Youth Camp in Malawi

Sharpening Iron
Facing His Final Hours: Jesus' Emotional Turmoil

Youth Camp in Malawi
The 2020 Feast of Tabernacles was my 59th to attend, having begun attending back in 1962. I have many fond memories of multiple locations over the past 59 Feasts, but I believe that last year was one of the best. You may ask, How could that be? The Feast of 2020 was fraught with problems and difficulties. There were two hurricanes on the Gulf Coast. New restrictions on seating were issued at some sites only days before the Feast itself. And who can forget the social distancing and face coverings?

Last year certainly proved that no matter how well you plan physically for the Feast, there will be surprises requiring adjustment. When Hurricane Sally hit Orange Beach on Sept. 16, a few weeks before the Feast, it seemed very unlikely that we would be able to hold a Feast in that area. But the local visitors’ bureau encouraged us not to give up, letting us know that we could still have the Feast in Orange Beach. We made the decision to go forward with the Feast in that area knowing that many of our plans would have to be adjusted. Many members lost their housing and had to seek lodging elsewhere, in some cases at other Feast sites several hundred miles away.

So, what made this such a great Feast? For me personally, it was the spiritual component that meant so much, probably more so than in previous years. The messages, the fellowship and even the difficulties made this a memorable Feast. We often make our physical plans weeks and months ahead of the Feast, but how much time do we devote to spiritual preparation? I believe that most of us worry about the physical—where we will stay, how we will travel to the site, and what we will see and do during the Feast—possibly not giving enough attention to the spiritual.

The Feast of 2020 was a wake-up call as to the significance of the Feast each and every year. We witnessed firsthand the importance of preparing spiritually, as we watched the physical things change in spite of our planning.

In this issue of One Accord, we mark the beginning of Feast planning. In this issue we have a list of our Festival sites for 2021. And we will soon begin the registration process for this year’s Feast.

I am sure many of us have already begun our physical preparations. This year I want to encourage all of us, myself included, not to forget the spiritual. I want to encourage all of us to take the time to read and meditate on the scriptures about the Feast and to take a day or two for fasting.

These are the important spiritual things that will make this Feast a great one and one to remember wherever we attend. After all, the purpose of the Feast, as outlined in Scripture, is spiritual—“that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always” (Deuteronomy 14:23).
Contents

4 Sharpening Iron
Facing His Final Hours: Jesus’ Emotional Turmoil

6 Youth Camp in Malawi

7 South Island Visit

8 Church Potluck

9 Announcements

14 Feast of Tabernacles
2021 Site Descriptions
Imagine the scene. At the Passover meal, Jesus looked at Judas—someone who had known Him and seen His way of life for at least 3½ years—and knew he was about to betray Him. How this must have hurt! But Jesus simply said, “What you do, do quickly” (John 13:27). So Judas left to meet with Jesus’ enemies.

Jesus knew what was to follow; the chain of events that would lead to His torture and death had been set in motion.

This evening was to be Jesus’ last Passover with His disciples, and He introduced the new symbols for the Passover: unleavened bread, to represent His soon-to-be broken body, and wine, to represent His shed blood.

He would have naturally felt emotional as He gave them the bread and wine and explained their meaning. The Gospel accounts clearly show that throughout that momentous day Jesus experienced a range of powerful emotions.

After commemorating the Passover in the upper room, they all sang a hymn and left for the Garden of Gethsemane, just a short walk away.

The backstory
To more fully understand Jesus’ emotional state, we need to understand the backstory of His life. Before He became God in the flesh (John 1:1-14), the Word (Jesus) had observed humanity from the time of the Garden of Eden. He was aware of the very first recorded murder (Cain’s murder of his brother Abel). He witnessed the panic and pain of the screaming millions who were drowned in the Flood for their violence and rebellion.

On through the centuries, the Word who became Jesus had watched the self-imposed suffering of people. Wars, misery and destruction had been the chosen pathway of this creation by God. Battle after battle; evil leader after evil leader. Think of all the cries of distressed mothers as they watched their families ripped apart by aggressors.

The prophecies
Add to all of this the prophecies that the Word knew were to be fulfilled when He became man so that the plan of redemption could be completed. Jesus the Messiah (Christos in Greek) was well aware of what mankind under the influence of Satan (man’s adversary and the god of this world) would go through as a result of sin and rebellion.

Christ knew His purpose on earth: to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29-30). For four Passovers during His ministry, Jesus ate the sacrificed lamb that taught how blood had to be shed to forgive sin. On this Passover He was to be the literal Lamb of God—the ultimate sacrifice for all human sin.

With all of this background then, why did Jesus experience such depths of emotion that fateful night?

Gethsemane
As they continued to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus reminded the disciples of their human weaknesses. He
“From a human perspective, He didn’t want to die, and He knew how horrifying His death was going to be. But He didn’t want to fail all humanity.”

The offer to all humans

Scripture tells us that all have sinned—no exceptions (Romans 3:23). All of us need the sacrifice of Christ to pay the penalty for past sins. Through that sacrifice, God makes the awesome gift of forgiveness available to those who repent and genuinely desire not to sin again. However, we all know how human and weak we are, and so God in His mercy offers His Holy Spirit to help us overcome our sinful nature and grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

We will stumble and fall, but God is willing to forgive and reconcile us to Himself (1 John 1:5-2:6). This is so encouraging, and it should motivate us to desire from the heart to walk as Jesus walked—perfect before the Father. We do not always do this, and a life of repentance following sin is part of our calling and our way of life as Christians.

Christ and the Father desire to bring “many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). There is a great overarching purpose to human life. It is not to live, suffer and die and then go to heaven to contemplate the face of the Father for all eternity—it is so much more than that.

We must not reject or neglect our calling

The calling we are being offered (John 6:44) is so very special and carries a wonderful reward in addition to the gift of eternal life. When Christ returns to this earth, there will be millions of humans to work with and help through the period called the Millennium—Christ’s 1,000-year reign on the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

We can be among those who help humans during this time come to appreciate the enormous and wonderful gifts that God has to offer: forgiveness of sins, the gift of God’s Holy Spirit and the gift of life with the Father and the Son for all eternity.

What if we turn it down?

Can you imagine anyone refusing this awesome offer from our great Creator? He wants to share all that He has, to make us coheirs with His Son, Jesus the Christ (Romans 8:17). But prophecy tells us that some will reject this offer. Sadly, for them there will be the second death—eternal annihilation for those who continue to rebel against the God of love.

The choice of obeying or rebelling is ours. Remember that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

So, back to the reason Jesus Christ was in such emotional torment.

Jesus recognized that without His sacrifice, no human would receive salvation. That means never, ever being with the Father or enjoying eternity with Him as a part of the family that rules this whole universe. Utter annihilation—to be forgotten forever.

Perhaps Jesus, who had known the glory He had with the Father before He became human, was thinking along these lines as He faced His final hours. From a human perspective, He didn’t want to die, and He knew how horrifying His death was going to be. But He didn’t want to fail all humanity by backing down either. So, although under enormous stress facing death, He knew it was worth it to accomplish the purpose for this vast creation of billions of humans.

Jesus knew He had to die so all humanity could have an opportunity for salvation. So, three times in desperate and agonizing prayer, He asked for the strength to stay the course until He could say the words on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34) and “It is finished!” (John 19:30).

He stayed the course with God’s help. He never sinned and returned to the Father in indescribable glory (Philippians 2:5-11). And He did it willingly—for you and for me. ☺️
Eclipse Lodge in Salima, Malawi, was the venue for a four-day youth camp, from Dec. 20-23, 2020. We had a total of 33 campers—20 boys and 13 girls—plus six instructors and five staff.

The church in Malawi has a higher number of youths than adults. So we feel that it is right and proper to provide them with both physical and spiritual education as leaders of tomorrow.

God’s Church is about developing leadership for His Kingdom and being ambassadors for that Kingdom in the present society of this world. Therefore, our reputation is very important in our society today. Our obedience to God’s commandments is of high importance for the achievement of His purpose in us.

Most of the youths in Malawi spend time on social media. And most of the materials on social media are world-based in nature. They are hostile to God’s laws. So our youth camp is a valuable forum for helping our youths put God first in their lives.

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, schools and colleges in Malawi were closed for six months. During this period, over 12,000 teenage girls became pregnant. In order to protect our girls from this promiscuous behavior, some older women in the Church were asked to talk to them at the camp about how they should protect their virginity up to the time of a right and proper marriage.

The program had a number of activities: Bible study with verse recitals, morning gymnastics, swimming and other beach games at the lake, and a talent show that was full of fun. For the first time campers had a beautiful golf shirt each. Delicious meals promoted the camp morale.

The youths in Malawi are very grateful to the Church’s commitment to their needs. This was the best camp we have ever had.

We are very thankful for the generous support the headquarters office renders to us.
New Zealand pastor Andre van Belkum and Andrei Siopan visited outlying members in the country’s South Island Jan. 31 to Feb. 5.

There are nine scattered members in the region. All attend weekly Sabbath services via the Auckland webcast.

The first leg was to see Donna and Peter Goomes, who live on Stewart Island (population 410). Stewart Island is the most southern part of New Zealand and is a bird sanctuary for the endangered kakapo with just over 200 in numbers.

Then it was on to Oamaru, where Cecilia Baxter lives. Cecilia also accompanied them to a local nursing home where a longtime member, Elizabeth Turner, resides. On the third day, they visited Linda Hopkinson in her beautiful garden home in Pareora. They had dinner on the last day with Elbert and Flora Gargar, their son Doughbert, and Cecilia Baxter.

They were also able to visit the Van Leeuwen Dairy Group, the dairy farm where Doughbert works. The farm is the largest robotic dairy farm in the world. With 24 robots and 1,400 cows, the farm produces 36,000 liters of milk per day. (New Zealand is the seventh largest milk producer worldwide).

The trip was marked by the warm hospitality of the brethren and wonderful fellowship. ☺
ANDRE VAN BELKUM’S 50TH YEAR IN THE MINISTRY

Members of the Auckland, New Zealand, congregation honored their pastor, Andre van Belkum, on Feb. 8. That month Mr. Van Belkum reached 50 years of service in the ministry since being ordained back in 1970.

The members thanked the Van Belkums for their love, support and dedication in taking care of the members of God’s Church. Their zeal and faith in teaching God’s Word and doing His work have been an excellent example to the brethren.

Your Auckland family loves you, Mr. and Mrs. Van Belkum!

Andrei Siopan

FORT WORTH HOLDS FOOD DRIVE

For three Sabbaths in December and January the Fort Worth, Texas, congregation collected food items and cash donations for the Tarrant Area Food Bank.

The teen group was responsible for collecting items and delivering them to the food bank. The donations were enough to provide 3,450 meals for needy people!

Ken Giese
AUCKLAND ENJOYS FELLOWSHIP

On March 15 the Auckland, New Zealand, congregation enjoyed fellowshipping in the beautiful farm home of John and Allison Hefer. With delicious meals, music and laughter, the brethren enjoyed the warm and loving spirit of togetherness. A highlight for the children was the trampoline and the bicycles set up for them to enjoy.

Andrei Siopan

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

Lorenzo and Kimberly Calderón, from the Navojoa, Mexico, congregation, are pleased to share the joy of the birth of their first son, Aaron. The baby was born Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020. He was 54 cm (21¼ inches) long and weighed 3.4 kilograms (7½ pounds).

Lorenzo's family from Navojoa and Kimberly's family from Guatemala are very thankful for all the prayers that people made on behalf of little Aaron’s delivery.

Congratulations to the Calderon family!

Adán Langarica
Baptisms

Joshua Holdsworth, a member who has been attending the Buffalo, New York, congregation, was baptized on Jan. 9, 2021. Members of his family have been in the Church since the 1950s. Joshua began to attend because of their influence on him over the years.

This baptism was more challenging to perform because Mr. Holdsworth suffered a significant back injury on the job some years ago. A pool was brought into the church hall to

On Feb. 18, 2021, in the midst of a very cold ice and snowstorm that gripped the nation, Tierra Brown of the Clarksville, Maryland, congregation was baptized by her former pastor, David Jackson, in a wonderfully warm hotel pool in Columbia, Maryland. Looking out through the floor-to-ceiling windows at the snow-covered trees and ground made for a beautiful setting.

Because of restrictions due to the virus in the U.S., the baptism was attended by only two very close friends, Edwin Jackson and Gianni Greene, along with Lisa Jackson.

We are excited to announce that we have a new sister in Christ. On Jan. 23, 2021, Sheila Marie Easterling was baptized by Wes Cohron, pastor of the Mobile, Alabama, congregation.

Sheila is a third-generation Christian. Her parents, Nick and Carla Easterling, as well as her siblings Charlotte and Jason were present at the baptism.

On Feb. 9, 2020, the Body of Christ gained a new member, Guia Nonoy, as she was baptized at the Siopans’ residence. The ceremony, officiated by pastor Andre van Belkum, was followed by a pleasant lunch and fellowship. Guia was originally from the Philippines and now resides in Auckland, New Zealand, with her husband and children.

On March 25, 2020, Timothy James Siopan and Desire Aime Sitchon entered their marriage covenant before God and family. The wedding was moved to an earlier date, due to the approaching COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in New Zealand.

The couple’s small wedding was officiated by pastor Andre van Belkum and was witnessed by six friends and family members. The occasion was intimate—full of laughter, singing and toasts.

On the afternoon of Sept. 6, 2020, Hannah Marie Kroska (daughter of Allen and Sheri Kroska) and Brad Michael Smith (son of Michael and Karen Smith) were married.

Weddings

Timothy and Desire Siopan

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One person noted that as the country was going into a full lockdown, the newlyweds were committing to being “locked down” to each other in marriage!

Brad and Hannah Smith

On the afternoon of Sept. 6, 2020, Hannah Marie Kroska (daughter of Allen and Sheri Kroska) and Brad Michael Smith (son of Michael and Karen Smith) were married.

Hannah and Brad both work as registered nurses at the Huntsville hospital and attend the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation.

It is with great joy that we welcome Sheila into the family of our loving God.

Debbie Daugherty

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As we do in Chile every year, in 2020 we gave several Bible studies exclusively focused on preparation for baptism. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have had online Bible studies for people in the southern area of Chile who were interested in getting baptized. Over several months we had regular online studies to discuss the topics related to this significant step in the life of every Christian.

Apart from just giving instructions, these studies were an opportunity to take advantage of the quarantine that had been imposed on all in this area. When the quarantine restrictions started to ease, we could finally meet and have private conversations with the candidates for baptism who had already finished the set of Bible studies.

That’s how in a single trip through almost all of the south of Chile, I was able to perform 10 baptisms and visit most of the brethren in the area with my wife.

While we were in Temuco, Gabriel Queupul and Angelo Henriquez were
Eunice Lamb

Eunice Arlene (Hanavan) Lamb of Strasburg, Colorado, died Nov. 6, 2020, in Arizona at 92. Eunice was born on a farm in Arapahoe, Colorado, on Dec. 26, 1927, where she grew up with her parents and nine brothers and sisters. She attended school in Arapahoe, graduating in 1946. Toward the end of high school, Eunice met Eugene “Gene” Lamb, who was playing in a band. The attraction was immediate and enduring, and they were married on April 10, 1947, in Goodland, Kansas.

During their early years of marriage in Kansas and Colorado, Gene and Eunice welcomed four daughters into the family. In 1958 they moved to Strasburg, where Gene and Eunice lived for the rest of their lives. Eunice was a great wife, mother and homemaker. She excelled in maintaining a home, cooking, baking, gardening, crocheting and sewing clothing for herself and her four daughters.

After retirement, Gene and Eunice enjoyed traveling and visiting family and friends, and spent many hours outside in their yard and gardens. Eunice's beloved husband of 70 years preceded her in death on Nov. 5, 2017. She was also preceded in death by her parents, six of her siblings, and her son-in-law, George (Gary) Koerner, Jr. Eunice is survived by her four daughters, Monica Koerner of Katy, Texas; Marilyn Chamberlain of Glendale, Arizona; Malea Lamb of Chandler, Arizona; and Melanie (John) Towne of Shelbyville, Illinois. She is also survived by grandchildren Ryan (Melanie) Koerner, Dustin Chamberlain, Danielle (Jon) Roberts,...

Grecia Stephanie Rios Corral

We are glad to announce that on Sunday, Nov. 22, 2020, Grecia Stephanie Rios Corral was baptized in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico. We share in the happiness of her parents, Jorge and Lorena Rios, and her brother Jorge Jr.

Welcome, Grecia, to the Body of Jesus Christ.

Adán Langarica
Michael Walter Ballo

Michael Walter Ballo, a member of God’s Church since 1969, died on Dec. 16, 2020, in his 86th year. He struggled with Parkinson’s disease for the last three years and was admitted to a long-term care center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, last year where he succumbed to COVID-19.

He was born in Chicago, Illinois, on Sept. 20, 1935. Michael graduated from DeVry University Chicago, after which he worked for Allied Radio. He started attending the Worldwide Church of God in the fall of 1969.

Mike was most known for his willingness to use his talents as an electrician and handyman, helping others with their jobs and home repairs. He opened the Hyatt O’Hare Hotel in Rosemont, Illinois, in 1971 and retired from the hotel chain in June 2000.

Michael is survived by his wife Teri; sons Johnny, Donald and his wife Camille, and Richard; stepson Benjamin Mater; and stepdaughter Jamie Hild and her husband Frank. He is also survived by three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Shirley Ries

Shirley Ries, a member in the St. Louis, Missouri, congregation, died on Jan. 26, 2021, at the age of 82. She was the beloved wife of Ronald Ries, also a member in St. Louis. She is survived by her son, Kurt (Sheri) Ries; daughter, Kelly (Bob) Schoonover; four grandsons; two granddaughters; and five great-grandsons.

For many years, Shirley worked at Armstrong Health and Fitness. She enjoyed gardening and taking care of her dogs, but especially loved spending time with her family and friends.

Shirley was a very kind and caring woman with a great sense of humor. She will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved her. The family held a private memorial service for her on Jan. 30.

Janice Wenberg

On Dec. 7, 2020, Jan Wenberg, a longtime member, died after suffering an acute stroke, and the St. Cloud, Minnesota, congregation lost a loving and kind member.

Jan was born on Jan. 30, 1938, in Lansford, North Dakota. She graduated from Tolley High School in Tolley, North Dakota. On April 28, 1957, she married Will Wenberg, and they had four children. Over the years, she and her husband lived in a number of places, where she would work as a certified nursing assistant in a hospital or nursing home. She also worked as a childcare provider.

Some of her hobbies included roller skating, drawing and taking pictures.

But the hobby that made her loved by so many in the Church was her love of talking on the phone and writing cards and letters. Every year brethren in the Minnesota congregations would receive handmade cards during the different holy day seasons.

She also loved playing card games and especially loved playing games with her grandchildren.

Jan was a loving wife, mother and friend, and she will be greatly missed by all.

She is survived by her husband, Will; her children, Michelle and Matthew; seven grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. Jan was preceded in death by her parents, her in-laws, a sister and two sons.
Anchorage, Alaska

Please note: As of this time, we still do not have signed contracts for the facilities listed below. This is in part due to ongoing coronavirus meeting restrictions in Anchorage. We expect to have confirmation that the Alaska site is a go by April 1.

For the first time in its 11-year existence, the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, is pleased to announce plans for the Feast of Tabernacles to be held in Anchorage, Alaska. Often referred to as the “Last Frontier” and “Land of the Midnight Sun,” the Feast in Alaska promises to be a memorable experience.

Ted Stevens International Airport is located 6 miles from Hotel Captain Cook. Over 40 air carriers serve the airport. Renting a car is highly recommended to get in and around the city.

Daily services will be held at two locations. For the first seven days, we will be at the luxurious Hotel Captain Cook. Located in downtown Anchorage, this beautifully appointed hotel will have ballroom space for 500. The hotel will be offering standard rooms as well as junior suites at very reasonable prices. Due to scheduling conflicts, for the final day of the Feast and Last Great Day, we will be at the Egan Convention Center. The Center is located a short five blocks from the Hotel Captain Cook.

Plans are still being developed for group activities, but rest assured, they will promise to take in the splendor and beauty of Alaska. Plenty of personal time will be provided for families to enjoy much of what the area affords in terms of sightseeing, wonderful meals and unique shopping.

Fragrance-controlled room available: Yes.

Tax rate for accommodations: 7.5 percent.

Closest airport: Ted Stevens International Airport (ANC), 6 miles.

Jon Pinelli
Branson, Missouri

Branson, Missouri, will again welcome the Church of God by hosting the Feast of Tabernacles for the 26th year in a row. The site is always popular for all ages. The Branson area, in the beautiful, hard-wooded hills of the Ozarks, is a wonderful setting for God’s Feast. The fall scenery can be spectacular, and the hills, lakes, forests and streams present an almost millennial setting. Wildlife can be seen in many areas—a very short distance from the theater and near many of the housing establishments and entertainment areas.

For those who want to be more active, Branson has something for everyone—ranging from first-class shopping and amusement parks to live music shows, golf courses, museums and the Promised Land Zoo.

Two new attractions are WonderWorks Branson, an “amusement park for the mind” with 48,000 square feet of “edu-tainment,” and the Wonders of Wildlife museum and aquarium in nearby Springfield. As well, Wild Animal Safari and National Tiger Sanctuary are less than 45 minutes away.

Housing in Branson is some of the most economical of any Festival site. Establishments range from first-class hotels, condominiums, houses and cabins to more economical motels. Virtually all housing facilities have, at the minimum, mini fridges and microwaves.

Services will again be held at the White House Theatre. This location offers several unusual but appreciated conveniences, including a large lobby for visiting before and after services and the West Wing conference center for other activities.

Fragrance-controlled room available: Yes.

Tax rate for accommodations: 7.5 to 11.8 percent, depending on location.

Closest airport: Springfield-Branson (SGF), 55 miles.

Mike Blackwell

Cincinnati, Ohio/Northern Kentucky (Satellite)

This is the second year for a satellite site located in the greater Cincinnati, Ohio, area. Once again, services will be held at the lovely Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport Hotel, located at 1717 Airport Exchange Blvd. in Erlanger, Kentucky.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the hotel, making it possible for brethren to stay on-site. Because this is a satellite site, services will be a combination of webcasts (from one of the other Feast sites) and live speakers.

The hotel will provide a complimentary deluxe continental breakfast buffet, which includes scrambled eggs, turkey bacon, pastries, assorted breads/spreads, fruit medley, coffee and tea. There is an on-site full-service restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A wide variety of other restaurants are within a 15-minute drive of the hotel.

Other hotel amenities include free Wi-Fi, an indoor pool, sauna and hot tub, an on-site laundry, 24-hour fitness and business centers, and free parking. In addition, there is a complimentary airport shuttle service.

Area attractions include the Newport Aquarium, the Cincinnati Museum Center, the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, the Ark Encounter and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. If you enjoy shopping, parks and various historical sites, those opportunities are also available in the greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky area.

Fragrance-controlled room available: No.

Tax rate for accommodations: 12.36 percent.

Closest airport: Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky (CVG), 3.6 miles.

Lyle Welty

Fort Myers, Florida (Satellite)

Fort Myers, Florida, is a satellite site that is for Florida residents with special needs first, but two weeks after general registration begins, it will be open to all outside of Florida until it is full. Here are the special considerations for members at the beginning of Feast registration:

• The distance to your assigned site (Orange Beach) is too far, and travel is too expensive.
• You cannot take the extra travel days away from your job and/or school to go to your assigned site.
• You live outside Florida, but you would like to visit with Florida family or close friends during the Feast who may or may not be attending the Feast in Fort Myers. After five very successful years, we will once again be returning to Fort Myers for our sixth year as a Florida satellite site. The beauty of the Gulf Coast of Florida, the many attractions to visit, and the excellent venue for accommodations and services make this once again a very good choice for 2021.

Services will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport, which is a beautiful lakeside property across from the Gulf Coast Town Center. There are over 30 top restaurants in the Gulf Coast Town Center area for brethren to consider for lunch and dinner. Most people may wish to stay at the Holiday Inn, where breakfast comes free with your room if you are with the Church. It is an easy walk to the ballroom every day for services.

This area of southwest Florida offers many attractions. The Edison and Ford Winter Estates, which includes the Edison Botanic Research Laboratory and Museum, are open daily for tours. The causeway to Sanibel and Captiva Islands is 30 minutes away and so is the bridge to the island and city of Fort Myers Beach. All have beautiful white-sand beaches, and there are plenty of seashells to gather on Sanibel and Captiva Islands. The very popular Naples Zoo is 35 minutes away, and the western Everglades National Park’s Ten Thousand Islands guided boat tour is just one hour away.

During the Feast this year the temperature highs in September should range from the upper 80s to the low 90s. The Fort Myers Feast site will be able to accommodate up to 200 people before it will be full.

Fragrance-controlled room available: Yes.
Kohala Coast, Hawaii

We will be returning to the Big Island of Hawaii this year for the Feast, meeting at the Fairmont Orchid, a hotel and resort about a half hour north of the city of Kona. This is a very popular resort area on the “dry side” of the Big Island. This area north of Kona, on the west side of the largest of the Hawaiian Islands, is the world-famous Kohala Coast.

We will be returning to the four-star Fairmont Orchid, which hosted us in 2017 and 2019. The Fairmont Orchid is located on over 33 acres of lush, tropical, oceanfront grounds that include not only the resort with its seven restaurants, but also a private bay with a children’s beach, two championship golf courses, a fitness center, spa, 10 tennis courts, pools, gardens and coastal hiking trails through a historical park.

We are expecting between 300 and 400 to attend the Feast on the Big Island this year. All of our services and meetings will be held in the ballroom at the resort, where we have reserved a large block of rooms at deeply discounted rates.

The hotel is offering us complimentary meeting space for our services and activities if most attendees stay at the hotel. Those staying at the hotel will help save the Church thousands of dollars in rental fees, and we appreciate your support in reserving rooms and staying at the hotel during the Feast.

There is plenty to do and see on the Big Island—sightseeing, shopping, fine dining, ocean water sports and beaches abound. Organized Feast activities will include Family Day on the beach, a teen beach party, a young adult kayaking and snorkeling excursion, a family sailing and snorkeling adventure, and a Hawaiian luau. You will find plenty of helpful information and pictures on our Facebook page—COGWA FOT – Kohala Coast, HI. We look forward to seeing you on the Big Island! Aloha!

Fragrance-controlled room available: No.

Tax rate for accommodations: 14.4 percent.

Closest airport: Kona (KOA), 23 miles.

Dave Register

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

We’re pleased to be returning to Lancaster’s only top-rated luxury hotel—Eden Resort & Suites. Church services will be held in the luxurious Crystal Ballroom.

For housing, we’ll have standard rooms (two queen beds) and a variety of suites. All rooms have a refrigerator, microwave and coffeemaker.

Resort dining includes Garfield’s (family atmosphere), Arthur’s Terrace (casual and fine dining) and the Encore Lounge, which offers a full range of drinks.

Off-site dining includes Pennsylvania Dutch restaurants, buffets, fine dining, bakeries and much more. See the Lancaster Visitor’s Guide—Where to Eat.

For group activities, plans are developing for a new off-site Family Day activity, with exciting potential for all ages (details forthcoming). Also, a block of tickets is reserved at the Sight & Sound Theatre for a showing of Queen Esther! Additional nearby family-friendly attractions, if available, are the Biblical Tabernacle Reproduction, Civil War History and the Underground Railroad, Lancaster Central Market (food and music), The Green Dragon (farmers’ market, Fridays only), Strasburg Rail Road, Amish Farm and House, Turkey Hill Experience (ice cream!), Bounce Kraze, Dutch Wonderland (family theme park, ages 3+), Hersheypark (which includes the Boardwalk water park and ZooAmerica) and Sky Zone Trampoline Park. For more details, see Discover Lancaster (the visitor’s guide can be downloaded using the link at the bottom of the web page).

Fragrance-controlled room available: No.

Tax rate for accommodations: 11 percent.

Closest airports: Harrisburg (HIA), 30 miles; Philadelphia (PHL), 65 miles; Lehigh Valley (ABE), 68 miles; Baltimore-Washington (BWI), 85 miles.

Kevin Epps

Mont-Sainte-Anne, Québec

We are planning to return to Mont-Sainte-Anne, Québec, for the Feast this year, meeting at the Château Mont-Sainte-Anne resort half an hour northeast of the historic city of Québec. Fall colors, expansive mountain vistas and deep canyons make this a beautiful place to keep God’s Feast. Services will be held in English and in French, alternating each day between the two languages, with translation available.

The Château Mont-Sainte-Anne, which recently became a Marriott property (Delta Hotels by Marriott), boasts an on-site restaurant, indoor pool, spa and fitness center. The hotel offers several types of rooms, suites and condos to match your accommodation needs and budget. Most room types include kitchenettes, while the spacious condos include full kitchens. A handful of local restaurants and grocery stores are within a short drive. Numerous off-site housing options are available nearby as well.

During the Feast, you can discover Old Québec, which dates back to the 17th century and is full of historic landmarks, unique restaurants, boutiques and sightseeing opportunities. For the naturalist, the Cap Tourmente and the Canyon Sainte-Anne are a short drive from the Festival site, and the expansive Jacques-Cartier National Park is within reach. The nearby Montmorency Falls stands a full 99 feet higher than Niagara Falls. You can experience this stunning cascade via a cable car ride, a suspension bridge over the falls or a long staircase to the base of the falls.

We hope you will join us this year to keep the Feast at Mont-Sainte-Anne! To register to attend, please follow the standard Feast registration process. If you are considering spending the Feast in Québec this year, meeting at the Château Mont-Sainte-Anne
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

We are excited to once again have the Feast in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Now a thriving metropolis, Myrtle Beach began as a getaway for employees of the lumber industry in Conway, South Carolina, who would take the train to “New Town” on their free weekends. The area continued to grow, and it was finally incorporated as a town in 1957. A contest to name it resulted in “Myrtle Beach,” after the area’s southern wax myrtle shrubs.

Today Myrtle Beach is known as the golf capital. Currently, there are 87 premier golf courses throughout the area. It is also considered to be one of America’s most popular vacation destinations. The area boasts a wide variety of motel and condo units as well as limitless restaurants and shopping adventures.

The biggest draw to the area is miles of coastline along the Atlantic Ocean. With that come opportunities to play in the sand, collect seashells and catch some waves.

Myrtle Beach is also a large draw for those who enjoy a variety of entertainment venues, such as the oceanfront Myrtle Beach Boardwalk, a new SkyWheel, Ripley’s Aquarium, several live shows in theaters, miniature golf courses, jet skiing and parasailing. There are 350 acres of shopping, restaurants and other attractions at Broadway at the Beach.

Services will be held at the Crown Reef Beach Resort and Convention Center (2913 S. Ocean Blvd., Myrtle Beach, SC). This facility includes an on-site hotel with kitchenettes for those who need or desire that.

New Braunfels, Texas

New Braunfels is a small town of approximately 90,000 people located in the hill country of Texas, just 30 miles northeast of downtown San Antonio. Its German heritage is evident in the city’s history, culture and cuisine. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, New Braunfels was the third-fastest-growing city in the United States from 2010-2020.

Services will be held in The Village Venue located in New Braunfels’ Freiheit Village. This will be the first time for us to use this facility for the Feast of Tabernacles. The facility was built in 2017 and features state-of-the-art audiovisual technology, breakout rooms and an elegant decor. Often used for weddings, this facility is also an outstanding place for corporate meetings and conventions. Premier shopping, restaurants and housing surround the facility.

Nestled among the convergence of two rivers, New Braunfels offers many recreational opportunities that include water. Whether it is enjoying the famous Schlitterbahn Water Park and Resort, wakeboarding without a boat at the Texas Ski Ranch, floating one of the rivers, or swimming in the largest spring-fed pool in Texas—there are plenty of ways to get wet!

For those interested in history, there are seven museums to visit and the historic district of Gruene (a district within the city of New Braunfels) to explore. For dining, there are many restaurants nearby where visitors can sample German dishes, Texas barbecue and contemporary fare.

If you’d like to venture beyond the local area, San Antonio is just 30 miles south on Interstate 35. There you can tour the historic Alamo, wander the River Walk, go up the Tower of the Americas, visit SeaWorld and enjoy Six Flags Fiesta Texas theme park.

The daily high temperature in New Braunfels in September is 87 percent.

There you can tour the Tower of the Americas, visit SeaWorld and enjoy Six Flags Fiesta Texas theme park.

As someone who has grown up in the Church, I know full well the Feast attitude that we are to exhibit. We come before God to experience His Feast of Tabernacles with great gladness and joy.

To say those attributes of attitude were tested last year is an understatement. For me, it was about recognizing that even in the most uncertain of physical times, we still have the opportunity to express great joy and thanksgiving for the wonderful picture of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ and the saints.

So what will this year bring? Should it be any different? The mind-set of joy at the Feast is remembering why we are there. While we all enjoy the physical elements of the Feast, we are reminded that it must always take us back to why we are keeping the Feast.

There is great joy in focusing and rededicating our lives at the Feast of Tabernacles. We come out of the world, in a sense, for a period of time to focus on the great joy that all mankind will experience after Jesus Christ’s return. When we think in those terms, it makes the Feast the joyful time that God has always intended His Feast of Tabernacles to be. That means joyous regardless of what is happening in the world around us at the time because we are in God’s presence (Psalm 16:11).

Let’s all throw ourselves into this year’s Feast of Tabernacles with a joyful mind-set. We may not know all the details yet due to lingering aspects of the pandemic, but we do know that it need not affect our joy. Why? Because regardless of what is happening in the world, come opening night of this year’s Feast, the deep meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles will not have changed.
generally ranges between 86 and 93 degrees F.

Fragrance-controlled room available: Yes.
Tax rate for accommodations: 13 percent.
Closest airport: San Antonio (SAT), 36 miles.

David Treybig

Orange Beach, Alabama

The southeast region will host the Feast of Tabernacles in Orange Beach, Alabama, with services in the Orange Beach Event Center, located in the Wharf district. The Wharf has many fine restaurants, shopping, a marina and lots of outdoor activities, including an escape room, Ferris wheel and a newly added zip-line attraction. For more information on the Wharf, you can visit alwharf.com.

In addition to our regular services, we will host teen and young adult drop-ins, a golf scramble, Family Day activities at the Orange Beach Sportsplex, our much-anticipated senior luncheon and a teen outing. There are multiple beach locations—stretching across several miles—that offer parasailing, diving, deep-sea fishing, glass-bottom boats, dolphin tours, beach volleyball and a host of other Gulf-related activities.

If your interest isn’t beautiful white sand, then just minutes from the beach are several theme parks, a zoo and Wade Ward Nature Park with its scenic wetlands boardwalk. We encourage you to visit gulfshores.com for more information on the attractions, restaurants and things to do in this coastal paradise.

If your plans call for a beach venue for this year’s Feast of Tabernacles, we welcome you to Orange Beach, Alabama! Fragrance-controlled room available: No.
Tax rate for accommodations: 13 percent. (Be sure to read details on each property listed in the housing information. Some Orange Beach accommodations include taxes and fees in their rates.)
Closest airport: Pensacola, Florida (PNS) 30 miles.

Phillip Sandilands

Rapid City, South Dakota

Once again, we are holding the Feast in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota, a premier family destination. Rapid City was a very popular site in 2018, and over the years many brethren have expressed a desire to return. We are happy to make that desire a reality again this year.

The Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Rapid City will serve as our host facility again this year, allowing hundreds to enjoy a beautiful, millennial setting. There is an amazing amount of natural beauty in Rapid City, with lots of family activities, educational and historic adventures, and three national parks within a short distance.

Housing ranges from first-class hotels to extended-stay properties. There are also some cabins and rental homes available 30 to 45 minutes away. Daytime temperatures at the end of September are generally in the high 60s and 70s.

Attendance will be limited to about 750 people, and we expect the site to fill up. Come join us in the beautiful Black Hills. You won’t be disappointed. We look forward to seeing you in Rapid City, South Dakota! Fragrance-controlled room available: To be determined.
Tax rate for accommodations: 9 percent, plus a $2 per night city occupancy fee.
Closest airport: Rapid City Regional Airport (RAP), 11 miles.

Mark Whynaught

Tucson, Arizona

We will be meeting again at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort. This is a beautiful four-star resort nestled up against the canyon and is a quiet setting designed for relaxation, entertainment, and fellowship. Loews offers not only a wonderful meeting space, but beautifully appointed rooms, gift shops, a bistro, four restaurants on premises, outdoor pools, an on-site spa, tennis courts, and two wonderful but challenging golf courses, one of which will host our annual Feast golf scramble.

Services will be on location in the Kiva Ballroom of the Loews Resort, so those staying at the resort will enjoy not only a beautiful room and view, but also an easy walk to services and other activities. For the second year, the Loews has offered our members tremendously discounted rooms and has waived the resort fee and parking fees.

Tucson offers many options in entertainment. The famous Tombstone, Arizona, is only a short drive to the south, and the well-known Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is a short drive to the west. Tucson also offers jeep or Hummer desert tours, hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, Funtasticks fun park, or simply driving to beautiful Mount Lemmon.

Tucson has many dining choices, including the well-known Pinnacle Peak Steakhouse (with its own outdoor shops and fun shows), Fleming’s Steakhouse, Churrasco de Brasil steakhouse, Blue Ice Gelato, Topgolf and many more.

Enjoy this beautiful Western site and watch it come to life again this year with those celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles as the family of God! Fragrance-controlled room available: No.
Tax rate for accommodations: 12 percent.
Closest airport: Tucson (TUS), 18.7 miles.

Paul Carter

Victoria, British Columbia

Please note: At this time Victoria is the backup site for Anchorage, Alaska, in the event we do not receive a signed contract for Anchorage. We expect to have confirmation that the Alaska site is a go by April 1.

This beautiful and historic city, located on Vancouver Island, previously served as a COGWA Feast site in 2016 and 2018. The site was extremely popular with our membership both years.

Daily services will once again be held at the Mary Winspear Centre in the quaint town of Sidney. Sidney is located a short 25-minute drive from downtown Victoria. For those who wish, there
are a variety of housing establishments located four blocks or less from the Mary Winspear Centre. Victoria features a number of very unique sightseeing venues. Tour the historic Butchart Gardens, listed on Canada’s national historic registry. Do not forget to bring your camera, as the beauty of a variety of floral presentations are in abundance at the gardens. Enjoy high tea at the historic Empress Hotel in downtown Victoria. Originally built as one of Canada’s grand railway hotels, it is also listed on Canada’s national historic registry, and its splendor is one of a kind.

This year we will once again offer an afternoon whale-watching tour. These tours have proven to be quite a highlight for many Feastgoers over the past two Feast of Tabernacles in Victoria. And I am pleased to report that everyone saw whales on their respective tours!

To round out your Feast experience, there are a number of restaurants in Victoria. With a variety of foods to fit all appetites and budgets, you will enjoy food and drink to your heart’s content. If you have never visited Canada, come spend this Feast with your brethren from Canada. You will not be disappointed!

Fragrance-controlled room available: No.
Tax rate for accommodations: 13 percent
Closest airport: Victoria (YYJ), 2 miles.

Jon Pinelli

Woodbury, Minnesota (Satellite)
This year the satellite site for the Wisconsin and Minnesota area will be in Woodbury, Minnesota, an eastern suburb of St. Paul and only 13 miles from the Wisconsin border. “Satellite site” means that services will be provided via webcast from one of the other Feast sites. While we will be a small site, there will be plenty of good fellowship. Services will be held at the Residence Inn (205 Radio Drive, Woodbury, MN), and we have a block of rooms set aside so that brethren can stay on-site.

This Residence Inn is an extended-stay hotel and is a short drive from historic downtown Stillwater. It offers a free shuttle service, Monday to Friday, within a 5-mile radius. Local attractions include Lake Elmo Park Reserve, many good restaurants and retailers. Cub Foods, Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s are a short distance away. There are many attractions in the greater Twin Cities area as well, including Como Zoo and the Mall of America.

A complimentary breakfast buffet is provided each morning, and each room includes an in-suite kitchen so you can prepare your own meals.

The hotel includes a business center, free Wi-Fi and on-site laundry. Pets are allowed. You may also enjoy the outdoor fire pit and the patio grill.

Monday to Wednesday you are invited to enjoy the Residence Inn Mix social hour for snacks, drinks and good conversation.

Fragrance-controlled room available: No.
Tax rate for accommodations: 7.125 percent.
Closest airport: Minneapolis–St. Paul (MSP), 20 miles.

Larry Solomon

International Feast Sites

Registration for Specialty and International Sites
Sunday, April 11

Africa
Mugina, Burundi
Man, Côte d’Ivoire
Douala, Cameroon
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo
Elmina, Ghana
Kenya
Salima, Malawi
Flic-en-Flac, Mauritius
Benin City, Nigeria
Gite, Rwanda
Uvongo, South Africa
Kpalimé, Togo
Mapoko, Zambia
Gweru, Zimbabwe

Caribbean
Dover, Christ Church, Barbados
St. George’s, Grenada
Lethem, Guyana
Jamaica

Europe & Middle East
Torquay, Devon, England
Montagnac, France
Loultraki, Greece

Latin America
Sierra de la Ventana, Argentina
Santa Cruz, Bolivia
Lican Ray, Chile
El Rodadero, Santa Marta, Colombia
Antigua, Guatemala
San Miguel de Allende, Mexico
Huanchaco, Peru

Asia/Pacific
Mooloolaba, Australia
Sigatoka, Fiji
Kolkata, India
Taupo, New Zealand
Sri Lanka
Philippines

Note: Not all locations in this list are final. Please check feast.cogwa.org for up-to-date information on international sites.

U.S. Online Registration
Sunday, April 25

ATTENTION THOSE WITH FRAGRANCE-SENSITIVITY ISSUES

We are aware that some of our members suffer from sensitivities to fragrances. We try to address this issue at the Feast sites where we can do so. We cannot control all the issues necessary to make an area truly fragrance-free, so we cannot guarantee a “fragrance-free” room. But certain sites are able to provide a “fragrance-controlled” room or “fragrance-sensitive” area. Those who have fragrance issues will generally find this area to be an aid in dealing with their sensitivities.
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