

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

LCG.org

January-February 2019

The Danger of Becoming Desensitized

Dear Brethren,

God has made the human race very adaptable. During the summer of 1966, three of us from Ambassador College traveled to Oregon to work for the Forest Service, specifically in Timber Stand Improvement—a fancy title for thinning the forest. Certain trees were marked with blue paint, and we were to leave them and cut down all other trees unless they were above a certain size. But larger trees marked with red paint were also to be cut down. The idea was to space out the trees, allowing them to grow faster. I would love to see the results of our labor from 52 years ago!

Our housing arrangements were primitive. We rented a small house in town for \$40 per month, and used it on the Sabbath to “get off the ground” and take our weekly shower. The rest of the time, we lived in tents. Each week we transported 25 gallons of water to our remote campsite for drinking, cooking, and dishwashing—not enough for bathing. We were paid ten dollars per acre of thinned forestry, so speed and hustle were essential. We sweated profusely from the summer heat and hard work. To say that we were dirty by the end of the week is a bit of an understatement. Sweat, chainsaw oil, and wood chips were ground into our clothes and bodies.

Not one of us grew up in such conditions. We were all used to bathing daily, and to tossing dirty clothes into a basket for Mom to wash, iron, fold, and put into our dresser drawers. But we adapted quickly to the circumstances in which we found ourselves. That experience taught me how easy it is to “adapt downward” within a short period of time.

Adaptability is a helpful trait when a situation requires it, but it can also lead to complacency. Why make fundamental

changes when you can simply adjust and “adapt” in order to maintain a comfortable status quo? We can easily adapt to accommodate even dramatic changes around us, even if we do so grudgingly at first.

Over the past five decades, the world has changed drastically. We knew from Scripture that the Israelite nations would descend into sin and fall at the end of the age. We knew that humanity’s sins would grow worse and worse, but few imagined how bad things would become. We read of Israel being likened to Sodom and Gomorrah, but never guessed that same-sex marriage and the LGBTQ+ movement would grow so large, infiltrating all levels of education, even grade school. Who could have foreseen drag queens reading to toddlers?

The downside of adaptability is that it is not limited to physical circumstances. We also adapt to the social and moral cultures that surround us. We are at first incensed by each new depravity, but over time, we get tired of hearing about it and become desensitized. In the end, some actually accept and defend the depraved behavior, becoming allies of sinful conduct. This is what Paul understood when he described aberrant behaviors, condemning those “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Romans 1:32).

Those who died twenty, or even ten years ago would be shocked to see today’s immorality. Are we equally shocked? Have we adapted and become desensitized? Have we gone so far as to defend immoral behavior?

We must never get to a place where we “approve of those who practice” immorality as defined by the only source capable of making that determination: the word of God (John 17:17;

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Romans 7:7). At the same time, we must never forget that Christ paid sin's penalty for *everyone* who repents and accepts His sacrifice, and His compassion includes those who live in a very miserable state of sin. Remember what Jesus said regarding the self-righteous and stiff-necked cities in which He performed mighty miracles: "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:24). See also Matthew 10:15, where He includes Gomorrah with Sodom in a similar statement. As true Christians, we must speak the truth while treating all sinners respectfully.

Human adaptability is necessary for our well-being, as we sometimes find ourselves in less than ideal conditions. However, right and wrong do not change, and we must guard against adapting and becoming desensitized to sinful behaviors. This is one of the great lessons of the Days of Unleavened Bread. Corinth was one of the most immoral cities in the first-century Roman Empire, and gross immorality surrounded the members of the Church of God who lived there—desensitizing them to such a point that, by their actions, they defended a man's co-habitation with his stepmother. They gloried in their tolerance of his behavior. Note Paul's strong rebuke: "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). The culture around us *rubs off on us!*

I have puzzled over God's description of the final Church era. He describes it as dominated by those who are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot (Revelation 3:15). Would not one expect His people to recognize end-time society's moral degradation, and the prophecies being fulfilled before their eyes? Would this not cause them to be spiritually on fire?

Such is not the case for many. The Bible predicts the opposite sort of reaction, and those predictions are coming true today. This does not mean that you personally cannot be on fire and zealous, but simply that these qualities do not represent the most common attitude within the broader Church of God during the end times.

The problem is that Laodiceans
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They see themselves as rich
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The problem is that Laodiceans are blind to their condition. They see themselves as rich and in need of nothing. "Rich" may be applied both physically and spiritually, and having physical wealth may fool some into believing that they are spiritually flourishing.

William Ramsay described the city of Laodicea as "The City of Compromise." He went on to write, "In the tendency of the Laodiceans towards a policy of compromise he [John] would probably see a tendency towards toleration and allowance.... The very characteristics which made Laodicea a well-ordered, energetic and pushing centre of trade, seemed to him to evince a coldness of nature that was fatal to the highest side of human character, the spirit of self-sacrifice and enthusiasm" (*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, pp. 413, 419–20).

These descriptions were the opinion of a historian who did not understand what we understand. He saw the book of Revelation as merely the work of a man, but his knowledge of geography, history, and the Scriptures gave him insight that is worthy of our attention. *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* was published in 1904, prior to the beginning of the Philadelphian and Laodicean eras of the Church.

Humans must be able to adapt, but the tendency to become desensitized to sin poses a grave danger. It cost Lot's wife her life (Luke 17:31–32), and while Lot himself is called righteous (2 Peter 2:7), the culture around him had a negative impact on his own behavior as well (Genesis 19:4–8).

We, too, are influenced by the society around us. Do we understand the cost of compromising with it? Christ tells us, "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16). We can even be in danger of becoming desensitized to this warning, so let us diligently seek God as the world around us descends into Sodom and Gomorrah!



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

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**Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Living Church News • P.O. Box 3810 Charlotte, NC 28227**

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Which Will You Choose?

In the later years of his life, Mr. Herbert Armstrong often referred to the opening chapters of Genesis, pointing us to lessons regarding the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These trees represent two opposite ways of life. The tree of life represents obedience to God and adherence to His way of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents man's reliance on himself to decide what is good and what is evil—a self-willed rejection of our Creator.

Mr. Armstrong spoke so frequently on the subject that some people tired of hearing about it. He often started by telling us that he was giving something new. Many, no doubt, chalked this up to an old man's forgetfulness, but there would usually be some additional insight added to the overall picture. Some might counter that this is simply "spin," an explanation to cover up a failing mind. But was his mind failing, or was he way ahead of us, consciously explaining a vital, life-saving lesson that passed over the heads of far too many?

What is remarkable about the history of Mr. Armstrong and the two trees is his perception that most people did not "get it"! Maybe that is why he said that he was telling us something new; it was certainly a revelation missed by the majority. He often told us, with emotion and power, "I don't think 50 percent of you get it!" Many of us even remember him saying, "I think maybe only 10 percent of you get it!"

When Adam and Eve chose the wrong tree and were cut off from the tree of life, they set mankind on an evil and ultimately unsuccessful course. Ever since, our moral compass has been set by human reason, separated from God. We have chosen our own education, government, science and technology, industry and commerce, culture and religion.

Regarding religion, Mr. Armstrong specifically warned us against returning to Protestantism. Why? What did he see that caused him to give us this warning? We kept the Sabbath and Holy Days, rejected the idea of an immortal soul, paid our tithes, and avoided unclean meats. We were on solid ground—or so we thought.

History proved Mr. Armstrong correct. The overwhelming majority *did not get it*. Soon after his death, many turned away from the truth and returned to heathen rituals and lies. All it took was one man standing

up and saying that it was okay. When Mr. Armstrong's successor "permitted" eating unclean meats, some went out that very night to order lobster or pork.

Only Two Trees!

Mr. Armstrong saw the heart and core of the Garden account. He understood human nature, and he understood the lure of the forbidden way (Hebrews 11:24–26). He recognized that many in the Church were picking the wrong tree's fruit and needed to wake up. Sadly, most did not. Mr. Armstrong understood that there is no middle ground: *There are only two trees!*

God told Israel, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Every day, our words and actions demonstrate which tree we are choosing. How easy it is to compromise, to profess love for the tree of life while choosing the tree that brings curses and death.

Our battle is spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3–5). It is an illusion to think that we can eat from the wrong tree, just as Adam did, and not suffer terrible consequences. Some things seem right to us, but don't work out so well, even leading to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)! We must not love this world, lest we pass away with it (1 John 2:15–17). Far too many church members of all ages attempt to have it both ways—to be in the Church and the world at the same time. This cannot work, as we learned from the example of those who failed to heed Mr. Armstrong's warning!

Elijah's Message

The prophet Malachi reveals that one coming in the spirit and power of Elijah will appear before the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). We understand that John the Baptist paved the way for the Messiah's first coming (Matthew 11:12–14), but Malachi specifically refers to the end time, the second coming of Jesus Christ, when he adds, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5).

Who was Elijah? He came "out of nowhere," his name never mentioned prior to 1 Kings 17:1. During a troubled time in Israel, and after three and a half years of severe drought, he appeared again before King Ahab. There was a short exchange before Elijah called for

Ahab to meet him on Mount Carmel, and to bring with him 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.

Quite a crowd showed up. It was then that Elijah asked the pertinent question: “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). He posed this question to a people who were trying to straddle a fork in the road—a strategy that will never work, as the gap widens with time and distance. Israel was, no doubt, much deeper into Baal worship than into the worship of the God of Abraham.

The New Testament refers to Elijah numerous times. He appeared in the transfiguration vision, talking with Jesus and Moses (Matthew 17:1–9). Some people thought that Jesus was Elijah (Matthew 16:14; Luke 9:7–9), while others thought that He called out to Elijah while hanging on the stake (Matthew 27:47, 49).

One interesting possibility is that the prophet Elijah typifies one of the two witnesses, Moses typifying the other. Evidence for this idea is threefold. As we have already noted, there is one to come in the spirit and power of Elijah, “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Moses and Elijah appeared in the transfiguration vision with Christ. The two witnesses will work miracles, including the prevention of rain for a period of three and a half years, reminiscent of the drought worked through Elijah during the reign of Ahab.

John the Baptist clearly fulfilled the role of Elijah, preparing the way for Jesus’ first coming. He was not the *resurrected* Elijah, but one who came *in the spirit and power* of Elijah. We should not think that it will be any different when a similar man appears at the end of the age; He will not be Elijah resurrected, as is proclaimed by some who do not understand the Scriptures.

Some believe that Mr. Herbert Armstrong was the Elijah to come, but the more time passes since his death in 1986 (33 years ago), the less likely that is. He certainly did an Elijah-like work, but did he fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 4? Time will reveal the truth.

The point is that the Elijah of old dealt with a compromising people. They had not thoroughly rejected the God of Israel, but they had one foot in the worship of the heathen gods of the nations that surrounded and infiltrated them. Will it be different at the end? Will not the end-time Elijah, regardless of who he may be, play a similar role, calling for people to repent and symbolically choose one tree or the other?

Is the church of Laodicea not told to “get off the fence”? Is compromise not the dominant attitude within the Church at the end of the age? “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16). Such willingness to compromise suggests a *lack of conviction!*

James gives a command and a warning: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:22–25).

Become Converted!

We often hear the word *conversion* used in the Church. A parent may ask a daughter considering marriage, “Is he converted?” You may wonder, “Am I converted?” But what does this mean? Often *converted* is thought of as meaning exactly the same as *baptized*, but we must understand that it means so much more. *Conversion*, in our context, means **truly changing**—being *transformed* to a different way of life.

A sort of initial conversion takes place when someone changes his eating habits, changes the day on which he worships and rests, and changes how he uses his money. There is a very evident transformation of those who come into the Church from elsewhere. For those who grow up in the Church, there must also be a conversion process, but it may not be as obvious, and this is where the proverbial rubber meets the road. Whether we grow up in the Church or come to it later in life, the real conversion process is not as simple as going to the Feast of Tabernacles and not keeping Christmas. Real conversion is inward, affecting both heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10). It involves a different kind of circumcision: “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer” (Deuteronomy 10:16). Conversion is an ongoing process that begins at baptism (Colossians 2:11–12; 3:1–5), and *ongoing* is the operative word. Putting to death one’s old ways must take place daily (1 Corinthians 15:31).

Become as Little Children

Jesus’ disciples were competitive, and some were afflicted with “who is greatest” syndrome. On one occasion, they asked Him, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” To answer them, He set a child in their midst, and 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 18:1–3). They needed to convert from one way of thinking to another, and the fruits of their lives clearly showed that they did, with the exception of Judas (John 17:12).

Children are teachable—they soak up knowledge and understanding. They want to learn, and so must we. One beatitude instructs us, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

Do Prophecies Fail?

By **Dexter Wakefield**

Sometimes when we read the Bible, we come across a verse in one place that seems to contradict a verse in another.

For instance, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, *they will fail*” (1 Corinthians 13:8). Paul *seems* to be telling us that at least some prophecies are not going to be fulfilled as predicted. However, Matthew recorded Jesus as saying, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17–18). Jesus said that *all* that God has said will come to pass, even to the smallest details. He also said, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to *believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*” (Luke 24:25). Jesus clearly expects us to believe everything the prophets have spoken.

So who is right, Paul or Jesus?

Paul himself said that he believed all that the prophets wrote: “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, *believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets*” (Acts 24:14).

But didn’t Paul write that prophecies can fail? How then could he believe *all* of them? Is the Apostle Paul contradicting himself? Is this a contradiction within the Bible?

Biblical skeptics believe such verses to be proof that the Bible is merely human literature, written by men, and not the inerrant word of a deity. To them, “One man wrote one thing and another wrote something else.” People have different points of view, the skeptics say, especially if they lived and wrote at different times, so contradictions are inevitable—disproving the divine inspiration of the Bible. Could you explain these verses if someone brought them up as a contradiction in God’s word?

Well, we can be sure that there is no contradiction anywhere in God’s word. It would be good to understand what Paul is saying so we can “give a defense” (1 Peter 3:15) and always be confident of the veracity of God’s word.

A Simple Answer

The explanation is actually quite simple. These verses appear contradictory *because of a translation issue in the King*

James and New King James versions of the Bible. In many modern versions, these verses are translated more clearly and do not give the appearance of contradiction. The verses are not contradictory in the original Greek text. It is important to remember that a sentence construction can appear contradictory in English, when it was not contradictory in the original language.

The books of the New Testament were written in ancient Greek, because that was the international language, the *lingua franca*, of the day. Many Greek words do not have exact counterparts in English, so sometimes sentences that are not contradictory in Greek (or Hebrew, in the case of the Old Testament) may seem to be so in English, depending on how they have been translated. This is the case with Paul’s comments in the *King James* and *New King James* versions of 1 Corinthians 13:8.

God does not make mistakes, but there are no inerrant translators. This accounts for many supposed contradictions in the Bible. For the Bible to contain a genuine, *logical contradiction* of itself, there must be two contradictory statements *in the original text*, for which there is no explanation or reconciliation—a standard that the Bible’s skeptics find very difficult to meet.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8–13, the word “fail” in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word *katargeo* (Strong’s 2673), which is used *four times* in these verses, but translated differently each time. Where *katargeo* appears in the original text, it is shown in bold type below.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they **will fail** [2673]; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it **will vanish away** [2673]. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part **will be done away** [2673]. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I **put away** [2673] childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:8–13, *NKJV*).

Here is the definition of *katargeo* from *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*. It carries one of two meanings, depending on context.

1. to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative:
2. to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish:

Other translations render *katargeo* (the word translated “fail” in the *KJV*) as “cease.” For instance, in the *New International Version*, 1 Corinthians 13:8 is translated, “But where there are prophecies, **they will cease.**” *Katargeo* does sometimes mean “cease” in the New Testament, but it has other meanings as well, such as “abolish.” While similar in some respects, the words “cease” and “abolish” have different applications. For instance, when a government annuls or abolishes a law, that law ceases to exist, but when a man ceases to speak, he does not abolish his voice. He has simply *completed* what he was saying.

What Was Paul Actually Saying?

In the original Greek of the New Testament, the verse is clearly saying that prophecies cease in the same sense that knowledge and other things that are immature and “in part” pass away in favor of the mature and complete. Each time the Greek word *katargeo* is used in these verses, it means basically the same thing. Here is how the *New International Version* renders this passage of Scripture. The multiple translations of *katargeo* are noted in bold type.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they **will cease**; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it **will pass away**. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part **disappears**. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I **put** the ways of childhood **behind me** (1 Corinthians 13:8–11, *NIV*).

Note that in most cases, the translators needed extra words as they tried to capture in English the meaning of this particular Greek word.

We should also note that some prophecies are conditional—“If *this*, then *that*”—and a conditional prophecy might not be completed if conditions are not met. Jonah prophesied the destruction of Ninevah *if* they did not repent, but the people did repent and were spared (Jonah 3).

The Larger Lesson

Paul begins this portion of his letter to the church in Corinth with an inspiring and profound statement on the subject of love. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–2).

The love that Paul writes about here is God’s quality of love, *agape*, and that is the word used throughout this chapter. *Agape* is selfless, outgoing concern for others, and is usually expressed in actions. The subject of Paul’s discourse is *love*, *not prophecy*, and it is important to

remember that as we read the rest of this chapter, particularly the part about prophecies.

Paul completes this lesson by writing, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; *but the greatest of these is love*” (1 Corinthians 13:12–13).

So—when does a prophecy cease to be a prophecy? When it is fulfilled or completed. It ceases in the same sense that childhood ceases when it is completed. When the imperfect is perfected, it ceases to be imperfect and is completed. Paul is presenting this rationale in order to make a profound point. Notice that he both *begins* and *ends* 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 by contrasting various parts of the human experience with *agape* love: “Love never fails.... the greatest of these is love.”

Many things may loom large in our lives. Our teenage years are a huge experience as we transition from childhood to adulthood, but they have a beginning and an end. The great events of history, even those that are prophesied by God, all have a beginning and an end. Our trials have a beginning and an end. Paul points out that for now, we can only “see in a mirror, dimly,” but that will cease, for the time is coming when we will *know just as we are known* (v. 12)! The day will come when *our faith and hope will be fulfilled and completed* in the eternal love and glory of the Kingdom of God.

Paul wants us to understand that while faith and hope are crucial to us on our journey through life, God is love, *agape* love, and His “love never fails.” *Love is the greatest of these things, because God and His love never cease or fail!* (L)

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The Value of Wisdom



By **William Long**

Is there one all-important quality that every true Christian must have in order to overcome the temptations of this life and rule with Jesus Christ at His return? Or are we to balance a myriad of godly characteristics and traits, always taking stock of where we are falling short and subsequently making “course corrections”? Put simply, the answer to both questions is “Yes.” However, without one all-important trait, everything else God expects of us becomes impossible to achieve. Christians must possess **wisdom** as a foundation if we are to develop the mind and character of God our Father and Jesus the Christ.

Godly wisdom allows us to overcome our carnal natures, providing incredible benefits, including the capacity to handle all manner of trials and tribulations and, eventually, the ability to rule with Christ. Here are just a few aspects of godly wisdom:

- It gives us understanding of God’s word. In fact, we cannot fully understand God’s plan and purpose without it.
- It frees us from fear.
- It is impossible to develop in its fullness without the Holy Spirit.
- It teaches us mercy, causing us to produce good fruit.
- God has always possessed it, but we must diligently seek it out.

In Daniel 12, we read a prophecy regarding the resurrection: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:2–3).

Notice that those who “shine like the brightness of the firmament” are not described as loving, merciful, kind, hopeful,

or any other quality that God says we are to possess. Instead, it says that the **wise** will shine brightly. If we possess the true wisdom from above—the wisdom that only comes from our loving Creator—then we are able to love as He loves, showing mercy, kindness, gentleness, and every other fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). How do we obtain that wisdom from above?

The Wisdom of Scholars and Educators

The world’s great thinkers and philosophers have tried to define wisdom, attempting—with differing explanations and rationalizations—to explain how to obtain it. Cicero, a Roman statesman and philosopher, said that “The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.” American essayist Henry David Thoreau stated, “It is characteristic of wisdom to not do desperate things.” A more modern educator, Stephen Covey, pointed out that whatever is at the center of our lives will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power.

None of these men is completely wrong in the way that he describes wisdom. In fact, Cicero, Thoreau, and Covey all describe it in ways that are not incompatible with the Bible. However, their understanding is not perfect, and we need the help of God’s word to properly grasp this foundational quality that all true Christians must come to possess.

We can certainly learn a lot about godly wisdom from King Solomon: “And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus, Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men” (1 Kings 4:29–31). How did Solomon get this wisdom?

It’s instructive to examine how Solomon obtained godly wisdom, because we can all obtain it in the same way. God and Jesus Christ do not change, and the way to receive Their wisdom has not changed either.

We Must Ask for It!

Solomon was a young man, about 20 years old, when he began to rule over the nation of Israel. He had to make very difficult decisions at the very beginning of his rule, and eventually had to execute rebels such as Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei (1 Kings 2). These responsibilities would surely have weighed heavily upon someone so young, and undoubtedly produced stress that would have been difficult to bear without God's help.

In 1 Kings 3:5, God says to Solomon, "Ask! What shall I give you?" Put yourself in Solomon's position. If God gave you the opportunity **today** to ask for whatever you want from Him (within the confines of His law, of course), what would you ask for? Would your request depend on your current circumstances? Would you ask for a new job? Would you ask for deliverance from a difficult health trial, or the ability to overcome whatever trial you may be going through right now?

Solomon had an open invitation to receive anything he felt he needed in that moment. He could have asked for God to remove his enemies so he wouldn't have to execute anyone else. He could have asked for material riches, which many inexperienced young people desire at that stage of life. Instead, he asked for godly wisdom.

"Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9).

God was so pleased with Solomon's request that He not only gave him the wisdom he so desperately needed, but also much more. "See, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days" (1 Kings 3:12-13).

Solomon received exactly what he needed in order to be an effective instrument in God's hands because he specifically asked for it. God certainly knew what Solomon needed, just as He knows what each of us needs in order to live abundant, righteous lives in His service (Matthew 6:8). Yet Solomon still made the effort to ask. We are expected to do the same:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, *let him ask of God*, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:2-5).

The first step to attaining godly wisdom is to ask for it, trusting that God will give it to us. Solomon explained this to his own son in the book of Proverbs.

Notice that we go through trials and tests because God desires us to be "complete" men and women of faith, and that "completeness" cannot exist without wisdom. Godly wisdom is the foundation for both freedom from fear and strength to face our trials and persecutions. It gives us the courage and faith to continue on when we feel flattened by the difficulties of this life.

The first step to attaining godly wisdom is to ask for it, trusting that God will give it to us. Solomon explained this to his own son in the book of Proverbs: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). He also wrote that if "you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding... and lift up your voice for understanding... then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom" (Proverbs 2:2-3, 5-6).

God Gives His Wisdom to the Humble

Solomon's attitude when asking for wisdom was one of humility. He didn't demand it of God, because he knew his place. He also knew why he needed God's wisdom. "Now, O LORD my God, You

have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.... For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:7, 9).

Solomon demonstrated humility as he talked with God. He also acknowledged that his responsibility involved not just any people, but the people of God. Do we take time to meditate on the fact that we do not belong to just any church, but the Church of the living God? When we truly grasp what God has done in calling us out of the world and placing us among His chosen people, we can't help but be humbled and grateful. We are a part of the most important Work on earth at this time in history. Recognizing this and using God's wisdom to discern right from wrong shows spiritual maturity. "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [spiritually mature], that is, those who by reason of use [or practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Remember that Solomon asked for wisdom to discern good and evil (1 Kings 3:9; 2 Chronicles 1:10).

Paul expounded even further on this subject to the church in Corinth. "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:6-7). What we have access to as God's people—the wisdom from

above—is hidden from the rest of mankind. Our possession of it is demonstrated by our understanding of spiritual things, understanding which can only be attained through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10–14).

Our possession of wisdom is also demonstrated by our conduct, as it reflects the character of God. We aren't properly discerning good from evil if we are acting according to Satan's devices. Are we envious of others? Do we lie and have selfish ambitions?

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.... But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (James 3:13–15, 17).

If we don't seek peace with one another, or work to produce good fruit, or if we show favoritism among brethren, we are not exercising godly wisdom, and we are failing to judge right from wrong. If this is the case, our spiritual lives and our relationships with one another will fall apart, and we will be derailed from our journey toward eternal life. What often happens next is not good. Many begin to question whether or not they are in the right place, and these thoughts snowball into fear.

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.... For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest... so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore (Hebrews 12:14–15, 18–19).

Godly Wisdom Makes Us Free from Fear

As he bore the great responsibility of shepherding God's people among the Gentiles, even the Apostle Paul dealt with fear of a sort, but that fear was no obstacle to the wisdom of God.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my

preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

Wisdom shows us what to fear: "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:7). The Bible admonishes us to be courageous in all areas of our lives and to fear only God—to have awe and reverence toward Him as our Creator.

In Matthew 14, we read of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee during a storm. The disciples saw Him and became afraid, thinking He was a ghost.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:27–31).

We must seek God's wisdom in faith, without doubting: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5–8).

Godly wisdom *can* be attained and *will not* be hidden from us if we diligently seek it, ask for it, fear God with our whole hearts, and live our lives in assurance that He will give us exactly what we need to succeed, just as He gave Solomon exactly what he needed to rule the nation of Israel.

Wisdom Is a Foundation for Eternal Life

As Christians who desire to do God's will and finish His Work, let's make sure to ask for wisdom. If we do, God will give us the blessings that we seek. Let's also do our best to remain humble and walk in all of His ways, exercising the Holy Spirit so that we may reflect the character of God our Father and Jesus the Christ.

As we look forward to the return of our Lord and Savior and our resurrection to eternal life, let's remember the quality all of us must have in order to receive our crowns of glory: "Those who are *wise* shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)! ^(L)

Feast of Tabernacles 2018

Keeping God's Feast Around the World!

During the Feast of Tabernacles in 2018, sites all over the world saw the people of God gather together to worship, to learn, and to orient their minds toward the coming Millennium! The collection of Festival summaries below includes almost all of our Feast sites. We hope reading about the experiences of your spiritual family around the globe will remind you of the joys we all shared during last year's Festival and will encourage you to look forward to the joys yet ahead!

United States Snowmass, Colorado



It is impossible to think about the Feast of Tabernacles without remembering the words of Isaiah: "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths" (Isaiah 2:3). This passage rings especially true for those blessed to have kept this year's Feast in Colorado.

Majestic and colorful mountains surround the village of Snowmass. During the Feast, the morning air was brisk and invigorating, and the night sky seemed close enough for you to reach out and touch the stars.

Among the most amazing aspects of this Feast were the unity of spirit and the family atmosphere that filled the hall

each day. These were enhanced by inclusive activities such as Family Bowling and a Progressive Dinner.

However, the primary reason we gathered in Snowmass was, as Isaiah wrote, to be taught the ways of God, so that we might walk in His paths. Sermons by guest speaker Jonathan McNair, Area Pastors Darryl Lovelady and Ron Poole, and Festival Coordinator Stephen Elliot gave everyone a glimpse into our incredible future.

From Opening Night to the final moments of the Last Great Day, enthusiasm, encouragement, and earnestness filled the Festival experience in Snowmass. From the beautiful surroundings and physical activities to the spiritual banquets provided each day, we were constantly inspired by the amazing Calling we've been given and filled with an urgent determination to fully engage in the Work of preparing for Jesus Christ's impending return. May God hasten that day.

Kauai, Hawaii



Kauai, with its beautiful scenery and spiritually uplifting messages, provided a vivid taste of the millennium. Brethren enjoyed stunning tropical ocean views, many opportunities to fellowship, and outstanding special music directed by Mr. Marcus McCullough. Kauai offered an amazing setting, with palm trees, world-class beaches, sea turtles, vibrant flowers,

cascading waterfalls, and the breathtaking Nā Pali coastline that rises four thousand feet out of the ocean.

Many brethren enthusiastically participated in the Festival activities. These included on-site group luncheons at the four-star Koloa Landing Resort, a singles' jungle tour through lush trails, and a world-renowned Nā Pali catamaran snorkel cruise that left onlookers in renewed awe of God's breathtaking creation. Family Day lived up to its name, as approximately 400 spiritual brothers and sisters joined together for burgers and hotdogs, children's activities, volleyball, and a sand sculpture contest. The progressive dinner provided a wonderful way for brethren to fellowship over a relaxed three-course meal. The family Dinner/Dance was highlighted by special live music during the catered meal, family photos, and great participation in the dance, including Mr. Gerald Weston joining in the line dancing.

The brethren showed tremendous examples of outgoing concern and brotherly love during this Feast. The President of the Koloa Landing Resort specifically expressed how wonderful it was to see families and children connect at the meeting hall. This Feast will be remembered for its wonderful messages, outstanding special music, warmth, atmosphere of unity, and the many ways in which it brought brethren even closer together. Kauai 2018 sharpened our focus, painted the millennial picture, and recharged our spiritual batteries, helping us look forward to Christ's imminent millennial reign.

Erlanger, Kentucky



Nearly 400 people came together in northern Kentucky to celebrate God's Feast of Tabernacles. The weather went from rain at the beginning of the Feast to comfortable sunny days by its end. The large atrium lobby of the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport encouraged excellent fellowship throughout the gathering, perfect for spontaneous bonding among Feast-goers of all ages.

Besides the shared meals of organized Holy Day luncheons at the on-site restaurant, brethren feasted on the rich spiritual food provided by the daily messages. Western U.S. Regional Pastor Jeffrey Fall gave two sermons and a Bible

study, as well as addressing the ordained men and women at the Leaders' Mixer. Other sermons and Bible Studies were given by Area Pastors Anthony Stroud, Mark Sandor, and Phil Sena. Connecting a vision of the coming Kingdom of God to how we currently live our lives emerged as a predominant theme woven through many of the messages.

This year's scheduled activities encouraged togetherness among all attendees. Highlights included a game night at a local recreational facility, a no-cost Seniors' Luncheon, an elegant moonlit riverboat dinner cruise on the Ohio River, Family Day at a local farm, and two teen activities. Perhaps the most popular activity this year was the casual Decades Dance, where folks dressed in the fashion of their high-school days and the music featured familiar dance songs from each decade from the 1940s to today. The evening started with brethren singing karaoke tunes as dinner entertainment, with a wide variety of music, including 50s doo-wop, country, and modern Italian "popera."

Many people rated this year's Feast in northern Kentucky as "excellent" on their Festival surveys, thankful that God blessed this site for a second year in a row.

Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri

Some 440 members of God's family gathered to enjoy the lush mountains of the Ozarks, which encompass all of the twists and turns that make the Lake of the Ozarks area so uniquely wonderful to behold. But truly, the surrounding beauty there was outdone by the spiritual messages given throughout the Feast. We were blessed this year to host longtime pastors and Council of Elders members Lambert Greer and Jonathan McNair, and their wives.

Overwhelmingly, Feast-goers expressed that this year's highlights were the inspired messages and the warm, encouraging fellowship. The common thread that tied all of the messages together was the vision of the coming Kingdom of God.

Memorable Feast activities included a Seniors' Luncheon, which featured an encouraging message given by Mr. Lambert Greer, who admonished his audience of 170 to develop relationships with the youth, as well as to accept the assistance offered to them, as seniors, in a gracious manner. Those who attended the DELs Luncheon were enlightened by a message from Mr. Jonathan McNair, who encouraged the audience of 46 to seek to train the next generation of God's Church.

Seaside, Oregon

More than 250 exuberant Feast-goers converged upon the coastal town of Seaside to worship God. His blessing was evident from start to finish. An atmosphere of togetherness was so palpable among the brethren that many commented on it.

Attendees enjoyed sermons from our guest speaker, Mr. Gary Ehman, during the second half of the Feast, who also

gave a talk at the DELs Luncheon. Mr. Jonathan Bueno gave a talk at the Seniors' Luncheon on usefulness in old age and bridging the generation gap. Other speakers during the Feast included Messrs. Brian Pomicter and Sheldon Monson.

One way that God showered His blessings on Seaside was in keeping most of the showers *away* from the area during the Feast! The site's unusually clear weather was noted by the people from the West Coast. There were sunny skies for our train ride excursion along the Oregon Coast, during which many sat in open-air train cars. Family Day featured games for the young and old alike. Children and adults participated together in a unique game of indoor kickball. Another highlight was a bouncy house obstacle course, which the adults seemed to enjoy watching just as much as the children enjoyed participating. Other notable activities included beach bonfires, game nights, and a Dinner/Dance evening with musical entertainment.

God's people certainly rejoiced together in Seaside for the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. Even as the sun set on the final dinner, jovial fellowship, hugs, and laughter carried on.

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina



Just over 800 brethren kept the Feast on beautiful Hilton Head Island, and 35–40 of them were observing their first Feast ever! The island has a natural, uncommercialized atmosphere, lending itself to the millennial feel we want at the Feast. Services took place at the charming Hilton Head Beach and Tennis Resort.

The opportunity to serve as lights to those on the island certainly added to the joy of the Feast. Business owners, servers, and others around the island profusely expressed how much they enjoyed working and interacting with the brethren!

God certainly blessed the entire atmosphere of this Feast, and the brethren felt a tangible spirit of love and servant leadership. Mr. Rand Millich was with us for the first half of the Feast, while Mr. Lambert Greer came for the second half, and many expressed that the messages they gave were major

highlights. On Opening Night, Mr. Millich celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination into the ministry of Jesus Christ!

We shared fellowship at multiple activities, including a Family Day at the pool and beach. Teens enjoyed a scavenger hunt, singles navigated through an “escape room,” and seniors rolled with laughter at the “stories of growing up” told by Ms. Elizabeth Moore at the Seniors' Luncheon. To cap off the Feast and usher in the Last Great Day, we held our “Kingdom Dinner.” At this meal, we discussed lessons from the Feast and topics regarding the Kingdom of God at each table. We then opened the floor for everyone, including children, to answer the emcee's questions and express what they look forward to in God's Kingdom.

Overall, the Feast in Hilton Head was a special one of unity and true joy among the brethren!

Marble Falls, Texas

Nestled in the scenic Texas Hill Country, the city of Marble Falls provided a beautiful millennial setting for the Feast of Tabernacles 2018. Three hundred eighty-seven Feast-goers had a wonderful time in the beautiful Highland Lakes area of the Texas Hill Country. The Lakeside Pavilion venue used for services, with its stellar view of Lake Marble Falls on the Colorado River, provided a peaceful backdrop to powerful messages concerning our ultimate destiny and the millennial rule of Jesus Christ, spiritually uplifting all in attendance. Activities included a family picnic buffet, Seniors' and DELs Luncheons, and our western-themed Dinner/Dance and Fun Show, which was a highlight of the Feast for many.

We were privileged to have Mr. Wallace Smith and Mr. Richard Ames as traveling guest speakers this year. Both gentlemen gave strong messages. Many brethren commented that Mr. Gerald Weston's Last Great Day message was powerful and inspiring. Sermons and sermonettes presented by elders were meaningful and uplifting as well.

It was an exceptional and highly memorable Feast for everyone, producing enthusiastic attitudes, great participation, warm fellowship, service to others, and most importantly, spiritual nourishment!

Mt. Snow, Vermont



For the third consecutive year, the Grand Summit Resort in Mt. Snow hosted the Feast of Tabernacles. Two hundred thir-

ty-one brethren were in attendance, enjoying the millennial setting provided by the area. The spiritual food served by God through His ministers was encouraging and inspirational.

There were several activities for the brethren to participate in throughout the week. Many enjoyed relaxing, fellowshiping, and dancing at our Sock Hop. Family Day was a big success, with activities promoting getting to know one another followed by a visit to the Vermont Museum of Natural History, where quite a few animals indigenous to the area were on display. The Progressive Fellowship Afternoon was once again a huge hit, as the brethren appreciated the opportunity to meet and spend time with many others while breaking bread together. Our Seniors' Luncheon, DELs Luncheon, and Dinner/Dance were also well received.

Overall, the Feast of Tabernacles in Vermont was a wonderful time that continued the building up of God's people toward our future roles in His family.

Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

Over 160 Feast-goers enjoyed crisp autumn days in the millennial environment of Lake Geneva. Though most gathered from far and wide and had not typically attended together at the site, there formed an almost immediate bond, which was seen and heard long before and after each service. Messages stressed the need to deeply comprehend the reality of our future responsibilities, and to diligently use our time and natural opportunities to prepare for them. Deacons, elders, and their wives were treated to a delicious dinner and were presented with books; men received *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, and women received *Lies Women Believe*. Seniors were also treated to a fine dinner, followed by a varied entertainment program provided by our musically-talented members. Attendees of all ages enjoyed an exciting afternoon of Bunco, a fun and easy game for all ages, which served as a great mixer for everyone involved. Members left spiritually filled, with both new and closer bonds and a resolve to review and apply the instruction God abundantly provided.

Canada

Kimberley, British Columbia

Two hundred fifty-four brethren enjoyed inspiring spiritual food, warm fellowship, and excellent catered meals. Warm days, cool nights, gorgeous fall colours of red, yellow, and green demonstrated that the Feast of Tabernacles is truly a fall Festival. The towering Rocky Mountains with a skiff of snow on them and wild deer wandering through the convention property almost daily, made it a truly millennial site. Many brethren expressed their appreciation that they could take beautiful walks enjoying nature and meditating on God's creation.

The sermons were the real highlights of the Feast. Mr. Gary Ehman gave three sermons, the first one on the Sabbath be-

fore the Feast, that challenged us to be Christians first, to go forward as ambassadors for Christ, and to finish the Work as the universe waits for us. Other themes included the doctrine of the millennium, being lights in this darkened world, a Feast for all peoples, and Tomorrow's cities—what they will be like.

On Friday evening, Mr. Stuart Wachowicz led an excellent Bible Study on why the book of Ecclesiastes was traditionally read on the third day of the Feast, and the lessons to be learned by all from the reading of that book, as well as a study on Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, and the fact that He was "God with us" while on earth. The brethren were also inspired by the comments made by our youth in the "Behind the Work" film.

Some of the activities the brethren enjoyed included a very interesting underground mine railway tour, a fun-filled day of softball, bocce ball, horseshoes, board games, and an excellent talent show during the Dinner/Dance. We also had a fun-filled silent auction of crafts that brethren had made and donated. The proceeds will go to help send our youth to the LCG camps.

In summary, we left the Feast encouraged to absolutely trust and obey God as we look forward to its fulfillment in Tomorrow's World.

Liverpool, Nova Scotia

As 105 joyful brethren attended the Feast of Tabernacles in beautiful Nova Scotia, the weather was sunny and warm, and a nighttime display of stars hung over the Atlantic Ocean. That display, combined with picturesque autumn foliage, added an extra measure of inspiration to the Feast in Liverpool. Messages were millennial in their focus, and Mr. Laurie Nyhus, Mr. Bob Riggan, Mr. Lenard Hine, and Mr. Frank Best all gave inspiring sermons.

Activities included a Silent Auction, a games afternoon, and a Dinner/Dance with recorded music as well as songs provided by musicians among us, including guitarists, a fiddler, and singers. Many brethren also enjoyed afternoons of Zumba exercise and bowling.

This year, Feast-goers once again took advantage of the scenery and tourist attractions along the beautiful south shore of Nova Scotia, including Lunenburg, where the refurbished *Bluenose II*, launched on September 30, 2013, is on display.

Many mentioned that a particularly strong feeling of love among the brethren was a triumph of this year's Feast.

Haliburton, Ontario

Two hundred fifty-two brethren rejoiced before God at this beautiful Feast site in the scenic Haliburton Highlands. This is an exceptionally picturesque area. The resort provided a full championship-level golf course, walking trails within its

160 acres of grounds, and an opportunity to see the beauty of God's creation. It also had a wonderful indoor pool, in which we baptized a new member into God's Family.

The Family Day activity involved a trip to the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve, where brethren could see a close-up view of a wolfpack in its natural setting. One-way glass gave a safe opportunity to photograph and watch the wolves—which roam freely within the multi-acre compound—without disturbing them. The Wildlife Reserve also included a museum, as well as a large outdoor area that housed a moose named Hershe. All of this, surrounded by the wonderful Haliburton Forest, made for a memorable Family Day.

The Regional Director for Eastern Canada, Mr. Winston Gosse, spoke during the first half of the Feast. Besides other ministers from Ontario, we were blessed to hear Mr. Ken Frank from Charlotte, who gave us a number of messages, including the Friday night Bible Study and speaking at the DELs Luncheon, where he encouraged us to use the Living Education program to further develop the Church's youth and help them grow. The great spiritual food was inspiring, and we hope the "Behind the Work" video will encourage many more to support the youth camps. Everyone left the Feast with renewed insight and inspired to forge ahead in growth and in God's Work.

Sorel, Québec

In Sorel, 110 attended the Feast of Tabernacles. Meetings were held at Hotel de la Rive on the shore of the beautiful St. Laurent River. Most of our members lodged there, while a few lodged in cottages and condos. The atmosphere was particularly serene, joyful, and relaxed. We had no problems and very little sickness, with only three anointings.



We had three meals together during the Feast. Each morning, when arriving at our meeting room, we saw on a board a biblical enigma to be solved, which stimulated conversations and biblical research. There was a cycling afternoon, including special games along the way, provided for our teenagers under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Marc Arseneault. Members also enjoyed an afternoon of bowling, as well as games and fellow-

ship in a private room offered all week long for free by the hotel. We also played *pétanque* (a ball game deriving from France) on the hotel grounds, and some brethren even went fishing. We experienced an enjoyable family atmosphere, as people in town and at the hotel were very welcoming and friendly. Every message was strong, but the highest point of the messages was clearly the powerful and inspiring "Behind the Work" film! God blessed us abundantly!

Africa

Kendu Bay, Kenya

More than 400 brethren assembled at the peaceful setting of Kendu Bay, near the shore of Lake Victoria, for eight fulfilling days. Preparing for the Feast of Tabernacles set the Church-owned site abuzz with activity, and cooperation abounded. We set up large marquees for each day's meetings and meal services. Separate smaller tents served as sleeping quarters, reminiscent of the Israelites in the wilderness. As well as from Kenya, members came from neighboring Uganda, and two Irish visitors joined us. Brethren were keenly attentive to messages contrasting the future Kingdom of God with the world's current state. There were also messages expounding upon the three resurrections, and how the Holy Days depict God's wonderful plan of salvation. We dispersed well filled with spiritual sustenance.

Lagos, Nigeria

For the second year running, we observed the Feast of Tabernacles at Presken Villa, a part of the Presken Hotels in Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria. Last year we found the Presken rather conducive to a Feast atmosphere and serene, so we decided to revisit it this year. The location is easily accessible to the Lagos metropolis and we were able to use the villa exclusively for the 19 brethren in attendance.

Initially, we had some disappointment. Some of our local brethren and others from Cotonou, Benin Republic—a sister-congregation and an integral part of the Church in Nigeria—could not come. A whole family came down with measles a few days before the Feast, and the brethren wisely chose to quarantine themselves. Two brethren in Nigeria also could not come, primarily on account of illness. But thanks to the Living God, brethren were able to shake off the initial disappointment and focus on rejoicing, as He commanded us to do.

This year we were able to be reunited with a couple of longtime members of the Church in Nigeria. And what an encouraging, happy reunion we had! They brought with them an old photograph of the first series of baptisms, conducted in 1977. A few of the brethren succeeded in picking out the faces of five of the thirteen people in the photograph, including that of the late Mr. Harold L. Jackson, pioneer pastor of the Church in Nigeria.

We were encouraged by the visit of a young member of the Church from Kenya who was on a business trip to Nigeria. He remained with us till the end of the Feast before proceeding on his official assignments. We were also able to welcome one of our Beninese brethren, who is now undertaking post-graduate studies in France.

Brethren enjoyed uplifting messages by way of sermon DVDs from Charlotte, supplemented by spiritual messages presented locally. The messages were well received by the brethren, who really rejoiced before the Eternal God, practised His way of giving and were in peace with one another. They showed kindness, warmth, understanding, and collaboration throughout the Feast.

A highlight of the Feast was an interactive Bible Quiz on the Pentateuch, challenging brethren to dig deep and uncover scriptures they might not have thought much about. A Bible Study also showed how we need to exercise spiritual discernment as well as godly attitudes and behaviour in a world that is increasingly rewarding and promoting ungodly wisdom.

This year, we chose to visit some places and locations of historical significance to this branch of God's Church in Nigeria. Among other places, brethren visited the area where the first "informal" Sabbath meetings in southwestern Nigeria were held, the venue of the first Feast of Tabernacles in Nigeria, the official residence of the first local pastor (later the Senior Pastor), the hall used for several years for official Sabbath services, and the only official Church building in Nigeria. It was an exciting and beneficial excursion, particularly for the brethren who had not known these places. The traditional singalong, usually held on the eve of the Last Great Day, was uplifting and exhilarating.

We give thanks to the Living God for the joy, comfort, provision, and security He gave us during this year's Feast of Tabernacles in Nigeria. He commanded us to rejoice before Him, and He made it possible!

Port Shepstone, South Africa



The moderate weather at the Banana Beach resort in Port Shepstone encouraged all 120 brethren attending there to

make the most of their time at the Feast. We were able to capitalise on fellowship, activities, fun, and learning during the eight fast-paced days.

Some of the usual activities were a Seniors' Luncheon, youth events, and an outing for singles and "in-betweeners." The young and old participated in a talent show and the Dinner/Dance, and our traditional Family Day barbeque was held on Friday. At the beach picnic, a sandcastle building contest revealed some innovative and detailed designs.

On the Sabbath during the Feast, children had the opportunity to be creative by forming animals from clay, and there was a Bible Study on the resurrections as a foretaste of the Last Great Day.

On Saturday there was a fun evening during which fathers and children made paper planes and then held an impromptu competition to see whose could fly the farthest. This was followed by a Bible-themed game show. Everybody snacked on popcorn and ice cream.

The sermons and sermonettes focused on a number of pertinent topics, which could all be tied into the message of the Feast and the Last Great Day. Guest speaker Bill Whitaker, Festival Coordinator Lawdi Ferreira, and Mr. Patrick Wallace all gave inspiring and helpful messages.

Roodeplaat Dam, South Africa

Roodeplaat Dam is located near the Johannesburg/Pretoria metropolitan areas, on a tranquil estate with well-kept gardens. Traditionally, we've used lovely coastal venues for the Feast sites in South Africa, but over the decades, increasing costs of such venues have proven overwhelming to our elderly and members of limited means. This year, we sought a site near the cities to alleviate these challenges. When the Roodeplaat Dam site was announced, a good number of brethren applied to attend it.

We were about 700 kilometers from the main site in Stillbaai, yet through modern technology, the Roodeplaat site was able to share services with the Stillbaai site on three occasions and enjoy messages from the visiting speaker, Mr. Bill Whitaker, who was unable to travel to Roodeplaat.

Being able to connect to another site through cyberspace did indeed make our Feast experience unique. This cyberspace adventure helped us on the social front as well, because while "Catch the Flag" and other physical activities were not feasible for all of the "oldies," we were able to "travel" to London's Royal Albert Hall via Wi-Fi and enjoy some great concert music. Members were also shown other Church websites and videos.

The Roodeplaat Dam site, while seemingly "out of the way," proved to be very "with it," and members very much enjoyed the programs, messages, and online video services provided by the Church.

Stilbaai, South Africa

Many South African brethren had experienced a hectic year and were longing for the peace and serenity of the Stilbaai Feast site. The name “Still Bay” aptly describes this jewel on the south coast of South Africa. A quiet river and lagoon join the Indian Ocean, drawing many retired folks to settle in this pretty, quiet town. Fishermen enjoy the millennial surroundings while fishing from the beach, both during the day and in the evenings.



Our visiting speaker from the United States was Mr. Bill Whitaker, a longtime friend of many brethren and previous resident of South Africa. He and his wife, Sheila, have many happy memories of past Feasts spent in this country. The 137 attendees heartily enjoyed the inspiring messages prepared for us in these beautiful surroundings.

Various activities had been eagerly planned, and participation was exuberant. The young children excitedly constructed their “Armor of God” in the crafts session, learning more about God’s Kingdom and His Way of life. The Seniors’ Luncheon showed without a doubt that nobody can say the older folks are done with enjoying life!

The energetic teenagers did not shrink from having a whale of a time learning survival skills on the beach. The singles participated in a cheese and wine pairing at a local cheese farm, Kasselshoop. Other activities included an energetic dance, and the weather was perfect for the Family Day, which provided sports, fun, and games for young and old participants.

Brethren expressed their eagerness to return to Stilbaai next year, and many have already started making plans for 2019. See you there!

Ukerewe, Tanzania

For the third year in a row, more than 140 brethren from Tanzania, Kenya, Congo, and Burundi, as well as several from Ireland and Canada, kept the Feast of Tabernacles at the Monarch Beach Hotel in Ukerewe, the largest island in Lake Victoria. The weather was lovely, with bright sunshine during

the day, beautiful moonlight at night, and cool breezes, all of which gave the brethren a joyous time to fellowship.

The Opening Night message by Mr. Gerald Weston was read in English and translated into Swahili. All of our messages were translated either into English or Swahili for the benefit of those who were present, since brethren had come from different parts of East Africa and overseas.

The Feast began with some challenges. We were not sure when or if we would get our hired tents to host the Feast. The government of Tanzania had taken all tents in the community for use at the funerals of the over 240 people who had recently died on an overloaded ferry. But our merciful God provided us one tent to start with, and we received the others by the end of the first Holy Day, which made everyone glad.

Mr. Simon Muthama and other local speakers from Kenya, Tanzania, and Burundi gave inspiring spiritual messages. Our guest speaker, Mr. Henry Cooper from Ireland, as well as Mr. Gershon Owino from Kendu Bay, who arrived on Wednesday evening and returned to the Kendu Bay Feast site on Friday morning, added more flavor to the spiritual meals, leaving everyone asking for more.

On Friday, Mr. and Mrs. Muthama hosted a special Seniors’ Luncheon. The oldest member in attendance was 82 years old. After this, we all watched the “Behind the Work” video.

On Sunday afternoon, the children performed a drama based on Abraham’s story in the book of Genesis. They also answered questions about that book, the Sabbath, and the Feasts. This preceded a drama by the adults of Nairobi’s congregation based on Genesis 3, and a talent show at which members sang, acted, or recited poems. The afternoon was filled with sport activities, including water balloon games, a bag race, a relay race, tug of war, and a “three-legged race,” which many of the children, youths, and young adults enjoyed.

On the Last Great Day, five children were blessed during the morning service. A family photo was taken afterward, and the Feast concluded with Mr. Weston’s closing message.

Caribbean Pebbles Beach, Barbados

One hundred fifteen Feast-goers from five countries joined us for our second year at the Radisson Aquatica Resort, nestled in picturesque Carlisle Bay, where tourists from around the world come to enjoy one of the most beautiful beaches to be found anywhere.

Highlights included the powerful messages from Regional Director Rick Stafford, Festival Coordinator Paul Shumway, Mr. Jeff Foster, and Mr. Shannon Christal. Close bonds built by warm fellowship inspired very good activity attendance.

After the first Holy Day, 18 teens and singles enjoyed an exciting mixer involving games and snacks. Prizes were awarded, and everyone left content and enriched.



The family Dinner/Dance featured a wide variety of music, including selections from local Barbadian musicians, and was very popular. Two dance instructors from the Living Youth Programs added enthusiasm that enlivened the activity from beginning to end, and door prizes added to everyone's enjoyment!

Family Day has traditionally been a favorite activity in Barbados, and this year, virtually *everyone* attended. Tropical Storm Kirk threatened the region, and as the island braced for the storm, a number of local events were cancelled. This only brought God's people closer together, as we all prayed for His powerful intervention... and intervene He did! The forecast of heavy rain was held back, and our loving Father gave us welcome cloud cover and a nice breeze that made the day even more enjoyable! We all loved the team-building activities and warm fellowship that took place—all within walking distance of the Radisson and right on the beach! Witnessing God's powerful intervention deeply inspired everyone present!

After Family Day concluded, extremely heavy rains pummeled the island, closing the airport. Mr. and Mrs. Stafford had been scheduled to arrive in Barbados that evening, but their flight was delayed until the next day, while the Shumways and Fosters were unable to fly out to Guyana until the day after that. With a few adjustments, God worked everything out!

The Bible Bowl activity on the eve of the Last Great Day was a favorite among our Feast-goers. Several teams faced off for a friendly competition in answering general Bible questions and reciting memory verses. The members impressed Mr. Stafford with both their eagerness to participate and their scriptural knowledge.

We enjoyed a wonderful "Gourmet Buffet" between services on both the first Holy Day and the Last Great Day. Dining and fellowshiping in the outdoor restaurant overlooking beautiful Carlisle Bay felt millennial! In the distance,

guests could see a large cruise ship docked at the far end of the bay.

The 2018 Feast will be fondly remembered for years to come, and plans are already underway to make 2019's Feast even better!

Port-au-Prince, L'Asile, and Gros-Morne, Haiti

This year, brethren in Port-au-Prince had the opportunity to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in a quiet and beautiful place with a lot of greenery, accompanied by the constant sound of tropical birds happily singing throughout the days. This site created the perfect atmosphere for 43 brethren celebrating the Feast and the Last Great Day. There were also 62 brethren who kept the Feast in L'Asile and 27 in Gros-Morne, for a total of 132 altogether.

Brethren in Port-au-Prince, L'Asile, and Gros-Morne were greatly encouraged by the special "Opening Night" message given by our Presiding Evangelist, Mr. Gerald Weston. This wonderful message set the tone for the entire Festival, as the brethren assembled themselves for eight days to enjoy what the rest of mankind will come to know in God's Kingdom.

St. François, Guadeloupe

Feast-goers from Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Canada, England, the Netherlands, and France all celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in St. François, on the island of Guadeloupe. The average number of those in attendance was 70. Our pastor, Dr. Wilner Pierre, stayed with us for a day as he traveled from Haiti to Jamaica.

Meals were offered between Holy Day services, and thanks to a local caterer, some Feast-goers were able to enjoy additional meals together. Many also visited the exceptional natural setting of la Pointe des Châteaux and the garden of Brosius, and the traditional Talent Show Evening allowed several members to display their abilities. The Festival ended with a reception for members leaving late in the evening, and everyone is looking forward to returning next year.

Montego Bay, Jamaica

For the tenth consecutive year, we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the north coast resort town of Montego Bay, at the Holiday Inn Resort. Brethren from Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom, and the United States joined the Jamaican brethren in observing the Feast. The pervading atmosphere was analogous to that of a family reunion. Among the over 260 gathered, eight were attending their first Feast ever, and 20 had kept 40 or more.

The messages were awesome and inspiring, and covered topics such as the harvest of God, learning to fear and walk

with God, bringing many sons to glory (the point of our existence), preparing for the everlasting Kingdom, and maintaining happy spiritual families.

At our premier activity, the Family Cookout and Fun Day, the brethren enjoyed mouth-watering local foods, table games, and some field events at the Montego Bay River Gardens.

Other activities included an icebreaker for the youths and singles, a Games Evening and off-site Fellowship event, a Seniors' Luncheon, a family dance, and a hymn-singing event. The choir presented "For Unto Us a Child is Born" on the first Holy Day, "I will Pray" on the fourth day of the Feast, and "Hallelujah" on the Last Great Day. Many brethren expressed their appreciation for the inspiring music. The Last Great Day began with an hour-long hymn sing, which everyone enjoyed, but as always, felt was just too short.

This Feast's hallmark was zealous fellowship, and many commented on the warmth, peace, and friendliness exuded by their Jamaican brethren. The majority of those who turned in their Festival survey forms indicated that aspects of this Feast they particularly enjoyed were the sermons, fellowship, and the Family Cookout and Fun day. Once again, the Feast in Jamaica made for a truly positive and memorable experience.

Lowlands, Tobago

Tobago was the picture of millennial beauty as the Feast of Tabernacles was held at the magnificent Magdalena Grand Hotel and Resort on the Tobago Plantations estate. Upon entering the estate, the 149 brethren attending seemed to leave the world behind, being greeted by lots of greenery, a lovely lake, and at times, caimans sunning themselves by day or crossing the road at night.

From the beginning, the Feast was inspiring and uplifting. There was lots of spiritual meat served up by Mr. Lascelles Fraser, Dr. Donald Roach, and Mr. Damian Weekes.

Activities kicked off on the second day with a children's party with the theme "In the World Tomorrow," featuring novelty games for both children and parents. People of every age group had great fun. Later that evening, at a singles' mixer with the theme "Learning to Work Together," the singles cooked up some splendid delicacies, including fish broth, barbecued chicken, and mini-burgers.

Another day, many gathered at the Friendship Farm and Riding Stables for an afternoon of fun and games. The children and some adults also enjoyed horseback riding there.

On the evening of the fourth day, nearly everyone assembled at the Café Coco Restaurant for our Festival Ball, which had the theme "Gems of the Night." A sumptuous dinner was served, and some of the brethren displayed their vocal talents, to the delight of all listeners. The floor was then opened for everyone to dance the night away.

The blessing of the children took place on the fifth day, as five little ones were blessed. Later that day, brethren gathered for an inspirational Bible Study from Mr. Weekes, followed by a Q&A session.

At the end of the Last Great Day, a fond farewell was bid by all. The brethren left looking forward to the next Feast, but even more so, to the fulfillment of the autumn Festivals. May God speed His Millennium.

Mexico and Central America

Punta Leona, Costa Rica



Ninety-five individuals enjoyed an excellent, joyful Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in Punta Leona, Costa Rica. The sermons and sermonettes were rich in spiritual content, and the messages about prophecy motivated all of us to remain focused on the upcoming Kingdom of God. We also enjoyed exquisite special music during services almost every day.

The Resort in Punta Leona is in a natural reserve, where sightings of monkeys, raccoons, armadillos, white-nosed coatis, and colorful macaw parrots are not unusual. We likewise appreciated the area's beautiful beaches, especially Playa Blanca and its clean, clear waters, where we witnessed giant whales jumping out of the ocean in play with their calves.

Keeping the Feast in Costa Rica were brethren from eight different countries: Canada, the United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, besides Costa Rica.

San Miguel de Allende, Mexico



The Feast of Tabernacles in Mexico was kept in San Miguel de Allende, which is considered one of the most beautiful cities in Mexico and was recognized by UNESCO in 2008 as a World Heritage site. Its attractive and cosmopolitan appearance makes it a favorite destination of art enthusiasts. The city

provides plenty of places to visit, and they all showcase its historical and architectural heritage.

Every day, 170 individuals joyfully gathered to receive the spiritual food that God had prepared. The highlight of this Feast was the fellowship experienced by all in attendance; we daily enjoyed pleasant dinners, at which we shared wine and exquisite regional cheeses.

We took advantage of opportunities to get to know each other better, sharing our experiences, needs, and achievements with one another while trying to grow in unity and harmony—elements essential to the body of Christ.

Tecpán Guatemala, Guatemala

Seventy people gathered in a beautiful countryside hotel in the city of Tecpán Guatemala to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Brethren from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala enjoyed every day spent at this site, where the pleasant smell of pines descended from the mountains. This year's highlights were the spiritual messages given by God's ministry and the beautiful special music presented by the women's and children's Festival choruses. Dwelling in cabins gave us the opportunity to practice hospitality, fellowship, and unity as we tried to represent God's government. We thank God for the beautiful Feast of Tabernacles that He directed us to keep.

Europe

Carry-le-Rouet, France

Two hundred twelve brethren representing 22 countries spent eight unforgettable days in the beautiful seaside village of Carry-le-Rouet to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Feast-goers were blessed with beautiful weather, breathtaking views, and the opportunity to wine, dine, and fellowship in an all-inclusive venue on the shores of the pristine Mediterranean.

Inspiring sermons were delivered in French and English, with real-time translations into English, French, German, and Dutch. The diversity of nationalities and languages contributed to this site's rich cultural exposure and reminded brethren that despite physical differences, in Christ we are all "one body, one Spirit." This was evidenced by the friendships formed and the wonderful time brethren had as they participated in the many activities and tours.

The strong theme of Zechariah 14:16 was reflected in each message, as brethren were encouraged and inspired to seek God's Kingdom and build holy, righteous character in preparation for ruling under Jesus Christ.

Activities this year included a seniors' activity, a singles' excursion, Family Day, an evening of family dance and entertainment, a fishing experience, a youth camp evening, a sunrise hike, a visit to a vineyard and olive tree plantation,

and a visit to the Bories Village, characterised by its beehive-shaped, dry stone masonry houses.



Highlights of the Feast included Mr. Peter Nathan's sobering and insightful Bible Study on the "Restoration of All Things," the Last Great Day message from Mr. Weston, the children's and adult choirs, beautiful special music, France's delectable cheeses and baguettes, and the close proximity of our members, which promoted unity and opportunities to build friendships. The Seniors' Luncheon hosted 30 brethren, with Mr. Gene Hilgenberg as guest speaker. He encouraged seniors to think about the legacy that they will leave, and to ensure that it will be a positive one.

Adding to the excitement and great joy of the Feast were two baptisms.

Salamanca, Spain



The heart of Salamanca, a land filled with history and the beauty of olive trees, was the perfect setting for keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. We were truly blessed with excellent facilities, good weather, blue skies, and an ideal atmosphere in which to fellowship and enjoy millennial messages. There, 85 cheerful brethren came together from a diverse set of countries such as Spain, the United States, Mexico, South Africa, Honduras, Cost Rica, and Puerto Rico. It was a pleasant and memorable Feast.

We were all refreshed and comforted by messages about the upcoming government of God on Earth, which will have

truth and justice as its solid foundation. A baptism on the Last Great Day encouraged and spread joy among the brethren. As we see the story of the past inscribed into the stones of this land, we also lift our eyes to God, strengthening our hope in the Kingdom to come.

Harrogate, United Kingdom



The historic spa town of Harrogate, North Yorkshire was the location for the Feast in the British Isles this year. The regal setting of the 118-year-old Majestic Hotel provided the meeting hall for services and accommodation for a good number of members, while the refined setting of Harrogate, along with the agreeably warm weather and stunning views of the surrounding Yorkshire Dales, added to the millennial vision. Two hundred seventy brethren gathered from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, Canada, Jamaica, South Africa, and the United States. We enjoyed inspirational fellowship and a wonderful, spiritually cohesive atmosphere.

Planned pursuits included a visit to the Jorvik Viking Centre and other sites around the ancient city of York, a tour of Harewood House, and a coach tour around the picturesque and rugged Yorkshire Dales, stopping in the cobbled town centre of Grassington to enjoy the delights of a cream tea or two! A family Ceilidh dance on Saturday evening and two children's art activities run by the young adults rounded off the social events.

The Festival and Children's Choirs provided wonderful special music, as did inspirational instrumental and vocal contributions. Feast surveys indicate that everyone really enjoyed this new site. So, thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to making this year's Feast in Harrogate truly memorable.

South America Tolhuin, Argentina

Forty-two brethren from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, the United States, and Colombia had the opportunity to keep the first Feast of Tabernacles to be held in the village of Tolhuin, just an hour away from Usuhaia, the southernmost city on the planet.



In a complex of cabins on the shore of Lake Fagnano, we experienced a pleasant atmosphere in which we served one another, shared Argentinian *mate* (a traditional drink made by infusing herbs), had delicious lamb and meat roasts, and enjoyed evenings of fellowship in an environment of harmony, unity, joy, and above all, daily gratitude to God.

Some days treated us to multiple seasons, beginning with strong snowfalls, continuing with sunlight to melt the snow, and ending with southern winds that refreshed the day.

We are blessed to have been able to keep the Feast in such a beautiful setting.

Moscou, Brazil



Despite the trials inherent in very quickly moving the Feast venue from Bonfim to Moscou, Brazil (just under 100 miles), God worked through His chosen servants, and Feast services began on time. The attitudes of the brethren from Awarewaunau (Guyana), Bonfim, Moscou, and Trinidad and Tobago mirrored the bright and sunny days that followed. Services took place at the meeting hall in Moscou, and all the Feast attendees stayed within easy walking distance. Services were conducted in considerable heat, but the approximately 130 brethren gave wide-eyed attention and focus as they hung on every word of the messages.

Using the inspired efforts of our sole translator of English into Portuguese, Mr. Adenir Texeira, God provided a Feast of spiritual meat in due season for His children. Mr. Damian

Weekes, Mr. Laurus Alfred, and Mr. David Grant (Trinidad and Tobago) all spoke, ably supported by Feast messages from headquarters. Additionally, Mr. Grant gave a Bible Study, which the brethren appreciated.

Activities included a children's party, football, and a women's volleyball match, which the young ladies won, although the older women pushed them to their limits.

The Dinner/Dance took place under a cloudless night sky, with the moon and stars as our overhead canopy and hardened earth as our dance floor. Brethren of all ages ate together, danced to beautiful Brazilian instrumental music, and then ate again, as we were constantly supplied with food and beverages, giving us all the energy to keep dancing.

As most brethren had long distances to travel back to their respective homes, many left early in the morning after the Last Great Day. We shed tears and shared hugs, kisses, handshakes, and laughter before we all dispersed.

El Quisco, Chile



This year we were blessed to be able to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the city of El Quisco, Chile. Forty joyful brethren from four different countries enjoyed comfortable lodging facilities. The highlights of the Feast were the fellowship and harmony that prevailed throughout all of its activities. Everyone in attendance enjoyed excellent special music and an abundance of spiritual and physical food. We strongly recommend this site.

La Tebaida, Colombia

God enabled 90 joyous members to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day in La Tebaida, Colombia. They came from Bolivia, Trinidad, Venezuela, the United States, Mexico, and of course, Colombia. It was a very edifying Feast, where brotherly love reigned and activities benefited from the goodwill and unity among God's people. Mr. Mario Hernández spoke about the future Kingdom of God and led a "Question and Answer" Bible Study. In addition to other activities, we enjoyed an outing to the villages of Filandia and Panaca. We thank God for this time, the good weather He

provided as a blessing to all of the activities, and the edifying sermons and sermonettes. This Feast was among the best, thanks to the Eternal.

Georgetown, Guyana



Guyana is an absolutely beautiful country that is blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Sadly, these blessings haven't brought abundance to its people, who are mostly very poor. Thankfully, the Feast of Tabernacles pictures a coming time of physical and spiritual prosperity, and all attendees in Guyana experienced a foretaste of that glorious future.

Attending with us during the first half of the Feast, Dr. Roach and his wife brought a great deal of energy and warmth, and their last-minute change of plans was deeply appreciated! A sizeable group of brethren from New York, as well as the other transferees, also greatly encouraged the local brethren. Members coming together from four countries made this Feast very special! Service attendance averaged 47 and peaked at 55, with sermons topping the list of this Feast's highlights.

The Family Day at Roseann's Resort and the special excursion to Splashmin's Resort both proved to be popular activities, garnering excellent participation.

Tropical Storm Kirk delayed by a day and a half the arrival of our guest speakers for the second half of the Feast, but the brethren proved very resilient, and didn't miss a beat! We had an impromptu hymn sing, and services were postponed until the speakers' arrival on the Sabbath. After services, we all enjoyed an exciting Dinner/Dance with excellent participation and special door prizes.

The Bible Bowl, held on the eve of the Last Great Day, was another great highlight of the Feast. Members were a little shy to volunteer at first, but once the event got underway, enthusiasm swelled. One nine-year-old boy who attends services with his grandmother asked if he could play. What happened next stunned everyone present—he stole the show! Brethren are still talking about his Bible knowledge and quickness to respond! Way to go, Samuel—and Grandma! Keep up the good work!

Yes, Festival 2018 in Georgetown, Guyana was truly inspiring. Our thanks go out to all who transferred in to help make it so special!

Cusco, Peru

In the city of Cusco, Peru, at 3,400 meters above sea level, 70 people gathered for festivities commanded by the Eternal. We had in attendance brethren from Peru, Bolivia, Australia, Chile, and Colombia. Joy, unity, humility, patience, and love prevailed in every heart of God's spiritual firstfruits throughout this time. Sermons, sermonettes, and Bible Studies were inspired by God to provide great teachings to all of us. We read the entire book of Deuteronomy, and held sports and social activities, and a family dance. At the end of the Last Great Day, brethren embraced one another with tears and smiles, hoping to see each other again in the near future and to join the eternal, spiritual family of God.

South & Southeast Asia

Goa, India



Fifty-nine brethren from India, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand had the wonderful experience of attending the Feast of Tabernacles in India. Our hotel, the Kyriad, was located near the tropical Calangute Beach in the province of Goa, and the hotel staff was highly attentive to all of our needs. Our main speaker was the Festival Site Coordinator Dexter Wakefield, and we enjoyed spiritual food offered by daily services, along with a large array of delicious Goan curries served by the hotel restaurant and nearby establishments.

Goa is a former Portuguese colony with a 350-year history, and Feast-goers enjoyed its tropical beach, its historical sites, and shopping in its plethora of markets. Brethren also appreciated a river cruise followed by a Goan dinner in town, and a Dinner/Dance at the hotel. Members were able to visit a local cloth merchant and the local tailor.

Feast-goers soon got used to seeing cows wander through the streets and highways. They also practiced their bargaining

skills with the local vendors, and some of the ladies attended the Dinner/Dance wearing lovely *sarees* that they had purchased locally.

The brethren quickly came together as a family and formed lasting relationships with one another. It was indeed a most memorable Feast!

Imphal, India



Eleven members from three families attended the Feast in Imphal. We all arrived at Youth Hostel at around 2:00 p.m. on September 23 and prepared for the Opening Night service. Sadly, there were disturbances on the first Holy Day, but we thank the Eternal for intervening and resolving the issues, allowing us to peacefully continue our services day by day. Two of the men translated the Feast sermons sent from headquarters, and one of them conducted children's Bible Studies.

This Feast, we learned many lessons from the Bible, and were very excited to learn about God's soon-coming Kingdom and our future in His family. In the evenings, we had children's activities and focused on providing opportunities for families to interact with each other. We enjoyed delicious food every day, recognizing that all we have is a wonderful gift from God for which to be thankful. Everybody showed love, peace, respect, and service toward one another, as God's people dwelt in unity.

We experienced a very wonderful and successful Festival here in Imphal.

Batu City, Indonesia

It is a joyous time when Indonesian brethren come together from different parts of the country to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Batu City. This year, some traveled from our capital city of Jakarta, and others from the island of Kalimantan. Twenty-eight of God's people, 18 adults and ten children, stayed together in a villa compound of Villa Bagoes to celebrate and anticipate Christ's future rule on this earth, and attend daily services and activities.

God provided sermons through the Area Pastor Arius Nusantara, as well as through recorded messages from Headquarters with Indonesian subtitles. With zealous desire, the brethren carefully listened to and meditated on this nutritious spiritual food, as God's laws and Way of life were expounded and His plans for humanity were made clear.



Our members showed a striking example of dedication to God's Feast: In order for some from Kalimantan to get to the Feast site, they initially motorbiked through dense jungles for three hours. They then boarded a boat, and traveled 13 hours farther on a large river before arriving at the city of Balikpapan. Next, their journey required a three-hour air-plane flight to Java island. Upon arriving on Java Island, they traveled for an additional three to four hours (depending on traffic) via land transport before finally arriving at the Feast site in Batu City. Their fervent desire to keep God's commanded Feast inspired us all.

A particularly exciting event during this Feast was a baptism, which took place early Friday morning in an on-site swimming pool.

Activities included an outing to a nearby beach, water games, singing, and a visit to a resort park where children enjoyed some fun rides. We held Bible Study sessions wherein we discussed many important topics related to our Christian lives, such as dating, spiritual struggles, and faith.

The Indonesian brethren offer grateful thanks to our great God and Provider for giving us the vision and hope of His coming Kingdom.

Baguio City, Philippines



What makes a Feast special? Among other things, God's presence and the faithful obedience of His people.

For decades, God's people have come to spend the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in Baguio City, which has always been the preferred Festival site for brethren in Luzon and Visayas. This year, almost 200 brethren peacefully celebrated and harmoniously worshiped in Green Valley, Baguio.

Despite Typhoon Mangkhut's arrival just before the Feast, God provided beautiful and pleasant weather during all eight days. He also provided an alternative hall after the typhoon damaged the original one we had booked. Although a bit smaller, it proved just large enough to accommodate everyone and turned out to be better than the other hall in many ways. This Feast site provided a cool mountain breeze and wonderful scenery, which inspired joyful laughter and warm smiles among God's people.

The activities promoted "face time" and personal interaction. Together, children worked with their hands, enhancing their creative imagination, while teens and singles enjoyed energetic games, sharing meals, learning new dance steps, and taking walks with friends. International guests enjoyed fellowshiping, tasting local delicacies, bamboo dancing, and the talent show's sing-along performances. Families from different congregations invited one another to Sabbath meals in their temporary dwellings.

Unique to this Feast was Mr. Rod McNair bringing his whole family to visit. After more than fifteen years, the McNairs reconnected with familiar brethren and had the chance to meet newer brethren.

Above all else, God graced this Feast with spiritual meat through His ministers. Messages about why we come to the Feast, who we are, what we should be doing now, and what we *will* be doing in the future all helped us to keep the big picture in mind. We hope to keep that fire burning, courageously face the future, and powerfully continue God's Work. We are thankful that God provided yet another successful and blessed Feast and Last Great Day!

Mindanao, Philippines

This year, the Feast of Tabernacles was held in the Philippines' South Summer Capital, Malaybalay City in Bukidnon. A landlocked province in Mindanao, Bukidnon is bereft of beaches but exhibits irresistibly gorgeous mountains surrounded and covered by pine trees, corn fields, rice fields, and pineapple and banana plantations. The brethren were embraced by a cozy atmosphere, which made it comfortable to listen to Festival messages every day. Morning and evening, the brethren also strolled through the emerald-green park, which was dappled with pine trees as well as nature-inspired cottages, where some of the brethren stayed. The scenic view

reflects how beautiful nature is, and gives a glimpse of what it will be like in the Kingdom all of us are waiting for.



Three ministers led the Festivals: Festival Site Coordinator Freddie Benitez, Assistant Coordinator Jose Arendain, and Mr. Felipe Casing. Two hundred seventy-five vigorous and jubilant brethren came from all over Mindanao Island, along with a few who came from Luzon and overseas, to worship God.

The Bible Study on the Sabbath was about the Product of the Kingdom. After that, the brethren asked questions, which the three ministers took turns answering. Aside from the inspiring messages, the brethren enjoyed the various activities and godly fellowship.

Mae Sot, Thailand



The 2018 Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day were two more milestones in bringing deeper spiritual growth and understanding to the Karen and Thai brethren concerning God's plan.

This year God once again blessed His scattered flocks in Thailand with a beautiful and especially peaceful environment. Twenty-five Feast-goers gathered in a resort situated in Mae Sot, in northwest Thailand, to enjoy the blessings of both physical and spiritual food—and more importantly, to focus their minds on the purpose of being at God's Feast.

The Karen and Thai brethren were privileged and blessed to have Elder David Isaac and his wife join us for the first half of the Feast. God, through Mr. Isaac, provided spiritual food that related well to us. The brethren were glad to have a combination of live messages from Mr. Isaac and pre-recorded DVD sermons supplied by the Church.

A few indoor and outdoor activities were organized to

help build a family atmosphere, giving the brethren opportunities to come together and practice teamwork. Before Mr. and Mrs. Isaac departed from Mae Sot to spend the second half of the Feast in Phuket, we all had an opportunity to visit a newly built and very beautiful garden site, allowing us to enjoy the different kinds of plants and flowers from God's creation. There, we all enjoyed peddling around on bicycles inside the big garden.

The daily messages were inspiring, and God certainly blessed His little flock here in this beautiful garden location. It has been a significant and profitable year, which has brought some positive changes and spiritual growth to the lives of our brethren in Thailand. We pray that all who observed the Festivals this year had an uplifting and wonderful time, as all the Karen and Thai brethren did.

Phuket, Thailand



Brethren from around the world, including Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka attended the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in Phuket. This cheerful celebration was enjoyed by 173 brethren. God's Spirit revealed itself in the laughter, gratitude, and many meaningful lessons we shared together. God blessed the Festival with dancing, singing, and abundant physical food, as well as the spiritual instruction given through inspiring sermons, sermonettes, and uplifting special music. The brethren were definitely "salt" and "light" this year!

Among our activities were three luncheons of delicious local and international food and one BBQ dinner, which also featured cheerful and energetic entertainment. Other activities included teen/singles events at James Bond Island, children's events in the meeting hall and hotel swimming pool, a talent show, the Seniors' Luncheon, evening Bible Studies, fun beach games, private-island-hopping, and visits to tourist sites.

The brethren were delighted to have Regional Director Robert Tyler and his daughter join us for the second half of

the Feast, along with Malaysian elder David Isaac and his wife, from Thailand's Mae Sot Feast site. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the jovial Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour from the United States, Mr. and Mrs. Kuma De Silva from Sri Lanka, and Festival Coordinator Rajan Moses and his family. In total, we were blessed with five ministers to spiritually feed and care for our Festival flock, and we truly praise God for His providence. The "Behind the Work" video's insightful comments from our Church youth about our awesome God really touched the brethren here.

It was indeed a great Festival, during which laughter, gratitude, and meaningful lessons pictured the soon-coming Kingdom of God!

South Pacific Ballina, Australia



This year, after two years elsewhere, the beautiful seaside town of Ballina, New South Wales served once again as our Feast site. We were able to again use the Ballina Surf Club Hall as our venue, which treated entering Feast-goers to a view of the Pacific Ocean surf rolling onto the pristine yellow sands just metres away. The size of the hall was ideal, allowing warm fellowship to be had before and after services over tea or coffee. On occasion, humpback whales passed by as they migrated south to Antarctica. The whole area provided a truly stunning millennial setting.

One hundred eleven brethren attended in Ballina this year, and we welcomed visitors from the United States, New Zealand, and other Australian states. Mr. Jason Fritts, his family, and others from the U.S. were most welcome guests, who added to our Feast experience. God blessed this Feast with generally cooler weather than the area's norm, and as the brethren experienced almost no sickness throughout the eight days, daily service attendance remained high.

Our Holy Day meals took place in Spinnaker's Restaurant, which overlooked the Richmond River at the local Ballina RSL Club, and we were treated to a display from some playful dolphins as they frolicked only metres in front of us.

Our Family Day at Pop Dennison Park included fun games for the energetic among us and a BBQ lunch. Those who did not participate in the games still enjoyed great fellowship as they watched their brethren exercise and have fun at the same time.

Early in the Feast, our little children had a great time with an activity specially designed for them, which allowed them to let off steam and get to know each other.

On the first Monday evening, the singles enjoyed a very pleasant get-together over dinner at the Ramada Hotel's restaurant. The seniors enjoyed an afternoon of lawn bowling and croquet at a Ballina Bowls Club, followed by scones, jam, and cream—as well as a nice "cuppa" tea or coffee.

Nearly everyone was involved in Tuesday's "Get to Know Your Neighbour Day." The Talent and Fun Show Evening was also a great success, as was the local Ten Pin Bowl.

Because of the smaller number of people at this Feast site, many commented on how wonderful it was to have the chance to talk to everyone attending. We felt an atmosphere of love, peace, joy, harmony, and unity throughout the Festival, and the brethren generally expressed that this was one of the most relaxing and "family friendly" Feasts that they had attended.

Of course, spiritual food provided the true highlights of the Feast. Sermons and sermonettes focused on the reality of the coming Kingdom, government, and family of God. Mr. Weston's messages renewed our zeal to do God's Work, focusing us on our unique understanding of His plan. We journeyed home with a "high hand" and recharged spiritual batteries, ready to take on the challenges that surely await us over the next twelve months.

Victor Harbor, Australia



Surrounded by the stunning blue-green sea and rolling hills of the Fleurieu Peninsula, 189 brethren gathered together to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in South Australia. Spiritual food was plentiful and nourishing as brethren learned more about God's plan and the roles they will fulfill in the future. Regional Director Robert Tyler, Mr. Michael Gill, Mr. Zig

Svalbe, Mr. Ryan Nicholson, and visiting Canadian minister Mr. Barry Walker all delivered sermons.

Good weather truly blessed this Feast site and helped to make every planned activity a great success. The seniors enjoyed a historical train ride along the scenic coast, followed by a delicious Seniors' Luncheon, while the singles toured the surrounding wine region in a bus and visited the world-renowned McLaren Vale Wineries. A progressive fellowship dinner involved brethren going to a different host's house for each separate course of their meal and provided great interaction.

The teens are still talking about the fun they had at their pizza party, which featured impromptu speeches and a round of mini golf. The Kids Craft activity, where the young children learned to think outside the box by making bookmarks for the elderly, was another hit. The Dinner and Talent Show event combined physical nourishment with an evening of fun and entertainment. We also had the opportunity to soak in the magnificence of creation on a short morning hike around Granite Island. On Sunday, the Feast finished on a high note with the Family Day BBQ, where everyone enjoyed games and ice cream. Special highlights of the Feast included watching a mother whale and her calf swim in the Bay.

We thank God for placing His name in Victor Harbor.

Hanmer Springs, New Zealand



One hundred eighteen brethren gathered to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Hanmer Springs. It is a clean, quiet, and peaceful town, situated away from the noisy, crowded cities; a place away from violence, where not a single police siren was heard.

We were easily captivated every day by Hanmer's beautiful green backdrop and snow-capped mountains surrounding us on every side. International guests from the United States, Canada, Tonga, and Australia added to the spiritual buzz in the air, which was extant throughout the entire Feast. Not only did we enjoy some of the best lamb in the world, but the elders here made sure we were spiritually well fed by their sermons. They helped us visualise the reality of God's

Kingdom and the honour and privilege that the saints will have during the Millennium as they prepare the world for the White Throne Judgment.

Social activities included a Singles' Winery Tour, Hanmer Golf, and the Entertainment and Trivia night, where families could come together and enjoy good, clean fun while being entertained by beautiful singing and dancing performed by our wonderful Pasifika Youth.

Perhaps the highlight this year was the high level of fellowship God's people enjoyed. Everyone seemed to be looking out for each other and openly demonstrating the kind of Philadelphian love that we know will be extant in God's Kingdom!

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

The Feast in Port Moresby got off to a good start with the ordination of Mr. Eugene Same as a deacon. Mr. Same and his wife, Barbara, have been faithful servants of God for many years. Eighteen of us assembled daily for services in a small, two-bedroom apartment, where iron truly sharpened iron over eight days of wonderful, binding fellowship and timely messages.

The entertainment highlight of this Feast was its talent show. Everyone participated by sharing their own special talent, which brought us all closer together. Other activities included a Q&A (which lasted most of one afternoon), special music, and Holy Day meals. All of our activities took place in the apartment, which reminded us of the close quarters we may experience in the place of refuge.

We were all very thankful to our great God for the opportunity He gave us to rejoice in such a relaxing, uplifting atmosphere of cooperation and teamwork. We look forward to a spiritually profitable year ahead, and to meeting up again in 2019.

The preceding Festival report contributions were created, compiled, and edited with the enthusiastic help and support of many people including Ephraim Abok, Oladele Akin-Ogundeji, Michael Aviles, Frank Best, Christo Botha, Yvon Brochu, Wade Brown, Joseph Brown, Shane Browning, Jonathan Bueno, Conie Casing, Peter Chan, Raul Colón, Henry Cooper, Mike DeSimone, Etienne Duval, Brandon Fall, Lawdi Ferreira, Richard Franz, Joseph Gonzales, Edgar Guerra, Richard Harvey-Haynes, Graeme Hemphill, Roger Herbert, Jahlean Naera Hingaiia, Richard James, Paul Kearns, Shane Kruse, Htoowah Laybay, Tanya Moodley, Antonio Mora, Simon Muthama, Ryan and Sarah Nicholson, Arius Nusantara, Armando Orrego, Cristian Orrego, Gabriel Ortega, Wilner Pierre, Simon Roberts, Bob Rodzaj, George Schaubeck, Phil Sena, Paul Shumway, Dayrell Tanner, Stuart Wachowicz, Dexter Wakefield, and Subash Wangkhem.



Weddings & Anniversaries

Happy to Be Part of God's Work

On October 4, 2018, **Gordon and Margaret Hill**, of the Sevenoaks, United Kingdom congregation, celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. In keeping with British tradition, they received a congratulatory letter from Queen Elizabeth II. They met at college in London in 1952 and were married on October 4, 1958.



Margaret heard about the Church first in 1953, listening to Radio Luxembourg when the Church was the Radio Church of God. Gordon did not take any interest in the Church when Margaret initially did. She used to talk to him about the Church but stopped doing this after reading an article by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong entitled "Don't Try to Convert Your Husband." The article got her—as she amusingly puts it—"to shut up!"

Around 1962, Gordon asked Margaret if she would like him to get a job as a lecturer in St. Albans, U.K. Wanting to be near Ambassador College at Bricket Wood, which was also located in St. Albans, Margaret quickly agreed.

Unbeknown to Margaret, Gordon would read her *Plain Truth* magazines when she was out of the home, and he eventually became interested in the Church. Both started attending services in London in 1962 and both were baptised in March 1963.

After the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, they filtered through other Church of God groups, but are now

happy to be in the Living Church of God. They believe "there is no other way of life" and are "happy to be part of God's Work." They have three children.

—Hugh Stewart

Mr. and Mrs. Ken (Eleanor) Edmonds of St. Albert, Alberta, were honoured on June 30 by the Edmonton congregation on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. Joined by their family, they were presented with a cake and several gifts after services, and all shared in a cold potluck meal. Mr. and Mrs. Edmonds were married on June 29, 1968, and have two children, Wayne and Karie.

The Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation honored **Mr. and Mrs. Alan (Ruth) Scalf** after services on February 24 in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Scalf were married on February 16, 1968. The couple are longtime faithful members of God's Church and very much loved by all who know them.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl (Rachel) Pinnock, of the Hook, United Kingdom congregation celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. They were married on a glorious, sunny day in Surrey on May 29, 1993.

Mr. Jacob Bennett and Miss Regan Trapp, both of the Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation, were united in marriage on Sunday, December 17, 2017. Mr. Gene Hilgenberg performed the ceremony. Many church brethren from near and far attended, along with family, to join in celebrating this joyous occasion.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. and Mrs. Randy (Tiffany) Hooley were ordained Deacon and Deaconess on the Feast of Trumpets, September 10, by their minister, Mr. Gene Hilgenberg, and elders Shannon Christal and Gene Lathrop. Mr. and Mrs. Hooley serve in the Fayetteville, Arkansas congregation.

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

In Loving Memory

Mr. Edward Paul Bagby, 73, died peacefully on November 22 after a long life of service and sacrifice. He was a faithful member of the Church of God since his baptism in 1974.

After he earned a degree in history from Northeast Missouri State University, he joined the United States Army and served in Vietnam. He is survived by two daughters and many nieces, nephews and grandchildren. His funeral service was conducted by Dr. Richard Franz. Mr. Bagby will be remembered for his love of his family, his sense of humor, his love of travel, and spending time with his friends. The congregation of Columbia, Missouri, where he attended will sorely miss his warm smile, inspirational messages, love, and support.

Mrs. Winifred Kamps Green, 88, of Fernandina Beach, Florida, died on Saturday, November 3. She was born on January 5, 1930 in Thomasville, Alabama. In 2000 she moved to Fernandina Beach from Houston, Texas to be near her family and enjoy her grandchildren. Mrs. Green was known as a strong, kind, and faithful woman who never met a stranger and was always eager to help others. She loved her family, and enjoyed sharing happy stories of raising seven children. Mrs. Green was known by her children as a selfless, giving and loving mother. She was a woman of great faith and her life reflected God's blessings. She leaves behind her seven children, Jim Kamps, Patrice Jones, Virginia Bolton, Danny Green, Michael Green, Rose Campbell, and Laura Weston; her older brother Jack Barnes; fourteen grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren.

Mr. Joe Salmon Hansen Jr., 82, died peacefully, surrounded by family members at his home in DeSoto, Texas,

on Monday, September 10, due to a massive stroke. Mr. Hansen was born on July 30, 1936 and lived almost his entire life in Dallas, Texas. Shortly after graduating from Adamson High School at the age of 16, he tried his hand at a variety of jobs and ventures, ultimately settling on real estate investing, and he was still very active with his various real estate investing activities until the time of his stroke on August 15.

Mr. Hansen was also active in the Church. He was involved with his family and his church family, who will miss his special music and his wonderful bass voice in the congregational hymns. He had a wonderful personality, always had a smile for everyone, and was willing to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. As he traveled to other countries, he'd always say in parting, "Come to Texas when you can."

Mr. Hansen is survived by his mother, Gladys; his wife Julene, one brother, six children, one step-daughter, seventeen grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, two nephews, and one niece. In lieu of a funeral, he requested that his family host a memorial celebration of life in his honor for close friends and family.

Mrs. Pat Hubbell, 77, longtime member of the Living Church of God in Big Sandy, Texas, died on September 26. Mrs. Hubbell was known as a generous woman, always willing to help, a homemaker, a talented artist, and a songwriter, who loved crocheting and calligraphy. She was preceded in death by her husband, Clarence Carl Hubbell, to whom she had been married for 55 years. Mr. and Mrs. Hubbell were pillars of faith in the Big Sandy congregation. She is survived by two daughters, Ginger Ulmer and Heather Coryell, and grandchildren.

Mr. Allan Lechelt, 91, of the Edmonton, Alberta, Canada congregation died peacefully on August 28, with his devoted wife of 69 years by his side. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and friend. A man of many talents, Mr. Lechelt was successful at a variety of occupations, always showing diligence and determination. He and his wife were baptized in 1976 and he maintained his allegiance to God for the rest of his life. Mr. Lechelt is survived by his wife Eileen, three children, eight grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. His funeral was conducted by Mr. Stuart Wachowicz, assisted by Mr. Lenard Hine.

Mrs. Brenda Mann, 78, of the Pontefract, United Kingdom congregation, died on July 25. She lived most of her life in South Africa, but loved to travel and was well-known at congregations in the north of England, South Africa, and Australia. She had particularly enjoyed occasional trips to Turkey to find out more about Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. Mrs. Mann's lively character and smile will be missed by many.

Mr. Lorne Martin, 82, died peacefully on August 20. During the last few days of his life he was surrounded by a number of loving family members. He had a full, successful, and enthusiastic life. Mr. Martin will always be remembered for the sense of humor he showed, even at the end of his life. There were no strangers to him, and he greatly loved the brethren. He and his wife Mary, and their grandson Cash, hosted many church events in their home over the years. Mr. Martin had a big heart and loved to share with others. He will be greatly missed, especially by brethren of the Portland, Oregon congregation.

Mrs. Alene Murphy, 84, of Walnut Ridge, Arkansas died on February 7.

IN LOVING MEMORY continued...

She was baptized in 1968, before the Radio Church of God became the Worldwide Church of God. Through the decades, in good times and in difficult times, she was faithful to the doctrines, teachings, and traditions of the Church. She was predeceased by her first husband, Willard Nunnally, three brothers, and four sisters. She is survived by her loving husband Jerry Murphy and by many nieces and nephews, whom she cherished. Her graveside funeral service was conducted by Messrs. Davy Crockett and David Stiffler.

Mr. Christian Price died on March 14. The Tri-Cities, Washington, brethren will remember him for his fun personality, love of children, and the big bear hugs that he gave the brethren over the years. He was baptized in 2010. The congregation certainly misses Mr. Price, but knows he is only temporarily sleeping until the real life to come.

Mr. Danny K. Rand, 74, of the Dallas, Texas congregation, died peacefully at his home on November 8, after battling cancer for several years. Mr. Rand is survived by his wife Nita, two brothers and a sister, three children, grandchildren, and other relatives. His wife and one brother, David, are members in the Dallas congregation. Mr. Rand served in the United States Army, serving in Vietnam, and owned a car repair shop for many years. He loved fishing, hunting, fast cars, gardening, and raising cattle on his ranch. He treasured his time in the

Church of God and knew where his spiritual priorities lay. His brethren will remember his big smile and the warmth he gave us every Sabbath.

Mrs. Barbara Schaer, 90, finished her course and died peacefully on July 5, with her husband of 70 years, Mr. Harry Schaer, by her side. Mrs. Bruce Tyler (Sondra) is their daughter. Mrs. Schaer was baptized in 1958 and lived a vibrant and energetic life. We will all remember her enthusiastic attitude, courage, and love for God and His way of life. Many brethren have received one of her encouraging letters or notes. She had an amazing way of encouraging others, not with flattery, but with genuine and heartfelt interest and appreciation. She impacted many brethren's lives in a positive way and we are better for having known her. We look forward to seeing her again.

Mrs. Yvonne Tripp, 89, a longtime member of the Church of God died peacefully in the faith on November 6, just a few days past her 89th birthday and more than 31 years after her baptism. She had been a faithful member in the Peoria, Illinois congregation until the last two and half years of her life, which she spent in Marietta, Georgia to be near a daughter. Mrs. Tripp was always a joy to be around and was a very good and loyal friend. Her funeral service was conducted in Bloomington, Illinois by Associate Pastor Irv Woelfle.

Births

Trae and Kaley Dennis, of the Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, **Penelope Lynn Dennis**. Penelope was born on May 22, weighing 5 pounds, 7 ounces and measuring 18.25 inches long.

Heath and Tabitha Sanders, of the Tri-Cities, Washington congregation,

celebrated the birth of their second child, **Ellinor Jean Sanders**, on June 15! She weighed 8 pounds, 11 ounces and was 20.5 inches long. Both Tabitha and baby Ellinor are doing very well.

Patrick and Tracy Hughes, of Homer, Alaska, are happy to announce the birth of their second child, **Jeriah James Hughes**, on June 23. He weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces and was 20 inches long.

Patrick, Tracy, Jeriah, and big brother Maes are all doing well.

Richard and Mandy Roth, of Homer, Alaska, celebrated the birth of their third child, **Ranger Elisha Daniel (Red) Roth**, on June 25. He weighed 8 pounds, 10 ounces and was 21 inches long. Ranger's big sister Stephanie and big brother Noah were very excited to hold their little brother.

Something for Nothing

By Jonathan McNair

“I’ll do that for you... if you do something for me.”

Just the other morning, my daughter Ellie asked for my help opening a bucket of honey. We get our honey in bulk, and the five-gallon buckets are quite a challenge to open.

My normal reaction would probably have been to say “in a minute,” or perhaps, “Can you get your brother to do it?” But, I was feeling particularly generous with my time that morning, so I said, “Sure!” and jumped up to help. With grunts and groans, I wrestled with the lid until it finally relinquished its hold on the bucket. But then I caught myself thinking about what I could ask my daughter to do in return for this wonderful favor I’d done for her.

My first thought was to say, “Okay, now that I’ve done this for you, could you please do the dishes in the sink?”

Now, there’s certainly nothing wrong with asking a son or daughter to take care of a chore. This is done all the time in our house, as it may be in yours. Even so, a thought flashed into my mind: If I always ask for a favor in return for a favor, what am I teaching my daughter? I mean, there are times when I ask my kids to pick up their laundry, or clean the car, or take out the garbage, and I expect them to just go ahead and do it without negotiating for a return favor. After all, I’m just asking for their help in making life

better for all of us, because I’m a parent and because the task needs doing.

So, I bit my tongue and didn’t ask Ellie to do anything in return. I simply accepted her thanks and went on with my business.

And then it struck me. This lesson applies as much to our relationship with God as it does to human relationships.

How many times do we catch ourselves thinking about our obedience to God in terms of what He will do for us in return? “I’ve kept the Sabbath, God, so in return, I’m really expecting You to give me wonderful favor with my boss,” or perhaps, “I’ve been faithful in my tithing, so I’m looking for those financial blessings that You owe me in return, God.”

But we really shouldn’t be trying to negotiate with God. He has given us wonderful favor and blessings and has never demanded “equivalency” in return. If we really think about it, how could we possibly give God the equivalent of “life and breath”? How can we possibly return the favor of eternal life, to which He has provided access through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ?

He’s already given us what only He has the power to give—and He’s given to us graciously, lovingly, and mercifully.

Maybe we should change our perspective a bit when, as we read the Bible, God tells us to *honor Him*, or to *keep His Holy Days holy*, or to *love our neighbor*. Maybe we shouldn’t think about what we can get out of the deal, but instead, just positively and happily do as He says. ^(L)

CHOOSE? continued from page 4

Notice that He does not speak of those who gain more technical knowledge (not that such knowledge is wrong to have), but those who hunger and thirst *for righteousness*. We must learn right from wrong and apply what we learn. That means recognizing the difference between the two trees and converting to the right one. Remember that Adam and Eve knew which tree was which, but the wrong one looked better in their minds. Let us not make such a mistake!

How easy it is to go through the motions but be unaffected by the journey. One can pray and study regularly,

but to what end? Yes, pray we must, and study we must, but are we *changing*?

Are we converting from the ways of this evil world, or absorbing what it offers? Are we growing in our discernment between two very different ways of life? “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food” (Hebrews 5:12).

Some take pride in feeding on what they consider “solid food,” thinking that this scripture refers to “new understanding” of prophecy. This is not correct! Note verse 14: “But solid food

belongs to those who are of full age [mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

If there is one lesson to remember in life, it is that when the world is excited and promoting an agenda, we should recognize this as a red flag. Consider carefully the images and ideas that come to you through the Internet, television, movies, social media, and advertising. Increasingly, the world around us is little more than an infomercial for Satan’s way. If you want to live forever, you must reject the tree he is promoting and choose the tree of *life!* ^(L)

COMMENTARY

The Bosom of Fools

Have you observed angry, demanding groups with a grievance, real or imagined, or special interests seeking redress, with threats of disruption or violence to achieve their ends? Consider personal behaviors that were illegal for millennia but are now considered to be “civil rights.” Behaviors and choices, no matter how deviant, are not only being allowed, but are being aggressively and sometimes angrily promoted, often to children who have not even reached puberty.

What will be the ultimate result of normalizing behaviors that are dangerous to one’s physical health, and that are detrimental to a stable, healthy mental state? What does history reveal about results of perverted lifestyles?

Is there an authoritative source to consult for answers? Definitely! If one acknowledges the Creator and His instructions for mankind found in the Holy Bible, the confusion quickly clears up.

David, King of ancient Israel, stated it this way, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works” (Psalm 14:1). No one wants to be a fool, so what does God say about gender? “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; **male and female** He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

Simple enough, yet down through history, mankind has attempted to deny this basic fact. Rampant deviant behavior occurred in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Abraham, resulting in the sudden destruction of those cities. And the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church of

God in Rome in about 57 AD about the same attitudes we see today, both depravity and a tendency toward violence (Romans 1:28–32).

Today, in much of the developed world, those who promote and agitate create angry disruptions to achieve their ends. It is an ancient practice that will not end well for them. In several places the Bible calls such individuals “fools.” For example, “It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel” (Proverbs 20:3). In another place it states, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32). Solomon said succinctly, “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

There is a time for righteous anger—not uncontrollable rage, but a motivation to take positive action for solutions. Paul put it this way to the Church at Ephesus: “Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath.... Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:26, 31–32).

When stressful situations or grievances arise in your life, rather than get caught up in the strife and anger that “rests in the bosom of fools,” remember the words of Paul: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:18–19).

—J. Davy Crockett III