

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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## Lessons from a Swamped Canoe

*Dear Brethren,*

Canoes are not the most stable watercraft. Though I've owned one—even fished out of it on many occasions—and have taken several multi-night excursions in fully loaded canoes, they still feel a bit wobbly when I first step into them. But I tend to relax after paddling a while.

For this year's Adventure Camp, 16 two-man canoes explored the Boundary Waters and Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. What I would have given for such an opportunity when I was a teen! I must admit that, at my age, sleeping on the ground and dealing with flying pests is a bit of a different experience than it was in my younger days. And when it was all over, my thought was, "I'm glad I did it, but this will be my last time." But now that some weeks have passed, the itch to do it again is returning.

In this article, I want to pass along a lesson learned from this Adventure Camp. After all, apart from the fun and the challenge, learning lessons is what such trips are about.

Only a couple of hours into the journey's first day, we rounded a corner to Windy Point—aptly named, though I understand that the gusts of wind that day were stronger than normal. By then we had already ironed out a few problems, learning how to pair canoeists and finding out who served best in the stern of each canoe, where steering is done. Nevertheless, we were still a "green" crew.

The swells were high with whitecaps, and each pair of canoeists struggled to make progress while keeping their canoe heading into the waves. Unsurprisingly, one canoe was caught sideways and then swamped. Righting an empty canoe in a calm lagoon is not the same as dealing with a fully loaded canoe while battling wind and waves. Another canoe pulled up

and tried to help but also swamped. Before it was over, a third canoe swamped, as well—and all were several hundred yards from shore.

Thankfully, further assistance came and everyone made it to the shore. I am not sure of all the details, as Mr. Leonard Hine and I were several hundred yards further from shore and making little progress, just maintaining our stability in the rough waters. We eventually had to make a difficult maneuver and ride to shore with the waves at our back.

On the surface this might appear to have been a disaster, but in fact it was one of the **best** things that could have happened, as it taught us something very important early on. Everyone was following the strict rule of wearing a life-jacket. Although the canoes were fully loaded with tents, food, sleeping bags, and much other paraphernalia, almost nothing was lost, because all was meticulously tied down prior to starting the trip. Nearly everything was also packed in waterproof baggage—only a few items got wet. Canoeists made it to shore, repacked, and got ready to move on. Thus, the lesson: *Swamping a canoe is not a disaster if you properly prepare for such an eventuality.* Swamping is part of canoeing, just as falling down is part of learning to walk. No one *wants* to swamp, but it happens—and everyone realized afterward that it was something we could handle. We were not deterred. After all, this was *Adventure Camp*, and we experienced a real-life adventure!

From an early age, we learn to deal with adversity. We fall down many times before we learn to walk. We pick ourselves up and try again. Sometimes a fall hurts and tears are shed, but we never quit trying until we finally learn. We all experience greater falls as we grow. Few of us break bones from our

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tumbles as we learn to walk, but bumps and bruises become greater when we begin running and climbing. Riding a bike often brings mishaps, and driving a car introduces more serious dangers. We take a chance when we get married or start a business. And no matter what the endeavor, there can always be that “swamped canoe.”

Our lives are like canoe trips. We grow in perspective and confidence every time we swamp, make our way to shore, repack, and shove off again. We realize that most setbacks are not the end of our world. The book of Proverbs tells us that “a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity” (Proverbs 24:16). And Micah explains, “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me” (7:8).

There truly is light at the end of the tunnel for the man or woman who looks to God for help.

When was the last time *your* canoe swamped? Was it a lost job or a car accident? Was it a frightening diagnosis from the doctor? Was it the death of a child or spouse? Did you go through a painful breakup with someone you thought was *the one*, or did you experience a divorce? No matter what it was and how awful it seemed at the time, it wasn’t—and *isn’t*—the end of the world. You make your way to shore, repack, and shove off again.

Dear brethren, I hope this does not sound too much like many a Spokesman Club speech, simply to be evaluated and forgotten. We need to remember this lesson, because our world is entering troubled waters—a fact obvious to anyone with open eyes. The world around us is becoming increasingly evil, and although hostility toward God can be found in all eras of human history, the open animosity displayed

today is *different*. Our world is changing—and changing rapidly. There is real *hatred* against God and His law (Leviticus 26:15; Romans 8:7). Freedom of speech, religion, and association are under attack to a shocking degree throughout

most of the Western world. We are watching as prophecy is fulfilled before our eyes: “Justice is turned back... for truth is fallen in the street.... So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey” (Isaiah 59:14–15).

We are living in momentous times. We must not set dates, but God’s judgment against an evil world will not be delayed forever. Yet the righteous man need not fear nor shrink from the battle. David did not face Goliath timidly. He spoke out confidently, with faith in God, and *ran* to meet the giant who defied the armies of the living

God. Neither should we shrink back when we see an evil wave coming our way.

Do you understand what lies ahead? Luke 21:12–19 and numerous other passages should teach us a lesson. Just as a canoeist must prepare for both the expected and the unexpected, we must do the same for trials we know are coming. We can see the waves on the horizon and should understand that it will be a rough ride, but if we are close to our Elder Brother—who paved the way for us—we will finish the course. As Philippians 4:13 assures us, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us—yet we must hold Him as close as a lifejacket and meticulously tie everything down, not to be taken from us by the waves and winds ahead, as we look forward to the successful end of our adventurous journey!



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## EDITORIAL By Gerald E. Weston

# Why the Church?

**I**t is a question few think to ask, but we all should consider: *Why the Church?* Jesus said that He would build His Church. *Why?* What purpose does His Church serve?

This is no trivial question. It is at the very heart and core of why we come together each Sabbath, why we observe or don't observe certain days, and how we live our lives. The answer explains our *raison d'être*—our reason for being.

### Why Are We Here?

Funerals tell us a lot about how people think. Family members often speak emotionally of the deceased, while others tell humorous anecdotes as a means of coping with their emotions at such a difficult time. When one tries to discuss the big questions of life and death, however, most who are not of God's people sit there bored, looking down or off into space.

Deep down, people **do** want to know "what it's all about," but most do not think there is a real answer. "Heaven" does not excite them. Clerics of various persuasions try to make their ideas about the afterlife sound exciting, but although they rarely agree with each other, they even less often consider that the deceased have a productive future ahead. But you and I understand what most do not. Why would God create beings to go where there is nothing productive to do? To most outside God's Church, the afterlife is what I often call a "candy store in the sky" or some kind of celestial LSD trip. For Roman Catholics and many others, it may be the so-called "beatific vision"—staring into the face of God for eternity—that brings supreme happiness and satisfies all our longings. But is this what God is doing—creating beings to find final happiness just staring into His face for eternity?

When I was first beginning to understand the Truth, I thought the difference between Heaven and the Kingdom of God was only a matter of location. Rather than exist up in the sky, Heaven would come here on earth. I certainly never thought that my reward would be to stare into God's face forever, but my ideas were vague and, frankly, not exciting. Heaven, though, certainly seemed like the better of the two options, and attending church services seemed to be essential to reaching the better alternative.

In fact, however, **where** our reward will be, **what** we will be doing, and what God **expects** of us now, are vital elements in understanding why Christ said He would build His Church.

We should all know that the Gospel is about the Kingdom of God, and that Christ is central to the Gospel message. The good news is that His Kingdom is coming, and that we can be born into it. Christ, the King, is the way into that Kingdom (John 14:6). The Bible is an expression of His will, and it shows us what our part in the Kingdom will be. But let us not get ahead of the story.

### Is Personal Salvation Enough?

Despite this wonderful news about our future, many are surprised to learn that our personal salvation is **not** the main reason why God is calling people in this present age. It is true that every one of us has earned eternal death because of our sins, and it is only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ that the death penalty can be satisfied on our behalf, and we can receive the Holy Spirit after sincere repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands by the ministry. The Spirit, then, which makes our salvation possible, will transform us from following our own ways to following God's ways as we prepare to be "born again" at the first resurrection.

"Isn't that enough?" many will ask? The answer is an emphatic *No!*

If our personal salvation were the main reason why God is calling us now, why wouldn't He call everyone? Why would He call you, or me? What makes you, or me, so special that God calls us, when it is obvious—from Scripture and from observable facts around us—that most of humanity is not currently called? Besides, if we are willing to be totally objective and self-searchingly honest, we know that there are many out there who are smarter, have more attractive personalities, exercise greater character, and are even—in human terms—more righteous. Further, why are so many cut off from having their own opportunity for salvation simply because of when and where they were born, in times and places where hearing the Gospel has been rare, if it has been preached at all? Think about it. This is important. *Why you?*

Jesus gave His followers a great commission, articulated in Mark 16:15–16 and Matthew 28:18–20. As we



have this divine commission as Christ's followers, is it okay to choose **not** to take an active part in fulfilling it? Paul tells us that Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Our Savior expects us to show outgoing concern for others. We must not sit back and wait for the Kingdom to come, as is the manner of some.

We may think of the Parable of the Minas in terms of developing ourselves personally, rather than in terms of multiplying our minas outwardly. However, notice that the rewards handed out involve rulership over cities (Luke 19:15–19). And what happens to the man who does nothing with his mina (vv. 20–27)?

Jesus asked an important question that applies to our future. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" His answer is most instructive: "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:45–47). Yes, the one **doing** the Work **now** is the one who will be doing the Work in the Kingdom!

Jesus then went on to give the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, followed by the Parable of the Talents. This latter parable is similar to, but not exactly the same as, that of the Minas. Instead of giving each servant a single unit of money, He gives more to those with greater ability, and expects each to multiply the talents according to his ability. The one who receives a chance to multiply a talent and does nothing is called "wicked and lazy" and is cast "into the outer darkness" where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:26–30). Are you and I acting on what we have each been given?

### Restrain Those Stumbling to Slaughter

Newer members of God's Church may be unfamiliar with the "Ezekiel Warning"—our commission to preach not just the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, but also to warn the world what will happen to those who live in disobedience to God and His ways. Ezekiel was a Jewish captive in Babylon. He was given a mission to warn the House of Israel (Ezekiel 3:4–7; 33:7). Though he did prophesy to Jewish holdouts in Jerusalem, the thrust of his message was to the northern ten tribes of Israel. Jerusalem was to be a symbolic *type* of the House of Israel (Ezekiel 4:1–3). A careful reading of the book—even merely the fourth chapter—makes it abundantly clear that Ezekiel knew the difference between the northern kingdom, known as the House of Israel, and the southern kingdom, known as the House of Judah—the Jews (vv. 4–6).

God told Ezekiel that he would be held responsible—that blood would be *on his head*—if he failed to warn the House of Israel (Ezekiel 33:1–6). He was to tell them that they would go into a brutal captivity if they did not repent. But here is

the problem: When you read carefully, you will realize that the northern ten-tribed kingdom—Israel—had **already** gone into captivity some 130 years before Ezekiel received his commission! Was God late in giving this warning—and thus quite unfair in holding Ezekiel accountable to do the impossible? Or is there another explanation? The latter is the case. Much of the book of Ezekiel was clearly written for the end time. This means that its message must be preached at the end of this age—which we, for many good reasons, believe is our time today. (For greater insight into this subject, go to [TomorrowsWorld.org](http://TomorrowsWorld.org) and watch my telecast "Ezekiel's Message Unlocked.")

So, we must ask: **Who** can preach that message? **Who** understands the identity of the House of Israel? **Who** understands what sin is, and what the results of Israel's sins will be? **Who** understands end-time Bible prophecy? And **who**, knowing all of this, understands what is at stake for those who fail to give the warning? Proverbs gives us this sobering warning: "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" (Proverbs 24:11–12).

Do we see a people "stumbling to the slaughter"? Yes, we do! Our world—especially the Western world and Israelite nations—is *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, as the late Robert Bork so eloquently stated in his book by that title. If we were merely "slouching" when he wrote in 1996, we *arrived* in Gomorrah several years ago! Our Western nations are shockingly rivaling Sodom, as politicians and the media attempt to outdo one another in rejecting all biblical standards and casting off all restraints. Truly, "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed" (Hosea 4:1–2).



Some in the Church of God have viewed our responsibility as one of “warning and walking away.” How often I’ve heard people say, “Anyone God is really calling will do whatever it takes”—meaning that they will drive two hours or more to Sabbath services, they will submit to a series of visits before being allowed to attend services, and they will jump through any number of hoops set before them—as if there is nothing you or I can do to dissuade them from following the truth.

If there is anything most of us have learned, it is that unless *God* is opening a mind, there is nothing you or I can do to open it. That is a given! However, does it follow that when God opens a mind, there is nothing you or I can do to *close* it? Remember Jesus’ warning, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” (Luke 17:1–2; see also Mark 9:42).

### “By All Means Save Some”

“Warn and walk away” is **not** what Jesus instructed. He gave this commission to His disciples, and it applies all the way to the end of the age: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20). It should be evident that the Church is both to give the good news and to warn, with the hope that some will repent. It is equally evident that the Apostle Paul understood this when he said, “I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.... I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19, 22).

Some who consider themselves part of the Church of God have disputed this point—either actively by misinterpreting the words of Scripture and proclaiming that there is nothing for us to do, or passively through laziness and inaction. So, are we to “wait it out” until Christ returns, or are we to do a Work?

Others tell us that Mr. Herbert Armstrong “finished the Work,” and that the Church’s responsibly today is simply to “get the bride ready,” referring to one-third of one verse:

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“and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7).

This, of course, raises two important questions: First, **where** is the bride of Christ today? And second, **how** does she make herself ready?

The answer to the first question is simple: For the most part, they are six feet underground! Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, Elisha, David, Daniel, and the converted individuals of the Old Testament—plus all the Apostles and the members of God’s Church from the first century onward until our own day—make up the bride of Christ, and the vast majority of them are in their graves.

Scripture gives us the answer to the second question, though it may be more difficult to answer to everyone’s satisfaction. God has clearly called us for a special purpose, and it is **not** for salvation only. We cannot sit back waiting for Jesus to return and avoid fulfilling that purpose **now**. Abraham and his descendants fulfilled their part

in God’s plan. David and Daniel did not sit on the sidelines. They ventured into the arena, as did the Apostles. We see the zeal of first-century Christians who did not turn back in the face of persecution.

The parables of the talents and the minas state powerfully that we must **actively do** the Work of God until Jesus Christ returns. Our Savior is unambiguous regarding those who are too afraid or too lazy to enter the arena. That which they have will be taken from them, and when they see what they have lost— forfeited by their choice to “wait it out” until Christ’s return—they will weep and gnash their teeth (Matthew 25:24–30; Luke 19:20–27).

Mr. Herbert Armstrong died in January of 1986—about 34 years ago. Most people alive today know nothing of him. Two whole generations have grown up since his death. We are thankful for what he did, but we must follow his example and be found **so doing**. We in the Living Church of God have a great calling to be sons and daughters of God (2 Corinthians 6:18). We can be “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). As we thank God for our personal salvation, we must also **show** our thankfulness by fulfilling the calling He has given us at this time. We should be grateful that He has allowed us to be part of something greater than ourselves—the active and energetic Church of God as led by our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ. (LH)

# Really Good Shawarma: Student Thoughts on the Holy Land



Our intrepid crew aboard a replica first-century fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee.

**F**or six of the students who pioneered the Living Education–Charlotte program, the most memorable part of that endeavor took place not in Charlotte, North Carolina, but in the heart of the Holy Land itself. On Living Education’s trip to the nation of Israel, these students experienced the unique biblical insights that come from an archaeological dig and a tour in the land of the patriarchs—including a visit to Jerusalem, the once and future capital of God’s Work on Earth. We took the opportunity to talk with each of these Living Education graduates from the class of 2019, who eagerly shared the insights and perspectives they had gleaned from their time in the land where, someday, we all hope to live.

While the tour let the students see Israel’s most famous sites with their own eyes, the dig let them get to know the land with their own muscles—and according to Tressie McNair, there was no prior archaeological experience required. “The dig was not as complicated as I thought it would be,” she said. “It can feel like yardwork. You dig—there are just as many thorns as dead grass, and you’re clearing it away.”

Francesca Rodino concurred, describing the work as “not so much a treasure hunt—you’re not going to find a whole

bunch of relics—and it’s not going to be as romantic as it sounds. You’re going to be hauling dirt, hauling rocks, doing a lot of manual labor. At the same time, it’s nice, because you’re working with different kinds of people, and you’re able to develop a camaraderie, to talk to the people in your little square dig site. It’s definitely really difficult—it’s dirty work, and it’s fun.” At the end of such an experience, the chance to tour Jerusalem came as a welcome respite. “It’s exhausting,” Francesca said emphatically. “You *earn* the tour.”

That tour progressed at a rapid pace—after all, when you have a limited time in a country as iconic as Israel, you fit in everything you can. “We covered a lot during the tour, and I’m glad we tried to get a whole bunch in there,” said Andy Casey, who felt awed to walk where one of God’s closest friends may have walked. “There was an old gate up in Tel Dan that they think could have been around during the time of Abraham,” he said. “That was when it really hit me that we were in Israel—when they were talking about how ‘This could have been a gate that Abraham went through. When he came up to rescue Lot, this is the area he was in.’ It’s pretty crazy to think that there’s stuff remaining from back then—evidence for our faith in the Bible.” Of course, much of Israel, particularly Je-



Jerusalem, is not exactly as the patriarchs left it. “Being on the Temple Mount was really interesting, because it feels really important,” related Jonathan Smith, “but because it’s Muslim-controlled, it feels kind of off, like something’s not right. Islam’s control at the Dome of the Rock itself is really strict. You can’t have Bibles there, and two of ours were confiscated. That was probably one of the most memorable spots.”

Despite the cultural tensions permeating the region, more than one student described Israel’s environment as surprisingly peaceful. “A lot of people think that Israel is really dangerous, but honestly, I felt super safe in Israel,” explained Geoffrey Ruddlesden. “We were in Tiberias, and there were these little kids just walking around without their parents, but they were all happy! So, it’s actually not that bad. People get the notion that if you go to the Middle East, you’re going to die or at least get attacked, but honestly, I felt really safe in Israel.”

As safe as modern Israel felt for our travelers, the dangers that ancient Israel faced, described in Scripture, were made abundantly clear. “We went and saw Solomon’s gates,” said Nathalie McNair, “some of his fortresses that were basically the barrier between kingdoms, because everything is right on top of each other. We went to one of his fortresses, and if you look off into one direction, that’s where the Philistines lived, and that’s not that far away. By comparison, we in the United States live in a very sheltered country that doesn’t have to deal with people right on our sidelines any time war should arise.”

Seeing how astonishingly close Israel’s neighbors are, it’s not hard to imagine the spiritual warfare the Israelites suffered along with physical conflicts. “It helped add some humility to my perspective,” Nathalie reflected. “When you think about how they fell into idolatry with their neighbors, you think, ‘How could they let God’s truth go?’ But when you look at how close they were—and obviously they had trade

routes and talked with their neighbors—how can we be so vain as to say we would have done better?”

And Israel’s modern separation from God’s truth is no less blatant than that of its past, a sobering fact brought home by an all-too-familiar symbol. “What taught me the most, I think, actually happened twice,” Jonathan said. “It was in Tiberias, which is a city on the Sea of Galilee where we stayed the first week, and then in Jerusalem itself, where we were in the last week. I saw two ‘gay pride’ flags, one at each city. In Tiberias, there was one just hanging down from a window, but in Jerusalem it was actually blowing in the wind for people to see. Those little moments were reminders for me that, yeah, Israel was really important, it’s where all our heroes of faith were—but where God is *now* is with us, with the Church and its congregations. There are more important things than geography.”

Nevertheless, learning firsthand about biblical geography was certainly a highlight of the trip. “The geography of the Bible has a lot more meaning to me now,” Andy said. “To actually be able to see it and realize how close everything was, how close the Israelites’ enemies were, the threats that they were facing—that all made it a whole lot more real. It would be terrifying to be a nation there, surrounded by enemies.”

To be sure, all of God’s people face powerful adversaries of various kinds, and for Tressie, one location in Israel offered a poignant lesson in confronting them. “For the archaeology dig, we were staying in the Elah Valley, in a kibbutz on one side, and that kibbutz was probably where the Israelites camped when David and Goliath fought in the valley. We climbed this hill across the valley, and it was called Tel Azekah—that’s where the Philistines camped,” Tressie explained. “When we came back to the kibbutz, I was looking up at the hill—I had looked down from it and seen this huge valley, but looking up, it just struck me that here, David went to the brook in between, got the stones, looked up, and saw this huge hill with all the Philistines and Goliath coming down. It was amazing to me, the realization of how he could look up and see the enemy, right there—this huge thing. Everyone behind him was afraid, but he still had faith and courage.”

Our personal “Philistines” may come in other forms, but they can often feel just as overwhelming to us. “We can feel like it’s all coming down, but David was still able to go forward,” Tressie concluded. “He took the step and started running toward all of that. It was exciting to be in a place where one of God’s people was so strong and courageous because God was working through him. No matter where, God’s people have always been courageous and faithful to Him. Anywhere we are, God can work through us.”

“Whatever your thoughts on Israel are,” Francesca mused at the end of our interview, “I think it’s so important to realize how significant that little country—especially Jerusa-



Enjoying great shawarma in a cave-turned-restaurant in Jerusalem.

lem—is to God. In the Millennium, it's going to be the capital of the world. It's really where God chose to put His presence. That's why it's important. It's insignificant in pretty much every single way except for the fact that it's where God decided to build something. And that's why that place is so special, that's why we went there for a dig—it's not even because it was a cool experience, it's simply because that is where God says, 'This is where I'm going to live.' That's where everything good is going to start again."

"Oh, and the food," Nathalie piped in. "I have to mention the food. You can't go to a country like Israel and not eat lots of food. You shouldn't. No, eat the falafel, eat the shawarma—just eat, okay? I don't care where you are, what you're doing—eat. I don't know if I could pick a favorite food, but I had a really good shawarma."

—Thomas J. White



Asherah or Astarte head uncovered during the week of our dig.



Geoffrey Ruddlesden standing in Square L17 at Tel Burna.



On the Temple Mount, with the Dome of the Rock in the background.



Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Smith during a brief pause in digging.



The group in front of the waterfall at En Gedi.





Tressie McNair and Francesca Rodino at Megiddo.



Resting in the shade during the lunch break at the dig site.



Assembled for Sabbath services by the shore of the Sea of Galilee.



The men's side of the Western (Wailing) Wall at the Temple Mount.



Pausing for a photo at the Old City Wall in Jerusalem.



Climbing to En Gedi, in the Judean wilderness.

# Living Education's Adventure in Israel

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By **Wallace G. Smith**

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**F**or two-and-a-half weeks, members of the Living Church of God explored the Holy Land as part of Living Education's foray into Israel—touring where Jesus Christ walked and participating in an archaeological dig.

Our pioneering Living Education students were Andy Casey, Nathalie McNair, Tressie McNair, Francesca Rodino, Geoffrey Ruddlesden, and Jonathan Smith. My wife, Jeanine Smith, and I—assisted by Chris Pringle and Rebekah Ross—drove the group from Charlotte to their departure point in Canada, where we were joined by Mr. Joseph Ross, his wife, Wanda, and their two young children, Elizabeth and Joseph.

Based on his earlier experience in Israel, Mr. Ross had planned a very ambitious schedule—if we were going to be in Israel, we were going to experience all we could! And that schedule began the moment our plane touched down on the tarmac in Tel Aviv.

## **A Very Busy Half-Week**

Before we even laid eyes on our housing, the team walked the ancient site of Herod's palace in what is now called Caesarea Maritima, took a dip in the Mediterranean Sea, and visited Muhraha, the location of Elijah's showdown with the priests of Baal. After enjoying a gorgeous view of the Jezreel Valley, it was finally time to head to our apartments in the city of Tiberias, along the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

The remainder of this first half-week was filled with sights and sounds around Galilee, where Jesus conducted a significant portion of His ministry. The team wandered the ruins of Hazor (a city developed by King Solomon: 1 Kings 9:15), walked through the ruins of Jeroboam's northern, blasphemous temple sanctuary in Tel Dan (1 Kings 12:26–30), viewed a city gate dating back to the time of Abraham, and traveled to Caesarea Phillipi and Banias to see a headwater of the Jordan River.

That week's Sabbath was a welcome break from the hectic touring pace. Services were conducted at an outdoor location previously scouted by Mr. Ross, and we enjoyed biblical mes-

sages and special music along the Sea of Galilee's shore, near a location related to fishing work.

After the service, we enjoyed a quiet day at Capernaum—described in the Bible as a sort of “headquarters” for Jesus' early ministry. There, we saw what is believed to be Peter's home, an early meeting place of God's first-century Church where Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31). We also walked through the remains of a second-century synagogue believed to have been built atop a *first-century* synagogue—likely the very synagogue where Jesus Christ once preached (Mark 1:21), a portion of which was visible through a hole excavated in the floor.

The next day concluded our time in Galilee, including a visit to the site of a first-century synagogue in Magdala—very likely one of those in which Jesus taught (Matthew 4:23)—and a boat excursion on the Sea of Galilee. The captain of the small boat (modeled after first-century fishing boats) noted as we looked on Galilee's shores that two-thirds of the gospels take place in the area we were laying eyes upon—a moving realization.

After a canoe trip on the Jordan River, a visit to Ein Harod (Judges 7:1), and a walk through the ruins of Megiddo, we arrived for dinner on Sunday night at our home for the next week: Kibbutz Netiv HaLamed-Heh.

## **Digging for Your Dinner**

The kibbutz was the temporary home of our dig team—the collection of scholars and volunteers we would join for one week at the Tel Burna archaeological site.

Located around 20 miles southwest of Israel, the Tel Burna site is thought by some to be the location of the biblical city of Libnah, mentioned in Joshua 10 and many other places. Mr. Ross had paired our students with an archaeological team whose leadership included a researcher who believed in the authenticity of the Bible's history—which, sadly, is not a given in modern archaeology.

Every morning that week, our group rode to the dig site with the other team members to begin digging by 6:00 a.m. On-site food was provided for breakfast and a snack—otherwise, work progressed nonstop until about 1:00 p.m. each day. And the work was *hard*—there is a reason archaeological

digs are called “digs”! As archaeologist Chris McKinny kept telling our team, “The goodies are underneath,” and there was a lot of earth to move.

We learned a great deal during that week, and a few relics were discovered, including a partial statue of a horse and rider, the head of an Asherah or Astarte figurine, and a pottery lip that may date to near the time of Noah’s flood. Regrettably, nothing was found that week that proved the site was that of Libnah, but hopefully next year will be different! Those who would like to keep up with the dig’s progress and see some photos of our team in action can visit the project’s website, [telburna.wordpress.com](http://telburna.wordpress.com). We are grateful to Drs. Itzick Shai, Steven Ortiz, and Debi Cassuto for allowing us to contribute to their work.

And they were thankful to have us: Volunteers and students make up a significant part of the workforce in such digs. Not only did our group gain the opportunity to experience an authentic Israel dig, but we also enjoyed fantastic food and friendly housing at the kibbutz—all for a shockingly low price that helped us reserve our precious budget for other pursuits. What we didn’t pay in shekels, we paid in sweat!

With the daily work ending at lunch, the second half of each day that week was free. Afternoon excursions included trips to Bet Shemesh, to the Sorek Valley (Judges 16:4), and through the Aruna Pass (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:22). Every location brought home the reality of the Bible. Particularly special moments included a trip to Tel Azekah (1 Samuel 17:1), where Dr. McKinny talked of David and Goliath while we looked upon the very location of their battle, a tour of the Israelite city of Gezer—guided by the archaeologist who had directed much of its recovery, Dr. Ortiz—and an opportunity to crawl into what was *possibly* the very Cave of Adullam where David hid from Saul (1 Samuel 22:1).

After dinner each day, some archaeologists working at the Tel Burna site gave lectures to the many volunteering students, including a fascinating discussion of the technology the team was pioneering to create three-dimensional models of ancient sites for later analysis. One evening that week, four adventurous students traveled with Mr. Ross to the Sultan’s Pool in Jerusalem for a performance of Giuseppe Verdi’s *Nabucco*, including the famous “Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves.”

### Visiting the Future Capital of the World

Though we were sad to leave our new friends at the end of the week, our muscles were happy! It was time for the final phase of our adventure: a week in the future capital of the world.

We checked out of our kibbutz on Friday and headed to our housing for the remainder of the journey: two apartments—one for the girls and one for the boys—in Jerusalem.

We began the Sabbath with a meal in one of the apartments and a good night’s rest. After a tasty brunch the next day, we enjoyed Sabbath services and an afternoon stroll on a promenade overlooking the City of David and the Temple Mount. We then ventured to Ben Yehuda Street after sundown for some brief shopping, then back home to rest and prepare for a very busy week.

That week included many adventures in Jerusalem. Early in the week, we visited the famous Western Wall and were led on a fascinating underground tour, where we saw stones that had been thrown down by Jerusalem’s Roman conquerors in 70 AD, the original street stones—still in place—of the marketplace that existed in Jesus’ day, and a room where scholars theorize the Sanhedrin met. Shopping in the Old City was quite different for many of us. The marketplace’s character and personality in each of its quarters—Jewish, Arab, Christian, and Armenian—was noticeably distinct. We returned frequently over the week for the goods, the food, and the experience.

Exploring the ancient portions of the city was fascinating, including a journey through Hezekiah’s tunnel (2 Kings 20:20) and visits to the Gihon Spring (1 Kings 1; 2 Chronicles 32:30) and the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7).

Later in the week, we enjoyed excursions to sites related to the life of Jesus Christ, including possible locations of the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus’ tomb, and Golgotha, as well as the Mount of Olives. Standing on the very mountain that will receive the returning King of kings was a special moment for us all. We expressed similar sentiments as we walked the Temple Mount and the steps outside its Southern Wall, knowing that the southern gates were common entrances and that Jesus Himself likely walked those very steps.

We also visited the Israel Museum. Among the artifacts there, we saw the ossuaries (“bone boxes”) of Caiaphas (Matthew 26:3) and possibly Jesus’ brother James (Galatians 1:19) and seals of biblical kings. The Museum is home to the Shrine of the Book, dedicated to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a scale reproduction of first-century Jerusalem. Several of us remarked that the museum seemed to give no special attention to the famous biblical people whose lives were proven by these items—as if the museum’s administrators wanted to distance themselves from the Bible or protect themselves from being accused of giving it any special attention.

The week’s adventures were not limited to Jerusalem. A midweek trip to the desolate Judean wilderness involved a climb to the spring and waterfall at En Gedi (1 Samuel 24:1), a tour of the famous mountaintop fortress of Masada, and a salty swim in the Dead Sea. Even after hearing how buoyant the waters of the Dead Sea can be, everyone was still caught off guard!



### One More Sabbath, Then Home

Our final Sabbath in Jerusalem was understandably bittersweet. Friday night, I led the students in a discussion of their experiences over the previous two-and-a-half weeks. They shared how the trip had impacted both their relationship to the God who loves the land of Israel and their understanding of His word. They also shared what they had learned about each *other*—after trekking together for 18 days, it's hard to keep many secrets! All agreed that it had been the trip of a lifetime.

After a relaxing Sabbath service the next day, our last evening in Jerusalem concluded with a light show in the City of David, celebrating the king whose name the city bears. The next morning, we were winging our way back home from our adventures.

By all accounts, the trip was a tremendous success, and there are many people to thank! A huge “thank you” is due to Mr. Joe Ross for the massive amount of work he performed and research he gathered to make the trip not only possible but also thoroughly educational. Mrs. Colleen Frank, wife of Living Education's Mr. Ken Frank, also provided valuable assistance with additional research and materials. Living Education's staff, supported by numerous additional mem-

bers in Charlotte, worked passionately to help all the details fall into place. Staff at our Canadian office kindly helped with taking care of our cars and taking us to and from the airport in Toronto. Special thanks go out to Mrs. Wanda Ross and Mrs. Jeanine Smith for helping to keep everyone well-fed and healthy in a land where all the food labels were in a language they couldn't read! And I want to publicly thank my incredible wife for doing so much driving. I hereby repent of forgetting how to drive a stick shift.

All who participated in Living Education's adventure in Israel have been changed by the experience. (LN)



Setting up the day's shade at the dig site at sunrise.



“Andy of Arabia” with a local merchant in Jerusalem.



A view of the Sea of Galilee from one of our apartments in Tiberias.

# 2018 Financial Review

**T**he 2018 audit for Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates was issued on May 31, 2019. It can be reviewed in its entirety on the Church website at *LCG.org* under the “About Us” link.

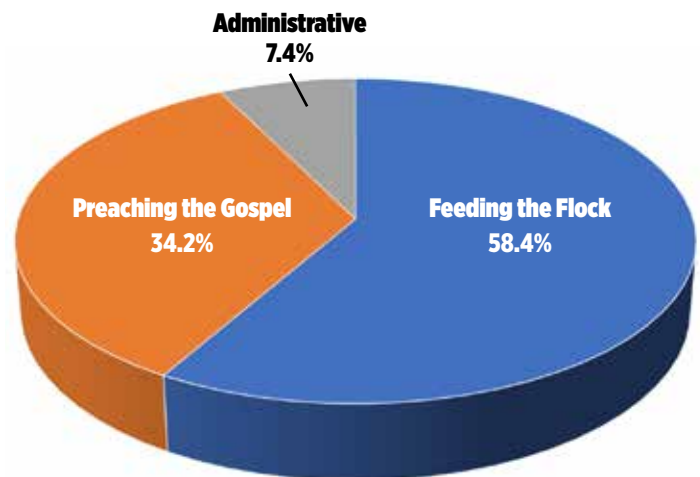
Once again, the audit was performed by Cherry Bekaert, LLP, from whom we received an “unqualified opinion” (where “unqualified” means that their statement is made “with no reservations”). The accountants stated plainly, “In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.”

In other words, not only Church members, but anyone doing business with us—such as vendors and financial institutions—can read our financial statements and know that the numbers stated are materially correct and that the Church uses proper accounting methods to present its finances.

A general summary of expenses for the year that ended December 31, 2018, shows that 34.2 percent of our resources were spent on preaching the Gospel, 58.4 percent on feeding the flock, and 7.4 percent on administrative expenses.

The Church relies on the tithes and offerings of its members, co-workers, and donors so that we may fulfill our mission as outlined in Scripture—to preach the Gospel and to feed the flock God has called. We are very grateful for the faithful financial support from all our donors as well as those co-workers and members who contribute their tithes and offerings regularly. In recent years, we have also been blessed with several large one-time contributions. At the very end of 2018, we received notice of one such pending distribution, which allowed us to pay off the mortgage on our Headquarters building in early 2019. We should also note that as a result of these one-time income items, overall income in 2018 increased by 23.82 percent over 2017.

On page 3 of the Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplemental Schedules, the Noncurrent Liabilities



Summary of 2018 Expenses

section includes a Notes Payable amount of \$1,172,365. This consists of several fleet vehicles and the 2018 balance of the mortgage on our Headquarters property. With that one-time income item, we paid these liabilities in full in January and February of 2019. What a blessing for the Church as we go forward! This will be reflected fully in the 2019 audit numbers, but has already affected our cash flow in a very positive way and has allowed us to expand our outreach in television, Internet, and publishing, along with their related support areas.

Brethren, we know that an audit is simply a review of our financial picture for a specific time period. We are already near the end of 2019, and the Work marches on. We hope that you remember your personal part in the Work. We are a small flock trying to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God to a dying world. We want to be a welcoming and warm Church to those whom He calls. We should all be excited about every door He opens, and pray that we have the resources to walk through each of them (Ephesians 6:19). To that end, please pray that God will guide every decision we make—even the small ones—to use the precious resources He provides through our collective tithes and offerings to further His Work. Let us together entreat, “Thy kingdom come!”

—Jerry Ruddlesden

# Teen Camp 2019: Lighting the Path and Outlasting the Storm

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By **Sheldon Monson**

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**T**he summer of 2019 saw another exciting Living Youth Teen Camp! At the Lone Star Camp in Athens, Texas, we hosted more than 320 people, including eight from Australia, a few from Europe, several from Canada, and even some from the Philippines, Mexico, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, and other parts of the Caribbean. The majority in attendance were from the United States, but our many international visitors truly enhanced the experience for everyone.

Dozens of young people were able to come to this camp—and attend other LYP camps around the world—thanks to the assistance they received from the Morgan Montgomery Memorial Fund. We also anticipate sponsoring several additional young people later this year to attend one of the upcoming international camps scheduled to take place in late December and early January. We are extremely grateful for the donations that have been made to this fund and have witnessed the joy it has brought to so many young people since its inception. These generous contributions have made it possible for many to attend camp who otherwise would not have been able to do so.

## **The Light We Need**

Every winter, months before summer camp, we carefully select a “camp theme”—one that will serve as the basis for all of the camp’s daily Christian Living classes. It is chosen to reflect an important message at the heart of God’s way of life, which the Church seeks to promote through the Living Youth Program. The theme in 2019 was “Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet and a Light to My Path,” taken from Psalm 119:105. All ten of the ministers who spoke to the campers and staff at the Lone Star Camp this past July covered a topic relating to this central message.

What did we talk about? What does this verse mean? The Hebrew word that is translated *lamp* means just what you think it might—a light, lamp, or candle. The idea is that the word of God is like a torch or a lamp to a person on a dark night. It shows them the way. It prevents them from stumbling over obstacles, falling down steep cliffs, or wandering off into paths that would lead them into danger or would turn

them away altogether from the path of life. The word *light* is similar in meaning. God’s word is a light that casts out darkness as it shines on the road ahead, so that we might see any hazards that lie in our path.

Those who make the word of God their guide and follow its teachings will be able to maintain their course in the right way. They will clearly see the path. They will be able to identify the road they ought to choose, avoiding all the byways that diverge from the main path—often at such a slight angle at first that there seems to be no divergence at all. As Christians, we need such a guide to cast light upon our path, and the Scriptures are that guide. Not only does the Bible inform us of God’s will, but as a light on a path in darkness, it very specifically reveals the right way and shows us how to avoid the wrong.

The world is in spiritual darkness! It is spiritually blind. The whole world has been deceived by Satan the Devil (Revelation 12:9). Most people’s minds have been blinded by the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). The Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:9–11).

And he concludes: “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (v. 14). This is why those whose eyes have not yet been opened are in spiritual darkness. They do not—they *cannot*—understand spiritual matters. They have no lamp to light the path. God has not given them His Spirit, which one must have to understand the things of God.

It is God’s goodness that leads one to repentance (Romans 2:4). God the Father opens the minds and hearts of



those He calls, and He draws them to the Son, Jesus Christ (John 6:44). Initially, God's Spirit works *with them* (John 14:17). Later, He places His Spirit *in them* after baptism for the remission of sin, the laying on of hands, and prayer for the receipt of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 19:6). It is this same Spirit that guides one into all truth (John 16:13). God knows who His people are, as they have His Spirit and are led by it (Romans 8:9, 14).

### **A Special Status and Opportunity**

Young people who have one or both parents in God's Church have been extended a calling—an opportunity to know and walk in truth. When a believing parent rears a child in the faith, that child is exposed to the truth in a special way. The child also receives instruction from God's ministers on the Sabbath and Holy Days, and through other means of God's design. Paul explained the benefits associated with living in a home with even one believing member. In his first letter to the Church in Corinth, he wrote: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy" (1 Corinthians 7:14). To be sanctified means to be set apart, such as for holy use. The last part of this verse shows that a child with even one believing

Young people who have one or both parents in God's Church have been extended a calling—an opportunity to know and walk in truth. **When a believing parent rears a child in the faith, that child is exposed to the truth in a special way.**

parent is no longer considered "unclean" to God. "Holy" in this context does not mean sinless, but rather that the child is sacred to Him—possessing a special status before God. Such children have an opportunity to know the Father and Jesus Christ, and to benefit as they learn to walk more fully in the path of righteousness.

Our children have the advantage of access to God and His guidance. They are in the light and they can clearly see the path they should travel. They can understand the truth. Satan's lies are exposed to them! They can avoid the consequences of sin as they choose to do God's will. But just as parents can cast aside their sanctification, so too can children choose to cast aside the special standing God has given them. Even though our children may not yet be converted, they are still accountable for what they know (James 4:17).

We would not know the Way—or how to walk in it—if God's word, acting like a lamp, did not reveal it to us.

We are guided by its instruction. A life lived in accordance with the laws of God is filled with peace and happiness—an abundant life (John 10:10). How valuable is it to know right from wrong?

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward (Psalm 19:7–11).

The value of knowing God's word and understanding it cannot be compared with any other desirable thing—even fine gold! It provides the key to wisdom, joy, and—most importantly—eternal life!

Physically speaking, we often take light for granted because it is everywhere, or at least nearly everywhere. When we find ourselves in its complete absence, we are deeply unsettled. Thankfully, we don't have to live in the darkness. This was the message we wanted to convey to this year's campers.

Our camp theme for the summer of 2019 was an attempt to paint a true picture of our path through a dark world to a better one, and we seek to exemplify that better world at every one of the Church's camps. At the Texas Teen Camp this year, many campers and staff members commented that they enjoy coming to camp because it lets them come out of the world for two weeks, and because they enjoy spending time with others of like mind. Camp surveys also revealed that the daily Christian Living class was once again the highest-rated activity at summer camp!

### **Quite a Storm!**

In addition to learning some valuable lessons from these classes, we experienced the excitement of a powerful storm one evening. While campers were engaged in the Camp Olympics—which included events such as ladder ball, cornhole, Frisbee golf, a soccer goal challenge, and balloon-launching—the storm began its approach. Quickly, staff decided to end the Camp Olympics a few minutes earlier than planned and to gather everyone into the large outdoor pavilion in preparation for Evening Reflection. Shortly before 8:30 p.m. the skies began to darken. Almost immediately, the storm knocked out our power. The power

flickered on and off intermittently several times within just a couple of minutes, so we decided to cancel Evening Reflection and the Hymn Sing that normally follows. Moments later, the wind picked up, and the rain began to blow horizontally. Several people scrambled to cover sound and video equipment and to secure items that might be blown away. At this point, intense lightning, high winds, and heavy rain kept us from leaving the pavilion safely on foot. However, within minutes, staff members with vehicles began to line up to provide rides back to the dorms and houses. A parade of cars, trucks, and vans whisked away the campers and their counselors first, followed by the rest of the staff. Within 30 to 45 minutes everyone was safely back in their accommodations for the night.

When the storm began, several staff members had quickly secured or taken down tent structures and awnings on the travel trailers, so they would not be blown away or broken into pieces. Even so, some tent poles were bent, a few awnings were damaged, and a couple of small pop-up tents were destroyed. One of the pop-up tents ended up on top of the dining hall, while the other could not be broken down quickly enough to prevent it from being twisted into a pile of junk. In addition, a large tree was downed at the

swimming pool. The tall pine took out a section of the fence surrounding the swimming area and crashed onto the deck, reaching entirely across the pool. Yet, during all of this, no one was hurt.

This exciting event taught us several lessons. It caused us to be thankful for the protection God affords His people and reminded us of how powerful God truly is. It also prompted us to review our current emergency plans to make them even more effective in the future, as well as to stake down all tent structures that much more securely!

Thankfully, the storm only lasted for about an hour. By our first activity the next morning, the downed tree had been removed and the damaged section of pool fence had been replaced. Bent tent poles were removed and replaced as needed, and camp resumed as if nothing had happened.

Plans are already in the works for next year! It is inspiring to see so many young people all over the world enjoying our summer camp programs and being taught God's way of life. As you can see, many important lessons are learned at these camps—and we strive to make them the best camps on earth! If you attended camp in 2019, we hope you'll be back in 2020! If you have never attended one of our camps—what are you waiting for? (LN)

















# Our Most Promising Prospects

By **Jason Fritts**

**M**any who come from across the country and around the world to serve at one of our youth camps are quickly reminded that camp is not a vacation.

It always sounds great at the beginning—help out the youth, get a little sun, meet some new people. And then, upon arrival, staff members are handed a housing assignment and welcomed with a mop, a broom, and various other cleaning supplies. (Just like at every other modern vacation resort, I'm sure...)

When your first day serving finally ends, your head hits the pillow and you stare at the bunk above you. You've stopped sweating—perhaps only for a few moments, but just long enough to ask yourself, “What exactly did I sign up for?”

Of course, the short answer is, “Living Youth Camp.” However, that brief answer is not nearly enough to convey the wonderful purpose behind the willingness of so many Church members to sacrifice their time and serve our youth!

## **A Mission That Includes Our Children**

God's people understand the need to dedicate themselves to preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the whole world. When Jesus Christ laid the foundation of the Church of God, He outlined our mission and our life's work. We are told to make disciples of all the nations, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, to teach them to observe His commands, and to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

Afterward, through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit during that year's Feast of Pentecost, the New Testament Church was formally inaugurated, determined to carry to all people throughout the world the good news of God's way and His Kingdom. And *our youth in the Church* are certainly included as “prospective members” to be reached by this great mission!

In 1 Corinthians 7:14, God reveals that our children are deemed holy due to the believing faith of one or both of their parents. This special blessing places on us a special responsibility toward them. We know from many examples in the Bible that only God can make something holy. From Moses' taking off his sandals on holy ground (Exodus 3:5) to the portion of time made holy for the Sabbath (Exodus 20:11), it is the will and presence of God that makes something holy.

As such, it is God's presence with the youth of the Church that makes them holy. Although not yet dwelling *in* them, God's Holy Spirit is certainly *with* them (cf. John 14:17). They are sanctified and set apart, with a unique blessing of oppor-

tunity. They have received a special calling to God's way of life and an understanding of the truth of the ultimate change that is coming to this world. In turn, it is our awesome responsibility as adults, parents, and grandparents in the Church to target *this* group, as well, with the Gospel message, encouraging their continued growth as they journey toward embracing God on their own.

## **Undivided Attention**

Each of my children, from time to time, will take a turn requesting my undivided attention. They call to me, and I respond—but perhaps I don't stop what I'm doing and run to them.

A couple months ago, Morgan, my four-year-old daughter, came to me with a question. Walking into my office, she said, “Dad, um, I have a question.” I quickly replied, “Yeah?” as I continued typing. Taking another step toward me, she tried again, “Daaaaaad...” I answered, “Yes, Morgan?”—my eyes still glued to the screen as I pounded away on the keyboard. Walking right up to me, she whispered in my ear, “Daddy.” Once again, trying to finish the thought I was typing, I murmured, “Mmm hmm.”

Then she reached up, put her hands ever so gently on the sides of my face, and turned my head toward hers until our eyes locked, inches apart. In that moment, she had my full, undivided attention totally focused on her monumental question: “Um, what day is it?”

I could only smile.

For many years, the Church has made significant efforts to build on the fundamental principle that we are to serve God's youth, letting them know they have a place within the Family of God and Body of Christ. Every summer, the Church gives them its *undivided attention* through camp and other activities. But even more than that, in our local congregations we must *continue* to encourage and cultivate the growth of these young prospective members who attend with us each week.

In Paul's letter to Titus, the apostle instructs older members of the Church to admonish and edify younger men and women through their godly examples. We should drive ourselves to take a concentrated interest in our “little brothers and sisters,” whom we hope will one day make their own commitment to God. We should pursue that goal with the same zeal we have for bringing along those prospective members who learn about us from the telecast or on the Internet. It is our joyful obligation to build relationships with and demonstrate our care and support for those whom God has set apart—made *holy*. With heartfelt attention, let's continue to set our minds on serving the youth—the future of God's Church—by sharing with them our hope and passion for God's Kingdom! (LN)

# A Camp Counselor's Journey

**M**y camp journey began eleven years ago, the last year LCG held its Teen Camp in Michigan. As a 14-year-old, camp was not a part of *my* life plan, to say the least. I really, *really* did not want to go. Nevertheless, my parents threw me into my minister's minivan, and I was off to camp. Now, looking back, I am glad they did. Camp changed my life forever. I ended up loving camp. I learned how important an experience like camp was for me as a young person in God's Church. So, I kept going. Every year.

Once I was old enough, I decided that I wanted to return to camp as a staff member, and my first job was serving on the media staff. I became a counselor the following year, and that has been my job at camp every summer since. I do not yet know what it is like to have children, but after seven summers of volunteering to serve *in loco parentis* for 15 to 20 teenagers, ages 13 to 18, I think I have been given a small taste—and for some reason I keep doing it!

## It Happens Every Year

Each year, on the way to camp, you are brimming with excitement. Anyone who has been to camp in any capacity knows what this is like. You are driving or flying to wherever the camp is located that year, and you begin to think, "What am I doing? Why am I coming back?" That first night, as your head hits the pillow, you think: "Again? I must be crazy."

But you're not. You begin to remember exactly why you are there. You remember what it was like to be a teenager and what camp meant to you. Camp was the only time of year when you could get together with the single largest assembly of Church of God teenagers in the world—a huge group of people your own age who were going through the same life experiences you were. This was your opportunity to sing with them, to play with them, and to learn with them. This was where you saw just how much the Church cares for you as a young person. With every powerful message delivered during Christian Living class, with every truthful word spoken in love, and with every calming, compassionate Evening Reflection, you knew. Once camp got underway and you were reminded of those things, you remembered: This is why you came back. This is why so many people come back—to serve and to help a new generation experience what you experienced.

## The Counselor Life

Upon arriving, you meet the other counselors and you discuss with your co-counselor your plans for the two weeks of camp. A special bond develops between counselors. It

reminds me of the song on page 115 of our hymnal, "Blest Be the Tie." We share our mutual woes, our struggles, and our triumphs—and believe me, there are many struggles and woes to share. Most of the time, however, there are far more triumphs than woes.

A large part of the well-being, enjoyment, and edification of these teens rests on your shoulders when you are a counselor. You are with your campers 24/7 for two whole weeks. This is no small task. It is important, and you know it. Keeping the big picture in mind and asking God to help you to do your best is crucial during camp.

Each day begins the same way. My wake-up time is usually 6:30 a.m., which can be a struggle for some—including me. Once the campers are all awake, they get ready for the day, doing dorm chores—such as cleaning the dorm bathroom, sweeping, mopping, and taking out the garbage—and then making sure they are wearing the shirt of the color designated for that day. Then we are off to breakfast and the day's activities.

For most staff members, since they are not campers, participating in activities is a thing of the past. But being a counselor is a different story—much like being a camper all over again, just with authority and a lot more responsibility. As counselors, we participate in the activities alongside our campers, and it is a real privilege. Being right there beside them as they play their hardest at football or volleyball, or being the obnoxious musician who tries to get them to sing out in music class, develops a real bond between the counselors and the campers under our care. It's neat to see what makes them excited, what makes them angry, and what makes them sad—there aren't many places where one can have these experiences, which makes me thankful for camp. With athletics, arts, crafts, music, speech, and more, campers enjoy a wide variety of opportunities and experiences.

## Giving Back

As a teenager, my counselors were a huge part of making my camp experience amazing. Counselors can make or break camp for any camper, so taking on this role is a great responsibility. So, again, why do I do it year after year? I do it because I love God's way of life and because I love working with His youth. I do it because I remember what a wonderful experience camp was for me as a teen, and I want to have a hand in creating that experience for others. I do it because there are innumerable lessons to be learned by both my campers and me. I do it because I love camp and always will.

—Chris Pringle



# LYP in Chevetogne, Belgium

*During the summer of 2019, Living Youth Programs hosted a teen camp in Chevetogne, Belgium, with visitors from several international areas. Mr. Rees Ellis provided the following account.*

Everything went well at the LYP camp at Chevetogne Estate, and we are thankful for God's blessings and protection.

Campers came from Europe, Canada, Martinique, Gabon, and Zambia, and their shining attitudes of jumping in to participate and serve contributed greatly to the success of the camp. A young man from Canada and a young woman from the United States both did terrific jobs as counsellors, and the food was excellent, thanks to our remarkable kitchen crew, who did a fantastic job.

The Bible classes covered these topics:

- The word of God, a light to your feet
- How to be a good friend
- What to look for in a friend
- Lessons from the ants
- Taking responsibility
- Your attitude in sports

The weather did not yield enough rain to allow kayaking on the Ourthe River, but that did not mean there was not plenty to do. Among other activities, every camper made a belt during the leathercraft activity, and the nature evening—a study of bats—allowed us to walk down the road to observe four different species of bat.

The pre-camp visit to the Euro Space Center was also a success, and we will definitely plan another visit for next year.

—Rees Ellis



# New Zealand Camp: Four Years Running!

**W**e held our fourth successive LYP NZ camp earlier this year in January. It was another “record breaker” year, with 32 campers attending—12 girls and 20 boys, joined by four mini-campers. They came from all over the country, as well as from Australia, the Philippines, and Vanuatu. Helping the camp run smoothly were its 28 staff members, who served with enthusiasm, dedication, willingness, and a desire to fulfil their roles effectively. Like the campers, the staff, too, came from a variety of locations, including Australia, the Philippines, and the United States. It was wonderful to see all the campers and staff connect well together and integrate seamlessly into the LYP “camp mode.”

## Camp Theme and Activities

As in previous years, a theme was woven into Christian Living messages and many other parts of the camp experience. This year’s theme was, “Be strong and very courageous,” from Joshua 1:7. We chose this theme because of what our youth must deal with in this generation of perversity. Indeed, our Church youth need all the spiritual help that they can get, combined with their personal desire to be strong and very courageous, as they stand up to the onslaught of utter immorality, ungodly attitudes, and abominable behaviours pushed at them by society.

Campers were well-fed both physically and spiritually throughout camp. There was an abundance of tasty food for all to enjoy. So, too, was there a bounty of spiritual food. The Christian Living classes focused on figures from the Bible: Jesus Christ, Joseph, Mary, Paul, Ruth, Esther, and David. Each class focused on one individual and drew lessons from his or her life that were applicable to Church youth today.

A diverse range of activities ensured that all campers could enjoy something that fit their interests and desires. Activities included volleyball, ultimate frisbee (girls only), touch rugby (boys only), basketball, archery, swimming, softball, and riflery. Additionally, there were dance classes, a speech and communication class, and even a “fashion and modesty class.” The girls enjoyed a baking and cooking class, and the boys were taught how to lead songs in a Church service, as well as how to change a car tyre. Thus, members: If you need your car tyre changed and you have a boy in your midst who attended the New Zealand camp in 2019, you know whom to call! Also greatly enjoyed this year were the two evenings when we had campfires, which let the campers and staff “change gear,” unwind, and relax next to a roaring—but well-controlled—fire. Campers had fun making and eating s’mores cooked over the fire.

Weather is one element that can make or break a camping experience. Thankfully, God blessed our weather. We enjoyed almost perfect weather for the entire camp! When it did rain, it was not a problem, as indoor activities allowed both campers and staff to “catch their breath” until the splendid sun shone in Eltham again.

## LYP New Zealand 2020

If you are a teen who would like to enjoy ten days of godly fun with like-minded people your age, then think about attending LYP NZ 2020. Many consider 20/20 vision to be ideal—and we think so, too, as we plan for 2020 with a vision of an even better experience for campers and staff alike. So, be sure to begin saving now for camp (if you have not already) and remember to be quick to submit your application, because—after four years of successful LYP camps in New Zealand—the word is out!

—Tony Leman





# Adventure Camp 2019: Canoeing the Boundary Waters of Canada

**T**he 2019 LYP Adventure Camp saw 32 campers and staff embark on the adventure of a lifetime, journeying by canoe into the boundary waters between the United States and Canada, while five dedicated volunteers maintained a base camp.

The trip began as everyone arrived in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Friday, July 26, meeting at the home of Camp Director Mr. Michael Kreyer and his wife Kim. Tents for the men were set up outside, then everyone gathered for orientation. After a hearty dinner, Mr. Gerald Weston presented an evening Bible Study titled “Choose to Do the Difficult.” Later in the evening, God treated us to a spectacular thunder and lightning display that lasted for several hours before peace settled over our first night.

Sabbath services were held in Minneapolis, where we were greeted by a thriving congregation with many children. Mr. Weston gave the sermon, “Stand on a Firm Foundation of Faith,” and everyone enjoyed fellowship with the Minneapolis brethren. We were up at 5:30 a.m. Sunday morning for an eight-hour bus ride into Canada, where Mr. Marco Manzo met us at Saganaga Lake with boats to transport us and our gear to the remote resort he and his parents, Living Church of God members Marc and Helen Manzo, run on the lake. What a joy, and how exciting it was for us to be there!

After a morning of canoeing instructions and loading up 16 two-man canoes, we set out on Monday afternoon. All went well until we came to aptly named Windy Point, which gave us a significant challenge, as the weather was even windier than normal that day, and three fully-loaded canoes swamped in the swells and whitecaps. Mr. Gerald Weston has written about this in his “Dear Brethren” article for this issue of the *Living Church News* (on page 1). Wisdom dictated finding an alternative campsite for the night rather than pushing on to the planned site—and in retrospect, we learned a very important lesson: Swamping a fully-loaded canoe when everyone is wearing a life jacket, nearly everything is in waterproof bags, and everything that can be tied down *is* tied down, is far from the end of the world. It is simply a part of canoeing—you deal with it and move on.

After an early breakfast, each day began with a Bible Study on the theme of this year’s Adventure Camp, “Mighty Men and Women of God.” Mr. Kreyer gave the first Bible Study, and Messrs. Josh Lyons, Garrett Steagall, Matt Lyons, and Marc Arseneault contributed to the daily learning. “That part of the day was really nice—you’re waking up, having your coffee, getting ready to have a good day, and you have a Bible Study about mighty men and women of God,” said staff member Mr. Kyle Wolford. “The big takeaway for me was that you’ve got to be faithful in the little things, and that builds up to what makes you a mighty man or woman of God. Just in your everyday life—‘No, I’m not going to do that on the Sabbath’—or whatever the case is.”

The first day’s forced change of plans affected the remainder of the trip, but the schedule still provided an excellent balance of long days of paddling and time to peacefully appreciate the features of the area. Our crew searched out exceptional campsites, at which swimming and fishing added to everyone’s enjoyment of the program—and the freshly caught fish added to our evening meals. “Just being able to relax and have that downtime was really helpful,” Mr. Wolford said. “It’s not like we just paddled all day, made it to camp, set up camp, had dinner, and went to sleep. We had a couple hours each day, after we got set up, to have that free time.”

We paddled some 12 to 13 miles on our longest day, which was spent in Ontario’s Quetico Provincial Park. While there, we visited a waterfall and a cliffside pictograph, hunkered down until one thunderstorm passed, then successfully out-paddled another.

After a tiring yet deeply fulfilling week of canoeing, we embraced another Sabbath day at the Manzos’ resort on the lake before returning to Minneapolis, then departed for our homes.

These LYP Adventure Camps are always challenging, both physically and mentally—and this year’s camp struck a wonderful balance of challenge and rejuvenation. It truly was an adventure none of us will forget!

—Editorial Staff

*Compiled from reports provided by Adventure Camp attendees.*







# Woman to Woman

## “Fight Like a Girl”

By **Janth B. English**

**W**hen I was a child, one of the worst insults someone could hurl at you was, “You throw like a girl!” No one wanted you on their ball team if you threw like a girl.

When the occasional scuffle broke out, one might hear an even harsher insult, “You fight like a girl!” This would often lead to *other* fights to prove that the insulted party did not, in fact, fight like a girl.

Today, the entertainment industry has created the genre of “superheroine”—an ideal that many women have accepted “hook, line, and sinker.” Moviemakers create fantasy lands where women weighing barely 100 pounds overpower men who are twice their weight. But do we, as women, **want** this image for ourselves and our daughters? What is really behind this idea? Why do some women feel that they must be as physically strong and tough as men? Should women be fighting at all?

### Myth of the “Superwoman”

It may be politically incorrect to say so, but it is still true and should be emphatically stated: In general, women are not as physically strong as men—and science backs this up. According to a study of Caucasian and Asian college students, published in the August 2012 issue of *Sport Science Review*, women had just 37 to 68 percent the muscle strength of men (“A Comparative Study on Strength between American College Male and Female Students in Caucasian and Asian Populations,” by Gong Chen, Liu Liu, and Jing Yu).

The Bible confirms what scientists know, and what everyone *should* know: women are the physically weaker sex (1 Peter 3:7). Regrettably, however, Satan has deceived many men (and women) into thinking that because women are physically weaker, they are somehow inferior. Many women feel it is self-deprecating and demeaning to admit that they are not as physically strong as men. Why? It is God who made us male and female. It is God who created the differences, and He did not make a mistake.

As a woman in God’s Church, you may not buy into the idea of the superheroine besting a man in physical combat, but have you bought into other “supergirl” ideals? Years ago, a

popular commercial featured the voice of a woman singing, “I can bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and never let you forget you’re a man. ‘Cause I’m a woman...” This sounds like a superwoman to me! Sadly, many women do find themselves in this situation, but it is not the life God intended for us. God intended women to be homemakers and find fulfillment in managing their homes and their children (Titus 2:3–5). If you have accepted the idea that you can do it all, I can tell you from my experience as a single parent that you cannot. Even when you think you are successfully juggling everything that must be done, there are some matters that you will either miss or not do well. No one can do everything. The truth is, there are no superwomen.

### Rejecting the “Battle of the Sexes” Deception

Society also demeans women by portraying them as victims of a “patriarchy” through which men have taken advantage of women and have actively held them back from achieving their true potential. Today’s society teaches people that there are no inherent differences between the sexes—just artificial variations attributable to environmental influences. Women are told to cast off all restraint and never to come under the authority of any man. This scenario pits women against men in a battle for superiority. While it is true that many women in Satan’s society experience hardship and even abuse from men who should be their protectors, we should not abandon the natural order that God has ordained, in which a husband is to be the head of his household (1 Corinthians 11:3). Have we, as women, accepted the idea that we do not need a man as head of our household? The truth is that there are inherent differences between the sexes, as well as differences in roles and responsibilities. The differences between women and men make them complementary (1 Corinthians 11:11–12) and, as such, there should be no “battle of the sexes.”

God created both men and women in His image (Genesis 1:27). He views women as neither inferior nor superior to men. He sees both men and women as human beings and potential sons and daughters of the Kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:18), and He has called women and men from all nations and ethnicities to be a part of His team. When we were baptized, we were conscripted into the army of God, and we are



Christian soldiers fighting spiritual battles on the front lines, alongside our brothers in Christ, called to use our spiritual strength to the utmost in the battle for eternal life.

There is a very real battle being waged, and Satan does not want us to be mindful of it. He uses every tactic available to distract us from following God's approach in the struggles we and our families face. We are in a very real fight as women of God against Satan and his demons. We fight against the powers and rulers of darkness. Yet we can have hope. Our warfare is spiritual, and God has given us spiritual weapons to use in combat. We are girded with truth around our waist and a breastplate of righteousness. On our feet is the Gospel of peace. We have the shield of faith and the helmet

**We should not look at the media-created superwomen as examples to emulate, especially since **there are true, godly heroines in the pages of the Bible—women who fought bravely using the same weapons God has given us.****

of salvation, and we can attack with the word of God, our sword (Ephesians 6:10–17). Our weapons are sharpened and made more effective through daily prayer, Bible study, and meditation, along with occasional fasting. Women have the God-given power to wield these weapons effectively and to overcome the enemy. We, too, must be strong and very coura-

geous, standing firm in the faith. In every meaningful regard, women face the same spiritual struggles as men and can receive the same rewards. We fight on the same side as men, not against them!

### **Real Examples, Not Hollywood's**

We should not look at the media-created superwomen as examples to emulate, especially since there are true, godly heroines in the pages of the Bible—women who fought bravely using the same weapons God has given us. Hebrews 11 mentions Sarah and Rahab by name. It mentions women who received their dead raised to life.

There are many more heroines in the Bible, but for now let's consider Ruth and her life's battle. Ruth was a Moabitess and a widow who started out with nothing after her husband's death. She had no means to provide for her mother-in-law, Naomi. Yet, she abandoned the pagan religions of Moab and, putting on truth, she accepted the God of Israel. Ruth forsook her homeland and its ways and left for the land of Israel, where she practiced God's law. Keeping His commandments gave Ruth the needed protection of righteousness. She walked in the way of peace among those who were not her people, and she gained a favorable reputation among them (Ruth 2:11–12). Following Naomi's instructions, Ruth used God's word, her sword, regarding widows and the laws of inheritance to find security (Ruth 3:8–9). Ruth used spiritual weapons to fight her battles and overcome her struggles, and God gave her the victory. Beginning as a young Moabite widow who came to Israel with nothing, she became part of the lineage of Jesus Christ as the great-grandmother of King David.

We all have battles to fight. As women, we need godly courage and spiritual strength to stand against the pressures Satan's society places on us to conform to unrighteous standards and reject God's. Christian women must fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12), but we do not fight as the world does. Our place is not in physical combat, and we are not involved in a battle of the sexes nor any political ideology. As Christian women, we are involved in *spiritual* combat, fighting *spiritual* battles with the weapons God has given us—truth, His law, peace, faith, salvation, and His word. With God's help, we *will* win—and our prize will be His Kingdom.

So, if anyone notices you striving in *this* manner—for your family, for your husband, or for your own spiritual development—and tells you that you fight like a girl, just say, "Thank you!" <sup>LN</sup>

## Weddings & Anniversaries

### **Mr. and Mrs. Gerald**

**Weston** celebrated 50 years of marriage on October 12. They were married by Mr. Carl McNair in St. Louis, Missouri, on that date in 1969, which was a week after the Feast of Tabernacles that year.



In comments to the Headquarters staff at a surprise early reception in honor of the occasion, Mr. Weston said that after they were married, "it was like we had always been married." The staff presented them with a crystal bowl. The Charlotte congregation also had a reception for them after services on October 5, with a special cake and happy wishes for many more years of marriage. By then, word was out, and on the actual date of their anniversary, early Feast-goers in Hilton Head presented them with flowers. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Weston, and much appreciation for their many years of faithfully and diligently serving God's people together.

Congratulations to **Mr. and Mrs. Bruce (Anne) Chwalek** of the Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregation, who celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary this year. They were married on February 22, 1979. The congregation honored Mr. and Mrs. Chwalek after services on February 23 with a special cake and signed card. They have been dedicated members of God's Church since the 1970s and are loved by all for their warmth and hospitality.

**Mr. and Mrs. Glen (Pat) Harrison** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on May 30. This is also their 50th year in the Church of God. Mr. Harrison is the Area Pastor for South Louisiana. On the Sabbath of May 25, the Baton Rouge congregation presented the couple with a beautiful anniversary cake and champagne.

**Mr. and Mrs. Terry (Doris) Hess**, of the Kannapolis, North Carolina, congregation, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on September 6. They were married

in 1959, called together into the Church of God in 1968, baptized in 1969, and have served as deacon and deaconess for many years. In honor of their great milestone, the Kannapolis brethren surprised them on the Sabbath with a beautiful reception, including an anniversary cake, non-alcoholic champagne, and a card signed by every member of the congregation, including those who are unable to attend. Mr. and Mrs. Hess are thankful for the many blessings God has showered upon them through the years, especially the calling to be part of His family and the sure hope that we all share, the establishment of His Kingdom on this earth.

**Mr. Charles Cunningham** and **Miss Wendy Armstrong**, of Houston, Texas, were married by Mr. Rick Stafford on July 14 at an elegant lakeside venue. Guests rejoiced with them while enjoying the beautiful wedding music. After the ceremony, all were treated to a lunch featuring outstanding "real Texas barbecue."

**Mr. Mike Kohl**, from the Omaha, Nebraska, congregation, and **Miss Robyn Baptiste**, from the Springfield, Missouri, congregation, were united in marriage on May 26 at the Joplin, Missouri church meeting hall. The ceremony was conducted by Mr. Gene Lathrop and followed by a reception for family and friends who celebrated this joyous occasion with the happy couple.

Traveling all the way from her home in Barbados, **Miss Melanie Thompson** was united in marriage to **Mr. Marcus Johnson** in Baytown, Texas, on August 11. Mr. Rick Stafford performed the ceremony, with the groom's brothers and their wives serving as bridal party attendants. Lively music, dancing, and delicious food completed this joyous occasion.

**Mr. Rickey Rupert** and **Ms. Amanda Howard** were united in marriage on June 23 in Joplin, Missouri. The ceremony, conducted by Mr. Gene Hilgenberg, was followed by a reception of food, dancing, and joyous celebration. Mr. and Mrs. Rupert attend 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](mailto:lcn@lcn.org)).



# Events

## Southern California Area Picnic

On Sunday, August 4, the Los Angeles congregation hosted the combined Southern California churches for our annual church picnic. It was a real success and “better than ever,” as many said. Approximately 70 brethren gathered at a park at the foot of the beautiful San Gabriel Mountains to play games, enjoy great food, swim, and fellowship together. The weather turned out nicely with a good breeze.

People enjoyed playing basketball, tennis, water games, and cornhole, and there were also a number of other activities for the children. “The Taco Man” mobile caterers prepared a great picnic meal for a very reasonable cost. Everything was prepared to our specifications, even the beans, and the tacos were “all you can eat,” a Southern California tradition. For dessert, we had different types of chocolate ice cream, while members also contributed delicious salads and fruits, and authentic Mexican Popsicles rounded out the menu. There was something for everyone, and our light as Christians definitely shined. The Taco Man caterer Felipe said, “Your people are very nice people and it was a pleasure serving them. It was the first time I have ever gotten an applause for my services.”

One member noted how “wonderful it was for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Many thanks to all who made this event the best yet, and to God for bringing us together. Discussions are already under way for another positive and enjoyable church picnic next year.

—Ben Millan and Roger Bardo

## Births

Jared and Sheila Colcord, of the Garden Grove, California, congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their second son, **Caleb Aiden Colcord**, on August 13. Caleb weighed 7 pounds, 1 ounce, and was 18 inches long. He joins

big brother Trent, who is eager for him to grow up and play.

Josh and Ashley Parton, of the Branson, Missouri, congregation, announce the birth of their daughter, **Mera Willow**.

She was born on August 1, weighing 7 pounds, 3 ounces, and measuring just over 20 inches long. Dad, Mom, and big sisters Raven and Layla are proud to have Mera to complete their family.

## ORDINATIONS

**Mr. and Mrs. Jon (Melissa) Cabaniss** were ordained deacon and deaconess on the Sabbath of June 29 by Area Pastor Ed Breaux and elders Bill Williams and Lawrence Johnson. Mr. and Mrs. Cabaniss serve in the Laurel, Mississippi, congregation.

**Mr. Herbert Ellis** was ordained an elder on June 1 by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz. Mr. Ellis serves in the Terrace, British Columbia, congregation.

**Mr. Jean Matte** was ordained an elder on July 24 by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz and Area Pastor Yvon Brochu. Mr. Matte serves in the Saguenay, Quebec City, Trois Rivières, and Sherbrooke areas.

## In Loving Memory

**Mrs. Fanny Dolores Bunn, 81**, of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation, died on June 21. Born in Ecuador, she moved to Panama with family when she was a young girl. It was there that she later met her future husband, Larry Bunn from North Carolina, and they were married in a bilingual ceremony on August 5, 1955. Later that year, she came to America with her new husband. Energetic and hard-working, she learned English and did everything she could to help and be supportive of her

husband, and together they raised three children. As an army family, they lived in many places, and she also braved the uncertainty of his year-long tour of duty in Vietnam. In 1966, she was happy to become an American citizen. Mr. and Mrs. Bunn were baptized into God's Church in 1968. They lived their faith, helping family and friends whenever needed or called upon. Predeceased by her husband of 46 years and four sisters, Mrs. Bunn is survived by two daughters, one son, three grandsons, two great-

grandsons, one sister, and other cherished relatives and friends. She was a loving person and well-loved, and will be missed by everyone who knew her.

**Mr. Stephen Coady, 65**, of the Tilton, New Hampshire, congregation, died in August of an apparent heart attack at his home in Quechee, Vermont. He was a longtime Church of God member. He retired several years ago after a successful career in the automobile business. Mr. Coady will be remembered

for his warm personality and his love of animals. He served as a song leader for many years, in addition to singing special music and emceeing at family dances at various Feast locations. He is survived by one brother, and he will be greatly missed by those who knew him.

**Mrs. Jacqueline (Jackie) Duray, 79**, of the Pensacola, Florida, congregation, died February 17. Mrs. Duray and her husband Robert were married in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, on April 20, 1968, and later that year, after hearing the "Tomorrow's World" radio program, began to study the Bible. They studied, kept the Sabbath, and tithed for four years before requesting a visit with a minister. They were both baptized on May 25, 1974. Through the years, they lived in several places in Florida and Missouri. Mrs. Duray made many friends along the way. She enjoyed gardening and loved the Church, the Work, and all the saints. God and His Church were her passion. Area Pastor Ed Breaux conducted her private funeral service.

**Mrs. Shelly Raye Jenkins, 59**, went to sleep surrounded by her loved ones on July 25 in Houston, Texas. She was one of seven children, and her nurturing and caring character, developed from a young age, led to her becoming a teacher for almost two decades. Mrs. Jenkins was a longtime and dedicated member of the Church of God, and is referred to by both family and many friends as the "sweetest person" they've ever known. She is deeply missed by her loving husband of 36 years, Matt; sons Clayton and Travis; her mother, Wanda West, a deaconess in the Baytown, Texas, congregation; brothers

Bud, George, twin brother Tracy, and David; and sisters Debbie and Becky. Mr. Rick Stafford officiated at her memorial service, which was attended by hundreds of family, brethren and friends.

**Mr. Vernon Lemke, 84**, of the Appleton, Wisconsin, congregation, died on September 11. He was baptized on February 22, 2008. Mr. Lemke was a very hard worker, continually employed during high school and working after graduation for 27 years as an assistant manager in a local grocery store. He then began his own successful business, retiring in 2007. He is survived by his wife Rita, three children, six stepchildren, 12 grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren. As a man of great faith and strong conviction, he set a fine example. Although Mr. Lemke had health problems in his later years, he faithfully attended services every Sabbath. The Appleton congregation will greatly miss his warm smile and firm handshake.

**Mr. Durwood Murray, 88**, of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation, died on July 26. He was a longtime member of God's Church, baptized with his wife in 1974. An army veteran, he worked for the United States Postal Service for many years, and was self-employed as a carpenter and painter. He also restored and tuned pianos; his specialty was restoring player pianos. In addition to his parents, Mr. Murray was preceded in death by two wives: his first wife of 54 years, Marie, and his second wife of 11 years, Ruth. He was also preceded in death by two siblings and his son-in-law, Ronnie Edwards. Mr. Murray is survived by three siblings, five

children, eight grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. One daughter, Peggy Edwards, and her family are also members in the Charlotte congregation.

**Mrs. Edith S. Oliver, 76**, of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation, died on July 8. She and her mother, Edna Sprouse, came into contact with God's Church in the 1960s and were baptized in early 1970. Their positive and loving influence has borne fruit down to her great-grandchildren, who are fifth-generation in the Church. Mrs. Oliver was a wonderful wife, mother, and homemaker, and enjoyed sewing doll clothes and decorating. A person who exuded joy, she faithfully attended services despite increasingly severe health problems, and her warm, patient, and kind presence is missed by all who knew her. Mrs. Oliver was predeceased by her parents, three brothers, and one sister. She is survived by her husband Jerome of 58 years, one daughter, two sons, eight grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. One son, Jeff (Sybil) Oliver, and her daughter, Jerrie (Keith) Powers, and their families are also members in the Charlotte congregation.

**Mrs. Mary Kathryn Sitarski, 68**, of the Houston, Texas, congregation, died peacefully in her home on July 5. Her memorial service was conducted in Katy, Texas, by her pastor, Mr. Rick Stafford. Mrs. Sitarski was a very active widow who loved to show hospitality and help others, and she also enjoyed traveling all over the world and making new friends. She is survived by her daughter and her sister.



# First LE-Sponsored Men's Training Camp!

The weekend of August 24 provided an opportunity for men of the Living Church of God to take to the green hills of North Carolina for the annual Men's Training Camp—the first to be sponsored by Living Education—Charlotte. Held at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Watauga County (the same venue as this year's Spring Holy Day Family Weekend), the activity saw a very nice turnout and provided a wealth of inspiring spiritual knowledge and practical wisdom to all who attended. Though rainy and misty from the start, the wonderful vistas of the Appalachian Mountains surrounding Blowing Rock—along with the quiet, cozy, well-maintained venue itself—provided a great atmosphere for bonding and growth. In all, 84 men from around the continental United States gathered to attend seminars, fellowship on the Sabbath, and share meals together during this brief two-day respite from the demands of modern life.

Along with an uplifting Sabbath service, the weekend schedule was packed with seminars about issues facing Christian men today. We enjoyed helpful give-and-take discussions about men's roles, exercises in refuting unbiblical doctrines and traditions, and energetic hymn-singing. At other times we relaxed, enjoying the beautiful surroundings and relishing our meals together. The facility's staff members were extremely helpful, and we hoped to leave the best impression we could by returning their kindness and service with calm and courteous fellowship—so different from much

of the raucous entertainment and partying stereotypical of men in today's world. In other words, we showed them that men can have a wonderful time together while remaining sober and sound-minded!

There were participants young and old, which brought variety to our discussions, as the wisdom and experience of our elders blended with the perspectives and struggles of the young fellows and “new guys.” The joy of such fellowship was one of the true highlights of the weekend.

Some expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to sing together as men, noting how the familiar hymns of the Church songbook took on a slightly different tone as the bass, baritone, and tenor voices echoed among the wooden rafters of the conference meeting hall. This resonance, which made a strong impression all its own, enhanced our appreciation for the blending of our voices with those of wives, children, and sisters in Christ when everyone finally returned home.

Attendees found encouragement in seeing men who truly want to learn and share experiences of how best to fulfill our God-given roles. After seminars that included videos exposing the aggressive, ongoing “war on men” around us, many participants related instances illustrating that the push for a “gender neutral” society is not the harmless, helpful, or “natural” sociological change proponents claim it is.

Afterward, there was a delight in heading home from the event with a renewed appreciation for the families and friends we each had waiting for us. Every opportunity to grow is also an opportunity to share, and what we learned at this year's Men's Training Camp was not meant just for us, but for others as well. We know that not everyone can travel to every activity, but if those who *can* make it to such opportunities agree to “take the lessons home,” then we all become that much better prepared as a group to face together the challenges ahead. In fact, that was one of the more sobering topics discussed during the weekend: the level of preparedness we all need—as men, together, in God's Church—to deal with the growing troubles of society. The opinions were varied, but the overall conclusion was this: *We can always strive to do better.*

Let's pray for and strengthen one another in doing exactly that.

—William L. Williams

**Editor's Note:** Living Education provides more follow-up resources about the Men's Training Camp on its website, [LCGEducation.org](http://LCGEducation.org). Just search the site for “Men's Training Camp” and follow the links to learn more.



## COMMENTARY

### For Want of a Nail

**M**any stories, proverbs, and wise sayings teach that small matters can bring serious consequences. One proverb I read early in life was titled “For Want of a Nail.” It shows the difference a little thing can make—even the difference between life and death! There are several versions of the proverb, but a basic one is as follows:

For want of a nail the *shoe* was lost.  
For want of a shoe the *horse* was lost.  
For want of a horse the *rider* was lost.  
For want of a rider the *message* was lost.  
For want of a message the *battle* was lost.  
For want of a battle the *kingdom* was lost.  
And all for the want of a *horseshoe nail*!

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., former Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, said, “Life is a great bundle of little things.” Indeed, our life is a series of little daily events and decisions.

Proverbs 30 describes four small creatures that are “exceedingly wise”: ants, which prepare their food in the summer; rock badgers which, though feeble, thrive in safe homes among rocks; locusts, which have no king but act in organized ranks; and spiders, which even dwells in kings’ palaces (vv. 24–28).

Jesus Christ compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a small mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32). Yet, He told His disciples that if they only had “faith as a mustard seed” they could move mountains (Matthew 17:20).

Christ tells us that “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). A jot is a small Hebrew letter resembling an apostrophe, and a tittle is small stroke of the pen. Though small, each is preserved until all is fulfilled.

After Jesus chose the Twelve Apostles, He spoke to the multitudes, making an often-overlooked statement:

But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great (Luke 6:46–49).

Today’s Christianity has much to learn from the mindset Christ described! For “want of a nail”—lack of attention to small and seemingly insignificant details—the very knowledge of God’s soon-coming Kingdom was lost to most professing Christians, along with many other important truths! But you can be different! Rather than blindly and haphazardly going along, you can look into your own Bible—mindful of the small and often overlooked details—and see what Christ says to do.

—Roger Meyer

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The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the [LCG.org](http://LCG.org) and [TomorrowsWorld.org](http://TomorrowsWorld.org) websites.