Ministerial Board of Directors Meeting

Sharpening Iron
Answering Jesus' Hard Questions

Tributes
Fred Davidson
David McCarble
Charles Dickey
If you are like me, you are tired of hearing the term *the new normal*. As a result of the coronavirus, we are advised that “social distancing” will continue to be important for the immediate future. Social distancing means remaining apart from others and, in some cases, even members of your own family.

Like many of you, I have spent a lot of time thinking about these things over the past few months. I pray daily for the time when we will have a “normal” church service—when God’s people can gather on the Sabbath in close proximity to one another without the current COVID-19 restrictions.

I had never heard of the term *social distancing* until March of 2020. Over the course of 2020, we have seen that, like everything else about the COVID-19 virus, this term has been disputed. Even among the medical experts, there is disagreement. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, defines this as 6 feet of separation, but the World Health Organization (WHO) says 1 meter, or approximately 3 feet, is good enough.

This illustrates what many have come to realize—that “following the science” means different things to different people. Of course, the reason for social distancing is to minimize the potential of contracting or spreading the COVID-19 virus. I have never doubted that the virus is real or that it has taken the lives of many people around the world. But the reaction to the virus is another thing. Nations have reacted in radically different ways, with some going to extraordinary measures that often seem irrational. Even in the United States, the approach to the virus differs from state to state. Why the differences? Isn’t the virus the same everywhere?

Because of the questions that are raised and the length of time since this began, many people have become weary. The contradictions and constantly changing guidelines make it difficult to know what to do. And we must ask ourselves, how does this affect the Church, and what will our services look like as we approach the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread in just three short months?

In Malachi 3:16 we read about the people of God, who feared Him and “spoke to one another.” In the King James Version this verse reads, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another.” I believe this version more properly captures the real meaning. The people of God are an assembly of believers who speak “often one to another.” The very definition of the word *church*, which comes from the Greek *ekklēsia*, is “an assembly of Christians gathered for worship… in the religious meeting” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

Sabbath services provide Christians a weekly opportunity to see one another and to fellowship, to speak with one another, as is encouraged in Malachi. As a pastor, for more than 30 years, I would leave services each Sabbath going over a mental list in my head of those I had spoken with that day. Then during the week I would make an effort to reach out to those I had not spoken with, either because they were absent that Sabbath or I simply failed to get around to speaking with them.

As a new calendar year begins, things will definitely be different than they were in January 2020. The COVID-19 virus, at some point, will run its course. We should continue being careful, taking precautions to protect our health, but we must not lose sight of the need to gather together to worship God, speak to one another and share our lives with each other.

I look forward to seeing God’s people every Sabbath, and I am excited about the upcoming festivals. I hope you are as well. I look forward to the new normal being like the old normal, but better! I hope that through the year of 2020, we learned to appreciate the need to be together and to speak with one another. And I hope we will never take that opportunity for granted.

*Jim Franks*
President
Church of God, a Worldwide Association
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A lot of politicians today try to win votes by saying what they think people want to hear, whatever will make them happy. Jesus did the opposite. In His 3½ years of preaching, His words continually stirred things up and created upheaval. And when He comes again, He will do the same, all with the aim of convicting people of their sins in order to lead them to repentance and change.

Someone once said a preacher’s goal should be “to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” Jesus certainly had that skill perfected! He could do both so amazingly, offering just the right words and actions at just the right time.

So often He reached out to comfort, encourage, heal and help the afflicted. But when He needed to “afflict the comfortable,” Jesus could just as easily make people squirm. And He didn’t play favorites—neither His disciples nor His enemies were immune.

Using the “pointed stick”
One of His common and most brilliant tactics for challenging people was quite simple—just ask questions. His questions were not like those of someone today taking a public opinion poll, where they say, “There is no right or wrong answer. Your opinion is what we value.” Oh no!

His questions could be like a pointed stick, probing into the core issues of right versus wrong, truth versus lies, honesty versus self-deceit. So when He mentally poked someone with a “pointed stick question,” it often made them uncomfortable, but He always got a reaction. Sometimes it was positive, sometimes negative.

Why did He do this? Why did He put people on the spot? Did it boost His vanity to use His superior intellect to trick or embarrass people? Was He the type of person you sometimes see in life who enjoys putting down people, embarrassing them or exposing their ignorance? Of course not!

The right kinds of questions make us think in ways we haven’t thought before. They make us learn. Christ, as a master teacher, wanted people to think, to examine life, to understand right and wrong, to search themselves, and then to make the right choices about how to live.

If probing questions would help guide people in their thinking process, then He would ask them, even if it made them uncomfortable. He asked them for their good, their learning, their growth.

10 hard questions
The Gospels record over 100 questions Jesus asked, but let’s consider these 10 that were particularly challenging for the people to whom they were directed:

• “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).
• “Do you love Me?” (John 21:15, 16, 17).
• “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” and “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13, 15).
• “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40).
• “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” (Mark 4:40).
• “What do you want Me to do for you?” (Mark 10:36, 51).
• “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” (Luke 6:32).
• “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3).
• “Where is your faith?” (Luke 8:25).
• “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?” (Luke 12:42).

Questions still for today
These were rather penetrating questions for anyone who heard them. But discerning readers studying the situations that led Jesus to ask these questions quickly
realize that regardless of who He was addressing then, these are still questions for us! And they are hard questions because they require deep thought and self-examination.

For example, was “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” a question only for Peter to answer that night before Jesus’ death? Or does it not apply to us today, in principle? Does it not ask us about our level of commitment, perseverance, dedication, watchfulness—the keys to not falling asleep spiritually?

The more we come to learn and love the Word of God, the more we find ourselves understanding that we need to personally consider these same hard questions. Jesus intended His audience to grow in understanding by answering His hard questions.

Spiritual growth often comes from confronting and answering the hard questions about life—the questions about our faith, our love, our relationships with our brothers and sisters, our knowledge of God and His way, our judgment, our motives, our commitment.

Answering the hard questions takes us into the deeper issues of life, and into deeper understanding and growth. Ironically, it’s when we answer the hard questions that life gets easier! Ignoring the hard questions keeps us in spiritual darkness!

**Which questions for Passover prep?**

This year God’s annual festival cycle comes quite early on the calendar. The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are just around the corner, less than three months away. Here is an easy question: Is it too early to begin spiritually preparing for the Passover?

We are told in 1 Corinthians 11:28 to carefully examine ourselves before taking the bread and wine. It is hard to imagine how we can effectively and deeply accomplish that without asking hard questions!

In his follow-up letter to the church at Corinth Paul urged everyone to “examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” Then, following in the style of Jesus, he posed a very introspective question: “Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Where can we start examining? I suggest going back to those same 10 questions Jesus asked so long ago. Consider them deeply, both literally and in principle. Think about them carefully and honestly. You will probably come up with some answers that will be encouraging indications that you have grown. You will probably come up with some answers that will identify and prod you in areas of needed growth. Either way, it will be productive. At least that has been my experience.

Above all, answering Jesus’ hard questions will, unquestionably, help all of us to grow! 😊
While we are just a few months removed from the completion of the Feast of Tabernacles 2020, plans have already started for the Feast of Tabernacles 2021. As such, the U.S. Feast coordinators, Church administrators and staff, met via teleconference for a one-day meeting. Due to the pandemic, our traditional two-day in-person conference (usually held at the headquarters office every November after the Feast) was postponed to February.

These annual meetings are invaluable in terms of revisiting the recently completed Feast and planning for the next Feast.

The teleconference was started with a welcome and opening comments from Mr. Franks and Mr. Horchak. Holding in-person services at Feast sites across the U.S. was one of this year’s many challenges. The coordinators were commended for making sure God’s Feast of Tabernacles was held—especially in light of the pandemic protocols that varied from state to state and kept changing during the year, in some case literally just weeks before the opening night of the Feast! To add to that, Orange Beach, Alabama, had to deal with not only pandemic protocols, but hurricanes and a mandatory evacuation during the Feast. All of this compounded an already challenging situation.

Coordinators all gave brief reports on their respective sites and the challenges they faced: seating for social distancing, room capacity limits and virus sanitizing practices. Reports also included comments regarding webcasting from every Feast site, something we had never done before. However, due to room capacity limits and the need to alternate groups for in-person services at some sites, it was necessary for our audiovisual crews to take on this added responsibility. All coordinators reported that their AV crews did a fantastic job.

Following a lunch break, everyone returned for discussion module subjects all related to the Feast 2021. Among those topics were 2021 Feast locations, contracts for those sites, attendance projections and registration items. None of these topics proved to be routine or ordinary. Our experience in 2020 has taught us to look differently at site contracts—especially pandemic-related and cancellation clauses.

This discussion module also proved fruitful in refining and streamlining our Feast registration process. We are establishing a better timeline for specialty site registration, and we are also rolling out an early registration for members who will be attending their assigned site. This latter issue has been a challenge in previous years because a site with a lot of transfer appeal could be full by the time those who were assigned to it tried to register. This new early registration process should alleviate and correct this problem.

Finally, the coordinators discussed our Festival planning schedule. Between now and next November, there are 37 dated items that all Feast coordinators deal with either directly or indirectly. This planning schedule is invaluable for making sure everyone stays on track and all sites are ready to go come opening night of the Feast of Tabernacles 2021.

While the one-day teleconference served its purpose, we are hopeful that we will be able to hold February’s two-day conference in person. These meetings will help us continue to plan and refine so that we can ensure a planned and organized Feast of Tabernacles for all of God’s people.©
The Ministerial Board of Directors held its annual meeting from Dec. 9 to 11 in COGWA’s headquarters office in McKinney, Texas. In order to allow social distancing, the board and administration convened in the Foundation Institute classroom, which had been specially arranged for the event.

The most important work of the board each year is to analyze, propose edits to, and finally approve the annual strategic plan, operation plans and balanced budget. These documents were in the hands of the board two weeks prior to the meetings.

After calling the meeting to order, asking for prayer, and making some introductory comments, Joel Meeker, chairman of the MBOD, turned the meeting over to the Church’s president, Jim Franks, for his “State of the Church” presentation. He briefly recounted our organizational history, starting in December 2010 with only a post office box and a bank account, both in Orlando, Florida. He noted that Dec. 23 this year will mark the 10th anniversary of our association’s founding.

He then enumerated issues affecting the Church in 2020, the key element being the coronavirus pandemic. The restrictions caused by the disease still affect almost everything we do. For 14 weeks, starting on the Sabbath of March 14, services in the U.S. and many other countries had to be webcast from the McKinney office. The International Leadership Program phase two meetings were interrupted for the rest of the year. All our youth camps had to be canceled, although a preteen virtual camp was offered online.

The organization of the Feast of Tabernacles was a particular challenge. In Latin America the Festival could only be conducted remotely. Restrictions varied widely in the United States, but through diligent efforts by Ministerial Services, Feast services were held in person for all those able to attend. Our Festival attendance worldwide was nearly 12,000 this year.

One positive element to come from the unusual nature of 2020 is a notable improvement in the financial situation of the Church. An increase in income and a
decrease in spending due to the travel freeze should leave COGWA with year-end cash reserves approaching 20 weeks of operating expenses.

The strategic plan
After a break, Mr. Franks explained the strategic plan, which turns on three major issues: leadership development, preaching the gospel to the world, and infrastructure upgrades.

The leadership development will include an international ministerial conference, slated for August 2021. The International Leadership Program will continue, as will the Pastoral Training Program, to equip men who may be called to the pastoral ministry. The International Leadership Program phase-three conferences should begin in May 2021.

Preaching the gospel is obviously a continuous effort. Our publications are reaching a growing number of people, and expansion is planned in all areas of media—video, print and Internet. The new studio (expected completion in January 2021) will allow new options for our video presentations.

Infrastructure upgrades will include the construction of some simple church halls in several parts of Africa where governments require dedicated church halls before allowing congregations to meet.

Operation plans
For the rest of the morning, Leon Walker, Doug Horchak and Clyde Kilough gave overviews of plans for their areas (in order): the work outside the United States, Ministerial Services and Media.

After a lunch break, the board reconvened to participate in a detailed discussion about the International Leadership Program, including how phase two is being completed online and how the in-person phase-three conferences will take place around the world.

The final presentation of the day, the proposed 2021 budget, was conducted by treasurer Britt Taylor. This was held in private session so that specific allocations, including salaries and other confidential elements, could be discussed.

Dinner was served in the Foundation Institute break room. Joel and Marjolaine Meeker, with help from Ina McLemore and Robin Beech from our office team, organized a raclette, a winter meal consisting of a unique Swiss alpine cheese, melted over potatoes and served with pickles, onions and thinly sliced air-dried beef. There was much laughter and camaraderie.

Tuesday
Tuesday morning began with a private discussion of the budget and a ballot that approved both plans and the budget for 2021. Mr. Franks then led a discussion of some personnel matters. Then Mr. Kilough led the board on a guided tour of the nearly complete studio. Everyone was impressed with the functional quality and modern aspect of the new hard set.

After lunch, the board heard reports from the Doctrine Committee chairman Don Henson, from Foundation Institute academic officer Ralph Levy, from Mr. Kilough about FI Online, and from Mr. Franks about Foundation Outreach International.

The final hour of the day was a private report via Internet connection from Jason Ranew, the Church’s corporate attorney. While we must always be cautious, there are no pending legal threats against COGWA.

The Sheraton Hotel across from our office opened its normally closed restaurant especially for the board, administration and involved staff to have dinner together.

Adjournment
Wednesday morning was devoted to a roundtable discussion of questions concerning the Church. These included identifying challenges to our work, how to better involve our younger members in the life of the Church, how COVID-19 has changed our collective situation, and what the Church should do to prepare for rising hostility toward Christianity. This was a heartfelt, thought-provoking and encouraging discussion. It was an excellent end to the annual MBOD conference of 2020.
Foundation Institute Begins
The pandemic-delayed Foundation Institute year is beginning. Orientation is Jan. 3, and classes begin Jan. 4. The class of 11 students consists of five men and six women. Six are from Texas, two from the country of Chile, and one each from California, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Ralph Levy announced on In Accord Dec. 24, 2020, that a new class is being added about modern Church history. It will be taught by Doug Johnson, pastor of the Cleveland, Ohio, and Meadville, Pennsylvania, congregations.

LHT Bible Study Course to Be Launched
Media operation manager Clyde Kilough announced in the Dec. 24, 2020, Ministerial Newsletter that the Life, Hope & Truth Bible Study Course “will be launched in a few weeks. We have been working on this for several years as it has gone through several permutations.”

Mr. Kilough said, “This will certainly be the most in-depth engagement product we have to offer on LHT. We expect it to have a somewhat limited audience because only people who are sincerely interested in pursuing a much greater understanding of the Bible would dedicate their time to an 11-lesson course, with each lesson 15 to 20 pages long . . .”

“Big kudos go to Erik Jones, who doggedly pursued completing this project, recruited and organized the writing team, and coordinated the entire effort. We still have a couple of lessons in the final stages of the editorial and design process, 30 Degrees North is working on the website development, and we still have a promo and instructional video to make. But it should all be ready to go in the next few weeks. Teri Mez, a member in Atlanta, Georgia, did the layout and design (as she did for the Encourage, Equip & Inspire program).”

100+ Episodes of Teen Podcast Posted
As of Dec. 25, 2020, there have been 108 episodes of our teen podcast “Something to Think About” and an additional 18 episodes of “Girl Talk” since the launch of the program in 2018. A list of the episode titles can be found at somethingtothinkabout.libsyn.com/

Topics in 2020 have included shortcuts to wisdom (March 13), the danger of flattery (April 11), anger management (April 18 and July 10), how to respond to what’s happening around you (May 2), the power of your words (June 8), advice from a billionaire (July 3), dealing with adversity (Aug. 9), teens of courage (Aug. 21), how to be a conversationalist (Sept. 18), doing the right thing anyway (Oct. 16), how to make haste slowly (Nov. 13), and are good intentions good enough? (Dec. 18).

International Leadership Program to Resume
Because of COVID-19, the Church had to cancel the International Leadership Program phase 2 for all international areas except for Guatemala and Mexico. However, all presentations were recorded and posted on the ILP website for all participants to view.

The Church plans to begin the conferences of the ILP phase 3 beginning in May 2021. The anticipated schedule for 2021 and 2022 is:
• May 7-10, 2021, West Africa (Ghana)
• June 25-28, 2021, Southern Africa (South Africa)
• July 9-12, 2021, Pacific region (New Zealand)
• Aug. 6-9, 2021, South America (Chile)
• Oct. 22-25, 2021, Philippines
• Nov. 19-22, 2021, England/Europe
• Dec. 17-20, 2021, Caribbean
• Jan. 14-17, 2022, French Africa (Rwanda)
• Feb. 19-21, 2022, Central America (Guatemala)
• March 18-21, 2022, Mexico

The topics and presenters have yet to be determined.

Focused Mentoring Program
Ministerial Services reported that the Focused Mentoring Program is completing its seventh full year. Through that time, 58 couples have gone through the program in the United States. Of those, the Church has hired 16 into the full-time ministry.

60 Million Have Visited Our Website
The English-language Life, Hope & Truth website went online in 2012, the Spanish-language site (Vida, Esperanza y Verdad) in 2013 and the French-language site (Vie, Espoir et Vérité) in 2015. Since 2012, the English-language site has had a total of:
• 48,173,167 unique visitors
• 60,062,404 sessions
• 87,102,191 page views

In all three languages we have seen an estimated 60 million different people log onto LHT.
YOUNG FATHERS HOLD RETREAT

On Nov. 6-8, 2020, men of the Fort Worth and Houston, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, congregations met for a young fathers’ retreat campout. This (social-distanced) weekend focused on the biblical role of fathers, the importance of a strong marriage and its impact on children, and the challenges facing fathers in a world seeking to diminish or even remove their vital place in the family.

A sunset dinner was enjoyed around the fire, surrounded by the peace of God’s creation. The fathers (and even one father-to-be!) had an opportunity to introduce themselves and their families. Each expressed how much they appreciated the opportunity to take part in the retreat and—of course—how much they enjoy being fathers.

With every presentation being interactive, each man was able to share experiences and give valuable input to the group. The weekend proved a valuable resource with many takeaways from each session.

Committed to following the example of our Heavenly Father as He raises His children, the men broke camp Sunday afternoon, returning to their families better prepared to fulfill their roles as husbands and fathers.

David Stump
The Ocala, Florida, congregation hosted a picnic on Nov. 1, 2020. It was a beautiful day with gorgeous weather. The picnic was held in Silver Springs State Park, set in the relaxing scenery of a pine forest.

The 4,000-acre Silver Springs State Park encompasses not only the springs, but the entire 5-mile Silver River and surrounding sandhill forest. The brethren enjoyed the fellowship and ate hamburgers, hot dogs and turkey bacon, with lots of sides and yummy desserts. After lunch, the activities included bingo, water balloons, dominoes, walking trails and playground fun. Fun was had by all.

The food and fellowship were outstanding, and many are already looking forward to next year’s picnic.

Gary McConnaughey

Ocala Enjoys Picnic

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.

Births

absolutely thrilled to announce the birth of their newest clan member, Naomi Dorothy Tranquada. Amy says that Dorothy was Andrew’s grandmother’s name and that Naomi and Dorothy together mean “pleasant gift from God.”

Naomi was born three weeks early, on Aug. 4, 2020—the same birthday as her older sister—at 6 pounds 8 ounces. She is happy and healthy, and both mother and baby are doing fine.

Her older siblings—Luke, Joseph, Isaac and Abigail—are so very happy to have their newest little sister. They (along with the rest of their friends and family) are doing their very best to show Naomi just how much she is loved.

Robert Worsham

Naomi Dorothy Tranquada

Ordinations

The Atlanta and Jefferson, Georgia, congregations celebrated their first combined holy day service of 2020—the Feast of Trumpets—on Sept. 19. This Sabbath was a very special day. Not only was it a holy day with two congregations attending services together, but it also marked the ordination of a deacon to serve in the Jefferson congregation: Tim Groves.

Tim Groves
Sandra J. Feiock, a member of the Wheeling, West Virginia, congregation died after an extended illness on Oct. 17, 2020, at the age of 77. She was born in Martins Ferry, Ohio, on May 3, 1943. She is survived by four sons—Brent, Ryan, Troy and Wade—and their families, including six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Her husband, Tom, preceded her in death in August 2017.

All of her life Sandy was an extremely busy and talented person. She was baptized into the Church of God in April 1967 and over the years served the congregation in many capacities. Among other responsibilities, she served on the social planning committee, coordinated the youth Sabbath school program and was the choir director. She was known for her friendliness and willingness to serve in every way she could.

Her large extended family was scattered throughout the country, but she knew and expressed individual care for each, and they were always excited and pleased when “Aunt Sandy” came to visit.

Over the years Sandy suffered several serious health setbacks and complications, but she maintained an optimistic outlook and a unwavering faith in God’s plan. Although her death was sudden and unexpected, it came after a long and challenging journey that was marked by faith, endurance and love.

In the early years they drove several hours to and from Sabbath services each week, leaving early in the morning and getting home late at night. Haynes was ordained a deacon in 1973, and Ethel was ordained a deaconess in 2003. Over the years their faith and example of hospitality and service have been an inspiration to many.

On this incredibly special occasion of their 70th wedding anniversary, the Hickory congregation gave the Bakers their honor, appreciation, admiration and love.

Tim was called to God’s truth when he was 16 years old. He was baptized in 1980 and married his wife, Teresa, in 1990. The Groves attended church in Columbia and Florence, South Carolina, before they began attending in Jefferson in 2000. They live in Iva, South Carolina, so they have a distance to travel every week.

Tim and Teresa are the parents of Amanda, Justin, Elizabeth and Alex Groves. Teresa’s parents, Larry and Betty Brannon, are also Jefferson members.

Tim has been serving the Church for many years. He is a speaker in Jefferson, provides special music and is a great writer. The congregation is thankful for the addition of his office. He was ordained by the Atlanta and Jefferson pastor, Mark Winner, and Bruce Gore.

Donna Quintana

Mike attended his first Feast this year in Orange Beach, Alabama. He said it wasn’t exactly what he expected, but he enjoyed the first few days in Orange Beach and the last few days at the Cincinnati, Ohio/Northern Kentucky site and is already looking forward to next Feast.

Carolyn Winner

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Over the years Sandy suffered several serious health setbacks
William Solinger, a member of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, congregation died on Dec. 17, 2019, at the age 93. A lifelong resident of southwest Pennsylvania, he was born in Elderton, Pennsylvania, on Dec. 9, 1926.

He married Thelma Rearick on June 1, 1953, and they shared 57 years of marriage and had three children: Bill (and wife Nancy, also members of the Pittsburgh congregation), Nancy and Ruth. He is also survived by four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

For several years Mr. Solinger patiently and lovingly cared for Thelma, who died in November 2010 after a long struggle with declining health. During World War II, while still a teenager, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on Landing Craft Support Ship 111, which played a pivotal role in the famous Okinawa battle in 1945. During most of his working years, he was employed by Eljer Plumbingware, where he held several positions, serving in their maintenance department at the time of his retirement.

Mr. Solinger was baptized into the Church of God in December 1965, and at the time of his death he was the longest-tenured member of the Pittsburgh congregation. He was well known for his generosity—no one who visited him left without a healthy meal and a sack of groceries. Although he was not able to attend Sabbath services for the last few years due to health issues, he continued to set an excellent example of tenacity, commitment and faithfulness.

We look forward to seeing her in the Kingdom of God with her beautiful smile!

Chris Moen

Mary Peyton

Helen Mildred Farnsworth died on Dec. 26, 2019, just two weeks after entering a nursing home near Grand Rapids, Michigan. She died quietly and without pain at the age of 93. Helen was able to attend church services up until her last few weeks of life.

Helen was born in Michigan on Dec. 3, 1926. Once Helen finished high school, she went to a trade school and then worked as a bookkeeper in Detroit. In 1944 she married Albert Eugene Farnsworth, who actively served in the U.S. Army at that time.

As a devoted wife, Helen would say of Eugene, “He was my only love.” Helen and Eugene had three sons together. They were married for 35 years before his death in 1979.

Helen enjoyed puzzles, crocheting, the TV show Jeopardy and Lawrence Welk music. She loved pie and ice cream and would jokingly say, “Eat your dessert before the meal, so you don’t fill up!”

She touched the lives of numerous people. Fellow Church members recalled many wonderful things about Helen: She was quick to see the good in people and recognized spiritual error if it was being taught. While she had many health issues, she was always courageous and never afraid of what was going to happen in her future. She was a devoted wife and mother, she put God first in her life, but still treasured her family.

We look forward to seeing her in the Kingdom of God with her beautiful smile!

Don Henson

Helen Mildred Farnsworth

Thomas Haldor Erickson

Family and friends lost Tom Erickson, a beloved member of the Fargo, North Dakota, congregation, on Sept. 18, 2020, just a few months after his wife, Carla, died. Tom had just taken his father-in-law’s ashes to Washington and shortly after died from complications due to blood clots.

Tom was born on April 1, 1964, in Green Bay, Wisconsin, to Haldor and Mary Jane Erickson. While growing up, he was encouraged by his grandmother to memorize Bible verses. At 9 he had memorized 1 Corinthians 13! He graduated from high school in 1983.

He attended Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, where he met his late wife, Carla Teitgen. They were married on Oct. 3, 1993, and lived a year in Minot, North Dakota, before moving to Grand Forks, North Dakota, where they lived for 26 years. Tom and Carla were blessed with three children, Eric, Joy and Alex.

Tom loved people, cars, fishing and cycling. In his younger years he even cycled competitively. Every chance he got, he would be outdoors duck hunting, fishing or cycling with his family. He was dedicated to his family, despite living with a chronic pain.

His faith in God was the cornerstone of his heart. He was a hard worker and loved to help others. He would tell his children, “Be kind and caring to everyone.” It was a motto he himself lived by.

He is survived by his three children, his brother Hal (Julie), and many aunts, uncles and cousins. Tom was preceded in death by his wife, his parents and his brother Eugene.

Don Henson

William Solinger

Mary Peyton
When Mr. Davidson got out of the Navy, he entered into aviation school and graduated first in his class. Northeast Airlines hired him, and he became a master aviation technician. Because of his work, Mr. Davidson and his family lived in many different areas, from Virginia to Miami, Ocala and Tallahassee, Florida.

In 1981 Mr. Davidson started a legal and accounting business. Mr. Davidson and his wife ran this business together for 31 years. During this time, he also served as a court mediator for 16 years. He was the only one who was allowed to put stipulations down for the judges. Many of the judges said that he should have been a lawyer. Mr. Davidson retired in 2012 and simply enjoyed being with his wife, Saundra, as they traveled and did everything together.

Mr. Davidson started attending the Church of God in Miami in 1969, and was baptized on Dec. 11, 1970. Mr. Davidson loved God, he loved God’s people, and he loved the truth. He was a deacon for many years and then was ordained an elder by Richard Thompson on Dec. 22, 2007.

During the last few months of his life, Mr. Davidson always attended services and offered warm and kind words to the members in Tallahassee, even though he was not feeling well due to diabetes and congestive heart failure.

Mr. Davidson died Friday, Nov. 6, 2020, due to complications from a stroke, with his wife and his son Bill by his side. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him. He was very kind and fully committed to God’s way of life and serving God’s people.

Mrs. Davidson said the one thing her husband never knew was grass, because he never let it grow under his feet. He was always busy working and preparing for the Kingdom of God. In addition to his wife, Mr. Davidson leaves behind three sons, Bill, Richard and Ricky Davidson.
Charles Dickey, a longtime elder in God’s Church, died peacefully on Dec. 3, 2020, of complications arising from COVID-19 and pneumonia, at the age of 81. His death was an unexpected loss to the local congregations, to his wife Ruth, Mr. Dickey’s surviving family includes his son Steve (Karen) Dickey, son Tim (Lisa) Dickey, daughter Regina (James) Hindman, son Brian (Julie) Dickey and stepson Billy (Caryl) Bailey. He also leaves his 14 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, as well as nieces, nephews and other family members.

Charles was baptized into God’s Church in 1963 and was later ordained as a deacon in Miami, Florida. Moving from there, he served in Roanoke, Virginia (1972-1975); Atlanta, Georgia (1976); and Chattanooga, Tennessee (1976-1989). In Chattanooga he was ordained as an elder during the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 1978.

Over those decades he was active as youth coordinator, basketball referee and special needs coordinator (especially for widows in need). He looked for any and every way to help his brethren. He was also known for his solid sermonettes and sermons, which conveyed his obvious desire to help his brethren succeed and make it into God’s Kingdom. He respected and supported the government and structure of the Church and encouraged others to do the same.

Charles spent his entire career working in the foundry industry (working with molten metal and castings for iron products). As a young man, he started out shoveling sand and worked his way up to the role of supervisor, and then into management, where he spent many years. Next, he worked in foundry supply sales for about 10 years and was then promoted to plant manager.

This role took him to Birmingham, Alabama, in 1989, where he spent the remainder of his career as a plant manager. During his time in the foundry industry, Mr. Dickey became known as one of the foremost experts in sand castings (into which molten iron is poured to make many iron products). After retiring, his advice was requested by so many U.S. foundries that he began a consulting business. At age 81, he was still traveling to foundries, showing them how to improve their casting processes and quality and how to reduce waste.

Charles always had a big smile on his face, and when you asked him how he was doing, his favorite response was, “I’m gooder than grits, but not near as grainy!” If he said that, you knew he was having a good day—which was most days!

Mr. Dickey will be greatly missed by his Birmingham, Alabama, and Trenton, Georgia, brethren, as for years he has provided a consistent presence of stability and support for God’s government, and an example of zeal for God’s truth, His laws and His coming Kingdom.

Paul Luecke
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