

OneAccord

June 2012



Discernment: A Vital Key to Spiritual Survival

*Personal
Contact:*
Counting the
Cost

*From the
President:*
Ministerial
Conference

*Portraits
of Faith:*
Baptism and
a New Life

from the president

ministerial conference

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One of the most significant events of our short history is scheduled for the month of June! Our first international ministerial conference since our organizational meeting back in Louisville, Kentucky, in January of 2011 will take place June 10-13 in Dallas, Texas. This conference will focus on our efforts for preaching the gospel. We are a small organization with big ideas! Those ideas include taking the gospel—the good news of the Kingdom of God—into all the world.

You cannot look at world history without concluding that we are living in an extraordinary time for delivering the gospel. Today we have a communication tool that will allow messages to reach into all nations virtually instantaneously. The full potential and open door of the Internet has yet to be tapped. Even in Africa I was surprised at how many people living in mud huts with dirt floors had cell phones with an Internet connection! Wireless Internet was also available in most restaurants, Internet cafes and hotels. I am not sure we fully understand how far-reaching the Internet really is.

You can find the statistics on Internet penetration as of Dec. 31, 2011, for each region of the world at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>. According to this source, almost 33 percent of the world's population has Internet access. The total population as of Dec. 31, 2011, was listed as almost 7 billion, which means over 2½ billion people currently have Internet access. But the most amazing statistic is the rapid growth of the Internet—528 percent in the past decade! And that growth isn't expected to slow down any time soon. It is becoming more common for people to think of Internet access as an entitled right rather than a privilege that one must pay for!

We plan to launch a new website during the conference that will become our primary vehicle for the public proclamation of the gospel message. Our goal is to have two websites—one for the Church and one for public proclamation. We are rapidly developing articles and other material for posting on the new website. The



work is proceeding at a feverish pitch and currently involves most of the ministry and many members. After the site is launched, we will introduce a plan for involving more and more members in these efforts to preach the gospel.

Our choice of *One Accord* as the name of our publication says a lot about who we are and what we must become. As a small church organization, our hope of having a voice in the world will depend on our being like the group that met “with one accord” on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31 (Acts 2:1). The door for preaching the gospel into all nations is truly in front of us, but the real test will be walking through that door in the most effective manner.

While the Internet will be our primary tool for mass communication, we will not forget about those who do not have access to the Internet. We are introducing trifold publications that can be used to preach the gospel in areas where there is no Internet access. For any U.S. members who don't have the capacity to read *One Accord* online, we are developing plans for printing and mailing personal copies. We do have some big ideas, so stay tuned and watch them develop!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Franks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct "J" at the beginning.

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Courage to Stand Up for the Truth

A member living in the predominantly Muslim country of Indonesia shares his conversion story and the challenges he faced in order to obey God.

by André van Belkum

During a recent visit to the church in Singapore, my wife, Elize, and I traveled to the island of Batam in order to meet members living there. Batam, with a population of over 1.1 million people is part of the Republic of Indonesia and is located 12 miles (20 kilometers) off the southern coast of Singapore. With its tropical climate, it is one of the fastest growing tourist destinations in Indonesia in terms of visitor arrivals.

Indonesia is comprised of 17,508 islands and has a population of 240 million, which is the fourth largest in the world, and has the largest Muslim population worldwide. Over the years, large areas have been ravaged by climatic disasters; and two days after our departure, it experienced an earthquake that measured 8.6 on the Richter scale. Fortunately, the quake did not trigger a destructive tsunami, as many Indonesians feared would happen.

Living on the island are members Edward Simanjuntak, his wife, Lilik Turiastutik, and their 13-year-old daughter, Bellinda. We found the story of how Edward learned about the truth and ultimately became part of the Church to be fascinating and inspirational.

Edward's story began in 1984 when he received *The Plain Truth* magazine. At the age of 27, he was enthusiastic about improving his education and, in particular, his proficiency in English. The magazine was one way he could accomplish this. However, its contents began to spark his interest in what it had to say about the purpose of life.

After seeing a promotion in *The Plain Truth* for the booklet *Why Were You Born?* he requested a copy. What he learned gave new meaning and purpose to his life and inspired him to investigate and study it further. He next ordered an article on the identity of the true Church, followed by the booklet on the Sabbath and the *Bible Correspondence*

Course. By now he was excited by the truth and how the Scriptures backed up what he was reading.

However, obeying what the Bible taught became a major challenge and a test to his daily way of living. Realizing that God expected him to observe the Sabbath, he approached his employer, Mr. Slamet, who was a Muslim, and requested permission to have the day off work so he could keep the Sabbath day holy. What follows is Edward's story of how he came to uphold the truth of God despite adversity.

The Sabbath test

"So one morning I knocked at his office door, and he ushered me in. I humbly but firmly stated, 'I have learnt from the Bible that I should not work on Saturdays. Please, I have come to make a request for a dispensation to have time off on Saturdays.' I also implied that I would be available to work on Sundays instead.

"Well, you know Saturdays are our country's official work-day. I am sorry, but I cannot change it. If you are convicted about your request, then you will need to quit your job,' he replied.

"At this point I didn't want to leave my job. If I was without employment, how would I support my life? But at the same time I deeply felt that I needed to keep the Sabbath. At this point I was busy reading the booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* but had not completely finished it. As I continued reading, I came to the last few pages where Mr. Armstrong gave some advice on how to approach an employer when facing Sabbath employment issues.

"The following excerpt caught my attention: 'Use a little wisdom and pray for God's help. ... Out of hundreds of experiences, I have found that nine in ten do not lose their jobs, and the one in ten who did ... soon found better ones.'

“At this point I didn’t want to leave my job. If I was without employment, how would I support my life? But at the same time I deeply felt that I needed to keep the Sabbath.”

“This really gave me confidence and courage, and so I went to his office again the following week. But once more he simply refused. His answer was the same as before, and he showed his displeasure with my second-time request. He asked me to leave the job. I then went back to my office saddened and unhappy.

“The next Saturday while I was reading Mr. Armstrong’s book *Mystery of the Ages*, thoughts began to flash through my mind. It was as if God was concerned that I should be obeying Him, but I was not. ‘Edward, why are you not doing what you know is right? You know that the Sabbath is holy, but you have been breaking it.’ It seemed too late now! Well, my mind was restless, and I was deeply sorry and broken up.

The moment of truth

“At this time, I lived in a small rented room at a colleague’s house. After what happened, I sat on my bed feeling that I was the most miserable man in the world. I thought there was no more meaning in my life because God had rejected me. I lost my appetite and found it difficult to sleep. I sat



Steadfast in the faith

André van Belkum, left, stands barefoot next to his wife, Elize, and the Simanjuntak family—Lilik, Bellinda and Edward. Being the only brethren on the island of Batam in Indonesia, the Simanjuntak family takes a ferry to Singapore on most holy days to attend services with brethren.

on my bed until about 2 a.m. before falling asleep. I woke up at about 4 in the morning in deep sorrow. It was Sunday morning. At that time, I was a member of a small Protestant church and played the organ during Sunday services. That morning I made the decision that I could no longer attend, as it was not God’s Church.

“Finally, I came to a desperate decision. I said to myself, ‘I will keep the Sabbath whatever happens. I will keep it even to the point of death.’ The moment I made that commitment I realized that God would forgive and support me. As this truth came to me, happiness and contentment overwhelmed me, and I jumped and jumped around my room. However, the next day, Monday, I went to work, and Mr.

Slamet asked me to come to his office.

"He looked at me and said, 'Edward, we have opened a new department. You will be transferred there so that you can observe the Sabbath.' I was so happy; but my happiness was more than doubled, because in this new department I worked shorter hours, allowing me more time to study the Bible with the help of the *Bible Correspondence Course*. However, more challenges were to follow.

More challenges

"Family members were dismayed that I had left my previous church. My brother reported me to my dad, who lived far away in North Sumatra, and asked him to come to Palembang in South Sumatra. Upon my dad's arrival, my brother fetched me at my rented home and asked me to explain my decision to observe the Sabbath to Dad. My brother was upset and asked many questions.

"After a while he retorted, 'I will kill you if you join this church.' He was furious and banged the table. He picked up three items of fruit off the table and in a rage forcibly threw them directly at me. But the objects flew in different and opposite directions totally missing me. It was Friday around 4 p.m., so I decided this was a good time to leave and prepare for the coming Sabbath at my rented home."

More trials were to follow when Edward later lost his job and, for a time, was homeless. However, a friend helped him obtain employment as a translator in the main office of

a garment factory in Bandung, the capital of West Java. He was the only employee in the company who did not work on the Sabbath. Edward explained further:

"As a result, some of the employees became jealous, and so I was transferred to an inferior department doing more menial work. However, about a year later, I was transferred back to the main office because they required a translator. I worked there for about five years before I got a private tuition job teaching English. Later, I was employed by a Japanese company in Batam."

It was there that Edward met and later married his wife, Lilik. He worked there for a further five years and then moved to where they are presently living in Batam. He was baptized in 1992, and Lilik was baptized in 2003.

Presently, Edward, with help and support from Lilik, runs a private school teaching English. They have a facility attached to their house that is properly set up for almost daily instruction. This project is being blessed and supplies the family with sufficient income to provide for their daily needs. On most holy days, and as other opportunities come along, the family will make the ferry trip to Singapore in order to attend services and fellowship with the brethren there. They continue to remain steadfast and loyal to God and His way of life. ☺@

André van Belkum is the pastor of the Christchurch and Hamilton, New Zealand, congregations.

Attention: High School Graduates!

Congratulations! We would like to feature the 2012 high school graduates in the July *One Accord*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by **June 15**.

1. Graduate's name.
2. Parents' names.
3. Congregation and pastor's name.
4. High school accomplishments.
5. Church activities/hobbies/interests.
6. Plans after graduation.

Also include your phone number or email address (we may use it to confirm spellings, etc.). Please give the bio and a recent photo (conforming to biblical standards of dress and hair length) of the graduate to your congregation's reporter.

We do reserve the right to edit for clarity and a 200-word maximum length. Thanks!



Baptism and a New Life

Jeremiah Johnson recounts his experience getting baptized into God's Church and shares his newfound sense of purpose and determination in his life.

by Jeremiah Johnson

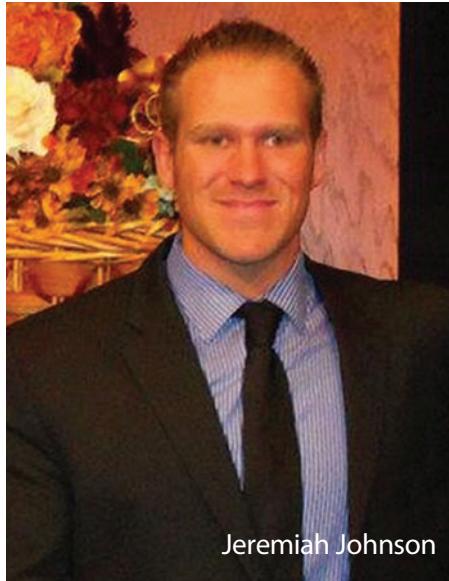
On Wednesday, April 4, I woke as usual, but this wasn't going to be just any other day. This was to be the most important day of my life.

At approximately 6:30 that evening I met my father and special friends Tom and Sam Schultz at my pastor Bruce Gore's house. We said a prayer there before driving to Bogan Park in Buford, Georgia. There we met up with my "mom," Suzanne Temple, and another close friend, Keith Butler. I remember being nervous and excited at the

same time. We all walked into the pool area where I was to be baptized. After I was immersed, we drove back to the Gores' home for the laying on of hands. We then had an evening of good conversation and fellowship. Suzanne and Keith had brought a bottle of my favorite Moscato wine, and we all had a toast.

That was one night I will always remember, as it marked a truly special beginning for me. I am very happy that I had my father and close friends with me for the experience.

The next day I was preparing for my first Passover, and I began to understand the pre-Passover trials I had heard about all my life. I started the day at work by having a metal rack filled with plants dumped on me from a forklift. Then a block dropped on my right hand, causing a good-sized bruise and blister to form. Later on, I was walking toward the back



Jeremiah Johnson

of the store, and I noticed something long and black lying on the ground. I thought it was a tire tread, so I walked over to pick it up. As I bent over and reached out to pick it up, it moved! This piece of tire tread ended up being a 5- to 6-foot snake! Snakes are something I do not mess with! Needless to say, I've had my first "snake experience" of the South, and I sure hope it will be my last for a long time.

That evening, I drove to Jefferson, Georgia, where Tom Schultz would be conducting his very first Passover service. We both shared a sense of being nervous that night. I remember the Passover service as both an inspiring and very sobering experience.

For the holy day we drove to Macon, Georgia, for services. This was a very special time for me, as it not only made me think about what that week pictured, but what my life now pictured. I had worked to put sin out of my life by removing



Bruce Gore baptizes Jeremiah Johnson (photo by Sam Schultz)

the physical leavening from my house and car, but now I would also be committed to God's way of life and putting sin out of my life forever. I will always remember my first Passover and First Day of Unleavened Bread because of the special people in my life who welcomed me into God's family. I was overtaken with hugs from people I knew and people I didn't know yet. A lady from the Jefferson congregation had also made me a dish of unleavened breads for the week.

Moving to Georgia from Wisconsin has done wonders for me. It has given me a chance to look at my past experiences, what I want to do to change my lifestyle and how I will live in the future. It has given me a perfect chance to begin the process of self-examination and how I can make necessary changes. The people here have been very supportive and have offered both guidance and motivation. ☺☺

What Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Tells About Your Future



Photo: Clipart.com

An inspired dream
2,600 years ago
laid out the course
of history from
then onwards. This
foundational Bible
prophecy especially
gives us hope for
the troubled time
just ahead of us.

by Mike Bennett

Originally posted on the "News and Prophecy Blog" April 20, 2012

You could say a lot of things about the most powerful leader in the world six centuries before Christ. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was arrogant, hot-tempered, extremely powerful and used to getting his own way. But no one would have accused him of being a prophet of the God of Israel.

Yet the Bible records that one of God's most foundational prophecies was given to this pagan king in a dream.

Nebuchadnezzar's challenge

The dream was so vivid and troubling that King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know right away what it meant. He called all his pagan wise men together and told them to give him the dream's meaning on threat of death. He also offered great rewards

to whoever gave the meaning, but he was astute enough to realize that they would be tempted to just make something up. To be sure they were giving him the real meaning, he said they also had to tell him what he had dreamed.

“The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh’” (Daniel 2:10-11).

King Nebuchadnezzar was not used to hearing “no,” and he didn’t care what other kings might have done. He “gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon” (verse 12).

Daniel in danger

Daniel and his three friends, captives from Judah, apparently hadn’t been called to give an answer, but the king’s decree still demanded their death!

Daniel and his friends sought God’s mercy, and God revealed the secret to Daniel in a dream. Daniel’s prayer of thanksgiving is a beautiful masterpiece of pure praise and an example for us all. Please take time to read it in Daniel 2:20-23.

Daniel faces the king

The king asked if Daniel could tell him the dream and its meaning. Daniel didn’t take the credit. In fact, he agreed with the wise men who had said no man could do this.

“But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days” (verse 28). These latter days are also referred to as the last days, the end of the age and the time of Jesus Christ’s second coming (2 Timothy 3:1; Matthew 24:3). Christ’s return to save humanity from self-destruction will come after the Great Tribulation, heavenly signs and the Day of the Lord (Matthew 24:21-22, 29; Joel 2:30-31).

All of these events are major themes of prophecies throughout the Bible, and all point to a time just ahead of us now in human history.

The beauty of the prophecy in Daniel 2 is that it gives an overview of a succession of empires that would rule on the earth and ends with a striking message of real hope—a powerful promise for us today.

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image

After describing the huge statue Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, from its golden head to its iron and clay feet,

As cruel and ruthless as Nebuchadnezzar was, things would only get worse till the end. But thankfully the end of man’s misrule will signal the beginning of a wonderful new world.

Daniel gave the dream’s meaning.

The statue’s golden head represented Nebuchadnezzar himself (verse 38).

The chest and arms of silver represented the next major empire to come on the scene after the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians.

The belly and thighs of bronze we know from history as the Greco-Macedonian Empire.

The legs of iron and feet partly of iron and clay represent the Roman Empire and its successive revivals all the way to the return of Christ. The 10 toes of iron and clay show that the last revival of this European superpower will be “partly strong and partly fragile” (Daniel 2:42).

Hope for our future

It’s interesting to consider that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom was likely the best of these four world-ruling empires, since God says the succeeding kingdom was “inferior to yours” (verse 39) and the value of the metals decreases further down the statue. The implication is that, as cruel and ruthless as Nebuchadnezzar was, things would only get worse till the end.

But thankfully the end of man’s misrule will signal the beginning of a wonderful new world.

“And in the days of these kings [the 10 kings represented by the 10 toes; these are also described in Revelation 17:12-14] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (verse 44).

For more about the wonderful, peaceful Kingdom of God that will be established at Jesus Christ’s return, see our beautifully illustrated booklet *The Mystery of the Kingdom*. ☺☺

Mike Bennett is a writer and editor for the Church of God, a Worldwide Association. He and his wife, Becky, attend the Cincinnati/Dayton, Ohio, congregation.

Discernment

A Vital Key to Survival

by Richard Pinelli

Member of the Ministerial Board of Directors

MANY YEARS AGO DRUG DEALERS WORKING THE border between Mexico and the United States found they could fly countless tons of marijuana across the border with low-flying light aircraft. Flying at almost ground level, they were able to cruise under the watchful, but unsophisticated eyes of radar.

Jesus Christ in the Olivet Prophecy talked about the time of the end when false Christs and false prophets would arise showing great signs and wonders and thereby deceive many, “if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24, 11).

How is your radar? How are you doing in discerning the signs and times and the cunning and crafty, deceitful plottings of the devil and his human henchmen? These are critically important questions because the devil hates the Church of God. His avowed purpose is to destroy the holy seed.

In the beginning, God created man in His image with the intent to reproduce Himself after His own kind. In the Garden of Eden the devil entered the scene and engaged humanity in the battle of the ages—the battle of light versus darkness. God told Satan that He would put enmity (hostility) between the spiritual serpent and the woman and between his seed (the deceived world) and her Seed (Jesus). Genesis 3:15 outlines the first Messianic prophecy, the promise that Christ will ultimately triumph over Satan via the crucifixion (bruised heel).

We see in Revelation 12 the ongoing battle between the devil and God’s people. Though Satan has been able to bruise the heel of Christ via setting up His crucifixion, Christ is alive and will come again to bruise Satan’s head by taking away his authority. This passage shows the attack on the seed of Israel as His chosen nation, then on Jesus Christ and, finally, on the spiritual body called the Church. The Church has needed the protection of Christ through the many eras of its existence.

The devil has used two basic methods of attack: first, through the open hostilities of society and governments toward those who believe the truth and, second, through internally

dividing and conquering. He sows discord, variance, strife, anger, hatred, heresies, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions and factions.

The successfulness of the deceiver

Why is he so successful? Job 32:8 tells us, “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (King James Version). There is simply a vast difference between the human mind and animal brain. The difference is the spirit in man. Spirit is not matter, but for convenience let’s call it the “human spirit.” This spirit in man imparts the power of intellect to the physical human brain. It gives us mind power, and it makes it possible for us to have a personal relationship with God. This spirit was part of God’s original creation in humanity.

But man was not complete. God had something greater in store—we needed the addition of God’s Spirit to unite with man’s spirit. When a human receives the Holy Spirit of God, the very spirit and mind of the immortal God is injected into him. According to 1 Corinthians 2:9-12, the natural man is able to comprehend what is within and around through a self-awareness that is made possible by the human spirit. But the natural man with just this one spirit is limited. Only when the Holy Spirit enters, combining with the human spirit, can a person come to really comprehend the things that are spiritual.

So how does Satan the devil work on the human mind? The old radio analogy remains one of the best ways to explain. In Ephesians 2:2 he is called the prince of the power of the air, working in the minds of people. If your mind, with this human spirit, is set on a certain wavelength, the broadcaster’s message comes through clearly. While God is broadcasting His truth, the devil is broadcasting contradictions. Satan broadcasts not in words, sound or pictures, but in attitudes, moods and impulses. He moves on the human spirit within people to stir up attitudes of envy, jealousy, resentment, impatience, anger, bitterness and strife.

Without God’s Spirit, over time the human spirit becomes

tuned to Satan's wavelength. Conversion, however, adds the special dimension of the Holy Spirit, and that begins to move us away from being tuned to Satan's wavelength to being tuned to God's.

While conversion comes upon receiving God's Holy Spirit, it also engages us in a process. Learning to sharpen our focus or fine-tune this process sometimes takes years.

We must move from obsolete and outdated radar—like that which missed the low-flying aircraft smuggling marijuana—to a highly sensitive and finely tuned radar that catches every nuance and movement of this deceiver.

Finely tuned radar

One of our defenses is discernment, a gift of God that comes through repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God "because they are spiritually discerned" (verse 14). Spiritual discernment gives us the ability to judge all things as to their true value. The Greek word for "discernment" in verse 14, *anakrino*, is the same Greek word in verse 15 for "judges"—"But he who is spiritual judges all things."

Even babes in Christ will have some spiritual discernment, but that finely tuned discernment is something we must develop over time. The book of Proverbs tells us that a man will increase learning and attain to wise counsel (Proverbs 1:5). Our senses must be "exercised to discern both good and evil," Paul says in Hebrews 5:13-14. We have to use this gift! Solomon admonishes us to "incline your ear to wisdom,

and apply your heart to understanding: yes, if you *cry out for discernment*, and lift up your voice for understanding" (Proverbs 2:2-3, emphasis added).

The apostle John tells us to "test the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). These scriptures strongly show that there should be power in the Church for detecting imposters.

Discerning the true spirit and cause of a matter, rather than just witnessing an effect, will become paramount at the time of the end when "evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving

Discerning the true spirit and cause of a matter, rather than just witnessing an effect, will become paramount at the time of the end.

and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

In the prophecy of Christ in Isaiah 11:1-3, the King James Version says that He was of "quick understanding" or, as the margin indicates in the literal Hebrew, "scent or smell." Did you ever hear a person say, "I smell a rat" or "There is something wrong here"? Christ used this divine help when He said in Matthew 16:21-23, "Get behind Me, Satan" when He saw how Peter, through weakness, had received Satan's broadcast. He also said to His disciples in Luke 9:51-56, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are" when they misused their newfound power. It is so important that we learn to be quick to discern, just as He was.

The conclusion to the matter is that we need to sharpen our discernment radar to catch those low-flying spiritual aircraft. Ask God and Christ to give you the ability to spiritually discern. Ask to have your senses exercised to discern good and evil and to have the eyes of your understanding enlightened as you continually resist the adversary and his henchmen. ☺☺

Ox Roast and White-Water Rafting Weekend

Parkersburg, West Virginia
June 30-July 1, 2012

arharper356@yahoo.com
304-679-2066

Join us for the annual Ox Roast and White-Water Rafting Weekend!

On Saturday, June 30, we will have church services at the Harper Farm, outside of Parkersburg, West Virginia. Afterwards, we will have a meal that will prove to be quite an event. Our main course will be ox roast, which will be served alongside various side dishes, desserts and drinks. The cost for the meal is \$5 per person.

On Sunday, July 1, we will take a half-day white-water rafting trip down the New River in beautiful West Virginia. The cost for the weekend is \$65. This includes all of the events for Saturday, breakfast Sunday morning, a T-shirt, a snack for after rafting and hamburgers and hot dogs back at the Harper Farm. The rafting company has given us a special deal. For more information, please contact Craig or Ali Harper.

We welcome you to join in on this fun fellowship weekend!



Question: What happens to the person who, after counting the cost, decides that the path is too hard to follow and does not get baptized? What becomes of him after this life? Is he condemned for rejecting the calling, or is that just for those who were baptized and then turned away? If it's the former, then it seems to me as if when you're called, your only option is to accept AND succeed. But in that case, there would be no point in counting the cost, would there?

by Cecil Maranville, manager of the Personal Correspondence Department

Answer: You will find the answer by looking into why Christ gave this advice to count the cost. The principal scripture used on this topic is Luke 14:25-35. Another scripture that signals the serious commitment required of a Christian is "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Perhaps the most powerful language Christ used is in John 6:25-66. This exchange was so frank that many people abruptly stopped following Him from that point (John 6:66).

From one perspective, Christ's approach seems illogical, because it seems He was not encouraging people to join Him! Clearly, Christ did not want just numbers, and herein lies the point. He wanted all who became disciples (members of the Church of God) to succeed, to make it through to the end. Everyone God called needed to know what lay ahead and to be prepared.

By analogy, failing to counsel them to count the cost would be like taking a group of average citizens and sending them on a military mission meant for a U.S. Navy SEAL team. (Remember, Christ used a military analogy, Luke 14:31-32.) Without proper training, the recruits would not likely even survive such a mission, much less accomplish their objective. God wants all to achieve their potential, and He is working to that end.

"Count the cost" is not the only counsel Christ gave. He also gave a promise to those who did commit: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). *The NKJV Study Bible* comments: "This quotation is one of the most emphatic statements in the NT. In Greek it contains two double negatives, similar to saying in English, *'I will never, ever, ever forsake you.'* Jesus uses the same technique to express the certainty of eternal life for believers (see John 10:28)" (comments on Hebrews 13:5, emphasis added).

You have heard the military saying "Never leave a man behind!" Similarly, the Father and the Son are 100 percent committed to those who respond to the calling of God. Jesus made a similar promise at the end of Matthew 28:18-20, saying He would never stop being with Church members at any time throughout the ages. He is the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), consistently leading the way.

Some people might say "No" after counting the cost, because they do not fully grasp the big picture. That might mean

God wants all to achieve their potential, and He is working to that end.

God has not fully called them yet. In other words, having *some* spiritual understanding does not necessarily mean that someone is called to salvation at that time. He accepts only those who can make it across the finish line at this time. It is not God's intention to hastily reject someone who hesitates to commit immediately.

Yes, everyone must agree to the commitment God requires. Everyone must receive the Holy Spirit. Everyone must live the Christian way of life successfully. The consequence of not doing so is to perish, as you implied. But the fuller picture given in the above scriptures shows there is much more to the answer. ☺@

The Personal Correspondence Department responds to questions from people who contact the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, about the Bible and Christian living issues, as well as general inquiries about COGWA.

Birmingham Celebrates 50th Year

Frank Schrock, Eddie Travis, Bruce Gore, Marcia Holliday Hendrix and Larry Hendrix (photo by Charles Gilmer)



On Feb. 25, 2012, the Birmingham, Alabama, congregation held a special celebration in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Church of God in Birmingham. Gerald Waterhouse started the church here on Feb. 24, 1962, with services held at the historic Redmont Hotel in downtown Birmingham.

Our guest speaker was Bruce Gore, pastor of the Atlanta, Jefferson and Macon, Georgia, congregations. Among those celebrating were five attendees of the first Sabbath service in 1962: Mr. Gore, Frank Schrock, Eddie Travis, Marcia Holliday Hendrix and Larry Hendrix. A potluck and square dance followed services.

Jerry Johnsey

Deep Bonds Form at Young Adults' Weekend in Gatlinburg

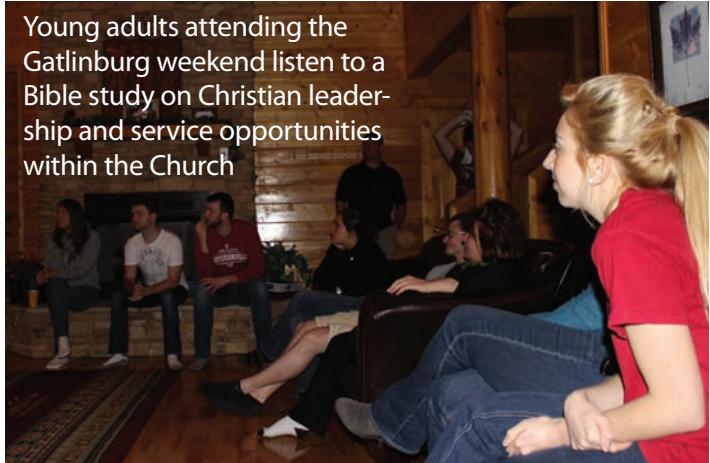
Sharing a mountaintop cabin outside Gatlinburg, Tennessee, March 23 to 25, over 20 young adults from Louisville, Kentucky, and Nashville, Tennessee, took part in a weekend retreat filled with fellowship, Bible study and fun and came away having experienced many laughs and having developed deeper bonds within the Church.

On the Sabbath Mark Winner, pastor of both congregations, led a Bible study on Christian leadership and the opportunities young adults have to serve in the Church. Mr. Winner challenged the young adults to embrace every opportunity to help and serve where needed in the congregations. In the afternoon, Mr. Winner facilitated a discussion on a variety of biblical questions.

Following the Sabbath, a round of "Minute to Win It" challenges started off an eventful evening. The attendees took advantage of the cabin's game room as well as the picturesque views overlooking the Smoky Mountains. Lively rounds of Bible Taboo and Monopoly Deal completed the night.

On Sunday, some ventured into Gatlinburg to explore the aquarium and the main tourist area before heading home.

Young adults attending the Gatlinburg weekend listen to a Bible study on Christian leadership and service opportunities within the Church



The time spent focused on God's way of life and the incredible opportunities afforded to those God has called was appreciated by all.

Jason and Emily Hyde

Tonbridge Congregation Celebrates Night to Be Much Observed Together

The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread always bring a time of excitement. Our thoughts lead to a time when we as God's children will be at one with our Creator.

This year in Tonbridge, United Kingdom, we felt the ripples of excitement among the brethren as we met together on those special feast days.

At the Night to Be Much Observed combined dinner, the food prepared was more than we could possibly eat, and the flowers were simply delightful.

As our pastor, Eddie Johnson, put it, "It truly is a blessing, coming out of Egypt."

Liz Serfontein

St. Louis Ladies Welcome Mary Pinelli With Cake and Icebreaker Reception

The women of the St. Louis, Missouri, congregation welcomed their new minister's wife with a ladies' reception on Feb. 25.

Mary Pinelli was warmly greeted with a pink, rose-covered cake and chocolate-covered strawberries. Before partaking of these expertly created homemade desserts, the ladies participated in an icebreaker game that allowed Mrs. Pinelli an opportunity to become better acquainted with each of them. Participants submitted a little-known fact about themselves to be added to an anonymous list. The game required the ladies to guess who belonged with which fact.

In the course of the game, even longtime friends learned new and interesting stories about each other. Facts ranged from attending elementary school in a one-room schoolhouse to participating in a dig in Israel to single-handedly fending off



Mary Pinelli (right) surveys her welcome cakes made by Sherrie Buchanan (left)

an attack by a Portuguese man-of-war. As this participant phrased it, "I survived. The jellyfish did not."

The ladies enjoyed getting to know each other and their minister's wife better, but they left the men exceedingly hungry for some of the delicious refreshments.

Lauren Wannenwetsch

Fort Worth Worker Bees Develop Hearts of Service



The preteen Fort Worth worker bees present unleavened bread feast baskets to members in the congregation

On March 31, 2012, the Fort Worth Worker Bees decorated and filled 21 baskets with unleavened bread products made by several of our ladies. The Worker Bees then gave the baskets to senior citizens, those unable to make it to services every week, newcomers, etc.

The Worker Bees are Fort Worth's preteen service group who engage in special service activities throughout the year. They are directed by Joyce Renslow.

Michelle Rickard

Nashville Goes Medieval



Lords, ladies and court jesters take over the Nashville congregation (photo by Angie Duncan)

"Hear ye! Hear ye! The Royal Household of God requests your presence at an All-Kingdom Celebration!"

On Saturday night, March 3, 2012, the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation hosted a potluck dinner followed by an evening of children's games. Brethren arrived wearing royal costumes for princesses, knights, lords, ladies and court jesters.

The activities consisted of ring jousting, crown decorating, scavenger hunting, face painting and musical games. Participants also enjoyed themed snacks. Mark Winner, pastor in Nashville, made an appearance as King David and presented the children with a variety of Bible-themed trivia. Fun was had by those of all ages!

Robin Beech

Dallas Christian Leadership Workshop Concludes Year

Surrounded by an extensive biblical art collection and rare Bible manuscripts, the Dallas, Texas, Men's Christian Leadership Workshop held its last meeting of the season, March 11, 2012, at the Biblical Arts Center in Dallas. Over 30 men from the local congregation gathered for the special meeting.

The Dallas Christian Leadership Workshop (CLW) provides men the opportunity to discuss world news and prophecy, practice speeches and sermonettes, as well as gain instruction on Christian leadership principles.

Gathering in the rotunda, the men first encountered exquisite sculptures and Vladimir Gorsky's world-famous Tapestry of the Centuries, a monumental canvas comprised of the people and events that shaped world history, from the birth of Jesus Christ through the year 1999.

The men were then assigned to groups and tasked to collaborate on answers to challenging questions for the upcoming discussion session. The CLW swung into full gear, tackling issues such as devising a gospel dissemination plan for the developing world and ideas for upholding the Church's great commission with the challenges of an aging ministry.

Later Justin Glasgow gave an excellent explanation of the often confusing scriptures in Deuteronomy 5 regarding biblical art. After a catered breakfast, George Townsend provided a sermonette on becoming a son of Abraham. Another highlight was hearing an unscripted perspective of biblical art from guest Gene Hogberg, who provided the men with a narrative on Herbert Armstrong's approach to biblical art



The CLW group learns about biblical art and manuscripts during a docent-led tour

along with the work of the brilliant Basil Wolverton that so many members remember fondly.

The CLW meeting ended with a docent-led tour of the biblical arts exhibits, most notably, the collection of antique Bibles from the collection of the esteemed Bible scholar, Charles Ryrie, the author of *The Ryrie Study Bible*, one of the best-selling study Bibles in America.

The CLW then presented a bottle of fine wine to pastor Doug Horchak, who now works as the operation manager of Ministerial Services, to thank him for his guidance and participation in the CLW program. Everyone is looking forward to Christian Leadership Workshop next year!

Cliff Demarest

Rodeo Roundup Raises Funds for Boys and Girls Harbor

On the beautiful Sabbath evening of March 24, 2012, 165 energetic members from all over the state of Texas gathered for the first Houston Rodeo Roundup Dinner and Dance at East Richey Gardens north of Houston.

The hall was decorated with old-timey ranch decor that included two enormous "wanted" posters of our two "infamous" pastors, Larry Salyer and Jim Servidio (complete with old-fashioned mustaches and cowboy garb). Hand-painted wine bottles made by Shirley Scott adorned each table.

Brethren enjoyed a delicious catered meal of barbecue chicken and all the fixings. Dessert, consisting of brownies, cookies, bars, muffins, cupcakes and cake balls, disappeared very rapidly after dinner.

Music was provided by Arnold Mendez Jr. and Wylie Marshall. These guys provided a big variety of country and other contemporary music, including some for line dancing, which was a big hit.

Mark Croft provided a photo booth where eager subjects

donned cowboy attire (complete with mustaches, bandanas, glasses, 10-gallon hats, clown noses, etc.).

The dancing was interrupted briefly by a cakewalk. Twenty-two homemade cakes and dessert bouquets found new owners. Hungry winners took their trophies home to enjoy later. Proceeds from the cakewalk will prime the pump for our next combined social.

Donations were accepted for the Boys and Girls Harbor of Clear Lake. This organization provides care for children and families in crisis. Many needed items were delivered to the home the following week.

It is not often that the Houston South and North members are able to get together other than on weekly Sabbaths and annual holy days. Brethren could be found catching up on old times, making sure to capture the moment with a camera's flash and a big hug. We look forward to our next opportunity to do the same.

Susan Scott Smith

Mexico City Brethren Visit Winery in Tequisquiapan



Brethren from Mexico City at the Freixenet Wine Cellar

On Sunday, April 21, 2012, a group of 22 brethren of the Mexico City, Mexico, congregation visited Tequisquiapan in the state of Querétaro, about two hours from the capital. This place is known for its peaceful landscape, beautiful mountains and warm climate. With perfect conditions for grape cultivation, the region is also known for its vineyards.

Around midday, our group arrived at Cava de Freixenet (Freixenet Wine Cellar), a region at an altitude of 2,000 meters (6,562 feet) above sea level, which produces 1,900,000 bottles of mainly sparkling wine and table wine per year.

We took a tour of the winery and descended 25 meters (82 feet) underground to the wine cellar, where the temperature varies from 16 to 18 degrees Celsius (61 to 64 degrees Fahrenheit). This winery, which is owned by a Spanish company, had its first vintage in the country in 1988, and it has been providing these guided tours throughout the year to compensate for "its apparent minor production."

During our visit to Freixenet—the word has a Catalonian origin—we had the opportunity to become acquainted with the production process of different types of grapes cultivated in the area and the time that it takes until the final product is obtained.

At the end of our educational visit at the winery, we went to the health resort called Termas del Rey (Hot Springs of the King). This health resort is located in the township of Tequisquiapan, Querétaro, and it is a good place for camping, swimming—it has several swimming pools—enjoying the water toboggans, roasting meat and playing on its spacious green areas.

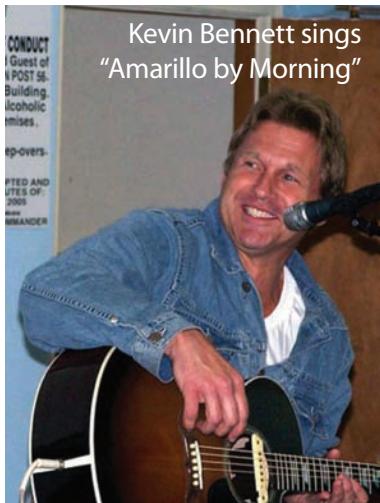
We definitely enjoyed a day full of joy, contentment, Christian fellowship and much delicious food. All in all, it was an excellent time, and we were witnesses of God's protection and blessings.

Jorge Ivan Garduño
Translated by Pablo Dimakis

Brethren of All Ages Delight in Jefferson Music Festival

A new tradition began on Saturday night, Jan 14, 2012, in the Jefferson, Georgia, congregation.

When the Sabbath ended and the delicious potluck dinner was finished, out came the guitars, an electric keyboard and sound equipment for the first annual Jefferson Music Fest. And what followed was beautiful music and voices blending together for a musical feast.



Kevin Bennett sings
"Amarillo by Morning"



Avery Bennett and
Maria Blencowe sing
"The Littlest Worm"

The evening was organized and hosted by Tim Groves and Kevin Bennett, who also emceed the event. Many brethren—aged 83 down to 8—took their place on stage to delight the audience. Our little children danced in the back of the hall, and everyone enjoyed the sing-along sessions. The hall was filled with laughter and enjoyment from being together and just having fun.

Performances covered a wide variety of music from spiritual songs like "Jesus Christ Has Come" by Tim Groves and "How Great Thou Art" sung by Brad Cohron to country songs like "Amarillo by Morning" sung by Kevin Bennett. Then there were the fun, silly songs like "The Littlest Worm," led by Avery Bennett and Maria Blencowe with all the children singing along. Siblings Elizabeth and Sam Schultz entertained us with "The Chic-Fil-A Song," which was so funny that it became one of the favorites of the evening.

Many other talented brethren also added their beautiful voices and music to the enjoyment of the evening, and there was much discussion about having this event every year!

Donna Quintan

Baptisms



**Kevin
Riddleman**



Jody Sproul



Lynn Alleman

West Virginia Welcomes Three New Members

Three baptisms were conducted recently in the Parkersburg and Morgantown, West Virginia, areas. Lynn Alleman was baptized on March 25, 2012. Kevin Riddleman was baptized on March 28, 2012. Jody Sproul was baptized on March 9, 2012. The baptism tank that was recently purchased will be put to good use.

Bill Jahns

Two Baptized in Barbados

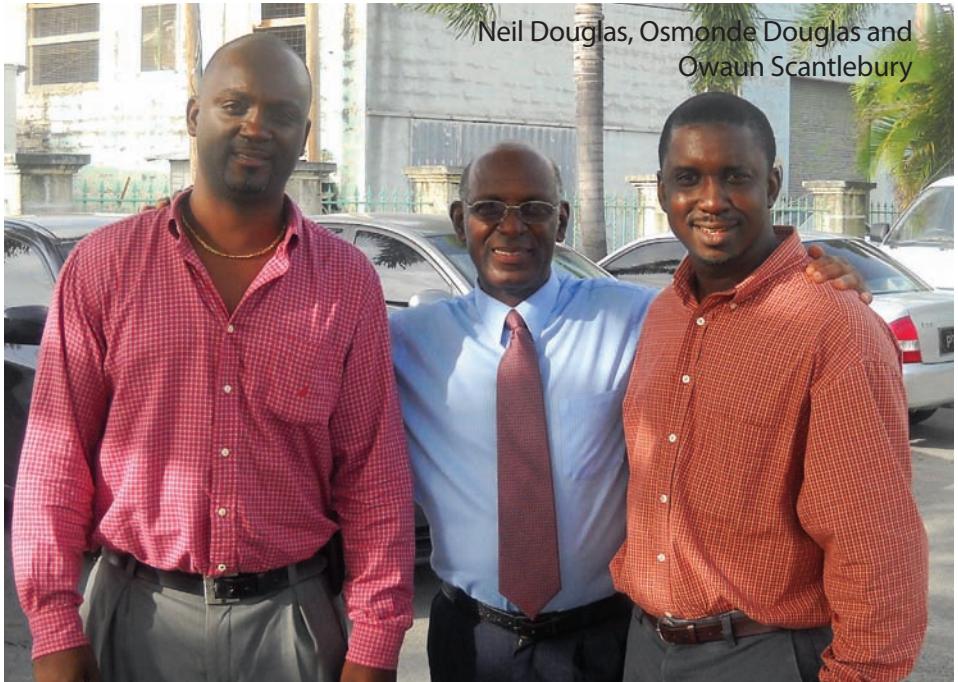
The Bridgetown, Barbados, congregation expanded as two of its attendees became official members.

On April 18, Karl Andrew Owaun Scantlebury was baptized, followed a week later by his relative, Neil Anton Douglas.

Neil is the son of Osmonde Douglas, who serves as elder in Barbados.

Both Owaun and Neil were counseled by Arnold Hampton, who granted Mr. Douglas permission to perform the baptismal ceremonies.

Osmonde Douglas



Neil Douglas, Osmonde Douglas and Owaun Scantlebury

First Baptism for COGWA Congregation in Arkansas

March 31, 2012, marked the first baptism in the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, in Mena, Arkansas. A total of 24 were in attendance when David Earl Williams of Nashville, Arkansas, was baptized. Included in the group were David's wife, Jo, and his daughter, Tina. After the ceremony, the brethren shared fellowship and refreshments.

Martha White

St. Kitts Member Marks 25 Years in the Church

Sheryl O'Loughlin of the St. Kitts congregation celebrated her 25th anniversary in God's Church. She was baptized on March 15, 1987, by Stan Bass. The entire St. Kitts congregation acknowledges Ms. O'Loughlin's commitment, and we encourage her growing into the saint God would have her to be.

Dameon Lawrence

Announcements



Makayla Kathryn
Zimmerman

Nate Zimmerman of the Cincinnati/Dayton, Ohio, congregation and his wife, Joanna, are happy to announce the birth of their third daughter, Makayla Kathryn Zimmerman. She was born Oct. 5, 2011, weighing 7 pounds 12 ounces and measured 20.5 inches long. Her 5-year-old twin sisters, Alexis and Kylie, along with her Grandmama Jan Zimmerman, Aunt Annie and Uncle Zacky were very excited to welcome another girl to the family.



Gareth and Elizabeth
Katelynn Nelte

Michael, Kirsten and big brother Gareth Nelte, of the Seattle, Washington, congregation, are thrilled to announce the birth of Elizabeth Katelynn Nelte. She was born on Nov. 2, 2011, at exactly 10 p.m., weighing 8 pounds and 7 ounces. She is already very long/tall, probably because her brother kept praying that she would be "as big as she could be."

Births



Simón Antonio Lagos Jara

Simón Antonio Lagos Jara was born on Feb. 15, 2012, at 9:30 a.m. He weighed 8 pounds 1 ounce and was 19.2 inches long. His proud parents are Marcelo and Evelyn Lagos of the Temuco, Chile, congregation. Mom and dad, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins are very excited to welcome Simón into their family.



The Corbitt siblings introduce
their new sister, Sarah Kaydence

Brian and Eva Corbitt, of the Portland, Oregon, congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their sixth child, Sarah Kaydence. She was born on March 4, 2012, at 12:34 a.m. She weighed 7 pounds and was 19 inches long. The family is very glad to be blessed with her and thankful for the extra blessing of having a very easy and quick labor.

Anniversaries



Ellis and Annie Lail

After the close of Sabbath services on April 28, the Hickory, North Carolina, congregation held a surprise 50th anniversary celebration for Ellis and Annie Lail. While the members were seated immediately after the closing prayer, the couple of honor was asked to come forward to listen to a performance of "The Wedding Song" (written by Paul Stookey), that was especially prepared for their special event and sung by a local member.

Fifty years ago, they walked down a different aisle together, practically kids themselves, at a small wedding where only their family members were present.

After the song, Mr. and Mrs. Lail were presented with a cake and then gave a heartfelt toast of their 50 years together as a strong marital team. After this emotionally exhilarating and inspiring acknowledgement, the congregation enjoyed finger foods specially prepared for the occasion.

Rebekah Leyden

Paul and Sandi Williams



Paul and Sandi Williams celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary on March 10, 2012.

Residents of Savage, Minnesota, they spend their winter months in Florida, where they are active in the St. Petersburg, Florida, congregation.

Paul is the former owner of Paul Williams Tire, Inc., a company specializing in complete auto repairing. Also, he sold tires on a wholesale basis throughout the state of Minnesota for a period of time.

He and his previous wife, the late Eva Marie, had two daughters who have given them two granddaughters. Sandi is the widow of Joe Kearns and is the mother of two sons.

Charles Haughee

Michael and Sandy Wille celebrated their silver wedding anniversary on April 25, 2012.

Mike was working as a cable splicer in St. Petersburg, Florida, when he suddenly found himself a single father raising three young daughters.

In desperate need of a babysitter, he asked a local elder in his congregation if he could recommend someone. He suggested Sandy Nadeau, a single mother raising two daughters of her own, who lived nearby.

Mike explains that after Sandy kept raising her rates for watching his children, he figured it would be cheaper to just go ahead and marry her. He quips, "Boy, was I wrong!"

They have been living in the Tampa Bay area since 1980. Mike is still employed as a cable splicer with Verizon, and he and Sandy are the grandparents of nine grandchildren. They serve in the St. Petersburg, Florida, congregation.

Charles Haughee

Sandy and Michael Wille



Obituaries



Charles Ailing

Elwanda Head, 75, a loving wife, mother and grandmother, died Wednesday, April 25, 2012.

Mrs. Head was born July 31, 1936, to Isaac and Etta Baker. She and her husband, Alton, have served in God's Church in Fort Worth, Texas, since 1963. Mr. Head was ordained an elder in 1983. Mr. Head, their daughter Carol and her family currently attend the Fort Worth congregation of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association.

Mrs. Head is survived by her husband of 56 years, Alton Head; children, Arland Head and his wife Terry, Carl Head and his wife Neita, Kenneth Head and his wife Denise, and Carol Rodriguez and her husband Jose; brothers, T.L. Baker and Dwight Baker; 15 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Alton Head



Julia Stoute

The Barbados congregation was saddened by the death of one of its staunch and faithful members, Julia Clarissa Odessa Stoute, on April 8, 2012. She was 52 years old.

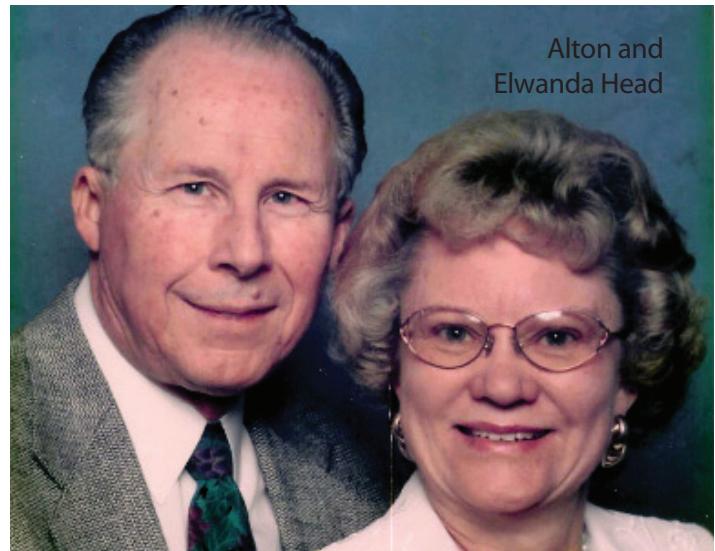
A service of thanksgiving for the life of Julia was held at the Chapel of Coral Ridge Memorial Gardens, Barbados. Miss Stoute was interred on Monday, April 23, 2012, at Coral Ridge Memorial Gardens cemetery.

The Buffalo, New York, congregation lost a long-standing member in April. Charles W. Ailing died April 11, 2012, just shy of his 84th birthday. He had been a member in God's Church for several decades.

Mr. Ailing was born in Buffalo on April 18, 1928, and was an employee of Tonawanda Forge. He is survived by several children and many grandchildren. He always liked to participate in church activities to the best of his abilities and treat brethren to lunch or dinner as often as he could. He served his congregation by helping with setup and takedown at Sabbath services.

He will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

Stephen Koenig



Alton and
Elwanda Head

The funeral was officiated by Osmonde Douglas.

The Barbados brethren expressed condolences to the Stoute family, especially to her daughter Shanika, with the understanding that they can count on the prayerful support of the Church. Julia will be dearly remembered in our hearts as we look forward, as she did, to the blessed resurrection.

Osmonde Douglas

We encourage members to send announcements to be featured in *One Accord*. We feature events in members' lives, including births, engagements, weddings, significant anniversaries (25, 40, 50, 60, etc.), graduations and obituaries. Typically they run between 50 and 100 words; however, we ask that all submissions stay under 250 words. Please submit a high-resolution color photo along with the written copy to your congregation's reporter.