

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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The Gospel in the Resurrection Chapter

Dear Brethren,

It has been about 30 years since the Worldwide Church of God, an institution many of us came out of, rejected God's truth and replaced it with old heathen doctrines. It was shocking then, and it remains shocking today how quickly the organization transitioned into doctrinal apostasy. There is a lesson for us today—to be diligent in holding onto the truth God has given us.

The error of the leaders who took Worldwide in a wrong direction involved an attitude of rebellion, as clearly defined in Romans 8:7. Their separation of law from grace was at the heart of the doctrinal confusion, as was their misunderstanding of what Christ's Gospel actually entails. Mr. Herbert Armstrong recognized that among professing Christian churches, there was a total lack of understanding of Christ's Gospel—His three-and-a-half-year proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God—which is why Mr. Armstrong focused so much on that forgotten aspect of the Gospel in his writings. The Bible is abundantly clear that Jesus' message during His ministry was about the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Two Opposite Ditches

However, even some of our members sometimes do not recognize that the good news the Apostles proclaimed also included the death and resurrection of the soon-coming *King* of the Kingdom—without which we cannot be born into it. If people leave out the King of—and the way to—the Kingdom of God, how can they understand that kingdom? As Jesus told His disciples, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). 1 Corinthians 15 makes the point clearly:

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved.... For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

Paul makes clear that the Gospel includes the death and resurrection of Christ. Worldwide leaders misused this passage to dismiss the Gospel of the *Kingdom of God* and focus solely on the person of Christ, rather than on His message. They accused faithful brethren, who held on to the full truth about our Savior, of not knowing Christ. But it was the apostate leaders who did not understand the purpose for His coming, nor His message—especially that He will set up a very real kingdom on this earth. They even rejected Christ's words about the law, and so much more (Matthew 5:17–19; 19:17; Luke 6:46). Sadly, many bought into that heresy.

On the other hand, we don't want to go to the other extreme—leaving out the very King of the Kingdom and the means by which we can be part of that kingdom. Christ's human life, His death, and His resurrection are essential to the Gospel. The Apostle Paul was not wrong when he described the Gospel as including Christ dying for our sins and being resurrected three days later.

The Full Gospel

Does 1 Corinthians 15 dismiss Jesus' three-and-a-half-year message and limit the Gospel to what happened over just a few *days*? Not at all, if we read the whole chapter! Paul followed his initial

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words about the Gospel with a list of some of the people who saw the resurrected Christ after His death. Since Paul wrote within about 20 years of Christ's crucifixion, most of those witnesses were still alive to confirm the facts (vv. 6–8). He points out in verse 11, “Therefore, whether it was I or they [the other Apostles], so we preach [the resurrection] and so you believed.”

Next, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the fact and importance of the resurrection (vv. 12–19). I'm summarizing here for the sake of space, but please read this for yourself. Paul continues by challenging them, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (vv. 12–14).

Paul's subject is the resurrection of the dead. He first begins with Jesus Christ's resurrection, but transitions to the importance of the resurrection for us. “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (vv. 17–19).

He next points out that Jesus became the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep. It is through Christ that we have hope in life after death. We must all die, but “in Christ all shall be made alive”—but it will be in the proper order (vv. 20–24). In other words, there is a plan that must be worked out and a specific order of events (vv. 25–31). There is no meaning to our existence if there is no life after death. “If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” (v. 32).

Why did Paul write these things? What was his purpose? It is obvious that he was dealing with those who denied the resurrection. He therefore knocks down one argument after another. “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies” (vv. 35–36). He then explains his point with examples from the natural world.

Then comes the good news with which he began this chapter—we can live again!

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit (vv. 42–45).

We rightfully call 1 Corinthians 15 the Resurrection Chapter, but we might also call it the Gospel Chapter, since that's what it is. Paul begins by describing the Gospel he preached. Some have neglected the remainder of the chapter, as if the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were the whole Gospel message. Paul does not do so. Read the *whole* chapter. The Gospel Paul preached included the good news that we can be born into the Kingdom of God, and the first 49 verses lead to that truth. Notice how the theme of the Kingdom of God then becomes plain:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the kingdom of God*; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (vv. 50–53).

Just as some choose grace while others choose law—as if they were mutually exclusive—so too do some claim that Christ's Gospel is only about the sacrifice He made in the past, while others see only the news of His kingdom. But the complete truth is truly wonderful news: Through Christ's sacrifice, we can be born into the Kingdom of God through a resurrection from the dead!



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EDITORIAL By Gerald E. Weston

Purity, Honor, and Respect

As the Radio Church of God grew during the twentieth century, it was recognized that there was a need to do something to help guide Church youth through an increasingly corrupt culture. So, a summer camp for teens was started in 1962. Several of those pioneer campers are still around, including my wife. To a degree, camp in those early years was more like *boot camp*. Campers “fell out” at 6:00 a.m. for morning exercises, inspections were exacting, and swats were given out as discipline for infractions. Camp is very different today!

It is easy to look back and wonder how camp could have been so demanding, but we are unwise to take any situation out of the historical and cultural context of its day. Most of those early camp leaders had either served in the military during World War II or had been influenced by those who had. Swats, inspections, and marching were also common then in the Boy Scouts, in which I participated before learning God’s truth. It was a different world back then, and it was not as bad as it may sound to people today. Camp that first year lasted eight weeks and many campers returned for a shorter six-week camp in the following year, even with 100-degree weather and housing in booths with no air conditioning! Sports, dances, and other activities contributed to innumerable lasting friendships.

The camp was moved from Texas to Orr, Minnesota, in 1965, and over the next several years it became recognized that a summer camp was not sufficient by itself to “keep the youth in the Church.” With the best of intentions from dedicated and sincere individuals, a program called Youth Opportunities United (YOU) was begun. Many ministers were young and athletic, so a basketball program was started for boys and a volleyball program for girls. Young adults also formed teams, with different congregations challenging one another. Tournaments began to be organized, with regional participation. These were great fun—but expensive, as facilities for practices and games had to be rented. Tournaments meant that families were burdened with the expenses of travel, meals, and motels, along with more demands on time.

Some areas had well-organized programs with good sportsmanship, but good sportsmanship began to deteriorate in other areas, and instead of drawing youth from different Church congregations closer together, the program

was often divisive. This was not true everywhere, but was true in too many locations. Angry disputes and hurt feelings became increasingly common, whether at basketball and volleyball tournaments in the United States or hockey tournaments in Canada.

I grew up playing organized baseball, football, and basketball, and ran the quarter-mile on my high school track team. I also took swimming lessons, which became my ticket to involvement with the Church summer camps. It was natural for me to be a big supporter of these sports events. But, as time went by, I became disillusioned by the fruits I was seeing in the later years of the YOU program. It was not all bad, but bad fruit *was* showing.

I was also a big supporter of the Summer Educational Program, serving nine years at the camp in Orr, Minnesota, and one year in Big Sandy, Texas. The value of this experience is difficult to overestimate, especially the years serving under Dr. Kermit Nelson from 1987 to 1994.

A New Beginning

When I joined the Global Church of God in early 1995, I was asked to help start a summer camp program under our Presiding Evangelist, Dr. Roderick C. Meredith. Our first camp was at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, and many campers thought it was a great success—but from an administrative perspective, it was not. Staff were untested and untrained. To begin to remedy the problem, we started training and testing high-school-aged staff for the purpose of selecting future leaders.

After God purged the Church of some disloyal ministers and members in GCG, Mr. Lambert Greer and I were asked to oversee the Living Church of God camp in 1999. The two of us, along with Messrs. Jonathan McNair, Paul Shumway, and others, took the lessons we had learned from the past and began to develop a new approach that would avoid some pitfalls from previous programs and activities. We recognized that we could not put “new wine into old wineskins” (Luke 5:36–39).

At an August 2000 Council of Elders meeting, I presented a vision for a new approach. The gist of it acknowledged that some past approaches had not produced the hoped-for results. Without realizing it, and with the best of intentions, we had tried to “keep teens in the Church” by providing exciting activities for a few weeks. During the 21-day sessions at Orr, Minnesota, the emphasis was

very much on the physical, and we had great physical facilities and programs—we had water skiing, rock climbing, canoeing into the wilderness, basketball, volleyball, softball, swimming, water polo, parasailing, and so much more. I have little doubt that many teens equated “God’s way works” with activity and fun. But what happens when the fun ceases?

The Summer Educational Program was a bit light on working with the mind and spirit. These points were not totally neglected, but to the minds of our teens they clearly must have seemed second in priority. As an example, throughout the three-week schedule we only had four Christian Living classes: “Your Relationship to Rules,” “Your Relationship with Money,” “Your Relationship with Others,” and “Your Relationship with God.” There were Sabbath services and Bible Studies, but there was a conscious and explicitly stated desire to *not* have a “Church camp.” There definitely

One of the first points covered is our Mission Statement, formulated in the first years of our Living Youth Programs:

“To bring teens together in a learning environment for the purpose of recapturing true values; and to further the creation of a culture of purity, honor, and respect among the youth within the Living Church of God.”

was an intent to promote godly values, but there was also a desire to avoid being “too religious.”

Despite that, much good came out of those Summer Educational Programs. Although I had grown up participating in organized sports from an early age, my first year working in Orr was an eye-opener. I had never seen such well-run activities as I saw there. I learned a lot about how to run a successful activity. Between 1983 and 1999, I worked under four different camp directors and learned a lot about what works—and what does *not* work. I was privileged to work with some remarkably talented and intelligent men and women over the years.

Regarding the history of Church youth programs, what also became clear is that people learn to appreciate those pursuits into which they invest time and energy—it is best when they have “skin in the game,” so to speak. Our youth are best served when they learn to give back to the Church. Those young adults and high school staff who *teach others* the values of the program are far more likely to “buy into it” themselves. How many times I remember hearing at a morning counselors’ meeting how “different” the teens were from when the counselors themselves were teens. Yes, there may have been a few differences, but in most cases, the counselors did not

realize how much *they* had changed. The values that had not been important to them a few years earlier had now become a part of them. As Mr. Lambert Greer rightly said, the values we teach today will not be internalized for several years.

We realize that not all young people will accept what is offered to them. We know the Parable of the Prodigal Son—two boys were raised in the same family, but while one chose the right way, the other chose a self-destructive path. The second son eventually repented and learned the right way, but by then he had been scarred and damaged, squandered his inheritance, and suffered a lot of heartache. Sadly, so it will be with some of our children.

A Mission and a Goal

Now that I’ve discussed some of the history of youth programs in the modern era of the Church of God, I want to share

with you some of the principles we are restoring during Staff Orientation at the Texas Living Youth Program. One of the first points covered is our Mission Statement, formulated in the first years of our Living Youth Programs: “To bring teens together in a learning environment for the purpose of recapturing true values; and to further the creation of a culture of purity, honor, and respect among the youth within the Living Church of God.”

purpose of recapturing true values; and to further the creation of a culture of purity, honor, and respect among the youth within the Living Church of God.”

We apply the same principles in conducting our onsite Living Education program, as well as our Living 4 Tomorrow programs for those aged 18–30. And what do we hope to accomplish? Here is how we express our purpose in one sentence: “We expect that out of this culture of purity, honor, and respect will come godly relationships that will lead to loving marriages and strong families that will provide stability and future leadership in the Living Church of God and society as a whole.”

This mission—this goal—must be explained in detail. What is meant by a *culture of purity*? All our activities must be conducted with this in mind. As I wrote in the November-December 2000 *Living Church News* on this subject:

It is accurate to say that if you do not know where you are going, it is likely that you will not end up where you want to be. The first law of success is to have a goal. We need to have a vision of what we hope our end product will be. Our product in this case is our children. If we hope to have young adults who

reflect God's way of life, we must begin creating the atmosphere in which that end result will blossom ("Coming Soon: A National Youth Program").

A culture is shared by members of a group, and purity is God's way of life. Each generation is born into a world directed by Satan (Ephesians 2:1-2). We must reinforce godly values—the same values Church parents want to see in their children. A godly culture is fostered when a growing number of young people begin to internalize those values. Then, when they are around other Church youth, such as at the Feast, they can find others who strive to live by the same culturally pure values.

But what do we mean when we speak of honor? This refers to a deeply ingrained code of conduct, such as it was for Joseph when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39).

We hope our young people will create a culture in which they live by an honor code of pure godly values and a life framed by respect for others—for parents and elders, for themselves, and for one another—for their good. I often say rather forcefully, "Girls, demand respect from the boys! Don't let them talk you into something you will later regret. And respect *them* in the way you dress. Boys, true love is outgoing concern. Respect these young ladies. Don't defile your best friend's future wife!" This is blunt, but they must hear it in an era that shows no respect and has little concern for others.

Conducting a Safe Camp

It is also important to emphasize to our staff that these are not our children. Parents send their children to camp with the reasonable expectation that they will return unharmed. It is our duty to do everything in our power to protect these children from any form of harm—physical or emotional.

We intentionally plan the teen summer camp as a highly structured program with little free time. This means we expect campers to be at certain places at certain times according to a well-planned schedule. All things are to be done *decently, in order, without confusion, and in peace* (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). We explain to our staff how this is practically applied. We have three fundamental rules into which most situations fall: Don't hurt yourself, don't hurt others, and don't hurt things. We strive to stop all practical joking, because it tends to escalate with retaliations, and sooner or later someone gets hurt or something gets broken.

Campers do not sit with whomever they want to during meals. Instead, we mix up the seating assignments for every meal and teach the campers to converse with and get to know everyone. We instruct them not to leave as soon as they are finished eating to go talk to someone else. When campers are allowed to sit meal after meal with their best friends, cliques

form and "in crowds" develop. These dining hall policies are one mechanism by which we encourage the principle of outgoing concern—no one is to be left out.

The same principle applies to Fellowship Time. This "activity" comes a couple times each day. It is not a time to play keep-away with a younger camper's ball cap, or pair off with your boyfriend or girlfriend—it is a time to mix and mingle. But, while we *encourage* "M&M," this is a choice individuals must make. We especially encourage campers to seek out the loners or shy people and bring them into the group, and many take this admonition to heart. This is also why we have *escorts* rather than *dates* for the dances, as campers are encouraged to M&M once they arrive at a dance.

We understand teens' desire to pair off—and, ultimately, we hope they will find that special someone with whom they will share their lives. But there is a time and place for everything, and camp is not the time for pairing off. Teens are not ready to consider marriage, and pairing off prematurely only creates problems for them. When pairing off is not discouraged, it breaks down the principles of learning to practice outgoing concern for all, and we expect staff to set the example. The morale of the whole camp can suffer due to the self-centeredness of a few.

We do not deny that individuals will have closer friendships with some than with others—even Jesus Christ was particularly close with one of His disciples, John (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2). What we don't want is for others to feel excluded. Is this not a biblical principle, illustrated by Christ's instructions regarding whom to invite to dinner (Luke 14:12-14)?

The Cool Factor

When people are trying to be *cool*, they are thinking of themselves. When everyone is trying to *out-cool* others, you have a camp filled with self-centered individuals—where the *cool* are part of the "in crowd" and the *un-cool* are left trying to catch up. By not allowing faddish trends to get started, you cut down on the cool factor and self-centered thinking and promote the concept of thinking about others' well-being.

We strive to give every camper some measure of success every day. This can happen only when staff members give personal, individualized attention. Staff members must be vigilant to find ways of helping every camper improve at least one skill. A standard we encourage is "Make someone's day, every day." Each camper should go to bed at night with the solid understanding and feeling of being respected, loved, and valued as an individual. Camp staff must practice servant leadership at all times.

A Pebble in a Pond

This world exerts negative peer pressure on our teens. We strive instead to harness the power of *positive* peer pressure. We want

young people to feel safe and secure in that no one will laugh at them as they pray, sing, and talk about God and His values—things they might not feel comfortable doing elsewhere.

We do not run a sports camp, although we have sports. It *is* a Church camp, and we do not apologize for teaching the values and the well-established doctrines of the Living Church of God. We have Christian Living classes in the first period of every activity day—“first things first.” The evening ends with a short hymn-sing and a short story conveying a lesson that reflects values of honesty, courage, and compassion.

Trustworthiness is an absolute necessity for staff members. We all make mistakes, but if we cannot trust someone to uphold the values, traditions, and rules of camp, we have no basis on which to work with them. Example is vitally important. Every staff member *will* be an example. The only question is, what kind—good or bad?

We recognize that not everyone lives up to our hopes and expectations. We also make mistakes—and camp is never perfect—but I wanted to share with you a bit of the history of summer camps in the Church of God and some of the important principles and mechanisms we are using to create an atmosphere of purity, honor, and respect—the way of outgoing concern.

The value of a few courageous and understanding individuals must not be underestimated. Jesus gave the parables of the mustard seed and of leaven. Small beginnings can grow into something great (Matthew 13:31–33). We should not despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). A pebble thrown into a pond sends out concentric waves. Through Living Youth Programs, Living 4 Tomorrow, and the on-site Living Education–Charlotte program, we hope to develop an ever-expanding godly culture among the youth of God’s Church. ^(LN)















The Adventure Program: Helping Our Youth Reach Greater Heights

By **Jonathan McNair**

Most people today do not spend nearly enough time outdoors—and this sad reality is even more debilitating for our young people than it is for adults. A quick Google search on the topic reveals titles like “Survey Finds Today’s Children Are Spending 35% Less Time Playing Freely Outside,” “Most parents today say their kids don’t spend enough time outside anymore,” and “Researchers warn kids don’t get enough outdoor playtime.” The truth is painfully clear—we’re less and less in touch with the natural world that God created, and the problem is steadily worsening in the lives of our children.

But did you know that the Living Church of God is actively working to reverse this trend? Living Youth Program camps are part of that effort, as campers spend a sizable part of each day outdoors. Our adventure camps, especially, involve outdoor living. What follows is a description of that program and why it is such an important component of our service to the youth in the Church.

What We Do

Each year, our Presiding Evangelist, Mr. Gerald Weston, oversees planning the locations for our different adventures. Since one of our goals is to provide an opportunity for as many young people in God’s Church as possible to experience the great outdoors, we focus our attention on where our members live. For example, this past summer, the Ouachita National Recreation Trail in northern Arkansas was selected as the site to serve our young people in the lower Midwest. We hiked a part of this 223-mile trail through the Ouachita Mountains of Oklahoma and Arkansas, which is listed as one of “The Best Thru-Hikes You’ve Never Heard Of” in *Outside* magazine and so remote that you’ll rarely see another person as you hike. Trip leader Mr. Bobby Jacques commented afterward that the beauty of the mountains and the different types of terrain were highlights of the three-day adventure. He wrote, “Traveling in the canopy of the forest among different types of terrain made for an adventure and experience of a lifetime.”

To serve the members on the East Coast, we planned a trip along the Linville Gorge Wilderness in the Great Smoky

Mountains. I was tasked with planning and leading the trip, assisted by Mr. Bill Long, who had led last year’s trip in Montana. This year, however, his primary camp assignment was the Speech Class that he was to give at our Texas teen camp. But as it turned out, I came down with COVID-19 the day before our trip began and he stepped up to lead it! Linville Gorge, also called the “Grand Canyon of the Southeast,” is in Pisgah National Forest. It is the third-largest wilderness area in North Carolina and rewards hikers with spectacular scenery from outlook points with names such as “Table Rock” and “The Chimneys.”

Why We Do It

One circumstance that is effective in bringing people together is facing a common challenge. We have all experienced this—perhaps on the basketball court, on the soccer field, or in the classroom or office. The bond we build in marriage may also come to mind; as they navigate the complexities of making a home, raising a family, and paying the bills, a husband and wife draw closer through their shared experiences. Knowing that your partner—whether on a team or in a marriage—has been by your side through thick and thin is a comforting and encouraging part of our human experience.

The adventure camps breathe life into this principle for their young participants. As Mr. Long noted,

Over the course of three days and two nights, the hike in and around the Linville Gorge in North Carolina was very challenging but also extremely rewarding. The camaraderie and willingness to serve that was demonstrated by everyone was truly inspiring. The focus by each person on the hike was to work as a team and fill the gaps in order for everyone to enjoy the trip. We learned a lot about each other and grew together in ways that only a burst of intense, physical activity can accomplish in a group of people.

Facing challenges brings growth, and facing challenges with other people builds bonds that are both precious and strong. Mr. Jacques echoed the same theme in his report:

God always took care of our needs, and we had many who were willing to help out another hiker who was running low on energy. We grew as a team and became a tight group as we focused on the next portion of the trail lifting each other up. It was great to see those of like mind working together to reach a common goal.

Learning to overcome challenges together is only one of the benefits of our adventure program. Here are a few other benefits of group hiking, cited by a popular outdoor adventure organization called “Adventure Treks.”

- A much-needed break from technology and digital media
- A chance to “rewrite” one’s narrative or story
- Multiple opportunities to step outside one’s comfort zone and experience personal growth
- Connecting to and developing an appreciation of nature
- Building lifelong friendships in a supportive, welcoming community
- Developing skills to thrive in the 21st century

(“The Benefits of Teen Outdoor Adventure Camps,” *AdventureTreks.com*, March 4, 2019.)

Many of these skills closely echo Mr. Herbert Armstrong’s “seven laws of success,” which can guide us in developing a framework of personal skills that can be applied directly to the adventure camps—and to life itself. The powerful truth is that they can be tested and developed through practice during each step of the hike.

Our Advantages

You may ask, “If there are adventure programs run by experienced organizations like Outward Bound, Adventure Treks,

and others, why participate in a Living Church of God camp?” Consider these three advantages:

- Typical adventure programs run by non-Church organizations take place over the Sabbath. We observe the Sabbath, so when one of our trips does extend over it, we modify our activities and keep the Sabbath appropriately wherever we are.
- Our adventure trips cost much less than typical trips run by other organizations—most outdoor adventure programs are extremely expensive. Our program is subsidized by the Church to help defray some of the costs, and our staff work as volunteers, making it affordable for our young people.
- Our adventures build bonds between people who have the same fundamental convictions about life. Building connections between us as those striving to be followers of Christ is extremely important, and this is a terrific way to make that happen.

Going Forward

Plans for the summer of 2023 are in the works right now. A trip is planned for the lower Midwest again, as is an adventure in the Southeast. We are also looking at the possibility of adding a third location. These trips are generally geared toward older teens and young adults, but we are able to work with some exceptions, depending on how quickly our trip rosters fill up.

Our adventure camps give young people in the Church a challenging experience that enables them to expand the boundaries of their comfort zones. If you desire to reach greater heights, we invite you to join us for adventure in the great outdoors! (LV)





Arkansas Adventure Camp 2022: Ouachita National Forest


By **Bobby Jacques**

Living Youth Programs' Arkansas Adventure Camp was a wonderful and challenging activity! Twenty-two campers and staff members embarked on the challenge in a small state park in Perryville, Arkansas, about 40 miles from the city of Little Rock.

Our base camp was at Lake Sylvia Campground, but Lake Sylvia itself was in the process of being moved from federal to state ownership, and was drained for repairs—something we had not expected. However, it worked to our advantage since it meant that the recreational part of the campground was closed, and we basically had the park to ourselves. It was a nice treat to set up our tents at several RV sites rather than in the primitive group campground that we were slated for. The trail head for the Ouachita National Recreation Trail was just 100 yards from the campground.

Campers and staff arrived on Sunday afternoon, and were on the trail on Monday morning. The theme for our endeavor was “The Path to Success!” We focused on both the physical and spiritual aspects of the path that leads to success and started our days with prayer. Throughout the week we focused on God’s creation and His way of life.

For most of the trail we were under a canopy of trees, with the temperatures in the low-to-mid 80s during the day and in the low 60s at night. We made about 8.5 miles on the first day and camped near a pinnacle. Water was not as plentiful as it had been when we had visited the camp a few weeks earlier, but God always provided. The terrain was rocky and the brush was thick in places. The elevation went from 800 feet to 2,000 feet over the course of the trail, with some beautiful pinnacles along the way. That first night out in the back country, at about 11:30 p.m., we were all awakened by the very loud and fearsome screech of an owl that was rather close by. Apparently, we needed some excitement! Though we eventually managed to get back to sleep despite its screams, we all looked forward to the sunrise. Heat, humidity, and lack of breeze made the hours long, but the campers always looked for three positives (credit to Mr. Mike DeSimone). In the evenings, everyone enjoyed hot meals and fellowship.

We wrapped up the adventure on Thursday with a trip to a nearby waterpark and some ice cream. Friday morning, everyone said their goodbyes and left with lifelong memories and bonds of friendship. As we reflected on the goal of completing a 26-and-a-half-mile hike, one lesson was, “We *can* do hard things!” 





Living Education: Five Years Running

By **Editorial Staff**

Its first semester having opened in the fall of 2018, Living Education–Charlotte reached a milestone this August as it began its fifth academic year. Much growth can happen over the course of five years, so we sat down with Living Education’s director, Mr. Jonathan McNair, to ask him a few questions about how the program has changed and developed in that time. Those considering attending Living Education–Charlotte in the future may think their experience will be much the same as that of an older sibling or friend, so they may be surprised to know that the program has become even more dynamic and engaging as time has gone on!

First impressions are important, and a great deal of thought has gone into making the most of the student orientation experience at Living Education–Charlotte. “One of the goals that we have here is to draw the students closer together so they develop a camaraderie as spiritual brothers and sisters,” said Mr. McNair. “When, right away, you go through experiences that tie you together, it helps to set a baseline that’s really important.”

The spiritual bonds begin developing in true biblical fashion—over food. “The students come in on a Friday and have a Friday evening meal at our house,” Mr. McNair said. “There’s no instruction or anything. All I ask them to do is introduce themselves to each other and say where they’re from, and we just have a meal together. It’s very relaxed—they just get to meet each other, because even the ones who know each other don’t know each other in this group, in this context, and with these dynamics. I’ve found that it’s really worked out.” Over the course of the Sabbath and Sunday morning, the students begin acclimating to their new surroundings. But then, it’s off to the North Carolina mountains. “We go up to Blowing Rock,” said Mr. McNair, “and have a Sunday evening meal together there—again, just to get to know each other. It’s not very formal.”

While at Blowing Rock, the students enjoy a series of orientation classes on Monday. “We go topic by topic, explaining things that they need to know,” Mr. McNair said. “It lays out the expectations really clearly—the expectations we have of them, the expectations they can have of us, and why we do what we’re doing.” Monday afternoon, students and faculty

visit *the* Blowing Rock, a natural outcropping overlooking gorgeous views of the surrounding forests and peaks.

On Tuesday, the students’ new bonds are strengthened through an adventure on the Watauga River. “We go whitewater rafting,” explained Mr. McNair, “which is a great way for the students to be able to get to know each other—everybody is out of their comfort zone, because nobody is comfortable in that water! It’s extremely cold.”

That evening, the group returns to Headquarters to prepare for several days of onsite orientation. “On Wednesday and Thursday, each of the office department heads take 15 minutes to introduce themselves and what they do,” Mr. McNair said. “That’s new—what happened in years gone by is they became acquainted with the different department heads over the course of months. Now, they meet everyone briefly within the first couple of days, and that’s helpful on both sides—the department heads get to see the students and the students get to know the department heads, so when they meet in the hallways, they’ve had a little bit of an acquaintance. Mr. Ames, Dr. Winnail, and Mr. Weston will give key-note speeches during those two days as well.”

As the Preparation Day dawns, the students have been well and truly oriented over the past week. “They have that day to rest and prepare for the Sabbath, and then they have the weekend—and on Monday we begin regular classes. That whole orientation week is working out really well.”

The Student Leader Program

While the student orientation process has developed steadily since Living Education–Charlotte’s first year, other refinements have taken more time. “One of the things that a lot of educational programs benefit from is having people who are new to the program *as well as* those who have gone past the first year of class,” Mr. McNair explained. “In a multi-year program, those who have been there longer can mentor, guide, and encourage the newer students. One of the challenges we’ve had over the past few years has been maintaining that kind of continuity, because we are a nine-month program by design. Every year, we have a new group of students, so we lose the continuity in terms of leadership, in terms of helping the new students to understand how things are done and to

navigate through the natural highs and lows that happen over the course of the year. We've lacked that in the past—those who have been there before and can provide the continuity.”

This year, Living Education's new Student Leader Program has filled that gap. “We've been chewing on this for a while, and we finally pulled the trigger this year,” Mr. McNair said. “What we've done is begin a program where certain students are invited to stay in the program for another year as student leaders. But we want to be clear that we are *not* making Living Education–Charlotte into a two-year program. Nobody who is *not* in the Student Leader program should feel that they're failing or that they're not fully enjoying the program and all it has to offer—it's a complete, nine-month program.”

While they serve as mentors for the new group of students, these student leaders will add to their own foundation laid in their previous year, with classes tailored specifically for them. “Mr. Frank teaches a class that focuses on the life and teachings of Christ and the book of Acts, building on the survey of the Bible he teaches the previous year and going more in depth,” Mr. McNair explained. “Mr. Tlumak teaches a class on Christian leadership, building on the Christian Living class that students took the previous year. And I teach a class called Introduction to Prophecy, in which the student leaders go over the prophetic books of the Bible. Those are the core classes, each of which the student leaders have twice a week.” Additionally, the student leaders have a weekly one-hour seminar just for them. “As an example,” Mr. McNair offered, “right now my brother is doing that seminar, and he's doing four sessions on Germany in prophecy. So, we've created a space where various instructors can teach on the topics of their choice—maybe for one session, maybe for four or five sessions. This allows someone who is familiar with a topic to teach it for multiple sessions—they aren't restricted to one hour, but they're also not obligated to teach on a topic for a full semester. So, really, it's very dynamic, because it can be different every year, depending upon who's free and what's happening.”

But the focus is to aid new students in adopting the Living Education–Charlotte lifestyle. “The student leaders are

required to attend the Forums and Assemblies along with the new students, as well as the Morning Motivations, which we've included in the program over the past couple of years,” said Mr. McNair. “They still work part-time at Headquarters, and they also take the lead in organizing different student activities, as we delegate some of the logistics to them. So, they're really stepping up. Ideally, every year we will have four to six student leaders to maintain the stability and continuity of the program.”

Teaching Opportunities for Ministerial Trainees

“A couple of years ago, we started having the ministerial trainees in Charlotte also teach a class,” explained Mr. McNair. “I think it's particularly neat because usually the ministerial trainee is on the younger side, compared to some of us. It's great practice for the ministerial trainees themselves, because while pastors have a captive audience in their congregations, students are sometimes a little less captive in terms of their attention span!”

The ministerial trainee is now assigned two courses during his time in Charlotte, one per semester. “For the first semester, he'll teach a class called Putting the Fruit of the Spirit to Work,” said Mr. McNair. “The concept of that class is to give him a framework of a topic that he can run with. For the second semester, he'll teach a class on the parables of Christ—now he's got to dig into expounding on Scripture, so it's a different teaching experience. It's just once a week, but by the time all is said and done, he's got a year's worth of teaching.”

Incoming students of Living Education–Charlotte can anticipate a year of foundational training in biblical understanding and God's way of life, supplemented by a wide variety of engaging educational experiences—and perhaps even the chance to become a student leader to help guide and encourage the next group! Those aged 18–30 who are interested in more information, including finding out whether Living Education–Charlotte is a good fit for this time in their life, can visit LCGEducation.org. We wish all the best to the students, both new and returning, of Living Education's fifth year! (LN)



From left to right: Student leader Sabrielle McNair, student leader Nathan Kroon, Madeline McNair, David Smith, Dawn Rude, Kaleb Johnson, Rachel White, Andrew McNair, Lauren Sena, Jontavious Mincey, Rachel Price, Mr. Jonathan McNair, and student leader Kezia Ciesielka.



From left to right: Mr. Thomas White, Mr. Ken Frank, Mr. Jonathan McNair, Mr. Julian Braddock, Mr. Dexter Wakefield, Mr. Wayne Tlumak, Mr. Jerry Ruddlesden, and Ms. Rebekah Ross.



Thinking Biblically with *LivingYouth.org*

By **Editorial Staff**

Since December 2021, *LivingYouth.org* has been providing articles, videos, and podcasts specifically for the teenagers and young adults in God's Church. The website is updated weekly, and often more frequently, to provide current and engaging content that aids the youth of the Church in seeing the world through a biblical lens. *Think biblically* has become the site's motto, and the site's contributors are committed to helping the Church's young people do so in an increasingly unbiblical world.

To find out more about the goals of *LivingYouth.org*, we interviewed Mr. Wallace Smith and Mr. John Robinson for a behind-the-scenes look at the website's flagship series, *The Living Youth Podcast*.

A Model of Biblical Thinking

If scientists create a pig that chews the cud, should we eat it? What's so bad about getting a tattoo? What is the Council of Elders really like? Why shouldn't we date "good people" outside the Church? Does Numbers 5 imply that the Bible is pro-abortion? And what do all of these questions have in common?

The answer to the last question is that they're all topics Mr. Smith and Mr. Robinson tackle at *LivingYouth.org* on the *Living Youth Podcast*, which is also available on YouTube and Spotify. Each week, Mr. Smith and Mr. Robinson aim to record a conversational, in-depth, Bible-based discussion of something that affects the lives of teens and young adults in God's Church today, whether it's a question about Scripture, a current piece of news, or just something they wish they'd known when they were teens and young adults. These recordings are uploaded on Fridays as 30-minute- to hour-long episodes that encourage listeners to think biblically about their actions, their opinions, and about what is going on in the world.

"A podcast format is ideal for our overall goal," says Mr. Smith, "which is to model how to think biblically about news, culture, and current events. We want to model for teens and young adults what it means to think biblically about our sub-

jects and to discuss them with a pro-Bible mindset, and the conversational format seems really well suited to that. Also, we hope the dynamic of listening to two or more people discussing a topic provides an organic richness to our coverage. Mr. Robinson and I don't think about things exactly the same way, even as we both hew to the biblical truth of a subject. So we each contribute different things that the other might not and approach our subjects from different directions sometimes. Hopefully that adds a helpful dimension to our discussions."

Unique Benefits of Podcasting

Though not completely off-the-cuff, these podcasts are decidedly unscripted, and that's by design. "Part of what we enjoy about the podcast is the conversational style," says Mr. Smith. "It's fun to just sit around a table and talk about things or explore topics in a format like this. While we do think about our topics ahead of time, there is also an organic nature to our conversations and the podcast that is very different from a carefully prepared presentation like a Bible Study—also, we don't just cover Bible verses. We've had some very popular podcasts where we sit down with people and talk about what the Church is doing, like talking to Mr. Jonathan McNair about Living Education, and to him and Mr. Gerald Weston about the camp program. Also, we get to address things happening in the culture that just wouldn't fit in a Bible study, but which still make for worthwhile topics to discuss."

Using the Bible as a vantage point from which to assess the world, while not necessarily feeling obligated to turn to a certain number of scriptures, allows Mr. Smith and Mr. Robinson a helpful flexibility in their conversations. "Mr. Smith and I wanted to be able to discuss a wide range of topics," says Mr. Robinson, "but more informally than you would in a Bible Study format. Our hope—and we did not take for granted that this would be a success—was that our friendship and experience would allow us to discuss various issues and that those discussions would be interesting to teens and young adults, while answering questions they may have. But within those discussions, we always want to view things through the lens of the Bible—not just give our opinion about how a given situation or question should be handled, but point back to the Bible, which has the right answers."

The podcast can also serve to cut through the clutter and divisiveness of modern news media by commenting on significant events through God's perspective, rather than man's bias. "The weekly format helps us to be really responsive," Mr. Smith adds. "When something happens in the news or the culture, from Will Smith's 'Oscars slap' to the death of Queen Elizabeth, the ease and speed of creating a podcast makes it that much easier to illustrate for teens and young adults how the Bible should shape our thinking on such topics."

Where You Like, When You Like

Podcasts are an increasingly popular form of media, particularly because of how easily accessible they are. "The flexibility is a unique benefit of the podcast format," Mr. Robinson says. "Podcasting is mainstream, so you can take advantage of a number of platforms, such as YouTube and Spotify, that will distribute your recording to anyone who is subscribed to it." Another advantage to the podcast is its versatility—whether you're driving, relaxing at home on the Sabbath, or trying to get your mind away from the workout you're doing, the *Living Youth Podcast* is a great choice. "Listeners can download and listen to the show whenever they have time, even during what is often referred to as 'found time,'" says Mr. Robinson. "For example, while in the car or cleaning around the house. You can listen while doing something else that would have ordinarily been all you were doing, which is another great thing about the podcast format."

"The audio-focused nature of the podcast makes it accessible, I think, in a way that video isn't always," agreed Mr. Smith. "You can listen to it while you're driving or, in some jobs, working, just like many listen to radio talk-show hosts."

I've listened to podcasts while mowing the lawn; that is a neat feature of audio-only items."

An Exciting New Avenue

The podcast has the potential to help listeners understand how God's way applies to every aspect of life. "Hearing ministers organically discuss a topic that matters to you as a teen or as a young adult, and getting to be a 'fly on the wall,' so to speak, as they do so, has a lot of potential to be helpful," Mr. Smith explained. "We're called to let Christ's own mind be in us, and with the podcast we can actively try to model what that looks like when you think about the things that grab your attention, whether it's a popular movie or a difficult verse in the Bible."

It can sometimes be difficult to understand how the Bible's ancient passages apply to modern situations, and the podcast can be a helpful tool in aiding that vital comprehension. "Our goal is to discuss topics ranging from current events to difficult scriptures, as well as general questions that the youth have," Mr. Robinson explains, "and the podcast format allows us to do that. But more than that, remembering that young people naturally don't have the experience that an older adult would, we want to make the Bible more approachable and interesting. It's an intimidating book, and it takes some time to get a handle on its wide-ranging topics."

Join the Conversation

That goal certainly seems to have been met for many listeners around the world. One in South Africa commented, "I just wanted to take the time to let you know how much help I have found in the podcasts of the LYP YouTube channel. They brought and continue to bring so much clarity concerning the world around me and the way I see things.... It shows me how deeply God can work with His ministers to make sure they bring the messages to different listeners."

With God's help, Mr. Smith and Mr. Robinson hope to continue bringing clarity to the young people of God's Church—and to do that, they need to know what those young people are wondering about. To help with that, teens, young adults, and parents can email Podcast@LivingYouth.org with their questions about the Bible, what's going on in the world, or just a topic they'd like to learn how to think biblically about. And if you haven't already, access LivingYouth.org for podcasts, videos, and articles created specifically for the teens and young adults in God's Church! (LN)





Woman to Woman

Is a Woman's Attire Important?

By **Janth B. English**

Recently, while shopping at the grocery store, I began to notice the clothes that other ladies were wearing. Some seemed to come dressed for bed, with pajamas and fuzzy slippers to match. Some wore form-fitting clothes that left little to the imagination—including cellulite. Still others had so few clothes on that I had to turn my head away out of embarrassment for them. It seemed most were adhering to the philosophy, “When you’ve got it, flaunt it.” My thoughts were that we will have a big job in tomorrow’s world teaching women something as basic as how to dress.

As I thought about the women I was observing, I began to consider my own clothes. What was I wearing in public? Was I, as a Christian woman, setting the proper example? Was my public attire something others should emulate? I had to admit that it was not. My clothes were not immodest, but they were hardly exemplary. They did not set the tone that I believe will be the standard in the Kingdom of God. I was dressed more for gardening or such than for shopping at a public grocery store. I had to admit that society’s much-too-casual dress code had rubbed off on me.

To be clear, I am not advocating a return to the day when women vacuumed floors in high heels, as we were portrayed to do on early television sitcoms, nor am I saying that we should wear pearls while doing housework, like the mother on *Leave It to Beaver*. However, I think we can agree that many women’s wardrobe choices have gotten out of hand, to say the least.

To Please God, Not Men

As Christian women, we all too often reassure ourselves by comparing ourselves with women who are not in the Church. Yet the Bible clearly states that comparing ourselves among ourselves is unwise (2 Corinthians 10:12)—so how much less reliable is it to compare ourselves with women whom God has not called?

Our standards should be based on what God says. So, what does He say?

God does not have a law that tells us exactly how long a dress or skirt should be. Christian women should not need

the “dress police” to measure hemlines. However, God does give us broad principles that, with His Spirit, we can use to make wise choices.

One key principle to use in selecting clothes is modesty (1 Timothy 2:9). The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary defines modesty as a “propriety in dress, speech, or conduct.” Today’s society likes to believe modesty is situational, meaning that each of us can define it to be whatever we want it to mean. But God’s standard of modesty does not make room for women to dress provocatively. Many women seem not to understand the effect women’s clothing choices can have on men. We are our brothers’ keepers, and we should not want anyone to suffer spiritually because of the clothes we choose to wear. Christian women should employ modesty in their public dress at all times.

Another principle to consider when selecting items for your wardrobe is whether or not the clothes are truly appropriate for women, specifically. Are they feminine, or do they hint at some kind of gender-bending? This may seem obvious, but with today’s transgender movement and the desire to blur lines between men and women, it must be considered. Many fashion designers lean toward either of two extremes in clothing: super-sexy or sexless. Unisex approaches that try to hide or deny the differences between male and female are an abomination to God, who wants women to look and dress like women (Deuteronomy 22:5). Pants are fine, so long as they are designed for women, and it’s not that every woman’s t-shirt and every female baby’s diaper must be pink—we do not need to consider blue jeans, green t-shirts, or white diapers as gender-bending. But we must use our wisdom and common sense to dress in a way that clearly distinguishes us from men. Christian women should want their femininity to be obvious, not obscured by the clothes they’re wearing.

There are many principles we could address, but the last we will consider in this brief article is an overriding tenet that should govern all of our choices: We are ambassadors for the Kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 5:20). As ambassadors, we represent the Kingdom of God, now. We practice God’s way now. We should emulate today the standards we will teach women in the world tomorrow, and we cannot convincingly teach what we have not practiced.



I am well aware that practicing our beliefs with respect to how we dress can make us stand out. This is especially true for younger women and women who work outside the home. The tendency is to want to blend in and not attract unwanted attention and possibly ridicule. But don't worry—be encouraged! If you suffer because you choose to dress in a godly manner, you will be well rewarded (Matthew 5:11–12)! Christian women recognize that we are representatives of the Kingdom of God and therefore dress to please our heavenly Father.

“Majoring in the Minors”?

Given Scripture's broad guidelines of appropriate dress and the broad range of clothing worn today, one would think there would be many choices that meet Christian standards, but there are surprisingly few. Many women's selections at clothing stores are either too short, or too low-cut, or too tight, or too something!

Dressing properly is not always easy (Matthew 7:14); however, there are options available. The more conservative brands often offer suitable choices. These may cost more, and it's true that some of us may be very limited by our income when it comes to choosing which clothes to buy. However, while some modest clothing may be more expensive, it is usually of higher quality and will last longer, making it a good investment. Also, a good seamstress can make alterations to some clothes to make them more appropriate, and some

brave souls might decide they would like to take up sewing and create their own styles.

In any case, Christian women must not give in to the provocative styles foisted upon us by worldly clothing designers. Choosing to dress as godly women will require more effort, yet with God's help, we can do it.

Some may question the importance of this topic. They may consider a discussion on how we dress as “majoring in the minors.” After all, God is interested in developing the inner person; He is developing our hearts and minds to be like Christ's (Philippians 2:5). Clothes are just a physical thing; does God really care about this?

This way of thinking is a false narrative, because *both* are important. Yes, God wants us to develop the inner person—and yes, God cares about what we wear. The clothes we choose to wear are an outward expression of the inner woman we are becoming. Our choices, including what we wear, reflect our faith (James 2:18).

While this article discusses some broad principles about the characteristics of clothes Christian women should wear in public, I am in no way advocating that we must dress in Sabbath-wear whenever we leave the house. There are appropriate clothes for differing occasions—we would not wear the same clothes shopping as we wear to the beach, for example. There are many times when a pair of jeans and a t-shirt are quite fine. Yet should we wear jeans that have holes in strategic places or t-shirts that have unchristian or political sayings on them? Should we be seen in public wearing clothes that are noticeably torn, stained, or dirty? The casual, grungy look has become very popular, and we should want to avoid that. Whatever the occasion, our public attire should be modest, and whether we are in public or not, our attire should be female and representative of our Christian values.

Yes, what we wear is important, and God does care, because we are His daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18). We are in training to be “kings and priests” in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 5:9–10). We have the unique perspective of being women, and we will be able to relate to other women in God's Kingdom. We will have the pleasure and the opportunity to teach them God's way of life in the soon-coming millennial reign of Christ. We have been enlisted by God the Father to preach the Gospel to the world, and sometimes the best way to preach is by being a light (Matthew 5:14–16). Let us be lights and show the world through our examples how Christian women should dress. (LH)

ORDINATIONS

Mr. Michael Haynes was ordained a deacon on August 13 by Area Pastor Martin Fannin, Associate Pastor Jim Meredith, and elder Tony Collier. Mr. Haynes serves in the Knoxville, Tennessee, congregation.

Mr. Derek McQuattie was ordained a deacon on May 29, 2021. Mr. McQuattie serves in the London, Ontario, congregation in Canada.

Messrs. Carlito Pisalbon and Joel Rivera were ordained elders on August 20 by Philippines Area Pastor Joseph Gonzalez and Iligan City Area Pastor Jose Arendain. Mr. Pisalbon serves

in the Lanao Del Norte congregation and Mr. Rivera serves in the Iligan City congregation, both in the Philippines.

Mr. Alex Pomictier was ordained an elder on September 10 by Regional Pastor Rand Millich and Omaha Associate Pastor Brian Pomictier. Mr. Alex Pomictier serves in the Omaha, Nebraska, congregation.

Mr. Nate Thomas was ordained a deacon on September 3 by Area Pastor Wyatt Ciesielka and elder Carl Derstine. Mr. Thomas currently serves in the Raleigh, North Carolina, congregation but is in the process of relocating to Eastern Virginia, where his continued service will be much appreciated.

Weddings & Anniversaries

Mr. Ethan Denny and Ms. Brooke Zehnder were united in marriage on Sunday, August 7, in North Carolina by Minneapolis Area Pastor Mark Sandor. The wedding ceremony was attended by family and friends who witnessed their covenant with God and each other and celebrated with them the beginning of their marriage. Mr. and Mrs. Ethan

Denny live in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area.

Mr. and Mrs. Andy (Ramona) Higginbotham celebrated their **golden wedding anniversary** on August 19. The Terre Haute, Indiana, congregation honored them with a reception after Sabbath services on August 20.

A special anniversary cake was shared in commemoration of the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Higginbotham have been members of God's Church for many years, and the brethren were happy to join in the celebration. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Higginbotham on this wonderful milestone of 50 years of marriage!

Births

Mr. and Mrs. T.J. (Amanda) Powers are delighted to announce the birth of their beautiful and healthy baby girl, **Abigail Elizabeth Powers**. Abigail was born August 28, weighing 11 pounds, 10 ounces, and measuring 23 inches long.

50th Anniversary of Montana Congregations

A small campground nestled in the Blackfoot River valley near Lincoln, Montana, was the site of the annual Montana Church Campout, held over the weekend of August 12–14. The campout also memorialized the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the first Church of God congregations in Montana. Fifty-five campers and visitors attended Sabbath services in the shade of aspens and pines, under clear skies, and with refreshing temperatures. Former Montana pastors Rand Millich (who raised up Montana WCG congregations in Missoula, Great Falls, Kalispell, and Butte), Rod McNair, Jeffrey Fall, and their wives were among those who attended. Current Montana pastor Brandon Fall and the LCG Montana brethren organized the event—complete with an abundance of mouth-watering food and warm fellowship. Several members from the first Sabbath service in 1972 were present, including Great Falls elder Arnold Lalum and his wife Micki. Mrs. Lalum had created a memento book for attendees, complete with pictures, memories, and write-ups detailing 50 years of the Church of God in Montana.

—Rod McNair

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In Loving Memory

Mr. William “Bill” Adams, 89, died peacefully in Tucson, Arizona, on June 30, with his wife Kathy by his side. Mr. Adams was born in Montana and lived there until moving to Tucson in 2021. Besides his wife, he is survived by four sons and one daughter: John (Marjie) Adams in Helena, Montana; Jim (Tami) Adams in Missoula, Montana; Mike (Kristen) Dalton in Tucson; Mark (Nikki) Dalton in Grand Junction, Colorado; and Ruth (Stephen) Johns in Missoula, Montana. He is also survived by ten grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Mr. Adams worked for Buttrey Foods for 38 years, starting after graduating from high school and retiring in 1990. Shortly after his retirement, he married Kathy. Mr. Adams was an active, longtime member of God’s Church, first hearing Mr. Armstrong on the radio in the 1960s. There were no congregations in Montana when he was baptized in 1969, but he would eventually go on to give sermonettes for more than 20 years in the Helena, Montana, congregation. He also served in many ways at the Festivals. He loved to sing in the choir and sometimes gave special music with his wonderful bass voice. He will be greatly missed by his brethren and family members.

Mr. James Barnes, 72, died on July 15. Baptized in 1973, he attended the Memphis, Tennessee, congregation until becoming homebound with health trials for the last few years. Mr. Barnes will be greatly missed by his family, his brethren, and all who knew and loved him.

Mrs. Shirley H. Breaux, 84, died peacefully on August 25, surrounded by her loving family. Mrs. Breaux was a faithful, longtime member of the Lafayette, Louisiana, congregation. A very kind-hearted person, her beautiful smile and soft laugh will be missed by all. She was always willing to serve wherever and whenever she could. Mrs. Breaux was a nurse and homemaker, and enjoyed caring for her family as well as sewing and reading. She loved the time spent with her family. She is survived by her two sons, Rickie and Eddie (Area Pastor in Mississippi and Florida), as well as by her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, other relatives, and many friends.

Mr. Robert “Bob” Cole died on September 5, just a few days after turning **92**. Mr. Cole was a longtime member in God’s Church, baptized in 1961, and was an inspiring example of endurance for the Tannersville, Pennsylvania, congregation. Mr. Cole served for many years as a deacon. He was one of 13 children and enjoyed NASCAR, fishing, hunting, and working outdoors in his younger years. He was the loving husband of 69 years of Kathryn Virginia Cole until her death in July 2020. Mr. Cole and his wife had three children, four grand-

children, and six great-grandchildren. His friendliness, humor, and example of faithfulness will be greatly missed by his many family members, friends, and brethren.

Mr. Raphael Garcia, 74, died on May 20, 2021, at his home. He was introduced to the truth in the early 1980s and was baptized in 1984. His wife demanded that he choose between her and God’s Church and he courageously stepped out in faith and opted for the path leading to eternal life. He attended the Montreal congregation while in Canada and the Chaguanas congregation while in Trinidad. A mechanic and businessman in Canada, he greatly enjoyed tending and keeping a few acres of land while in Trinidad, successfully planting and reaping limes, cassava (manioc/yuca), coconuts, and corn, as well as different varieties of mangoes. Soft-spoken, courteous, and kind, Mr. Garcia will be missed by all who knew and loved him. He is survived by one son and other relatives.

Mr. Andrew Gurahoo, 59, died on March 30, 2020, at his home. Mr. Gurahoo was a member of the Georgetown, Guyana, congregation. He first learned of God’s true Church at the age of 20, when he read a magazine, and he was baptized in 2012. Mr. Gurahoo was always ready to lend a helping hand and was responsible for mailing Church literature to subscribers throughout Guyana. He is survived by his wife of 35 years, a son, and three grandchildren, and will be missed by all who knew him.

Mr. Lewis Stephen Noreiga, 75, died peacefully at his home on February 15. He learned of the truth through the *Tomorrow’s World* telecast and was baptized into God’s Church in 2019. A member of the Chaguanas, Trinidad, congregation, he was a very quiet, approachable person and easy to get along with. Mr. Noreiga was predeceased by his wife and is survived by two daughters, a granddaughter, and other relatives.

Ms. Bonnie Parsons, 70, died on June 22 after a lengthy period of health trials. Ms. Parsons had a wonderful personality and a very keen sense of humor. She will be greatly missed by the Fort Smith, Arkansas, congregation and all who knew her.

Ms. Sheila Siewsankar, 68, died peacefully at home in her sleep on July 26, 2021, after battling cancer for a few months. Baptized in 2004, she was a faithful member of God’s Church and attended the Chaguanas, Trinidad, congregation. She loved attending God’s Feasts and spending time with God’s people. Ms. Siewsankar is survived by three sons, three daughters, and eight grandchildren, and is greatly missed.

Electronic Service Requested

What We'll Never Regret

Many in the world think of commitment as dangerous. And, for the most part, they're not wrong. Commitment *is* dangerous—just ask anyone who ever shelled out cash for tattoo removal. The Scriptures actually warn against throwing promises around—even with the purest intentions—because we humans are neither omnipotent nor omniscient, and might very well realize later that a commitment we made was unnecessary, foolish, or even sinful (Proverbs 20:25; Matthew 5:33–37; James 5:12).

A rash or poorly placed commitment can indeed create a nightmare of consequences, and because they recognize that, many people are understandably terrified of commitment in general. “If I commit,” they think, “I might regret it.”

In God's Church, we're constantly reminded of our need to remain committed to God and His way of life. And because of the veil they're under, many in the world find that commitment uncomfortable, to say the least. “Tying yourself down to a religion for *life*? You're going to regret that.”

To them, we're binding ourselves to a restrictive lifestyle that keeps us from variety. Because of the commitment we've made, we can't try all the foods they try. We can't see all the movies they see. We can't do all the things they do with all the people they do them with.

And again—they're not wrong. There's a lot that a servant of God *can't*. But what the world doesn't see, what it's simply not *able* to see, is the vast number of things we *can*.

We can talk daily to Someone who is genuinely and wholeheartedly listening to us. We can read His heartfelt, wise

answers to the deepest questions of life. We can take a day, every single week, to cast our usual burdens completely aside. We can feel the gratitude and satisfaction that come from becoming better people with our Best Friend's help. We can sincerely ask forgiveness and know that we'll receive it.

We can have a wonderful relationship with our Father—no matter who our parents are. We can be confident in the guidance our Father provides to help us build healthy family relationships. We can live without puzzling over what morality is, because we have a perfect guide to teach us. We can feel the love of Someone who literally gave His firstborn for us. We can have unshakeable confidence that death is not the end, but just a pause. We can look forward to becoming, one day, far beyond human.

And that's not even a tiny fraction of what we *can* because of our commitment to the One who deserves commitment more than anyone else. Commitment to the God of the Scriptures will never turn out to be a bad idea in hindsight. We'll never find ourselves outgrowing Him, never discover fine print that He tried to hide from us, and never be burdened with the realization that it would have been better to commit to some other way of life. We'll all make many stupid decisions as the days and years pass, but if we're doing our best to sincerely follow Him, we will never, ever look back and say, “I really shouldn't have tied myself down to God.” Those in the world don't think we have the abundant life, but that's only because they confuse “abundant” for “unhinged.”

Yes, there's a lot a servant of God can't do—but none of it is worth doing. If we've committed to Him, we've made the safest commitment possible, and *we can* rejoice in the knowledge that we'll never regret it.

—Thomas White

The above is adapted from one of the commentaries available at LivingYouth.org, all of which discuss issues relevant to the young people of God's Church today.