tabernacles, and the community greeted us warmly. Services were conducted at the Days Inn Conference Center with many of the brethren lodging at the adjacent facility. Nearly 400 brethren came from all parts of the southern United States, the Midwest and Canada.

The messages were timely and inspiring. Mr. Ed Breaux, Festival Coordinator, welcomed Feast-goers during the announcements just before Dr. Meredith’s inspiring opening night message and later gave a sermon titled “Learning to be a Judge.” Other speakers were Messrs. Davy Crockett, Ken Frank and Glen Harrison. Sermon topics included: “You Were Born to Teach,” “The Power of God” and “Preserving the Unity of the Spirit.”

Tuesday evening, we had the Family Dinner/Dance. A BBQ brisket and chicken meal was served, followed by a dance featuring a variety of music for all generations, making for a very memorable evening.

Mr. Crockett, Associate Pastor from Little Rock, Arkansas, gave an inspiring and humorous message tailored for the “seasoned” citizens at the Seniors’ Honors Luncheon. The teens and “young at heart” visited Wild Willy’s Adventure Zone in Fort



Walton Beach, where they got a chance to enjoy games, rides and various activities. Everyone had a great time fellowshipping and bowling on Family Day at White Sands Bowling Alley. At the DELS Luncheon, Mr. Ken Frank encouraged those present to take classes at Living University in order to expand their knowledge of scripture and be better able to serve the brethren in their local Church areas. On the weekly Sabbath, Mr. Glen Harrison gave a Teen Bible Study.

This year two people were baptized—one from the Laurel, Mississippi congregation and the other from the Pensacola, Florida congregation.

Those attending the Feast visited area attractions such as the beautiful beaches, local museums, the zoo and area shopping malls. It was a memorable Feast with God’s Spirit evident in acts of service, attentive audiences and loving fellowship.

SEASIDE, OREGON



Seaside, Oregon provided a taste of the Millennium with both beautiful scenery and spiritually uplifting messages focused on the coming rule of Jesus Christ. Brethren enjoyed



the spectacular timber- and fern-covered mountains, trails with coastal views, and easily accessible sandy beaches. The Oregon coastal weather was truly a highlight of the week, with unusual amounts of sunshine, clear views of the ocean, and temperatures in the 70s throughout the entire Feast!

Mr. David Stiffler kicked off the Feast on the first Holy Day, encouraging the brethren to sharpen their vision by imagining, in detail, the glorious future that God has in store for us. We were privileged to have Regional Pastor Jeffrey Fall as our traveling guest speaker. His encouraging messages discussed various aspects of the roadmap to God's Kingdom, the Last Great Day, and beyond. Other uplifting messages encouraged the brethren to build bonds of brotherhood through the opportunities for fellowship during the Feast, to learn lessons from tabernacles, and to look to God's promises for our future.

The activities included gathering around a bonfire on the beach, complete with s'mores and guitar. Many brethren enjoyed a beautiful coastal hike with stunning views of the coast and wooded areas with lush ferns. Brethren also enjoyed hours of fellowship at the historic "Camp 18" giant log cabin chalet. The private banquet room providing a cozy ambiance with unique historic decor and a large rustic rock fireplace. Young and old alike delighted in an afternoon ride on a coastal train pulled by a 1920s steam engine. The beauty of the Oregon coastline was enhanced by soaking in the spectacular sunshine—especially in the open-air cars.

The tremendous examples of outgoing concern and brotherly love observed at the Feast this year gave us a taste of the brotherhood that will be experienced in God's soon-coming Kingdom!

PALM HARBOR, FLORIDA



More than 500 of God's people met for the third year at the Innisbrook Resort in Palm Harbor, Florida, where the luxurious Edinburgh Hall provided a wonderful venue for inspiring messages, truly special music, choir performances and a very special piano concert. Nestled among exquisite golf courses and rolling, manicured terrain, the serene atmosphere, the very evident presence of God's Spirit, and the sermons by Mr. Dan Hall, Dr. Michael Germano, Dr. Douglas Winnail and others all pointed us toward our future and provided a great reminder of our calling and the urgent need for Christ's return.

Wonderful weather enabled us to enjoy an array of activities—a very nice dinner/dance, a Family Day at a nearby park for games and fellowship, sumptuous Holy Day buffets, family time at the resort's various swimming pools—and this year we added an evening dinner cruise around Tampa Bay to view the city lights and a speedboat ride around the Bay for the teens to view the city and porpoises. The fellowship and beautiful atmosphere at the activities lent themselves to a glimpse of what God's Kingdom will be like.

The Feast in Palm Harbor was once again a memorable occasion with warm fellowship, unity, and brotherly solidarity on display, all of which helped us focus on God's Kingdom and to go home with a resolve to finish the Work.

ST. GEORGE, UTAH



Many commented that the St. George site was truly "the best Feast" they have ever had and "the most beautiful Feast site" they have attended. Situated in the proximity of three national parks: Zion, Bryce, and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, it made an ideal location for more than 500 brethren to worship before our God and enjoy His creation. Services were conducted at the Red Lion Hotel where the staff was very accommodating and helpful.

After dynamic messages on the first Holy Day, the Feast was jump-started with the Singles' Meet-and-Greet, a beautiful dinner with enjoyable live entertainment, and a delightful dance to close the evening.

Members from around the world enjoyed many activities—including the Snow Canyon Park Dinner and Show, a beautiful show of color, lights, music, entertainment

and amazement! Other activities included “once in a lifetime” hikes in Zion National Park, touring the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, and an open Family Activity at the Fiesta Fun Center with bowling, mini-golf and many other exciting activities!

Overall, we captured the vision of God’s Feast of Tabernacles in this most picturesque setting. The togetherness strengthened our relationships with God and family.

INDIAN WELLS, CALIFORNIA



Desert temperatures and low humidity greeted Feast-goers in Indian Wells, California and desert lovers came from as far away as Canada. The Miramonte Resort and Spa hosted us in the cool and lovely Mediterranean Ballroom, decorated in fall colors. Harmony and cooperation marked this Festival and added to the pleasant rejoicing among families and Church friends.

It was a delight to have Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames as our guests during the second half of the Feast. Mr. Ames gave two sermons, “God’s Greatest Creation” and then “God’s Great Salvation” on the Last Great Day. For the Friday night Bible Study he spoke on “Jerusalem—the Capital of the Kingdom.” He also spoke at the Deacons’ & Elders’ Luncheon, encouraging us in our service to the Church. This was Mr. Ames’ 101st Feast site visit in his 55 years of attending the Feast, and he and Mrs. Ames just happened to stay in Room 101.

Two accomplished pianists, two vocalists, the Festival Choir and the Children’s Choir performed truly Special Music. Mrs. Ames inspired us all when she played a beautiful violin solo, Massenet’s “Meditation from Thais,” a piece we would all recognize even if the name is unfamiliar.

This site offered such varied activities as the Living Desert Zoo, the Children’s Discovery Museum, Wet’ n’ Wild (a water park for the young at heart), and the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway—a cable car that goes from the valley floor to the top of 8500-ft. Mount San Jacinto.

The Miramonte hosted a lovely buffet dinner and Family Dance. Our live DJ planned good music for the whole family so we danced to polkas, waltzes, Texas two-step, swing, as well as line dances, the Bunny Hop and the all-time favorite—the Chicken Dance.



Two evenings brethren participated in board and card games while musicians played their guitars, banjos and mandolins. This was family fun in a wholesome atmosphere.

The members at this site practiced the loving attitudes of cooperation, patience and caring for one another, and these all produced the harmony among brothers and sisters that we look forward to in the coming Kingdom of God.

KAUAI, HAWAII



This year more than 500 brethren came together on the millennial island of Kauai to rejoice and keep God’s Feast—and what an epic Feast it was! Timely sermons by Messrs. Martin Fannin, Sheldon Monson, Anthony Stroud and Site Coordinator Jim Meredith were largely focused on being servant leaders in God’s coming Kingdom. And this island was a wonderful example of what God’s Kingdom will be like—from the scenic beaches to the towering mountains on the Na Pali coast, Kauai has it all.

The bountiful spiritual food was complemented by an abundance of fellowship and activities. It was an inspiration to see such a high turnout to so many of the activities. On Tuesday, many singles and young married couples were able to enjoy an ATV tour of Kipu Ranch where many movies, including the Jurassic Park series, have been filmed. The afternoon of bouncing along over the rough and sometimes muddy paths was topped off with a delicious BBQ chicken dinner enjoyed against the backdrop of the scenic ranch and mountains.

Over 250 of the brethren were able to enjoy a 5½ hour boat cruise along the awe-inspiring Na Pali coast, where the



mountains rise more than 4,000 feet above the ocean. Many commented that this was the highlight of the Feast for them and how glad they were to be able to see the island from this perspective.

Most of the brethren attended the Family Day at the beach, enjoying a sumptuous lunch of freshly grilled hamburgers, hot dogs and all of the fixings; volleyball, football, Ultimate Frisbee and children's games; or simply the beach and warm tropical water.

The senior citizens enjoyed a lovely lunch at a spectacular oceanfront restaurant. Teens were treated to a light lunch followed by an afternoon of kayaking up the Wailua River. At one point we beached the kayaks and hiked to a 60-foot high waterfall we were able to stand under.

This year we had the unique opportunity to have an exclusive luau for more than 400 of the brethren. A "luau" is a Hawaiian party or feast, and feast is what the brethren did, on an amazing buffet arrayed with traditional Hawaiian dishes. Everything from Poi and Taro, to fish, chicken, turkey and beef! After the luau dinner, brethren were able to watch a show depicting



some of the history and culture of the Hawaiian peoples. After the show everyone enjoyed a couple of hours of dancing and fellowship in the balmy, tropical night.

The activities wrapped up on Sunday afternoon with a golf tournament at a challenging golf course with some beautiful ocean-front holes.

Needless to say, the Feast in Hawaii was an "epic success" both physically and spiritually. What was especially evident was the fellowship and love of the brethren, which was further

evidenced on the Last Great Day when an announcement was made regarding a family in need of help. Their handicapped son had ended up in the hospital during the Feast, and was going to have to remain there for at least a couple of weeks, requiring the parents to stay on the island. Within hours of the announcement, brethren donated a considerable amount of money to help them cover the unexpected expenses. Their initial comment when told of the donations was, "Only God's people would respond this way." These were God's people, and they all had a spiritually rejuvenating Feast on Kauai—we thank God for that!

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN



It was exciting to have a beautiful new Feast site this year in Traverse City, Michigan! This northern Michigan town was named on *TripAdvisor.com* as one of America's "Top 10 Charming Small Towns." God's people spent the Feast of Tabernacles in a Millennial setting and enjoyed the beauty of this idyllic and historic town right on the clear, blue waters of Lake Michigan. This hidden gem is adjacent to breathtaking natural surroundings, hiking and biking trails, championship golf courses and is only 45 minutes from the famous Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park, which was called "The Most Beautiful Place in America" on *Good Morning America*. A variety of quality restaurants and wineries provided opportunities for fine dining.

Services were conducted at the Great Wolf Lodge, with many of the brethren staying on site at the hotel. God inspired the messages to be knit together in a common theme of rejoicing and staying focused on the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Mr. and Mrs. Millich began the Feast in Traverse City, where Mr. Millich gave two sermons: "The Feast of Tabernacles: A Time of Endings and Beginnings" and "Rejoice at the Feast." Other sermon topics were: "Accept the Gift of the Kingdom," "The Four 'Legs' of the Kingdom of God," "Will He Find Faith?," "Joy of Our Salvation," "Burning Our Ships: Prioritizing for the Kingdom of God," and "It Is Done."

The brethren enjoyed a buffet lunch at the Great Wolf Lodge between services on the first day of the Feast and again on the Last Great Day. On Tuesday evening the DELS dinner was held.

Mr. Millich, who gave a short talk about how appreciative the Church is of its leaders, encouraged them to never give up and to train up other leaders in their respective congregations. The next afternoon brethren enjoyed a challenging but fun experience at the Family Day activity at Jacob’s Corn Maze. Everyone was treated to cider, cookies and fellowship. Thursday evening was the Dinner Dance. Brethren were treated to a top-notch meal followed by an entertaining fun show and dance. On Sunday afternoon the “seasoned” members of God’s Church ate together at the Seniors’ Luncheon and were serenaded by the Festival Music Director, Mr. Scott Fulford. Later that evening, to begin the Last Great Day, the brethren attended a Family Seminar by Festival Coordinator, Mr. Bill Long.

It was a memorable Feast for God’s people in Traverse City. The weather was cool and the surrounding scenery kept everyone focused on the Kingdom of God, promoting a sense of unity and family.

TANNERSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA



In the scenic Poconos Mountains, God called together 310 of His people to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with joy. Although the first few days saw a healthy dose of “liquid sunshine,” the Feast throughout saw mostly pleasant, cool autumn conditions—and the presence of many deer and chipmunks also brightened our days!

Brighter still were the solid messages and fellowship, as Messrs. Jonathan and Rod McNair, John Hunter, Phil Sena, Bill Oswald and Randy Moran took to the lectern, along with other dedicated speakers, while the brethren from the Northeast LCG organized favorite events from Feasts past and new activities as well!

One highlight was the “Progressive Fellowship,” wherein brethren are organized into visiting groups. They then are able to enjoy a three-course dinner and plenty of warm conversation and bonding—as each course is served for each different group at the temporary dwelling of a completely different host!

Other activities included the traditional Dinner Dance, Bible Studies and Choir, Singles’ and Teens’ activities, luncheons for the Seniors and serving Deacons and Elders, and a cookout at a nearby park. A game of “bubble ball” was organized for



those energetic enough to engage in soccer while wearing a huge transparent rubber bouncy ball from the knees up over their heads (who uses their arms in soccer, anyways?). Needless to say, the well-cushioned players feared no injuries from falling or colliding—a blessing indeed, as collide and fall they did, many times, and often with enthusiastic (and deliberate) help.

For those who wanted memorable scenery, the famous Bushkill Falls waterfall was less than a half-hour’s drive away from the Chateau, while the top of Camelback Mountain itself offered a wonderful, nearly 360-degree panorama of the entire region and the mountains beyond.

The Feast went very smoothly, and the Chateau Resort handled our needs despite being a bit understaffed, even for the low-traffic season. Some brethren stayed in rental homes and cabins conveniently close to the facility, while many stayed at the hotel itself. Live telephone hookups were provided for those sick or otherwise shut in.

The Last Great Day was blessed with much-needed sunshine, and the brethren were able to depart home safely from another year’s Feast, full of true godly fellowship and worship, bidding farewell to each other and the beautiful Poconos.

BOERNE, TEXAS



Nestled in the scenic Hill Country of South Texas, the city of Boerne provided a beautiful millennial setting for the Feast of Tabernacles, 2015! Services were held in the Boerne Civic

Center where more than 300 Feastgoers comfortably attended. Nearby lodging in condominiums, vacation homes and motels afforded the brethren quick and easy access to the facility.

Powerful messages concerning our ultimate destiny and millennial rule of Jesus Christ spiritually uplifted all in attendance. Traveling guest speaker, Mr. Lambert Greer, gave two sermons: “Watch and Grow in Faith” and “Power of the Age to Come.” Dr. Scott Winnail was able to spend the entire Feast in Boerne and



gave three sermons: “Called to be First Fruits,” “Having a Child-like Attitude” and “The Meaning of the Last Great Day.” Many brethren commented that Dr. Meredith’s Last Great Day message was very powerful and inspiring. Sermons and sermonettes presented by elders and deacons were meaningful and uplifting as well.

The Feast site coordinating team organized a variety of wonderful activities, including catered lunch meals for both Holy Days, an afternoon of bowling and free pizza for the teens, a singles mixer at the Scenic Loop Restaurant with a “Wine Sip & Paint” activity afterwards, a rousing Texas-Style Family Dance at the renowned Nelson City Dance Hall and a Family Day gathering highlighted by a special live, “Birds of Prey” demonstration including hawks, raptor falcons, vultures and other impressive large birds.

Our younger children were provided activities after services and made photo album picture frames of the Feast along with colorful bookmarks for themselves and their families. Our seniors were celebrated with a special luncheon at the beautiful Helene House, and a DELS luncheon was held at the same location.

The highlight activity of the Feast was attending a real Tejas (Texas) Rodeo where our brethren were provided special seating and were welcomed on the big screen. There were comments from some that had never attended a rodeo before and found it exhilarating to watch the cowboys and cowgirls do roping, riding, and barrel racing under the large covered arena!

The South Texas Hill Country had much to offer and our brethren took advantage of visiting nearby San Antonio, home of the famed Riverwalk, the Alamo and Sea World.

The 2015 Feast of Tabernacles in Boerne, Texas was truly an inspiring and memorable experience for God’s people, with timely and meaningful messages, a spirit of teamwork, cooperation, unity and a focus on our role of living in a manner that is reflective of the children of God!

SHAWINIGAN, QUÉBEC



In Shawinigan, Québec, Canada, we had 96 attendees at the 2015 Feast of Tabernacles. The brethren greatly enjoyed lodging in the same facility where we had services: Auberge Gouverneur. Even though the hotel is in town, one has the impression of being immersed in the country, surrounded by a rich natural environment, right in front of the St-Maurice River. The day we had our cruise on the river, the two boats took us up a few steps away from the hotel.

Shawinigan was a bilingual site and translation was provided each day. The spiritual menu was inspiring and encouraging, providing vision about our identity and awesome future. The Friday night Bible study concerning “The Temple of Ezekiel” was deeply appreciated. It was given by our guest speaker from France, Mr. Vincent Lardé, who serves the Angoulême, Strasbourg and Paris congregations. God manifested His presence in many ways. One of them was the fact that Mr. Jacques Secours, pastoring the Montreal and Ottawa congregations, was able to attend after a major heart surgery of six bypasses three months ago. He was even able to give two sermonettes and to proceed with two baptisms. It was increasingly evident this year that the Church is a real family, and we enjoyed the serene, relaxed, harmonious, caring and sharing atmosphere. We had a special afternoon of various games followed by an uplifting Bible Quiz involving a friendly competition. A Talent Show and Dance evening with a country-western flavor was particularly appreciated.

All those who served did a fine job.

NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO



At the Americana Resort in Niagara Falls, 335 brethren and guests gathered to celebrate the soon-coming return of Jesus Christ. Brethren from the U.S., the Caribbean and the United

Kingdom joined their Canadian brothers and sisters for eight days of physical enjoyment and—more important—spiritual direction from the messages provided.

Brethren enjoyed and rejoiced in a number of Church-sponsored activities, such as Family Day, which provided an afternoon of fun and fellowship for children and adults of all ages. A Family Dinner and Dance that same evening was also provided, where more than 200 brethren were able to partake of a fine meal and musical entertainment.

A Seniors' Day, featuring a tour bus ride of the area as well as a visit to the local Butterfly Conservatory, where God's people witnessed one of the amazing wonders of God's creation, was truly a highlight for many.

In addition there was a wonderful afternoon and evening of singles' activities featuring a Niagara Falls boat tour and a "Journey Behind the Falls," where the great majesty of the Falls was witnessed by all while clothed in very necessary rain coats. That evening a group meal at the Skylon Tower was greatly enjoyed, finishing off a day of fun and fellowship.

God's people were also blessed with meaningful and Christ-inspired messages throughout the Feast. We were very thankful to have two long-time ministers attend with us—Mr. and Mrs. Ehman from Charlotte for the first half of the Feast as well as a very "young at heart" Mr. and Mrs. Bill Whittaker from South Carolina.

Their sermons formed the basis for all other messages, helping us to realize what God has in store not only for us, but for the whole world. Mr. Shane Kruse, an elder from Ontario, presented a message on "The Language of Love" that would be extant throughout the Millennium, while Mr. Winston Gosse spoke on messages related to the effect of the Righteous Government of Jesus Christ. Overall, the Feast in Niagara truly whetted our appetite for the reality of what is in store for God's whole creation.

KIMBERLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA



Nearly 250 brethren congregated together in the magnificent Canadian Rocky Mountains for the purpose of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. The meetings were held in the ultra-modern facilities of the Kimberley Conference Centre, at the base of the Kimberley Alpine Resort, nestled among beautiful hotels and condos in which the majority of brethren were lodging.

The weather was largely perfect, allowing Feast-goers to fully appreciate the natural beauty surrounding them and

visualize the peace and beauty of the time being pictured. The inspiring sermons and sermonettes, focusing everyone on the reason for our calling and the way in which the world under Christ will be repaired, were the highlight of the Festival.

Family bowling and the Seniors' Luncheon early in the week helped people get acquainted. This was followed by a wonderful Family Day in nearby Wasa, where people enjoyed food and fellowship as well as games of softball, bocce ball and horseshoes. The dinner dance the next day featured a magnificent banquet, and great entertainment by a local celebrity, Adi the Yodeling Woodcarver. We were also blessed with a melodious Festival chorale led by Mr. Jim Reed.

Overall it was a Feast that reflected the peace and optimism typifying the millennium under the rule of God's Law. Thanks to all who contributed to making this a most memorable time.

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, MEXICO



Spirituality, love, joy and beauty were the predominant aspects God blessed us with at the Feast of Tabernacles in the noble and colonial town of San Miguel de Allende. The highest attendance was 126, with brethren coming from different parts of Mexico and from overseas. Brethren worked together as a team because of their good attitude and disposition, and we were able to conduct all of the activities with no problems. We thank God for blessing us in this site, for feeding us with spiritual bread and for giving us the opportunity to live once-in-a-lifetime moments.

GREAT MALVERN, ENGLAND



Great Malvern—a small town nestled up against the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire—was the United Kingdom Feast site for the second year. From many nations, 200 brethren gathered here to observe the Feast in the beautiful autumnal sunshine, without a drop of rain until the Last Great Day. This picturesque setting where God placed His name was ideal for an inspiring and peaceful Feast.

The range of planned activities included a Severn River cruise, a coach tour to the town of Ledbury and the pre-Roman fortifications of British Camp. A tour of the Morgan Cars factory was a highlight for many, to see traditional sports cars built by hand. A visit to the Malvern Priory, an evening barn dance with Alf Alfa and the Wild Oats, ice-skating, a children's party and two children's art activities rounded off the events.

The Feast messages, including the sermonettes, focused on looking forward to the establishment of God's Kingdom and all complemented each other entirely. Mr. Ben Whitfield, visiting from the Midwestern United States, discussed "The Meaning of the Feast" and "What Will Life Be Like in the Millennium." Area Pastor Mr. John Meakin covered "Abraham's Children of Promise" and "What Is the Kingdom of God?" Our Regional Director, Mr. Gerald Weston, joined us for the second half of the Feast and gave us the Bible Study plus sobering sermons on "Where Will You Be in the Millennium?" and "The Meaning of the Last Great Day." Festival Elder Simon Roberts spoke on "Opening Their Eyes" and "The Future of Monarchy." Delightful special music was provided by piano, clarinet and vocal soloists as well as the Festival and Children's Choirs.

Complementing the strong spiritual food, the opportunity for uplifting fellowship with brethren and a happy friendly atmosphere was a highlight for many this year. Many stayed at the Abbey Hotel and enjoyed sharing meals and the extra opportunity to spend time together. Thank you to everyone who attended the Feast in Great Malvern, for your positive attitudes, service and support to make it successful!

CARRY-LE-ROUET, FRANCE



The gorgeous and sunny setting provided by the Vacancier Village at Carry-le-Rouet, on the Mediterranean coast in the south of France, set the stage for what was an inspiring Feast of Tabernacles. Around 225 brethren from numerous countries gathered together, in peace and unity, to share in the delicious and savory meals offered by this tranquil resort resting along a protective and picturesque rocky cove.



The highlight of the Feast was the opportunity to hear spiritually uplifting "meat-in-due-season" from Regional Director Mr. Gerald Weston, and travelling minister Mr. Ben Whitfield, as well as other local ministers. The sermon cuisine included messages on how to have a good Feast, the restoration that is to come, why we keep the Feast, the good news of the Kingdom, what life will be like during the Millennium, why we are called now, and what the product of the Kingdom will be.

Beyond sharing meals together and enjoying extended fellowship opportunities, activities this year included a cruise along the coastline of Marseille and the surrounding area, a group Bible trivia game, archery (the first time for many), a family dance, a walking excursion, a 3x20's activity in honor of those aged 60 or older, an excursion exploring the Carmargue nature reserve, and a fantastic talent show which included a song performed by the enthusiastic teen choir.

The Last Great Day service concluded with a moving and tearful rendition by the choir and the rest of the congregation of "How Great Thou Art." With God's hand protecting the site from powerful and destructive nearby storms, His people were assured of His greatness, and encouraged to strive toward the Kingdom.

BALLINA, AUSTRALIA



The beautiful coastal town of Ballina in northern New South Wales was once again, after ten years, chosen by God to be one of the two Australian Feast sites. This year we had a stunning venue—the Ballina Lighthouse Beach Surf Club Hall. As Feast-goers entered the Hall they were treated to a beautiful view of



the surf rolling in to the pristine yellow sands just metres away. The hall was ideal, allowing warm fellowship before and after services over a cup of tea or coffee in the hall or on the balcony in the fresh sea air just outside the meeting room. Occasionally, and clearly visible from the hall balcony, humpback whales passed by, breaching and splashing to entertain us as they migrated south to Antarctica. The whole area is a truly stunning millennial setting.

This year 113 brethren were in attendance. We welcomed visitors from New Zealand, the United States and South Africa, as well as from most Australian states. God blessed the Feast with absolutely beautiful weather, some cool evenings and beautiful days.

All the outdoor activities went as planned, and even the young singles and older teens enjoyed themselves with various team-building games right on the beach in front of the Surf Club. The Family Day at Pop Dennison Park involved a BBQ lunch, fun games and a soccer match that left some participants with aches and pains from muscles long dormant.

Our little children had a great time in the Hall in a specially designed activity for them, which allowed them to let off steam, and get to know each other right at the start of the Feast.

The singles enjoyed a very pleasant get-together early in the Feast with a fine dinner at the Lennox Head Hotel's "Reef & Beef Balcony Restaurant." Later, the seniors had an afternoon of lawn bowling and croquet at a Ballina Bowls Club, followed of course by scones, jam, and cream—along with a nice "cuppa" tea or coffee.

Nearly everyone was involved in the "Get to Know Your Neighbour Evening" on Tuesday. Because of the smaller numbers at this site, many people commented on how wonderful it was to get to know everyone who attended. There was an atmosphere of love, peace, joy, harmony and unity throughout the whole eight days. Many members felt this was one of the most relaxing and "family friendly" Feasts they have attended.

The Talent and Fun Show Evening was a great success, with everyone enjoying the items and the Pictionary Relay. Many rediscovered their youth with a game of "Musical Chairs." It truly was a fun-filled evening with happy smiles all round!

Of course the spiritual food provided by the ministry was the spiritual highlight of the Feast. They focused us on the reality of the coming Kingdom, Government and Family of God. Mr.

Rod King's relaxed and personable sermons covered the reality of seeing Jesus Christ as He is, as well as the restoration of all things. Mr. Mal Jennings and Mr. Dayrell Tanner covered topics on fearing God, the Government of God, why we observe the Feast, how to be peacemakers and the "Better Resurrection." We left for home recharged spiritually, ready to take on the challenges that will surely await us during the next twelve months.

VICTOR HARBOR, SOUTH AUSTRALIA



One of the two Australian Feast sites where God placed His name this year was the beautiful seaside town of Victor Harbor—only a 45-minute drive from Adelaide city.

The McCracken Country Club Resort hosted 108 members, who appreciated a foretaste of God's coming Kingdom. Victor Harbor has a peaceful millennial setting including sweeping coastal beaches, scattered granite islands and a panoramic hinterland backdrop. The township also hosts a variety of shops, cafes and restaurants all close by to hotels and rental accommodations.

Feast-goers in Victor Harbor received inspired sermons from the Regional Director of the Australasian work, Mr. Bruce Tyler as well as ministers Messrs. Robert Tyler, Graeme Hemphill and Michael Gill. Sermon titles included, "How to Manage Your Future Cities," "New Beginnings for the Millennium," "Dwelling with God," "Keep the Vision of the Millennium in Focus" and "Thy Kingdom Come." All Feast-goers gained a greater spiritual understanding of the Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ as the King of kings and His Government over the nations during the millennium. We were reminded of our most important goal—*seeking first the Kingdom of God!* Many of the fine messages from the ministry gave us practical instructions on how to prepare for our future roles as the future kings and priests, teachers and judges.

Activities were enjoyed by all—from the very young to the young-at-heart. Activity highlights included the Bible Study Q&A, the Family Outdoor Barbeque/Fun Day in a beautiful, green parklands area and the entertaining Talent Evening, where a combination of music items and humor blended with warm fellowship.

As we pray for God's Kingdom to come, this Feast had a special impact for all—we learned more of God's great plan and purpose not just for us, but for all mankind.

PORT MORESBY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This year the Feast was held in the capital, Port Moresby. The weather was not as hot and humid as normal for this time of year, although the dry season was lasting a little longer than usual and rain is needed. None of this dampened the spirit of togetherness of the 20 brethren attending the Feast.

Activities included a lunch at the Botanical Gardens, a Bible quiz and two barbecues around the swimming pool in very balmy late afternoon conditions. The Bible quiz was enjoyed the most with the children actively participating and answering many of the questions. Brethren brought food every day to share for lunch after services and many commented on the wonderful spirit of having all things in common. This was evident throughout the Feast. For all the brethren it was an opportunity to fellowship with each other and enjoy singing hymns together, as most live too far away to meet on a regular basis. A highlight on the Last Great Day was special music sung by the children's choir—made up of two children!

Messages focused on learning more about the Kingdom of God and our part in it, what we must do now in this life to be in God's Family, dwelling with God and the temporary nature of this physical world. It was exciting to hear new brethren—one of whom was keeping the Feast for the first time—say they were learning so many new things. Their enthusiasm for wanting to live God's way was infectious to all.

It was a fun-filled Feast with much rejoicing before God and also thankfulness to Him for His protection all throughout.

LICANRAY, CHILE

Under a warm rain that inspired prayer next to the river Calafquen in southern Chile, we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. Chile received the brethren with blessed water from heaven, which the brethren enjoyed while giving thanks to the Eternal.

A warm and family friendly Feast saw all the brethren gathered around a bonfire fellowshiping with pleasant conversations, and a visit from Mexican elder Mr. Antonio Mora.

Brethren enjoyed trips to places surrounding the Feast site. We visited hot springs, travelled around the lake and the native dense forests, and were able to enjoy and admire God's wonderful creation.

We truly felt like a family at the Feast, a feeling encouraged by the inspired sermons, the beautiful special music and poetry. Without doubt it was a wonderful Family Feast.

ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

We enjoyed pleasant weather and rain in Antigua Guatemala, in the company of our brethren from Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico and Puerto Rico. There were just a bit more than 100 brethren. It was very encouraging to see the involvement and leadership of the song leaders and speakers. God provided spiritual and physical nourishment with wonderful fellowship,



allowing us to get to know more brethren from other countries, and strengthen even more our wish for the Kingdom of God to come soon!

QUINDÍO, COLOMBIA



This year in Colombia, the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day were celebrated in the inviting Hotel Portal del Sol, surrounded by beautiful landscapes, many flowers, birds and their harmonious singing, and abundant coffee and banana farms in a warm and gentle atmosphere given by our God. We had the pleasant visit of brethren from Australia, Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Guatemala, the United States, Peru, Chile and Israel. Eighty-two of God's children received powerful and inspiring messages by Mr. Mario Hernandez and other co-workers. Throughout the Feast we enjoyed harmony, fellowship, and abundant spiritual fruit. We give thanks to our Father and our Savior Jesus Christ for the received beautiful blessings, and we long for the government of God for this world, which is in need of true lasting righteousness and peace.

BARBADOS

At the Barbados Beach Club, 135 brethren from Barbados, Britain, Canada, Jamaica, the United States, and Trinidad and Tobago settled in on Opening Night.

The Opening Night message was followed on Monday by Mr. Alex Celan's sermon, "Changing End-time Values to Godly Values," and Mr. Clyde Skeete's sermon, "It Has Now Become a



Youth and Children's Activity, The Family Fun Day, and the Festival Ball.

Brethren were enthusiastic to spread their joy by giving Special Music every day of the Feast, with the membership serving to their heart's delight, and showing how a well-oiled "team-machine" works.

These are but a few of the many, many high points that permeated God's Feast in Tobago this year.

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

Wonderful Kingdom." This was the start of a spiritual Feast that the brethren expressed delight in digesting. Our brethren were drawn from many parts of the world, and yet the harmony of God's Spirit caused a genuine love to flow.

The catamaran cruise started with rainclouds over our route, so the captain changed course and we experienced the majestic flight of the flying fish. In Carlisle Bay we swam, and afterwards enjoyed a sumptuous buffet and close warm fellowship. It was truly an unforgettable occasion.

Under fine weather we set out on Family day for the serenity of King George Park. The whole family participated in the exciting games and senior races, events that promoted our seniors and esteemed others. Regional Director Mr. Richard Stafford and his wife were able to enjoy this event with us.

The young children presented gifts to our seniors as part of a tribute to honor them in the beautiful Reefview restaurant.

The success of the Feast was quite evident as we shared with our brethren, we praised, honored and obeyed our God. We learned how to fear God and look forward to Christ's reign in a spirit of great rejuvenation.

TOBAGO

God's Feast of Tabernacles 2015 was held on the beautiful and relaxed island of Tobago. From Opening Night to the Last Great Day, God's people "hit it off" with warm, genuine greetings and fellowship, which reflected the weather with which God blessed us.

With attendance averaging 125, God richly fed His people spiritually with sermons by the Regional Director, Mr. Rick Stafford, who set the foundation with his two-part message of "The Heart of a Shepherd." This foundation was built upon by ministers like Messrs. Joe Brown, Dan Dever and Shannon Christal. Examples of some of the messages given were: "What Will It Be Like To Be a Child of God?," "A Sabbath Rest" and "How to Build Family Unity." They were supported by split sermons from the local members like Mr. Don Bethelmie, "Prepare Our Hearts for the Kingdom of God"; Mr. Mukesh Sankar, "Faith and the Beatitudes for the Feast: The Connection"; and Mr. David Grant with "Focus on God's Promises."

God did not forget to also richly feed His people physically, providing wonderful food and much-needed exercise in the



For the seventh consecutive year the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the north coast resort town of Montego Bay, our island's premier tourist destination. Brethren from Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States joined the Jamaican brethren to celebrate the Feast at the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort. Opening Night began with 215 brethren in attendance. The atmosphere was absorbing as excitement filled the air in anticipation for the start of the 2015 Feast. The group lifted up their voices and sang, giving God glory, honour and praise. There were approximately a half a dozen persons attending their first Feast ever and the majority in Feast attendance range from 5 to 35 years. On the weekly Sabbath designated for the Blessing of the Little Children, four children were blessed.

Fellowship, camaraderie and a sense of family were evident as brethren rejoiced in celebration of the future—the Kingdom of God. The messages were focused on the Millennium, covering topics such as what we should be doing now in preparing for the reality of tomorrow's world, God's master plan, going from human to divine, rejoicing at the Feast, the heart of a shepherd and how everything is going to be. God's Holy Spirit was evident in guiding the speakers in their preparation of both the sermons and sermonettes. The fellowshiping was warm and friendly before and after services each day, at meal times and at the other activities.

At our premier activity on Day Four, the Family Cook-out and Fun Day, where the brethren enjoyed mouth-watering local foods and table games under the cool covered areas of the Montego River Gardens, attendance was just above 150. Worship

service on this day started earlier to allow for maximum fun and fellowship. Other activities at the Feast included a Pre-teens, Teens' & Singles' Ice Breaker, a Games Evening and off-site get-together with our visiting and Jamaican brethren, Seniors' Appreciation Luncheon, a Family Bible Study, a Bible Bowl and Talent Show and a Hymn Sing. Day Three was designated a tour day, and like the Family Cook-out and Fun Day worship service started earlier to allow the brethren more time to visit local attractions.

We recorded our highest attendance on Day Seven (252). The majority commented that the highlights of the Feast were the messages and fellowshiping with the brethren. The Feast was a truly positive and memorable experience.

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA



More than 50 brethren from Guyana, Barbados, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States gathered at Regency Suites Hotel in Georgetown, Guyana for the last two of God's Festivals this year.

The hall at Regency Suites was again the site for daily services, and the fellowship that we experienced each day was encouraging. The messages, from Messrs. Roach, Harvey-Haynes, Bueno and Mallet, were truly inspired by God and each one tied well to the others. God provided an interesting opportunity for His people this year as we played hosts to more than 20 guests from a non-COG group who desired to join us for the Feast. They have been keeping all God's Feasts since 2009, but this year they were unable to plan properly for the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. All of them attended the Opening Night service while some were present most of the other days.

This year we had the traditional Family Day activity and a Games & Fellowship Evening, as well as a Dinner Dance event. A hymn sing on the eve of the Last Great Day rounded off the activities.

All the foreign brethren gave positive feedback concerning God's blessings on the Feast this year. It was very encouraging to have speakers travel from far and wide to feed God's people the spiritual meat He deemed necessary to give them in this season.

We thank our heavenly Father who kept us safe throughout the Festival period and fed us a sumptuous serving of spiritual food and supplied many physical blessings.

PUNTA LEONA, COSTA RICA



In beautiful Punta Leona, Costa Rica, 79 brethren met this year to celebrate the Feasts of the Eternal. Brethren from Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Mexico and Costa Rica met in Punta Leona. The highlight of the Feast according to the Feast survey was the speaking. Truly the fellowship among brethren was another excellent aspect of the Feast; there was great warmth, service and harmony all throughout! We had a great family night, full of joy.

We did not have many activities outside of the site because the complex has plenty of its own appeals, like two crystal clear beaches, hiking trails, a butterfly farm and several sports venues. The only sightseeing trip was a tour we took to the river Tárcoles by boat travelling on the river, and we were able to view from the boat all the wildlife—especially the great variety of birds and animals who live by the river. And of course, our trip included the Crocodile Tour and among them we saw the oldest croc, an 18-foot long senior of 80 years! The tour guide attracted a crocodile by simulating giving him a piece of food and it was amazing how he jumped up out of the water. Brethren mentioned how much they enjoyed the Feast and that it was one of their best.

TARTANE, MARTINIQUE



The Feast of Tabernacles was held in the beautiful fishing village of Tartane, located on a peninsula along the Atlantic Ocean. From the islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guyana, 68 brethren attended the Feast along with a few visitors

from Quebec, the United States and France. We also had a few visitors attend the Feast site from other Church of God fellowships, who joined us in celebrating a spiritual banquet of inspiring messages.

Children were not forgotten, with the help of coloring books translated for the first time into French, focusing on the meaning of the Feast. Every child at the Feast received a special Feast gift. On the Sabbath, four little girls were blessed by Dr. Pierre, and Messrs. Ginier, and Duval. Dr. Pierre and the entire congregation were deeply touched by the ordination of Mrs. Liliane Colombo, a widow, along with Mr. Jean-Yves Celeste. Both deacon and deaconess will continue to serve the congregation in Guadeloupe.

Despite the hurricane season, the weather was beautiful throughout the entire Feast. Feast activities included wind surfing, sightseeing, a talent show and dance, Family Day barbeque, and arts and craft activities for the children. Catered lunch and dinner meals were shared together. During the first day of the Feast and the Last Great Day, the brethren shared a meal together at a beautiful restaurant overlooking the Caribbean Sea.

BIZOTON AND LASILE, HAITI



The 2015 Feast of Tabernacles was held in Bizoton, Haiti, located in the western part of the country, and at a second Feast site in Lasile, located in the southern part of the country. There were 27 brethren at the Feast site in Bizoton and 62 brethren at the site in Lasile.

This year we welcomed Mr. Jean Luc Hodebar from Martinique, and Mr. and Mrs. Exume from Tampa, Florida.

The inspiring Opening Night message from Dr. Meredith set the tone for brethren to understand the true meaning and purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The brethren from Haiti received a great abundance of spiritual food from live sermons and sermon tapes throughout the Feast. The weather was absolutely beautiful as the brethren enjoyed a variety of activities, which included a Family Day barbecue, game night, swimming, arts and crafts for the children, and a movie night.

During the Feast, the brethren in Haiti got a foretaste of tomorrow's world with sermons preparing them to teach all

nations. And this year, once again, the brethren in Haiti got a little closer to this goal. Through prayer, we will continue to ask God to help each member of the body of Christ to remember the messages heard during the Feast in Haiti and all around the world. We all had great fellowship at the Feast, as a big real family.

KNYSNA, SOUTH AFRICA



Spectacular scenery on the drive along the southern coast of South Africa introduced Feast-goers to the mirror-smooth lagoon of Knysna and the ragged cliffs of Brenton-on-Sea, one of the two Feast sites in South Africa. Background "music" was constantly provided by waves pounding onto pristine white sandy beaches, and many Feast-goers were enthralled as bushbuck grazed close to their accommodations in a forest setting. Attendees at this year's Feast of Tabernacles came from Ireland, the United States, the Netherlands and Germany, with a couple of "local foreign" visitors from Botswana and Lesotho joining the South Africans, bringing the total of attendees to 175.

The overall theme of the Feast messages was about preparing for God's Kingdom. The guest speaker from Ireland, Mr. Henry Cooper, spoke about using the power of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of God. Other inspiring topics expanding on our preparation were "Prepare to be a king," "Imagine the difference," "Transform the mind to God's will" and "Why does God love us?" A Bible Study on the Sabbath reiterated to all the importance of learning and practising self-control and teaching it to our children. Daily webcam messages were streamed to nine households.

The seniors' sit-down lunch and the singles' activity of a boat trip to the Knysna Heads were enjoyed in good weather. Rainy weather stayed away until the Family Day's barbeque and fun "Amazing Race" activities had concluded. As two services were held on Thursday, Feast-goers had "a free day" on Friday to visit interesting places a bit further afield. At the Knysna Elephant Park one could feed and touch elephants. Monkeyland provided the opportunity to view life as monkeys experience it by walking around the sanctuary on a suspended boardwalk high above the forest. Many Feast-goers visited the Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary, viewing many large African animals, and at Birds of Eden, beautiful exotic and local birds.



On the Last Great Day, Mr. Botha explained the meaning of the day and all were attentive to Dr. Meredith's closing message. Though sad to leave friends after eight days of exciting fellowshiping, Feast-goers were encouraged and inspired to prepare daily for the coming Kingdom of God.

KENDU BAY AND MIGORI, KENYA



Brethren from East Africa met in two locations in Kenya for God's Festival this year. The majority met at Kendu Bay, where some 430 brethren and families gathered at the local congregation's property, under a marquee erected for the Feast. Brethren stayed in tents and buildings on the property. Another 65 brethren, including those from Tanzania, met at the Girando Hotel, Migori, just north of the Tanzanian border. This enabled the Tanzanians to cross into Kenya without the cost of visas and travel documents. Brethren from Ethiopia and Burundi who normally attend in Kenya were unable to travel for the Feast this year.

One member wrote after the Feast: "The Feast of Kendu Bay was the most wonderful one I have ever observed since 2008. It did surely give me a high uplift [to my] Christian way of life. I honestly find myself loving at least every one, from the youngest to the oldest. The atmosphere of the Spirit was very [great so that we did not] want to leave each other at the end."

The local ministry, including Messrs. Simon Muthama and Ephraim Abok, as well as visiting Headquarters elders Messrs. John Robinson and Peter Nathan, presented sermons. Videos provided by Headquarters were highlights at both sites.

Activities included a Family Day and Seniors' Luncheon and teen Bible studies for numerous teens at the Feast. A strike by



the public school teachers made it easier for the high school students to attend the Feast.

BADAGRY, NIGERIA

Soketta Hotels, in the historical town of Badagry, near Lagos, once again played host to 26 Feast-goers in Nigeria. The Church in Nigeria first used the facility in 2013.

Brethren enjoyed the uplifting messages by way of sermon DVDs from Charlotte, supplemented by spiritual messages presented locally. They also enjoyed the Behind the Work video and an exhilarating picnic at a beach resort. The brethren received the messages well, and appreciated the opportunity to "rehearse" the Way of God as they get prepared for His soon-coming Kingdom.

Some of our brethren from nearby Cotonou, in the Republic of Benin, once again came to celebrate the Feast with their brethren in Nigeria. Feast activities included indoor games, a talent show and a picnic. The picnic was held at a popular beach resort situated by a lagoon adjoining the Atlantic Ocean.

During the Feast, Oladele Akin-Ogundeji visited brethren in Afagnan, Togo, for three days. The brethren were observing the Feast with the financial assistance of the Church in Belgium. Dr. Akin-Ogundeji was accompanied on the trip by three brethren from the Republic of Cotonou, who, apart from helping in translating from English language to French, led songs at services, helped organise a sing-along and offered much encouragement to the brethren. Thanks to the Eternal God for His blessings over us all during this year's Feast of Tabernacles.

MELAKA, MALAYSIA

The Feast of Tabernacles 2015 was held at the Bayview Hotel in Melaka, Malaysia. While the country is experiencing the smoky haze caused by the Indonesian forest fires, it did little to dampen the spirits of the brethren.

Assembled here were 81 people—73 locals and eight overseas visitors—to observe the last two annual Festivals of God. We were privileged to have Mr. and Mrs. Dexter Wakefield from the



United States for the first half of the Feast, as well as brethren from the Philippines, India and Singapore. It was a wonderful atmosphere, meeting every morning for breakfast as well as Holy Day luncheons and various other meals and activities around town.

The theme for the Feast in Melaka was “A Millennial Kingdom” with bold signage decorating the back wall of the stage. It was truly a feast of God’s wonderful truth about His soon-coming Kingdom, with inspiring DVD messages from Headquarters and also live sermons from Mr. Wakefield and our Festival coordinator Mr. Rajan Moses.



Throughout the Feast the brethren were treated to a variety of fun and interesting activities that took advantage of what Melaka has to offer, including a trip to Melaka Wonderland.

The Behind the Work presentation, “Go Into All the World,” was the most inspiring and uplifting film we have ever seen. The news of the growth of the Work brought tears to our eyes.

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

All the brethren were inspired by meat in due season plus great fellowship and a wonderful family atmosphere, along with much laughter, fun and love among all. Truly the best Feast ever!

HIBISCUS, KALUTARA, SRI LANKA

The first drops of rain on the blades of the lush equatorial grass began on Opening Night in Kalutara, Sri Lanka where 17 brethren gathered for the Feast. For eight days, everyone drank and feasted on the atmosphere of rejoicing, faith and hope as well as the rich spiritual food that focused the brethren on the greatest destiny for mankind.

At the beginning of the Feast the brethren were edified by sermons given by Regional Director, Mr. Bruce Tyler. Everyone soaked up all they could from him before he headed back to Australia for the last part of the Holy Days. On day three, the curtains of rain finally opened to give way to sunny skies—perfect for the brethren’s early morning beach walks, energizing them for the sermons by



Area Pastor Mr. Zig Svalbe and elder Mr. Kuma De Silva. We were also treated with wonderful video sermons from Mr. Rod McNair and Dr. Scott Winnail.

In between daily spiritual food, the brethren enjoyed many other activities including Family Night, a spiritual sing-along, Family Fun Day, Talent Night, a trip to the Turtle Hatchery, shopping, a Bible quiz, a photo competition and a Seniors’ Luncheon. Highlighting the activities was the baptism of Mrs. Avril Bastiansz by Mr. Tyler, bringing much rejoicing to the congregation as another member is added to their number. Teatime every afternoon brought the brethren closer in fellowship by sharing stories and encouragement over tea and pastries.

Although few in number, the love and care for one another was extremely palpable with the table filled with laughter and the hall filled with one voice in hymns. And even as the Feast drew to a close, the Last Great Day sermons inspired the brethren to keep going and looking toward the future. With joy in their hearts, the brethren parted with a longing to meet each other again soon. All praise goes to God our Father and Jesus Christ who made it all possible.

THAILAND

The Feast in Thailand was a great success. Services were held at the Im Boutique Hotel and were attended by 22 people. The Feast in Thailand is a rare opportunity for our members to receive well-grounded spiritual food from live speakers. The messages focused on spiritual growth, building the Christian family and real faith. Mr. Peter Edwards used the transcribed messages from Headquarters to deliver the daily spiritual food. He also conducted two Bible Study sessions on the topic of family and who was the God of the Old Testament. These two topics helped provide a clearer understanding for the brethren and their role in the Kingdom of God.

The Behind the Work DVD highlighting the Work of God around the world encouraged and motivated the brethren and raised questions about what roles they could play in order to help accomplish the Work.

Apart from spiritual food that God prepared through His human leaders during the Feast, He also blessed His little flock in Thailand to enjoy the physical food. This year all the catering was done and served by the hotel, which allowed the brethren to have more time to spend fellowshiping. The hotel management was very friendly and was responsive to our needs. They provided us with the BBQ equipment and conferencing equipment including a lectern and a projector at very little extra cost. In return, we presented the staff with

a certificate of appreciation. We all enjoyed the BBQ grilling, Western style, which was prepared by Mr. Romel Augustin but served along with the local hot spicy chili BBQ sauce, Asian style.

Prior to the Feast some of our Thai brethren faced and had gone through some tough trials and tests. However, this year's Feast brought everyone together and helped build closer bonds and a stronger family atmosphere. The brethren in Thailand were motivated by the spiritual food that God provided them through His Church. They enjoyed and were encouraged by the brethren from abroad coming and joining them again this year. We thank God for pouring out His Holy Spirit that has brought more spiritual growth, unity, love and care among His spiritual family in this part of the world.

Compiled from reports by: Oladele Akin-Ogundeji, Christo Botha, Ed Breaux, Yvon Brochu, Michael DeSimone, David Edwards, Stephen Elliot, Jeffrey Fall, Lascelles Fraser, Winston Gosse, David Grant, Edgar Guerra, Gene Hilgenberg, Ricardo Jarra, Htoowah Laybeh, Bill Long, James Meredith, Rajan Moses, Peter Nathan, Cristian Orrego, Gabriel Ortega, David Perry, Nancy Perry, Wilner Pierre, Ron Poole, Simon Roberts, Jahra Roxas, George Schaubek, Juanita Schaubek, Gary Stein, John Strain, James Sweat, Dayrell Tanner, Stuart Wachowicz, Damian Weekes, Adam West, Angela West, William Williams ■



Pray for Our Financial Growth
Continued from page 2

and effectiveness of the Work has been **shattered** beyond belief. All of the little groups that have clung to at least *part* of the Truth are literally **unknown** to 99 percent (or more!) of the world's population! Most of you realize this. If you go around *your neighborhood* you find virtually *no one* who has heard of the Living Church of God or any of the other groups that are trying to do God's Work today. *This needs to change!* So I hope all of us can begin to *fast* and to *pray fervently* and ask God to help us *stir ourselves* to do our part *far more zealously* and begin to serve our Creator with zeal and to give of our physical substance *sacrificially* as we are able. Some of our brethren are already doing this. But I am fully aware that many of our brethren—often fine brethren who mean well and who are already giving a little bit of their substance—are nevertheless sitting on hundreds of thousands or **millions** of dollars worth of money, property and other resources they very rarely touch to help do the Work of the living God at the very **end** of this age.

Think of it!

In the early days of the true Christian Church, brethren were often filled with such *zeal* and such *fervency* that they were willing to open their hearts and their wallets to a degree *far beyond* what most of us are willing to do today. God's Word tells us: "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:32–37). God does not ask us to "have all things in common" as did these first-century Christians, but we can still be moved and inspired today by their great zeal.

Brethren, as our beloved peoples of America, Canada, Britain and other Israelite-descended nations go down and down and **down** in worldly power and influence, it is obvious that God will soon **shake us** beyond what we have ever experienced before. It is obvious that our *own standards of living* will **greatly diminish** more than what many of us can perhaps imagine. It is obvious that *many millions* of people of the descendants of Israel will go into captivity—

experiencing anguish and *suffering* which they have never before experienced.

So, is it asking "too much," as Daniel did, for God to intervene in a *powerful way* at this time? Is it too much to ask that *all of us* follow the pattern of the early Church and **give** of ourselves, our time, our energy and our possessions in the very service of Jesus Christ at the **end** of this age? It is in *that spirit* that I am asking all of you to become more truly zealous and "sacrificial" in the way you give of your resources. We in America, Canada, Britain and Australia often have *far beyond* what we actually need to lead a comfortable life, and far, far more than we need merely to subsist. So, "God is watching and testing" our attitudes in this regard. I am just asking you to do what some of us are already doing to a degree. But I, and all of us here at Headquarters certainly need to *do more*. I have now served my Creator—and hopefully all of you—for over 63 years *full-time* since my graduation from Ambassador College in June of 1952. I am trying to *give my life* to God more fully than ever after 63 years of continuous service. So I ask you to join me in a genuine "crusade" so God's message can go forth with greater

power than ever before. That is **why** I am writing this message at this time—filled with extra *fervency* and **zeal** as a follow-through from the wonderful spirit so many of us felt at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Once again, I am *asking*—as your pastor and friend—that you will "join me" in this **crusade** to ask God fervently for this financial increase, and that each one of you will try to do *your part* as best as you are able. I hope all of you can see the "signs" of the soon-coming **end** of this age. We all know what this means. We know that it means that we have just *so much time* to get out Christ's message so that people all over the world will know that our God is **real**, and that He is now beginning to intervene with increasing **power** to set up His Kingdom on this earth. So, I pray we will all "get going" as never before. May God guide you, inspire you and bless you as you walk with Him. Let us all pray for one another that we can keep the **zest** of the Feast of Tabernacles going and growing in our personal lives day by day. I love you. I *thank you so much* for the love and the joy and the encouragement that you have continued to give, and I hope that you will join me in this crusade to ask God to give us even greater power than ever before—even in the financial part of the Work. Then we will be able, in this *commercial society* in which we live, to reach out even more powerfully than ever before. May God be with you.

With Christian love,



Ordinations

Mr. John Adams and *Mr. Chet Carpenter* were ordained deacons on June 27 by Regional Pastor Jeffrey Fall and elder Arnold Lalum. Mr. Adams and Mr. Carpenter serve in the Helena, Montana, congregation.

Mrs. Minnie Johnson was ordained a deaconess on August 22 by Area Pastor Ed Breaux. Mrs. Johnson serves in the Jackson, Mississippi, congregation, where her husband, Lawrence, is a deacon.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew (Moneica) Shaver were ordained deacon and deaconess on August 22 by Area Pastor Ed Breaux. Mr. and Mrs. Shaver serve in the Jackson, Mississippi, congregation.

Mr. David Zehnder was ordained a deacon on September 12 by Associate Pastor Michael Kreyer and elder Errol Wade.

Mr. Harvey Friddle and *Mr. Dan Harp* were ordained deacons on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor James Sweat assisted by elders Gaylyn Bonjour, Carl Derstine and George Webb. Both men serve in the Greensboro, North Carolina, congregation.

Mr. Jeff Foster was ordained an elder on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Paul Shumway and elder Mark Sandor. He

serves in the Logan, West Virginia congregation as well as in other surrounding congregations.

Mr. Yancy Taber was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Paul Shumway and elder Mark Sandor. Mr. Taber serves in the Bristol, Virginia, congregation.

Mrs. Betty Shrader was ordained a deaconess on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Paul Shumway and elder Mark Sandor. Mrs. Shrader serves in the Bluefield, West Virginia, congregation, where her husband, Sam, is a deacon.

Mr. Rick Collins and *Mr. Scott Smith* were ordained as deacons on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Gary Stein and elders Dwain Crisman, Marshall Moluf, Alex Celan and Jim Meredith. Mr. Collins and Mr. Smith serve in the Dallas congregation.

Mr. Steve Green and *Mr. Malcolm Hall* were ordained deacons on the Feast of Trumpets by Area Pastor Anthony Stroud and elder Glendon Driver. Mr. Green and Mr. Hall serve in the Montgomery, Alabama, congregation.

Mr. Jim Goodman was ordained a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets by Pastor Stephen Elliott, Regional Pastor Jeffrey Fall, and elders Don Roach and Ed Sheret. Mr. Goodman serves in the La Crescenta, California, congregation.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Philippe (Danielle Stewart) Pierre are overjoyed to announce the birth of their second son, *Jude Alexandre Pierre*. Although he was born six weeks early on May 20, he weighed five pounds and was 17¾ inches long. God has intervened tremendously in his life and he is a delight to all his family, especially to his big brother, David. He is grandson to Atlanta elder Hugh Stewart and his wife, Maxine.

Mr. and Mrs. Derek (Kayla) Self, of the Dallas, Texas, congregation, are

delighted to announce the birth of their second child, *Lexi Ann Self*, on Friday, June 26. She weighed five pounds, 15 ounces and measured 19½ inches long. Lexi Ann's big sister, Adrianna Claire, is happy helping Daddy and Mommy with the new arrival.

Mr. and Mrs. Clinton (Melissa) Murray of the Chaguanas, Trinidad congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their twins, daughter *Jedidah Abigail Murray*, weighing

5.9 pounds, and son *Jedidiah David Murray*, weighing 5.4 pounds, on the Sabbath of August 15.

Mr. and Mrs. Simon (Shazia) Masih of the London, England, congregation are pleased to announce the arrival of the newest member of their family. *Samuel Jeremiah Masih* was born on October 5, just after the Last Great Day ended. He weighed seven pounds. Samuel has been enthusiastically welcomed by big brother Sirion.

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Weddings

Mr. and Mrs. Marc (Eva) Randolph of the Dallas, Texas, congregation are happy to announce the marriage of their daughter *Christina* to *Brandon Fisk*, on June 28. Brandon is the son of Dean and Lisa Fisk of Puyallup, Washington. The marriage was performed by elder Terrence Graves and took place at the breathtakingly beautiful Wild Rose Estates in Arlington, Washington. The couple resides in Bellingham, Washington and attends services in Aldergrove, British Columbia, Canada.

Mr. Jeremy Mark Hooks and *Miss Alyssa Renae Sanders* were united in marriage on Sunday, July 12, by Area Pastor Brandon Fall. Family and friends from the greater Rocky Mountain region came to celebrate the occasion and rejoice together at the reception and dance that followed the ceremony. The couple resides in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

David Betourney and *Britni Hart* were united in marriage on August 23, by Pastor Gary Ehman. Family and friends came together to celebrate. The couple resides in Matthews, North Carolina and attend the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation.

Robert Riggan and *Dianne Blackwood* (elder and deaconess) were joined together in matrimonial happiness on October 25 in Clemons, North Carolina at the Village Inn Event Center. Friends, family and scores of brethren attended the wedding ceremony, conducted by Area Pastor Gary Ehman, and a reception, which included toasts and well wishes for the happy couple. The couple will reside in Jamestown, North Carolina, and continue serving in the Greensboro, North Carolina and other area congregations.

Anniversaries

Dallas, Texas, congregation member, *Mrs. Veronica Green* and her husband *Darrell*, celebrated their 25th (silver) wedding anniversary on July 14, at their home with family and close friends. Organized by their children, Darrell, Jr., Natareeya and Jenesis, it was a beautiful backyard celebration, with silver and lavender decorations, good food, music and happy memories of their marital journey.

Mr. and Mrs. Avon (Florence) Pfund, members in the Anderson, South Carolina, congregation, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on August 14. They were married on the Ambassador College campus in Pasadena, California in 1960. Avon had just graduated from Ambassador College and Florence, the first Canadian to be accepted to Ambassador College, was a freshman. Later they moved to the Big Sandy, Texas, campus where he taught in the elementary school and became a track and field coach. For the last 22 years, they have lived in Pickens, South Carolina. Mr. and Mrs. Pfund have a son, Victor, and a daughter, Nicole.

On the Sabbath of August 29, the Minneapolis, Minnesota congregation surprised our local elder and his wife, *Errol and Sandra Wade*, with a special reception and cake after services in honor of their 50th anniversary. The Wades have set a wonderful example of marriage and have served the Minneapolis area brethren for many years. We want to congratulate them on 50 years of marriage and wish them many, many more!

Mr. and Mrs. Scott (Debbie) Smith celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on September 14, along with their two grown children and one granddaughter. Mr. and Mrs. Smith attend the Dallas, Texas, congregation.

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

In Loving Memory

Mr. John Pearce, 89, long-time deacon in the Dallas, Texas, congregation, died in the early morning hours of June 21. The funeral service was conducted on June 26 by Lafayette, Louisiana, Elder Mickey Mayeaux. Mr. Pearce attended his first Sabbath Service in September 1969 and was baptized in February 1970. He was ordained a deacon in April 1982 and served for many years in the Lafayette, Louisiana, and Dallas, Texas, congregations. Mr. Pearce loved God's Work, and all who knew him appreciated his example of zeal for the Truth. He is survived by his wife Marion, a deaconess in the Dallas congregation, as well as four children, 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Mary Lawson of the Peoria, Illinois, congregation, finished her Christian race on August 17 and is now awaiting the resurrection. She was 86 and had been in the Church of God for 43 years. Her husband of 70 years, Carl, age 90, as well as their eight living children, 22 grandchildren and many great- and great-great-grandchildren will greatly miss her. Her Church family remembers Mrs. Lawson's cheerful attitude and warm smile for everyone. The funeral message was given by Peoria Associate Pastor Irv Woelfle.

Mr. Don Spenard, 90, of the Peoria, Illinois, congregation died on August 17. He had lived a very productive life: WWII veteran, pilot in the Army Air Corps which preceded the U.S. Air Force, later a father to three sons, an avid archer and bow hunter, and operator of an auto body shop for many years. Mr. Spenard's greatest accomplishment, though, came in the last ten years of his life, when he learned the Truth, and pursued God's way of life with zeal. He attended services whenever he possibly could, though that became extremely difficult as his health failed. After a stroke made it difficult for him to talk, he still shared the Truth with his family and anyone who would listen. His wife predeceased him by a little more than two months. Peoria Associate Pastor Irv Woelfle gave the funeral service.

Mrs. Serena Gerard of the Georgetown, Guyana congregation died on August 27. She was just a few weeks short of being 89 years old. Mrs. Gerard was baptized in 1993 and will be missed for her quick wit and her love for the brethren. Mrs. Gerard is survived by her husband of 62 years, eight of her nine children, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Associate Pastor Damian Weekes conducted her funeral.

Mrs. Rhonda Lee Samson, 54, died on August 28 after a lifetime of health struggles. She was married in 1979 to Randy Samson, and they were blessed with three children and four grandchildren. Baptized in 1983, she had a deep respect for God and loved to serve His people. She loved to cook, and eight invitations to a meal would result in 14 guests. At the Feast, invitations to 20 would produce a party of 40. Mrs. Samson served many in the Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, congregation and she will be missed by her children and grandchildren, the brethren, and especially by her husband. Area Pastor Marc Arseneault conducted the graveside funeral.

Mrs. Jackie Baker died on September 2, just a few days short of 57 years of age. She was a long-time member of the Church, baptized in 1977. Her strong faith, knowing she was in God's care during her 2½-year battle with cancer, made her an inspiration to all. She was always happy, had a positive attitude and her smile was infectious. Predeceased by her mother Mary in 1998, she is survived by Lawrence, her husband of 24 years, children Jerry (Ebony), Ben and Shannon, four grandchildren, her father, Jim (Louise) Hay, brother Keith Hay, step-brothers Jered and James Dennis, and step-sisters Brenda, Debra, and Lisa, all of whom miss her dearly.

Mrs. Geraldine Arender, 63, of the Jackson, Mississippi congregation, lost her battle with cancer on September 5. She had been a member of God's Church since 2000. Married for 47 years to Mr. Johnny Arender, they had four children, 14 grandchildren, and twelve great-grandchildren. Area Pastor Ed Breaux conducted her funeral service on September 9.

Mr. Jonathan Quintin Freeze, age 50, of the Rolla Missouri, congregation, died on September 8, surrounded by family, after battling Muscular Dystrophy. He was baptized in 2007. Mr. Freeze was predeceased by his son Derek, and brother Jeff. He is survived by his loving wife Tonya; daughter Brittany; grandson Aden Oldham; his parents, Orville and Reva Freeze; brother Robert and sisters Kathy Cornahan and Janey Richmond. Mr. Freeze was a hardworking man who took pride in his work and loved his family and the Church. He was very outgoing and friendly, and enjoyed fishing, golfing, music and puzzles. He played sports in his younger days and remained a lifelong sports fan. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Mr. Don Yale of Gladewater, Texas, died at the age of 82 on September 11, 2015. Mr. Yale was baptized in 1971 and it was his honor to serve the Church as a deacon in the Hawkins, Texas, congregation. He will be greatly missed by Velma, his wife of 62 years, children Marty (Jane) Yale and Brenda (Robin) Stow, two grandchildren, as well as his Church family. Area Pastor Dan Friz conducted the funeral.

Mr. William Dobbin, age 78, of the Raleigh, North Carolina congregation, died September 28 at his home, surrounded by his loving family. Mr. Dobbin was truly a kind and meek individual, loved and respected by everyone privileged to make his acquaintance. Mr. Dobbin managed his own appliance repair business for more than forty years and was known as a pillar of faithfulness both in and out of the Church. Preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, their union produced four children, eleven grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Mr. Dobbin was a loyal member of God's Church for almost 50 years, serving selflessly as a deacon all the way to his finish line. The funeral service was conducted by Area Pastor James Sweat to a packed house of so many paying final tributes and respect to a man who exemplified God's Way to live. Mr. Dobbin will be sorely missed until we see him in the Kingdom!

COMMENTARY

Cities of Tomorrow

Thirty-three years ago, Walt Disney tried to create a place where people could see the future with their own eyes. The EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) Center was meant to be a window into mankind's fantastical future. Yet his idea of the "prototype community" was not original; he pulled the concept from 19th century futurist Ebenezer Howard's "garden cities of tomorrow."

The idea was that to plan a city most efficiently, it was necessary to lay out a circular design with a series of rings. The innermost ring of the city would be the municipal and commercial center, with greenbelts between that initial ring and the residential ring. The thought was that the greenbelt would provide the appropriate sustainability and tranquility necessary for the ideal society, a thought that has been widely promoted in recent years. The concept was seen as a revolutionary and unprecedented statement in city planning. This would have been a genuine spark of genius on Howard's part; however, whether he realized it or not, even he was not the author of this revolutionary concept.

Blueprints for the "cities of tomorrow" have actually been in existence for millennia. In the Bible, the book of Numbers contains a set of instructions inspired by God, for constructing a very special type of city. Within those instructions, God designed pastures to extend 1,000 cubits outside the city walls, approximately the equivalent of one-third of a mile (cf. Numbers 35). These pastures

would serve to feed livestock for the city's sustenance, and if a city were for example one mile across, then that city would have more than 1,500 acres of pastureland surrounding it. These cities were to be centers for guidance, governing and education—not large by today's standard, but their impact was to be felt throughout the

nation of Israel; they were meant primarily to develop and advance people, not to multiply distractions and preoccupations. God's "cities of tomorrow" will focus on the development of the individual into the likeness of God, rather than being concrete jungles where people live on top of one another.

Soon, God will use these ancient blueprints to create a beautiful future for mankind. He is extending an invitation to some today, to help fulfill

instrumental roles in building that future—a future that brings a tangible hope! As God planned to use the Levites as priests to the physical nation of Israel, He will in the near future use those He is calling now to be leaders, ruling over cities in His Kingdom in sustainable, just and ethical ways as members of His Family (Daniel 7:18; Matthew 25:14–30; Revelation 5:8–10).

No, the future most likely will not bring hovercars, and humankind may not reach Mars before Christ's return (although I am still holding out hope for those self-tying Nikes). The cities of tomorrow may not have a lot of gadgets and "things," but they will bring tranquility, peace and joy to those who dwell within them.

—Ryan Dawson

