Feast of Tabernacles 2020

Sharpening Iron
Reflecting on the Feast—What? So What? Now What?

Journeys and Reflections
Roy and Pauline Demarest
The Feast of Tabernacles 2020 is now behind us. It was truly one for the record books! But in spite of all the challenges we faced, it has been described by so many as one of the best Feasts ever! It seems that when we have physical challenges, we focus more intently on the spiritual.

In reality, the physical challenges we faced this year in the United States would be considered minor when compared to the challenges faced daily by brethren in other parts of the world. I know that we are all fully aware of these things, but sometimes it does help us to have a broader perspective as we reflect on things. Consider what our members are faced with in southern Africa. As a result of the pandemic, combined with a severe drought, countries like Zimbabwe are facing the greatest threat of starvation in more than a decade, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In a recent report, the WHO stated that within a matter of months, potentially thousands will die from starvation in this region alone.

During this year’s Feast, the plan of God was clearly laid out over a period of eight days. We know that this plan, which is centered on the return of Jesus Christ, will provide the ultimate solution to these problems. But the fact that we know the solution should not prevent us from grieving with those who are suffering, and we should still try to do what we can to alleviate that suffering. It is part of who we are as Christians. We adhere to what Christ called the second great commandment—to love your neighbor as yourself.

To illustrate this point on a small scale, I want to share with you an event that took place in Orange Beach this year. It wasn’t about starvation or human suffering, but it was one of the most encouraging things that I have seen (or, in this case, heard of) in recent years.

As you know, two weeks before the Feast, Hurricane Sally struck Alabama’s Gulf Coast area, which includes the cities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. After a herculean effort of cleanup, the area was able to host the Feast. Businesses were up and running, but that didn’t mean all private properties had been cleaned up and returned to normal.

Upon arrival at the Feast, we were made aware of two employees of the Event Center (where services were held) who had spent so much time getting the center ready for our services that their own properties were left in need of cleanup. Rhonda Waddle, a Church member from Houston who serves on the board of Foundation Outreach International (the nonprofit organization created by the Church to “do good”), arranged a work party to assist the families of these two men. On Sunday afternoon during the Feast, 210 volunteers showed up and cleaned these two properties.

A neighbor commented how amazed he was that so many people showed up to help a stranger while they were “on vacation.” It was indeed a true light to the community of Orange Beach and those who benefited from the volunteer labor.

Paul admonished the Galatians that “as we have opportunity, let us do good to all” (Galatians 6:10). In the example from Orange Beach, it wasn’t Church members who benefited from the love and care of the brethren, but there was a need and members rose to the occasion.

I believe that Jesus Christ will return soon to solve the world’s problems. Starvation and pandemics will be a thing of the past. But until then, we are admonished to be lights in a spiritually dark world (Philippians 2:15) that seems to grow darker each and every day.

I want to thank the group in Orange Beach for making a difference for these two families. I hope everyone had a great Feast and that each of us made a difference, where we could, for those we had contact with. Hopefully, this year, more than ever, we did shine like lights “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”!

Jim Franks
President
Church of God, a Worldwide Association
Sharpening Iron
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2019 Audit

Journeys and Reflections
Roy and Pauline Demarest

2020 Feast of Tabernacles Reports

Church Potluck

Announcements
Do you recognize the photo above?

If not, take another look at this issue’s cover, turn it upside down to see it from another angle, and you’ll recognize the reflection of the young adults who posed for that picture on their hike during the Feast at Park City, Utah.

Every one of us is carrying mental pictures—they’re called memories—of this year’s Feast. One of the best things we can do is to take another look at them, from other angles, and see what is reflected in our experiences.

Those hikers pictured will instantly see more than just the photo. Photos inevitably trigger a lot of associated memories. They will reminisce about the total experience of their hike—the beautiful scenery, animals they spotted, conversations on the trail, or even the post-hike aches and pains they experienced courtesy of the mountain climb.

Likewise, reflecting on our own Feast experiences triggers numerous memories, and focusing on the lessons we learned is key to gleaning the greatest value from keeping God’s Festival.

Educators have long understood that their classroom teaching is only part of an effective learning process. The students’ practice of reflecting upon what they have been taught is essential to connecting the lesson to their lives. So it is for our eight days in our Feast “classroom.”


“At its simplest, reflection is about careful thought,” writes Jennifer Porter on the Harvard Business Review website (March 21, 2017). “Reflection gives the brain an opportunity to pause amidst the chaos, untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations, and create meaning.
This meaning becomes learning, which can then inform future mindsets and actions."

Is this not God’s intent for us, that His feasts create meaning in our lives, which becomes learning, which then guides our thoughts, attitudes and future actions?

To that end, it’s critical to our spiritual growth to take time to reflect—to think about the messages we heard, the conversations we had, the things we experienced.

I want to share with you a great formula I recently stumbled on that has changed the way I think about how to effectively do this.

In 2001 Gary Rolfe, Dawn Freshwater and Melanie Jasper authored a book titled Critical Reflection for Nursing and the Helping Professions: A User’s Guide. Intended for medical professionals, the reflection process they proposed quickly gained widespread popularity because of its simplicity and effectiveness.

All it requires is pondering three basic questions:

What? So what? Now what?

Let’s examine this reflection process by asking these questions in the context of the Feast.

1. What?

This question is about describing. What did I hear in that message? What events happened each day? What was my reaction? What reactions did others have? What was good or bad about the experience? What did I observe? What resulted?

2. So what?

With this question we move to analyzing. What were the results or consequences of what I experienced? What conclusions did I reach? What did I learn about myself? What did I learn about others? How was it significant? Why does it matter? How does it relate to my life spiritually, mentally or emotionally? What values or opinions were changed or reinforced through this?

3. Now what?

This last question is about changing. What can I apply from what I learned? How will I do things differently or approach people differently? What should I do the same? What can I do more constructively in my life as a result? What do I want to remember? What do I want to make sure I follow up on—study more, think about more, talk about more with others, etc.? What do I need to share with others?

Reflecting on these three questions alone covers virtually every angle necessary for our growth!

The “reflection paper” approach

Foundation Institute (FI) graduates will tell you they were seldom tested on the material they were taught, but they were assigned to write a lot of “reflection papers.” Each instructor has his own approach, of course, but let me share as an example one of my past assignments when I taught the Former Prophets classes a few years ago.

When we finished the book of Joshua, my reflection paper assignment to the students was this: “You are talking with members after services next week, and you mention that we just finished the book of Joshua in class. They ask, ‘What do you remember most from that book, and why does that stand out to you?’ What do you say?”

The students were given a couple of days to submit a short essay—a page or less—giving their answers.

Why have we taken that approach to their FI education?

First and foremost, it is a biblical principle. God told Israel time and again to remember the lessons of their experiences, and the only way to do that is by reflecting upon them.

“Moses said to the people,” we read in Exodus 13:3, “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place.”

Moses knew it would be critical to their spiritual and physical survival for them to reflect often on God’s working in their lives. Furthermore, he added in verse 8, “And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.’”

In other words, share with your family these great lessons of life!

Sad to say, most of them forgot the lessons. As noted in Psalm 106:7, “Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea.”

Reflection is a biblical principle because it works! It solidifies our experiences. As author James Clear put it, “Reading can teach you the best of what others already know. Reflection can teach you the best of what only you can know.”

Ralph Levy, one of the Foundation Institute instructors, explained to me, “Reflection helps to synthesize rather than memorize.” We don’t want to see students just be able to explain the scriptures we covered on a particular book of the Bible, he said. What we really want is to give them teachings about the book, then see them take the main themes and lessons and understand how they integrate into their lives today.

David Johnson, another FI instructor, said he is adding discussion boards to his classes next year as another way for students to engage and share their reflections with each other. One can consider, “What does this mean to me?” but when he or she talks with others about it, the back-and-forth responses generate even greater depths of comprehension.

“Some of the reflection papers in the past have shown very good thought,” Dr. Levy noted. He said it is always
The 2019 independent audit was completed in July, and we are happy to share the results with our Church members and donors, who generously support the Church or God, a Worldwide Association, Inc.

We are very thankful to report that income received for 2019 was just over $13 million—the highest in our history. This was a 3 percent increase over 2018, which was also a strong year, with income just under $12.7 million. Total expenses for 2019 and 2018 were about $12.5 million and $11.7 million respectively.

In both years our income exceeded expenses. This results in a very positive and stable financial position for the Church and enables the Church to build a cash reserve for expenses going forward.

We acknowledge that these blessings come from God the Father and Jesus Christ, who continue to bless our income. Especially in today’s turbulent times, we recognize that it is only by God’s grace, mercy and continued blessing that we will continue to experience the sound financial health with which God has blessed us these past nine years.

We extend our deepest thanks and appreciation to the brethren and others who support the Church for their continuing generosity and faithfulness in giving tithes and offerings. We ask that you continue to pray for us to have wisdom and discretion as we follow Christ’s lead in our stewardship of the resources He provides.

This year’s audited financial statement is for the years ending Dec. 31, 2019, and 2018. In a confirmation letter dated July 28, our independent auditing firm, Henry & Peters, P.C., of Tyler, Texas, gave us a favorable, “unqualified” opinion that the financial statements accurately present the Church’s financial position and results of operations for 2019 and, by comparison, for 2018.

The unqualified opinion reflects our independent auditor’s judgment that, without any identified exceptions, our financial records and statements are fairly and appropriately presented and are in
accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

These results not only positively reflect the performance of the financial operations of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc., but the entire organization's approach to its fiscal responsibilities. The Ministerial Board of Directors and administration are committed to continuously improving the Church's operations and being the best stewards we can be of the financial resources God provides us to do His work. An unqualified opinion is just one indication of that commitment.

Below we have presented several statements related to the Church's operations for the year ending Dec. 31, 2019. ©©

Go to the following link to view the audited financial statements and related unqualified opinion online:
https://cogwa.org/assets/Church_of_God_a_Worldwide_Association_2019_Audit.pdf
Recently retired pastor Roy Demarest, along with his wife, Pauline, reflected that “serving in the ministry for these last 53 years has been the greatest honor and privilege of our lives. There have been many challenges and disappointments during this time, but they cannot compare to the glorious future that God has promised to us all. There can be no more satisfying life than to serve the God who made us.”

For them, it all began with two faithful mothers. Pauline’s mother, Mary Baxter, heard Herbert Armstrong in 1947, when Pauline was 3 years old. Edna Demarest first heard The World Tomorrow broadcast in New Jersey on Christmas 1956. Roy was 12 years old. Edna was baptized in 1957 by a team from Pasadena, California, but had to wait until 1959 to attend church. That was when a congregation began in New York City. At that first Sabbath service in New York City, Mrs. Demarest met 16-year-old Pauline and her mother, Mary. Little did Roy or Pauline know that this event would play such a big part in their lives many years later.

Ordination and service
Pauline went to Ambassador College in 1961, and Roy in 1963. In 1964 they both were transferred to Big Sandy, Texas, to help pioneer the new campus. Their friendship developed into love, and they were married on June 5, 1967, after Roy’s graduation.

Then it was off to Evansville, Indiana, to assist the local pastor. Roy was ordained as an elder at the Feast in Jekyll Island, Georgia, in 1967. Thus began a life filled with travel, friendships and exciting experiences lasting for more than 50 years.

In 1978 the Demarests were transferred from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Pasadena for a yearlong sabbatical. That was cut short when they were asked to fill a need in Baltimore, Maryland. They recall the six years spent in Baltimore as some of the best years of their lives. Every day seemed to be filled with activity in the congregation of more than 500, and many enduring friendships were forged there.

Mr. Demarest’s health necessitated a move to a warmer climate, so they were reassigned to Tampa, Florida, in 1985. While there, Roy served as the district and later the regional Y.O.U. coordinator. There were 70 teens in the Tampa congregation, so every weekend was filled with teen activities.

Mr. Demarest estimates that he baptized more than 500 people from 1967 to 1992. One of the most memorable baptisms was his very first. The pastor let him baptize a lady, and when he asked her, while she was sitting in the water, if she had repented of her sins, she said, “No!” He looked at her and said, “What do you mean, no?”

That was his only experience of having someone say “no” to that question, and it had to be his first baptism! There was, however, a happy ending. “The lady was baptized after we counseled for a few minutes. She thought she needed to be free from all sin before being baptized.”

Family
The Demarests’ three sons, Cliff, Chad and Daniel, were all baptized by their dad. He officiated at their weddings, and they, along with their wives, are all members of COGWA today. The Demarests are also blessed to have six grandchildren: Hannah, Derek, David, Kaley, Ella and Zoey.

Of the many memorable events during his ministry, Mr. Demarest recalls one in particular. His son Cliff was accidentally stabbed during shop class. The Demarests rushed to the high school and found EMTs working on Cliff, his blood pressure critically low. Mr. Demarest
rode with his son in the ambulance and prayed for Cliff’s healing, and his life. Several anxious hours later, their son was released to go home. Fervent prayers had been answered. “Miracles like that stay in your mind forever,” a grateful father remembers.

Rewarding experiences
Another inspiring event involved a lady in one of their congregations.
“She was one of the most negative people we had ever met. She was critical of seemingly everyone. We decided to see if we could win her over. So, we visited her often; we admired her gardening and her prowess at quilting. She slowly started to warm up to us. She taught us to play canasta. She finally felt comfortable enough to tell us her life story. It was a sad tale of neglect and abuse, and it had made her bitter.
“She was baptized again after she realized that she just hadn’t been ready years before. After this, her life and outlook began to change. She started to like people, and they began to enjoy her company. To this day, my wife and I consider this one of our most inspiring and rewarding experiences in the ministry.”

Now that the years of his active ministry have drawn to a close, Mr. Demarest thoughtfully sums them up: “One of the most satisfying parts of the ministry has been visiting many hundreds of people that God was calling to the faith. To see the excitement and joy in their lives from hearing God’s way of life explained to them will always be a highlight of our years in the ministry.”

On the Road Again
The following are the congregations that the Demarests served between 1967 and 2020:

1967       Ministerial assistant, Evansville, Indiana
1967       Ordained an elder at the Feast in Jekyll Island, Georgia
1968-1971  Resident elder, Cape Girardeau, Missouri
1971-1972  Resident elder, Evansville, Indiana
1972-1974  Pastor, Evansville, Indiana, and Bowling Green, Kentucky
1974-1978  Pastor, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
1978-1979  Sabbatical in Pasadena, California
1979-1985  Pastor, Baltimore, Maryland
1985-1993  Pastor, Tampa, Florida
1993-1995  Pastor, Orlando and Port Orange, Florida
1995-1998  Pastor, Orlando and Palm Bay, Florida
1998-2007  Pastor, West Palm Beach, Miami and Port St. Lucie, Florida
2007-2010  Pastor, Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida
2011-2017  Pastor, Orlando, Florida
2017-2018  Pastor, Orlando and Ocala, Florida
2018-2020  Pastor, Orlando, Florida

Additional responsibilities:
1988-1990  District Y.O.U. coordinator in Florida
1991       Feast coordinator in St. Petersburg, Florida
1993-1994  Feast coordinator in Daytona Beach, Florida
1995-1998  Feast coordinator in Orlando, Florida
The 2020 Feast of Tabernacles was a great success—despite the many challenges we faced with seating restrictions and hurricanes! Ministers and Feast coordinators in the U.S. and those representing brethren around the world shared their observations of the positive, inspirational impact of the Feast for God’s people.

Amid the ongoing uncertainty and chaos of this world, the Feast of 2020 offered the brethren a well-deserved time for rejoicing, fellowship and the wonderful vision of the future that the Feast prefigures for all mankind.

Whether they were attending virtually from their homes, or part of the thousands that were able to meet in small groups in Malaysia, Sri Lanka and various places in Latin America, brethren enjoyed the wonderful vision of the world tomorrow that the Feast brings to God’s people every year.

Those brethren fortunate enough to meet with larger groups in New Zealand, the Philippines and the United States were all able to worship the great God—enjoying His rich blessings during these eight days, while focusing on the inspiring hope of the future that God’s plan gives to all of His people.

Doug Horchak

AFRICA

MALAWI

This year the Malawi church observed the Feast in three sites instead of one place. This first in our history was due to COVID-19 restrictions. Combined, the three sites—Blantyre, Lilongwe and Ntcheu—had a high attendance of 135.

At the time of planning and preparations, a number of members had questions and some felt disappointed that the usual site near Lake Malawi would not be used. However, as the Feast was coming to an end, everyone claimed that it was the best Feast ever! The reality of the present situation overwhelmed the familiarity of the past situations.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we did not have a visiting minister, so Elifazi Salawila and Tielmans Chirwa

I crisscrossed country, visiting the three sites with the message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. The sermons were tailored to our preparations for work in that Kingdom.

Thursday was the outing day. Brethren from Lilongwe and Ntcheu visited the lake at Senga Bay and had a number of activities, including swimming. Blantyre members visited a game sanctuary at Bvumbwe. We had a walking tour of about 2 kilometers and were able to view wild animals like zebra, giraffe and others.

We had three guides, placed in front, in the middle and at the rear of our group. One guide questioned our purpose of being there as a church. When he heard about God’s appointed feasts as written in Leviticus 23, he looked surprised. The subject of not going to heaven was also a topic of conversation. At the end of the tour he gave us his two phone numbers and asked for the Church’s literature, especially that relating to prophecy.

During the Feast, members enjoyed delicious millennial meals, which we do not often have in our homes due to how expensive they are. We very much appreciate the Church’s generous assistance that enabled us to experience a bit of a foretaste of the utopian life in God’s Kingdom. We are eagerly waiting for its soon coming.

Tielmans Chirwa

ZAMBIA

This year’s Feast of Tabernacles was extraordinary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To meet government regulations, we held the Feast at the following three sites: Lusaka (at the Sanctuary Lodge), Mapoko and Nalubanda. The total attendance was 178 (compared to 173 in 2019).

The sermons looked at the poverty, sickness, violence and squalor that we witness today in our country. This dismal present-day picture was contrasted with what the world will be like when Jesus Christ, together with the saints, takes over the Zambian government.

All the Feast sites reported that they enjoyed plenty of tasty food, and there was a lot of time to fellowship. The Family Day was the highlight in all the sites. Many members said that seeing Shirley Banda, who is battling cancer, attend the Feast was extremely encouraging to them.

On the Last Great Day there was some anxiety, because it threatened to rain in Nalubanda and Lusaka. In Mapoko a gust of wind almost tore the tents. But the bad weather held off. A few minutes after the Lusaka bus left the Feast site, there was a huge downpour, which continued throughout the night and only finished the following day in the afternoon. God still takes care of the needs of His people today.

Silvestor Njovu

ASIA/PACIFIC

BACOLED CITY, PHILIPPINES

The Feast this year was like no other. Twenty-eight brethren kept the Feast in Bacolod City, our central webcast site, with another 21 in Tacloban and about 200 others online across the Philippines, Indonesia,
Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia—either alone or with families and small groups. With travel and group meeting restrictions and lockdowns, everyone was so grateful to have the services broadcasted live over the Internet.

We even managed to have virtual activities throughout the Feast, the highlights of which were daily fellowshipping, Bible bowl night and the family entertainment night, which drew a lot of positive comments.

The brethren really appreciated all the encouraging sermon messages, especially those from headquarters, which were just wonderful and so inspiring, as well as the sermonettes and special music.

We also had one baptism on the sixth day, which added to our rejoicing.

These are clearly interesting times, and we all look forward to gathering together in person as a group next year—and to the fulfillment of the meaning of the Feast in the future.

Beltran Sison

LAKE TAUPO, NEW ZEALAND

The Feast at Lake Taupo was filled with so many positive aspects—and very few negative ones. After all the uncertainties of whether we’d be able to meet together in person, there was rejoicing and thankfulness seldom witnessed on the opening night, when 64 brethren congregated with joy.

The sense of relief—that finally the Feast had arrived, and we were together as a family—was evident. That spirit of togetherness and brotherly love was a hallmark of the next eight days.

There were two baptisms, which were performed in one of the thermal spas at the resort where the services were held. Members stayed healthy, with only one anointing.

Not even a tremor—caused by a low-level quake that could clearly be felt in the hall during one of the services—could dampen our spirits. We received a message from the hotel reception that, should a more severe tremor occur, we should immediately evacuate the building. Fortunately, nothing further materialized. I am sure most of us were silently praying for calm!

The sermons focused on the coming Kingdom of God, with special emphasis on our part in the reeducation programs Christ will institute.

We held the usual Feast activities—opening evening get-together, Feast dinner, seniors’ dinner, youth activities and outings to local scenic and entertainment spots. The weather was near perfect—no rain and plenty of sunny, warm days.

André van Belkum

LANGKAWI, MALAYSIA

This year, the Malaysian brethren gathered together to keep God’s Feast at Adya Hotel in Pulau Langkawi (Langkawi Island), Malaysia. The area is surrounded by the sea on one side and the mountains on the other and has a warm climate—a perfect place to be inspired by majestic views of God’s creation.

The opening night video message by David Baker provided brethren with the strength and encouragement needed for the remaining days of the Feast. Festival greetings from the other sites around the world were most encouraging. Brethren were inspired by all the rich spiritual messages that helped us picture the Millennium and our future role as kings and priests.

The weather throughout the Feast was a great blessing, with beautiful sunny days, which made it easier for the brethren to visit various places like Underwater World, 3D Art Museum and Dataran Lang, also known as Eagle Square. Eagle Square, with its large sculpture of an eagle, is one of Langkawi’s best man-made attractions.

In addition, brethren enjoyed the steep cable car ride up Langkawi’s second highest peak, Mount Machinchang. The ride allowed views of the surrounding islands, hillside flora, waterfalls and occasional glimpses of wildlife and birds.

Though only a small number of members attended the site, all who did enjoyed fellowship and doing most of the activities together. We left having had a truly joyful and memorable Feast experience—and hoping that we will be joined by even more members in the future.

Samuel Isaac

NEGOMBO, SRI LANKA

The Feast of Tabernacles 2020 in Negombo, Sri Lanka, was observed by 16 brethren, who enjoyed warm and tropical breezes on the shores of the Indian Ocean at the beautiful Grace Beach Resort. We had perfect and wonderful weather throughout the Feast.

We missed our overseas brethren, who unfortunately
were prevented from attending the Feast with us due to the COVID-19 restrictions. The 16 of us present all shared our meals together and enjoyed and rejoiced in our fellowship. The spiritual sermons were outstanding in helping and reminding us to stay focused on preparing to serve with Jesus Christ in the wonderful world tomorrow. We also had a Bible study.

The Grace Beach Resort provided us with a great selection of Eastern and Western cuisine, which was enjoyed by all. We were unable to visit any places of interest due to the COVID-19 restrictions. But we had a wonderful Family Day, a karaoke night where we all sang our hearts out, and a talent show.

The Feast in Negombo was truly an inspiring example of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Rodney Vanheer

LATIN AMERICA

COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR

If we could define 2020’s Feast with one word, it would be expectation!

Due to COVID-19, we were in confinement for about seven months, without having any chance to meet personally with the members. Our every activity as a church was done online.

As the Feast drew near, we had to accept the fact that we would have to continue with our online meetings. I’m sure most of the attendees from Colombia and Ecuador felt disappointed. But despite adversity, we were determined to celebrate our “Feast to the Lord.”

But we still had questions: How would it go? Would we be happy? Could we please God? Could we be united? Could we enjoy the Feast?

We came up with a program that, in addition to services (our primary activity), used technology to design activities for members to share. There were online games; an artistic show with poetry, short stories and painting; and a fashion show focused on the most popular garment of our time—the wonderful face mask.

This unforgettable Feast was way beyond our expectations. God made the Feast with His presence, spending time “virtually” with the members in such a wonderful way that at times we thought we were physically together. The sermons, the special music, the leadership seminars and the leisure activities had the fruit and the manifestation of God’s presence and inspiration.

As if that weren’t enough, we also had the great joy of having a baptism: Pablo Andres Hernández, who lives in Bogotá.

We are deeply grateful to God for all He made possible during the Feast—His protection, care, love and unwavering loyalty. Thinking about the Feast we just had, I remember the inspiring words of Romans 8:31-32.

As we face the world again and continue on our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God, the memory of this unforgettable Feast will be with us forever!

Eduardo Hernández

GUATEMALA

“Exciting, edifying, entertaining, full of joy, deep like one’s first love, something that surpassed everyone’s expectations.”

These are some of the words or phrases used to describe the Feast of Tabernacles 2020 in Guatemala. This was the case not at just one specific site, but at all of the many places where God allowed us to keep the Feast in our own tabernacles. Once again, we saw the promise of the joy He gives us, the hope of a better future in the Millennium, His protection and the filling of our hearts with His words. We had an average of 98 Zoom connections, with a total attendance of 575 people (455 adults and 120 children) for services and the activities we held online. We enjoyed saying hello to each other on camera, singing and praying together, and even clapping and cheering one another on.

God placed His name in so many places: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Mexico and the U.S. We also shared photos and videos with brethren in Chile, Colombia, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, France and some countries in Africa.

God’s love and His Spirit connected us. All of us could feel it. Every family was even more dedicated and put in even more effort. We were all responsible for making the most of the Feast—the decorations in our homes, the flowers, the banners on the walls, the setup for the area dedicated to the webcast, services themselves, the audio, the Internet, the music, the food, our clothes, etc. Even though the situation around the world was chaotic, the circumstances surrounding this Feast encompassed the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 8:28.

This Feast has truly been a massive benefit for all of us. For now, we must continue
to hold Sabbath services online, but we hope to see each other soon.

Luis Mundo

MEXICO

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, the Church was not able to organize any official Feast site, so Church members in Mexico celebrated a virtual Feast this year—and enjoyed it just the same. We had 98 Internet connections throughout the Feast. Some few families were able to get together with extended family and close friends at hotels or cottages, but for services they, too, connected via the Internet.

As Latins, we missed the close fellowshipping, the kissing and embracing of our spiritual family from all over the country, especially those we do not get to see but once a year. However, we all understood the situation and put forward our best attitude to contribute in whatever way we could. The participation for activities and music was fantastic.

Everything was done professionally. The youth chipped in with their technical knowledge, assuring that all transmissions went through without any technical problems. The special music pieces, which included both the local area choirs and the international choirs, were excellent and uplifting. We also had many sermons to listen to, since headquarters sent us many very good ones that were already translated into Spanish for us. We had many of them up on a website for members to watch as Bible studies in the afternoons, after services.

Brethren were very happy to see and hear Mr. Franks’ sermon, which he gave in Spanish (no translation needed) on the second day. We were also able to enjoy some virtual activities, like a tea party for the elderly and the traditional talent show, which was prerecorded. All of these made this Feast very enjoyable and unique.

At the end of the Feast someone put together a slideshow with pictures of all of us having activities with our families and enjoying the Feast locally. Many tears of joy were shed.

I believe that this year God has shown us how much He truly loves us and how much we love and miss each other—things we may have taken for granted in years past. Overall, deep spiritual lessons were learned, both from the sermons and from this new way of having to keep the Feast. May our Father speed the day when we will all be together in His Kingdom.

Larry Roybal

SOUTHERN SOUTH AMERICA

“It exceeded our expectations.” This was the common phrase heard at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles in the groups where it was kept around the Southern Cone.

Prior to the Feast, several small miracles were obvious to many of us. First, in Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay and Brazil, travel restrictions due to the pandemic were lifted just enough to allow almost everyone to travel to a nearby location and gather in small groups to keep the Feast.

Only Argentina maintained a total quarantine, with the brethren unable to leave their homes. However, even under strict restrictions, a second small miracle could be seen. There was one family in Argentina who had been unable to leave their home for several months and wanted to keep the Feast with their extended family, who live in another city. The head of the family found a way to ask for a special travel permit so they could join the rest of their family for the holy Feast. The condition required by the authorities was that they had to stay at their destination for at least 10 days—the exact number of days needed for them to keep the Feast.

A third event in which God’s intervention was obvious concerned a family in Chile. Three members of this family were diagnosed with COVID-19 only three days before the Feast of Tabernacles. Complicating things further, this family is very hospitable, and they’d had direct or indirect contact with several people from the Church. So all these people’s plans for the Feast would need to change, and they would have to enter into a mandatory and total quarantine. We all prayed for our brethren to be he healed. Amazingly, a day later laboratory officials called the “infected” family to apologize for having “made a mistake in their diagnosis.” The family was not infected, and they and all those who’d had contact with them were able to keep the Feast as planned.

Despite so many doubts and worries before this year’s Feast, in the end, everyone in the Southern Cone was able to keep it peacefully. We had 710 people gathered in different places to worship God during the eight days. All of them “registered” and reported to us where and with whom they would be keeping the Feast.

Each day of the Feast brought immense joy, as we saw the hundreds of faces of the brethren gathered to

La Plata, Colombia

Mexico
wondering. We also used Facebook and cogwa.tv for the broadcast of services and activities. A total of 165 connections were used to be “present” before God. The groups connected ranged from several brethren to only one family. The largest group was of 63 members in Algarrobo, Chile. Then there were 50 in Melipilla, Chile; 45 in Pelluhue, Chile; 20 in Pirque, Chile; 20 in Lican Ray, Chile; 15 in Santa Cruz, Bolivia; and so on.

It was also very encouraging to have a virtual talent show of high quality numbers that took a long time to prepare, rehearse, record and edit. The only objective of all of their effort was worshipping God and cheering up the brethren.

We also had other virtual activities, such as a children's party, an elderly tea time, a ladies' breakfast, a youth activity, a Spokesman Club, etc. It was very exciting and encouraging to see everyone participating!

Another factor that contributed to the joy of the Feast was the opportunity to hear several sermons from members of the Church’s administration in Texas and from Leon Walker, our regional director.

It was also very encouraging to know that several people in the area were keeping the Feast of God for the first time or were returning to the Church after many years.

In Uruguay Hector Bassi had been part of the Worldwide Church of God until 1995 and this year was keeping the Feast alone in a wooden cabin that he had built in his backyard. One day during the Feast, Hector was praying when he heard a loud knock on his door. It was Marcos Severo, another former member of the Worldwide Church of God who is now in our Church. Our brethren in Uruguay were in a hotel in the city of Salto—where Hector lives—keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. The two men told each other that they were keeping God’s Feast. Hector Bassi was moved with emotion when he realized that the Church of God had not disappeared in 1995, as he had thought. He kept the rest of the Feast with us and continues to gather with the Church through Zoom every Sabbath.

In Santiago, Chile, Ayleen Fernandez and her family had been members of the Worldwide Church of God. In recent years, for different reasons, she had been keeping the Sabbaths and the holy days at home. But this year, Ayleen and her children wanted to keep the Feast of Tabernacles with other members of the Church of God. I spoke with her, and she expressed her desire, so they met with other families of our Church at a nearby location, worshipping God together for the eight days. Ayleen returned from the Feast happy, with the conviction that she had found her brethren in the faith. Now she and her children are gathering with us.

Despite the pandemic and the suffering it has caused in the world, the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, in the Southern Cone was able to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day with much joy, peace and harmony. We saw God’s miracles and other encouraging events that made this Feast an event we will never forget. The Feast filled us with spiritual energy to continue worshipping God eagerly, even in the midst of the pandemic.

Saúl Langarica

UNITED STATES & CANADA

BRANSON, MISSOURI

Branson, Missouri, was dressed in beautiful fall colors and enjoying comfortably warm temperatures, as between 800 and 1,000 members of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, arrived to keep the 2020 Feast of Tabernacles.

Because of seating restrictions and social distancing requirements, we had to use three separate meeting halls this year. Two of them were in the White House Theatre, where we’ve held the Feast for a number of years, and the third was the Branson Star Theater, just a few miles away. Services were webcast from the main auditorium in the White House to the other two halls, and in this manner everyone was able to attend every service in person all Feast long. We even had room for some extras who came up after hurricane evacuations orders impacted Orange Beach, Alabama.

The messages were all on point, and the spiritual meat was exactly what we needed. But perhaps the most memorable aspect this year was the attitude and approach of the brethren under unusual circumstances. Not meeting in the same hall created challenges for friends wanting to see each other. And there were a few problems with webcast connections, difficulties with lighting in the hall, and some other challenges.

Yet the attitude and approach of everyone was one of patience, unity and joy to be at the Feast to worship our Creator and look forward to the time when the picture of the Feast will be a reality!

Tom Clark
CINCINNATI, OHIO/NORTHERN KENTUCKY

The Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky site was a new site this year, with more than 100 brethren meeting for services at the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport. In a challenging year, God provided us with a very encouraging and spiritually rejuvenating Feast.

The attractive hotel ballroom provided an uplifting setting for daily services. We were blessed with inspiring messages that focused our minds on the wonderful future time God has in store for all people, and on our need to be preparing for that future. The special music was beautiful and inspirational, and fellowship was warm, lively and edifying.

Although there were no Church-sponsored activities this year, members were able to enjoy a number of local attractions. These included the Newport Aquarium, the Cincinnati Museum Center, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Ohio River cruises, the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens, and the Ark Encounter. Beautiful weather and colorful fall leaves added to our enjoyment of these activities and an overall wonderful Feast.

Lyle Welty

FORT MYERS, FLORIDA

High attendance at Fort Myers was 156 on the morning of the Last Great Day, with additional Feastgoers from Orange Beach joining us. There was room for everyone in the main hall and three overflow rooms. The highest number of webcast connections was on Oct. 6, with 71.

Attendees were grateful to God for providing a peaceful place to have in-person services in the beautiful City of Palms. Sermonettes and sermons were inspiring and pointed toward a better and more hopeful world ahead.

Though the planned activities were canceled because of COVID-19, many attendees found ways to get together in small groups for activities and Family Day. Fellowshiping was lively, in spite of the restrictions.

Feastgoers also made cash donations to a local food pantry that two local members volunteer for. A total of $2,300 was contributed.

On the Last Great Day we received the wonderful Orange Beach morning service by webcast. After singing “God Be With You” at its conclusion, it felt a bit strange to come back for afternoon services. But we ended by singing it again at the end.

Mike Bennett

KERRVILLE, TEXAS

Kerrville, Texas, located in the sparsely populated hill country west of San Antonio, served as a safe and enjoyable location for this year’s Feast. Cases of the coronavirus were extremely low in this area, and the meeting hall was large enough for everyone to sit socially distanced in the main auditorium every day.

Toward the end of the Feast, approximately 30 members who had initially been at the Orange Beach, Alabama, site joined us for the concluding days of our meetings. We had a high attendance of 338 for the morning service on the Last Great Day.

This year we had only one official activity—an outdoor hike for teens and their families in the Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. With a less demanding schedule of activities than in previous years, members took advantage of opportunities to host other brethren in their temporary homes, join others for meals in restaurants and tour the surrounding area.

Throughout the Feast, members appreciated the many fine messages that focused on what conditions will be like in the Millennium and what we should be doing now to prepare for it.

David Treybig

LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

Around 300 Feastgoers kept the Feast in person at the award-winning Eden Resort in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Many commented that they found the sermons and special music (recorded and live) to be insightful and uplifting.

This year’s COVID-19 challenges led to three themes (said tongue in cheek by the coordinator) becoming increasingly realistic:
- I don’t know, I’ll get back to you.
- Your guess is as good as mine.
- “Do all things without murmuring.”

The fellowship was rewarding, despite the challenging 25-person per room limitation that was the Pennsylvania state policy for indoor meetings. Thankfully, we had enough rooms for two groups (150 each) to alternate days (or times) for in-person attendance.

During the last two days, the state policy was changed to 20 percent of a room's capacity. This allowed us to remove the two partitions in the main ballroom, providing a more normal setting.

For the main activity, over 100 attendees enjoyed (with social distancing) the Queen Esther show at the Sight & Sound Millennium Theatre.

Overall, there were no known COVID-19 cases,
no A/V problems, great Wi-Fi connectivity and overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Kevin Epps

MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

“In so many ways this was absolutely the best Feast ever!” This is what I heard many times over this year in Myrtle Beach. God knew we needed this Feast in the worst way, and He inspired the messages, encouraged the brethren and sent us all home on a true high.

Because of social distancing, we met in two groups and online, but we made the best out of the situation. In-person and online attendance combined likely averaged well over 1,000 each service.

A number of attendees participated in a scavenger hunt throughout the Feast using an online app, and the winning team took home $300. The teen activity and the golf scramble were well attended, as was the midweek Bible study.

The weather was a little cooler at the beginning. But it warmed up as the Feast progressed, and many were able to enjoy both the beach and some of the many local attractions.

The fellowship seemed incredibly important to everyone due to the pandemic. Members did all they could to take advantage of the opportunity to be together. As a result, the eight days flew by quicker than ever. Many thanks to all those who helped make this Feast “the best ever.”

Mark Winner

Orange Beach, Alabama

This year was unique for observing the Feast in Orange Beach. Hurricane Sally hit just 10 days before opening day, and Hurricane Delta threatened to disrupt the end of the Feast.

The damage to housing establishments before we arrived caused most to have their accommodations canceled at least once! Then, in the middle of the Feast, the governor of Alabama declared a mandatory evacuation of all visitors, only to rescind that order a day and a half later.

Foundation Outreach International was able to organize two work parties to help area residents clean up the debris left from Sally. Over 200 Church volunteers descended on two properties and spent several hours raking, cleaning, cutting lumber and moving trees for pickup.

We once again contributed to the local food bank by supplying them with nonperishable goods and monetary donations, which were badly needed in this hard-hit area.

Regardless of the distractions, we only missed one day’s service. Many commented that the meaning of the messages was amplified by the distractions, as we learned to focus on the future instead of the present difficulties. This is one Feast those of us in Orange Beach will never forget!

Phil Sandilands

PARK CITY, UTAH

This year brethren from around the United States had an amazing Feast in Park City, Utah.

It was, of course, also a very different and challenging year for everyone. But the brethren were very patient and understanding of our restrictions. As a first-time Feast coordinator, I couldn’t have asked for a better group of people to work with.

The weather was exceptional with beautiful fall colors. Every day we experienced unseasonably warm temperatures in the mid- to high 70s. I know some were hoping for a little snow, but it didn’t happen this year!

Even though we weren’t able to have many activities, there were over 20 young adults who enjoyed hiking up to beautiful Bloods Lake. A few even had the courage to jump into the cold water.

The teens were also able to enjoy an afternoon activity in one of the nearby parks. They enjoyed developing new friendships and playing basketball, volleyball and corn toss.

We had the opportunity to shine our light in the community of Park City.

This year we again collected money for the Christian Center of Park City, which runs food pantries in the area, and were able to present $2,240 to them on Friday.

The messages this year were very inspiring and uplifting. They encouraged us to keep our eyes on the horizon, to be good Christian examples and to keep our focus on the Kingdom of God.

Mark Whynaught

POST FALLS, IDAHO

This year Post Falls, Idaho, was a great example of how God “places His name” on a location for the Feast of Tabernacles. Due to the cancellation of the Canadian site in Victoria, British Columbia, we had to scramble to find a location in the Pacific Northwest.

With God’s help, we were able to secure this site in the Idaho Panhandle only 38 days before the opening night of the Feast! It turned out to be a most memorable and inspiring site.

Members enjoyed a most beautiful millennial setting in this area of Idaho. Nestled in foothills and located next to the Spokane River, we enjoyed eight days of spiritually enriching food. Guest speakers Bruce Gore and Tim Waddle gave us a wonderful diet of meaningful and spiritually uplifting food. The live sermons, along with the headquarters video sermons, gave us all a deeply inspiring and rewarding Feast.

Beautiful and unseasonably warm weather—high 70s to low 80s—allowed an abundance of outdoor activity. While
group activities were limited due to pandemic restrictions, members were still able to get together in small groups and enjoy the sights and sounds of Post Falls and neighboring Coeur d’Alene. Many enjoyed horseback riding, ATV trail rides and boating on Lake Coeur d’Alene. The Feast left a very positive experience on all who attended in Post Falls. Many remarked that they hope we will come back to this beautiful area of the country for another Feast of Tabernacles.

Jon Pinelli

SAINT-HYACINTHE, QUÉBEC

Government restrictions imposed two days prior to the Feast forced us to relocate the Québec Feast site, originally planned for Mont-Sainte-Anne. We selected the Sheraton Saint-Hyacinthe Hotel, half an hour east of Montréal. We were delighted to welcome 20 brethren and to provide daily webcasts for those who could not attend. Translation from French to English was available for those visiting from neighboring Ontario.

We were thankful throughout the Feast for the simple gifts of hearing God’s truth preached each day, rejoicing before God and enjoying much-needed opportunities for fellowship. Local restaurants remained open even though less than a week later they were forced to close their dining rooms.

The region of Montérégie had much to offer. Members enjoyed a visit to a local apple orchard and picked several pounds of Empire apples together. A visit to a local Rougemont winery provided the perfect venue for an outdoor wine tasting and a “tasting” of local sparkling apple cider for the children!

Saint-Hyacinthe was a much-appreciated Feast site, providing us with a reminder of God’s care for His people. Our focus was on God’s awesome plan and the peace and tranquility that the whole world will know in the Millennium.

Daniel Harper

TUCSON, ARIZONA

Tucson, Arizona, was a success as the Southwest location for the Feast of Tabernacles in 2020. Around 600 to 700 people gathered together or joined online via the webcast.

The opening night of the Feast was highly anticipated, as many members in the West had not been able to hold in-person services for a number of months. The excitement of simply being together remained high throughout the Feast in a very warm, family environment.

The Loews Ventana Canyon Resort was a fabulous venue for the Feast. About 40 to 50 percent of brethren stayed at the resort and fellowshipped daily around the large pool and the resort’s numerous other gathering places. It was a peaceful environment, with hiking trails and waterfalls, while only a short distance from the city.

Family Day was a rustic outdoor barbecue of chicken and New York strip steak, followed by a fun show and karaoke. It was a great way to enjoy the evening. Temperatures during the Feast were unusually high—in the triple digits—but at night it cooled into the 60s and 70s with a nice breeze.

Many were in Tucson this year because of nostalgia, and many were there for the first time. In both cases there were numerous praises of this being a wonderful Feast and, as we often hear, “one of the best Feasts yet!”

We thank our Creator for allowing us to gather in such a wonderful place to observe His Feast of Tabernacles!

Paul Carter

WOODBURY, MINNESOTA

Woodbury, Minnesota, was once again a satellite site for the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Around 35 brethren from Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Iowa enjoyed the Feast together.

All of the brethren stayed at the Residence Inn, and services were held next door at the Courtyard by Marriott. They webcasted services from Branson each day, and the webcast came in loud and clear.

As a small group, they were able to share meals together at the hotel and in local restaurants. They also enjoyed a number of activities this year, including a painting and ceramics class, a fun show and a social. The social, with the theme “Life’s Destination Is Worth the Journey—Trials and Blessings Along the Way,” allowed many of them to share experiences from their lives.

The weather was beautiful the whole time, with temperatures averaging in the 70s. A few even enjoyed a pontoon boat ride on an area lake one day.

There were many comments on what a great Feast it was physically and spiritually!
## 2020 Feast of Tabernacles Attendance

Because of COVID-19 and the abundance of webcasts, calculating Festival attendance this year was a real challenge. The numbers below for the U.S. and Canada are the combined in-person attendance and estimated webcast attendance for each site.

The formula we used for calculating this year’s attendance in the United States and Canada included taking the highest in-person attendance (in areas that rotated groups, this required adding the two groups for a total number) and adding that to the estimate of those attending via webcast.

Getting the estimate of webcast attendees was a bit more challenging than usual. (In 2019 we had two webcast sites, but this year we had 10!) We started by taking an average of the second, third and fourth days of the Feast to use as the base number of connections at each site. We then used our normal formula of two viewers per connection. As a final step, for those sites where members rotated between attending in person and by webcast, we subtracted the attendance of one group from the total to provide a more accurate number.

Our best calculation for the U.S. and Canada is 4,409 in-person attendance and an estimated webcast attendance of 1,386, for a total of 5,795. This is slightly fewer than our registration numbers, so it seems reasonably accurate.

Attendance outside the U.S. and Canada showed a nice increase, providing a total worldwide attendance of 11,894. This number also includes DVDs for shut-ins. Here is the breakdown by area.

### Africa
- Burundi: 554
- Cameroon: 35
- Congo: 499
- Côte d’Ivoire: 67
- Ghana: 586
- Kenya: 188
- Malawi: 135
- Mauritius: 4
- Nigeria: 37
- Rwanda: 80
- South Africa: 136
- Togo: 10
- Zambia: 178
- Zimbabwe: 245

### Asia/Pacific
- Australia: 25
- Fiji: 29
- India: 34
- Indonesia: 3
- Kuwait/U.A.E.: 5
- Malaysia: 6
- Myanmar: 18
- New Zealand: 78

### Caribbean
- Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Kitts: 154

### Europe
- England: 22
- France: 18

### Latin America
- Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay: 710
- Central America: 575
- Colombia: 100
- Peru: 296
- Mexico: 200

### United States & Canada
- Alberta, Canada: 24
- Beloit: 9
- Branson: 1,073
- Cincinnati: 224
- Fort Myers: 268
- Kerrville: 478

### Total By Site

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<td>Woodbury</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 11,096**

**U.S. Shut-ins (DVD): 324**

**Intl. Shut-ins (DVD): 119**

**Scattered Intl. Webcasts: 355**

**Total: 11,894**

To hear messages from the 2020 Feast of Tabernacles, go to [Feast.Cogwa.org](http://Feast.Cogwa.org)
ORLANDO HONORS ROY AND PAULINE DEMAREST

On July 25, following a delay of over a month due to COVID-19, the Orlando, Florida, congregation hosted a Sabbath service celebrating the retirement of the Demarests after 53 years in the ministry.

The Demarests have served in Florida congregations for the last 35 years, and many members from these different congregations were able to come for the celebration. The Demarests’ three sons, daughters-in-law and five grandchildren were also there to share the day with them.

Doug Horchak and Jim Franks, guest speakers from headquarters, gave messages recounting the many congregations the Demarests had served in, some of the opportunities and challenges they met during their service, and scriptural background for the role of the ministry in general. They also presented them with a beautifully engraved cobalt glass vase in appreciation for their many years serving God’s people.

At the conclusion of services Gary McConnaughey, the new pastor for the Orlando congregation, invited the Demarests up to the stage to give them a gift on behalf of the congregation. The Demarests then each took a few minutes to speak to the congregation. Mrs. Demarest gave a heartfelt thank-you to all of the members over the years who had made so many church socials, events, children’s programs, etc. successful. Mr. Demarest then shared his appreciation for his mother and his wife who helped make his calling and ministry both possible and fruitful.

Thank you to the Demarests for their years of dedicated service to God’s people!

Jennifer Demarest
ELI OLALEHE ADVANCES IN EDUCATION

The Bridgetown, Barbados, congregation has much to be celebrating even in the Covid times.

One of the teens, Eli Olalehe, has successfully written the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination. It is an examination that determines a young person’s entry to one of the secondary schools in the country.

Eli attends church with his parents, Derek and Antoinette Olalehe, and younger brother, Alec.

Eli was voted the most creative in his year group. He enjoys drawing and can be found assiduously working to develop his own style. For a pastime, Eli enjoys playing video games. He is in the initial stages of developing his first game.

The Barbados congregation joins in congratulating him, wishing him every success in his future educational studies.

COLUMBIA SAYS FAREWELL TO SARGENTS AND FROEDGES

On Aug. 22 the Columbia, Missouri, congregation said good-bye to our pastor Greg Sargent and his wife, Marian, who have been serving our area for 25 years. As difficult as it was to see them go, it was a very special Sabbath, as we were able to remember all the wonderful moments we had with them.

We also said good-bye to our assistant pastor of two years, Caleb Froedge and his wife, Katie, and family. Despite having been in our area only a relatively short time, they had become very special to all of us.

During the Sargents’ and Froedges’ final service here, we were able to have two pieces of special music—a vocal solo by Ray Harris, accompanied on the guitar by Carissa Caple, and an instrumental duet by Chad Smith and Catrina Foreman. Mr. Froedge and Mr. Sargent were also able to share some of their memories during their split sermons.

After services ended, Ray Harris presented gifts to both couples. Then, finally, the whole congregation sang one last song, the hymn we wish we never had to sing, “God Be With You.”

Shalynn Mellerup
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.

**Weddings**

**Timothy and Ciara Rickard**

May 24, 2020, was an especially memorable day for Ciara Steele and Timothy Rickard II as they were united as husband and wife among friends and family.

The event was held outdoors at the beautiful Quant Ranch, hosted by Michelle and Dave Johnson. The ceremony was performed by Andy Burnett, pastor of the Dallas, Texas, congregation.

Guests enjoyed dining, dancing and warm fellowship and then sent the couple off with swords held high. Everything went well, and the families couldn’t be happier for Timothy and Ciara.

*Brenden Moore*

**Brenden and Michelle Moore**

On the evening of May 24, 2020, a quaint family wedding was held in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, for Brenden Moore and Michelle Cunningham. The wedding took place at the home of Brenden’s parents, Michael and Samantha Moore of the West Palm Beach, Florida, congregation.

*David Jackson*

**Samantha and Mike Moore**

On Sept. 19, 2020, the Feast of Trumpets services for the combined West Palm Beach and Miami, Florida, congregations were made even more special with the ordinations of Mike Moore and his wife, Samantha Moore, to serve as deacon and deaconess in the West Palm Beach congregation.

The ordinations were conducted by their pastor, David Jackson, who was assisted by the local elder from the Miami congregation, Dennis Garland.

Mike and Sam have been longtime servants of God’s people. Their ordination was followed by a round of loving applause from the congregations.

*David Jackson*

**Due to coronavirus restrictions, only 25 members of the immediate family were present. David Jackson, pastor of the West Palm Beach congregation, performed the ceremony. A beautiful meal followed. The newlyweds honeymooned on the Palm Beach shores. They now reside in Louisiana and have just bought their first home.**

*Brenden Moore*

**Tim Rickard Family**
Baptisms

Alick Mangena

Alick Vusa Mangena, a faithful member of the Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, congregation, was baptized on the Sabbath of Aug. 8, 2020.

The baptism was conducted by elder Stephen Tshabalala, who was assisted by Joseph Ndlovu, a deacon in the congregation and the grandfather of Alick.

Anniversaries

Neville Smith

Carolyn Winner

April 5, 2020, was a chilly morning, but despite the cool temps, Brittany Ash was baptized in the most Texas anniversary cake made by Kristin Leitzsey.

Nelson and Phyllis were married on July 25, 1970, at the home of then pastor Gary Arvidson in West Columbia, South Carolina. The Brights have three children, Tracey, Brian and Amanda, and one grandson, Ashton.

We all wished the Brights a happy anniversary and many more to come.

Nancy Lochner

Births

Cora Laine Winner

Vince and Melissa Winner of the Louisville, Kentucky, congregation proudly announce the arrival of their fourth child, Cora Laine Winner. Born Jan. 28, 2020, Cora weighed in at 7 pounds, 13.1 ounces and measured 22 inches long. She was welcomed by big sisters Claire and Kate and by big brother Simon.

Cora is also loved by paternal grandparents Mark and Colleen Winner (Atlanta, Jefferson and Macon, Georgia), paternal grandmother Debra Rogers (Louisville) and maternal grandparents Dave and Karen Fergen (Wichita, Kansas). Great-grandparents are Cliff and Carolyn Adams (Louisville), Carolyn Winner (Louisville) and Loretta Woodbridge (Wichita).

Judy Swanson

Charles Dickey

Charles Dickey, an elder from the Birmingham, Alabama, congregation, and Ruth Bailey of the Knoxville, Tennessee, congregation are pleased to announce their marriage on the night of Saturday, Jan. 4, 2020, in Knoxville, Tennessee. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Dickey’s son Tim Dickey, also an elder from Birmingham.

Following the ceremony, the bride and groom, along with 75 guests, dined on some of the newlyweds’ favorite foods in a private reception at the Knoxville church hall. Following the dinner, the bride, groom, family and friends danced the night away.

Carolyn Winner

Brittany Ash

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Obituaries

Carla Erickson

Carla Erickson, of the Fargo, North Dakota, congregation, died on Wednesday, July 8, 2020, at her home following a five-year battle with cancer.

Carla was born June 29, 1971, to Herb and Anne Teitgen in Texas. Her family moved to Washington, where she grew up on an orchard. She was baptized in 1989 and attended Ambassador College in Big Sandy from 1990 to 1991.

Carla met Tom Erickson at a church activity in Fargo, and they were married on Oct. 3, 1992. They first lived in Minot, North Dakota, and then moved to Grand Forks, North Dakota, where they lived for the last 26 years.

Carla's love of helping people gave her great joy. She helped care for disabled people for a number of years, and then went to school to become a massage therapist. For 18 years, she not only eased tension and pain, but developed many friendships through massage therapy.

She loved the outdoors and greenway. Up until she was diagnosed with cancer, she ran 5 miles a day. Her faith in God is what helped her survive the last five years. Carla dearly loved her husband, Tom, and her three children, Eric, Joy and Alex. She was preceded in death by her parents, Herb and Anne Teitgen.

Mary Peyton

Juanita Stephens

Juanita Stephens, a member of the Akron-Canton, Ohio, congregation living in Lodi, Ohio, died on Wednesday, June 24, 2020.

Mrs. Stephens and her husband, Jack, were baptized before the Passover in 1965, making her one of our longest-standing members. She was born Sept. 2, 1943, in Kentucky. She and her husband lived for decades in Ohio, where their daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren live.

Mrs. Stephens worked as a cook and was well-known for her homemade pies. She enjoyed vacationing with family, camping, hunting, fishing, golfing and bowling.

She was a humble and unassuming servant who fought the good fight through a lengthy period of declining health. In spite of many pains and a string of hospitalizations, you would never hear her complain. She set a fine example of what it means to be a Christian.

She is survived by her husband, Jack, four daughters, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Dave Myers

Roberta Waddle

Psalm 116:15 says, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.” Roberta Waddle was one of those saints, a godly woman after God’s own heart. Baptized in July of 1961, she lived a lifetime of faithfulness to God, and her first love was studying His Word. Everyone who knew Roberta loved her; she had a warm smile for everyone and will be greatly missed by us all!

Roberta Louise (Holladay) Waddle was born Nov. 2, 1940, in Glasgow, Kentucky, to Robert and Grace Holladay. She died peacefully in her sleep Sabbath morning, July 25, 2020, surrounded by her children and grandchildren.

On Dec. 24, 1958, Roberta married Charles Waddle, who lived next door to her grandparents. They had six children.

Survivors include her children: Mitzi (Scott) Hanna of Vine Grove, Kentucky; Michael (Barry Ann) Waddle of Shelbyville, Kentucky; Timothy (Valerie) Waddle; Bryan (Rhonda) Waddle of Houston, Texas; and Steven (Hyon Cha) Waddle of Lacy, Washington. Other survivors include her twin brother, Roy (Norma) Holladay of Chattanooga, Tennessee; sister Linda (Richard) Daffron of Calhoun, Tennessee; brothers Charles Holladay of Minneaplis, Minnesota, and Leonard (Sandy) Holladay of Wasilla, Alaska; 10 grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were her parents; her beloved husband of almost 55 years, Charles; daughter Linda Suzanne; and sister-in-law Linda Holladay.

The service was performed by Eric Evans at the Somerset Cemetery on July 29, 2020, with family and friends attending.

Judy Swanson

Peter Gabriel