

OneAccord

December 2016



Feast of Tabernacles 2016

Foundation Institute | Portrait of Faith
Semester Update | Gatha Williams

personal from the president

The Feast of Tabernacles Is a Big Deal

This issue of *One Accord* focuses on the recently completed Feast of Tabernacles. We have lots of pictures and lots of stories to share. Members have filled Facebook with pictures from sites around the world—from Sri Lanka to Victoria, British Columbia, to New Braunfels, Texas. This year we held the Feast in more than 40 sites, and from all accounts it was truly one of the best Feasts ever!

Each year, as soon as the Feast is over, we begin planning for the next year. As you read this issue of *One Accord*, we will be meeting with the U.S. Festival coordinators and some of our international coordinators to discuss plans for 2017.

While some sites are already determined (we signed multiple-year contracts), we do have a number of decisions to make for next year. We can't return to Victoria, British Columbia, until 2018, and the facility we used in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, will not be available next year. We are currently working on replacing Victoria with Redmond, Oregon, for one year and replacing Steamboat with Estes Park for one year. These sites have been used in the past and are quite familiar to us. We are also returning to the Big Island in Hawaii next year, where the Feast will be held at the same resort we used in 2015, the Hapuna Beach Resort.

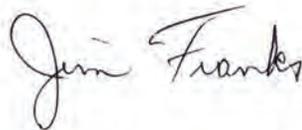
Where will our international sites be next year? This year more than 1,000 members—approximately 20 percent of our entire U.S. attendance—traveled outside the U.S. for the Feast. Our international ministry will solidify the locations of their Feast sites between now and next February. Sites in Britain and Europe, the Caribbean, New Zealand, Fiji, South Africa and Canada, along with others, have been very popular over the years.

So be on the lookout for the list of Feast sites for 2017. It should appear prior to the spring holy days. I am sure there will be something there to pique your interest. Of course, we should never focus so much on the physical location that we forget our reason for attending the Feast.

Each Feast has a physical element and a spiritual element. We see this in Deuteronomy 14:23: “And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.” There is the physical element—“you shall eat before the LORD your God”—and the spiritual element—“that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.”

Keep in mind that the most beautiful and physically pleasing site can become nothing more than a vacation if we are not careful. For many years the Feast of Tabernacles was observed in the piney woods of East Texas. While East Texas is a beautiful area, it cannot compete on a physical level with many of the sites we use today. The potential negative to all these wonderful sites is the possibility of getting so wrapped up in a physical location that we forget the spiritual.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a big deal, requiring a lot of work and cooperation from everyone. But we must never forget, in the midst of all the planning, that it is first and foremost God's Feast. He lets us share in it, but He is the ultimate owner (Leviticus 23:1-2). I hope you enjoy reading the reports from the Feast of Tabernacles 2016!



Jim Franks

President
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One Accord is published monthly, except April and November, online at members.cogwa.org by the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc.

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FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2016 REPORTS

The Feast of Tabernacles 2016 was truly one of the best Feast of Tabernacles we have had in years. With over 40 sites around the world, we were truly an international brotherhood. Overall attendance was the highest since COGWA began. The steady attendance at services throughout the Feast indicated that people were there to worship God and to fellowship with brethren as we learn to fear the Lord our God.

Weather was a threat at several sites, with a hurricane, a very strong Pacific storm and a typhoon menacing several areas. But God once again protected His people, and everyone was able to rejoice and worship Him. Some of those in the south of the Philippines had to have an impromptu Feast site, but all were protected.

The messages this year were very inspiring, according to many members who attended the various sites. This year, once again, we had a significant number of guests from other Church of God fellowships celebrating with us. Many of them expressed appreciation for the messages and the welcome they received from brethren. As you read the reports from around the world that follow, let's all thank our God for a wonderful and inspiring Feast of Tabernacles 2016!

Mike Blackwell

VILLA LA MERCED, ARGENTINA

The Argentina Feast was held at a new site this year. It was a mini United Nations, with 10 different nations represented at the beautiful lakeside location of Villa La Merced. In addition to our Argentinian hosts, brethren came from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Mexico, New



ARGENTINA

Zealand, Paraguay, the United States and Uruguay. Attendance on the first holy day was 207. The highest attendance was 213.

Messages included the Feast sermon given by Church president Jim Franks; a video message from Chile and Argentina pastor Saul Langarica; sermons and split sermons from Argentina minister Alfredo Arboleas, visiting headquarters minister Ralph Levy and Chile deacon Gustavo Mellado; a youth Bible study from Chilean member Pablo Carvajal; and a general Bible study from Dr. Levy.

It's always impressive to see how much work and effort goes in to the success of the Feast of Tabernacles, and this year was no exception. Activities included a welcome night, a Spokesman Club meeting, a family dance and a youth dance, a talent night (with lots of wonderful home-grown talent), and a senior citizens' tea. Many brethren packed special costumes for the talent night and the Monday night welcome. All the hard work paid off and was much appreciated, especially by those visiting Argentina from other countries.

The cabins all included kitchen facilities, and brethren took the opportunity to extend multiple invitations to delicious lunches and dinners in their cabins. Argentinian beef is among the best (and most plentiful) in the world, and several barbecue meals were organized. Others enjoyed the lunches and dinners provided daily by an outside catering service.

The lakeside setting was beautiful, and brethren enjoyed walks around the lake and games of tennis and volleyball. One intrepid group took a hike into the mountain opposite the resort. Several visitors took an afternoon bus tour around the area, stopping at the dramatic



AUSTRALIA

dike outside Cordoba. Yes, it was *una excelente Fiesta*.

Ralph Levy

COFFS HARBOUR, AUSTRALIA

Thirty brethren met in the seaside community of Coffs Harbour for the 2016 Feast. This year the Feast was held at the Opal Cove Resort, allowing us to be together on one site with a short stroll to the conference facilities. Not only did God bless the Feast with glorious weather, the brethren also received a rich banquet of spiritual messages, focusing everyone on our future and the fantastic plan of God for all of mankind.

The Feast activities were once again enthusiastically attended by everyone, making it a close, family-orientated Feast for brethren. All of the visitors were warmly embraced by their new Aussie family, as are all who make the journey to Down Under. We left the Feast feeling reenergized and looking forward to our return in 2017 and the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

David Maczek

ST. PHILIP, BARBADOS

The 2016 Feast in Barbados was indeed a much-needed break from the world. A time to get into the "zone" so that we could focus on what is really important—seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). From the opening night with the beautiful full moon shining over the Atlantic Ocean to the Last Great Day when everyone was saying their good-byes, we experienced a



BARBADOS



BURUNDI

wonderful family atmosphere. One of the older members of the Barbados congregation summed up the relationships at the Feast between the visiting brethren and the locals as “true family.”

The Crane Hotel provided a millennial atmosphere with its Old World charm, incredible natural beauty and beautiful view of the Atlantic Ocean. An overall average of 130 people attended from the United States and Barbados, with a high attendance of 139 people.

Mr. Franks’ sermon topic, “Focus on the Kingdom,” was reinforced by the messages given throughout the Feast. With all of the bad news in the world today, it was refreshing and inspiring to hear about the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. In this dark world, this is the hope that illuminates our lives to help us shine forth in the world as lights.

Activities during the Feast included an island tour, karaoke, a family dance and a boat cruise. At the family dance we were able to experience a “taste of Barbados,” with an assortment of Bajan food that included fish cakes, sugar cakes, bakes, conkies, cou cou and saltfish, topped off with mauby and sorrel to drink.

Ann Hampton

ST. HELIER, JERSEY, BRITISH ISLES

A close-knit, family Feast of Tabernacles was enjoyed in Jersey by about 30 brethren

from the U.K., the U.S., Greece and Jamaica. (The majority of British members were at the French Feast site this year, while others traveled farther afield.)

We were able to download a recording of Mr. Franks’ first holy day sermon, which was played at services on Tuesday and was much appreciated by all. Messages were also given by Will McLoughlin, Dustin Ellison, Andrew Bryan, David King and Festival coordinator Peter Hawkins.

Our choir, organized by Jana Ellison, performed two pieces, and one-third of the adults attending the Festival site participated! Jana Ellison, Mary Peyton and Dustin Peyton also provided inspiring vocal and instrumental performances.

We were able to visit the Jersey War Tunnels. Forced labor dug these tunnels into the rocks to protect German troops during the occupation of the island in World War II. It was a sobering experience.

Feastgoers also explored some of the castles; walked around the Durrell Wildlife Park, a conservation center for endangered animals; and toured the island by coach.

Peter Hawkins

SANTA CRUZ, BOLIVIA

Without a doubt, God’s blessing was on Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. We had great tropical

weather throughout, which is common in the area where Los Cedros Hotel is located. This was the place that hosted all 73 of the happy attendees of this year’s Feast, coming from Peru, Chile and Bolivia.

As we arrived at the hotel, there was no doubt that it was a place chosen by God. The facilities there allow for all kinds of activities, with several pools, courts for almost every sport, beautiful halls, restaurants, and very comfortable rooms and cabins.

It is also amazing to be in the midst of such an exotic natural landscape, with all the characteristic sounds of thousands of birds and insects from the Amazonian jungle.

A beautiful Feast site, however, is only that. To have a beautiful Feast of Tabernacles, is another thing. This was possible thanks to the attitude of all the Church members, who attended all the activities and helped with the organization in a spirit of joy. Everyone was also very receptive to hear the spiritual messages of each day, as well as the special music numbers and attending the feasts prepared for every activity.

Our pastor and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Langarica, arrived at the Feast site in Bolivia in the middle of the Feast. After his arrival, we had a very special moment when Jaime Zagal Jr. was ordained as a deacon. He has been a member of the Church in Bolivia for many years and has been a faithful collaborator in the organization of the activities in Santa Cruz. It was certainly moving to see tears of joy in all the brethren

from Bolivia when they heard this good news.

The Feast ended with high spirits. There were hugs and more than one tear shed as the time came to say good-bye. Everyone left inspired and eager to see each other again at the Feast of Tabernacles 2017.

Alvaro Matamala

MUGINA, BURUNDI

We had 437 people attend the Feast of Tabernacles in the northern province of Cibitoke in Burundi this year. This is an increase of 142 over last year, as two new congregations have formed in the intervening period. The site is located on a church-owned lot where a large church building can host the whole group.

Local church leaders gave sermonettes, and Nathan Mukeshimana, our elder in Burundi, gave sermons. Chorales from each of the five congregations provided special music.

Meals were prepared by women from the congregations in the kitchen building on site. Meals included local staples, rice, beans, and greens, but also potatoes, beef and chicken.

Games were organized for the children, and there were many passionate discussions about the Bible and God’s truth. It was most encouraging this year to be so numerous in observing God’s Feast of Tabernacles.

**Nathan Mukeshimana
and Joel Meeker**



ESÉKA, CAMEROON

Around 30 members, from many parts of Cameroon and the United States, celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the town of Eséka, in southwest Cameroon between Douala and Yaoundé. We gathered at the Ndjigui Mpec Hotel complex where we roomed, shared our meals and held our services.

We very much appreciated the presence of Lee and Robyn Page from the United States. Mr. Page augmented recorded sermons with his live sermons in French, as well as seminars on leadership and preparing sermonettes. During the Feast, we also had live sermonettes from several other men.

Delicious meals were prepared by the ladies under the leadership of Mélanie Nyemeck. During the meals we had spirited discussions about the Bible and the messages we heard. Mr. Meeker's recorded opening night message was much appreciated, as was the Festival sermon by Mr. Franks.

A planned excursion on the fifth day of the Feast had to be canceled because of a terrible train derailment in Eséka. It tragically killed 79 people and injured 550. We kept our focus

on the Feast by singing hymns together to help everyone learn hymns they might not know well.

The Feast this year in Cameroon was a pure and wonderful success thanks to God. All the participants rejoiced and dreamed of the future Kingdom of God to come.

**Armel Ngom
and Joel Meeker**

ORFORD, QUÉBEC, CANADA

This year, for the first time since COGWA has existed, we had a bilingual French-English site in the province of Québec in Canada. The resort area of Orford, near Lake Memphre-Magog was the location. Services were held at the beautiful Manoir des Sables, where the glass wall of the hall offered a beautiful view of the changing colors of autumn foliage. Thirty-eight attendees came from French- and English-speaking areas of Canada, as well as the East Coast of the United States and the Caribbean. Church services were held alternately in French and English with simultaneous translation offered.

David Evans from the headquarters office acted

as Festival coordinator and gave sermons in English, while his wife, Marguerite, translated French sermons into English. Bernard Hongerloot of the French Department gave sermons in French and translated from English to French. Halfway through the Feast, the Hongerloots left to keep the last half of the Feast in France, and Joel and Marjolaine Meeker arrived from the French site to observe the rest of the Feast in Canada.

It was a joy for scattered brethren to spend this Feast together, fellowshiping and sharing meals. Group lunches were organized on the first and last holy days and on the weekly Sabbath. A special welcome reception was hosted by the Evans at their chalet. A final *au revoir* reception was held after the afternoon service on the last day.

This was a wonderful first Feast for French-speaking members in Canada. We are thankful to God for this exciting step forward.

Joel Meeker

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

For the first time in COGWA's history, we ventured

north of the border to Canada for the Feast. Victoria, British Columbia, was the Pacific Northwest site for this year's Feast of Tabernacles. Accessible by air or ferry, the location proved to be very popular and well-received by all. Daily services for 575 were held in the nearby town of Sidney, or, as the locals refer to it, "Sidney by the Sea." Located a short, 25-minute drive from downtown Victoria, the venue proved to be very nice and convenient for all.

While the weather for Victoria was typical—rain or chance of rain every day—it did not dampen the spirits of the members. Many enjoyed any of a number of local attractions. Whether it was world-renowned Butchart Gardens, the distinctly different provincial parliament buildings or high tea at the famous Empress Hotel in downtown Victoria, everyone enjoyed the unique sites that only Victoria could offer.

A number of planned activities gave everyone the opportunity to come together as a family and experience some traditional and some unique activities. A family evening activity consisted of a family dance, game night and ice cream sundaes for all. Two whale-watching tours during the week gave members an



CHILE



CONGO

opportunity to experience all types of sea life in their natural habitat. And the teen activity was a Canadian tradition—ice skating.

We enjoyed excellent sermons, sermonettes and Bible studies. Many remarked about how inspiring and thought-provoking this year’s messages were. With many, many positive comments, the Church of God, a Worldwide Association’s first Feast site in British Columbia, Canada, was a resounding success.

Jon Pinelli

LICAN RAY, CHILE

This year in Chile, 360 people gathered in Lican Ray, which means “rock flower” in the local dialect, Mapudungun. Representatives from six different countries (Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, the United States and Chile) attended the site, which is about 500 miles south of Santiago.

Our regional director and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Walker, spent the first half of the Feast with us and then traveled to Colombia for the second half. Likewise, Mr. Langarica (the local pastor) and his wife

traveled to Bolivia for the second half of the Feast.

Throughout the week we received inspiring messages—equivalent to 2½ months of weekly Sabbaths. For those of you who like numbers, we had six sermonettes, six split sermons, seven sermons and three Bible studies, and we also sang about 50 hymns during services.

Regarding the weather, the forecast had announced rain in Lican Ray for the whole week of the Feast. However, we only had one rainy day and a brief downpour, which allowed all the activities to go on as planned. Clearly, God was in control, and we witnessed His intervention.

Among the activities of the week was a welcome night for our international visitors, with traditional Chilean dances. We also had activities for all the different age groups, like a party for children younger than 12, an activity for our elderly brethren, a meal for the ladies and a Spokesman Club session for men only. Other activities were a sports evening, a family dance and a talent show, with dances from various countries, all well-prepared and quite professional.

Before the beginning of the Last Great Day, and after several counseling sessions, we

also had three baptisms that took place on the northern shore of Calafquén Lake. Johana Silva, Wanda Sáez and Claudia Soto were baptized. The first two are members of the church in Santiago, and the last is a member of the church in Temuco. Finishing the Feast of Tabernacles with such a ceremony was quite moving. While we were about to end another annual cycle of the feasts in the plan of God, these three people were beginning their path in that amazing plan. What a blessing!

According to the comments from all who were in charge of the activities and all who attended this Feast site, the conclusion is that all who participated in this year’s Feast of Tabernacles in Lican Ray were able to experience once again what the Bible says: “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

Jaime Guíñez

EL RODADERO, SANTA MARTA, COLOMBIA

We celebrated the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles in Colombia with an attendance

of 85 people from Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, the United States and Colombia. For several years we have been celebrating the Feast in El Rodadero, Santa Marta. The sermons were focused on the Kingdom of God and the urgency we must have to prepare ourselves to be in that Kingdom.

Those attending enthusiastically and joyfully participated in all of the various activities. This year several members of the Church have been tested on health issues, and the Feast was like an oasis and resting place for them and their relatives, enabling them to renew their strength and be comforted by the greatness and reality of the promises of God.

We enjoyed the great blessing of having four more people added to the Church, a fact that brought about the joy and enthusiasm of all and one more reason to thank God for His merciful intervention.

We know that as the world advances and continues its march, evil will increase, and it will be more difficult for the sons of God to shine in the midst of darkness. We will be tested. But the Feast reaffirms the reality of our Father and His wonderful and incredible promises. We return to our homes with the certainty



that no matter what comes or happens, God will be with us and strengthen and comfort us, as He has promised.

Eduardo Hernandez

KINSHASA, CONGO

The 2016 Feast of Tabernacles in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was observed by 133 people. Services were held in the house compound the Church rents as a meeting hall and official address. Sermons were translated from prerecorded French messages into the local Lingala language by several speakers.

Meals were prepared by the women of the congregation and by caterers. Festival activities included games for the children, singing, dancing and many Bible discussions.

The youth enjoyed a special outing to the Lola Ya Bonobo Sanctuary on the outskirts of Kinshasa. This was the first time most of the young people had ever been able to leave the city limits of the capital or see bonobos, primates that are only found in the Congo.

The members were thankful for God's protection at a time of tension in the city. A canceled presidential election that was to occur in November has led to demonstrations, sometimes violent, and the shooting deaths of protestors.

Regional director Joel Meeker was unable to receive a visa in time to make a planned pre-Feast visit to the Congo.

The Feast occurred peacefully by God's grace. Thanks to brethren in other countries for their faithfulness, allowing the financial support needed to enjoy God's Feasts again this year.

Joel Meeker

MAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

All of the congregations of Côte d'Ivoire gathered in the village of Bololé, near the city of Man in west-central Côte d'Ivoire, to keep the Feast of Tabernacles this year. About 120 people participated. The congregation near Abidjan traveled 360 miles to be able to keep the Feast. Others came 50 miles.

The sermons were translated from prerecorded French messages into the local Yacouba language by local leaders Paul Tia and Séoussié Bleu.

The most appreciated physical activity of the Feast was eating plenty of good food, prepared by the women present. This is not to be taken for granted in these poor regions.

Football (soccer) matches were also organized during the Feast. And there were games for the children to help them rejoice.

This was our best Feast of Tabernacles ever, and we thank our brethren in other countries for the financial support that allowed us to fully enjoy the Feast.

**Séoussié Bleu
and Joel Meeker**

PACIFIC HARBOUR, FIJI

Fifty-five brethren from Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and the United States celebrated the Feast in the newly extended and renovated Pearl Resort on the beachfront of Pacific Harbour on the main Fijian island of Viti Levu. The various activities, which included an unforgettable traditional Fijian *lovo* dinner prepared by the Fijian brethren, an interesting excursion to Fiji's capital city Suva and a trip to the island of Beqa, where a secluded area of the beach had been prepared for the day's activities. These included snorkeling, swimming, a *lovo* luncheon and listening to two excellent Fijian guitarists and vocalists who tirelessly played and sang an array of superbly melodious Fijian songs.

Services were held in a pleasant and ideally suited wedding chapel, situated on the grounds of the resort about 50 meters from the beach. The Feast offered a wonderful opportunity for a number of expatriate Fijian members

living in New Zealand to reacquaint themselves with the Fijian language and culture. A small number of them had not visited the country of their birth in 20-plus years. The special music performed by the Fijians, including the expatriates, was simply superb and very moving.

The primary focus of the sermons reflected on the World to Come and the transitions that are prophesied to usher in this world. The final dinner at the Pearl on the Last Great Day was an appropriate farewell to our Fijian brethren and to all our overseas guests.

Art Verschoor

LA BUSSIÈRE, FRANCE

The fall weather was crisp and cool, but the fellowship was warm as 140 people rejoiced before God in the rural setting of La Bussière, France. The surrounding landscape of large fields dotted by centuries-old farms and villages provided a sense of escape from the hyperconnected, bustling, busy life that many of us know all too well.

Our group had exclusive use of the facility again this year. Therefore, with the exception of the staff members, everyone at the site was there to celebrate the Feast. The site itself resembles a small village of separated accommodations



GHANA



GRENADA

of various sizes. The main building, which houses the hall for services and the restaurant, is located in the center of the “village,” only a short walk from the accommodations.

The brethren who attended the Feast of Tabernacles in La Bussière this year were delighted by the close fellowship, the daily spiritual food of inspiring messages, and the delicious French cuisine offered at the all-inclusive site.

The four-course lunches and dinners, served family-style, each included a delicious cheese course and wine. These meals served as special opportunities for those of all ages to catch up with old friends and make new Feast friends. Other occasions—such as the welcome toast, the Friday afternoon snack offered by the brethren from Martinique, and the good-bye toast—provided precious moments for all in attendance to truly celebrate together as a body of believers.

Other activities during the Feast this year included excursions to two magnificent French chateaux, a guided tour of the medieval fortress of Chauvigny, and an afternoon at Futuroscope, a family amusement park. On Family Day some learned to play pétanque, while others played soccer, tennis, Ping-Pong and other games. The well-attended, talent-filled variety show was followed by a

surprise family dance offered Saturday night by the site staff.

Thanks to the help of a member from Switzerland, that evening several were able to gaze at the stars through the lens of a high-powered telescope. Far from the lights of the city, the night skies of the countryside complemented the excellent weather conditions for stargazing.

La Bussière was a fitting setting for focusing on God’s awesome plan and imagining the peace and tranquility that the whole world will know in the Millennium.

Several parents of small children mentioned that they were delighted to see their children so at ease in the peaceful, family atmosphere of the Feast site. What better way is there to add to the family atmosphere than the presence of a large number of growing families of like mind who are teaching their children about the blessings of God’s way of life?

Daniel Harper

MFENSI AND ELMINA, GHANA

For the Feast of Tabernacles 2016 we were unable to find one location large enough to accommodate all the members that would fit within our budget.

It is always more enjoyable when everyone in the Church in Ghana can be together at

one location for the Feast. However, if an appropriate site does not open up, we divide into two Feast sites, and that’s what was necessary this year.

For the northern site, we used a facility in the town of Mfensi, which sits northwest of Kumasi. In the past we’ve been able to use this as one combined Feast site, and the meeting hall is large enough. But a large portion of the housing we’ve used in the past for the members had been leased out.

Down on the southern coast, we used the church building in Elmina for services. By filling the hall with chairs and using a tent with more chairs just outside the door, we were able to have seating for everyone. We were also able to find enough housing in the area for all the members who traveled in for the Feast.

Our peak combined attendance was 616, and the daily attendance averaged 520. We were blessed with good weather in both locations, and for a welcome change, we were able to hold services in both locations all eight days without a power loss during services! Your brethren in Ghana are grateful for your prayers and support, and they want you to know they pray for you as well, looking forward to meeting you in the Kingdom of God we all celebrated during the Feast!

Tom Clark

ST. GEORGE’S, GRENADA

Thirty-three of your brethren kept God’s Feast of Tabernacles 2016 on the beautiful Spice Isle of Grenada. For eight days God’s people from Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts, Trinidad and the United States enjoyed the warm Caribbean sunshine as we celebrated the Feast together at La Heliconia Apartments and Day Spa. The eight days did race by quickly, but we were all encouraged by the abundance of spiritual food we enjoyed.

Feast coordinator Osmonde Douglas ensured we were well-nourished by setting the stage with his opening night message, reminding us that we are mere pilgrims on this planet but headed for the Kingdom of God. Some of the other inspired messages by God’s servants included “Focus on the Kingdom” by Jim Franks, “Wear the Whole Armor of God” by Steve Grabowski, “Our Obligation to a Sovereign God” by Don Simpson, “Strive to Finish the Work We Are In” by John Foster, and “The Kingdom Does Not Reside in Man’s Heart” by Steve Basant. We also enjoyed listening to the children’s choir.

Activities were varied: Bible seminar, Bible quiz, Bible study, Sabbath classes for the children, a social evening with barbecue, children’s fun



day, bus tour of the island with a trip to the Diamond Chocolate Factory (which had been featured in a *National Geographic* article) and Family Day on the beach. On Family Day, lunch was provided for the brethren, who were treated to Grenada's national dish—"oil down." This comprised breadfruit, coconut milk, salted beef, chicken and fish, together with local seasonings. It was truly "finger lickin' good" to borrow a popular phrase.

A few members were able to join Mr. Douglas in visiting our shut-ins, Eunice Harbin and Ann De Gale, at their separate institutions. They were each presented with flowers and a fruit basket.

As always, on the Last Great Day, one could sense a bit of sadness during and after the final hymn, "God Be With You." Nevertheless, we were indeed encouraged, strengthened and renewed. We can attest that we are able to confront the challenges that lie ahead as we look ahead, Kingdom-bound.

Steve Basant

ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

During the Feast of Tabernacles 2016, the seniors' choir sang a hymn for special music titled "We Are Standing." The lyrics summarize what we, as brethren from many

places—such as Peru, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and the United States—literally experienced.

We truly lived the hymn. We prayed together; we didn't forget to keep the holy days; we were united by faith, standing in truth and, above all else, abiding in our God.

Of course, we, the 525 attendees, enjoyed all of the activities. We had a welcome event for the members from outside the country, a gala evening for the young people, a seniors' breakfast, a children's event, a ladies' tea, a ladies' night for Spokesman Club, and a Family Day. This last event started out rainy, as it had on other occasions. But this didn't stop us. There we were under the rain, thankful to God for all of His blessings. A little bit after the start of the activity, the rain ceased and the sun appeared to share its joy with us—that same joy that God gives to us, as it says in His Word.

It was very special for all of us to receive the Sabbath together by sharing a meal at sunset. We focused on the purpose of the Feast: to learn the ways of God, to listen to His messages, and to be filled with encouragement and strength to continue in our fight. We were also filled with hope through the fitting lyrics of the special music, but mainly due to the effort of the groups who prepared to

present this offering to God long before the Feast.

On the Last Great Day, like always, we had feelings of nostalgia because we had to say good-bye to our family. We returned to our homes, charged with positivity, asking God to accompany everyone on their way back and to give us the opportunity to see each other again at the Feast of Tabernacles 2017 or in His Kingdom upon hearing the final trumpet.

Alberto Mazariegos

LETHEM, GUYANA

Only six persons were present for the opening service on the first day of God's Feast in Guyana. Traveling to the Feast site is always problematic in the interior. Anyway, those who were present shared a lunch, and after the afternoon service we all shared time together in long-awaited fellowship. Some hadn't seen each other since last year.

The days went by quickly and were very hot. The few hours spent in the air-conditioned room were a relief from the searing heat. The sermon messages were much-appreciated and inspiring. All of them, except Mr. Franks' message, were from last year's Feast messages.

We had the usual family gathering with the barbecue as the main ingredient. There

was also a Feast of Tabernacles Bible quiz, with explanations given to the newcomers. It was an eye-opener for them.

The highest attendance was 15, and on the Last Great Day we had 10 persons. I noticed one person silently applauded and kept nodding his head in acceptance at the end of Mr. Foster's "Strive to Finish" message.

All in all, it was a wonderful time to be together with the small group and share in the taste of the coming Kingdom. Much thanks to the assistance rendered by the Church, and all glory and honor to God for a remarkable Feast. Already plans are afoot for next year.

Gary Atkinson

RUNAWAY BAY, JAMAICA

It was nothing short of miraculous that this island was spared the ravages of Hurricane Matthew, allowing the 172 brethren assembled there to celebrate the Feast.

The sermons and sermonettes we heard presented the purpose and goal of the Feast in unique ways, exploring the meaning of having a special relationship with God and being faithful to our calling.

Our first charge was to have, express and bring joy to others. What better way to apprehend God's existence and glory than to view the majesty, mysteries and beauty of the



heavens through modern telescopes. Mr. Franks' analogy of an athlete, marking and keeping sight of his goal and not looking back, was instructional.

We can encapsulate the varied topics in questions, such as: What do the saints hope for? Do we hunger and thirst for righteousness? Can we count pain and suffering, all joy? Yes! There is purpose and value in all the trials we go through. Is water essential for physical life? Consider a fountain springing up into everlasting life! Did the prophets of old understand the mystery of sonship and of judging angels?

There were Bible studies for all age groups, and the adult, youth and children's choirs worshipped in song. Thanks go to Mrs. Keener, the hymn accompanist.

Fun activities included a visit to the Dunn's River Falls and the Green Grotto Caves, while the talent show featured songs, skits and dances. Indoor games substituted for the rained-out field sports.

Sandra Fisher

SENGA BAY, MALAWI

A very exciting Feast of Tabernacles was held on the shores of the freshwater Lake Malawi, with 76 people in attendance.

The Feast began with unexpected challenges. Just

as we were leaving for the Feast site, Beach View Palace, we found that there was new management, which changed our accommodation program due to poor information management within their system. We also learned of a 16 percent government surtax and 1 percent tourism levy (one way of boosting up government revenue from the hospitality industry). The new transactions made our budget costs shoot up unexpectedly. However, the negative change did not wear away brethren's determination to obey God's command to rejoice at the Feast.

Our brother, Juts De Jager from South Africa, reminded us of the importance of observing the Feast—that we were to learn to fear God and that we were before His presence. The sermon linked well with Jim Franks' message, which pointed out that every yearly Feast of Tabernacles has its own opportunity and we must not miss it. Sermons made us focus on our role in God's Kingdom and how we are to be committed in daily Bible study, meditation and prayer in order to be overcomers to the end.

The exciting talent show activity, which was spiced up with a goat meat braai (barbecue), made this year's Feast more memorable, as most of the youths participated.

The other activities that members enjoyed most were swimming and playing beach soccer. For the first time, old

and young women had daily early morning gymnastics, with the exception of Sabbath days.

Truly, God's festivals are full of knowledge and joy as we look forward to His coming Kingdom.

Tielmans Chirwa

FLIC EN FLAC, MAURITIUS

The 2016 Feast of Tabernacles on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius was held in the small beach resort town of Flic en Flac.

Fifteen people attended the Feast, including nine from the United States and two from Zambia. We had very uplifting sermons from church elder Robert Harvey and instructive sermonettes from several different men.

We often shared lunch and dinner in restaurants as one family, and we also had a wonderful time fellowshiping together after services. It was a joy to get to know each other more deeply and strengthen bonds of brotherhood.

Excursion destinations included the waterfront of the capital, Port Louis, the nearby covered market, the Casela Nature Park, and the Natural Bridge rock formation at the south of the island. Those moments were profitable for our spiritual growth and truly a foretaste of the Kingdom to come.

Jocelyn Prodigue

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, MEXICO

San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, was witness to great fellowship, food, wonderful weather and about 320 joyful brethren from Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, the United States, Canada, the Dominican Republic and Mexico who enjoyed the Feast of Tabernacles in this beautiful, warm and friendly place.

We are all very thankful to God for His many blessings and for the inspiration He provided this year. Sermons were inspirational and clear, helping all to understand the greatness of what God has in store when He comes to set up His Kingdom. His great plan is not only for His firstborn children, but also for the whole world and, in the end, for everyone who has ever lived.

Mr. Franks' message was very well received and helpful in setting the tone for future messages that referred to the need to have a vision and set the goal for the Kingdom. All messages were beautifully orchestrated by God's Spirit and worked together to make this year a truly unforgettable spiritual Feast.

The brethren enjoyed having four meals together at the meeting hall, which offered great opportunities



for fellowship and sharing. Although many of the English-speaking brethren did not speak Spanish, they were able, through hugs, kisses and smiles, to share the same fraternal language as all their Latin brethren.

Children, youth, singles and the elderly all enjoyed activities during these eight wonderful days. Other activities included a family day, a talent show, a night of photographs, cheese and wine, and a conference for married couples.

All in all, this was truly a Feast to enjoy and remember for many years to come.

Larry Roybal

LAKE TAUPO, NEW ZEALAND

“Spiritually rewarding and uplifting,” “a wonderful opportunity to rejoice,” “blessings in abundance”—these were a few of the sentiments expressed by 72 people who attended the Feast at Lake Taupo, New Zealand. The messages focused on the principle that members are in training to *help others* to follow God’s way of life in the Millennium. The sermon by Mr. Franks set the tone and reminded us that we have to be on guard not to be distracted from our goal of entering the Kingdom of God.

Weather conditions turned out to be exceptional and helped with the enjoyment

of the various activities—a river boat cruise, Feast family dinner and seniors’ luncheon, visiting the various outstandingly beautiful scenic spots around the lake and close vicinity.

Visitors from the United States were heavily involved in special music, especially the contingent from Nashville, Tennessee. They formed a Festival choir and also presented piano solos and duets, all greatly appreciated by those attending. Others assisted with speaking assignments, both sermons and sermonettes.

There were tears of joy, but also certain feelings of sorrow, as the last hymn “God Be With You” was sung, and people prepared to return to their homes in various countries of the world.

As coordinator, I appreciated so much the spirit of cooperation, togetherness and unity evident among those attending God’s Feast at Lake Taupo.

André van Belkum

HUANCHACO, PERU

This year God once again placed His name on the beautiful resort of Huanchaco. Huanchaco is a beautiful town on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, located about 6 miles north of Trujillo and 338 miles north of Lima, the capital.

With Hotel Bracamonte serving as the activity center, around 165 people kept the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in Peru this year.

Although the Feast has a strong, spiritual character, it is impossible not to notice the many physical factors that are clearly controlled by the Owner and Host of the Feast, who ensures that everything—weather, food, ocean, etc.—is appropriate. He helps us experience how happy we, and at some point all of humanity, will be in His Kingdom.

From the opening service, the hall was filled with joy, hugs, kisses, laughter, happiness and reunions. Everything was framed by God’s first words to us, His people on earth, by which He moved us to focus on the spiritual part of the Feast and to consciously decide to spiritually recharge ourselves and desire and pray for the Kingdom of God.

With a clear understanding of what was taking place, we all enjoyed the peace of the Feast site. Members eating together filled the restaurants. Plenty of Peruvian food was served, and many of us gained a considerable amount weight, a characteristic situation of the Feast.

Except for the first day and the Sabbath, services were held at 10 a.m. every day. Our hall was a tent set up in the hotel parking lot. The comfortable seats and a fresh breeze from the Pacific made it pleasant

place to attend services. We had excellent messages that were deep, clear, concise and filled with meaning. All of the messages encouraged us to firmly continue on our path to the Kingdom. We are living in complicated, difficult and adverse times, but God makes sure we won’t be weakened by lack of instruction.

Two family dances, an entertaining ladies’ night, a spectacular talent show and a well-presented Spokesman Club session were some of the activities that enhanced the Feast. The last activity is worth special mention, since Peru has mixed Spokesmen Club sessions. We had the opportunity to listen to the ladies giving speeches and being evaluated by other female members of the club. It was a great surprise for those of us who participate in all-male Spokesman Club. After speaking with some of the ladies during the break before the speaking part of the meeting, we realized that many of the ladies actively participate in the club throughout the year. They told us about how they prepared their lessons, about times they failed their speeches for not complying with the manual guidelines and about many other experiences. Becoming familiar with this style of club was very positive.

On the Sabbath of Oct. 20, Ethaniam Carmen Elvira Muñoz from Arequipa was baptized and received a loud,



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joyful and spontaneous applause during services.

It was a beautiful and meaningful Feast. It was joyful and lively in peace, harmony and love. Brethren from Ecuador, France, Bolivia, Chile and Mexico enjoyed the care, comfort and blessings that God poured out upon us. May God keep us in His Son and allow us to once again keep another beautiful Feast at the location where He places His name next year. Thanks be to God.

Daniel Francisco Sepulveda Solis

BAGUIO CITY, PHILIPPINES

For the third time in COGWA, the Feast was held again in Baguio City. Historically, Baguio has been a Feast site for the Church of God since the late 1960s.

This time registration came up to more than 250. This included all of the COGWA members in the country with the addition of about two dozen members from the United States. There were also some Filipinos from Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

On the other hand, there were two uninvited things that sort of joined the group in the opening days and the middle of the Feast. They brought with them strong winds and rains. Because of these

typhoons and the cancelled flights they caused, a sizable number of our brethren from Mindanao were not able to come to Baguio. Paul Cebrian, our pastor in Mindanao, was able to make last-minute preparations for them to keep the Feast in Butuan City.

Though these two tropical typhoons caused some problems, such as power outages, the Feast in Baguio went on as scheduled.

Mr. Franks' message on distractions came at just the right time, and our guest speaker Mark Winner shared inspiring messages that kept us well-fed spiritually.

Almost all of the activities went well.

During the second half of the Feast, the typhoons seemed far away, as if nothing happened. This was because God's people spent their time learning and fellowshiping with each other.

Overall, it was a Feast of experiences, resourcefulness and joy for all the members. God is truly with His people rain or shine.

Eriz Dizon

BUTUAN CITY, PHILIPPINES

Mindanao brethren were all set to go to Baguio City for the Feast of Tabernacles. Unfortunately, chance events intruded the scene. While we in Mindanao had fine weather

(all through the Feast, in fact), Typhoon Karen ravaged much of the Luzon area. On Oct. 15 airlines announced the cancellation of all flights to Manila.

Since flights could not be had, we then scouted for a possible alternate venue. All members were asked to come to Butuan City for an alternate opening night and holy day service at the Grand Palace Restaurant, located about 200 meters from the Agusan del Norte Provincial Capitol. (This was the same beautiful, auspicious and conducive Chinese-owned restaurant and venue that we used some time ago when we had our own separate Feast of Tabernacles in Mindanao.)

Our plan was to stay in Butuan only for the first day of the Feast and then proceed to Baguio on the second day of the Feast, or after Typhoon Karen was gone. However, weather reports showed another weather disturbance coming, Typhoon Lawin. We consulted with the Baguio City Festival coordinator, Eriz Dizon, and our senior pastor, David Baker, and they agreed that it would be better for us to stay in Butuan and have a separate Feast than try to get to Baguio and possibly be trapped along the road due to flooding and landslides.

We all then consulted together to plan our daily activities. Without much preparation, everything seemed instant, if we may

call it that. Thus we had the Feast in Butuan City from the opening night all the way through the Last Great Day. Our attendance fluctuated between 36 and 44, as some were already in Manila ahead of schedule for the Baguio Feast. Few were unable to attend due to health problems.

Even without time to plan, we had several activities—a dinner for our seniors with local leaders and youth leaders; a youth day (with a youth dinner and karaoke sing-along in the evening); a service in the Amontay Beach Resort hall (in Nasipit, a nearby town) for Family Day, followed by different games and swimming; and finally a family dance night (with singing and dance intermissions) in the evening after the Last Great Day. It was a night of boisterous enjoyment and laughter.

All hall rentals were convertible into lunch food, served as buffets, at both the Grand Palace and the Amontay Beach Resort. (What wasn't consumed was wrapped and given to members.) Housing accommodations, which included breakfast, were at Ecclesiastical Home Shelter, which charged us P100 per person.

The whole Feast was a series of joy and excitement for both spiritual and physical exercises. All activities were successful due to the voluntary involvement of all the members and the guidance



and coordination of those assigned the task of leading. I owe them all my heartfelt gratitude! Many thanks go to all the members who stayed with us for the Feast!

Paul Cebrian

GITI, RWANDA

The Feast of Tabernacles in Rwanda for 2016 was once again held on the church-owned property in the village of Giti. Seventy people attended the Feast, almost all of whom stayed in tents or under tarps during the Feast.

Each day sermonettes and sermons, based on sermons prerecorded in French, were given in Kinyarwanda by our deacon Jean-Baptiste Sibobugingo and our elder Jean-Marie Mundeli. The messages were all spiritually very rich.

Meals were prepared in our newly improved kitchen, now closed to the elements. Even though Rwanda is currently experiencing a food shortage, God made it possible for us to find good food. We enjoyed beef, cheeses, potatoes, wine from grapes and wine from bananas. We all ate our fill.

Additional activities included educational discussions for both youth and adults. One presentation was on proper etiquette. Two university students gave a presentation on the value of pure water in our lives, as well

as the noxious quality of added sugar in our diet. There were also more active activities for the children.

In addition to all the physical blessings, the spirit of service and cooperation, shared discipline and the will to obey and please God was clear among those of all ages.

We are thankful to God for His blessing and to our brethren in other countries, whose financial assistance made it possible for us to enjoy a wonderful Feast.

Jean-Marie Mundeli

UVONGO, SOUTH AFRICA

The Feast of Tabernacles was held at Uvongo on the east coast of South Africa. We were blessed with beautiful, mild weather for the entirety of the Feast and had an average attendance of 131. The highest number to attend was 143, and from all accounts it definitely was a time of rejoicing for all present. We were also blessed to have visitors from the United States, including Gary and Jane McConnaughey.

The sermons and sermonettes contained encouraging messages of inspiration and hope, focusing on the millennial rule of Jesus Christ and our future role in His ruling government.

Mr. McConnaughey, our guest speaker, also highlighted the importance of rejoicing at the Feast and developing

a true fear of God through obedience. Sermons were also given by Morgen Kriedemann, Neil Becker and Neville Smith with the following titles: “Rejoice Before the Eternal Your God,” “Just Who Do You Think You Are?” “The Kingdom of God Is the Solution,” “The War to End All Wars,” “Millennial-Type Scriptures,” “What Do You Think I Want Most?” “Jesus Said, ‘Watch and Pray’—Four Things to Watch For” and “God’s Mercy and Justice.”

There were also five scheduled activities—a family afternoon, youth beach activity, variety concert, seniors’ lunch and family dance.

As always, the eight days passed by far too quickly, but it was an exceptional time of fun, fellowship and spiritual nourishment that was enjoyed by all who rejoiced before God at His Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

Neville Smith

HIKKADUWA, SRI LANKA

Sixty-three brethren from Sri Lanka, Kuwait, India, Indonesia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, enjoying warm fellowship and tropical weather along the shores of the Indian Ocean in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka. Everyone was accommodated at a seaside

hotel, which included an air-conditioned hall for services as well as three group meals per day. This arrangement allowed ample time for relaxation and fellowship. By the end of the Feast, we felt like one large, extended family.

Messages focused on the meaning of the Feast and our preparation to serve as kings and priests during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Each message helped to sharpen our focus on the future inheritance and responsibility that awaits us.

The monsoon rains arrived just before the Feast, which provided relief from several months of hot and dry weather. After the opening night service, we experienced a tremendous thunder storm, which was a reminder of God’s awesome power. Thankfully, the rains occurred mostly at night with predominantly beautiful, sunny daytime skies.

Activities during the Feast included a visit to a sea turtle hatchery, a visit to the historic fort of Galle for shopping and sightseeing, a river safari that included a visit to a cinnamon island, family day activities near the beach, a talent show and a karaoke evening. After the Feast, 21 members took a two-day excursion into the hill country to travel through tea plantations, tour a tea factory and view the spectacular scenery of mountains covered in greenery with cascading waterfalls. The group spent a night in a club that was started



by English planters more than a hundred years ago. On the way down from the hill country, the group visited an elephant orphanage to view and ride elephants.

The Feast was a very joyous festival. It was a wonderful blessing for our Sri Lankan and Indian brethren and a blessing for all of us to share in their part of the world.

David Baker

KPALIMÉ, TOGO

Twenty-four people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in Kpalimé, Togo, this year. Everyone stayed together at the same hotel and took their meals together at the Institut National de Formation Agricole de Tové.

The sermons, both live and recorded, were very edifying and much appreciated. They offered new perspectives about God's plan of salvation during the Millennium and the period represented by the Last Great Day. It was a true spiritual Feast!

We especially appreciated the presence of Lee and Robyn Page from the United States. The fine messages Mr. Page gave in French and the lovely example they set as a couple were most inspiring and motivating. We also appreciated Mr. Page's seminar on sermonette preparation.

Particularly enjoyable was an afternoon outing to the

famous Kpimé Cascade, near Kpalimé. We also enjoyed Bible games for the children and a talent show with skits and music.

This was a spiritually intense Feast with wonderfully warm fellowship.

Guy Ahialebedzi

BRANSON, MISSOURI, UNITED STATES

The Feast of Tabernacles in Branson was a breath of fresh air and a wonderful spiritual boost from the world around us. God gave us a very encouraging look at what the future holds for us and ultimately for all of mankind. Messages were spot-on and painted a very clear picture of what God is doing and our part in it—as well as what we must be found “so doing” in the meantime.

Attendance peaked at 608 and averaged 548 for all services. We had a significant number of members from other Church of God fellowships visiting and attending with us. Special music was truly special this year and added to the inspiration. Beautiful weather and fall foliage added to the enjoyment of the Feast.

In addition to daily services and the usual Bible studies, there were two seminars given by pastors one evening, giving everyone an added opportunity to delve into

God's Word. Festival youth lessons, held before services on two mornings, gave the children a special opportunity to learn about God's ways with others of their age.

Senior citizens were able to enjoy fellowship and a delicious barbecue lunch that featured entertainment from some of the seniors. Teens, on the other hand, had a cookout, games and activity at Table Rock State Park.

The Branson Feast site has morning services on the weekly Sabbath due to shows in the theater in the afternoon. This presented a unique opportunity to have a Sabbath fellowship at a state park in the afternoon. There were lots of refreshments (some even brought their lunches), and we filled the large pavilion. People visited while the children played and got to know each other better. Those who wanted to take a leisurely stroll made use of the walking trails along the lake. A highlight of the day was a Sabbath hymn sing. An elderly man with a harmonica started playing the hymns and was soon joined by three or four other musicians. Many joined in to sing praises to God in the beauty of the Sabbath afternoon.

Other activities included a family dance, a preteen mini-golf outing, an elders and deacons' reception, along with lots of family time to enjoy fellowship and the natural beauty of the area. People as a group seemed to feel this was

one of the best Feasts in a long time.

Carol Blackwell

FORT MYERS, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

This year close to 200 brethren met at the Holiday Inn Gulf Coast Town Center in Fort Myers, Florida. The majority of brethren were from six of Florida's eight churches. Some brethren came from other parts of the country to keep the Feast with friends and relatives in Florida. The weather was beautiful with the temperatures in the mid-80s throughout the Feast.

The messages were encouraging and timely. Mr. Franks' sermon was received very well on the second day of the Feast. Everyone enjoyed a good balance of sermons along with two webcasts from Pigeon Forge. Britt Taylor, Church treasurer, joined us for the second half of the Feast and spoke twice.

Activities included a family night reception, dance and karaoke. Family Day was held at the zoo in Naples. It featured many shows with the animals, including the feeding of the alligators. The seniors' activity included a catered outdoor luncheon followed by a guided historic tour of the Edison & Ford Winter Estates and museum in Fort Myers. Most Feastgoers made it a must to visit the beautiful



LAKE HARMONY



NEW BRAUNFELS



ORANGE BEACH

white sand beaches of Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel Island and Captiva Island. Also, during the week of the Feast brethren contributed over 600 pounds of food to a local charity that helps those in need.

It was truly a wonderful Feast this year. The only problem we had was it ended too soon.

Jim Haeffele

LAKE HARMONY, PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES

About 360 attendees kept the Feast at the Split Rock Resort in Lake Harmony, Pennsylvania. Feastgoers greatly appreciated the sermons, special music and fellowship, as well as the restaurants, activities and surroundings.

The Split Rock Resort underwent renovations in the millions of dollars. Most notably, the acoustics in the meeting hall were improved, and the food court was expanded. Many activities were enjoyed. The family dance, with about 130 attendees, was enthusiastically enjoyed by attendees of all ages, ranging from preteens to members over 90 years old. A variety of music from the past and present was played throughout the evening.

A senior luncheon was served to over 100

participants, who enjoyed a plated meal while being entertained by vocal solos and instrumental selections from both adults and teenagers. Don Henson, shared life lessons, along with humor that was appreciated by all.

For the *Samson* show, over 100 participants boarded two luxury coach buses (with free Wi-Fi access) and traveled to the Sight & Sound Millennium Theatre in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Before the show, attendees enjoyed a buffet meal served at the Bird-in-Hand Restaurant.

More than 200 people enjoyed the Last Great Day luncheon buffet. This meal and fellowship provided an appropriate closure to what many described as a great Feast.

Kevin Epps

NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS, UNITED STATES

Approximately 350 brethren met in New Braunfels, Texas, to observe this year's Feast of Tabernacles. The New Braunfels Convention Center was a beautiful, spacious venue for keeping the Feast. The Convention Center allowed us to bring in our own food and drink, so we enjoyed coffee, tea and treats before and after all of the morning services—something that added to the

warm fellowship we enjoyed.

The warm and sunny weather was especially appreciated by those who floated the Comal River and by those who hiked or tried other outdoor activities. A repeat feature of last year's Feast was to have a designated photographer who took photos of everyone fellowshiping and at the various activities. The photos were shown most days before services via a PowerPoint presentation.

Many remarked on the inspiring messages given throughout the Feast. Two main themes seemed to be woven into most messages: the coming millennial rule of Christ on earth and the need for each of us to prepare now to be part of His government.

With its scenic beauty, abundant housing and wide variety of restaurants, New Braunfels was an outstanding location to observe the Feast. We look forward to returning to this historic German community for the Feast next year!

David Treybig

ORANGE BEACH, ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

Orange Beach, Alabama, once again played host to 838 people keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. The weather was pure sunshine the entire time, and unusually warm temperatures made it a

perfect site for those who love sand and sun. The spirit of peace and calm among those attending paid tribute to our desire and longing for the future reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

The local community has come to understand our visit and appreciate the people of the Church of God. We were told on many occasions that this group is by far their favorite, as we are friendly, warm and care for their facilities. This year many restaurants changed their regular menus to cater specifically to the Church. It was wonderful to walk into eating establishments and be handed a special menu with our name on it.

Family Day, held at the Orange Beach Sportsplex, was again a tremendous outing. This area consists of multiple playing fields and hosted softball, flag football, volleyball, face painting and a train ride for the young at heart. The city, in appreciation of our hosting the Feast in their area, again gave us free use of this complex this year.

The Church sponsored a food drive for the local food bank for the third year in a row. Even though our numbers were smaller this year, we still contributed 4,175 pounds of food and supplies, as well as sizable cash donations that will allow the food bank to purchase a further 8,000 pounds of needed supplies. In a letter sent to the Church,



the food pantry chairman, Stan Moss, again praised our members for their generosity, telling us that our group is far and away the biggest contributor to their charity each year.

Phillip Sandilands

PIGEON FORGE, TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES

As the beautiful moon of the seventh month climbed above the tops of the Smoky Mountains surrounding Pigeon Forge, Larry Salyer welcomed 590 brethren to the opening night of the Feast of Tabernacles with the words “Take off your shoes!” In the following days, these were joined by nearly 300 more brethren who came to worship God.

God truly blessed us in Pigeon Forge with a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. The week began with very warm days and cool nights, finally cooling off slightly toward the end of the Feast to nearly perfect weather for the last few days.

More than half of the speakers in Pigeon Forge this year had 35 to 50 years of ministerial experience behind them. They were able to draw on wonderful stories of past Feast experiences, going back to the times when the Church met in huge tents and members camped in the piney woods of East Texas. Many of

the brethren mentioned their appreciation for the many inspiring messages.

Several of the department heads commented on the wonderful attitudes the members displayed in all the activities and daily worship services.

The choir, under the direction of Dave Myers, delivered some outstanding music for the brethren, and on the final afternoon of the Last Great Day gave us a very moving rendition of “Only God.”

Even though Pigeon Forge is considered a tourist town in the beautiful mountains of Tennessee, it has consistently been one of the more popular sites where God has placed His name.

Bruce Gore

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

Four hundred brethren traveled to the San Diego, California, area this year to celebrate the Feast at the Four Points by Sheraton San Diego. Since over 50 percent of our attendees stayed at the hotel, we got a great nightly rate and free meeting space for all of our services, meetings and breakout needs. That saved the Church several thousands of dollars!

Most walked to services each day from their hotel rooms, and the restaurant on

the property catered to our dietary needs. The hotel staff set up tables and chairs in the atrium area where most of our members were assigned rooms. Often families would gather in the atrium to eat meals, fellowship and play games together. Those who stayed at the hotel reported in our housing survey that staying on-site and fellowshipping before and after services and sharing meals with other attendees spiritually enhanced their Feast experience.

Activities this year included teen and young adult hospitality rooms, a young adult dinner cruise of San Diego Harbor, a teen beach party on Mission Bay, a Family Day picnic with games at Mission Bay Beach, a golf tournament, and our traditional seniors’ luncheon at the hotel. Of course, families enjoyed swimming and playing in the surf at the nearby beaches and visiting the world-famous San Diego Zoo, Sea World, the museums at Balboa Park and LEGOLAND.

The San Diego area lends itself to the spiritual nature of our festival because of its tropical lushness, natural coastal beauty and relaxing atmosphere—from the sunny days and brilliant display of stars nightly to the expansive views of the sea and gorgeous landscapes.

The management of the hotel were very pleased with our group—they commented

on how well-mannered the children were and how nicely dressed our attendees were. They also mentioned our group was most pleasant since our group didn’t complain a lot when problems and issues arose. They were pleased to invite us back, and we are reviewing a proposal to return for the Feast in San Diego for 2017.

Dave Register

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO, UNITED STATES

Throughout the Feast in Steamboat Springs, it was inspiring to witness an outstanding expression of God’s Holy Spirit in the form of friendliness, happiness and cooperation. This was most notable and commented on by many.

Once again, the Sheraton Steamboat Resort hosted us for a wonderful Feast with excellent facilities and a very helpful and friendly staff.

Upon learning that the hotel has been sold and will be converted to a non-convention type of property, many brethren expressed disappointment that we will not be able to return.

Fall colors were past peak, but the scenery was still gorgeous. Weather was mostly quite pleasant. It snowed a little one night, but there was no accumulation on the ground at the hotel level. The Texans had



to drive up the mountain to throw snowballs!

We were at historic Howelsen Lodge for Family Day. After a nice barbecue lunch, we heard a very interesting presentation on the history of the Steamboat Springs area from Candice Bannister, executive director of the Tread of Pioneers Museum. The younger children enjoyed face painting and balloon tying.

Many made comments of appreciation about the excellent spiritual food we enjoyed through sermons, sermonettes and the Bible study. It was nice to have Doug and Tanya Horchak with us for the first half of the Feast, and we benefited from Mr. Horchak's two sermons. Festival Youth Instruction was held on two days for the children.

Special music was excellent, with both solos and the Festival choir of just over 30 adding much to the inspiration of the services.

Larry Neff

WARRENS, WISCONSIN, UNITED STATES

This was the second year for the satellite Feast site in Warrens, Wisconsin. We again

used the Three Bears Resort to celebrate the Feast. There were 52 registered, but more than that attended most days. The weather was near perfect for this time of year, with little rain and above-average temperatures.

Because of the size of the group, everyone had a chance to get to know one another. Although the ages of those attending ranged from 1 to 95, there was harmony and plenty for everyone to do. Most attended a tour of the local Cranberry Museum and enjoyed hearing the history of that small red fruit. There was also a talent show and two evening social gatherings. For the younger ones, the water park was open most evenings.

This year the webcast service came to us from Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and the reception was flawless. We appreciated the messages and talked about them at length after each service. This was another very successful and profitable Feast of Tabernacles at Warrens, Wisconsin.

Don Finger

MUMBWA, ZAMBIA

Almost 200 members

enjoyed the Feast of Tabernacles just outside of Mumbwa, Zambia, which is about 90 miles northwest of Lusaka, the capital. Kambani Banda and his wife, Shirley, were required to make last-minute adjustments when the original arrangements for the Feast outside Lusaka fell through.

The Mumba location was a camping experience for the members and their families, so it was reminiscent of the Big Sandy campground of years ago. Member food crews prepared the meals, providing ample portions for adults and children each day. Services were held in a building at the campground, which meant members were together for the entire eight days.

None of the activities, church services, social events, meals, etc. required any travel, so it truly was a dwelling together in unity, fellowship and brotherly kindness. The sermons and music helped remind everyone that God's Kingdom is the hope for mankind and that one day the entire world will dwell together in the same kind of harmony experienced this year in Zambia. The 2016 Feast of Tabernacles in Zambia was

an inspiring observance for God's people in this part of southern Africa.

Jim Servidio

BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

This year 199 members of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, met at Tuli Hill Camp in Bulawayo to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The majority of our members traveled by hired buses from all seven church areas and provinces.

Every available room at the Feast site was occupied. Although we expected very hot weather at this time of the year, some days we had clouds sheltering us from the sun.

Members enjoyed very good and delicious meals together, three times a day. This was a blessing to all of us, considering that our country is going through very difficult times. Due to a crippling shortage of cash in all the banks, most people now queue outside banks as early as 3 a.m. to get just US\$50. Members continue to be thankful for prayers and support from the Church, as many of them harvested very little food this year.



FEAST OF TABERNACLES ATTENDANCE

Among the encouraging reports from the Feast this year were the attendance figures recorded at each of the Feast sites around the world for the Church of God, a Worldwide Association. The figures below represent the high attendance at each site.

We also include those who connected via prerecorded DVD sermons, daily webcasts and Roku. Consistent with our past reporting practices and member feedback, for attendance purposes we count an average of two viewers per DVD or webcast/Roku connection. This year we also had a few scattered members who kept the Feast at home without any Internet connection or DVD messages.

This year God blessed us by sending His servants, Mr. and Mrs. Servidio. Mr. Servidio gave very uplifting and inspiring sermons about the coming Kingdom of God, held a special Bible study for the youth and took us through the book of Philemon. We could not download the Feast video, so Mr. and Mrs. Servidio went to the city and downloaded the video for us to watch.

We were blessed to witness four people being baptized into the Body of Christ. As well, Mr. Servidio blessed 14 children during the Blessing of Little Children.

It was a pleasure to see the many young and old people participating in games during the youth and family day.

God protected His children during the Feast and as they traveled back to their homes.

We thank God and the Church for making it possible for us to have the most profitable, enjoyable and inspiring Feast of Tabernacles in 2016.

Many members expressed their sincere gratitude for having been spiritually uplifted and encouraged as always at this most wonderful Feast of Tabernacles.

Stephen Tshabalala

ABU DHABI & SINGAPORE	4	NEW ZEALAND	72
ARGENTINA	213	NIGERIA	32
AUSTRALIA	30	PERU	165
BAHAMAS	2	PHILIPPINES	256
BARBADOS	139	REUNION ISLAND	4
BOLIVIA	73	RWANDA	70
BRITISH ISLES (JERSEY)	32	SOUTH AFRICA	143
BURUNDI	437	SRI LANKA	63
CAMEROON	32	ST. LUCIA	3
CANADA		TOGO	24
ORFORD	38	UNITED STATES	
ST. JOHNS	6	BRANSON	608
VICTORIA	575	FORT MYERS	188
CHILE	360	LAKE HARMONY	358
COLOMBIA	85	NEW BRAUNFELS	329
CONGO	133	ORANGE BEACH	838
COTE D'IVOIRE	120	PIGEON FORGE	848
FIJI	55	SAN DIEGO	393
FRANCE	140	STEAMBOAT SPRINGS	328
GHANA	616	WARRENS	61
GRENADA	33	ZAMBIA	199
GUATEMALA	525	ZIMBABWE	199
GUYANA	15	ON-SITE TOTAL.....9,547	
INDIA	12		
JAMAICA	172	U.S. SHUT-INS (DVDS)	320
KENYA	108	WEBCAST/PHONE U.S. & INTL.	560
MALAWI	76	LATIN AMERICAN SCATTERED	69
MAURITIUS	15	AT-HOME TOTAL.....949	
MEXICO	317	TOTAL.....10,496	
MYANMAR	3		

Look at many more photos from around the world in our Feast photo album
facebook.com/cogwa



Photos by Codi Cole

Fast Pace Continues at Foundation Institute

Students keep a packed schedule during the first semester of FI.

By Josh Travers

There are a lot of words that can be used to describe the FI experience: educational, rewarding, exhilarating, fun, emotional. *Slow* is definitely not a word that any student would use to describe their time at Foundation Institute.

Students returned from Feast sites around the world—France, Mexico, British Columbia, California and Alabama, to name a few—and swiftly settled back into classes (after sharing Feast memories, of course). Since then, it’s been a bustle of activities and fun.

Two Sabbaths after returning from the Feast, the students joined members of the Dallas congregation at the preteen post-Feast social, where some of the students made new friends among the younger members of the Church. Everyone had a chance to enjoy fellowship and the movie *Finding Dory*.

The Sabbath after that was karaoke night, with the students and Dallas members singing a variety of songs, from *High School Musical’s* “Breaking Free” to Frank Sinatra’s “My Way.” Some kept singing until 1 in the morning.

On Nov. 17 the students took a field trip to the Sixth Floor Museum in downtown Dallas, finding out more about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and how that one event has shaped the world we live in today. After an all-too-brief tour of the museum, the students had an enjoyable lunch at a nearby Mexican restaurant and then went to the giant eyeball sculpture for a group photo.

Of course, there’s a lot more than just activities going on—the students are learning quite a bit, as well. So far, in the three months FI has been in session, the students have finished covering the books of Genesis, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Acts, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Galatians.

Students enjoyed a quick break around Thanksgiving and are now getting ready for the end of the first semester! ☺🙏

PORTRAIT OF FAITH



Gatha Williams

By Barbara Lee

Our congregation has a wide range of ages! On the Sabbath of Sept. 17, 2016, we honored the oldest member of the Twin Cities, Minnesota, congregation, Gatha Williams, who just turned 95! When I asked Mrs. Williams what it feels like to be 95, she replied, “It’s just like any other day.”

Mrs. Williams and her first husband, Herold Schriver, were born and raised in West Virginia. He was a coal miner, and they had eight children. Both worked really hard. Mrs. Williams sewed all their clothes, making dresses from feed sacks when they were young. She was an excellent gardener and canned hundreds of jars of food each year. She was a wonderful cook and really enjoyed it, and she taught her daughters to love cooking. She was quick to praise and say what a good bunch of kids they were.

Mrs. Williams and her husband started listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio and getting literature in the 1950s, when they lived in southern West Virginia. They were baptized in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1963 by Les McCullough and Bill McDowell. There were no congregations in West Virginia, so every other week

they traveled 190 miles each way to Greensboro, North Carolina. They were thrilled when a local congregation began in Charleston, West Virginia—only 90 miles away!

In 1968 Herold died of the effects of black lung disease. She still had five children at home and was determined to get all her kids raised and through school and continue to attend church. She drove the family to the Feast of Tabernacles in the Poconos and Jekyll Island, even though she didn’t know how to read a map! She had lots of friends at church who would tell her which routes to take.

In 1975, seven years after being widowed and with all the children gone from home, she came to Minnesota for her daughter Mary’s wedding. There she met Ralph Williams, a widower, and they liked each other immediately. Three months later they married and had 19 happy years together until Ralph died in 1995.

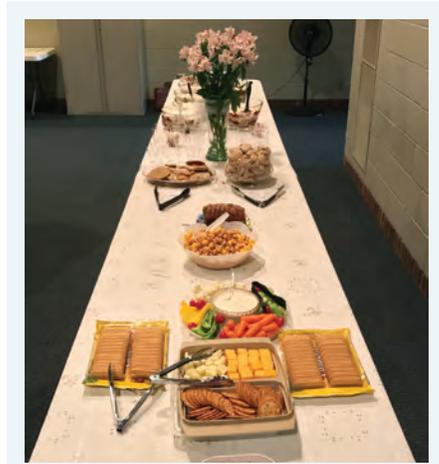
When I asked how Mrs. Williams found out about the Church, she gave me an excerpt from her autobiography:

“We lived beside a family that was Seventh-day Adventist and Herold started really reading his Bible again and learned that the seventh-day Sabbath was supposed to be kept. And we did study with the Adventists for about two years, but we never were fully convinced that it was God’s Church.

“Herold continued to read and tell me what he had read. Then I read too. When he told me, way back in the ’50s, that the holy days were still here, I thought, ‘He’s gone too far now.’ But it turned out he was right.

“One day Herold told me, ‘God has a church someplace. It’s called the Church of God, and it isn’t very large because the Bible speaks of a remnant. I’d go to it no matter where it was if I knew where.’

“So I told him, ‘Well, why don’t



Twin Cities congregation honors Gatha with a food fellowship for her 95th birthday

you ask God to show you?’ He seemed surprised. He hadn’t thought of it. And he knelt down, and so did I, and he prayed the prayer and told God what he told me, and asked God to show him if He had a church, where it was, etc.

“A short time after that, *The Plain Truth* came in the mail. We did not have a radio that would pick up the faraway stations, but my stepmother had known of us trying to keep the Sabbath and had sent our name in. We ordered the magazine and booklets and got a secondhand radio for \$15. It was an older one, but a good one, as it picked up 50,000-watt stations like Nashville, Tennessee.”

Mrs. Williams’ legacy is her faith. She had a heavy responsibility of raising her family after the death of her first husband. However, she could go to bed and sleep at night because she knew God was with her.

At 95, Mrs. Williams is a cherished member of the Twin Cities congregation, where she attends with her daughters, Mary Burke and Teresa Luginbill. She is able to attend services most weeks and has a smile and a positive comment for everyone she sees. As she often says, “God has been so good to me!” ©A



Q

For years I've been praying for a husband—or at least real friends. Friends you can talk with, hang out with, laugh with, cry with or who just remember you exist. God's answer almost seems like a mockery. My texting friends turn out to be perverts. My church "friends" really don't care if I'm there and seem to enjoy inviting people to their house and parties when I'm standing less than 10 feet away. They plan lunch dates with the "new people" and give me the cold shoulder. When they do invite me, it's more a general meeting, but I can never get ahold of them and I hear how much fun they had with their other friends. I've been to eight weddings in the past 10 years. Hearing how the bride and groom found each other leaves me feeling jealous and wishing that someone thought I was worth half the effort. I just feel like a big joke in God's eyes.

Through this column, we want to provide you with a window on the work of the Personal Correspondence Department. Because we interact mostly with people new to God's truth, some topics might not seem directly applicable to you. But think how you would answer the question if someone asked it of you! And many answers will contain spiritual principles that you can apply in your life, even if the question isn't one you would ask.

A

Never think God mocks your sincere prayers! Consider the wisdom of Proverbs 18:24: "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

Have you had the opportunity to read "[The Loneliness Epidemic](#)"? It analyzes the huge problem of loneliness in our seemingly connected world. Near the end of the article, you will find specific advice on defeating loneliness. It amplifies the biblical counsel to "be friendly."

Have you arranged any lunch dates with people? It doesn't have to be a luncheon. It can be a visit over coffee, tea and snacks; a game or movie night (at home)—or any number of other possibilities. Take the initiative rather than wait for someone to invite you. Ask yourself what you can do to be friendlier than you already are. Most of us can make a renewed effort to reach out to others.

I can appreciate that it's hard in one way to see others get married. But are you also happy for them? Do you thank God for blessing them? Rejoice in the benefits that you see others receive, rather than give in to jealousy. Pray also about ways to serve other people. This way of thinking often results in developing unanticipated friendships.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers further insight into an alternate translation of this proverb: "If a person has many companions, or numerous friends chosen indiscriminately, he may find himself in trouble (lit., 'be broken in pieces')" (John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, ed., 1989).

Relate this to your experience: "texting friends turn out to be perverts." Are you looking in the right places for relationships? Unfortunately, this world is filled with people whose minds are far from the values of God. We can help you through articles in the "[Friendship](#)" section of Life, Hope & Truth.

Keep on praying about your needs, but make sure your prayers are also about others. I suggest that you read or review "[Five Keys to Answered Prayers](#)" and "[Intercessory Prayer: How Does God Want Us to Pray for Others?](#)" Notice the advice in the articles to pray according to God's will. When asking for anything, we should always leave the "if" and "when" in God's hands. You can trust Him to have your best interests in mind.

I've prayed for you too. After you have the opportunity to read what I've suggested and to implement this advice, let me know how things are going. ☺

CHURCH POTLUCK

What's cooking in your congregation?



MINNESOTA CONGREGATIONS SQUEEZE IN ONE MORE SUMMER PICNIC

Summer is taken seriously in Minnesota, and with colder weather on the horizon the Twin Cities and St. Cloud, Minnesota congregations don't like wasting precious opportunities for fellowship! So on Aug. 20, even though the day began with rain, the brethren from both areas, toting umbrellas and jackets just in case, gathered after Sabbath services for a relaxing picnic, their second of the summer.

While some spent time visiting with one another or supervising the preteens at the nearby playground, others organized the food, and soon everyone enjoyed a delicious meal of hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, salads, chips and much more. Fellowship continued well into the evening, and some even cooked s'mores over the remaining fire on the grill to share with everyone!

Although we are sad to see summer winding down, we appreciated the opportunity to make the most of this day with God's people.

Barbara Lee



CHILDREN HAVE A BLAST IN SANTIAGO, CHILE

On July 24, 2016, the children of the Santiago, Chile, congregation attended an activity exclusively for them.

For two hours the 34 children played games prepared by the young adults and then shared a delicious lunch with their parents.

Afterward, the children enjoyed a play called Superheroes on the Decline. The main goal of the play was to demonstrate that there is no better superhero than God.

The entertaining afternoon concluded with some nutritious chocolate milk and a tasty piece of cake.

It is always reassuring to see smiles on the faces of our children, especially when the reason for that smile is being able to play with their church friends and learn more about God. The activity was a complete success!

Cony Mendez



MARRIAGE RETREAT IN PERU IS A COMPLETE SUCCESS

A total of 30 people from Lima, Arequipa, Cajamarca and Huaraz, Peru, attended the first COGWA marriage retreat in Peru July 28-30, 2016. The retreat took place at the countryside hostel La Chacra, located in the Huaraz province, where the Feast of Tabernacles was held in 1995 and 1996.

Over the three days of the event, the seminars focused on marital edification, perfecting communication between spouses and strengthening God's family by having well-established marriages. Couples answered questionnaires and completed checklists to identify opportunities for improvement in their relationships. The entire program was led by Manuel Quijano, who pastors all of Peru.

We were blessed with lodgings in the midst of a beautiful landscape. The hostel was easy to get to, and we had free access to the halls and a fully equipped kitchen. We held church services there on the Sabbath. Halfway through the event there was a dance, karaoke and a fantastic, candlelit dinner that was enhanced by flowers, chocolates, instrumental music and the warmth of a romantic fireplace.

Fredy Caceres





AUSTIN HOSTS PROGRESSIVE POTLUCK DINNER

On the Sabbath of Sept. 10, 2016, the Austin, Texas, congregation had a lovely progressive potluck dinner. Brethren were organized into four different groups for the event. Folks started at one member's house for hors d'oeuvres, then traveled to another member's house for the main course and again traveled to a third house for dessert.

The participants enjoyed caravanning from place to place, following all of the other cars in the group. Everybody in each group contributed food or drinks to each house. The evening was full of great stories and lots of laughter. The best part was that you could talk to different people at each house and get to know the people who live near you! Those in attendance and those who hosted said they would enjoy doing it again!

Taylor Rocheleau



OHIO BRETHREN VOLUNTEER AT RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

Members of the Columbus/Cambridge, Ohio, congregation volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House in Columbus on Sunday, Nov. 6. Volunteers baked cookies as treats for the families. They also cleaned the kitchen and cafe area and provided glider and spinning top kits for the families to color and assemble.

Denise Hadley

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We encourage members to send announcements to be featured in *One Accord*. We feature events in members' lives, including baptisms, births, engagements, weddings, significant anniversaries (25, 40, 50, 60, etc.), 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.

BAPTISMS



Cecilia Baxter

On July 6, 2016, Cecilia Baxter was baptized by André van Belkum and Art Verschoor. Cecilia is originally from the Philippines and now lives in Oamaru, New Zealand. She has one daughter, Aiza, and a cat named Charlie. Cecilia came in contact with the Church through the Gargar family who are longtime members of the Church. We warmly welcome Cecilia with joy to the family of God.



Nikita Mahe

Nikita Mahe was baptized April 18, 2016, by André van Belkum. She is 20 years old and attends the Church with her sister Erika in Auckland, New Zealand. Both grew up in Australia and are now living with their relatives, Isaac and Natasha Khalil, who are also members of the Church in Auckland. They first learned about the Church through the Khalils.

Nikita is currently in her first year in the University of Auckland, majoring in education and minoring in linguistics. A hearty welcome to God's family, Nikita!

BIRTHS



Florencia Dina Casas

Fabián and Julia Casas, of the Cordoba, Argentina, congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their daughter, Florencia Dina Casas Da Silva. Florencia was born on June 30, 2016, at 3:40 p.m., weighing 7 pounds 8 ounces and measuring 20.1 inches long. Juan and Luciano, the proud big brothers, are delighted with the new addition to the family.



David Ruben Followell

Ruben Followell and his wife, Pamela, are happy to announce the birth of their firstborn, a beautiful baby boy whom they named David Ruben Followell Roybal. David was born on Thursday, Oct. 27, at around 10:30 a.m., at Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Hospital near Houston, Texas. It was a successful natural birth, and David was born weighing around 6.6 pounds and measuring about 20 inches.

Ruben and Pamela extend their thanks to all who prayed for a healthy pregnancy and a positive delivery and request prayers for little David's continued good health and for a quick recovery for the new mom.

It is worth noting that David is Larry and Blanca Roybal's first grandchild. Mr. Roybal has served as the regional pastor of the churches in Mexico for more than 20 years and is an important pillar in the

Church of God in Latin America. Mr. and Mrs. Roybal's happiness, along with that of their other daughter, Paola, who is now an aunt, adds to the joy experienced by the Followell family.

Jorge Iván Garduño



Isabella Carsan Foster

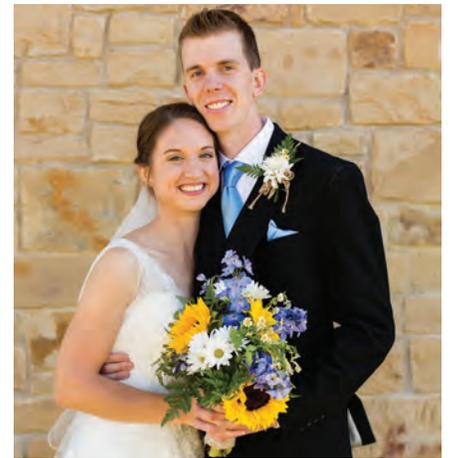
Eddie and Shannon Foster of the Cincinnati/Dayton, Ohio, congregation are ecstatic to announce the birth of their daughter, Isabella Carsan. Izzy made her arrival on June 14, 2016, weighing 7 pounds 15 ounces, and measuring 20.5 inches long. Joyful grandparents are James and Carla Guy of the Youngstown, Ohio, congregation and John and Susan Foster of the St. Louis and Rolla, Missouri, congregations.



Lautaro Salinas

Lautaro Esteban Salinas Bautista was born on July 21, 2016, at 9:36 a.m. He weighed 7 pounds 5 ounces and was 20.1 inches long. His proud parents are Benjamín and Mónica Salinas of the Santiago, Chile, congregation. The whole family is very happy with the arrival of this little guy, especially Thamar, his big sister.

WEDDINGS



Jacob and Erica Golden

Mike and Becky Bennett are happy to announce the marriage of their daughter Erica to Jacob Golden, son of Jesse Golden and Jania Dove. The wedding took place the morning of Oct. 9, 2016, at the Oak Point Park Nature and Retreat Center in Plano, Texas. Guests enjoyed sunshine and ideal temperatures as they witnessed the ceremony, held on the center's patio with trees and a lake serving as a backdrop. Afterwards, the bridal party and guests moved into the center to celebrate with a brunch and dance.

Erica was attended by her sister, Heather Cole, and friends Tatiana Meeker and Anna Zimmerman. Jacob's best man was his father, Jesse Golden, and groomsmen were Collin Jones and Timothy Rickard. The ceremony was performed by the groom's grandfather, Roy Dove.

Jacob and Erica honeymooned in Colorado before spending the Feast in Steamboat Springs. They met each other while attending Foundation Institute in 2015-16. They live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, where Jacob works as a technician and Erica works as a dietician.

Becky Bennett

ORDINATIONS



Andrés Cisneros

In addition to the happiness and Christian fellowship that was experienced during the Feast in Mexico, an extra, very special ingredient was added. During services on the Last Great Day, Larry Roybal, regional pastor of Mexico and coordinator for the San Miguel de Allende Feast site, along with Ministerial Services operation manager Doug Horchak and local elders Alfredo López and Ernesto Arteaga, ordained Andrés Cisneros as a deacon.

It was moving to see Mr. Cisneros, one of the most service-oriented members in the Mexico City congregation, hugged by friends and family at the end of services. Mr. Cisneros was baptized on Aug. 17, 1999, a decade after his family started to attend the Worldwide Church of God in the Mexican capital. Since then, he has been characterized by his disposition to serve and help the Mexico City congregation. Mr. Cisneros' ordination is confirmation of what he has done for years and that he has been an example to all the members of his family (his wife, two children, mother and two brothers). For this reason, the ministry is certain that Andrés Cisneros will continue serving in the church with love and diligence.

Jorge Iván Garduño



David Hicks

On the Feast of Trumpets, Oct. 3, 2016, Knoxville, Tennessee, pastor Eric Evans ordained David Hicks a deacon in the Church of God. Mr. Evans was assisted by elder Jeff Baker. David and his wife, Ginger, have served in many capacities in the Knoxville congregation since their move from Missouri in June 2012.

David was around 8 years of age when he was introduced to the Church in London, Kentucky, and Ginger was born into God's Church while her family lived in Pasadena, California. They were both baptized and married by the pastor of the Columbia, Missouri, congregation, Greg Sargent.

Judy Swanson



Kisione and Latai Pelisikoti

On Aug. 27, 2016, Kisione and Latai Pelisikoti were ordained deacon and deaconess by local pastor André van Belkum, who was assisted by Leon Walker.

Mr. Pelisikoti was born in Tonga. He worked in the United States for nine years and now resides in Auckland with his wife, Latai, and their youngest daughter, Loraine. They also have three other daughters, Mina, Lupi and Sela, who are all attending Foundation Institute this year. Their son, George, lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with

his wife, Kara.

The ordination was followed by warm hugs and congratulations to the family. It was indeed a time of rejoicing because of God's blessing to His Church in Auckland.

Andrei Siopan



Sherry Sodergren

Sherry (Alexander) Sodergren, a faithful member of the Asheville, North Carolina, congregation, was ordained a deaconess by her pastor, Eric Evans. Born in North Carolina, Sherry graduated from Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, in 1972. She married and spent several years in Texas, where her four daughters were born. They are Catherine Girard, Dareth Kovaleski, Erin Alexander and Stephanie Alexander. The family moved to South Carolina, where her husband died prematurely, and Sherry remained a widow for a number of years before marrying John Sodergren in 2010. They live in Simpsonville, North Carolina, a suburb of Greenville.

Judy Swanson

ANNIVERSARIES



Benjamin and Mary Lou Richmond

On Oct. 20, 2016, Benjamin and Mary Lou Richmond of the Leicester,

Massachusetts, congregation marked the survival of 60 years of married life together. This was not a storybook romance, but a series of hard knocks and foolish mistakes. It is also a story about miracles.

In the 1960s Mary Lou had wanted to straighten her life out and prayed to God for help. One day, God answered her prayer when she tuned in to *The World Tomorrow* on WWVA radio. She was baptized in December of 1967. A real miracle!

Her husband, Benjamin, started attending the Feast of Tabernacles with the family in 1973. He also camped with them for a few years and attended a few church services on occasion. By the 1980s, he was attending regularly.

Fast forwarding to 1996, Ben requested baptism and joined the family of God in March of that year. More miracles! With a lot of growth and understanding, they began to walk together on the path toward eternal life.

Mary Lou knew for quite a while that she had ancestors who probably kept the Sabbath. Her father's mother was a Crandall—descended from Elder John Crandall of the 1600s. After much research into her background, Mary Lou found that Samuel and Tacy Hubbard, some of the first Sabbath-keepers in Rhode Island, were her distant grandparents. While tracing Ben's ancestry, she found that he, too, was a descendant of Samuel and Tacy Hubbard.

Ben and Mary Lou have two sons, Wayne and Stephen, and a daughter, Tertia King. They are blessed with six grandchildren and two great-grandsons. Mary Lou serves the Leicester congregation as one of our deaconesses, and both help in other areas as a source of encouragement to many.

Lorraine Daudelin



Erwin and Gladys Knuth

Erwin and Gladys Knuth, longtime

members of the Church of God, celebrated 60 years of marriage on Sept. 1, 2016. The couple attends the small but faithful COGWA congregation in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Erwin and Gladys met each other in 1955 at their local country church in rural Alberta. To their surprise, they learned that both of their parents were neighbors back in Europe. They were married on Sept. 1, 1956, in Meadowview, a small town in northwestern Alberta. It was an extremely rainy day, and they had to overcome certain obstacles, such as getting stuck in the mud on the way to the ceremony. Nevertheless, the wedding did take place!

They began to farm in 1961, and even as retirees now, they both still go to their daughter's farm and help whenever possible. Their calling first began in the early 1960s. Learning God's way involved a few changes—such as no longer raising pigs on their farm! By 1964, they began to attend Bible studies and then services with the Worldwide Church of God. Erwin was baptized in 1964, and Gladys shortly after in 1965. They have two daughters, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. In 2001, after years of faithful service, Erwin and Gladys were ordained as deacon and deaconess.

On Aug. 20 the Edmonton and Calgary congregations combined to celebrate this special occasion. Pastor Mark Whynaucht, his wife, Cheryl, and the brethren presented the happy couple with an engraved silver desk clock and anniversary card. Of course, as with any special occasion, cake was also a necessity and enjoyed by all!

The Knuths' love and devotion to God and to one another is an inspiration to us all and gives us a great example of following in Christ's footsteps.

Elsa Schafers

On June 1, 2016, Larry and Linda Neff celebrated 50 years of marriage. The following Sabbath they were honored in both the Berthoud and Castle Rock, Colorado, congregations, where they serve.

Larry Neff and Linda Sloane first met in the fall of 1964 at the Pasadena



Larry and Linda Neff

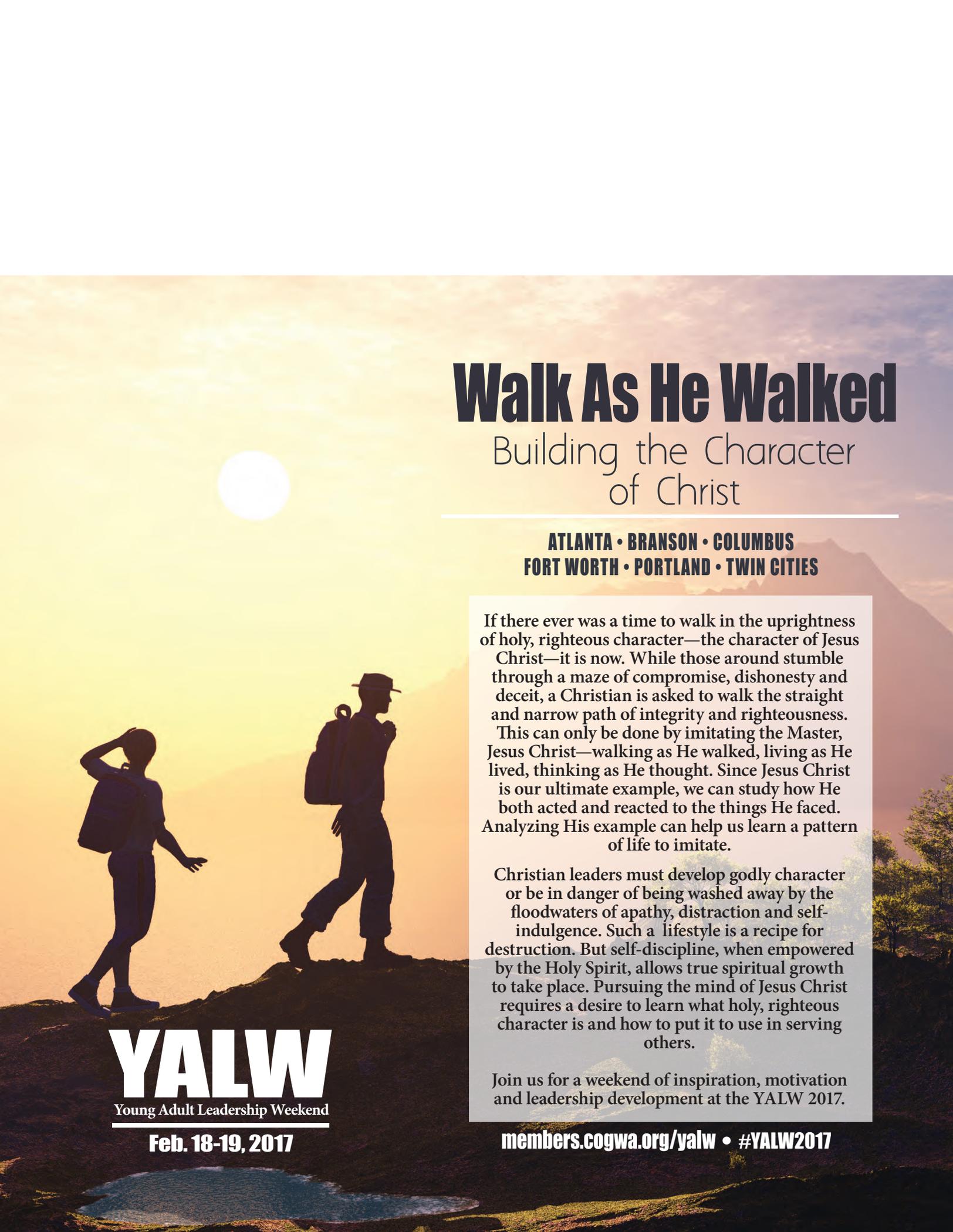
campus of Ambassador College. Linda's "sparkling brown eyes" proved to be quite an attraction, and the two were married on June 1, 1966, in the Lower Gardens on campus.

Larry became a pastor in 1971 and, together with his lovely bride, has faithfully served in Austin/Waco, Texas; Tucson/Sierra Vista, Arizona; Sacramento, California; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and is currently serving the Front Range area of Colorado.

Larry and Linda have three children, Larry, Debbie and Melissa; and five grandchildren, William, Emily, Tristan, Dylan and Finn.

Much love and laughter can be seen in their marriage, and they have been a great example and inspiration to the brethren they serve!

Sera Grabowski

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two hikers walking on a ridge at sunset. The sun is a large, bright white circle in the upper left, casting a warm orange and yellow glow across the sky. The hiker in the foreground is on the left, wearing a backpack and looking back over their shoulder. The second hiker is further up the ridge on the right, also with a backpack and a hat. The landscape is dark and silhouetted against the bright sky.

Walk As He Walked

Building the Character
of Christ

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If there ever was a time to walk in the uprightness of holy, righteous character—the character of Jesus Christ—it is now. While those around stumble through a maze of compromise, dishonesty and deceit, a Christian is asked to walk the straight and narrow path of integrity and righteousness. This can only be done by imitating the Master, Jesus Christ—walking as He walked, living as He lived, thinking as He thought. Since Jesus Christ is our ultimate example, we can study how He both acted and reacted to the things He faced. Analyzing His example can help us learn a pattern of life to imitate.

Christian leaders must develop godly character or be in danger of being washed away by the floodwaters of apathy, distraction and self-indulgence. Such a lifestyle is a recipe for destruction. But self-discipline, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, allows true spiritual growth to take place. Pursuing the mind of Jesus Christ requires a desire to learn what holy, righteous character is and how to put it to use in serving others.

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