

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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We Must Become Family!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As we reported last Fall after the Feast, virtually everyone commented that it was an unusually inspiring and helpful Feast of Tabernacles. Certainly, the Living Church of God now has a great sense of unity and enthusiasm and an increasing “family spirit” in the way we interact with each other to serve God. For this we can be very thankful.

But, just as certainly, we are facing one of the most exciting and traumatic times in human history. With a new President in office who is attacked by the media almost non-stop, Brexit and increasing talk about breaking up the European Union, and growing tension between the U.S., China, and Russia, dangerous times lie just ahead.

Many of us realize that. God’s people will be tried and tested as we never have been before. We will be persecuted as never before in the years ahead—as God’s Word clearly predicts. Satan will try to “divide and conquer,” as is his usual tactic. He will not only try to divide different nations and ethnic groups, but he will surely go after Christ’s true Church and try to *confuse*, undermine and **divide** us in any way he can. Yet in the terrible times just ahead, we will all need the love and support of one another more than ever. We will need to become “family” more than ever, and I hope that all of us can fully realize that and pray that God can help us respond and become a true family under the leadership of Jesus Christ. God is *reproducing Himself* and enlarging *His Family* to ultimately include **billions** of human beings made in His image.

But right now, as religious persecution and harassment are going to increase, we will “need each other” more than ever. We will need a “safe place” to give us the help and human support that is so encouraging—certainly *in addition*

to direct guidance and help from God Himself. Some of our brethren may lose their jobs or lose their homes. Some may even go hungry in the years ahead, as national upheavals become worse and worse in the various parts of the world, and some will *go hungry* even among God’s people. So we are held accountable by our Father in heaven, who will expect us to *respond* with love and show a “family” spirit in the way we interact with one another.

God tells us through the Apostle Paul, “Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees to the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the **whole family** in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:13-15). So even in the trials and tests that Paul went through, the brethren responded, and Paul speaks of the entire Church’s being named after God the *Father*, “from whom the **whole family** in heaven and earth is named.” As we all know, the *true* Church of God is called—in various forms—the “Church of God” in twelve different places in the New Testament. So the **name** of the true Church is



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not in doubt. And it is certainly named after God, who is described in verse 14 as “the Father.” He certainly is the Father of us all!

As Paul wrote to the Church in Rome: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28-29). So we are **all** spiritual Jews—filled with and led by the *same Spirit*, which comes from God. We are **not** to be divided.

Again, the Apostle Paul tells us, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28).

So even though we certainly continue to use separate bathrooms as male and female—and there are, and *should be*, certain differences in purely physical matters—we are **one family** in God, who is our Father, and we are to let this spiritual relationship override physical differences as much as we possibly can within God’s Law and God’s teachings!

We Are One Body

Using the analogy of the human body, the Apostle Paul was inspired by God to tell us, again, how we are “one body” and unquestionably in a “family” relationship. Paul states, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12:4-5). If we are, in fact, “members” of one another just as our hands and feet are “members” of the same body, then truly *we are “family”!* So we are to love each other, help each other, encourage each other and **support** each other in every way, the best we possibly can, in the years of trials and tests just ahead!

In this same passage, Paul tells us that we are to be “not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in

prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” (Romans 12:11-13). So we are to be “*distributing* to the needs of the saints” and willing to *help out one another in every possible way* we can—visiting those in prison, visiting and encouraging and praying for those who are sick and *physically helping* with food, clothing, shelter and even money when our brethren are in genuine trouble and need help.

As most of you know, a real “family” is an absolutely wonderful thing! I will always remember when my mother had a massive heart attack back in 1951. Raymond McNair and I were on a baptizing tour, and I diverted our schedule to go by and see her in the hospital. But while we were staying at home with my father and two sisters around the table at dinner, my

Using the analogy of the human body, the Apostle Paul was inspired by God to tell us, again, how **we are “one body” and unquestionably in a “family” relationship.**

father did a *very unusual* thing for him.

He grew up in Oklahoma when it was still Indian Territory, near the turn of the last century. He was never converted, so he kept a loaded revolver in his home and often had it under his pillow at night, as he had grown up in dangerous circumstances as a young boy. He always taught me to be “tough” and to be “masculine.”

Yet, when we were having dinner after visiting mother in the hospital after her heart failure, my father had a number of envelopes by his plate and showed them to us during dinner. It was remarkable to see my father *shed tears* as he described the tremendous financial burden that was about to hit him. For *very few people* had medical insurance in those days. He certainly did not, and “things were tight.” Yet, he showed us the envelopes from “family” all across the nation. My mother had grown up in a family with seven sisters and one brother, and after her heart failure, virtually *every single one* of them sent a check. Some of them for several hundred dollars, some

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EDITORIAL By Roderick C. Meredith

What Lies Ahead?

With the 24th anniversary of the Global/Living Church of God now behind us, it is important to think about where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going. All of you know that—with my advancing age—I have recently brought in Mr. Gerald Weston to replace me as leader of the Work if I am incapacitated or die. I hope all of you will pray for him and be *absolutely loyal* to him as long as he continues in the way of God—which I have every confidence he will. For in our previous association more than two decades ago, the man brought in to lead *that* organization had virtually *no experience* in high-level leadership and was not tried and tested in the same way Mr. Weston has been.

As I have explained in previous letters and articles, I have known Mr. Weston since he sat in my Freshman Bible Class, 51 years ago. He has been *very solid* and *very dedicated* throughout those 51 years. I have described those “fruits” before. But I want all of you brethren to realize that *Satan* will try to “divide and conquer” in this Work, as he always does when attacking God’s people and God’s Church.

The Bible is very clear in warning us about Satan’s tactics: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your

brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). So *every one of us* should be crying out to God that He will keep this Church unified and will continue to use us and *empower us* more than ever to finish the Work! For we have been blessed in being able to do far more of the Work than any other group—as most of you know. We must **not** give up or allow ourselves to be turned aside from this!

Also, we should continually look to the fact that Jesus Christ is **alive**. He is the *living, active* Head of His Church. For Almighty God describes the fact that “He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

We should *continually* pray to God that He and Jesus Christ—our living Head—would rebuke Satan, protect His Church and help us strive in every way we can to submit to one another and to honor God by following the Apostle Paul’s command to the Corinthians: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

Brethren, right now we *do have* a very dedicated and unified ministry and church—as you all know. But certainly, Satan is “lurking” out there and trying to find an “opening” to cause division in the very Church which is doing God’s Work! So we do need to be “on guard” more than ever in the years to come. All of us realize that Satan is busy dividing even the carnal citizens of our nations right now—in the nations of Israel, as well as the rest of the world. Since Mr. Donald Trump’s selection as the next President, there is *more division* in the United States than there has been in many, many decades. Satan is causing division in our nation. He is causing division in Britain over the “Brexit” situation. He is causing division in the European Union, with many nations thinking about “opting out,” as Britain has done. All over the world, Satan is causing **division**. So we



must **not** think that he is going to leave alone the very Church of God. Let us do our best to resist this. Let us be loyal to the leadership that Christ has put in place as long as that leadership continues to teach the basic Truth and do the Work.

Remember, brethren, I have always said that there is no “perfect” church. But when you think about what to do—as most of you have—you must always keep in mind the *three basics*: (1) Which church is preaching *more fully* the complete Truth of God? (2) Which church is actually *doing the Work* of God more completely? (3) Which church is teaching and practicing the genuine *Government* of God in the church more fully than others?

Follow Clear Biblical Examples

As I have stated, there is **no church** that is doing all of these things perfectly. However, when you consider those *three basics*, it should be obvious that there is **one Church** which is doing them more fully than any other on earth. *We* in the Living Church of God are that group. This does not make us “better,” but we have had our minds opened to realize that we should follow the basic pattern Christ showed through His servant Herbert W. Armstrong for all those years, by carrying on the Work and seeking to be those instruments that Christ can use to finish the Work and “prepare a people” for God.

Those who *refuse* to follow the biblical form of Church Government are, frankly, **very confused**. For *how* can you practice a *different* kind of government throughout the entire church age and then expect to be a *leader* in administering the *real government* of God in the near future in God’s Kingdom?

It is important to *review* the pattern Christ gave for His Government from time to time. Remember, brethren, how Christ guided His servant Moses to “select” or **choose** able men to lead His work at that time: “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you” (Exodus 18:21-22).

Later, God guided a faithful king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, to set or **choose** judges or leaders throughout Judah: “Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, ‘Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Now therefore, let the fear

of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (2 Chronicles 19:5-7).

Brethren, how much **more** would Christ guide His **New** Testament leaders—filled with God’s Spirit—than He did those Old Testament judges who were simply ruling over physical Israel? For Christ is the **same** yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). So we should have *great confidence* that the living Christ is **alive** and that He will guide those who are set in office—those doing His Work and following His true pattern of government.

We all should remember the example of how God **requires** us to have *deep respect* for the leadership and judgment of those He sets in authority. For even when the king of Israel himself rebelled against the instruction of God’s *spiritual* leader, Samuel, Almighty God dealt with him *fearfully*! After Saul refused to do *exactly* what he was instructed, God inspired Samuel to tell Saul: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

The Example of Christ and His Apostles

Jesus Christ Himself set the *example* by choosing or **appointing** the twelve Apostles: “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all

night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13). Later, the living Jesus Christ appointed “seventy others” to carry out responsibilities in the Work of God: “After these things the Lord

appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Luke 10:1-2). Notice that the New King James Version literally uses the word “appointed” regarding Christ’s selection of the seventy others. For this was the “pattern” revealed by God in **all** the selection of leaders in His Work!

Still later, the Apostle Paul was led by the living Christ to follow the same pattern in that he “appointed” elders in every church in Asia Minor: “So when they had **appointed** elders in

We all should remember that God requires us to have **deep respect for the leadership and judgment of those He sets in authority.**



God's 7,000-Year Plan: *Earth, the Universe, and You*

By **Wyatt Ciesielka**

How can the earth or the universe fit into a 6,000-year history? How does a “new earth” or “young earth” teaching deal with prehistoric fossils of dinosaurs, mammoths and fauna? If God has a “7,000-year Plan” with the first 6,000 years allotted to mankind before Christ’s return, then how do we explain the universe, the galaxies and the stars, not to mention the age of the earth itself?

While most atheists and agnostics accept that the universe is billions of years old, they reject that creation demands a Creator. However, some “fundamentalist Christians” also err, misunderstanding Scripture and ignoring overwhelming scientific evidence, as they try to force *all of creation* into a 6,000-year history. They ignore results from measuring cosmic microwave background radiation that suggest the universe, galaxies and stars themselves are *billions* of years old. Even if the models and methodologies used to accomplish this dating is off by a modest percentage, the cosmos would still be far older than 6,000 years!

Similarly, some try to force the *earth* into a 6,000 year history, ignoring that techniques such as “relative dating” (studying fossil and sedimentary layers) and radiometric dating, paleomagnetic stratigraphy (examining how magnetic materials in the earth’s crust have been affected by periodic changes in the global magnetic field), potassium-argon dating, other chemical analysis, and even Arctic and Antarctic ice core samples indicate an age for our planet far beyond six millennia.

God’s Church teaches a “7,000-year Plan,” but what precisely does that mean? Is there a *contradiction* between the Bible and science? Does God have a 7,000-year plan? And what does Scripture reveal about the universe, the earth and creation that *current scientific understanding* does not contradict?

It is vital to understand that many of the claims that Scripture and science are in disagreement are completely false. While atheists and agnostics err by “falling into one ditch,” denying that creation demands a Creator and that “His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20), these “young-earth Chris-

tians” err and fall into “the other ditch,” as they try to cram what truly seems to be billions of years of history into 6,000 years. Both theories are *wrong*! As will be explained, there is absolutely **no** contradiction between the possibility that the universe and the stars and galaxies contained therein may be billions of years old—or that dinosaurs or other animals were alive millions of years ago on this earth—and the fact that God created man (Adam and Eve) roughly 6,000 years ago.

All Things Created Through Christ

A fundamental, very important fact supporting this entire discussion is that **God created ALL things through Christ**. As Colossians 1:16 explains, “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” “All things” means *everything*, whether in the *physical realm* or the *spiritual*!

However, the Bible simply does not teach that *all things* were necessarily created about 6,000 years ago. There *is* a 6,000-year time *for mankind*, and Scripture plainly teaches a 1,000 year “Millennial” reign of Christ (Revelation 20:6). This is the overall plan that God’s Church continues to accurately teach. And again, that plan or doctrine is *not* recently invented! In his article in the September-October 2012 issue of the *Living Church News*, “The ‘7,000 Years’ Doctrine,” Dexter Wakefield noted, “The ‘7,000 years’ teaching has an ancient history that is well known to scholars.”

Around 200AD, Eusebius writes that Papias of Hierapolis (in Asia Minor) is understood to have said that “there will be a period of some thousand years *after* the (first) resurrection of the dead, and that *the Kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth!*” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 39). According to *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapters 80 and 81, Justin Martyr taught the same thing, saying that after the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth a general resurrection and judgment of all people would take place. And, Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons, France who lived 130–202AD wrote: “For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded.” And continuing, “This is an account (Gen. 2: 1, 2) of the things formerly created, as also *it is a prophecy of what is to come*. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years, and in 6 days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the 6th thousand year.” And finally, “These (rewards) are to take place *in the times of the kingdom*, that is, *upon the 7th day*, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works which He created, *which is the true Sabbath of the righteous...*” (*Against Heresies*, Book 5, Chapters 28, 33). Furthermore, Tertullian, in *Against Marcion*, Book 3, Chapter 25 acknowledges the possibility of a promised Millennium on the earth.

Discussing the same doctrine, Dr. Douglas Winnail wrote in “Is There a ‘Plan of God’?” (*Living Church News* November-December, 2001):

Over the years, the Church of God has explained that God has a 7,000-year plan. While this is not specifically stated in Scripture, it is understood through history and scriptural analogy. In the first two chapters of Genesis, we read that during the “creation week” God [made] the earth and all things in six days—and that He rested on the seventh day. The Apostle Peter, citing Psalm 90:4, drew the analogy that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). The Apostle Paul drew a spiritual analogy comparing God’s rest on the seventh day of the creation week, our rest on the Sabbath and the ultimate rest for Christians in the Millennium (Hebrews 4:1–11). During the millennial rest, the saints will rule with Christ for 1,000 years when the kingdom of God is set up on this earth (Revelation 20:4–6). The implication of this analogy is that God’s plan has allotted 6,000 years for man to attempt to rule this earth, followed by the 1,000-year reign of Christ and the saints.

The idea that the Bible teaches a 7,000-year plan is hardly the exclusive property of the Church of God. Historian Edward Gibbon writes: “The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of creation had been fashioned in six days, their duration in their present state, *according to a tradition*



which was attributed to the prophet Elijah was fixed at six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention [our present age], which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection" (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 15).

Yet, some have taken the "7,000-year doctrine" and unscripturally tried to fit the entire history of the universe into

It was Lucifer who willingly chose to rebel and become Satan—who destroys, harms and murders. It is Satan who corrupts things. When God makes things, He makes them "good."

the last 6,000 years. This is simply *not* what the Bible actually says or what the Church of God teaches. So what *does* the Bible teach about the beginnings of the universe?

1. In the Beginning was God the Father and the Word, Who Became Christ

There was a "beginning" *before* Genesis 1:1. In John 1:1–2 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." This is "forever" in the past. And we see again, in verse 3, that *all things* were made by the Word, who became Christ: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (v. 3). John 1:1–2 is referencing a reality *before* the creation! The Word that was with God and that *was* God existed *before time or space were created*.

Modern theories of cosmology (the study of the origin of the physical universe) theorize that space and even time, itself, are part of the physical universe. Experiments validating Albert Einstein's theory of Special Relativity suggest that there is a link between the physical universe and time and that space and time may not be valid concepts by themselves. So, even according to modern physics, it is possible that before God created *space* there was no *time*, and that God and the Word truly did exist "before time began" (2 Timothy 1:9 *NKJV*), according to these theories.

2. "Later" God Created the Spirit World

So, while the Bible reveals that God and the Word existed forever, at some point They created something—but what? Scripture provides the answer. We see in Job 38:4–7 that when God was planning the creation of the physical universe (when He "determined its measurements") and when He "laid the foundations of the earth," the angels were *already*

in existence, and they "shouted for joy" at the marvelous creation God was doing. Therefore, the angels were *already* created beings, *before* the physical world was created.

3. Then, Sometime "Later," God Created the Heavens and the Earth Through Christ

Later, after the angelic world was created, comes Genesis 1:1. Here we read: "In the beginning, God [the uniplural 'elohiym' indicating God and the Word, together] created the heavens and the earth." This first creation of the physical universe is discussed elsewhere, as well. But, as we will see, this was long before God created Adam and Eve! And you may be surprised to see that there are verses in the Bible, recorded thousands of years ago, that are very consistent with current theories about the origin and condition of the physical universe that were not understood until modern times!

Hundreds of years ago, people were tried by the Roman Catholic Church at great risk for publicly claiming that our solar system was anything but a fixed model where everything revolved around the earth. But *thousands* of years ago, God described Himself as "stretching out the heavens," in passages such as Psalm 104:2, Isaiah 42:5 and Jeremiah 51:15. The Hebrew word in these verses for "stretching out"—*natah*—is indicative of motion and expansion. This is very consistent with the current conclusions of modern astronomers that the universe is not "fixed," and that the galaxies are moving outward—stretching outward, still!

4. Between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 (The Gap Theory)

So *after* the spirit world was created, and apparently long after the stars and galaxies were created, Genesis 1:2 reveals that the earth became *tohu* (a Hebrew word meaning without form, or chaotic and wasted) and *bohu* (meaning void, empty and wasted). But God did not create it that way! As we'll see in a moment, there is a "gap" between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, and that gap could easily have been many millions of years. This understanding is referred to by some as the "Gap Theory." It is consistent with the Bible. It is consistent with science. And it is what the Church of God teaches. But how can we be sure?

The Hebrew word *hayah* in Genesis 1:2 that is translated "was" in most Bibles could and should be translated "became" in that particular passage. The Hebrew word can mean both "became" and "was," based on the context. For instance, Genesis 19:26 says that Lot's wife "became" (*hayah*) a pillar of salt. But there is a far more compelling reason we can know that the earth "became" *tohu* and *bohu*.

God did **not** create the earth *tohu* and *bohu*, meaning broken, formless and confused. God is *not the author of confusion* (1 Corinthians 14:33)! Isaiah 45:18 makes this **very** clear: "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, who is God, who

formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did **not** create it in vain [*tohu*], who formed it to be inhabited....” Other passages show a connection between *tohu* and *bohu* and punishment due to *sin* (Jeremiah 4:23; Isaiah 34:11). Clearly, something happened between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. God did **not** create the heavens and the earth in “chaos.”

It is *Satan* who corrupts things (cf. Ezekiel 28:15). When God makes things, He makes them “good” (cf. Genesis 1:31). It was Lucifer who willingly chose to rebel and become Satan—who destroys, harms and murders (John 8:44). There is **no** way that God created things *broken or in chaos*. This is a violation of Scripture and is *contrary* to God’s nature. To assert otherwise—that God would create things in a destroyed state—is, at best, to fail to understand that nature.

It makes sense that Satan’s sinful rebellion caused the *confusion* we find in Genesis 1:2. As Jesus Christ said, He saw “Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). As Mr. Armstrong wrote in the booklet *Did God Create a Devil?*, “The earth was created perfect and complete. Then it BECAME chaotic as a result of rebellion” (p. 13). Ezekiel 28:11–15 and Isaiah 14:12–15 tell the story. Satan was the ruler over the earth prior to his rebellion (and he is still the ruler over the earth; see John 14:30, 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 6:12). He attacked God’s throne, and then he was cast back down to the earth! Christ is obviously immeasurably more powerful than Satan, but Christ will not replace Satan as acting ruler over this world until His Second Coming (cf. Revelation 11:15).

It was Satan’s rebellion that caused the destruction of the earth before Adam. God did not create it that way. His sinful act left the earth and heavens in the ruined, chaotic, wasted state we read about in Genesis 1:2.

5. After Genesis 1:2, God “Re-created” (Repaired) the Heavens and the Earth

Psalm 104:30 says, “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.” This passage is symbolic of the promise that God does uphold His creation, but this may also be a literal reference to the work of God’s re-creation beginning in Genesis 1:2. And a type of this refreshing and renewing that God performed about 6,000 years ago will again be performed in the future! Scripture indicates that God *will again* renew and refresh the earth at Christ’s Second Coming, after the terrible destruction Earth will suffer during the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord (cf. Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:29–31; Acts 3:19–21; Romans 8:21–22).

Beginning in Genesis 1:3, God begins His “re-creation,” repairing the destruction found in Genesis 1:2. First, He separated the light from the darkness. As the account unfolds, we notice that whatever God repairs or creates, He creates **good**. God’s nature is to create *good*—not to create things in a state of chaos, emptiness and destruction (i.e., *tohu* and *bohu*)! But the stars and galaxies were already in place at this time. So He

made the light shine forth, and it was “good” (v. 4). And everything that God made or set in its place, He made or repaired to be *good*—whether the creation of the grass and the trees (v. 12), or the creation of animals (v. 25), or the creation of man and woman (v. 27): “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good...” (v. 31).

6. Then, God Made Man

This is where the roughly 7,000-year plan (and human history, 6,000 years ago) finally begins!

There is no biblical reason to doubt fossil records showing that dinosaurs and some other sorts of animals existed before man was created, but none of these creatures were *human*. Adam and Eve were the first humans. God created these creatures, like everything else, through Christ (John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). As we’ve already established, there was a creation *before* Genesis 1:2, which Satan corrupted and destroyed, rendering it *tohu* and *bohu*. Neither science nor the Bible contradict this.

So if these creatures before Adam were not human, what characteristics are unique to humans? What made Adam and Eve different than the animals that came before? Many things!

First, Genesis 3:20 reveals that Eve was the mother of **all** living humans. All humans come from Eve. **Second**, only “man” has the “spirit of man” (Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27). The spirit of man makes us truly *human* and allows us to have understanding (1 Corinthians 2:11), and to think and reason at the higher *human level* instead of at the lower level of animals. **Third**, humans are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). Though they are created physical, while God is spirit (John 4:24), humans are created after God’s likeness, not only in our ability to think, reason and create, but also in our shape and appearance. Humans do not look like fish or insects or four-legged animals. Humans look like our Eternal Father. (See the January-February 2016 *Living Church News* article “In God’s Image.”)

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is only available to *humans* and to no other living thing. The Holy Spirit is made available to those whom God calls (John 6:44) and who repent, are baptized and have hands laid on them by a **true** minister of God (Acts 2:38). Only humans can be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. **Fifth**, with the Holy Spirit in us, humans are able to *obey God* and keep His laws, showing our love for Him—as it says in 1 John 5:2–3, that the love of God is to keep His commandments. **Sixth**, when humans die, we are not conscious, and our spirits are not immortal. But, unlike with animals, God does keep our spirit while we “sleep” in death, preserved for the judgment (Ecclesiastes 9:10; 12:6–7; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Seventh, humans were created to become part of God’s family (Romans 8:14–17; 2 Peter 1:4). In this, man is unique,



special and *very different* from animals. As **humans**, with the spirit in man in us and able to receive the Holy Spirit, we can be born into the Family of God in the future. This is not available to animals. This is only available to humans.

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong summarized this in a 1978 *Plain Truth* article titled “What Science Can’t Discover About the HUMAN MIND.” He wrote:

This human spirit also adds to man a spiritual & moral faculty not possessed by animals. God had made the needed second spirit—the HOLY SPIRIT—available to Adam. But on Adam’s rebellion and taking the forbidden fruit, God had driven Adam out and closed all access to the tree of LIFE—symbolic of His Holy Spirit.

Yet through Christ, a repentant humanity may yet receive God’s GIFT of His Holy Spirit. To Nicodemus Christ said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Of course Nicodemus could not quite understand that. Almost nobody today understands it. Jesus explained, “That which is born of the flesh IS FLESH, and that which is born of the Spirit IS SPIRIT” (John 3:6). Man came from the ground. He IS flesh. Jesus was not talking about another physical birth or experience of conversion in this life—but about a spiritual birth—when man shall BE Spirit, no longer composed of matter, but composed wholly of SPIRIT! Yes, LITERALLY! Then he shall have been born of God. God is Spirit (John 4:24, RSV).

Now to become human, each of us had to be begotten by his human father. Likewise, to be born again—of THE SPIRIT which is of GOD the Father, one must first be begotten of the SPIRITUAL FATHER—of GOD.

7. The Kingdom of God

Finally, after working with man for roughly 6,000 years, Christ will return and will begin the 1,000-year Millennium. This is when Revelation 11:15 will be fulfilled, when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of Christ, and He will reign forever! This is when God’s plan for mankind will come to fruition, when Elohim will grow into a huge family! As Dr. Roderick C. Meredith powerfully summarizes in the booklet, *Your Ultimate Destiny*:

In his final letter, Peter described how God’s “divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... that through these [promises] you may be partakers of the *divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3–4).

Do all these scriptures mean what they say? Can we honestly “spiritualize away” the many, many inspired scriptures that tell us to be holy, to be like God, and to yield to Him so He can place within us His own *divine* nature? Consequently, it is logical to consider the idea that it has been God’s plan all along to reproduce Himself. This *is* what the God Family (*Elohim*) had in mind when they said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26).

God does have a 7,000-year plan, but He has apparently been working on this plan for *billions and billions* of years! God is creating a divine family, and He wants you to be part of it! This is an amazing Truth that the world does not understand, the eternal fullness of which even the saints struggle to grasp (Psalm 145:3, cf. Isaiah 9:7)—that we are to become members of the God Family, the Elohim, and to live in peace, harmony, love, perfection and submission to God’s perfect law, forever. (LN)



ARE YOU REALLY AN AMBASSADOR?

By **Mark Sandor**

We have finally finished another election year in the United States, and the election of Mr. Donald Trump promises to continue dominating the news as it has done so far. It has been interesting, if not also tragic, to see how much social media and reality television now define our election process. And while it is easy to bemoan much of what we see reported every day, the change of power in the United States from President Obama to President Trump can also serve as an opportunity for every true Christian to ask himself or herself: Am I *really* an ambassador?

Many of us are familiar with the admonition in 2 Corinthians 5:20 to be “ambassadors for Christ.” But do we really detach ourselves from the political scene? Or do we get too emotionally attached to our nation’s politics? Do we become distracted from what the Bible truly says about our nation and what our attitude toward our political leaders should be?

The New Testament contains a few passages about how Christians should interact with their secular government. In this article, we will examine Paul’s writing to the Romans, specifically Romans 13:1-8. However, before we do, it might be helpful to remember the setting of Paul’s writing. Romans is traditionally dated around 56AD, when Emperor Nero was ruling over Rome’s vast holdings.

Life under Nero

Perhaps you’ve heard of Nero. Even if you don’t know anything specific about him, you might still recognize that this name is not attached to a particularly nice person. Nero would not make the “top ten list” of leaders to imitate, or for positive characteristics in general. Instead, Nero was a vain, cruel ruler who managed to alienate most of his subjects during his reign. Nero specialized in assassinations (which he probably picked up from his mother, who was suspected of assassinating the previous emperor), and he used them

frequently against his family (including his mother) and others he saw as political threats. He was widely blamed for a major fire in Rome, which he might have caused, and his poor response to it increased his unpopularity. Nero demanded worship as a “god,” which was begrudgingly given by his pagan subjects, but which also eventually stirred the Jews to revolt. Unsurprisingly, the Romans eventually had enough, and Nero’s bodyguard deserted him, at which point Nero committed suicide rather than be assassinated, himself. Tragically for the Jews, his death did not end hostilities, and Jerusalem was eventually captured and the temple destroyed in 70AD.

This historical information is interesting, because it was during Nero’s reign that God inspired Paul’s words. Think of it another way: what if Romans 13 had been part of the Psalms? What if it had been written during one of the times that Moses, Joshua or Nehemiah were leading Israel? If it had been written during those times, we might not see the real challenge of what Paul is telling us to do. We might say to ourselves, “Well that’s how Christians are supposed to act when they have good leaders.” We could argue that if Barack Obama were more like Moses, we’d be more respectful, or that if Donald Trump were more like David, we’d be able to do just as Paul says. But that’s not how God inspired Paul’s words. God waited until His servants were under one of the worst secular rulers the world has ever seen to inspire Romans 13. We cannot pretend that we have it harder due to our modern leaders’ lack of character—Nero had no character himself!

With that in mind, let’s turn to an examination of five lessons we can learn from Romans 13 about truly being Christian ambassadors.

1. All Authority Is Ultimately Granted by God

Romans 13 starts off by reminding us that “there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (v. 1). This is easy to forget under democracies, such as the American system of government.

When I taught civics, I noticed a bias in public school textbooks to which all secular education falls prey: the book focused solely on men—human beings. This might not sound like it would make much difference, but this narrow focus becomes especially noteworthy when the textbooks talk about how to solve problems in society: they never mention a need to repent before God, only the “need” to elect the right people! For all the worldly wisdom and education many of them possessed, the Founding Fathers of the United States were human beings, and the Constitution they created is still only a man-made document, meant to help human beings solve problems according to man’s own wisdom. As wisely as it may have been crafted, the U.S. Constitution will never be enough to solve America’s problems. Humanity focuses only on its own approaches to solve its problems *without God*, and its problems, therefore, continue!

This focus can infect true Christians too. We often heap too much praise or blame on men and forget the clear fact that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men” (Daniel 4:17). This does not mean that all secular leaders are always the “lowest of men” (think of George Washington or Winston Churchill, for example). However, it does point out that God is not limited in whom He chooses to put over a nation. God will put over a nation a leader of His choosing, not ours. Consider the recent election. Who would have guessed two years ago that Donald Trump would be a serious contender for the presidency, much less win it? Who would have guessed the same about young Barack Obama in 2006? It is not my point to try to suggest that President Obama or President Trump are the “lowest of men”—rather, the point is that God is able to put in power anyone He chooses, regardless of what seems apparent to human experts. We have to keep this fundamental Biblical truth in place to be effective with the other lessons from Romans 13.

2. Be Sure When You Disagree That You Do Not Become Disrespectful



This point is one of the missing factors in American politics today. It is rare to see politicians from either party show any respect for their political opponents. Nevertheless, Christians are called to give “honor to whom honor” is due (Romans 13:7). This does not mean we will always agree with our political leaders! Honoring them does not mean agreement. I seriously doubt Paul agreed with everything Nero did! There are often many things Christians disagree with in the official platforms of various political parties, including the major political parties of the United States. Peter commands us to “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). His letter, like Romans, was written while Nero was “king.”

One way we can test ourselves to see if we are honoring our leaders is to examine how we talk about them. Simply stating a person’s office before his name—such as “President Obama” or “President Trump”—often shows a measure of proper respect. Are we consistent with how we talk about our leaders, regardless of their political party? Exodus 22:28 warns us not to curse a ruler of our people, and in Acts 23:5, Paul showed that he considered this command personally binding. Sometimes, we can find ourselves feeling offended if a person curses a politician or president whose policies we have enjoyed, but accepting if someone curses a leader whose policies or politics we don’t like. Yet, while we should never accept, agree with, or condone sinful behavior, we also shouldn’t let a leader’s party or politics cause us to be hypocritical. Politics is no excuse to ignore God’s laws concerning respecting leaders.

Every leader of every nation on earth is a *human being* who will have faults. Those leaders will do things we disagree with—and *should* disagree with when their actions and policies conflict with Scripture. That does not give us an excuse to become disrespectful in our discussions, comments and public posts about our leaders.

3. Obey All the Laws We Can

Sometimes people use Peter’s bold statement in Acts 5:29 that “we ought to obey God rather than men” as an excuse to disobey laws they do not like. However, most of the time our government asks us to obey laws that do not contradict God’s laws at all. Typically, we *can* obey God and man at the same time! Furthermore, we often can serve God by serving men. The same Peter who made that bold statement in the book of Acts also wrote, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2:13). The fact that we don’t like a law doesn’t give us an excuse to break it. The only reason to break one of man’s laws is if it requires us to violate one of God’s commands!

One example where man’s laws often do not conflict with God’s laws are the traffic laws. Do we follow our government’s instructions about how to drive? According to one study,

traffic deaths in the United States would be cut by 96% if people would simply obey the laws! Some 30,000 Americans die each year on the road. The three most common causes of death are distracted driving (due chiefly to texting), driving drunk, and speeding. We could potentially save nearly 29,000 lives a year if Americans would follow their government's laws against these activities! Do we do our part? Or do we give ourselves excuses to speed, drink and drive, or text while driving? We should not allow our reading of Acts 5:29 to be "a cloak for vice" (1 Peter 2:16).

God loves those who have obedient hearts. We have the opportunity to show Him our willingness to obey, not only in our response to His eternal, spiritual laws, but also

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what to pray, but we need not stray from God's word. Paul gives the specific prayer for our leaders: **"that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence"** (1 Timothy 2:2).

concerning the vast majority of our nation's man-made laws—as temporary as they may be in the bigger picture.

4. Try Not to Worry about Taxes

This is especially tricky. Our politicians spend plenty of our tax money on things true Christians should never support! And yet, so did the Romans. The Jews hated the Roman taxes that paid for pagan worship and licentious behavior, which is one reason why the Pharisees tried to trap Christ with their question about paying taxes, found in Matthew 22:16-22. Christ gives us the famous response that we focus our lives on what we render to God rather than what we render to Caesar. Simply put, we are not responsible for how the government spends our tax money.

While we can often focus on the negative uses of tax money, we should try to focus on the positive. Again, Romans 13:6 commands us to "pay taxes" so that secular rulers can serve as "God's ministers." Did you notice what Paul was inspired to call our secular leaders? That's right, they are called "God's minister(s)" three times in Romans 13! We typically look at the word "minister" and think of a pastor or local elder, but the word can simply mean servant, as it does here in this chapter. While pastors serve us spiritually, those people whose salaries are paid by our taxes also provide services. We might not always want their services, but we can focus on those we do appreciate (police officers, firefighters, etc.). It is an easy trap to become critical of how our government uses tax money, but ultimately we have to simply focus on the positive and remember we are not accountable

for the negative. *God* will one day hold them accountable for how they spent the taxes they collected—that prerogative is His, not ours.

5. Pray for All Authorities

Since Romans 13 reminds us that true Christians should view secular rulers as "God's ministers," do we pray for them? In 1 Timothy 2:1-3, Paul exhorts us to pray for "all men" and specifically "for kings and all who are in authority." Sometimes this can be difficult to do, especially when we see our leaders make unethical decisions. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, Paul was actually telling first century Christians to pray for Nero and the Roman leadership!

Christians in all ages have been commanded to pray for their secular leaders.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what to pray, but we need not stray from God's word. Paul gives the specific prayer for our leaders: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2). If we can peacefully keep God's commandments and His way of life and do His Work, we should pray that our leaders

would continue to let us do so! Often our lack of satisfaction with our secular leaders comes from our having very high expectations for them, and the knowledge that their decisions have very real impact on our lives. We worry they will take away our rights—and this is increasingly an understandable concern. At the same time, in many of our countries we enjoy more freedom to practice God's way of life than most Christians throughout history could ever dream of! All the more, we should use that freedom to obey Paul's command and pray for our leaders.

If you are an American, how many times over the last eight years have you prayed for the President? By the end of two four-year terms, we will have had nearly 3,000 days to pray for a president! I know I failed to pray for President Obama on a daily, or even weekly basis. Now, I am commanded to pray for President Trump! If I focus on his public faults and apparent, human carnality, prayer for Mr. Trump will not appeal to me. Yet if I want to live by "every word of God" (Matthew 4:4), I had better get ready to start praying!

Being a Christian ambassador is never easy. It is uniquely difficult for those of us living in democracies, which tend to encourage civic participation in the government, to distance ourselves from the lie that is very easy to accept: that men are the solution to our problems. The hope for the future is not electing the right person to the presidency. It is for mankind to finally "be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20) at the return of Jesus Christ. As citizens of the Kingdom He will bring (Philippians 3:20), let's put our focus where we should—on being ambassadors of Tomorrow's World. ^{LN}

From Around the World...

Feast of Tabernacles 2016

During the Feast of Tabernacles in 2016, more than 10,500 of God's people gathered together in 50 sites across 33 countries to rejoice before their Creator and celebrate the coming Kingdom of God! This year, we have included special reports from Haiti and Seaside, Oregon about the dramatic role weather played in their Feast experiences, reminding us of God's powerful hand in our lives—and reminding us, too, about His divine love and protection. We hope you will enjoy reading about the Feast sites your brothers and sisters in Christ enjoyed all around the world!

United States

Charlotte, North Carolina

God's Church in the United States experienced something new this year! A Feast site was cancelled because of a hurricane (Hurricane Matthew), and at the direction of the leadership, less than a week before the Feast started, the decision was made to have an emergency "Pop-up" site. So... we organized the Feast of Tabernacles in Charlotte!



With about 200 people attending, the air was really buzzing with excitement and energy in an amazingly positive atmosphere! We all worked together to encourage one another and build one another up. By working together, God's people took

a bad situation, pulled together and made it a wonderful and memorable experience. It became what was, for many, the best Feast we've ever had!

When we asked for a raise of hands, we found some really interesting statistics! First, we found that because we had the Feast in Charlotte, about 40 people were able to attend who otherwise wouldn't have been able to do so! This included Mrs. Faye League, who would have missed her first Feast in 57 years, and another man who would have missed his first in 56 years! Second, having it in Charlotte made it *much* easier to attend the Feast for about 80 percent of the crowd who had to cancel their reservations for Hilton Head—many of whom still had their finances tied up in the cancelled site. The third exciting piece of news was that ten people in the crowd were keeping their first Feast, and another ten were keeping only their second Feast! These new people in God's Work added even more of a thrill to the air!

We had Mr. Richard Ames and Mr. Gerald Weston as guest speakers for the first and second halves, respectively. All the messages were inspiring and encouraging, and focused on helping us prepare now for our future! We were blessed to have great activities, including a Family Day Picnic BBQ, which was a highlight for many, a seniors' luncheon, a dinner dance and a bowling activity. We also had a trip to the "Lazy 5 Ranch" petting zoo, where participants had the opportunity to ride around in horse-drawn wagons and pet buffaloes, water buffalo, deer, antelope, zebras, giraffes and other animals! Truly, a millennial experience!

We are thankful to God for allowing everything to work out so miraculously smoothly on such short notice!

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

The beauty of creation was certainly evident for the brethren attending the Feast of Tabernacles 2016 in Gatlinburg this



year. The autumn leaves were turning and reaching their peak of rich fall colors in the majestic Great Smoky Mountains, helping everyone in attendance to be in awe of the Creator. Five hundred and thirty-six of God's people were able to truly rejoice, as the weather each day could not have been more ideal, especially for outdoor activities, as it started out warm in the 80's and cooled to the 70's by Feast's end.

Many enjoyed hiking, horseback riding, UTV excursions, a singles' picnic, chairlift rides to the top of Ober Gatlinburg and simply walking through the shops and stores downtown. Additional events included a seniors' luncheon and the DELs luncheon, each addressed by Dr. Douglas Winnail; the teens' activity at WonderWorks; an afternoon of indoor games, enjoyed by our children; and the family dinner and dance.

"Awesome" seemed to be the word used often in messages to describe God's special calling to further understand His purpose and plan. We were able to gain clearer and deeper vision and more zeal to continue to support this Work, of which we are all a part. The Feast was certainly motivating and rejuvenating, as as we were filled with hope for the future. Messages by Dr. Douglas Winnail, Mr. Martin Fannin, Mr. Wallace Smith and Feast Site Coordinator Mr. Ron Poole expanded our vision and gave a foretaste of God's soon-coming Kingdom. That vital focus was complemented by many fine sermonettes.

As usual, the children's choir was a huge success, singing a beautiful song while photos of brethren enjoying the Feast and natural scenes of the area were being shown on the large screen next to them, with words to the song displayed on the pictures. This performance followed the always-special service of the Blessing of the Children.

This truly outstanding Feast was certainly memorable and filled with God's spirit of service, loving fellowship, and audience attention to all messages. The brethren were a shining example of love, joy and peace in their service to each other as everyone did his part in making the entire Feast one to remember.

Lake Conroe, Texas

A short one-hour drive north of Houston, Texas is Lake Conroe, where 370 people enjoyed the Feast of Tabernacles at a

majestic resort location along the lake. All services and many events took place at the La Torretta Lake Resort & Spa where the majority of attendees stayed for the eight days. Others took advantage of nearby lodging in condominiums, vacation homes and motels with easy access to the facility.

Powerful messages concerning our ultimate destiny and the millennial rule of Jesus Christ spiritually uplifted all in attendance. Our traveling guest speaker, Mr. Lambert Greer, and Regional Pastor Mr. Dan Hall provided uplifting and inspiring sermons on the two Holy Days, and Messrs. Glen Harrison, Norm Aitchison and Gary Stein brought key messages in regard to the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Many brethren commented that Dr. Meredith's Last Great Day message was very powerful and inspiring!

The resort has an onsite convention hall with several beautiful banquet rooms, where most events took place. Between services for both Holy Days, everyone gathered in the glass-walled Versailles Ballroom for exquisite buffet meals with a wonderful view of Lake Conroe. This location was also the venue for celebrating our seniors, as more than 125 "seasoned" members enjoyed a plated luncheon. The elders, deacons and department heads and their spouses were also honored with a finely prepared meal, followed by comments of appreciation and motivation by Mr. Hall.

Our younger children enjoyed activities after services at the Kid's Corner, and the singles took advantage of quality time together by gathering on several occasions to visit and share experiences.

A very successful Family Day event took place at the Incredible Pizza Company in nearby Conroe, Texas. Many of all ages enjoyed several hours of "all you can eat" pizza and buffet, bowling, miniature golf and more!

The highlight activity of the Feast was the Family Western Dinner, Talent Show and Dance, where brethren dressed in their favorite western-wear and enjoyed a real Texas-style BBQ buffet, followed by a one-hour talent (fun) show showcasing some incredible talent! The evening was capped off by hours of "good ol'" boot-scooting and enjoyable dancing.

The Feast here was truly an inspiring and memorable experience for God's people, with timely and meaningful messages, a spirit of teamwork, cooperation and unity, and a focus on our task of living in a manner that is reflective of the "children of God!"

Mt. Snow, Vermont

Three hundred and fifty of God's people came together at the Grand Summit Resort in Mt. Snow for the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles. The Fall colors of the trees provided a beautiful backdrop to the Festival site. The brethren were fed inspiring messages ranging from topics on economics in the Millennium, mentoring others, and knowing the true



God, as well as many other issues. There were an abundance of activities and opportunities for the brethren to spend time together, including a sock hop, a day at the Adams Family Farm, a winery tour, a dinner dance, and the always enjoyable Progressive Family Dinner afternoon. Many of the brethren from warmer regions were pleased to experience their first snowfall as the area received about an inch of snow one evening. The following morning the weather warmed and melted the snow away. Overall, it was an encouraging and pleasant Feast of Tabernacles this year in autumnal Vermont.

Osage Beach, Missouri



God once again placed His name at the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks, Osage Beach. Over 540 of God's people enjoyed the changing fall colors of the hardwood forest covering the Ozark hills surrounding the blue waters of the lake.

We were blessed this year with Mr. Lambert Greer as our traveling speaker, who was present with his wife Nancy for the second half of the Feast. Mr. Greer gave inspiring messages dealing with the economy of the Millennium and the meaning of God's glory and power in His Kingdom. Mr. Gene Hilgenberg, the Festival Site Coordinator, presented the Family Bible Study on Friday evening. On Sabbath morning Mr. Kenneth Frank, Registrar of Living University, along with Dr. Richard Franz, Assistant Festival Site Coordinator, presented a tag-team Bible Study for the teens, answering questions that had been submitted by the teens in attendance. Many mentioned that the highlight of the Feast was the spiritual food

from the tremendous messages given by the elders that were present. Main messages from Messrs. Kenneth Frank, Daniel Friz, Gene Hilgenberg and Dr. Richard Franz continued the focus on preparing for God's Kingdom.

Other highlights included the many activities enjoyed by everyone. Seniors were treated to an elegant luncheon with musical entertainment and a short message of encouragement presented by Dr. Franz. Teens started off the Feast with an ice cream mixer, followed by a bowling and pizza party. Many enjoyed cruising the lake on Tuesday evening with a family dinner cruise and playing games and activities during the Wednesday afternoon Family Day carnival. Those who attended the DELs luncheon were encouraged by Mr. Frank to enroll in classes at Living University.

Sunny skies and temperatures in the upper 80's started the Feast, with a short cool-down, then a rise in temperatures again to end it. God's people were able to enjoy the blessing of fellowship with each other throughout God's Feast of Tabernacles, reflecting Christ in all their activities.

Panama City Beach, Florida



Incredible, sunny days without rain greeted Feast-goers in beautiful Panama City. Services were held at the Boardwalk Beach Resort/Hotel and Convention Center. Whether staying there or elsewhere, special attention was given to God's people, who could enjoy breakfast only steps away from the meeting hall. Many enjoyed accommodations in other facilities nearby, having access to many fine restaurants. Just over 1,100 brethren were assigned to the Panama Site, with an additional 300 joining us after the closing of Hilton Head, South Carolina. With this addition, the facility management and brethren went to work to ready this site for those who would have to transfer in. (And, of course, special thanks go to our Father and Savior.) Everyone sprang into action to now accommodate more than 1,400 attendees.

Though all of this was challenging, everything came together on the opening night. From there, things moved for-

ward with messages that were inspiring and greatly needed. Messrs. Gerald Weston, Sheldon Monson, Anthony Stroud and Dr. Douglas Winnail, among others, contributed to the sermons and other beneficial messages.

For the DELs, Mr. Weston addressed us all as we enjoyed soft music in the background and a special meal prepared by the venue. For the seniors' luncheon, Mr. Anthony Stroud encouraged them to know that they all have a special role in God's Church to pray and teach the younger members. Our dinner dance evening was special, as everyone, young and old, took to the floor and danced the night away, having an enjoyable evening. Family day was a huge success, as about 400 brethren enjoyed bowling, pool play, skating and many games, while the DJ played music for our enjoyment. A special cruise was put together during the Feast, and just over 200 brethren were able to enjoy Shell Island and the beautiful waters. There were also many places to shop, eat and visit as family, including our extended family from various congregations around the world.

The Feast of Tabernacles is indeed a time to **rejoice and celebrate** preparing for a time when the whole earth will be filled with the **knowledge** of God! Thank God for this joyous time to celebrate what lies just ahead, when Christ returns to usher in the kind of peace we can only dream of. But for now, He gave us a little taste of what it could be when God's ways are kept!

San Diego, California

Balmy ocean breezes, sunny days, and beautiful clouds made for delightful weather for the Feast at San Diego. The Bahia Resort Hotel hosted 500 registered attendees in fine style with great service. The combination of lovely surroundings on a protected bay just a short walk from the ocean, nearby world-famous attractions, a warm and loving group of Feast-goers, and fine spiritual food made for a wonderful Feast experience. Many said that they were coming back to San Diego next year.



Dr. Roderick C. Meredith spent the entire Feast here, giving two live sermons: "Opening Night Welcome" and the "First Holy Day—the Meaning of the Day," besides the recorded Last Great Day message. He joined the brethren for all the luncheons and the dinner dance. Mr. Rand Millich, Regional Pastor from Kansas City, was at San Diego for the second half and gave two sermons, as did Mr. Bob Rodzaj. Mr. Stephen Elliott gave three sermons, and about 20 young children were prayed over at the Blessing of the Children service on the sixth day of the Feast.

This year we had *two* very successful family dinner dances. The first was held on the William D. Evans paddle wheeler, a beautiful replica of an 18th-century Mississippi riverboat, as it cruised Mission Bay. The second and main semi-formal dance was held in the Mission Bay Ballroom of the Bahia Resort. Professional DJs provided a great selection of music for all ages. Both nights, the dance floors were crowded with happy, rejoicing adults and children.

Nearby attractions included world-famous SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo, the Natural History Museum, Belmont Park amusements and arcade, the U.S.S. Midway aircraft carrier and Legoland.

This Feast site exemplified what we all look forward to in the Millennium: happy people caring for and cooperating with each other to make life what it should be. Many pitched in to make all the support functions run smoothly. We all truly rejoiced before our God. It was a wonderful experience.

Seaside, Oregon

The weather this year created an extra buzz of excitement and reminded us of Who *really* controls the weather! The added weather excitement seemed to pull the brethren together even more as a family and gave a warm, Millennial environment for the Feast.

Dr. Jeffrey Fall and Mr. Rod McNair started off the Feast with messages on our amazing hope for the future and the peace we will see in the world around us. Other messages painted a picture in practical ways of what God's Kingdom will be like, our responsibility to grow as little children, emotional leadership and the need for faith and courage as we journey toward our promised land.

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 spectacular sunshine, blue skies, and ocean views, especially in the open-air cars. Other activities included gathering around a bonfire on the beach, complete with s'mores and guitars. Brethren also enjoyed a beautiful coastal hike with stunning views of the coast, wooded areas with lush ferns, and even a washed-up humpback whale skeleton on the beach. After the sun set for the Last Great Day, brethren enjoyed hours of fellowship

at the historic “Camp 18” giant log cabin chalet. The private banquet room provided a cozy ambiance with unique historic décor and a large rustic rock fireplace, next to which we could share our final goodbyes.

Many commented on the unity, the wonderful messages, and the many family activities that brought the brethren together, as we look forward to God’s soon-coming Kingdom.

(Please read more about the Feast observance at Seaside in the nearby column compiled by Mr. Brandon Fall.)

St. George, Utah



In the beautiful desert Southwest, nestled next to the stunning red cliffs of Zion National Park, over 400 enthusiastic brethren observed the Feast in this unique corner of Utah. The picturesque green valley of the Virgin River was a fitting place for the Feast as many enjoyed the fabulous outdoor activities and magnificent mountain, desert and scenic views. We celebrated nearby cultural venues and many great eateries, amid the warm and dry temperatures.

Feedback from attendees listed the spiritual messages and activities as their highlights, along with the stunning scenery and natural beauty of the close-by National Parks. Many also said the love and spirit of the Feast in this beautiful area typified God’s future millennial setting at Christ’s soon-coming return.

New guests attending services (including one from another church that was meeting on-site for Sunday services!), along with our tour guides and activity venue operators alike, were very impressed with the caliber and character of God’s people. The Red Lion Hotel staff also commented a number of times that they hoped we would come back and about how much they appreciated us. The owner of the hotel personally served our members as well!

God additionally blessed us with lovely special music, a great service-oriented attitude for one another, a variety of well-received activities for all ages and a thought-provoking Friday evening Bible Study. The messages were inspired, on-point and spiritually focused, concluding with the powerful

Last Great Day message! The great examples of our brethren clearly showed as they collectively let their lights shine everywhere. Many thanks, truly, to all who served so diligently to make it work smoothly. This was indeed a Feast dedicated to our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ!

Traverse City, Michigan



For the second year in a row we had a beautiful Feast site in Traverse City! 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. The Feast took place during the peak of autumn’s colors. The trees were fully vibrant with shades of red, orange and yellow.

Brethren enjoyed fine dining at a variety of restaurants and wineries. Services were conducted at the Great Wolf Lodge, with many of the brethren staying on-site. Average attendance at services was 221, with maximum attendance reaching 246.

Messages were given by Messrs. Mark Sandor, Phil Sena, Alex Celan, Bill Long, and Dr. Douglas Winnail. It was clear that God inspired them to be knit together in a common theme of preparing for our future and staying focused on the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Dr. Winnail ended the Feast with sermons on restored values in religion, government and education in God’s Kingdom, and love as the Kingdom’s most important quality.

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 afternoon, a number of adults went on a tour of local wineries on the Leelanau Peninsula, which juts out into Grand Traverse Bay. The next afternoon brethren enjoyed bowling and games at the Family Day activity at Incredible Mo’s. Thursday evening was the dinner dance. Brethren were treated to a top-notch meal followed by dancing. On Friday afternoon the “seasoned” members of God’s Church ate together at the seniors’ luncheon and

received original framed prints painted by Mrs. Shelby Vice. Later that evening, to begin the Sabbath, the brethren attended a Bible Study about developing “soft skills” (character) by the Feast Site Coordinator, Mr. Bill Long. On Sunday afternoon the deacons, elders, and their spouses enjoyed a nice lunch together. Dr. Winnail gave a short talk about how appreciative the Church is of its leaders. He encouraged them to be as active as possible in their respective congregations and to set a good example of service.

It was a memorable Feast for God’s people here. Because the Feast took place in late October, the weather was crisp but the surrounding scenery kept everyone focused on the Kingdom of God, promoting a sense of unity and family.

Canada

Charlottetown, PEI, Canada



The Feast of Tabernacles in Charlottetown went well. We had a total of 107 excited brethren attending in Prince Edward Island, Canada’s smallest province. The hotel staff in the Best Western were wonderful. The meals and other activities were well worth the cost.

Highlighting the beginning of the Feast was the opening night message by Presiding Evangelist Roderick C. Meredith. Sermons during the Feast were also given by Messrs. Stewart Wachowicz, Jonathan Bueno, Charlie Sutton, Shane Kruse and Frank Best. Two members were ordained as deacons during the Feast and one woman was baptized.

Activities included a visit to the Anne of Green Gables House and a dinner and dance, along with assorted luncheons. It was also a real treat this year to have a live piano player and ample special music. Visitors included members from Western and Central Canada, along with some from the United States and England.

Once again this year, as in years past, a definite spirit of warm fellowship, love and thankfulness permeated the Feast.

Cypress Hills, Saskatchewan

The week before the Feast in Saskatchewan seemed ominous: Cypress Hills received two feet of snow. However, when Feast

time came around, God’s protection and intervention was plain to see. The snow melted and beautiful fall temperatures settled in. The site was truly millennial, first by the messages received and then by the fellowship of kindred minds, and finally by the surroundings—a beautiful pine forest, with deer that came and ate from the hands of children. Moose and other wildlife completed the scenery.

Among the many activities of the Feast, which included a nature walk for the teens and singles, a sing-along and s’mores night, was the Dinner, Talent and Dance Night. We had the opportunity to hear yodelling and some wonderful piano pieces. The dance part saw wonderful smiles on the faces of those present and allowed those who had dancing feet to get them going. Then, after almost three hours of different styles of music, people retired to a well-deserved sleep.

The Feast this year in Cypress Hills was a success, and when the family of God comes together it is a feeling of just that: *family*. We had the opportunity to meet new people, whom we soon felt we had known all of our lives. The stories of how God called them to the Truth and the understanding of the hope that we have is fantastic. Many fond memories were created in the minds of those who were there for the first time in many years and of those who were there for the very first time. The sermons provided by the guest speaker, Mr. Gary Ehman, caused many people to comment on the awesomeness of God’s plan for us and for mankind. Every day, Bible trivia questions were written on a whiteboard and had people searching the scriptures and talking about what the answer could be. Furthermore, a Bible game on game night brought laughter and challenged the knowledge of many.

Overall, the more than 130 members present in Cypress Hills enjoyed the Feast and are looking forward for its realisation in the years to come.

Penticton, British Columbia



Once again Penticton came through as a very popular and friendly location for God to place His name. Since 1969, Feast-goers have enjoyed this beautiful semi-arid part of Canada, complete with its vineyard and sagebrush-covered hills set against two large blue lakes. Although the weather was a little bit cooler than usual, our generous Father in Heaven completely confounded the weatherman with better-than-predicted weather. The nicest, sunniest day was on Family Day, and everyone enjoyed a day of good food, quality

fellowship and interesting games, including Corn Hole Toss, Bocci Ball, modified basketball and remote controlled car races. The day was fun for everyone of all ages.

Other activities included a South Okanagan Winery Bus Tour and a Thanksgiving-themed dinner dance. The award-winning wines of the Okanagan Valley and the turkey dinner were enjoyed by everyone.

Many brothers and sisters from south of the border joined their Canadian brethren to learn more about the Government of God. We heard many sermons on this theme, and 185 brethren took note of these lessons and admonishments as the love and concern for one another—and for our Creator—was obvious.

It was the very first Feast for a few, and for about the same number it was more than their fiftieth. The sermon highlights and Christian fellowship were enhanced with the joy of the baptism of a very happy lady, along with a special Blessing of the Children, which involved only one, beautiful little boy. Everyone went home with a renewed zeal to grow personally as the Church pushes forward doing the Work of God.

Rockland, Ontario

In Rockland we had 222 attendees to the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles. Meetings were held at the River Rock Inn of Rockland along the Ottawa river. Members lodged there, as well as in two other hotels in Orleans, and in a few cottages in the area.

The spiritual menu presented by our speakers was deeply appreciated by our people. Dr. Roderick D. Meredith's messages strongly hit home. We shared two lunches together, one on the first day of the Feast and one on the Last Great Day. We also enjoyed a very pleasurable dinner dance. After dinner, the dance floor stayed full all the evening, as we enjoyed well-planned, high-quality music! Other main activities included bowling and a car ride of 22 kilometers to a beautiful wildlife park, where we traveled among animals of all kinds—even feeding some from our car.



Although there were many illnesses, the attitude was positive. People helped and encouraged each other, and they went back home uplifted and spiritually fortified. A lady attending the Quebec City congregation was baptised during the Feast, a first fruit from Rwanda. Members made a strong, positive impression on people serving them, and room maids commented on how considerate our people were. The lady overseeing our meals said she had never served such a well-behaved and appreciative group. She asked questions about the Church, our beliefs and why we are so different. God truly blessed this Feast abundantly in many ways.

Caribbean Bon Accord, Tobago



Rovanel's Resort again served as the main site for God's Feast in Bon Accord, Tobago. The meeting hall was spacious and comfortable and the fellowship among the brethren was warm and positive.

With a high attendance of 117, God richly fed His people spiritually with main messages by Regional Director, Mr. Rick Stafford, as well as visiting speakers, Messrs. Joe Brown and Damian Weekes. We also had the annual Family Bible Study as well as special music every day.

Brethren were also well treated to a range of activities, which included a short boat cruise and ocean dip for the singles, the Family Fun Day, the ever-popular Festival Ball and the Talent Show.

The brethren served with all their hearts to ensure that each activity was a success and that every area of responsibility was handled properly. Many commented that this was a relaxing, yet rewarding Feast.

Christ Church, Barbados

One hundred and fifty-three brethren travelled from Trinidad, the United States, Canada and Britain to share in re-



joining at the Barbados Beach Club on the peaceful Maxwell Coast Road.

There were rich blessings of sunny weather and warm fellowship, with a banquet of spiritual and physical food. Sermons were presented encouraging brethren to wait for the promise and benefits of the Kingdom. Fine Christian examples of love for all humanity were shared in both sermons and sermonettes. Messrs. Paul Shumway, Richard Stafford and Clyde Skeete were ably supported by visiting ministers, Messrs. Todd Lawrence and Shannon Christal.

Our seniors were honoured with a buffet in the “Reef-View” Restaurant overlooking the blue ocean. Some other highlights of the Feast were the catamaran cruise, the family day at Mangrove, and the dinner dance in the beautiful setting of the Dome restaurant.

What a great time of learning, rejoicing and fearing our great God!

Gosier, Guadeloupe



The 2016 Feast of Tabernacles was held in Le Gosier. Guadeloupe is actually divided into two large islands, and the Feast was held on the eastern island, which includes soft, rolling terrain, white-sand beaches, resort areas and Guadeloupe's largest city, Pointe-à-Pitre. The western island offers a dramatic rain forest, towering waterfalls, magnificent beaches, a dormant volcano and Guadeloupe's capital city, Basse-Terre.

French-speaking brethren from Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Quebec, Montreal and Paris enjoyed a wonderful spiritual and physical Feast, along with English-speaking visitors from New Jersey, Rhode Island, Florida, Georgia and Texas. Translation was provided by brethren from Canada, New Jersey and Georgia.

Dr. Wilner Pierre, the area pastor for the French-speaking Caribbean, arrived in Guadeloupe after being with the brethren in Haiti. He and Mr. Rick Stafford, Regional Director for the Caribbean, who arrived in the second half of the Feast, delivered two sermons. There was also an inspiring Bible Study, which was followed with a question-and-answer session that could have continued even longer if time had permitted.

One of the highlights of this year's Feast of Tabernacles was the baptism of two new Church members from French Guiana. Other special highlights, the Blessing of the Children and a performance of the children's choir, touched the hearts of everyone.

Brethren took advantage of several Church-sponsored activities, along with beach activities such as snorkeling, kayaking and jet-skiing. The Saturday evening family dance was one of the highlights of the Feast. Music was provided by one of Guadeloupe's local steel drum bands. As a special treat, the band played a song from the Church hymnal while the brethren sang along.

The Feast in Guadeloupe was just a small foretaste of what God's people all around the world can look forward to in His Kingdom. Peace, harmony and family unity could be felt throughout the entire Festival.

Pétion-Ville, Haiti

Those of us in Port-au-Prince lodged at the hotel “La Reserve” in Pétion-Ville, because it was not possible for us to go elsewhere due to the bad weather. The Opening Night service was conducted by Dr. Pierre, with the viewing of a special message from the Presiding Evangelist, Dr. Roderick C. Meredith.

On the first day of the Feast, we had an attendance of 27 brethren. The sermonette was presented by the local elder, Mr. Jove Jean-Pierre, titled “What Motivates Us to Serve God?” The sermon was given by our Pastor, Dr. Wilner Pierre. We had the same attendance on the second service of the first day and we watched a DVD.

Since we only received one DVD for the Last Great Day, brethren received an additional sermon from Mr. Jean-Pierre titled “The Depth of God's Mercy.”

We thank God for His many blessings before, during and after the Feast of Tabernacles this year. We claim more blessings from our Great God for the coming days, months and years, while we patiently wait for His Kingdom of peace.

(Please read more about the Feast observance in Haiti in the nearby column by Dr. Wilner Pierre.)

Montego Bay, Jamaica

For the eighth consecutive year, we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles on the north coast resort town of Montego Bay, our island's premier tourist destination. Brethren from Australia, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States joined the Jamaican brethren to celebrate the Feast at the Holiday Inn Resort. Opening Night began with 289 brethren in attendance. The atmosphere was absorbing as the fellowshiping began. The brethren lifted up their voices and sang, giving glory, honour and praise to the Great God. We had 15 individuals at-

tending their first Feast ever, and there were nine who were celebrating 50 or more!

A family atmosphere permeated the gathering. The messages were focused on the Millennium and what we should be doing to prepare for it. There was camaraderie, warmth and friendliness, before and after services, at meal times and at the activities as the Feast progressed. Our premier activity was the “Family Cookout and Fun Day,” where the brethren enjoyed mouthwatering local foods and table games under the cool, covered areas of the Montego River Gardens for five hours. We also enjoyed a designated tour day, which, like the Family Fun Day, allowed the brethren more time for fellowship and for enjoying the attractions. Other activities at the Feast included an “ice breaker” for pre-teens, teens, and singles, an evening of games and an off-site get-together with our visiting and Jamaican brethren, the Seniors’ Appreciation Luncheon, a family Bible study, a family dance and a hymn-sing. On the weekly Sabbath, we had the Blessing of the Little Children, and five children were blessed.

We recorded our highest attendance on the morning of the first day of the Feast (342). Many visiting and local brethren alike indicated their satisfaction with how things were organized. The majority commented on the warmth and friendliness of the Jamaican brethren and that the highlights of the Feast were the messages and fellowshiping. They also indicated that they enjoyed the other activities as well. God willing, we all look forward with anticipation to another memorable Feast in 2017!

Central America

San Martin, Argentina

Argentina is south of the equator, so when it is time for the *Fiesta de la Tabernáculos*, the countryside is enjoying beautiful springtime weather. This year’s Feast was held in the province of San Luis in the small city of Villa de Merlo. Sixty enthusiastic brethren from eight countries met at the Hotel Torres del Sol, where accommodations and all meals were provided. Brethren visiting from other countries often take a side trip to Buenos Aires, either going to or coming home from the Feast.

Visiting minister Mr. Dexter Wakefield provided the sermons, along with videos by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith and Mr. Mario Hernandez, with translations by Miss Deborah Lincoln-Strange and Mrs. Priscilla Lyons.

Activities included rock climbing and horseback riding in the high *sierra* near the Feast site.

In addition to the spiritual food, the *Fiesta* featured a special type of Argentine BBQ called an *asadoro*. These cookouts are an important part of the Argentine culture, and the *Fiesta* there usually features one or two. The usual BBQ or *asado* features beef and lamb cooked over coals similar to an American BBQ. In the *asadoro* prepared by local minister, Sr. Aaron Bravo, kid goats were filleted out on vertical grills and

slow-cooked by the radiant heat of an open fire. The result was most delicious! If you go to the Feast in Argentina, be prepared to eat a lot of *carne* (meat) and to enjoy Argentina’s good Mendoza wines if you so desire. When bought domestically, the better Argentine wines are a pleasant bargain compared to their prices in the U.S. and other countries.

When everyone lives and eats together, as is the case with the Feast in Argentina, the members get to know each other and form lasting friendships. A *Felice Fiesta*, indeed!

Punta Leona, Costa Rica



One hundred and five brethren coming from Canada, the United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Bolivia, Trinidad & Tobago, Puerto Rico, Wales, Holland and Spain this year successfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in the Hotel and Club Resort Punta Leona on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

The messages were truly inspiring and helpful for everyone, and we truly enjoyed the fellowship with so many brethren coming from different nations—so much so that at the end of services we stayed for quite a long time fellowshiping in the meeting hall.

The majority of the brethren said that they enjoyed the natural environment, such as the flora and fauna in the resort, and we truly enjoyed that picture of peace that we all desire for the whole world.

On the Church survey, all the brethren said they recommended this site for the year 2017. The brethren in Costa Rica are very grateful for brethren from other countries who visited us, and for all the brethren who participated and helped us with service and dedication to make all the activities successful.

San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

This year in Mexico we once again celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in San Miguel de Allende—a colonial city with a pleasant climate.

Brethren from the United States and Puerto Rico joined us in the celebration, and the attendance was 144. We re-



ceived spiritual nourishment, which helped us to have the vision of the Kingdom and the future restoration when our King of kings will begin to govern this earth. On top of this, we had fellowship, which allowed us to share meals together and partake in activities. We enjoyed a children's fiesta and a children's class, which included children and parents, alike. Likewise, we had a young adult activity in Queretaro and a congregational dance. God blessed us greatly and we thank Him for giving us the knowledge and opportunity to celebrate His Feasts.

South America

Moscou, Brazil

Brethren from southern Guyana and northeastern Brazil, as well as a couple from Trinidad and Tobago and one from the United States gathered in the village of Moscou, in the state of Roraima, Brazil for God's Feast this year. The weather was quite humid, and the warmth was matched only by the fellowship among the brethren.

With a high attendance of 139, God richly fed His people spiritually with main messages by Elder Mr. Laurus Alfred, as well as visiting speakers Messrs. Hugh Stewart and Damian Weekes. Messages covered the following topics: "The Holiness of God's Promise," "Follow God's Pattern" and "Lessons to Be Learnt at the Feast."

We were blessed to have special music most days and most meals were shared in the common eating area next to the meeting hall. There were lots of sporting activities during the afternoons, a family Bible study, and an impromptu sing-along one evening.

Lican Ray, Chile

Thanks to God this year that the brethren from Chile were able to keep the Feast in the city of Concón, surrounded by beautiful nature and ocean views. During our stay we visited a botanical garden and the cities of Viña del Mar, Quintero and Maitencillo (a Feast site in years past).

The spiritual and physical nourishment was abundant, and being able to eat three meals together with the brethren was very special, as was being able to enjoy the children's company. From the children, we learned to enjoy the Feast, like our Lord Jesus said: "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you

are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

La Tebaida, Colombia

In Colombia we had a spectacular Feast. Eighty-two people attended from eleven countries: Columbia, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, the United States, Guatemala, Israel and France. For nine people, it was their first time celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, and they said it felt like a family. There were four baptisms, three of which came from the preaching of the radio, and one came to the Church via our website.

We celebrated in a zone of Colombia that is best known for its coffee production, and we enjoyed the nature, peace, harmony and fellowship. There were activities for everyone each night, and we had a theme oriented to help us identify the deceit that is in the world and how to come out of that deceit. We celebrated a pleasant family Feast, and everyone participated. The theme of the Feast in Colombia was enjoyment and reflection, celebrating the future restored world, and being conscious that we live in a world that needs restoration.

Huaychulo, Peru

Located 10,498 meters above the sea in the Huaychulo Resort in Peru, in the midst of nature and surrounded by woods where eucalyptus trees are abundant, 69 spiritual Israelites congregated, coming from different cities of Peru, Chile and Colombia to celebrate the Feast to our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. God provided a spirit of service, joyfulness and fellowship to all the brethren.

We enjoyed meat in due season and fellowship activities, which made us desire all the more the true Kingdom. We also had tasty meals typical of the Peruvian country. We thank God for all His mercies and endless kindness, and our thanks to each of the brethren for the love they showed during this Festival season.

Southeast Asia

Baguio City, Philippines

The City of Baguio, set high in the Cordillera mountain range, again hosted the Feast of Tabernacles. We were joined by and welcomed guests from Australia, Hong Kong, China and Canada.

Sadly, we were also joined by (though did not welcome) Typhoon Lawin. This typhoon struck the Philippines the day before the Feast started, bringing with it some of the strongest winds ever recorded. So, for the first part of the Feast, Baguio was subjected to drenching, lashing rain and very fierce winds resulting in local flooding. Baguio was without electricity for a couple of days, but the administrators of the Feast site were able to provide a limited power supply from generators and we were able to hold services as planned.

Festival- and Millennial-themed sermons were delivered by local ministers Messrs. Basilio Osillos and Kinnear Penman. Halfway during the Feast, we were joined by Headquarters minister Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour, who had spent several days with the brethren in the southern Philippines. Everyone enjoyed and benefitted from his messages.

Of course, the Feast presents many opportunities to fellowship with each other. Forty-five of our senior citizens were hosted at the popular Good Taste Restaurant, where they enjoyed a luncheon of chicken and beef dishes. Our youngest attendees appreciated Mrs. Noemi Agravante's children's activity, where they enjoyed games and treats. At a sports afternoon, games of volleyball and basketball were played by members of all ages. On the evening after the first day of the Feast, a "Getting to Know You" activity did, indeed, allow many to meet those who had been strangers but soon became friends. One of the memorable highlights of the Feast was the fun show, which was ably emceed by Ms. Regina Abelardo. One memorable presentation was a traditional Philippines bamboo dance, the "Tinikling." The Baguio Feast Choir, led by Mr. Joseph dela Cruz and other talented musicians and singers, enhanced our worship services with special music.



By the end of the Feast the sun had returned to Baguio. The brunt of the typhoon was borne by provinces north of Baguio. There are a few Living Church of God congregations and video groups in the north. Members returned home to survey and report on the damage. At the time of this writing, their farms and homes appear to have suffered relatively little damage, for which we thank God.

Davao City, Philippines

Eighty-five people convened at Lantaw Bukid to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Brethren from congregations in Davao City and a few from Luzon stayed in cottages, huts and dormitories, which brought everyone closer together. The green scenery encouraged the brethren to fellowship, and area



attractions included a swimming pool, basketball court, and swimming pond for the families to enjoy.

For the first half of the Feast, brethren were blessed to hear messages from a guest minister, Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour, who spoke on "Catching the Vision" and "Path to the Kingdom." He emphasized that God's people are in the same boat but we use different oars. Festival Site Coordinator Mr. Felipe Casing emphasized the nature of God's Kingdom and that His people should be an example of peace and service.

There was a spirit of unity throughout the Feast, and as a result, all the various activities were greatly enjoyed. The Festival talent show demonstrated the talents and skills of the brethren in singing, dancing and participation in parlor games. Children also participated in games and enjoyed prizes followed by spaghetti and ice cream for dinner. The sports day was cheerful as all basketball and volleyball enthusiasts showed their skills in front of the cheering crowd. The senior citizens also became participants in the 300-meter run, which proved that their legs are still just as capable as their minds.

The Festival this year was another memorable Feast for the people of God. As Psalms 133 says, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Maranding, Philippines

Filled with enthusiasm and joy, 112 people from Iligan, Sindangan, Cagayan de Oro, Claveria and Zamboanga made their way to the Feast site at Maranding. The attendees had a taste of what it would feel like in God's Kingdom, as they were filled with an abundance of food for both body and soul, with genuine happiness, authentic freedom and internal peace.

Many brethren commented that the Feast was filled with spiritual meat, right from the opening message from Dr. Roderrick C. Meredith, which warmly welcomed everyone. While the Feast's activities were instructive and fun and helped all to bond with each other, as usual, the highlight of the Feast were the spiritual messages that prompted us all to take a deeper look into God's word and His coming Kingdom. The children's activity event, special nights for different groups—

such as couples, singles, youths and families—a film showing, and even the daily services all created happy memories and filled us with much instruction that will help us in our walk towards God’s Kingdom.

At the end of the feast, everyone, most with some hint of sadness, said their farewells, bid one another good-bye, and went home with hearts filled with delight as the Last Great Day came to a close. All are already looking forward to next year’s Feast and are intent on preparing for it in every way through the next twelve months.

Batu, Indonesia

Warm days and cool evenings with the occasional tropical downpour welcomed 34 brethren, 23 adults and 11 children to the resort city of Batu, East Java where they experienced a wonderful and joyous Feast of Tabernacles. The sermons and sermonettes as well as the “Behind the Work” presentation truly inspired God’s people to stir up His Spirit and become even more involved in His Work. The attendance of brethren from Malaysia and Australia was greatly appreciated by the local brethren.

Besides the spiritual food, the brethren enjoyed a day trip to the beach, a visit to a local theme park, a stroll through a transport museum and daily frolics in the swimming pool, as well as a special dinner, a talent show and a movie evening. The attitudes of love, cooperation and caring between the brethren will long live in the memory of all who were there.

Mae Sot, Thailand



Mae Sot is a district in western Thailand that shares the border with Burma. It is notable as a trade hub and for its substantial population of Burmese migrants and refugees, and this is where God placed His name this year. Twenty-five brethren gathered together at the Im Boutique Hotel to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

For the past three years, the Feast in Thailand has been kept in the city of Mae Sot. It is a closed site, only serving the brethren in Thailand. The brethren there are very humble, loving, caring and welcoming. All the brethren live in Thailand. Most of them come from the district of Tha Song Yang, a few live in Mae Sot, and the rest are from Mae La Camp.

The Feast started with a strong recorded message from Mr. Rod King entitled: “Come Let Us Tabernacle with God,”

reminding the brethren of the purpose of the Feast and the lesson that God wants His people to learn. With the focus on the spiritual food, and the millennial picture, the sermons provided the brethren with detailed information of what the Kingdom of God is and how God uses the Holy Days as a tool to teach His people about His master plan.

The brethren were uplifted and spiritually fed by the inspiring messages, and they were also well-fed physically with a variety of good Thai food. The fellowship was great during outdoor activities. However, the highlight of the Feast was the Bible quiz that started with a crossword-puzzle warm-up then ended with questions surrounding this year’s Feast theme. At the end of the quiz, the brethren were so excited that they asked that this kind of activity should be done more often, as it helps them to revisit the scriptures and the notes taken during the sermons, and also provides a way for them to test their own biblical knowledge.

This year’s Feast concluded with great joy as—on the morning of the Last Great Day—Mr. Rajan Moses baptised a new member into the Body of Christ and blessed a child in the afternoon service. Nonetheless, it was with great sadness that we said goodbye to each other, as many of our brethren did not want to go home because of the warm, loving, caring atmosphere of the past eight days. But, we finally did, in the hope that we will see each other again next year at the same time, though maybe in a different place.

We are thankful and grateful for God’s blessings and protection throughout His Feast here in Mae Sot, as it went very well. And as we departed to our dwelling places, we began, once again, preparing for and looking forward to the next year’s Feast.

Penang, Malaysia



The Feast of Tabernacles 2016 was held at the Flamingo Hotel by the Beach. It was a very joyful Feast in Penang for about 78 local and overseas brethren, including children. There were visitors from Australia, the Philippines and the United States.

Ministers and wives present during the Feast were Mr. and Mrs. Michael and Heather Gill from Adelaide, Mr. and

Mrs. Rajan Moses from Kuala Lumpur for the first half of the Feast, and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gonzales for the second half.

During the "Get Together Night," visitors introduced themselves and there were some lively games. An activity for children and teens was conducted in the afternoon of the second day. There were plenty of laughs at the Bible Quiz. At the BBQ night there was happy singing and dancing. The beach games on one of the afternoons had good weather instead of rain. The fun talent show was viewed by an enthusiastic audience. There were acts of singing, dancing, whistling and plays about the ten plagues in Egypt found in the book of Exodus and about the parable of the ten virgins of Matthew chapter 25.

A family Bible study was given by Mr. Gill on Friday night about building the mind of Jesus Christ, using the example of King David, a man after God's own heart. An interesting and amazing tour to the 3D Penang Trick Art Museum in Georgetown City was arranged. The senior buffet luncheon was enjoyed with abundance by 16 seniors.

Adult and children's choirs sang praises to our glorious Creator who gave us His wonderful plan of salvation. There were helpful sermonettes and sermons. There were many occasions to take happy and memorable photos among the brethren. The Blessing of the Children was one such special occasion.

There was a group photo taken by the steps beside the swimming pool after the encouraging 2016 Last Great Day sermon by Dr. Roderick C Meredith.

It was a wonderful Feast picturing God's wonderful Kingdom.

Sakhangyi, Myanmar



This year for the Feast of Tabernacles, about 66 members of God's Church in Myanmar attended in Sakhangyi. Burma (Myanmar) is one of the poorest countries in the world, but God's people came together joyfully.

One of the highlights of the Feast was that our first baptized member of God's Church in Myanmar, who had been baptized in 1972, came to the Feast accompanied by his daughter. We were so happy, and enjoyed the Feast more

powerfully because of this. As the sermon tapes came too late, Mr. Thomas Tial Hoe preached from some of the tapes and booklets we have here. Though the Sakhangyi brethren are of limited means and are but a tiny presence in a country of over 51 million, God did not forsake our Myanmar members.

We kept the Feast with a unified spirit of love, togetherness and selfless service to one another. We ate together, stayed together, listened to the sermons together, and were happy. Our days were joyful, and we enjoyed delicious meals that we never have during the year.

This Feast was an opportunity for the brethren to spend time together, as a *family*. Thank you very much for your help, your assistance and your deep concern for us.

The South Pacific Hanmer Springs, New Zealand



One hundred and sixty-nine Living Church of God brethren and guests enjoyed the stunning Festival site of Hanmer Springs this year for the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. The attendance is a record figure for the Church in New Zealand, which is encouraging! Many commented that the site was the most millennial they have experienced, including some who have been attending the Feast for over 50 years!

The grand snow-capped mountains, stunning turquoise lakes and relaxing thermal pools provided the ideal environment for a millennial context. The brethren were well fed by inspiring sermons from Dr. Scott Winnail and Messrs. Tanner, Niehoff, Leman, and Kearns. It was certainly a privilege to have the Winnail family with us for the first half of the Feast and it was encouraging to see them serving in various ways.

Perhaps the three best social highlights of the Feast were the dinner dance, animal park and talent show, the last of which involved Pacific Islander brethren showcasing amazing dances from various Pacific nations.

What a wonderful Feast it truly was!

Luganville, Vanuatu

The island of Santo is a popular tourist destination, with diving as the principle attraction. The tourist presence in the

township, though, is barely noticeable as the locals go about their daily routines.

This year was the second time the Feast was held at this location and, it was enjoyed by over 100 enthusiastic, happy brethren and their families. Most travelled by ferry from the Islands of Malekula and Efate, with others attending from Australia and Noumea to rejoice before God at His chosen Feast site.

This Feast was very much a family affair, with many children helping to fulfil the objective of a family-oriented Feast. There was much laughter and joy seen clearly on the faces of all who attended. One outstanding feature of the Ni-Vanuatu people is their capacity to enjoy themselves. Our talent evening had full participation and extended well into the night with a variety of acts—over three-and-a-half hours with no intermission.

During the Feast, the brethren experienced a good balance between timely sermon and sermonette messages and the fine fellowship enjoyed on a daily basis. Two beachside picnics were held—one at World Heritage-listed Champagne Beach. The highlight of that picnic was the baptism of a woman from the Port Vila congregation.

Elder Jerry Sam, his wife Colette and all the dedicated brethren did a great job of helping to make this a very memorable Feast indeed. The Last Great Day ended with some very emotional farewells, with brethren lining up to shake hands with the ministry and sermonette men, then in turn with each other. Many photos were taken along the way—many happy memories for the year ahead.

Nelson Bay, New South Wales



The Feast of Tabernacles in Nelson Bay was a wonderful opportunity to be spiritually refreshed, uplifted and made ready for the year ahead. It was a great opportunity for brethren to rediscover the things that matter and to consider the splendour of our magnificent future.

We had a total of 225 Feast-goers, including a wonderful mix of American guests. We were also blessed to have Dr.

Scott Winnail and his family join us for the last half of the Feast, after spending the first half with our brethren in New Zealand.

To help us grasp and appreciate why we were at the Feast, Mr. Rod King spoke about “Catching the Vision” of what it will be like in God’s Kingdom and the roles we will potentially play as spirit beings. Regional Director Mr. Robert Tyler taught us about the coming Kingdom of Peace, Dr. Scott Winnail reminded us about how desperately the world needs the coming Kingdom of God and the role of the firstfruits in God’s Kingdom. The detail that was presented was both encouraging and exciting and this vision of the coming Kingdom became the dominant theme.

Special music was enjoyed every day and ranged from the very young in the Children’s Choir to international performances and the full-blown sounds of the Festival choir, as they sang “Strangers Here Below” by Mark Graham and the rousing “New Heavens, New Earth” by Charles Romer, which only gave more meaning to the vision of the wonderful world ahead.

One memorable moment was when Dr. Winnail presented Mrs. Sondra Tyler with a beautiful clock bearing an inscription honouring Mr. Bruce Tyler’s service, as well as a Living University Certificate dedicated to Mr. Tyler’s service and position as regent with Living University. It was very stirring to watch, as our lives have all been touched by Mr. Tyler’s diligent, loving, devoted service. His memory is ever-present with us.

There were a number of organised activities that included a very successful whale and dolphin tour, which culminated in a magnificent twin breach by two large Humpback whales. Much fun and fellowship was enjoyed at the family picnic, the fellowship dance evening and the sunrise walks.

The Feast in Nelson Bay was filled with inspiring sermonettes, sermons and activities encouraging all to rejoice in the coming kingdom *together* and to most assuredly catch the *glorious* vision as we go forward!

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea



This year's Feast in Papua New Guinea was again held in the capital, Port Moresby. The weather was hot and humid (as is normal for this time of year), and the spirit of togetherness was evident among the 23 brethren attending from around the country.

Brethren enjoyed a Bible quiz, a ladies' afternoon tea, a song-leading session for the men, a special presentation on where the sons of Cush went, and two barbecues around the swimming pool in very balmy conditions in the late afternoon/evening. The brethren also enjoyed several hymn sing-alongs after lunch where the ladies chose the hymns and the men took leading songs, resulting in much joy and merriment for everyone.

Every day, the brethren brought food to share for lunch after services, and many commented on the abundance that we all enjoyed. This Feast was a wonderful opportunity to fellowship with each other, especially with those who came from the more remote areas of the country and who can't meet on a regular basis. Some were attending their first Feast.

Messages focused on learning more about the Kingdom of God and what we need to do to develop our relationship with God and be part of His Family. Many face much difficulty in their lives living God's way, but here at the Feast they found peace and joy.

There was much rejoicing before God and much thankfulness for His protection and provision during the eight days. Everyone is looking forward to the Feast next year.

Western Europe

Carry-le-Rouet, France



Two hundred and forty-two rejoicing Feast-goers, representing 30 different countries and nationalities, gathered in Carry-le-Rouet to keep the Feast this year. Carry-le-Rouet is a seaside resort situated on the spectacular Mediterranean coast, about 30 kilometers from Marseille. All of the members stayed in a Vacaniel, a French resort. This provided the opportunity for "full-time fellowship," as the members ate their meals together, attended services together, and enjoyed most of their activities right at the resort.

Services alternated between French and English, with translations provided into multiple languages for each service. Messrs. Ben Whitfield, Ray Clore, Rees Ellis, David Chornomaz, Adam West and Vincent Larde spoke on many important subjects. During the Sabbath Bible Study, entitled "Jerusalem in the World Tomorrow," Mr. Clore offered a first-hand glimpse into the city of Jerusalem, complete with a slide presentation.

In addition to the strong messages, the brethren were treated to fabulous French cuisine at each meal. There was a host of on-site activities, including a dance lesson and dance, a game-filled family day, arts and crafts, a nearby hike, a park frequented by the children, a lesson in making tapenade, and a variety show showcasing the musical and comic talents of many of our brethren. In the evening, there was a family-friendly bar, complete with table games, at which we could gather and continue the conversation. In addition to this, there were excursions to the picturesque village of Baux-de-Provence, atop the Alpilles Mountains, as well as to the historic town of Arles.

God's hand of protection was clearly seen at the Feast this year. This past July, the hills all around the Feast site experienced a massive wildfire, which stopped exactly where the Vacaniel property started. God spared His Feast site from the devastation. Many brethren enthusiastically stated that this was their "Best Feast Ever!"

Great Malvern, England



Two hundred and fifteen brethren from the United Kingdom and Ireland gathered with visitors from Canada, Honduras, Malta, South Africa, Sweden and the United States in the charming English town of Great Malvern. We enjoyed the blessing of autumnal sunshine as we soaked up the panoramic views from the vantage point of the Abbey Hotel, where services were held.

Feast surveys indicate highlights for many members were the excellent sermons and wonderful, relaxed fellowship,

especially during meals. The attendees' Feast experience was very inspiring, uplifting and motivating and the excellent service from the hotel staff made it all the more enjoyable.

Feast messages meshed together well. Regional Director Mr. Adam West spoke on "The Product of the Kingdom" and "Untying the Knot" before leaving for the French Feast site. Other speakers were Messrs. Wyatt Ciesielka, John Strain, John Meakin and the Festival Site Coordinator, Mr. Simon Roberts.

The planned activities included the Avoncroft Historic Building Museum, which provided a chance to practice hands-on temporary dwelling construction skills like brick-making and wattle-and-daub techniques. Also, many enjoyed the eclectic Hampton Court Castle and gardens. A tour of the Morgan Cars factory was a highlight, providing an opportunity to see traditional sports cars built by hand. An evening family dance with Cole Valley Ceilidh Band, ice skating, two millennial-themed children's art activities and a sports afternoon rounded off the events.

Delightful special music was provided by piano and vocal soloists, as well as the Festival and Children's Choirs. Thanks to all those who, officially and unofficially, quietly served others at the Feast to make it so successful—it certainly contributed to the atmosphere of unity and outgoing concern experienced by so many of our wonderful brethren.

Africa

Badagry, Nigeria

Thanks to the Eternal God for the joy, provision and assurance He gave the brethren who were able to observe this year's Feast of Tabernacles in Nigeria.

We had planned to observe the Feast on a government facility this year. However, just three months before the Feast, the management of the facility reneged on the agreement we reached with them. Therefore, we had to start looking for alternatives, eventually choosing to return to a familiar facility we had used for three years—Soketta Hotels, in the historical town of Badagry, near Lagos.

We enjoyed the uplifting messages by way of sermon DVDs from Charlotte, supplemented by spiritual messages presented locally. The messages were well received by the brethren, who realized the importance of the Feast of Tabernacles in helping us "rehearse" the Way of God as we prepare for His soon-coming Kingdom.

Mr. Oladele Akin-Ogundeji organised an interactive workshop/class on "Proverbs for Living." The interactive class examined the purpose of the book of Proverbs, learning wisdom early, the difference between worldly and godly wisdom, key benefits of godly wisdom, dealing with peer/social pressure (including social media), and gleaning wisdom from everyday living. Brethren also enjoyed indoor games and an

uplifting sing-along. Some of our brethren from nearby Cotonou, in the Republic of Benin, once again came to celebrate the Feast with their brethren in Nigeria.

The Eternal God commanded us to rejoice before Him. He made it possible!

Kendu Bay, Kenya



Over 500 brethren from Kenya together with visitors from Uganda and Ethiopia gathered together to observe the Feast of Tabernacles at the property of the Church in Kendu Bay, close by the shores of Lake Victoria. One Kenyan travelled from Dubai, where he has been working to be able to attend the Feast.

A feature of the Feast this year was the introduction of a Spokesman's Club to the Kenyans as a means of developing leadership within the Church. As only one Kenyan member has ever experienced a Spokesman's Club, a video was taken of the Charlotte Spokesman's Club meeting as a way of introduction. Commentary to provide a context for the club activity was provided. Two visitors from the United States served as club officers. They were appointed to be the president and vice president for the meeting and took leading roles for both the Table Topics and Toast Master duties. The result was a very enjoyable afternoon for all, with the rest of the congregation watching eagerly from the sidelines. The immediate question was when could they have another meeting. So another club was arranged for the Sunday afternoon, allowing some of the local men to act as officers and lead as Topics Master and Toast Master. Kenyans of all ages were keen to take part in the clubs.

Health problems at the Feast this year, especially from malaria, were at a minimum, enabling the brethren to rejoice. Problems the Kenyans face include taking children out of school for the Feast period. One congregation had put real effort into working with school principals in their area and were successful in establishing a great example for the rest of the congregations. Almost all of the children from that congregation were able to attend the Feast.

At Kendu Bay, the majority of the brethren sleep in tents and services are held under a large marquee. An occasional torrential rainstorm is common during the Feast. Keeping water from pooling on the roof of the marquee is important to prevent collapse. This year a rainstorm came through early in the Feast, catching people unaware and necessitating much drying of bedding and clothes. Being only 20 kilometers from the equator, the daytime temperatures soon took care of that need. A second rainstorm a few days later found the brethren ready for a deluge.

The Feast videos were well received by the brethren. Videos had to be shown in the evenings, as the sides of the marquee needed to remain open during the daytime for ventilation. The bright colors of the marquee illuminated by the bright sunshine cast interesting hues on the people attending services!

Brethren and families departed from the Feast excited by the opportunity of knowing the plans of our Heavenly Father and having a part in their fulfillment. One enthusiastic Feast-goer wrote a message that speaks to their takeaway this year: "This year's Feast of Tabernacles was a wonderful one ever since creation. We need to commit our lives to Christ and always meditate upon His Holy Scripture. Thank you [for introducing] unto us the Ambassador Spokesman club, which we really enjoyed."

Ukerewe, Tanzania



Brethren had a very lovely and uplifting Feast in Ukerewe Island, Tanzania. The event took place at the Monarch Beach Resort, which is situated along Lake Victoria. About 100 individuals attended, including children.

The spiritual food all pointed to the coming of God's Kingdom, the purpose of the Festivals, the meaning of the Holy Days and the life Christians should live in order to enter God's Kingdom. Dr. Meredith's closing message was read by Mr. Cooper and translated by Mr. Mwanzia for the benefit of all who were present.

It was a pleasure to have Mr. and Mrs. Cooper from Ireland, Mr. and Mrs. Cegelski from California, Mr. and Mrs.

Abok from Kendu Bay Kenya and Mr. Jacob Hall from the Church Headquarters for a day's visit. It was short but profitable. Mr. Cegelski's comments on faith were very encouraging, as he told the incident about his daughter's fingertip being cut off in a slamming door. He said the doctor told them that there was only a two-percent chance that the fingertip would heal properly after attaching it back. But he said they all prayed, family and friends, and God restored the finger to good health.

There were two messages from two different elders regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. Mr. Hall gave a sermonette on hope and encouraged everyone to use the Feasts to strengthen our hope. The Blessing of the Children took place on the Last Great Day, and twelve children were blessed by Messrs. Cooper, Muthama and Mwanzia.

The seniors' dinner was held on Sunday in the dining room at the Monarch Beach Resort with 13 members in attendance. Other activities throughout the week included a talent night, swimming, canoeing, a visit to Church meeting sites and properties, and many walks in the surrounding area.

Everyone had a wonderful Feast, and some have expressed that it was the best Feast and site they have attended.

Port Shepstone, South Africa

With the rolling hills, green shrubbery and banana trees providing a picturesque backdrop and the friendly Indian Ocean contributing to the festive milieu, 146 brethren gathered at the Banana Beach Holiday Resort in Port Shepstone for the fifth year running. Most of the brethren stayed in the resort, which made fellowshiping at short notice an everyday occurrence. Early morning services left ample time for activities in the afternoon. Sermons were given by the visiting speaker, Mr. Jim Meredith, and Messrs. Louis Bouwer, Roger Herbert and Lawdi Ferreira.

The spiritual menu was supplemented by diverse physical activities. The "first-timers" function was held at the close of the first Holy Day, which is a custom that allows those who are attending the Feast for the first time to get to know the ministers and their families and to share their stories about how they came to learn about the Truth.

While the senior citizens enjoyed a scrumptious catered lunch on Tuesday, the kiddies got playfully creative, and the singles and youth went to Lake Eland for zip-lining, which was not for the fainthearted. On Wednesday, the weather turned out beautifully for the traditional family day *braai* (barbecue) at the nearby Marlon Resort. There were games to keep the young ones entertained, and the older folks all relaxed under the thatched lapa and around the swimming pool while the younger men cooked all the meat. On Friday, we arranged an outing to Mac Banana, a banana plantation outside Margate, where a lecture was given on bananas and a visit was paid to the butterfly dome.

Friday evening activities started with a Bible Study on building character through developing soft skills, and the evening was rounded off with a Bible Quiz in which the Banana team triumphed.

The Feast was over too soon, and on the Last Great Day as everybody said their goodbyes, many were already looking forward to seeing their friends, new and old, again next year.

Stilbaai, South Africa



The venue for the Feast of Tabernacles this year for the Western Cape, South Africa was Stilbaai, also known as the Bay of Sleeping Beauty. The average attendance was 156 with visitors from Australia, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

Activities included a horseback safari for the young singles, shark diving, a seniors' luncheon, a traditional *braai* (barbecue) at the family day and—a first in LCG South Africa—a family dance. All activities were very well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A true Philadelphian spirit was very evident throughout the Feast, as brethren used every opportunity to fellowship. The messages were very positive, directing us to the soon-coming Kingdom of God, encouraging us to develop the mind of Christ and those abilities He is going to need in us to be able to help restore a physically devastated humanity. But, more importantly, we learned more about how to teach mankind God's laws and thus restore their relationship with God the Father.

The facilities in Stilbaai have already been booked for the 2017 Feast—all visitors are more than welcome to join us next year!

Afagnan, Togo

We held the first Feast of Tabernacles of the Living Church of God in Afagnan, Togo this year, with a high attendance of 29. Services were held in the hotel Chic Millennium and were led by local video recipient, Mr. Koffi Martin. Recorded sermons in French were viewed every day. Speakers included Dr. Meredith via recorded video, and Messrs. Yvon Brochu, Rees Ellis and Jean Matte. Attendees shared a meal together on the first day of the Feast and on the Last Great Day.

South Asia

Kalutara, Sri Lanka



Twenty-three brethren representing six countries—Sri Lanka, India, Canada, Puerto Rico, the United States and Australia—kept God's Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day in a beautiful tropical setting by the ocean, at the Hibiscus Hotel in Kalutara, South Coast, Sri Lanka.

They were all well-fed—spiritually as well as physically—with many culinary delights being served by the hotel on a daily basis. Sermons focusing the brethren towards our Creator and the Millennium were given by Messrs. Kuma De Silva, Zig Svalbe and Malcolm Jennings.

The hotel staff was delightful and waited on our group with a smile. The room boys—not to be outdone—decorated our beds daily with fresh hibiscus and frangipani flowers and with amazing towel creations of swans, elephants, turtles and monkeys. Frogs, tortoises and a variety of fish in the lotus pond adjacent to the restaurant delighted the guests and the sounds of a variety of birds were ever-present. A family of monkeys prancing in the surrounding gardens was a common feature.

Activities during the Feast included a visit to a turtle hatchery, where holding baby and adult turtles was a real treat. It also included a visit to the historic Galle Fort, first built by the Portuguese in 1588 and then fortified extensively by the Dutch from 1649 onwards, with the original solid stone churches and buildings still standing today. Shopping within those malls and arcades was an interesting experience. Other Feast activities included daily pre-breakfast beach walks for the early risers, an energetic cricket match, a “Fun and Games” afternoon, a seniors' luncheon, a talent night filled with talent and a stimulating “Bible Quiz” night were enjoyed by all the brethren.

Some visitors had the opportunity to purchase jewelry consisting of locally mined and cut gems, while others were given gifts of gems by the local gem-shop owner.

The brethren in Sri Lanka look forward with eager anticipation to having more visitors attend the Feast 2017, as they are unable to travel overseas. For those who missed out this year, an after-Feast trip can provide a wonderful, enriching experience in Sri Lanka—an island rich in colour and tropical beauty and with a history dating back to Biblical times. (L)

Compiled from reports from many individuals, including Oladele Akin-Ogundeji, Michael Aviles, Rodger Bardo, Frank Best, Peter Chan, Michael DeSimone, Rees Ellis, Brandon Fall, Deanna Firth, Edgar Guerra, Jacob Hall, Graeme Hemphill, Gene Hilgenberg, Thomas Tial Hoe, Lehman Lyons, Antonio Mora, Armando Orrego, Gabriel Ortega, Jove Jean-Pierre, Tony Levy, Deborah Lincoln Strange, Madeleine Lincoln-Strange, William Long, Koffi Martin, Simon Muthama, Arius Nusantara, Wilner Pierre, Ron Poole, Simon Roberts, George Schaubeck, Gary Stein, Robert Tyler, Dexter Wakefield, Barry Walker, Damian Weekes, and Ian West. Our apologies to those who contributed but whose names are not listed above. Our thanks to them and to our many photographers!



From a “Lion” of a Storm to a “Lizard with an Attitude”

Following the hurricane on the East Coast that caused the cancellation at Hilton Head’s Feast site, meteorologists were predicting the “storm of the century” on the other side of the country, as the tail end of a powerful typhoon was scheduled to hit the Pacific Northwest. As many brethren were traveling to Seaside for the Feast, hurricane-level winds and resulting widespread power outages were forecast for the weekly Sabbath of October 15.

As we prepared for those Sabbath services, with flashlights and lanterns handy, Dr. Jeffrey Fall gave a sermon ironically titled “Light in the Darkness.” Even though power outages were predicted, services continued as scheduled and were broadcast over the Internet to the Pacific Northwest congregations with only a flicker of the lights (which seemed to dramatize the point he was making). The lights stayed on and continued to stay on for the entire Feast!

As local station KOMO reported, “What was computed—even as of Saturday morning—to rank among the region’s greats ended up woefully under developing. What was supposed to be a lion turned out to be something more along the lines of a lizard with maybe a bit of an attitude... [A]s the storm reached the spot to develop as predicted, it started strengthening. And then, something strange happened, it didn’t go as strong as forecast—ending up much weaker than even the most pessimistic forecast model had predicted.”

While meteorologists were puzzled, saying that they would be pouring over the question of what went wrong with their forecasts “for quite some time,” all of us *knew* “what went wrong” and were energized and thankful for God’s merciful intervention.

—Brandon Fall

Testimonials from Feast Families at Seaside:

“We were at the Best Western the Friday before the Feast. We got a call from the front desk giving us the warning to be prepared for high winds. The hotel general manager informed us that the local sirens had gone off, warning the locals of 100 mile per hour winds. We were advised to stay away from windows and glass. The wind picked up, but the ominous storm never came!”

“On the Tuesday before the Feast, two of our families were traveling together. After experiencing the Giant Redwoods, we stopped for the night at a hotel in Crescent City, California. When checking in, the hotel manager asked where we were headed... Upon telling him we were going to Seaside, Oregon, he immediately became very concerned, and suggested that we change our plans. He proceeded to tell us that there was a major storm due to hit the Oregon coast, with forecasted high winds

of 100 mph plus, as well as very high waves. He said it was unknown as to the damage it could bring, again suggesting we wait it out before proceeding. We thanked him, but continued to the Feast the next morning.’

“In speaking to one of the friendly staff members at the Best Western Resort in Seaside, I commented that, while we were prepared for electrical outages, we were pleasantly surprised to not have the storm fulfill all the expectations for the area! She animatedly commented that they were very appreciative also, and that this ‘storm of the century’ was scheduled to come directly to Seaside. Interestingly, she further said that as this major storm headed directly toward Seaside, it suddenly split into two fronts of near-tornado type winds, hitting 12 miles north and 12 miles south of Seaside! She was amazed—as was I, but I instantly felt very blessed and protected by our Great God!”



Storm of the Century, or Collective Sigh of Relief?

The following was the experience of one Church of God couple as they drove into a potentially dangerous storm, only to arrive safe and sound at the Seaside Feast site:

As we were traveling by car to the Feast site in Seaside, Oregon this year, we kept a close eye on what was being called “the storm of the century” that loomed just off the Pacific coastline of California, Oregon and Washington. On Thursday, October 13, we started encountering the early rain and wind bands from the storm as we explored the California countryside on U.S. Highway 101. We had alternating weather

from rainy and windy to just cloudy throughout the day, but as night fell we ran into more severe conditions. We concluded our daily trek earlier than we had planned because of the increasing gusts and downfalls, along with debris that was being ripped from the towering redwoods.

Reasoning that the storm would be less intense farther inland, we re-routed our course along Interstate 5. The plan was a success for a while, but—again—we started experiencing the powerful energy that the storm was exhibiting in its advance to land. One band that we survived in the Salem area brought such a torrent of rain, accompanied by an unyielding wall of wind, that traffic was forced to slow to a safer speed in an effort to handle the raging conditions. With sheets of water spraying from vehicles, veritable buckets of rain falling from

the storm clouds and blasts of hurricane-force wind, we could feel our vehicle fighting to hold traction on the highway. The trip that we felt would be an easy jaunt became an extended challenge.

After reaching Portland later than we had previously planned, we regrouped and turned our attention toward Seaside, knowing that surely more of the same was in store. As we travelled along Oregon Highway 26 toward our destination, however, conditions improved. Rain and wind continued, but not the ferocious nature that we had seen. We arrived in Seaside to just a gentle ocean breeze and a misty drizzle, and we thanked God for an all-the-more tremendous Feast experience.

—Lehman B. Lyons, Jr.

“We will one day be the builders”

The Feast in Haiti was an opportunity to witness—in advance—the destruction and hardship that all humanity will face before the return of Jesus Christ. The brethren in Haiti understand this more than most. For example, in 2010, the brethren were protected from one of the most destructive earthquakes in history. On the Sabbath following the earthquake, all the brethren showed up for services with thanksgiving and a positive attitude.

Right before the Feast of Trumpets *this year*, their faith was tested again as Hurricane Matthew approached the island, heading toward the western part of the country where most of the brethren live, where Sabbath services are held, and where one of the two 2016 Feast sites in Haiti was located. I cancelled Holy Day services to make sure no one was traveling throughout the early afternoon and evening. That evening, the hurricane turned towards the rural southern part of the country. The brethren there had planned to travel to the western part of the country to keep the Feast with those brethren—however, no one could keep the Feast at that site as planned: the main bridge leading to the Feast venue was completely destroyed, and the facility itself was also damaged by the extensive flooding. The search for a new Feast site began immediately.

Again, the brethren remained positive and determined to have the best Feast ever. God blessed them and put His name on a brand-new resort hotel in the western part, where the

brethren enjoyed a physical Feast of all-inclusive food and beverage for the entire eight days of the Feast. The rebuilding of all nations under the rule of Jesus Christ became the theme of the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles in Haiti, and we were able to understand more fully the true meaning of this aspect of our future responsibilities.

It was just two days before the Feast that I was able to reach the brethren in the southern part of the country. The local elder and one of the deacons traveled with me through the mountains and flooding. I had not been able to contact any of the brethren there but when the three of us arrived, we found that no one had been hurt. However, several brethren had lost all of their property. They will relocate and rebuild in other areas.

For these brethren to keep the Feast, we were able to use a facility they have used in the past, in an area where there was no damage. Keeping the Feast in this area of Haiti is a reminder of how the Feast was kept during the early years of the Church, when the brethren camped out in temporary dwellings. I was also able to assist brethren who needed help to keep the Feast. All Feast activities continued as planned. Under the most difficult circumstances, the brethren still organized the choir, talent show, arts and crafts for the children, and family dance right under the stars. Despite what was going on around them, the brethren remained positive, and encouraged and helped one another to enjoy the Feast.

As I had approached the devastated area of the southern tip of the country before the Feast, I wondered what I could say to encourage the brethren. But instead, they encouraged me, with their ability to endure, their humility, and their attitude of looking forward to Tomorrow's World, no matter how difficult it may be right now in this present age. As one of the brethren put it, “We must endure hardship, because God has a greater plan for the rebuilding of this nation, and we will one day be the builders. What a great task just ahead.”

—Wilner Pierre



FAMILY continued from page 2

for a few thousand dollars—and, remember, the dollar was worth five or six times more back then than it is today! So my father—the normally “tough guy”—shed tears when he showed us the envelopes that had poured in from all across the nation from “family” who heard about their sister’s illness and knew that our family *needed help*.

In God’s Church, we *also* need to “be family” in similar circumstances. I will always remember how so many Church brethren in the early days of this Work helped us—young men going out from the college—and took us in as “family” in many, many different circumstances. When Owen Smith, Ken Herrmann and I went up to Oregon to work in the woods during the summer of 1950, Mr. and Mrs. David Henion truly “took us in” and treated us as family. They had only met us once or twice at the Feast of Tabernacles. But they knew we were in God’s Church and in “Mr. Armstrong’s college” and knew we were part of the Work. Mrs. Henion, formerly a country woman from Oklahoma, had to get up at 5:00 or 5:30 each morning to have the wood stove burning, make things ready and prepare breakfast for us before we were off to work. Finally, as we were able to get further out in the woods working with a particular crew, we would come back to the Henion home only on weekends to get a warm shower and *much better food*, and to be part of a “family” atmosphere. It was certainly inspiring to see the warmth and the love of these people who simply knew that we were “God’s young men” and part of a “family” in that sense.

Time after time, different brethren pitched in and helped us and took care of us—and each other—in similar circumstances. It was an experience I will *never forget*.

Describing how he, Timothy and Silvanus had helped the brethren in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write: “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:7-10).

As you read the above verses, you can see the “family spirit” coming forth as Paul tried to help and exhort these people as a “**father**” does his own children. He worked for them, served them and gave them love and encouragement as well as *physical help* in every way he could. We are to treat one another in the same manner. We may not always have the physical facilities or money to take in others. But many of us *can* and **should** do this in the future more than ever. How will **you**

react when real trials and tests come and some of your brethren are *going hungry*, or are thrown in prison, or are terribly sick and need prayers and help?

How Will You Respond?

One of the most powerful exhortations on this in the entire Bible is found in Matthew 25 in the very words of the Son of God: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:31-46).

Notice that Jesus Christ *powerfully instructs us*, as His servants, to feed the hungry, take in strangers, nurture the sick, visit those in prison and help those “in trouble” in every way we can. He tells those doubters who try to water down what He was saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, **you did it to Me**” (v. 40). When you take in brethren or *any human being* in this kind of circumstance, you are taking in and helping *Jesus Christ* Himself! We all need to meditate on this and try to “do better” in the way we help and serve one another. Brethren, *pray fervently about this* and ask God to help us to demonstrate—in every way we can—a more complete “family spirit” in the way we interact with each other and treat one another.

Dear brethren, let us all try to develop an even greater

sense of love, warmth and enthusiasm, and a total outflowing and “giving” spirit in the way we interact with another. This will not be easy. Do not “kid” yourself. Our natural tendency is to be selfish and to take care of “self” *first* and others *last*.

But with the help of God’s Spirit and *Christ living in us*, we can *and must*, as a church, develop a total warm, loving, *joyous* approach to giving of ourselves to one another, knowing that we are in that way *serving Christ Jesus Himself*—and knowing that we will be “rewarded” for **all eternity** if we learn to **give** instead of “get” and develop a genuine warm, loving, joyous

“family spirit” in the Church of God more than we have ever done before.

Let us “*take action*” **now**! For the times of trials and tests are coming upon us within the next few years. Again, we will “need” each other. We will “need” to have the help, the warmth, the encouragement and the physical necessities that we can share with each other in time to come. Let us not *fail* to serve Jesus Christ Himself, as *He* is present in each one of these situations. As Jesus said, “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the **least** of these My brethren, you *did it to Me*” (Matthew 25:40). (LN)

WHAT LIES AHEAD? continued from page 4

every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23).

Nearer the end of the apostolic period, God inspired the Apostle Paul to command Titus to follow the same pattern and to “appoint” elders in the Church of God. He instructed Titus: “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint** elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:1-5).

So we have an *unbroken succession* of examples and even **commands** by God’s true servants to “appoint” those in authority within the Government of God! **Why** is it so difficult for some to understand? **Why** are they unwilling to follow the clear instruction of their Creator in this vital matter which concerns our preparation for the very job we will soon be doing as “kings and priests” in the Government of Christ in Tomorrow’s World?

Brethren, it all gets back to a matter of **faith**! For we should absolutely **believe** that Christ is, in fact, the living

Head of the Church of God. **He** will guide those whom He is using to do His Work and teach His Truth. **He** is responsible to be sure that they are the right ones for that time. *He* is ultimately responsible for guiding these situations! So let us in this Work move forward in absolute **faith** in Christ’s leadership and sincerely respond to those whom He puts in office in His Church and in His Work today!

After much prayer, meditation and counsel, I have been led to appoint Mr. Gerald Weston as the future leader of this present Work, which Christ used me to raise up some 24 years ago. I hope all of you can *understand that* and have genuine **faith** that God will guide Mr. Weston and guide His Church and Work *through* him as a human leader, and I hope you will give him every bit of your help, cooperation and loyalty in the years ahead. Let us all *actually do this*—believing in **faith** that Christ is in charge of His Church and guiding these things and that we will be rewarded **forever** in God’s coming Government if we learn to respond to His leadership and His Church in this life.

Brethren, as I approach the end of my life, I want to do *all I can* to prepare for the Living Church of God to continue in good shape for many, many more years. So I will appreciate all of you trying to “walk with God,” as I have preached for so long in so many sermons. *If* we do that, I am sure that God will guide and bless this Work and will help us to have a far greater impact in the years yet ahead. We may have *several* more years to continue the Work. So we must *never* let down, *never* turn aside, **never** give up! Let us pray fervently for this and for God’s Kingdom to come soon. (LN)

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Church of God as your charity. You can then purchase the *same* products at the *same* prices, but Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase to LCG. This is a free, easy way for you to generate donations to the Church, and, if we all do this, it could result in thousands of

dollars a year in extra contributions that we can put to work preaching the Gospel around the world. Thank you for your prayers and your support of God’s Work!

—Wyatt Ciesielka

Reaching the World

The Internet is an exciting tool the Church has to preach the gospel to the whole world. At the same time, it presents unique challenges. We have always presented the truth free of charge and will continue to do so; however, when we post everything we have on our websites with no means of knowing who is reading our material, this creates some difficulties.

For example, we were on television for over four years in Hong Kong until the station ceased operations. During that time we had thousands of people responding to the telecast by going to our H.K. website. And without a cost-effective telephone service, we were not able to capture names, addresses, etc. except for a few hundred that signed up for a monthly e-mail newsletter. We embarked on that initiative as an act of faith and because we are commissioned to go to the whole world, and we knew that we would not be able to do things in Hong Kong or China like we do in the “Western” World, but the result is that we have no idea who these people were and no way of contacting them. If we had their e-mail addresses, we could have informed them of a new offer, a new station, or a *Tomorrow’s World* Presentation. The

same is true in India, where our primary source for people responding to our telecast is by means of our website.

We have encouraged people everywhere to sign up for our digital magazine, but when the whole magazine is already on our website and therefore available without subscribing, there is little incentive to do so. What we plan to do going forward is to offer a portion of the magazine on our websites, but if one wants to read the whole magazine right away, one must subscribe (thus giving us an e-mail address). Otherwise, he must call or write for a hard copy subscription. We will still make the whole magazine available after the next issue comes out so it will still be available, but with a delay for some articles for as much as two months.

In addition, we hope to offer enhancements—additional material that will be available with a digital subscription. The intent in all this is not to take away, but to give more to the subscribers and to make it possible for us to better serve these individuals going forward.

The reason for this announcement is to inform all of our members the reasons for these changes. This is not unusual in today’s Internet world. We will remain different from others in that we still provide everything free of charge.

—Gerald Weston

Weddings & Anniversaries

John Henry Wheeler and **Patricia Anne Sheehan** were united in marriage on Sunday, August 21 by Mr. Rick Stafford in Houston, Texas. Family, friends, food, unique wedding music and a touch of humor all combined to help make the event even more special. The couple attends services in Houston, where they reside.

Michael Patterson and **Susan Twigg** were united in marriage on November 20 at the beautiful Apple Mountain Golf and Ski Resort in Freeland, Michigan. The ceremony, conducted by Area Pastor Bill Long, was followed by an elegant meal and reception. The groom is the son of Franz and Christina Boehm of Traverse City, Michigan, and the bride is the

daughter of George and Janet Twigg of Freeland, Michigan. Mr. and Mrs. Patterson now reside in Grawn, Michigan and attend the Traverse City congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambert (Nancy) Greer celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on September 3 with the Louisville, Kentucky congregation. They were surprised with many handcrafted gifts by the talented local brethren, including an embroidered family tree and a beautiful painting. Following the celebration, many of the brethren joined the Greers at one of their favorite local restaurants. Several of the other congregations in Mr. Greer’s pastorate helped them celebrate their anniversary, either before or after the actual date. The Greers were deeply touched by the outpouring of love that was shown to them by their Church family.

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 lcnc@lcn.org).

Mr. and Mrs. John (Sandra) Nolan celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on November 10. They met in Buffalo, New York, while in their late teens and were married in 1956. In 1969 they were both baptized into God's Church. Mr. and Mrs. Nolan attend the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Barnie (Annabel) Henderson of the Temple, Texas congregation celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary on December 19. The happy couple were married in 1953. Their one son, Barnie Allen, and one grandson, Edward James, celebrated this wonderful milestone with them.

Births

Lydia Celeste Lopez was born to Erwin and Courtney Lopez on March 18. She weighed 7 pounds 9 ounces and was 19.25 inches long. Her two older brothers and the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation are happy to have a new addition to the family!

Michael and Gina Heykoop of the Mississauga, Ontario congregation are pleased to announce the birth of **Joel Allan Willem Heykoop** on June 18. Baby Joel weighed 8 pounds 12 ounces and was welcomed with great excitement by his older sisters Makayla (5) and Aria (2).

Thomas and Abigail Plagenza of the Big Sandy, Texas congregation are happy to announce the birth of their baby girl, **Lyla Jayne Morgan Plagenza**, on August 3. She weighed 6 pounds 9 ounces and was 20.5 inches long. Her happy grandparents are Shawn and Tasha Plagenza and David and Margie Crockett, all of the Big Sandy congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard (Mandy) Roth of the Homer, Alaska congregation are glad to announce their second child, **Noah**

David Zachary Roth, born on August 26. Noah weighed 9 pounds and was 21 inches long. Parents, grandparents, and big sister, Stephanie, are all very happy.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe (Jessica) Matherly of the Indianapolis, Indiana congregation are delighted to announce the birth of their son **Raylan Jameson Matherly**. He was born on September 7, weighing 6 pounds 10 ounces and measuring 19.5 inches long. The happy grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Don (Linda) Matherly of Indiana and Mr. and Mrs. Lee Roy (Lori) Hall of Texas. Raylan was also welcomed home by his ecstatic big brother Jackson.

Ryan and Lisa Patterson of the Dallas, Texas congregation were blessed with their first child, **Ava Anne Patterson**, on October 3. She weighed 7 pounds 7 ounces and was 20 inches long. Everyone is amused by her many expressions and happy personality. Ava's grandparents are Franz and Christina Boehm of the Traverse City, Michigan, congregation and Alan and Pat Oberlander of the Omaha, Nebraska congregation.

Valentin and Debra Celan of the Dallas, Texas congregation are grateful to announce the birth of their second child, **Adalynn Grace Celan**, on November 22. She weighed 8 pounds 1 ounce and was 19.5 inches long. The physical and spiritual family is delighted by the new addition, including big sister Savannah who is (for now) a happy and curious observer.

Karl and Lacey Harmdierks of the Dallas, Texas congregation are excited to announce the birth of **Hayley Ann Harmdierks**. She arrived on Saturday, November 26, weighed 7 pounds 11 ounces, and was 21.5 inches long. Dad and Mom are thrilled with the arrival of their first child.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard (Marissa) Barnard of the Homer, Alaska congregation welcomed their first child into the world on October 27. **Richard Nathaniel Gottlieb Barnard** weighed 6 pounds 9 ounces and was 19.25 inches long. Little Nathaniel was originally due on Atone-ment, so everyone anxiously anticipated his arrival throughout the Feast.

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Susan Rosenberger Derstine, 72, of Wilmington, North Carolina, died November 27 at her home with her husband and daughter by her side. She is survived by her husband, Mr. Carl Landis Derstine, one daughter, Lisa Bapst and her husband, three grandchildren, four sisters, and three brothers. Mrs. Derstine grew up in Pennsylvania, working in the family dairy business. She married her husband in 1963, and they moved to Wilmington in 1968. Mrs. Derstine dedicated herself to serving her family and others. She also loved gardening and had a great interest in nutrition. In many respects, she personified the Proverbs 31 woman, and her deep faith expressed itself in her fine example. Her wonderful sense of humor and special grace will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour conducted her funeral on December 1.

Beloved local elder in the Atlanta, Georgia congregation, **Mr. James English**, died on December 3 after a three-year battle with cancer. He was 72 years of age. Baptized into God's Church in 1982, he was ordained an elder in 2010 after serving as a deacon for seven years. He will be remembered for his kindness, courtesy and positive attitude. He leaves behind his wife of 25 years, Mrs. Burnetta English, two sons and a daughter, three step-children, 20 grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. Regional pastor Dan Hall conducted the funeral service to an overflowing chapel of family members, brethren, friends and neighbors.

Mr. John V. Bogard, Jr., 66, died of a massive heart attack on December 22, 2014, just a month short of his 25th wedding anniversary. Mr. Bogard received his Bachelor of Science degree in Physics and Mathematics in 1973 from Rio Grande College in Jackson, Ohio. In spite of being legally blind, he taught himself Computer Science and was Network Administrator for the Pomeroy County Highway Department until his retirement. He enjoyed nine years of a busy and productive retirement. Mr. Bogard was baptized in 1979. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, and is also greatly missed by the Ripley, West Virginia brethren. Mr. Paul Shumway presided over the memorial service.

Mrs. Melvie Maxwell, 91, died peacefully in her sleep on June 24. She and her late husband, Darcey, were faithful members of God's Church in Tasmania and remained committed to the end. Mrs. Maxwell will be missed by all who knew and respected her. She finished her race, and as Ecclesiastes 7:1 says, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth...."

Mrs. Rosalia Sagayno, 72, of the Mauswagon congregation in the Philippines died August 6 of cardiac arrest. Mrs. Sagayno is survived by her husband, Amado Sagayno, and six children. She will be greatly missed by her family, brethren and friends. Mr. Freddie Benitez conducted the funeral.

Mrs. Ezola Alford, 91, of the Atlanta, Georgia congregation died peacefully at her home on September 5 with daughter Avis Lucas by her side. Mrs. Alford began keeping the Sabbath in the 1960s and was baptized in 2012. Regional Pastor Dan Hall conducted the funeral service. Mrs. Alford had a special love for her Church family and seldom missed a Church gathering. Her favorite subject of conversation was the Kingdom of God, and she often compared the troubles of this world with the promised peace of tomorrow's world. Her family and Church family will miss her warm smile and positive outlook. She is survived by daughters Gamore and Avis, son Fred (Jackie), brother Sheddric, four grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Elva Russell Sedliacik died at age 83 on October 20 from breast cancer. Thankfully, she did not suffer much pain while her health deteriorated. Her spirit is now "asleep," awaiting the resurrection at Christ's soon-coming return. Mrs. Sedliacik went to Ambassador College in Pasadena, California at age 17 to learn more about God's ways and to help Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong preach the Gospel to all the nations. She committed her life to God and was baptized at that young age. She was married to Richard Sedliacik for 53 years, until his death in 2010. Mrs. Sedliacik is survived by three sons, Richard (Alisa), Roderick and Joseph. Her family and Church family greatly miss her and look forward to seeing her at the return of Jesus Christ—may God speed that day!

Mr. Charles J. Collins, a long-time deacon in the Dallas, Texas congregation, died at the age of 88 on November 13. He was preceded in death by just 29 days by his wife of 68 years, **Virgie Lee Collins**, a long-time deaconess. Mrs. Collins died peacefully at home on October 14, at the age of 86. Mr. and Mrs. Collins were married in 1948 and started listening to the

Truth on the radio in 1957. They were both baptized on the Feast of Trumpets in 1961. They had three children: Charles, a deacon in the Dallas congregation; Dennis, of Apopka, Florida; and daughter Candace Davenport, of Midland, Texas. They had nine grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. Alfredo Oteda was ordained a deacon on May 14 by Pastor Kinnear Penman and Elder Basilio Osillos. Mr. Oteda serves in the Puerto Princesa City congregation in the Philippines.

Mr. Prudencio Cara was ordained a deacon on June 23 by Australasia Regional Pastor Rob Tyler and Pastor Kinnear Penman. Mr. Cara serves in the Baguio congregation in the Philippines.

Mr. John Elliott and **Mr. Johnny McKinney** were ordained deacons on September 10 by Pastor Ben Whitfield and Elder Shawn McMillin. Mr. Elliott serves in the Colorado Springs congregation and Mr. McKinney in the Denver, Colorado congregation.

Mr. Patrick Wallace was ordained an elder and **Mr. Ryan van der Watt** was ordained a deacon on October 1 by Elders Jim Meredith, Louis Bouwer and Lawdi Ferreira. Mr. Wallace and Mr. van der Watt serve in the Pretoria, South Africa congregation.

Mrs. Connie Baz was ordained a deaconess on October 3 by Area Pastor John Strain, Pastor Randall Kobernat and Elder Ron Peterson.

Mrs. Baz serves in the Tampa, Florida congregation.

Mr. Brian Davidson and **Mr. Leif Kareliusson** were ordained deacons and **Mrs. Kay Crawford** and **Mrs. Mary Schildtknecht** were ordained deaconesses by Pastor Sheldon Monson and Elders Buzz Marvel, Ray Clore and Larry Alverio on October 3. Mr. Davidson and Mr. Kareliusson serve in the Washington, DC congregation, and Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Schildtknecht serve in the Baltimore, Maryland congregation.

On October 3, Evangelist Gerald Weston, Pastor Dan Hall, and Elders Richard Grimes and Hugh Stewart made several ordinations. **Mr. Gaspar (Rick) Bordonaro**, who serves in the Macon, Georgia congregation, was ordained an elder, **Mr. Matthew Ellison**, who serves in the Atlanta congregation, was ordained a deacon, **Mr. Jeffrey Lamm and his wife, Andrea**, who also serve in the Atlanta congregation, were ordained deacon and deaconess, and **Dr. Howard Woodard and his wife, Linda Joy**, who serve in the Macon, Georgia congregation, were ordained deacon and deaconess.

Mr. William (Tom) Young and his wife, Kelly, were ordained deacon and deaconess on October 3 by Pastor Ed Breaux and Elder Rob Coates. Mr. and Mrs. Young serve in the Ocean Springs, Mississippi congregation.

Mr. Craig Bemis was ordained an elder on October 3 by Regional Pastor Rodger Bardo and Elders Jim Nork and Ruben Lujan. Mr. Bemis serves in the Tucson and Prescott Valley, Arizona congregations.

Mr. Omer Babineau and **Mr. Harry Leyte** were ordained deacons on October 18 by Area Pastor Frank Best. Mr. Babineau serves in the Moncton, New Brunswick congregation and Mr. Leyte in the Springdale, Newfoundland congregation.

Mr. Miguel Alamilla was ordained an elder on November 23 by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz, Pastor Winston Gosse, and Regional Director of the UK, Europe and the Middle East, Adam West. Mr. Alamilla serves in the Toronto, Ontario congregation.

COMMENTARY

Worthless Things

Does it frustrate you that so many things are made with “planned obsolescence” built in? You know, the product falls apart or quits working soon after the warranty expires? As you walk the aisles of your favorite store, are you appalled at the flood of cheaply made merchandise that becomes worthless soon after being put to use? Do you lose time to things that aren’t positive or productive?

Modern life offers a nearly endless supply of such things—movies, video games or “reality” television shows—which feature scripted tensions and struggles by characters that are actually parodies of real life. Certainly, these activities can be entertaining, but are they really worth the time invested?

If you look to the Bible for guidance about what is valuable and what is worthless, you’ll find clear instruction, with the pros and cons (called blessing and curses) of many attitudes and activities described plainly. An underlying principle found throughout the Bible is that our decisions determine the quality of our lives. God tells us in Deuteronomy 28 that if the instructions given by our Heavenly Father are followed, bountiful physical blessings are promised (vv. 1–14). However, if His instructions, which are embodied in the Ten Commandments, are ignored or despised, intractable problems and curses will result (vv. 15–68). This knowledge enables a person to recognize what is worthwhile and what is of no value.

There are behaviors that are worthless, though not widely recognized as such. Highly commercialized holidays based on ancient pagan customs that long predate Christianity now occupy a great deal of people’s time and money, which is not pleasing to

God: “Thus sayeth the LORD, learn not the way of the heathen... For the customs of the people are vain” (Jeremiah 10:2–3 KJV).

The Apostle Paul and Barnabas had to explain this to the people of Lystra, a town in Asia Minor. A man was miraculously healed at the hands of Paul, and the local people immediately assumed that Paul and Barnabas were the pagan gods Hermes and Zeus. The town’s people began to worship them with pagan practices. Paul vehemently decried this and said to them “Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15 NRSV). So we see that idolatry in any form is worthless and destructive in God’s eyes.

“Whew!” you may say. “At least I don’t have any problems with idolatry.” But consider that, from God’s point of view, idolatry comes in various forms (such as covetousness, Colossians 3:5).

Psalms 119:37, one verse in a beautiful poem about the Law of God, puts it this way: “Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way.”

In life there are valuable pursuits about which the Bible has much to say. Solomon put it into perspective in describing the pursuit of godly wisdom: “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:13–17).

—J. Davy Crockett, III

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the lcg.org and TomorrowsWorld.org Web sites.