



Preparing a People: Feast of Tabernacles 2022

By Heidi Braun

What comes to mind when you think of a teacher? Some of history's greatest teachers have overcome tremendous challenges and come from humble backgrounds. Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867-1957) is one such example. Laura and her family faced many hardships as pioneers and farmers—famine, sickness, a devastating fire and the loss of a child, to name a few. They made long journeys under the temporary shelter of a covered wagon. Although she briefly taught in a one-room schoolhouse, Laura's greatest accomplishment in teaching was her Little House book series. Laura's educational work for elementary school-aged children became classics through which her life experiences benefited others.

We in God's Church are being prepared to be teachers



Larry Costales/Unsplash

Over the past couple of years, we've faced a lot of challenges, but these did not prevent us from traveling to our temporary dwellings to keep the Feast of Tabernacles 2022 in peace and unity.

who, like Laura, can use the challenges God helps us overcome to train others. As brethren around the world kept the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day this year, we were pointed to our future roles in the Millennium and beyond. We have

faced many challenges, particularly over the past couple of years, but we still met as a family with great excitement for God's plan.

The United Church of God had 56 Feast sites (and 11 satellite sites) this year with a total

of 12,311 brethren attending in person. The United Church of God also provides a service called "Celebrating the Feast at Home/Online" with two daily national webcasts. Jekyll Island served the eastern time zones, averaging just under 600 con-

nections per day. St. George served the western time zones with between 250 and 300 connections per day. There were also a few people who connected by phone. It became apparent that many people listened to both webcasts as well as listening to Feast sermons that were posted during the Feast. This demonstrates the eagerness of our members in seeking the word of God and the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles.

In this issue of *United News*, the Feast experiences of God's people around the world are highlighted in the Feast of Tabernacles reports (pages 4-12 and 17). A gallery of photos from the Feast sites (pages 2, 13-16) and satellite sites (page 2) has been provided for your enjoyment. We are thankful to God for the wonderful Feast experience had by all as we continue to prepare for the future of His Kingdom! **UN**

Youth Camp Held In Zambia

by Filius Chalo Jere

CHIPATA, ZAMBIA—Under the theme "Preparing Youths for the Kingdom of God" 23 youth from UCG eastern Zambia participated in a three-day camp from Aug. 24-27, 2022, at Sunnyside Lodge in the periphery of the city of Chipata. Coincidentally, this was similar to this year's UYC theme for camp in the U.S., although this only came to our knowledge through Aaron Dean on the second day of the camp. Youth from the far-placed satellite congregations of Ngilile in Petauke, Chiwoko in Katete and Kauzu in Chipata were present.

In spite of its proximity to the city of Chipata, Sunnyside Lodge offers total seclusion from the hubbub of urban life; it has preserved a pristine forest of indigenous tree species around a sizeable dam. A few animals and birds from the wild (particularly some docile impalas and kudu) and a good number of ostriches, peacocks and ducks could be found on the dam. As a result, it offered just the right atmosphere for meditation, serious learning and leisure in the form of fishing, boating and evening strolls in a rare enjoyment of nature.

Learning topics included Christian living, the importance of goal-setting in life and how to avoid or overcome peer pres-

sure and juvenile delinquency. Conveniently, the US topic for Wednesday, "Join the Family," was incorporated into Thursday's topic on Christian living.

Every day started at 5 a.m. with morning physical exercises and gymnastics, followed immediately afterwards by morning devotions before breaking for baths and breakfast.

Theoretical deliveries were conducted on an open archipelago jutting out into the dam. Lessons occupied most of the mornings followed by practical subjects in the afternoons. Sporting activities came later in the afternoon.

Practical subjects included simple handcrafts (like making



Youth attended from Ngilile in Petauke, Chiwoko in Katete and Kauzu in Chipata.

doormats using second-hand woolens) and hair-plaiting. These two skills are in high demand

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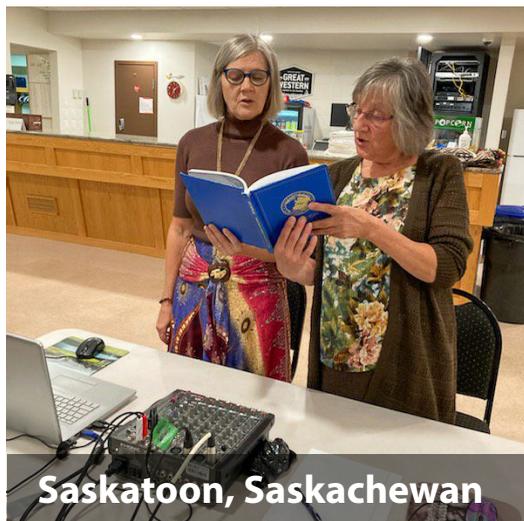
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Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



St. George, Utah



Vanuatu Islands



Santa Cruz, Bolivia



Walnut Creek, Ohio



Winneba, Ghana

Feast of Tabernacles Attendance Around the World

Canada

Drumheller, Alberta157
 Midland, Ontario.....112
 Osoyoos, BC.....118
 Satellite sites112

Europe

C. M. La Gaillarde, France.....215
 Kuressaare, Estonia 39
 Llandudno, North Wales191
 Sabaudia, Italy270
 Titisee, Germany148

Feast at Home

CD/DVD/online695

United States

Bastrop, Texas260
 Bend-Redmond, Oregon392
 Branson, Missouri688
 Cincinnati, Ohio252
 Estes Park, Colorado501
 Gatlinburg, Tennessee669
 Glacier Country, Montana ..145
 Jekyll Island, Georgia.....981
 Ocean City, Maryland.....255
 Panama City Beach, FL.....900
 Pewaukee, Wisconsin165
 St. George, Utah714
 Satellite sites595

Caribbean

Mirebalais, Haiti*.....505
 Montego Bay, Jamaica.....402
 Reduit Beach, St. Lucia..... 57

Latin America

Buzios, Brazil..... 31
 Chinacota, Colombia.....46
 Neuquen, Argentina..... 10
 Panajachel, Guatemala.....150
 Pichilemu, Chile..... 85
 Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.....660

Africa

Blantyre, Malawi.....98
 Blolé, Côte d'Ivoire40
 Chemba, Zimbabwe35
 Cotonou, Benin21
 Douala, Cameroon 15
 Got Kachola, Kenya.....130
 Kalukanya, Zambia**
 Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe45
 Lubumbashi, DR Congo45
 Madzimawe, Zambia50
 Mombasa, Kenya54
 Mossel Bay, South Africa146
 Momé Hagou, Togo32
 Mufulira, Zambia118
 Nkhwazi, Malawi.....146
 Ogembo, Kenya84
 Winneba, Ghana283
 Yagoua, Cameroon.....20

Asia/Pacific

Agra, India 18
 Bay of Islands, NZ..... 34
 Baguio City, Philippines119
 Bukidnon, Philippines.....238
 Merimbula, Australia178
 Passikudah, Sri Lanka 48
 Rockingham, Australia..... 77
 Sabah, Malaysia.....42
 Sunshine Coast, Australia ...370
 Visayas, Philippines110

Grand Total

13,116

*This site combines UCG & another group.

**This site was held but attendance numbers are unavailable.

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The Spiritual Balance of God's Spirit

As a young boy, I loved to play with a gyroscope, which is a small, spoked wheel in a round frame with a hole in its axle. You can wind it up with a string, pull it and then watch it gyrate.

When it spins, the gyroscope establishes its own force field, called gyroscopic inertia, which makes it rotate on its own axis regardless of other forces pulling at it. A bicycle, motorcycle and the automatic pilot on large airplanes (which normally use four gyroscopes) operate on the same principle.

The same force keeps our planet spinning and tilted upward. The earth turns at approximately 1,000 miles per hour and this incredibly high rate of rotation is one of the reasons that man can survive on this terrestrial globe. It also generates the earth's magnetic field, which shields us from the deadly radiation coming from outer space. The world is marvelously designed to allow life, despite its fragility, to exist. Just looking at the basic physics involved should be enough to convince anyone that God exists by studying the complexity of things He has exquisitely made (Romans 1:20).

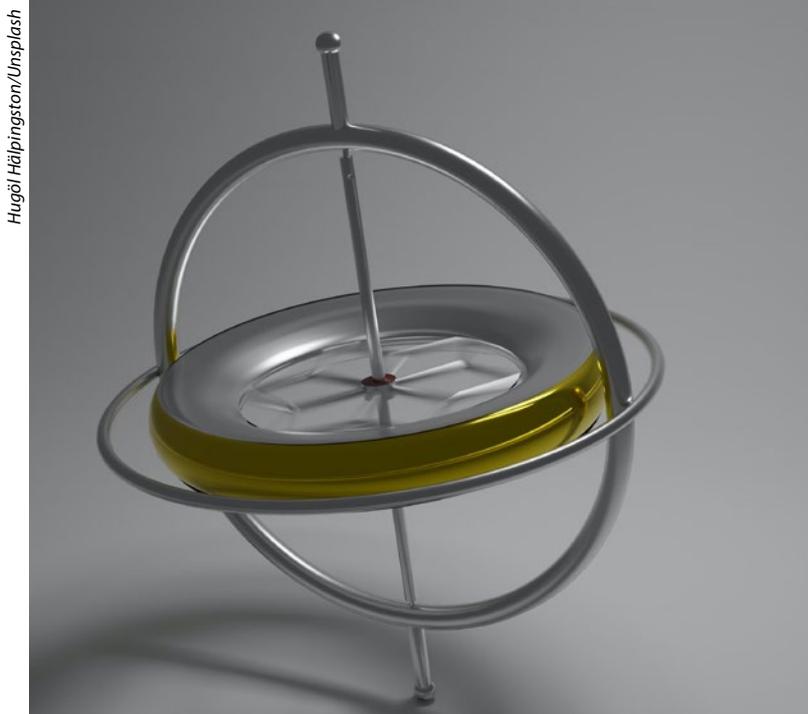
When I came into the Church, I discovered that a gyroscope is a good illustration of the equilibrium in God's Spirit to create a well-balanced individual who can be used to serve God and the brethren.

One of my first memories at Ambassador College in Big

Sandy, Texas was being invited to a minister's home after the Sabbath. I was so impressed by the minister and his family—he was a happy, caring and balanced person, his children were well-mannered and his wife was friendly and loving. I came to learn that the Christian life is a life of balance in both the physical and spiritual realms.

As Christ mentioned, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Yes, true Christianity is living the abundant life, especially in its spiritual dimension. There will be trials and tests along the way, but also great joy because of what God is creating in us—godly character (Romans 8:18). It will bring out the fruits of God's Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). That is what I strove to learn at Ambassador College and what is now being taught at Ambassador Bible College in Cincinnati, Ohio. We learned to do all things in a balanced way—to laugh, study, work, dance, play, eat and drink in an appropriate and moderate manner.

Paul also described the balancing elements of God's Spirit when he told young Timothy, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has



Hugoi Hälpingston/Unsplash

A gyroscope is a good illustration of the equilibrium in God's Spirit to create a well-balanced individual.

not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:6-7, emphasis added throughout).

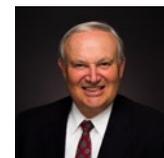
These three elements of God's Spirit, power, love and a sound mind are a great example of the internal balance we should strive to have but naturally lack. Each spiritual force should complement, yet check each other. We should remember the following points.

Power

Power (Greek *dunamis*, from which the terms dynamic, dynamite and dynamo come) is needed to impart courage and strength to get things done, but without love, it can become cold and harsh, causing damage.

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Mario Seiglie graduated from Ambassador College with degrees in theology and Spanish. He serves as a pastor in California, as a senior pastor in South America and on the UCG Council of Elders. He can be reached at mario_seiglie@ucg.org.



Operation Manager's Update: MMS

One major responsibility of Ministerial and Member Services (MMS) is to provide festival locations around the world to observe God's annual Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day. We seek to determine where God has placed His name through prayer and by walking through the doors God opens for us as we consider various festival site possibilities.

We have just completed the annual cycle of God's Holy Days, so now is a good time to reflect upon the reality that God's plan of salvation, revealed in these days, is a plan devised in love and grace for all mankind. These days also reveal that God isn't calling everyone now; but for those who understand and answer God's

call, now is our day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

Some think we keep these Holy Days because we are legalists trying to earn our salvation. Not so! In fact, these Holy Days picture God's plan of salvation through grace! We would not understand the fullness of God's grace if it were not for our observance of these Holy Days! And even now, we still don't fully grasp that grace.

New Testament Passover

God's grace is highlighted in the first of God's annual Holy Days. The Passover also underscores our calling now; we were baptized, immersed in water, and had the laying on of hands of a minister of Je-

sus Christ (Acts 8:12-17; Hebrews 6:2), because God called us now, at this time. We accept Jesus Christ as our Messiah, our Savior who died for us (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:6-8; 14:15; 1 Corinthians 15:13). We repented of our sins, sins which made it necessary for Christ's death on our behalf. The wages of sin is death and death is what we all deserve (Romans 6:23); but our sinless Messiah died for us and the gift of God is eternal life. That is grace. Christ now lives as our High Priest, making intercession for us

as we are saved by God's ongoing grace and forgiveness (Hebrews 2:7; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11). We are repentant members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16; 12:27; Ephesians 4:12).

New Testament Days of Unleavened Bread

Jesus Christ is the unleavened bread, the perfect sacrifice/

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Ordained in 1985, Mark Welch pastored congregations in the U.S. for almost 30 years before moving to Cincinnati, Ohio to serve as operation manager for Ministerial and Member Services. He can be reached at mark_welch@ucg.org.

Argentina**Neuquén**

After many years, we were able to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day again in Argentina. God especially blessed us with this great opportunity of celebrating His Holy Feast in the city of Neuquén, in Villa El Chocon, a place with a nice lake and a complex of buildings called Chocon Suite Spa.

After a trip of about an hour and a half from the cities of Centenario and Cipolletti, we had 10 brethren attend the Feast where we would share eight wonderful days in peace and fellowship.

We met in one of the rented cabins where we had services and enjoyed meals, including tasty steak dinners, prepared by Susana Albino Carrasco from the Buenos Aires congregation with the help of other ladies.

Andres Guerrero

Australia**Merimbula, NSW**

After three years of lockdown mandates, excited brethren from Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and further afield once again celebrated God's Feast together.

Opening night was full of excited conversation and tales of the journey through fog, rain, potholes, flooding and even snow. The meet and greet after the first day's service was enhanced by a delectable assortment of hors d'oeuvres and drinks. Barista coffee, available daily, proved highly popular; the ladies running the business desk appreciated the care of others who served them so they didn't miss out. Magnificent stands of green foliage and white flowers arranged by Laisa and Siulolo Fungalai beautifully enhanced the stage setting, causing one of the venue staff to comment on how glorious they were and how the lovely scent wafted from the hall into other parts of the club.

Activities were enjoyed by all. A coach trip to the Seahorse Inn at Two-Fold Bay culminated in a fine lunch (the barramundi was delicious) and time well-spent on catching up with old friends. Other activities included a "Bugs" family night, barefoot bowls and a bistro dinner, Top Fun, a scavenger hunt, kayaking and other outdoor activ-

ities. An Eighth Day luncheon was provided between services.

The finest part of the Feast was the spiritual aspect—from the opening video service featuring Rick Shabi's uplifting and encouraging sermon and the beautiful music to the final sermon and all the hymns we sang and heard in special music, including the service from Jekyll Island. There was a great sense of togetherness through it all, even among some who were unable to travel to the venue due to ill health, but joined every day via webcast. A quick pan-around after services and brethren staying in touch via phone and sending photos added to the feeling of "being there" in spite of being so physically far away.

Mavis Miller

Rockingham, Western Australia

In the tall, spacious, glass-fronted Gary Holland Community Centre, the beautiful beachside city of Rockingham, Western Australia, hosted 50 Western Australians, 17 East Coasters, one American and one South African, as they gathered to celebrate the Feast together.

Launched by the inspiring opening night message by Rick Shabi, the Feast messages focused on God's plan of salvation, preparing for the marriage to Christ, godly leadership (ruling with gentle authority), seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and reaching out for reconciliation through Christ. Encouraged to never lose the vision, we were reminded that this physical life is temporary and that we are children of God and heirs, inheriting what Christ created.

As is Western Australian custom, the meet and greet after the first Holy Day service was filled with sumptuous finger foods, drinks and fellowship.

The Kingdom Quiz Night was a fun evening of biblical questions, naming hymns, Scripture recognition and delicious dessert.

The Perth Observatory once again brought telescopes to Point Peron and transported us light years away into the endless universe. We zoomed in on Jupiter, Saturn, Antares, Albireo (yellow and blue double star), the 47 Tucanae Global Cluster, the Jewel Star Cluster, Tarantula Nebula and Lagoon Nebula.

The popular hymn sing beginning the Sabbath evening

brought praises to God in song and was a great time for young, aspiring songleaders to "have a go."

During Sabbath school the children built a temporary dwelling. The youth and young adults learned more about taking steps towards baptism and later enjoyed an eventful evening of ten pin bowling.

The Eighth Day brought us another inspiring service focusing on the meaning of the day with a reminder that the vision of the Kingdom is not the end but only the beginning of God's plan to bring many sons to glory.

The annual spiritual family photo was taken and the farewell lunch was a delicious catered roast dinner with desserts, providing time for fellowship, confirming friendships, fostering unity among brethren and farewelling travelers. It was another wonderful, inspiring Feast.

Kim Chick

Sunshine Coast, Queensland

This is our 16th year at the Convention Centre on the Sunshine Coast. The facility suits all our needs and the management looks forward to our coming each year. We had almost 400 registered and we reached capacity attendance each day of the Feast.

For the first time in three years, we were able to have all the activities due to the lifting of previous COVID-19 restrictions. Every activity was very well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all, young and old.

All the Feast messages were very inspiring and meaningful, showing a vision of the future Kingdom of God and encouraging everyone to live God's way now as this is our time of judgment, preparing and over-coming.

We had many interstate visitors who had not been able to attend a Feast due to being in lockdown for COVID-19 for the past two years and they were very excited to be at God's Feast in person once again, especially as some saw family again after three years. A number of international visitors were able to be with us and added a great deal to our fellowship and Feast experience as new friends were made. Everyone is looking forward to next year's Feast at the same location.

Jenny Bradford

Benin**Cotonou**

The brethren of the Cotonou congregation in Benin were blessed to meet at a hotel in the historic town of Ouidah situated about 40 kilometers west of Cotonou and near the Atlantic Ocean. Services were held in French each day and translated into either the Yoruba or Fon language. The messages were inspiring and instructive and focused on our role now as God's people, as well as our role in the coming millennial rule of Jesus Christ. During the Feast, brethren participated in interactive Bible studies and the children were blessed to have youth instruction tailored for them during the eight days we spent together. The theme of peace emerged during the Feast as the messages were given. During the interactive Bible studies, a special presentation was made in which Bibles were given to the children and teens of Church members. We also enjoyed a wonderful talent show with music, humorous sketches and a dance. The weather was exceptional and was matched by a spirit of love, service and sharing. We thank God for giving us a wonderful Feast and want to say thank you to all those who provided financial support to us.

Pierre Ogoudélé

Brazil**Búzios**

From three different countries—Brazil, United States and Portugal—31 brethren gathered together to observe the Feast in the beautiful Búzios Beach Resort in southern Brazil. For six brethren, it was their very first Feast. There were five baptisms on the first day of the Feast.

In addition, 33 brethren from northern Brazil (Maloca de Moscou) joined the festival services via Zoom. There were also connections from Portugal.

Services were given in English with a simultaneous Portuguese translation. Many bridged the translation barrier by using the Google Translate app, which proved to be an enormous source of communication. God's Spirit was an evident binding force.

The messages were excellent, covering the meaning of the Feast to the meaning of the Last Great Day. The many practical Christian living subjects includ-

ed God's plan of salvation in its phases, God's Holy Days in the Bible before Sinai and their implication for us today, how we can be blessed by God, how we are God's people, the promises to the seven churches of Revelation and how they apply to us, the reciprocal favors of God, our marital responsibilities, our responsibility to our Lord and Master, how we can affect our future by the kind of living sacrifice we are, the importance of keeping the second tithe and how to live a balanced life in the days after the Feast.

Organized activities included a scenic dune buggy ride through Búzios, which included stops along the beautiful beaches and a relaxing boat ride along the Búzios coastline. Both activities were enjoyed by everyone.

A ladies' afternoon proved to be a big success, coordinated by Laura Macedo. Some of the experiences shared brought many to tears.

Nearly 1,500 brethren were also able to travel to Luanda, Angola (a satellite site for Brazil) to attend the Feast together. An additional large number of brethren had to attend in other satellite sites due to various challenges including transportation. A new Feast site near Rio de Janeiro, but more modest and economical, has been booked for next year.

Jorge de Campos

Cameroon & DR Congo**Douala, Yagoua & Lubumbashi**

A big hello from Cameroon and DR Congo! This year over 100 people gathered to keep God's Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day in our three feast sites. The two sites in Cameroon were Douala and Yagoua, and the site in DR Congo this year was Lubumbashi. Due to several challenges, we did not have a Feast site in Kinshasa, DR Congo. This large city still has several health barriers.

In Douala, our church complex has served as our Feast site for several years. Yagoua is in the far north of Cameroon, where we used The Sentinel Club Motel as our Feast site. In Lubumbashi, the Feast was held in a Catholic monastery, a very quiet place.

God blessed us a lot this year, as there was no power cut during the Feast. Because of the school and university system, our children face a lot of difficulties in coming with us to the Feast. Some even

risk expulsion, a situation we pray to God about.

We thank the home office for the help and support they provided for these Feast sites.

Moise Mabout

Canada

Drumheller, Alberta

We had 157 brethren at God's Feast in Drumheller this year, including brethren from across Canada and two couples from the USA. The messages were inspired by God to teach and encourage His children to rejoice together in His awesome plan of salvation for all mankind. The theme of living waters carried through the entire Feast. Messages looked forward to the time when healing and restoration will take place in all things, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord and people will come up to the mountain of the Lord.

Each day featured outstanding special music including harp music and vocal solos. We also had a quartet, choir and children's choir. A piano and instrument ensemble (trumpet, tenor saxophone and flute) accompanied our daily hymns. On the first Holy Day there was an ordination of an elder, a very special event!

We had many opportunities to grow our relationships with each other. On the second day of the Feast, we had a champagne welcome reception for all, hosted by the Edmonton congregation, with lots of fellowship, food and beverages. For our teens and young adults there was a meet and greet at the beginning of the Feast and a Bible study later on. We held children's lessons twice. The seniors' luncheon was excellent, with 70 attending and performances given by adults and children, including harp, piano, singing and poetry. We held a Tyrell Museum Day, games night, Bible study night, family day at a local outdoor fun park, golf tournament, group buffet dinner and a dinner theater outing.

So many members helped serve in so many ways. It was a heartwarming and bonding time. An abundance of fellowship, bonding as brothers and sisters in Christ and feasting (physical and spiritual) occurred throughout the Feast. We truly rejoiced and praised God together.

Michael Erickson

Midland, Ontario

As a pastor in attendance commented, the Midland, Ontario, Feast site continues to be the next best thing there is to an all-inclusive Feast site! The meeting place in Midland is a hotel that lends itself ideally to most attendees staying comfortably together in one location for the entire week. Included in the room rate is a hot breakfast served buffet-style each morning in a lovely eating area that is cheerful and well-lit. Most brethren availed themselves



Mossel Bay, South Africa

of this most important meal of the day. They used this as an opportunity to joyfully mix with one another each morning.

Church services provided delectable spiritual food which Midland attendees enjoyed daily as well. The opening night message from President Rick Shabi set the tone for the entire week. Sermonettes, split sermons, sermons and special music were well-prepared and delivered daily to an appreciative group who savored each serving. A highlight of the Feast was the ordination of a deaconess, an occasion most had not seen for a long time.

Something new this year was a Thanksgiving dinner buffet on the opening day of the Feast, Monday Oct. 10, which happened to be Canada's Thanksgiving Day! A group of 102 brethren partook of an abundance of turkey along with all the trimmings usually associated with a tasty Thanksgiving turkey dinner.

Anthony Wasilkoff

Osoyoos, British Columbia

As if on cue, the intense smoke from far away forest fires lifted, making way for a breathtaking millennial panorama. It was a stunning scene which seemed so apropos, like an inauguration of the Feast. At that time, 118 joyful

children of God came together from near and far to praise God for the coming reign of Jesus Christ, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

They gathered for the first Holy Day, then mingled at a meet and greet and moved about from tabernacle to tabernacle (suite to suite) fellowshiping, strengthening old friendships and creating new ones. Youth played poolside, played volleyball and participated

There was one baptism—one of the Church young adults, Jocelyn Catalán García joined the Body of Christ.

As always, the main reason for our attendance of the Feast was receiving inspiring and rewarding sermonettes and sermons for our growth as future leaders.

We are deeply grateful to God for the invitation to His Holy Feasts and for allowing us to live eight days in complete harmony among the brethren. We all felt that God through His Holy Spirit was with His people so that we could rejoice and enjoy His Feasts as He commands us.

Marcelo Saavedra

Colombia

Chinacota

For a second consecutive year we were able to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles at the Incan-to Hotel, located in the tourist town of Chinacota, in the north-eastern part of Colombia.

We were able to have the hotel exclusively for the eight days of the Feast. The largest number of people that attended was 46, although the regular attendance was 44 people.

We held several activities, including a bonfire and a family outing. Unlike last year, when it was necessary, due to COVID-19, to have two small sites, we were able to gather most members and regular attendees to this Feast site. God granted us our desire to be able to all gather in one place.

This year we had the pleasant presence of a deacon, Aaron Dominguez. His messages were appreciated by all the attendees. We enjoyed the spiritual food provided by our loving Father, particularly messages about life during the Millennium and the Eighth Day, detailing the important work that the firstfruits will have when the Kingdom is established, and emphasizing the urgency of preparing for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Especially interesting and profitable were the two interactive Bible studies we had on Friday and Sunday, prior to the weekly and annual Sabbaths. In a very pleasant atmosphere of true family unity, young people and adults asked questions and commented on various topics about the Word of God. It is at these times that we felt the fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "There-

fore encourage one another with these words" (New International Version).

We were also able to enjoy the delicious physical food with a variety of tasty menu dishes. A final point to highlight was the great dedication of the staff assigned exclusively to serve us, always ready with a kind gesture and diligent to satisfy our requests. But best of all was the positive impression we left on them. Their own words were: "Your presence here renews this place." To this we say: thank the Eternal God!

Jaime Salek

Côte d'Ivoire

Blolé

Brethren from the two congregations in Côte d'Ivoire, La Mé and Man, observed the Feast together in Blolé at the Complex Hotelier Infinité. Services were held each day in either French or Yacouba with many visitors present due to a special event which the Church hosted during Feast. The high attendance during the Feast was 40 people. Each day, women from the church prepared meals for Feast-goers, providing three meals a day for everyone. We received extra assistance so that the meals would be copious and special, as well as special assistance to improve the fence around the church property. During the morning of the third day, five brave souls participated in a 10K run, cheered on by others.

Fellowship was very meaningful every day. After services on the first day of the Feast, the Church received assistance to host a village-wide local evangelism event, inviting people from the community of 8,000 people to join them for song, dance, food and a special sermon. More than 400 came for the outdoor event, including the village elders, and the event lasted for six hours until 2 a.m., when the rains came in. The congregation purchased a cow and had it slaughtered so that everyone present could have a meal. Professional Yacouba singers punctuated the evening with praise music and dance, and the theme of the sermon by Albert Oulai was the wedding feast of Matthew 22, asking if those present would accept God's invitation or not. Local member Fulgence Oulai tailored matching traditional clothes for the members who led the evening so that church members would be recog-

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Blolé, Côte d'Ivoire
Continued from page 5

nizable. The following day, many who attended the event came to services and asked questions about the Church and its doctrines.

*Albert Oulai et
Mamadou Tokpa*

Estonia**Kuressaare**

The Feast in Estonia was celebrated on the large Baltic island of Saaremaa, where bounteous dairy, beef, poultry, fish and bread products are produced for the nation. The weather was mild and pleasant, with little difference between day and night temperatures. From eight nations, 39 people attended harmoniously at this English-speaking site. Our group of 12 Eastern European/Scandinavian brethren from Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Norway and Finland were pleased to be joined by members from the Netherlands, Australia and the United States for the first time since 2019. Lively special music, both instrumental and vocal, supplemented the compelling messages every day. Both the spiritual food and the physical food were tasty and filling.

The all-inclusive spa resort provided outstanding buffet breakfasts and dinners. Many folks visited the nearby medieval castle and the quaint specialty shops in addition to a modern, indoor Estonian shopping mall. A bus tour offered the opportunity to see the Viking history of the island, as well as a visit to a local iconic, historic inn with an outdoor one-way-mirror guest room, a small gin brewery and samples at a local fruit jam producer. Quite captivating was a visit inside a massive, 13th century church building.

Everyone was able to join in celebrating the baptism of a gentleman from Estonia. Be sure to make plans for 2023 to support and encourage the scattered Eastern European/Scandinavian brethren at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Tim Martens

France**Club Miléade La Gaillarde**

The brethren in France were blessed to welcome visitors from twelve countries, with 215 Feastgoers gathering at Club Miléade la Gaillarde on the French Riviera.

The all-inclusive site meant good fellowship over delicious and varied buffet-style meals and lots of time together after the days' activities. The children's playground and multiple swimming pools were a big hit with the large number of children present.

Messages, alternating between French and English, focused on studying and putting God's Word into practice now to lead and rule in the coming Kingdom of God, with many using effective PowerPoint presentations. We also enjoyed an interactive Bible study from Bob Fahey on the Psalms of Ascent. Tim Pebworth gave an update on the work of the Church in the French-speaking areas and, during services, shared a sampling of French-language animated Poly Col y Toly videos created for children to understand the meaning of the Feast days. Brethren were able to explore the surrounding area by renting cars or taking planned excursions to Antibes, St. Tropez and St. Paul de Vence.

With the site situated across the street from the Mediterranean, Feastgoers experienced a peaceful appreciation of God's power and creation, enjoying many picturesque sunrises and sunsets. This festival site was blessed with beautiful special music, including vocal solos, adult and children's choirs and small group performances as well as various instrumental musical offerings. Activities included family day, in which families participated in games on the tennis court and on the shore of the Mediterranean, youth education and a talent show which drew a large crowd and was followed by music and dancing.

Suzanne Lavaty

Germany**Titisee**

The Feast was blessed with mostly gorgeous sunny weather, good food and warm family fellowship. With no COVID-19 restrictions required, it was a joy to welcome our first international guests from overseas after two years. There were 148 guests in attendance from nine different countries.

On the first Holy Day we welcomed friends from Ukraine who are supporting refugees from Eastern Ukraine. During the Feast brethren donated US\$2,130 to support their efforts in cooperation with LifeNets. Afterwards, we had time to fellowship with Vlad Yuris-

hko and his family over coffee and Black Forest cherry cake. Heinrich Bergmann, a member of the Dormagen congregation, speaks fluent Russian and was able to translate during the afternoon.

Activities during the Feast included children's lessons, a ladies' Bible study on agape love, adult discussions on Biblical topics, a senior afternoon, a family-style hymn-sing out in nature and a fun children's afternoon at a water park.

A special highlight was a concert evening with the Hebrew Melody Trio from Zurich. The three internationally renowned musicians delighted their audience with an exquisite program of classical music at the highest level.

Julie Zutz Brown from Philadelphia conducted a ladies' tea afternoon. The topic of the afternoon's activity was "Silent Affirmation" which left all women very encouraged, motivated and cheerful. Afterwards everyone was invited to bond over apfelstrudel, tea and coffee.

For the first time we conducted a mystery dinner in which hosts and guests enjoyed a surprise dinner evening. This activity was a lot of fun and a great success.

Three people were baptized and welcomed into the family of God.

Many commented that this year's Feast of Tabernacles was blessed with inspired spiritual food through the sermons. It was amazing how God guided the spiritual theme at the Feast to be: "Partnership with God: Do what you are capable of doing and God will help you with the things you need but can't accomplish on your own."

Jesmína Allaoua

Ghana**Winneba**

The 2022 Feast of Tabernacles in Ghana took place in Cape Coast in the Central Region (there are 16 regions in Ghana). The coastal city was host to congregants from Accra, Agona Abirem, Agona Kwanyako, Kumasi, Winneba, Yeji and the new congregations of Cape Coast, Elmina and Takoradi—the latter two cities are further west of Cape Coast. We had a high attendance of 283.

Notable themes across the various messages during this year's festival included love, Christian values and the mental attitude believers must have to walk in the

way of God. The messages also served as pointers to the task that lies ahead for Christian soldiers in a world that continues to stray further and further away from the truth—the Word of God.

Volunteers were on hand to translate messages from English to the local Twi or Fante and vice versa. Individuals and groups of brethren contributed special music in between messages to enhance a spiritually edifying Feast.

Brethren who had not met in person for a long time used the afternoons to catch up and fellowship with each other. This also created the space to welcome the members from the aforementioned new congregations.



Mufulira, Zambia

tioned new congregations.

Brethren also came together for bonding through indoor and outdoor games, which included ludo, draft, playing cards, apple-eating contest, football and volleyball. A visit to the Cape Coast castle was capped with a beach get-together where brethren treated themselves to a variety of foods while making merry and having fun as one big family. We remain thankful to international donors who contribute to the family-focused activities at the Feast.

A youth-centered educational Bible quiz was again held this year following its successful debut last year. The quiz was introduced with the objective of encouraging the youth to constantly engage in personal Bible studies. This year's quiz was so keenly contested that the final round ultimately went down to a tie-breaker for a winner to emerge. The experience for both contestants and audience was as educational as it was wholesomely entertaining.

The Eighth Day came with news of four attendees who had been baptized. Indeed, it was a splendid and distinctive way to cap the Feast of Tabernacles and to acknowledge God's blessings throughout those amazing eight days!

Papa Ekow Ferguson-Aikins

Guatemala**Panajachel**

After two years of COVID-19 restrictions, this year we were able to celebrate the Feast in the town of Panajachel, in front of beautiful Lake Atitlan, surrounded by volcanoes and mountains. We had 150 people in attendance from Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and the United States.

The themes of the messages focused on the prominent return of Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom, Christian attitudes and duties, family unity and Bible prophecy. We had children's choirs and choirs from various congregations during the Feast.

We also had 25 connections from YouTube and Facebook, connecting with some congregations in South America, Mexico and the United States.

We had two baptisms. At the end of the Last Great Day service, we had the opportunity to observe a photographic presentation of several families who joyfully participated in the Feast of Tabernacles 2022.

We celebrated an inspiring and blessed Feast with much joy and happiness in our temporary dwellings, as a pilgrimage in our physical life. We set our eyes on the world to come, longing for the coming establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Israel Robledo

Haiti**Mirebalais**

Our brethren in Haiti combined with an affiliated group to observe the Feast this year. God's Feast of Tabernacles was held in Mirebalais, Haiti, with more than 500 in attendance. Strife and violence exist in most of Haiti, but Mirebalais, located in the hills about an hour and a half drive from the capitol of Port-au-Prince, is mostly quiet. This was the first combined Feast sponsored by the United Church of God and a local church that has adopted our beliefs and doctrines, including the observance of God's Holy Days. This combined group celebrated the future peaceful reign of Jesus Christ for eight days. These people pray and dream of a world so different from the land they are living in today.

UCG deacon Joseph Jean and pastor Michelet Derisme deliv-

ered messages of hope and prosperity to this group who were able to enjoy a feast of food and drink (including meat!) during God's commanded Feast of Tabernacles. Music filled the air as all truly celebrated for the first time in several years (due to COVID-19 and civil war). The brethren were able to catch a small glimpse of God's wonderful Kingdom of God.

Chuck Smith

India

Agra

Brethren kept the first half of the Feast at home and excitedly arrived at the Agra Crystal Sarovar Premiere Hotel on day four to observe the second half of God's Feast.

COVID-19 restrictions and the requirement for vaccine certificates to stay at hotels in India were lifted just weeks before the Feast. Travel had been so difficult for so long that some of our local and international brethren were hesitant to travel to the Feast, not knowing what the restrictions would be.

However, our Church family of 18 were brought closer together as they enjoyed the Indian tradition of all members staying in the same hotel, eating three buffet meals together and having services in the hotel meeting room.

Most of the members knew the national language, Hindi, and some also know English very well. However, we had several members who speak predominately Hindi. This year, services were in English and the Hindi speaking members requested that instead of "intermittent translation" the brethren gather in a circle at the conclusion of each service to discuss the message in Hindi. Those who were well versed in both English and Hindi took very good sermon notes and discussed the important aspects of the messages. It was a helpful and meaningful review for everyone.

The four days spent together were full of daily fellowship, tea time, relaxing in the pool and Bible study. On Sabbath afternoon we played "Bible baseball." The Indian brethren really enjoyed this game, which was initially challenging as the rules of American baseball had to be explained first. Bible questions were "pitched" and even a home run was scored!

There was enjoyable fellowship on the rooftop of the hotel,

which has a beautiful view of the world-famous Taj Mahal and a pool. The brethren had a few opportunities to swim and fun and laughter were enjoyed as the children at the Feast jumped and giggled with joy. An afternoon outing at a famous park was also enjoyed by several.

You are invited to join your Indian brothers and sisters at next year's Feast. If you want to travel internationally and you earnestly seek to meet and serve your brothers and sisters in Christ who live overseas, the Feast in India would be an exceptional opportunity for you. A visit to India will be a life-changing experience. You can make a difference by sharing your time, talent and love with your Indian brothers and sisters. There is a need for Church elders and leaders in their congregations to attend the Feast in India and share daily messages during the Feast. For all who come, this will be a Feast you will not soon forget.

David Schreiber

Italy

Sabaudia

Gathered from several countries, 270 brethren gathered at the lovely, well-established seaside location near Sabaudia. The weather was outstanding, with calm seas and spectacular sunsets.

The Feast began with a moving memorial for Carmelo Anastasi, who is sorely missed. Carmelo Anastasi and Angelo Di Vita with their families and the Italian brethren have worked for years to maintain an excellent relationship with the hotel Oasi di Kufra. Feastgoers have benefited from this for years.

The physical food was outstanding and plentiful but it was the spiritual food that made the Feast. A great variety of speakers were able to serve excellent messages along with those who offered their gift of beautiful special music.

The highlight of the Feast was the ordination of a deacon, Manuel Finazzi, and an elder, Vincenzo Alfieri, who will serve in the Italian Church. Four baptisms occurred, evidencing the recent growth in the Italian work.

The all-inclusive setting was wonderful for fellowship; however, it carried a higher risk for rapid spread of disease. When an outbreak of COVID-19 occurred

mid-Feast, the Church acted quickly, supplying tests, masks and coordination of efforts. With great care and cooperation, the brethren rose above the challenge, showing love towards one another, even though some had to isolate. With God's blessing, the outbreak was contained and the Feast carried on.

Activities including excursions to Rome and Pompeii, building sand castles on the beach, the ever-famous talent show and the final farewell dinner with professional Italian musicians were enjoyed by all.

As we look forward to the fulfillment of the Feast, above all, the warmth and love shown to us by the Italian brethren lingers in all our hearts.

Dan and Fern Berendt

Jamaica

Montego Bay

What a joy to see so many families this year, as brethren ages 3 months to 94 years celebrated the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day in Montego Bay, Jamaica!

This was our second year at the all-inclusive Iberostar Resort, which contains three tiered hotels (Rose Hall Beach, Selection Suites and Grand), located on the same stretch of beach. Services for 402 brethren were held in the Black River Theater with overflow in the nearby Grand Ballroom (both in the Suites hotel).

A split sermon format was used most days, so we received an abundance of spiritual food centered on our theme of Daniel 7:27—the greatness of God's future everlasting kingdom and the role of His saints. We were also blessed with inspiring special music from visitors and KingsOne (from Kingston). In fact, we had so much talent we scheduled a Friday evening praise and worship hour to include nine selections, followed by a hymn sing.

Activities this Feast included the traditional ladies' mingle with a gift exchange, widows' tea, young adults tour/fellowship, teen meet and greet/beach sports/interactive Bible study, festival youth instruction/children's choir, golf outing and a buffet lunch in small groups on the Eighth Day between services.

Highlights included three weddings: Adrianna Lockhart

and Warren Weis (Oct. 8), Tri-sann Poyser and Oneil Thomas (Oct. 11) and Stacy-Ann Jackson and Trevor Daley (Oct. 13). For our Jamaican brethren, two-day passes gave them the opportunity to enjoy the Beach/Suites properties and attend the Daley wedding.

Thank you to all who donated Bibles, luggage/backpacks, vitamins/food and more to our Families Helping Families program. Our local brethren are very appreciative.

Please join us as we return to this luxurious location in 2023 for our third year!

Alisa Lockhart

Kenya

Got Kachola

This year, the Feast of Tabernacles was held in Got Kachola, a small fishing village. We had about 100 in attendance and everyone stayed healthy. We all had the opportunity to share in God's wonderful plan of salvation as we rejoiced together. Some of the activities were soccer, hiking, walking on the beach and watching the local fisherman pull in their 1,000-meter-long nets that they had cast out early in the mornings. Some of the brethren even pitched in to help pull in the nets later in the day. The food and time spent together was great!

Monte Knudson

Mombasa

We had 54 in attendance at the Feast site in Mombasa, a coastal city in southeastern Kenya along the Indian Ocean with warm white sand. The weather allowed for a number of nice activities and opportunities to fellowship, including two historical tours.

We were blessed that everyone stayed healthy. We all had the opportunity to share in God's wonderful plan of salvation as we rejoiced together.

Monte Knudson

Ogembo

This Feast site is found in Kisii County along the Kisii-Kilgoris Road. It is at a place that has rain falling throughout the year. Most of the people who live around the Feast site are small scale farmers. These farmers keep livestock and grow maize, beans, bananas, trees, fruits like avocados, coffee, tea, vegetables and sugarcane. This has been a

Church-owned facility since the year 2005. The Church first celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles here in the year 2011.

Attendees came to this year's Feast from Migori, Naivasha, Kitale, Bagaria, Meru, Madianyi, Ndanai, Magenche, Ogembo and the USA. The attendees contributed money and food. We had hired kitchen staff who prepared delicious meals for the brethren. The members assisted the cooks in preparing meals before the start of Sabbaths.

The messages were spiritually enriching and awakening. We had Bible studies, question and answer sessions, special music and a ladies' seminar. Members remained thankful throughout the Feast to those who gave donations to make the Feast a success.

The ever-green environment and rains that came almost every evening made the brethren reflect on the weather back home, as there were brethren who had come from drought-stricken areas like Meru and Naivasha.

The attendees lived in tents and some in bandas. The members had plenty at the site and good weather that topped the joy of many. After the Feast a good number said that they will consider coming back again if the Feast is held at the site.

The attendance high was 84 people and the low was 46 over all of the eight days. The Feast did not face any serious challenges and we are grateful to God for the success He granted.

Kriphas Ongori

Malawi

Blantyre

This year's Feast of Tabernacles was different from the previous ones. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, and she was not spared from the negative impacts of COVID-19 and the economic hardships created by the war in Ukraine. But the rising prices of food commodities, fuel and services did not dampen the spirit and morale of 98 brethren who gathered at Kanjedza Forest, in the commercial capital of Blantyre City to keep God's Feast. Inspiring sermons were expounded, explaining how God will banish the devil and his cohorts from deceiving mankind for 1,000 years and usher in His Kingdom where peace, joy

Please see next page

Blantyre, Malawi*Continued from page 7*

and prosperity will prevail under the reign of Jesus Christ. Members were encouraged to remain steadfast and focused in obeying God and keeping His commandments in these difficult times. Sermons were spiced with beautiful special music by the UCG main choir, youth choir, children's choir and some individuals.

As a foretaste of that coming wonderful world tomorrow, brethren were treated to delicious meals which they don't eat often at home. They were also entertained with variety shows performed by some of the members of the Church, especially the youth. We held family day in which several social activities were provided, bringing brethren together as one big family. On Sunday, before the Eighth Day of the Feast, there was final treat for everyone starting with the senior citizens, the upcoming senior citizens, the youth and the preteens. Preteens were taken to a lodge where they enjoyed a swimming pool. Everyone enjoyed mouthwatering food at a barbecue, which was also a farewell party with dancing. What a wonderful Feast we have had this year!

*Gracious Mpilangwe***Nkhwazi**

Since its inception as a Feast site in 2018, the Nkhwazi Feast site has been making improvements to better host God's festivals. This year, it hosted 79 Feast-goers from the Lilongwe and Nkhwazi congregations.

The activities began at 5:30 a.m. with morning aerobics at the site playground, where everyone was welcome to participate. Our daily morning service took place at the multipurpose hall at 10:30 a.m. We received joyous, uplifting and encouraging messages on our spiritual journey as we enjoyed the foretaste of the world tomorrow. In addition to services, we held Sabbath school and children recited Bible verses. Special music was always on the program, including women and youth who enjoyed praising God with music. One afternoon, a Bible study took center stage as we discussed the origin of sin and how God is going to deal with sin by removing the one who is the mastermind of sin in humans.

The senior citizens, youth and Sabbath school children were each entertained to a treat

with braai and drinks on different days within the Feast. We had also group meals that gave us time enough to fellowship together as families. One night we were amazed with a variety show which featured the brethren's abilities. We also had a Feast dance which brought us together while enjoying the Feast mood.

We held football and netball games which involved our UCG teams and villagers around us. It was a good opportunity to interact with people of different faiths in our community, so people would learn about who we are.

*Cephas J. Chapamba***Malaysia****Sabah**

After two years of not being able to physically attend the fall festivals of God, the Sabah brethren observed the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day at Shan Shui Golf Course and Resort located near the forest reserve of Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia, which has been the Feast site since 2009. The resort is only a 15 minute drive away from the Tawau Airport and the city center, making it accessible to everyone.

The highest attendance this year was 42 with Mr. and Mrs. David and Denise Dobson serving the first half of the Feast and Mr. and Mrs. Iyarmoon and Eunice Dulay, a deacon from Mindanao, Philippines, serving until the Eighth Day.

On the third day, the resort sponsored a barbecue dinner that showcased some of the authentic Malaysian cuisines, while the pre-recorded variety show presentations from both the Mindanao and Sabah congregations were played for everyone to enjoy. Family day, sports, a fruit festival, youth day and the leisure tour to the nearby hot spring were some of the highlights of the Feast.

The brethren enjoyed and were inspired by the messages centered on the theme taken from Hebrews 2:10: "... bringing many sons and daughters to glory." The youth and singles engaged actively during the Bible study session with a focus on the Seven Laws of Success by Herbert Armstrong and how they relate to the modern challenges they are facing in terms of achieving the ultimate goal, the Kingdom of God. There were also sessions tailor-fitted for the specific needs and responsibilities of men and women in the Church

during the men's and women's socials, which were held separately.

The picturesque view of the forest reserve and the jungle mountain landscape, which served as a backdrop to the festival site, the teeming wildlife picturing that of the wonderful world tomorrow and the warmth and love shared by the brethren, made this Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day a memorable and profitable one.

*Iyarmoon Dulay***Mexico****Puerto Vallarta**

For the 10th year, the Hotel Friendly Vallarta, an all-inclusive beach and Spa resort in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, welcomed us with open arms to hold the Feast.

There were 660 brethren in attendance from five different countries (Mexico, U.S., Canada, Chile, Guatemala and Colombia). The numbers allowed us to have the exclusive use of the hotel, its staff, activities and meals (all foods were clean according to biblical specifications) making it very relaxing and enjoyable, especially for wives who didn't have to cook or clean up during all those days. Six restaurants (including a pizza oven to serve custom-made pizzas and a new hamburger and sandwich outlet) served Italian, Mexican and American meals free of charge.

The brethren commented on the uplifting spiritual messages, also directed toward our youth and filled with encouragement (all Spanish services were translated into English). We had a taste of what the Millennium will be like to maintain the hope that one day we will be part of it and a review of the fundamentals of the Kingdom of God.

We had an ABC orientation class given by Nathan Albright, and Ben Light gave a teen and young adult interactive Bible study with breakout sessions that included over 50 teens and young adults. There were also eight baptisms, all from Mexico.

On the social side, we enjoyed the peaceful, sunny place and its abundant meals—basically, an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord. The new large restaurant by the beach was a big hit as was a new covered pool and grill. Activities included a folkloric Mexican dinner show with fireworks at the end. Another highlight was the children's costume party in which actors dressed as Spider-Man, Superman and other personages did

some acrobatics and met the kids. We also had the opportunity to release around a thousand baby turtles on the beach, hoping that many of them will survive to return to Banderas Bay and breed.

Toward the end of the Feast, we had a number of COVID-19 cases and so switched to virtual services and piped the messages to the lobby and the patio areas. Thankfully, all were able to return to their countries without further problems.

*Mario Seiglie***New Zealand****Paihia, Bay of Islands**

The Feast of Tabernacles was an exciting event this year in New Zealand, not only because it is a spiritual highlight but also because the brethren could keep the Feast together. New Zealand had been in lockdown, preventing any in-person gatherings last year. The brethren made up for lost time as they enjoyed fellowship and family activities together.

The Feast was held in Paihia, in the beautiful northern region of the North Island of New Zealand. Paihia is a bustling seaside town right in the heart of the Bay of Islands. It is the main tourist town in the Bay of Islands in the Northland Region and is often referred to as the Jewel of the Bay of Islands. Paihia has golden, sandy beaches; safe, clean water for swimming; scenic walks to explore God's creation and a wide range of water related activities such as fishing, sailing and kayaking around the 144 islands that make up the Bay of Islands. The area is rich in history and culture and is often referred to as the "Birthplace of the Nation."

The opening night message was a highlight of the Feast this year that got everyone focused and excited about the meaning of the Feast and the future ahead of us. On the Eighth Day a group lunch was enjoyed between services, in addition to the spiritual food provided by God. Feastgoers enjoyed activities together throughout the Feast, such as an afternoon cruise out to "hole in the rock," lighthouse viewing, dolphin viewing and island exploring. Other group activities such as Bible Jeopardy, game night, family club and afternoon tea were enjoyed. A baptism added to the uplifting experiences of the Feast.

As we celebrated with God on these Feast days, we reflected on God's plan and His promises. We wrapped up the Feast with every-

one looking forward to next year's Feast of Tabernacles.

*Michael Fike***Philippines****Baguio City**

Baguio City was again one of the three Feast sites in the Philippines after two years of having virtual celebration due to the pandemic. For the 20th time, this festival was held at the "Ating Tahanan" grounds of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines located at the South Drive in Baguio City. This is the ninth time we have used their multi-purpose hall since 2012.

The Feast started out with our traditional opening night service on the evening of Oct. 9 with a short welcoming message delivered by the Baguio festival coordinator reiterating the importance of rejoicing and learning the fear of God during the Feast. The highest attendance we had during this Feast was 119 on the Eighth Day/Last Great Day.

The messages were all very uplifting, inspiring and encouraging. The pre-recorded message from our president, Rick Shabi, "Welcome to the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles" was played, viewed and listened to by the brethren as the main sermon on the morning of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The afternoon service of the first day was suspended when the sermonette giver, Constantino "Toti" Carlotta III, suffered a heart attack during the hymn following his message. He was rushed to the hospital and was sadly declared dead on arrival. The Church conducted a funeral service for him in the afternoon of the fourth day of the Feast.

It was a very sad event with everyone tearfully praying, but with God's help, encouragement and guidance through His Word, we were able to continue rejoicing in the right fear of God, with the rest of the services and programs of the Feast.

Thanks to our great and merciful God, the various activities were all enjoyed as planned by the young and old alike. The whole family had the opportunity to enjoy wholesome fun, food, fellowship and games. Among the activities everyone enjoyed were the youth day activities for the preteens and teens held on the second day, the seniors' socials and dinner on the fourth day (hosted by our teens and young adults) and the family day activities on the fifth day of the Feast.

The festival show this year was held on the third day of the Feast. The show featured festive songs and dances focused on the importance of rejoicing at the Feast. Some of these were native Filipino songs, popular music and classic Filipino folk dances, including the famous local folk dances called the “Sayaw sa Bankô,” the “Tinikling” and (special this year) an authentic Mountain Province “Igorot Dance.”

The messages were spiritually inspiring and centered on the vision of what the Millennium will be like and the establishment of God’s Kingdom on this earth when we will be reunited with all our loved ones who have gone before us. The warm fellowship, the spirit of serving and outgoing concern the brethren shared and experienced was a blessing. Everyone present felt that they were blessed by our great God with a deeper level of spiritual understanding of the joy, unity, love and togetherness we all look forward to in the Kingdom. In spite of the sad event that God

held on first day of the Feast and the evening was a time for the brethren from different congregations to get to know one another through fun-filled games.

The second day’s service was dedicated to the young and the once-young. The afternoon was occupied by the children’s and youth day activities and the seniors’ socials simultaneously. An evening Bible study was held for the youth.

The third day was highlighted by a very productive women’s enrichment meeting in which all girls and ladies 13 and above got to enjoy a free bazaar and beauty services while being entertained by games, songs and dance numbers. A more serious conversation and talks among women were continued on the afternoon of the following day. Meanwhile, the men enjoyed a social gathering on that evening with some grilled steak, soup and drinks.

The fourth day was dedicated to the young adults of the Church. They enjoyed a short two-hour, off-trail hike to a waterfall in Ce-

ren went to the Nasuli Spring Resort. We were also blessed with the addition of one member to God’s family; as Shela Mae Valdez-Abrigana, who committed herself to God through baptism. An appreciation dinner for the servant leaders capped the night while the rest of the brethren enjoyed a sumptuous meal at the hall.

The Eighth Day had a meaningful service filled with messages and special music which pictured the meaning of that day. An unexpected death of a faithful widow, Cecilia Gargar (86 years old), at the dawn of the Eighth Day around 3 a.m., shocked the brethren. But we were all comforted by God’s message of hope and resurrection.

Overall, the Feast was full of rejoicing, strengthened hope and wonderful memories, which are a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God.

Roy Gilos

Visayas

After two years of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day at home (2020) and in clustered sites (2021), brethren in the Visayas region of the Philippines have once again been able to celebrate at Baybayon Ni Agalon (The Master’s Shore) in Albuera, Leyte. The resort provided an exclusive nature-inspired environment for Feastgoers giving everyone a beautiful picture of God’s coming Kingdom. With a daily average attendance of 102, brethren of like mind gathered for morning services each day and a whole-day service on the first day and the Eighth Day.

Inspiring messages, beautiful special music and wonderful hymns were shared by everyone. Adding to the thrill and enjoyment, activities included a fellowship night on the first day followed by the children’s day and senior’s socials in which the young as well as the senior members of the church enjoyed a variety of games and activities held within the resort premises. A marriage and family forum for young adults and married couples, conducted by the festival coordinator, explained how God’s standards on marriage are being observed by existing laws in the country.

The youth and singles enjoyed activities including a tour to Lake Danao, one of the scenic tourist attractions in Ormoc City. The eve of the third day was dedicated to a women’s enrichment meeting featuring valuable lessons, stories of encouragement and examples

to help the women perform better as part of God’s Church.

The fourth day focused on training the men on how to properly conduct church services with the songleading workshop. The Feast was made more memorable by the “Festival Show,” which showcased talents through dance, songs and other performances pre-recorded and performed live by various members from every congregation in the Visayas.

The Feast would not have been complete without a fun-filled family day which gave everyone a chance to participate in games designed to encourage cooperation and teamwork among members from different church congregations on the fifth day.

A national webcast service joined by all three festival sites in the Philippines along with the festival site in Sabah Malaysia was held during the sixth day in which everyone had an opportunity to listen to an inspiring sermon given by senior pastor of the Philippines, David Dobson.

The seventh day started with a sumptuous breakfast followed by a morning service in which brethren watched the recorded service from Jekyll Island. A festival dinner was served in the evening to celebrate the Eighth Day.

With the guidance, inspiration and protection of the great God Almighty and the active participation of volunteers and different festival committees, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day celebration this year was a great success!

Jo Campos

South Africa

Mossel Bay

For the fourth time, the Feast was held in Mossel Bay. Almost everyone stayed within walking distance of the hotel where the hall is. At the lovely hotel restaurant, it was easy to visit and invariably find people to fellowship with.

Messages this year reminded us of the Millennium and God’s Kingdom while focusing on keeping the vision, trusting God fully, staying true to His teachings and enduring to the end.

Special music included a children’s choir bigger than we’ve had in a while. They performed two songs before our blessing of the children ceremony, held on the weekly Sabbath, in which we were blessed to have three little ones participate.

Our planned activities began

with a welcome evening after the first Holy Day. Fun, games and even a bit of dancing encouraged everyone attending to meet new people and make friends. Groups were each given a roll of toilet paper and told to “do something creative with the whole roll!” Naturally a number of mummies emerged and there was even a Miss FOT 22, complete with wreath and crown.

Our family picnics this year included something new for the little ones: a puppet show! It was greatly enjoyed and enthusiastically participated in. The kids also made their own hand puppets, which they introduced. We fit in a few games of bingo, which was surprisingly popular with the teens.

About 60 seniors enjoyed a meal together at the Mossel Bay Gold Club. So popular was this event that we seemed to have a number of very young seniors this year! The chef shared that “it was a pleasure serving you today. My team commented that it was like being with a happy family that enjoys each other’s company. Please come back soon.” God willing, we will!

On our final beach walk 40 or more people got a rousing send-off by Graham Cowley playing the bagpipes. Quite a sight on a beautifully overcast morning! Other activities included an uplifting hymn-along and musical evening, a ladies’ breakfast, a lively teen get-together and discussion, a lovely afternoon spent at a pick-your-own strawberry farm (also home to the largest permanent hedge maze in the Southern Hemisphere) and the final farewell evening.

Our highest attendance, which included an encouraging number of first-time attendees, was 146, which included 125 adults and 21 children. South Africa is an ideal site for hosting our international family, and we had visitors from Indiana, Maryland, Texas, Scotland and Zimbabwe. Consider yourself invited—we look forward to meeting you!

We’re so grateful our loving Father once again blessed us with a precious opportunity to attend another inspiring, hope-filled Feast of Tabernacles!

Vivien Botha

Sri Lanka

Passikudah

A group of 48 brethren between the ages of 7 months and

Please see next page



allowed us to experience, this Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day will be remembered as one of the most joyful and spiritually memorable Feasts ever.

Rey Evasco

Bukidnon, Mindanao

The Feast of Tabernacles in Mindanao was successfully held in a new Feast site at Hotel de Susana, Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines. The theme was: “Bringing many Sons and Daughters to Glory” (Hebrews 2:10). Attended by a congregation of 238 strong at peak attendance, the entire Feast was a true reflection of the Millennium.

The Feast began on the eve of Oct. 9 with a warm welcome dinner and singing hymns to God. The rest of the days followed a consistent schedule, in which morning worship services started at 10 a.m. and were followed by a buffet lunch served by the hotel.

Whole-day services were

held at Campground, Impasug-Ong, Impalutao, Bukidnon. In the evening, a marriage and parenting forum was attended by couples and parents.

The fifth day was family day with an afternoon filled with fun games for all ages. We gave certificates to all students of the Virtual Sabbath Bible School for school year 2021-2022. The day featured a buffet of native Filipino delicacies and fruits as well as a fruitful young adults’ forum in the evening.

The sixth day featured a Sabbath afternoon Bible study in addition to the national webcast given by the senior pastor for the Philippines, David Dobson, which was joined by all three sites in the Philippines (Baguio City, Leyte and Bukidnon) and Sabah, Malaysia. In the evening, the brethren enjoyed a hybrid variety show of pre-recorded and live presentations. Some members donated ice cream and pizza, which everyone got to enjoy and share.

On the afternoon of the seventh day of the Feast, some brethren

Passikudah, Sri Lanka

Continued from page 9

93 years enjoyed a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles at the Amaya Beach Resort, in Passikudah, Sri Lanka. We give all glory, honor and thanks to our God and Father and to our Lord and Savior for blessing His people with a joyous and inspiring Feast.

All brethren stayed at the same hotel and each day ate three delicious buffet meals together. This environment allowed us additional time to share experiences and enjoy fellowship.

Brethren gathered daily at the onsite conference hall, eager to attend services and listen to and digest God's Word. The spiritual messages were compelling and meaningful, enriching the brethren. Special music each day was provided by the many talented Sri Lanka members who, along with one of our internationals, sang songs of praise to our Creator.

The brethren greatly rejoiced this year, catching up as they were not able to keep the Feast as a group in 2021 due to COVID-19 lockdown in Sri Lanka. The evidence that God and our Savior were with us throughout was very evident. All the brethren served one another with gladness.

Sri Lanka enjoyed many Feast traditions. One of those was an afternoon game of cricket. Young and old, first-time and experienced players joined in the fun. Another favorite was family day with the introduction of newer games that were challenging but fun; brethren competed hard and yet maintained brotherly love. One afternoon during the Feast, brethren went to the beach and a few relished snorkeling for the first time while others took a boat ride. One special evening at the end of the Feast, the blessing of God-given talent was showcased at the Feast variety show.

However, one of the true highlights of the Feast was the baptism of seven members who committed their lives to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Five of the individuals were from the Sri Lanka congregation and two from Pakistan. We know the angels were rejoicing with God the Father as these individuals repented, received God's Holy Spirit and began their journey toward the Kingdom of God.

Feast 2022 will be remembered by the Sri Lankan brethren for some time to come. The eight overseas brethren who attended

were simply interwoven with the locals to make one enlarged family dwelling together with love.

We thank God for everything, because His presence, direction and blessing made His Feast the success it was.

*Frank Reckerman and
David Schreiber*

St. Lucia

Reduit Beach

The beautiful Bay Gardens Beach Resort and Spa was the location for the Feast of Tabernacles in St. Lucia. The resort is located on Reduit Beach, one of the best beaches in St. Lucia, in a bay with calm, clear blue waters. Since this was the first Feast since 2019 that we were able to celebrate with our Caribbean brethren in person, it was a joyful family reunion with plenty of hugs and excited chatter! Everyone enjoyed meeting the overseas brethren, many of whom were in St. Lucia for the first time. In addition to St. Lucia, brethren attended from Trinidad & Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent, the USA and Canada.

The Feast was kicked off perfectly by the opening night video, to which brethren sang along and applauded. After the first day services, the ladies gathered for our traditional "meet and greet" social, in which everyone enjoyed delicious snacks and drinks and took turns sharing their conversion journey. By the end of the evening, there was a closeness that continued throughout the Feast. Meanwhile, the men gathered on the hotel's deck by the ocean and enjoyed their own fellowship, snacks and drinks.

Messages were all right on point and focused on the coming Kingdom of God. We were blessed with inspiring music each day, mostly performed by our St. Lucia brethren.

Other activities included family day at Pigeon Island, an island tour, karaoke/dance, sunset wine toast on Mt. Pimard and a catamaran sail around the majestic twin Piton mountains. But the most enjoyable activity was simply fellowshiping with each other, sharing scripture and meals, renewing old friendships and making new ones. We finished the Feast by all joining together for a meal on the beach between the two services on the Eighth Day.

For many, this was the best Feast ever!

Chuck Smith

Togo

Momé Hagou

It is with abundant joy that the two congregations in Togo met to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles 2022. We were not able to observe the Feast for the past two years due to government restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Being able to meet again was like a balm for our hearts and filled our time together with joy and friendship. We were doubly blessed as well, as right before the Feast we finished construction on a dormitory with six bedrooms at our church property in Momé Hagou, thanks to assistance from church members in the United States. Momé Hagou is a village located approximately 90 kilometers northeast from the capital of Lomé where we also have a congregation and church hall. There were 32 people present for the Feast. Each evening was watered by gentle rains as we began the second rainy season in this part of the country.

We followed with attention the sermons and sermonettes given in French and translated into Ewe on each of the eight days. The ladies and youth of the congregation generously provided special music each day as well as preparing our delicious communal meals. After eight days we left the Feast with warm feelings for one another

was our Feast location. Around 210 members, from overseas and the British Isles, came together to hear the messages of the hope of Christ's coming reign presented through the eight days.

Services were enhanced by special music from soloists and groups of singers, including a children's choir which filled the stage during Friday's service and a festival choir that performed two pieces on the afternoon of the Eighth Day.

Attendance figures varied from a low of 137 for the mid-Feast evening service, to a high of 191 recorded on Friday morning's service.

As there are several within our church community unable to attend the Feast in person, Internet links using Zoom were provided for every service and Bible study. The Zoomers were able to fellowship before and after services. An average of around 30 connections were made to each service.

Informal get-togethers were organized for both the beginning and end of the Feast, providing opportunities for informal fellowship, quizzes and other activities.

A memorable highlight was the combined talent show and ceilidh (traditional dancing), which was slightly oversubscribed in numbers of enthusiastic attendees who ensured the dance floor was always full. The talent show highlighted the talent in the Church, from the youth to seasoned performers.

donia National Park or visited attractions such as picturesque Betws-y-Coed, the city of Chester and the late thirteenth century Conwy Castle.

David Payne

United States

Bastrop, Texas

A group of 260 brethren gathered at Bastrop for the Feast of Tabernacles. All meetings were held at the Convention and Exhibit Center. Brethren served in an attitude of humility and cooperation to create a millennial atmosphere that made it a time of refreshing for all (Acts 3:18-21).

Daily messages pointed members to the coming Kingdom of God and the blessing of being able to see its significance. Messages emphasized being a peacemaker; enduring to the end; the right understanding of God's law; leadership; anticipation, joy and thankfulness; seeking more clarity about the meaning of the Feast; ensuring we get to the Millennium; millennial business practices and becoming like Jesus Christ.

The daily messages were enhanced by a variety of virtual music, individual presentations, family groups and a live presentation by the children's choir.

The preteens enjoyed two classes geared to their grade levels with a focus on God's Word being a lamp unto their feet (Psalm 119:105). Adults and teens also enjoyed Friday night Bible studies geared to further enhance their understanding of God's truth.

We enjoyed family day at Barton Hill Farms, a senior citizens' luncheon and a night of games and fellowship.

God clearly placed His blessing on the gathering for the Feast with good weather, a beautiful gathering place, profitable messages and great fellowship. It was another memorable year on the journey to the reality of what God pictures through the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day.

Gary Smith

Bend-Redmond, Oregon

Greetings from sunny central Oregon where 392 Feastgoers met on the first Holy Day to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Redmond, Oregon! The inspiring opening night message from President Shabi was a great way to launch the festival. The messages



and anticipated being able to meet again next year.

Kossi Fiaboé

United Kingdom

Llandudno, North Wales

The ornate Wedgwood Suite of the St. George's Hotel in the town of Llandudno, North Wales,

Activities away from the hotel included a young adults' get-together for a chat over a pizza and a session for younger children in a soft play area. A group of 22 young people from 8 to 18 spent an enjoyable couple of hours socializing while bouldering and high rope climbing at a climbing center. Many ventured into the stunning Snow-

that followed brought to reality the true connection we all share as a spiritual family as well as God's glorious plan for mankind.

Special music greatly enhanced our daily services. The festival choir and each individual performance was touching and heartfelt, which put the audience in a positive mindset.

Family day featured activities both inside and out. We had a cornhole tournament, children's games, bingo and table games inside with various prizes to choose from.

The family fun show showcased the talent and creativity of our members who sang, danced and had everyone laughing through skits and funny songs. Our senior luncheon was a big hit. We met at a nearby restaurant where our brethren came to serve and honor our older members. It clearly exemplified the love brethren have for one another.

A highlight for our teens was the activity at a local indoor trampoline park! Hundreds of bouncy surfaces covered the floors and walls to allow for bounce races, obstacle courses and basketball dunking. The provided pizza gave teens energy to jump some more!

Though our numbers were lower this year compared to some, we still made a big impact on the community by once again donating money and non-perishable items to a local food bank. This provided an opportunity to let our light shine to others during these days, as we will do in the future—a future that we all anticipate.

Jeff Richards

Branson, Missouri

God blessed 688 brethren attending the Feast in Branson, Missouri, at the beautiful, spacious Mansion Theatre.

Speakers gave encouraging messages to help us envision the millennial rule of Christ on earth. Several messages gave us a biblical description of what it will be like to be literal children of God with the ability, as Jesus showed, to appear at just the right time to guide others in learning and choosing to follow God's instructions.

On the opening day we were encouraged by President Shabi's message to more fully appreciate the joyous, righteous rule that will fill the earth with living water and make Jerusalem the Holy Mountain of God. Many expressed delight with the powerful music in the video presentation. That afternoon, Bob Dick explained that

as God's children destined to rule with Christ, we are obligated to serve others from the heart.

Family day services gave insight into how God will change the nature of animals and how as God's children we are to uphold our commitments in all our words and actions. The brethren abundantly provided stuffed animals for our children.

As rain threatened our family day cookout, brethren were asked if we should go ahead in faith or cancel. Overwhelmingly the answer was a "yes" to go ahead with a young man named Noah adamant in his support. The rain stopped at about 11 a.m. and 350 joyful brethren attended the cookout and patiently fellowshiped as the chow line snaked into the parking lot.

Gary Petty gave an outstanding Bible study contrasting the current headlines with the wonderful headlines we might expect four years into the world beyond today.

A group of 240 seniors enjoyed a delicious luncheon hosted by Tom and Lisa Damour which included participation from the audience and musical presentations.

Brethren were extremely generous in their donations to Families Helping Families. We were able to cover all our activity expenses because of the love of the brethren for one another.

Joe and Pat Dobson

Cincinnati, Ohio

More than 200 attended the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in the beautiful peak fall foliage of Cincinnati, Ohio. Fellowship bustled vigorously from the first day to the last and people found opportunities to serve one another and try to live the vision of God's Kingdom.

A small vocal festival ensemble buttressed the eight days in inspiring songs, with solos, duets and a heartwarming children's choir filling in the middle days. Inspiring messages encouraged spiritual conversations among the brethren. Several Bible studies throughout the Feast, including an interactive Bible activity answering real letters sent to the United Church of God's Personal Correspondence Department kept the spiritual fellowship rolling throughout the eight days. A family day dinner and game night got brethren, young and old, together for food and fun. Group Bible Jeopardy was a hit for more than a few. The senior luncheon was well attended and a delight, with more than

91 in attendance. The seniors had the privilege to hear musical stylings from Phil Rishel and Teresa Yazell. Teens enjoyed a Sherlock Escape Room and almost made their escape. Many took advantage of several local attractions such as the Creation Museum and the Ark Experience in Kentucky. A Sunday evening hymn sing got everyone in the right frame of mind for the last Holy Day of the year.

Despite the sicknesses that made their rounds throughout the Feast, people continued to maintain an upbeat and positive attitude. God definitely had His hand in every aspect of the Feast running smoothly. We were all thankful that God's people could dwell together in unity and harmony at a location on which God placed His name for these incredible days. An overarching theme of all the messages seemed to be keeping the vision of the Kingdom alive and active in our lives today, and these were truly our marching orders going forward into another year of serving God on this earth.

Andy Duran

Estes Park, Colorado

More than 500 brethren were blessed to keep God's Feast of Tabernacles in Estes Park, Colorado. As our Father in heaven commanded, His people rejoiced in fellowship, spiritual food and the beauty of the Rocky Mountains. Herds of elk could be heard bugling throughout the Feast and all sorts of wildlife lent their beauty to the picture of what God's Kingdom will be like in the future. Inspired words of instruction, encouragement and hope flowed out every day to God's people. Voices were lifted in praise and worship to God, as brethren shared their talents and gifts in special music.

Brethren took part in all sorts of activities, such as our family day when the brethren went up to the 860-acre YMCA Camp of the Rockies. Surrounded by mountain vistas, the sprawling camp offered something for everyone: rock-wall climbing, roller-skating, basketball, volleyball, archery, swimming, mini-golf, outdoor games and some spectacular arts and crafts. The family day activities were topped off with a family dance in which more than 250 brethren kicked up their heels, visited and listened to music. There were multiple teen activities, a young adults' hike and a seniors' luncheon. We also held Bible studies for teens, young adults and all the brethren, in addition to a marriage seminar.

Most of the brethren took the opportunity to tour the Rocky Mountain National Park and go over Trail Ridge Road, known as the "Highway to The Sky." It is the highest paved highway in the continental United States. We are so thankful for God's blessing and the lifting of His people's hearts. The warmth of fellowship and God's love was abundantly evident.

David Jones

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

A group of 669 people attended the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Everyone enjoyed the spacious facility with extra wide aisles for easy fellowshiping before and after services each day. The Gatlinburg site allowed us to have lots of fun activities.

Teens were able to meet and get to know one another early on with a pizza social on the first day. Then the young adults met for a Bible study on the second day. Tuesday was baseball day at a nearby diamond owned by the city. On Wednesday, we had a family dance with lots of line dancing, snacks and laser lights. On Thursday, we held a family day picnic on the large soccer field adjacent to the meeting hall. Families competed in our Novelty Olympics, while the smallest children played in the inflatable bouncy houses and others played corn-hole and Frisbee. Workers at the complex commented on how good it was to see so many children enjoying themselves! On Friday afternoon we hosted a special luncheon for the seniors with music and a short biblical message geared towards the elderly. On free nights, members were able to use the world-class sports facilities for volleyball and basketball. Feast attendees also collected 1,200 pounds of food for a local food bank.

Feastgoers in Gatlinburg were blessed with warm autumn weather with lots of sunny days and crisp, cool nights. The fall leaves were a beautiful mixture of red, yellow and green, which made hiking and driving very scenic.

The messages during the daily services were energetic and Feast-focused. Every day we enjoyed high-quality, spiritually uplifting music and rousing song services.

Craig Scott

Glacier Country, Montana

Just west of Glacier National Park, 145 brethren rejoiced before

God and Jesus Christ. Over half of those attending stayed on-site at Glacier Bible Camp where the Feast was celebrated.

Feast activities included a bowling party after sunset on the first day. The second day included the family day activities held in the playground area of the camp. On the third day, early services were held so there would be more time to explore Glacier National Park and the beautiful Flathead Valley. Brethren reported sightings of moose, elk, deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep and bears. Other activities included the senior luncheon, ladies' tea luncheon, hymn sing, teen pizza/movie night and Bible studies. On many evenings, brethren gathered around a campfire or in the lobby or dining hall to play games and fellowship.

One unusual consideration this year was that, due to a poor year for berries, black bears came into the camp trying to find food to help them prepare for their winter hibernation. One mama bear had three cubs and another had two. Proper care was exercised and there were no negative encounters, although some did see the bears from not too far away! During services there were many references to Isaiah 11:7—"The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

Just over a dozen people contracted COVID-19, but by providing anyone who wasn't feeling well with a test kit, the cases and impact were much less than last year. The brethren were very conscientious about testing and staying at home if not well. We appreciated everyone showing such concern and love for one another.

The Feast flew by and too soon people were saying tearful good-byes, leaving for their homes but filled with good memories of God's magnificent creation, fellowship with friends both old and new and a renewed clear vision of the coming Kingdom of God!

Daniel Deininger

Jekyll Island

Members from across the nation gathered to observe the Feast of Tabernacles at Jekyll Island, Georgia, this year. Numerous families with children attended, which provided sizeable numbers in all age groups. We were blessed with over 120 teens, plus another 125 children in the age bracket of 5-12.

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Jekyll Island, Georgia*Continued from page 11*

Our senior luncheon was well received with over 180 in attendance.

The members were grateful for the ministers visiting from numerous states and were thankful for their uplifting and encouraging messages. The messages this year were a good reminder of God's beautiful plan, but also relayed a sense of urgency so that we continue to prepare for the coming Kingdom of God. Many commented that they felt this was their "best Feast ever."

Three Bible studies were provided, along with a seminar that encouraged members to improve in helping others who are hurting.

Our family day, at the beach pavilion, was well attended with over 600 members coming together for a picnic, fellowship and games on the beach. Our activities included a golf tournament, teen dance, mixers for the pre-teens, teens and young adults, a family dance, youth education classes, teen bowling and golf, family day, a senior luncheon and a beach party for the teens.

It was wonderful for several families to experience a type of "family reunion," with some groups having 15 to 30-plus relatives in attendance. There is great satisfaction when our physical family is also connected to God's spiritual family. All glory and honor belong to God for inviting us to His Feasts, which remind us of our glorious future in His Family!

*Doug Wendt***Ocean City, Maryland**

The family-oriented vacation resort of Ocean City, Maryland, the largest on the Delmarva Peninsula, was once again the site of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Performing Arts Center, where more than 250 were in attendance, is a beautiful concert hall located within the Roland E. Powell Convention Center, and proved to be the ideal place to gather to worship and glorify God!

We were blessed with inspiring messages that intertwined to give us a glimpse of our future, not only as kings, but also as priests, serving under Christ's rule during the Millennium, as well as focusing on the great love God has for mankind. On Friday evening, Fred Kellers presented a Bible study focusing on how God intended for marriage to be a blessing.

The third day of the Feast was extremely busy! A teen hospitali-

ty was held before services. After services, the teens spent the afternoon together at a local bowling alley, while the seniors gathered for lunch consisting of Caesar salad, chicken artichoke piccata and meatless baked ziti. Later that evening, the young adults and singles gathered around the fire on the beach with snacks and fellowship.

The next day was family day, held at a restaurant/arcade where, after a buffet lunch consisting of chicken marsala and salmon, kids and adults alike enjoyed various arcade games, a 3D virtual ride, virtual golf and a mini-bowling alley. A family dance on Saturday night featured a wide variety of music and two rousing games of musical chairs—one for kids, and another for adults!

On the Eighth Day, between services, nearly 100 shared a meal of pit beef and grilled chicken breast smothered in barbecue sauce—a great meal to wrap up a great Feast! The love and cooperation everyone showed toward one another made the Feast special throughout. It seemed that everyone was working and serving together to make the Feast memorable for all. And indeed, it truly was!

*Don McCoy***Panama City Beach, Florida**

This year 900 brethren gathered in Panama City Beach, Florida, to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day. The only thing warmer than the sunshine were the smiles and hearts of the brethren grateful to be together before God!

Opening night services were charged with the excitement of the Feast as the welcome video set the perfect tone. Many brethren commented on how the uplifting the message was, combining the awesome images of nature and inspiring music to capture the millennial setting all look forward to.

After services on the first day of the Feast, young adults gathered to meet, greet and plan for the rest of the Feast. The teens enjoyed a hospitality with an ice cream sundae bar and get-to-know-you activities. The day was capped off by two baptisms in the beautiful Gulf waters.

On Wednesday, the seniors enjoyed a luncheon at the ever-popular Captain Jack's Seafood Buffet. A large group of young adults met for an afternoon of fun at Coconut Creek with miniature golf and a giant maze. That evening, 175 brethren of all ages gathered for the Feast dance.

On Friday evening, three Bible studies were held. The general Bible study was presented by Jim Wilkins, in which he expounded on the book of Hosea and God's relationship with Israel. A young adult Bible study about finding joy in all aspects of life was conducted by Chris Shude. Stephen Bouchette talked with the teens, drawing a parallel between a few grains of sand and the beach to our present lives and the amount of time we will have in the Kingdom.

We are very grateful that God placed His name in Panama City Beach this year. The messages were truly inspiring and the fellowship was outstanding. We pray that all brethren had as enjoyable and rejuvenating a Feast as we did. We look forward to the return of Christ, when this foretaste of the Kingdom of God will be enjoyed by all mankind!

*Dan Preston***Pewaukee, Wisconsin**

Surrounded by colorful autumn foliage, the Ingleside Hotel in Pewaukee was a beautiful backdrop for 165 brethren to gather and rejoice for this year's Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day.

Over the eight days, we were spiritually fed by 18 different speakers with messages that discussed what our vision should be, God's healing waters, our role in the Kingdom (as well as our responsibility today) and many other enriching topics. Four different Bible studies were presented, one on Friday evening and three more on the Sabbath. We also enjoyed a wonderful buffet of musical offerings from our festival choir, soloists and the children's choir.

One of the big highlights of the Feast was having a private group breakfast each morning. The Ingleside provided an exceptional spread of food and the brethren took advantage of the additional two hours of fellowship. This fellowship continued through various other activities including shared lunches on family day and the Holy Days, a game night, the seniors' luncheon, a musical evening with Johnny B and a private family day event at the Springs Waterpark.

God truly blessed the Feast in Pewaukee with wonderful weather, uplifting messages, and a genuine spirit of family. We look forward to the time when these days which we observe will become a reality.

*Nathan Ekama***St. George, Utah**

St. George, Utah, also known as the Greater Zion area, hosted the Feast of Tabernacles for the third consecutive year. Several national parks, state parks and hiking trails provided options for outdoor activities and scenic viewing and touring. This area is great for teen and young adult activities and for all ages who want to enjoy the desert beauty God provides. Most members stayed in condos rather than hotels due to their abundance.

Church services were on the campus of Utah Tech University in their 1,100-person auditorium. The highest attendance on the first Holy Day was 714. Since we were in a permanent seating auditorium, we offered advance seating reservations. Over 50 percent of attendees signed up for this program, developed and operated by Broen Dowd.

The messages offered a balanced display of inspiring topics directing us to God and the future Millennium. We had a special Bible study with Don Harms from the Loveland, Colorado, congregation. His presentation focused on demonstrating the location of ancient Sodom as Mr. Harms has twice excavated at the archaeological site in Jordan. After the Bible study questions were solicited from the audience and a dozen people stayed even longer to ask more questions.

The teens gathered at a park for pizza and games and the young adult activity of canyoneering (hiking and rappelling through scenic canyons) was opened up to all ages. A family dance and dinner buffet were offered one night. Hospitalities for the teens and young adults provided social interaction and two days of youth education afforded children the chance to meet others.

Coordinated by Randy Schmidt, special music was exceptional throughout the Feast. Talent abounded in St. George this year.

*Charles Melear***Zambia****Madzimawe**

Despite a precarious lack of resources, timely divine intervention through LifeNets International in Southern California and LifeNets Australia allowed the Feast and Last Great Day to be celebrated in eastern Zambia. As a result, 50 adults from three areas of eastern Zambia were

able to meet at Madzimawe UCG Community Center for eight days as one family in prayer and joy, foreshadowing the soon coming Kingdom of God. Our theme was "The Futility of Laboring for the Wind" (Ecclesiastes 5:16).

Each of the three churches, Kauzu, Chwoko and Ngilile, brought 150 kilograms of maize grain, the staple food in Zambia. In addition, each participant paid a prescribed amount of money as second tithe. As a result, the monetary assistance from LifeNets catered for supplementary food, transport and toiletries.

Each day started with morning devotion followed by bathing and breakfast. Services were from 9 a.m. to noon. All messages were based on the theme with emphasis on the futility of chasing after earthly things to the detriment of one's salvation and attainment of citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Bible studies were held in the afternoons, highlighting the importance of God's Holy Days, including the weekly Sabbath. The Bible studies were so captivating that they often ran long; they were a wonderful platform for information seekers. Only darkness and the clang of the bell proclaiming that dinner was running cold could effectively pull people away.

On the third day, participants undertook an exciting outing to Sunnyside Nature Resort where they could admire a few wild animals like ostriches, duikers, pelicans, ducks and peacocks. The resort also featured a large collection of wild plants and herbs which the caretaker explained had the proven ability to cure certain ailments. Sightseeing was followed by an open-air service on the banks of the dam. In addition, each group presented special music touching on the amazing creativity of our God. Later in the afternoon, brethren played basketball, relaxed and even explored the dam in small barges.

The Eighth Day was an excellent conclusion to the festivities. The sermon by the pastor hinged on Jesus's open offer to mankind that if anyone among us is thirsty (for salvation), he or she should approach Him and his or her thirst would be quenched immediately (John 7:37). The sermon concluded with Jesus's call to His people to "come out of" false religion lest we become participants to her sins and receive her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

Please see page 17



Agra, India



Baguio City, Philippines



Bukidnon, Philippines



Club Miléade La Gaillarde, France



Kuressaare, Estonia



Llandudno, N Wales



Merimbula, Australia



Paihia, New Zealand



Passikudah, Sri Lanka



Rockingham, Australia



Sabah, Malaysia



Sabaudia, Italy



Sunshine Coast, Australia



Titisee, Germany



Visayas, Philippines



Blantyre, Malawi



Blolé, Côte d'Ivoire



Chemba, Zimbabwe



Cotonou, Benin



Douala, Cameroon



Got Kachola, Kenya



Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe



Lubumbashi, DR Congo



Madzimawe, Zambia



Momé Hagou, Togo



Mossel Bay, South Africa



Mufulira, Zambia



Nkhwazi, Malawi



Ogembo, Kenya



Winneba, Ghana



Yagoua, Cameroon



Buzios, Brazil



Chinacota, Colombia



Drumheller, Alberta, Canada



Midland, Ontario, Canada



Mirebalais, Haiti



Montego Bay, Jamaica



Neuquen, Argentina



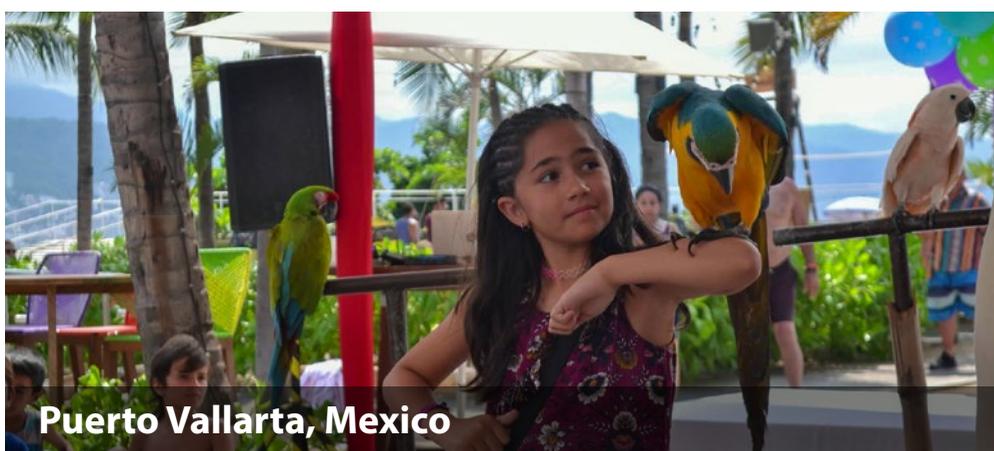
Osoyoos, British Columbia, Canada



Panajachel, Guatemala



Pichilemu, Chile



Puerto Vallarta, Mexico



Reduit Beach, St. Lucia





Bastrop, Texas



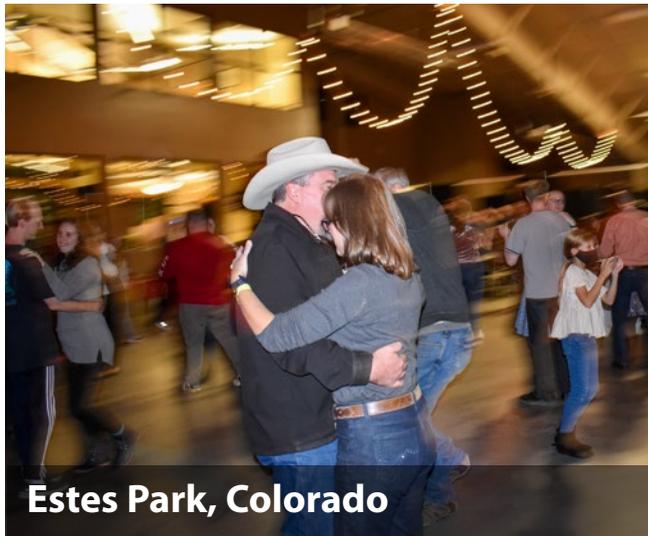
Bend-Redmond, Oregon



Branson, Missouri



Cincinnati, Ohio



Estes Park, Colorado



Gatlinburg, Tennessee



Glacier Country, Montana



Jekyll Island, Georgia



Ocean City, Maryland



Panama City Beach, Florida



Pewaukee, Wisconsin



St. George, Utah

More Feast of Tabernacles photos can be viewed here: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjAcryy>.

Madzimawe, Zambia*Continued from page 12*

Such a wonderful period of piety and togetherness could never have been possible without the love and kindness of brethren from afar. It was resolved that brethren should look ahead to the Feast of Tabernacles for 2023 and start preparing now.

*Filius Chalo Jere***Mfulira**

The Feast of Tabernacles remains an important and joyous festival as it depicts the coming Kingdom of God when mankind will have an opportunity to reign and dwell with God. But even as we celebrate these festivals on earth, we are to enjoy and rejoice, and that is what we saw in Zambia when 118 people gathered to celebrate the Feast. Some traveled 600 kilometers (over 370 miles) just to be among God's chosen people.

The Feast was characterized with special music in the local language from youth, women and the choir. Bible studies discussed the Church's fundamental beliefs, making our evenings fruitful as people were interested in learning the truth. Playing games, watching movies and rehearsing hymns were among the activities.

Sermons and sermonettes held similar messages pointing to the coming Kingdom in the world tomorrow. We extended love by visiting four members that did not make it to the Feast due to sicknesses. It was such an encouraging experience to the brethren as joy was seen in their eyes, in the words they said and in the warm welcome they gave us.

On a special Sabbath six people were added to the family of God through baptism and the laying on of hands.

We thank God for the peaceful Feast we had and all the people who supported us financially. Thank you all for your prayers.

*Rodrick Epomba***Zimbabwe****Chemba**

Greetings from Chemba Village in Gokwe, Zimbabwe where 35 of our brethren enjoyed the Feast. Goat meat was in abundance. Chemba is a very remote farming village. Brethren from the surrounding area gathered here to keep the Feast of Tabernacles together.

*Mabasa Chichaya***Lake Chivero**

Greetings from Lake Chivero, where 45 brethren gathered at the beautiful lakeside site. Fishing was a major activity. Soccer was another activity, which the boys and girls loved. Game viewing was a luxury here; we got to see warthogs, white rhinoceros, ostrich and impala roaming. It was such a great blessing to be here.

*Mabasa Chichaya***Satellite Sites****Bolivia****Santa Cruz**

From the beginning, the Terranova Hotel in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, provided us with the space we needed to carry out our activities. Many said it was the best Feast we have had in recent times.

We watched all the scheduled videos that were sent to us from the home office, regarding the welcome sermons and the sermon of our president, Rick Shabi. We also followed the messages of our senior pastor, Mario Seiglie. We had three Bible studies, two of them related to the tabernacle in the desert and its relationship with Jesus Christ. Then we had a study of the universe with a mathematical analysis of how we are going to participate in the future, when our King of kings will establish His Kingdom on the earth, where we are going to participate as active members of His family.

We had the baptism of Luis Daniel Mora Salazar, a member from Lima, Peru. After the ceremony we welcomed him to the Church with a nice toast. Later, the children enjoyed the pools in the warmth of a splendid sun.

As the Bible states, (Leviticus 23:40, Nehemiah 8:14-17) we rejoiced with delicious meals accompanied by tasty wines and seasonal juices. We were all happy and very glad to have accepted God's invitation to celebrate the Feast in the place where He put His name this year. We also took advantage of an evening for the children and some of the older members to sing their favorite songs through karaoke.

During our stay, we visited a mall where we ate ice cream and went bowling. We also visited a beautiful place called La Rincona-

da Ecoparque. It is an ecological park full of lagoons, waterfalls, tropical water lilies, a great variety of trees, plants, fish and nice aquariums. This outdoor recreational area was a pleasure to visit, because it resembles a paradise.

We have returned to our homes, very grateful to our God and Father for having given us the opportunity to continue growing, improving our understanding and knowledge, through the meaning of the plan that God created for humanity.

Raúl Machicao**Estes Park, CO****Canada****Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**

This was the third year that the Feast has been held in Saskatoon. We were blessed with attendees from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In person, we had 31 Feastgoers and an additional eight on Zoom.

All the messages were inspiring, giving us a clear picture of the Millennium and Kingdom of God, focusing us on our part in God's great plan and renewing the great hope we have before us. We had three pastors on the speaking schedule: Sheldon Sitter, Larry DeLong and Rainer Salomaa (who spent part of his Feast with us and the rest in Drumheller). We thank Mr. Salomaa for sharing some of his time with us. We also thank Mr. Shabi for his encouraging messages.

The first social activity of the week was a bowling social filled with fellowship, laughter and shouts of congratulations. As the week progressed, our activities included a catered festival dinner and a game social (followed by a potluck meal using leftovers from the catered meal). The final activity was a ladies' tea. While the ladies enjoyed tea the men went to the Western Develop-

ment Museum, traveling back in time over the past 150 years of Saskatchewan history.

Special music soothed and lifted everyone's spirit. Even though Saskatoon was a small site, members volunteered to perform every day, including solos, duets, a ladies' ensemble and piano solos.

Our members generously gave physical items and money to three different local charities—a great opportunity to give back to the community.

Like last year, one of the members brought a large jigsaw puzzle that was set up at the back of the hall. It was a center of chattering voices and laughter, as all shared in the goal of finishing it before the Feast was over.

Thank you to all that made this year's Feast so special. Thank you to those that stepped up and volunteered, often outside their comfort zone, to fill the needs and responsibilities of the Feast site.

*Larry DeLong***United States****Walnut Creek, Ohio**

Beautiful Amish country in Walnut Creek, Ohio, provided a millennial setting for the 170 brethren celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. The spectacular, colorful hills of Holmes County and bright blue skies provided the perfect setting for this Feast. Services were held at Timbercrest Camp & RV Park in a big top tent.

The Kingdom-focused messages and special music illuminated God's awesome love, grace, hope and promises in the context of the Holy Days. In addition to services, we held Bible studies, hymn singing, a musical concert by Mark Graham and a seminar on the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 by Darris McNeely.

The campfire area next to the tent provided warmth and was the perfect spot for many hours of fun and fellowship. Sharing iron kettle soup, kettle popcorn, chicken and hamburgers was a highlight of many evenings.

The youth enjoyed an afternoon of fishing at a local farm lake. A guided tour through the colorful Amish countryside on a wagon provided an enjoyable Sunday afternoon activity.

The brethren also had the opportunity to visit the Amish Country Theater for a comedy show, learn about the history of the Amish and Mennonites at the Behalt Museum, feed safari ani-

mals at The Farm at Walnut Creek and browse at the famous Lehman's Hardware store where items Grandma and Grandpa used can still be purchased. The many local shops provided plenty of opportunities to enjoy Swiss cheese, homemade chocolates, crafts, baked goods and much more.

The Feast concluded with farewell fellowship around the campfire after the Last Great Day, giving us one last opportunity to visit. This year the group experienced an exceptional spiritually enriching Feast with gladness. To God be the glory!

*Susan Miller***Vanuatu**

In the Vanuatu Islands in the Pacific, 40 people were able to keep the Feast in the bush village UCG tabernacle. They were able to connect to the Sunshine Coast Feast site with modern technology and enjoy every service being webcast. They enjoyed family day and a lot of Feast activities following the Feast schedule of services and activities.

An American family donates money each year for the Vanuatu members' Feast that enables them to buy a whole beef and extra food items so they can really feast, island-style. The Vanuatu members are very thankful for this and for the ability to generate power and use technology to have a very meaningful sermonette and sermon each day, giving them the vision of the Kingdom of God and His plan for all mankind. Thank you for all the support to this island community of God's family in the Pacific.

On Thursday after the Feast, we traveled to Vanuatu at the members' request to visit with the members. They traveled to Port Villa from some of the outer islands for the Feast and some wished to be baptized.

After travelling on a very difficult road to the village in the middle of the island where the Feast was held, Bill baptized five people after Sabbath services in a big new tub purchased for the occasion and placed on a platform. All the members and children stayed to witness a serious, but joyful ceremony.

They all enjoyed an island lunch. Afterwards, a blessing ceremony was held for seven children followed by a marriage blessing for a recently married couple from an outer island. It was a very full day of joy and thanksgiving to our great God and Jesus Christ.

Bill and Jenny Bradford UN

GN

The Good News

Don't Quit, Keep Playing

However rudimentary we may feel at times in our spiritual pursuit, our Great Master's arms are wrapped around each of us.

By Terri Eddington

There is a tale of the renowned Polish concert pianist and composer, Ignacy Paderewski, performing in a series of concerts. A mother bought tickets to the series, hoping to encourage her young son with his piano lessons. The two arrived early and located their seats near the front of the concert hall. The mother, seeing some friends nearby, went to speak with them—leaving her son unaccompanied in his seat. After a while, the boy grew restless and wandered off to explore the concert hall.

A short time later the house lights dimmed and the audience turned their attention to the stage in enthusiastic anticipation. The mother returned to her seat, only to discover her son missing and at that very moment, the curtains parted. The spotlights focused on the stage, highlighting the magnificent Steinway piano, and to her horror, she saw her son sitting at the keyboard. He began an elementary two-fingered pluck of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”

The audience jeered and hissed at the boy to get off the stage but he tinkered away. Before his mother could make a move, the great piano master appeared from behind the curtain and walked briskly to the keyboard. The crowd silenced, anticipating a stern admonition. Instead, he leaned over the child's small frame and could be heard whispering, “Don't quit, keep playing,” as he reached down with his left hand and began playing an accompanying bass part. He then encircled his right arm around the boy and added a running obbligato. Together, the great master and young novice mesmerized the concert crowd with their music.

However rudimentary we may feel at times in our spiritual pursuit, this anecdote is a poignant reminder of our Great Master's arms wrapped around each of us. He does not call the equipped, but He does equip the called, and He augments and supplements to create a masterpiece within those He calls His own. Actively working in the lives of individuals who have committed their lives to Him, Scripture paints some very descriptive word pictures of how He personally engages to assist in our development and success of this worthy goal.

Looking back, I have identified chapters in my life when this perspective was obscured from me. By my

Michal Parzuchowski/Unsplash



He does not call the equipped, but He does equip the called.

own doing, I denied myself the blessing of recognizing His presence beside me as He worked in my life. If only I had used a spiritual telescope and focused my gaze up on the Great Master when ongoing difficulties fogged my vantage point. Instead, I often focused down through the lens of a physical microscope, agonizing over nuances and uncertainties over which I had no control. This only resulted in anxiety and a floundering, murky perspective. Reflection on this has brought re-orienting principles to the forefront, and I hope they will aid in bringing equilibrium and clarity to you too when you feel bogged down in the quagmire that substantial difficulties often bring.

Find your strength in God

Following God never “just happens.” It takes a deliberate intention to be a disciple and give up our will, pick up our cross and follow no matter the cost. Let's be real. There may be times in our discipleship when emotional or physical pain consumes us with such sorrow that it feels as though our innermost parts are unraveling. Or as Job experienced: loneliness, hurt and disappointment run deep when human encouragements seemingly evaporate. For some, pain from the past may linger into the present, or sometimes our own thoughts may hold us captive. The truth is, our enemy has great power—but let us label him for what he ultimately is, a defeated foe. So why do we listen to the thoughts he puts in our head? Our Great Master is not just greater, He is the greatest, and it is essential to find strength and encouragement in Him no matter the hurdle before us.

We cannot always control that which happens to us, but we can be assured that God does not randomly allow trials in our lives just to make us fearful, nor are our lives simply an exercise in futile anxiety. He does not play with or experiment on our faith. When we love God and His Spirit is dwelling in us, He works to prepare us for His

coming Kingdom. Everything we experience is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ and nothing is wasted. Faith tells us that wherever we are going He is already there, so we find strength and hope by seeing that which is unseen. As His plan for us unfolds, we can trust that He is in control and He will never leave us.

Take time to see the unseen. Make a list of the ways God has actively worked in your life and set aside time to thank Him. Read 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 and identify the profoundly personal relationship He has with each of us. From these passages we can draw this hope:

When I am anxious, He is my Rock.
 When I am defenseless, He is my Fortress.
 When I am distressed, He is my Deliverer.
 When I am weary, He is my Strength.
 When I am encircled with evil, He is my Shield.
 When I am vulnerable, He is my Refuge.
 When I am in despair, He is my Support.
 When I am lost, He is my Lamp.

Isaiah puts it this way: “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:28-31, New International Version).

Personal reflection: Have I ever been disappointed with someone for not being as supportive as I would have liked or felt I needed? If so, have I ever contemplated that perhaps God wants me to find my strength in Him and not from reliance on others? Would I be willing to forgive the person or people I believed failed me and consider what it is that God really wants from me?

Understand the perspective of God's priorities

Significant difficulties can leave us with significant questions. Before the long haul of trouble invaded our lives, perhaps we were content with our understanding of God's sovereignty and the way He works with us. However, when the issues are no longer theoretical but rather very real, solace is not found in religious platitudes. We want answers as we try to make sense of our infirmities and uncertainties. Sometimes there are no easy answers and questioning God's whereabouts when we feel abandoned is a very human response—showing how desperately we are in need of His mercy and grace.

Often the eternal reasons for our suffering are masked and the truth is only discoverable as His Spirit illuminates our understanding to see that His utmost desire is for us to grow into the likeness of His Son. God has a unique plan for each of us and there will always be trials, because they are a part of our preparation. Only when this understanding becomes a part of our learning will we find the peace that transcends and releases us from anger, disappointment or bitterness toward God.

In Matthew 6:8-10 Jesus shows us how to pray: “For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Here we are told that the Father already knows exactly what we need even before we ask Him. So, there must be more to prayer than simply meeting our needs, because if He already knows them, why should we ask? The prayer begins by recognizing God as our Father and us as His children. We are then to honor who He is and what He has done, anticipate and welcome God’s Kingdom on earth, long for the day in which He reigns and be conformed and aligned with His will in the accomplishment of these things. Why? Because to pray in this way puts us in a mindset which transcends the physical.

Personal reflection: By praying in this prescribed way, I change how I think. It helps me to recognize God’s priorities, keep my eyes on the higher purpose and modify my outlook to become more aligned with His.

Irritation is a teacher

Consider the only gem produced by the stress and irritation of an undesired intrusion, the lustrous pearl. When an outsider intrudes the home of a sensitive, soft oyster its defensive response is to secrete a blend of minerals, creating nacre—a substance that encases the irritant and keeps the oyster safe and comfortable. Researchers have found nacre to have qualities of resilience and extraordinary strength. It is lighter and stronger than concrete and as durable as silicone. Layer upon layer of nacre cements together until slowly, over time, a gem of great beauty is conceived through wounding stress and irritation, without which there would not be a pearl.

“If we love God and are called according to His purpose, everything we experience, good and bad, helps to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. When you are a child of God nothing is wasted, even painful events and experiences are part of a grand purpose” (Greg Thomas).

God’s method of spiritual growth is to permit irritants to intrude upon our lives. These can include world turmoil, hurts and disappointments, relationship difficulties, anxiety, illness or chronic pain and often our own imperfections. How we respond to these stimuli determines if our struggles will take us closer to God and whether we develop spiritual maturity. Faith tells us that God is working something out in our lives, and this per-

Faith does not mean we will be spared from trials, but that we recognize they serve a purpose that is spiritual and not physical.

spective is crucial to avoiding resentment and to becoming disciples with mature character. Both Romans 5:3-4 and James 1:2-4 provide us with the same formula: when we respond to trials in faith, we build resilient endurance.

Faith does not mean we will be spared from trials, but that we recognize they serve a purpose that is spiritual and not physical. Honestly, there have been times when I have struggled to maintain this outlook. One exercise I have found to be helpful is to say out loud to myself: “God’s plan for me is right on schedule.” If ever we lose this perspective, read James 1:5 which tells us if, in faith, we ask God for wisdom it will be given to us. Ask Him to grant the wisdom and personal perspective needed to forge ahead.

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself” (C.S. Lewis, “Mere Christianity” pg. 176).

Personal reflection: There will be heartache, frustrations, regrets, physical and emotional obstacles that may succeed in sapping our resolve—but a hopeless response to suffering can become an impediment to our faith. Will I tell my story from the perspective of a victim or as a hero, from despair or hope, survival or woundedness, fear or courage, emotional resentment or forgiveness, a physical mindset or a spiritual mindset?

The acceptance and submission of that which will not be removed

For millennia a difficult aspect of the human struggle has been in trying to reconcile the knowledge of a loving God who has the ability to eliminate sufferings, injustices and atrocities but chooses not to. How can we believe He shares in our sorrows, cares for us and loves us when He hears our cries yet allows us to endure such hardship?

In this context, Hebrews 5:7-8 has been a helpful passage to meditate upon for me personally. Here we see a glimpse into the very personal struggle the human Jesus Christ felt as He anticipated the intense suffering and tortuous execution ahead. Three times He prayed and petitioned with anxious cries and tears of blood running down His face to the One who could deliver Him from the events soon to unfold. He beseeched God to remove what was to come, and perhaps find another way that was not so dreadful to anticipate. He wrestled with this in emotional and mental anguish (Luke 22:42 and Matthew 26:38). But then, He showed His faithful acceptance and reverent submission to the perfect plan when it was not removed from before Him.

We are told that He endured it all “for the joy that was set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2-3), meaning He kept His eyes on the higher purpose. His trial was temporary but His reward was everlasting and uniquely qualified Him to be an Advocate. Now He is our Advocate and His death bears truth to the fact that our pain, suffering and tears are never dismissed. He understands what it is like to agonize and wrestle with challenges that may loom before us. He understands the sting injustice inflicts and the depth of pain that emotional and physical travail can bring. He understands when it seems as though our human suffering has been climaxed, and He understands when we wrestle with God’s plan for our lives—even when we also seek to submit ourselves to it. Meditating upon this is a balm to my soul when I am in the middle of something very hard.

Luke 22:43 tells us that, in the midst of Christ’s prayer, an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened Him so He could endure what was yet to come. Reassurance washes over me to know that when we lay our hopes, fears and anxieties before God’s throne, He hears us. Our petitions enter His ears and He will provide the strength we need to bear what lies ahead. 2 Samuel 22:7, “In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears.”

Personal reflection: Christ’s crucifixion is simultaneously the worst and best of all historical events. The

empty tomb changed everything. His hardest trial became the most amazing love story of all time. He loved us enough to die for us, knowing what awaited all humanity on the other side of this trial was a reason to endure. Now we too have a reason to endure, knowing what lies ahead. He may not take our distresses away, but He knows our pain must be attended to. He will commune with us in our suffering with the hope it forms us into holy people dependent upon Him, knowing who we are and to whom we belong.

Friends, remember the story of the great master and the young boy and “don’t quit, keep playing.” What we do in this life echoes forward into all of eternity. Let us keep our eyes on the higher purpose and be faithful through the long haul, knowing our Great Master is always with us. **GN**

Why Did God Call You Into His Church?

Jesus Christ came to earth for a profound purpose—part of which was to call a group of disciples and begin His Church (Matthew 16:18). But why did Jesus form His Church and what was to be its mission? And why did God call you into His Church?

By John LaBissonere

To answer the questions above let’s first examine a scripture highlighting what Jesus Christ said at the beginning of His public ministry. “Now after John [the Baptist] was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15).

The gospel, meaning “good news” or “glad tidings,” is about how the Father’s perfect, divine government that now rules in heaven, will be established on earth (Luke 11:2). Plus, it’s the means by which faithful, obedient people obtain the gift of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ and enter God’s spiritual family to serve with Christ in governing the world at His second coming (Romans 1:16; Revelation 5:10).

Many scriptures reveal that the good news of God’s Kingdom was the centerpiece of Jesus Christ’s ministry and message. He said, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent” (Luke 4:43, emphasis added throughout). Coupled with this, Jesus communicated through various parables that nothing was of greater significance or value than the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:44). And this has everything to do with the Church He established and the mission He assigned to His faithful followers. Christ

Continued on page 20



Ben White/Unsplash

The purpose of preaching the gospel is not only to give people the opportunity to learn the truth about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, but also to respond to His divine calling if they so choose.

wants us to continue the work He began in preaching the gospel and making “ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

Fully dedicated to the mission

Examples of His disciples performing this critical assignment fill the pages of the New Testament (Acts 8:12; 15:7; Romans 15:19). Indeed, Jesus’ early apostles and disciples dedicated themselves completely to this great mission. And, throughout the ages since then, other steadfast servants of God did the same and are doing so today. In this respect, Jesus declared that one of the pivotal signs indicating the imminent time of His second coming was that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

But what is the purpose of preaching the gospel as a witness? It is not only to give people the opportunity to learn the truth about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, but also to respond to His divine calling if they so choose. For those who reply favorably, God’s Church is ready to offer marvelous spiritual and moral instruction and guidance (John 21:17; Luke 1:17). By doing so the Church fulfills its follow-on duty which is to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Spreading the gospel in today’s world

When considering all of the above, you and I, as brethren of God’s Church, have the obligation to support the spreading of the gospel to an entire world of deceived humanity. Bearing in mind today’s increasing lawlessness, hatred, corruption and violence, people need to hear and read the awesome truth about Jesus Christ and the wonderful age beyond today. As a part of its mission to preach this good news, the Church must also deliver a consistent and strong warning about the consequences of disobedience to God’s commandments—meaning the suffering and discord it brings to individuals, families and nations (Ezekiel 33:6; Isaiah 58:1).

When Jesus called His early disciples to follow Him (John 10:27) He also admonished them to be wary of false teachers who would arise and fill the world with so-called “Christian” doctrines that He had never taught (Matthew 24:4-5). But let’s be clear, God’s Church stands totally separate and apart from the world’s churches—which do not know or proclaim the true Jesus Christ or the genuine gospel of God’s Kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:17)! Therefore, we must hold firm to Christ’s teachings and follow His perfect example of focusing squarely on His mission (Matthew 4:19; 1 John 2:6). Indeed, He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). What, therefore are some ways we can also make God’s work of spreading the gospel our nourishment?

Having our heart in God’s work

First, we can pray zealously for the media work of the Church in preaching, broadcasting and publishing the gospel. This includes the efforts of home office personnel and those of the operation directors and senior pastors and their assistants in the regional areas of the world. Their needs are published regularly in the Ministerial and Member eNews and in the United News. Moreover, we can pray for the many people who God is calling out of this world—asking Him to protect them from Satan’s deceptions and distractions as they unlearn spiritual error and learn biblical truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

In this regard, Ephesians 2:2 says that we “once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.” But God rescued us from that condition due to His tremendous love. He wants us to have the same deep love for others by our willingness to share His truth with them (John 13:34). As we enjoy the fellowship and social life of our local church and pray for each other, let’s also pray for the people in the world who God is calling! In Jesus’ model prayer of Matthew 6:13 He said, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” The word “deliver” means to rescue from danger or destruction. In Christ’s parable of the sower and the seed, He details various obstacles, including Satan’s dire influence, that people face as God opens their hearts to His truth (Mark 4:13-20). Therefore, it would be more than fitting for us to ask God to protect

the people He is calling from “the evil one” so they can make steady progress in learning the truth of God.

While praying for those individuals we can also thank God for the Church’s generous coworkers and donors, requesting that He bless them for their willingness to financially support His work. Plus, we can pray that God will raise up more dedicated men and wives to serve in the ministry. Jesus said, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2). In all of these areas we can exercise our calling to fully back up the spreading of God’s glad tidings to a confused and hurting world. While we certainly need to be conscientious about our own godly behavior and personal spiritual development, we should also be keenly attentive to our key priority, which is to support the preaching of the gospel.

Why God called you

Finally, now more than ever, people in today’s confused, hopeless world need to learn about God’s coming Kingdom and the peace, hope and happiness it will bring. Plus, they need to discover how they can personally enter God’s spiritual family. As we individually grow in grace, knowledge and character as Christ’s disciples, let’s be highly diligent about our foremost mission, which is to support the preaching of the gospel and in helping make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Indeed, this is the reason He called you into His Church today! Therefore, let’s do all we can to live worthy of our calling. **GN**

“If You Love Me . . .”

Millions of professing Christians say, “It’s so good to know and love the Lord.” While this is a nice sentiment, how do these sincere people express their love to God? Is it done in the way specified in scripture or is something vitally important missing?

By John LaBissoniere

A famous professing Christian evangelist frequently implores people to turn to God by encouraging them to pray this way: “God, I’m a sinner and I’m sorry for my sins. I ask You to forgive me. I believe in your Son, Jesus Christ, and invite Him into my life.”

Part of that statement is fine since people need to admit they are sinners, ask God for forgiveness and acknowledge Christ as their Savior. But there is a critical missing ingredient in this declaration. What is it? Jesus gave the answer when He declared, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Those seven words are certainly unambiguous! Even so, Jesus’ statement is not what millions of traditional Christians believe or practice. Rather, they have been taught that the Christian life can be lived without any obligation to obey God’s laws—

His Ten Commandments. Although these people are sincere, they have been schooled in a false idea—that God’s grace sets them free from having to do anything other than believe in Jesus as Savior. Obeying the commandments is viewed as a way to gain salvation by “works.”

“Created in Christ Jesus for good works”

To support this erroneous concept, professing Christian ministers and theologians often point to Ephesians 2:8-9 which states, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Indeed, no one can be saved by works since it is only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ’s shed blood that a person can be purified from sin. However, conventional Christian theologians often disregard the very next verse which plainly says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (verse 10).

No one can be saved by works since it is only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ’s shed blood that a person can be purified from sin.

Holy Scripture explains that grace does not abolish, cancel or repudiate God’s law! The author of Ecclesiastes wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Moreover, Christ said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10). When a young man asked Jesus what he needed to do to obtain eternal life, He told him, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). He then listed several of the Ten Commandments to make it clear what He was referencing (see verses 18-19). True disciples of Christ are therefore obligated to follow His model of obedience to the commandments (1 John 2:6). When Jesus lives within us following repentance, baptism and having received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, we are to fully and faithfully emulate His example of diligent obedience to His Heavenly Father (Romans 2:4).

Sadly however, mainstream Christian ministers have led people to believe that God’s laws have been annulled. But this teaching is preposterous when we examine what Jesus actually stated about God’s commandments. Did He come to eradicate God’s laws—to get rid of them? Absolutely not! Rather, He said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but

When an individual fulfills a commitment, he or she certainly doesn’t abandon that obligation but satisfies it completely!

to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18, emphasis added throughout). The word “fulfill” doesn’t mean “destroy” as some theologians would

have people believe. When an individual fulfills a commitment, he or she certainly doesn’t abandon that obligation but satisfies it completely!

“For all Your commandments are righteousness”

So, it is undeniably clear that Jesus loved God’s laws and kept them meticulously. In this regard, what were the very first words Jesus Christ voiced as He began His public ministry? He said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). But, repent of what? Sin! The Bible defines sin as breaking the commandments. “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). The apostle Paul said in Romans 7:7 that he “would not have known sin except through the law.”

Furthermore, what did Paul tell the brethren in Rome about sin? “Therefore do not let sin reign

carnal nature as well as the downward pull of sinful society and the devil’s powerful, venomous influence (see 2 Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:25-32; 6:11-18).

The apostle John wrote about this ongoing battle against sin by telling baptized, converted Christians, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). Indeed, when we sin after having been baptized, we must go before God’s “throne of grace” in earnest prayer to acknowledge our disobedience and ask God for His forgiveness (Hebrews 4:16).

“If you love Me, keep My commandments”

Finally, millions of people who profess to be Christian say they know and love Jesus. But then they fail to obey the commandments that He not



Studying the Bible diligently and obeying its instructions carefully is central to ensuring we are not led amiss spiritually.

in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:12-13). In order to become “instruments of righteousness” Christ’s true followers must obey God’s laws because as Psalm 119:172 declares, “For all Your commandments are righteousness.” What else did Paul convey about God’s law? In Romans 7:12 he wrote, “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” Plus, in verse 22 he said, “For I delight in the law of God.” When considering such glowing statements of esteem and admiration, how can anyone believe God’s commandments have been made null and void or should be disregarded? It’s illogical and scripturally fallacious.

The fact is, God’s laws are fully authoritative and operational and have been established for the supreme benefit of all humanity. Breaking the commandments brings disastrous results. Paul understood this—realizing he was engaged in a daily struggle to keep the commandments even after having repented of sin. He stated in Romans 7:14, “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” Are professing Christians being taught that upon repentance they must continue striving to overcome sin? Sadly, they are not! The fact is, repentant, converted Christians can and do sin and therefore must persevere in opposing their own

only fully observed but told them to keep! Does that make any sense? Christ’s message to them is this, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does

It is vitally important that you and I take to heart the inspired, scriptural words of Jesus and His apostles.

the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). It is vitally important that you and I take to heart the inspired, scriptural words of Jesus and His apostles. Their testimonies ought to motivate us to seriously examine our beliefs and traditions.

Considering this, what can you do to ensure you are not being led amiss spiritually? Studying the Bible diligently and obeying its instructions carefully is central to this goal (Psalm 119:172; Luke 4:4; Hebrews 4:12). This certainly includes accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, repenting of sin and continually seeking God’s righteousness (Galatians 2:20; Matthew 6:33). And importantly, it also means living your life in the identical manner Christ did—by faithfully observing His Father’s commandments (John 15:10). Again, remember Jesus’ clear statement, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15)! **GN**

New Faces at the Home Office



Stephanie Bissessar was recently hired as a media campaign strategist and digital content editor for the United Church of God.

Stephanie is from Trinidad and Tobago, the southernmost island country in the Caribbean. She obtained a bachelor's degree in communication studies (major) and international re-

lations (minor), graduating from the University of the West Indies. Over the past six years, she has worked in a variety of fields including the newspaper industry, television production, advertising and social media marketing. In her last role, she was employed by Carib Brewery, Ltd., an industry leader in beverage manufacturing, to lead the company's digital marketing efforts internationally.

In Stephanie's free time, she enjoys cooking, reading and photography.

In her new role at the home office, she will be editing the Beyond Today TV program as well as launching new social media campaigns to expand the Church's evangelistic advertising.

Stephanie says "I am really excited about the opportunity to increase UCG's ability to connect directly with the brethren of all ages and countries in today's digital era." **UN**



Dave PerMar was recently hired as a systems administrator in the IT department for United Church of God.

Dave was born and raised in Orlando, Florida. He started attending church services in 1990, was baptized in 1991 and was a student at Ambassador College from 1993 to 1995. He

currently lives in Orlando with his wife and two children.

Dave recently graduated summa cum laude with his bachelor of science degree in cybersecurity from Champlain College. He previously worked for Cintas Fire Protection.

Dave enjoys spending time with his family and, when he has time, singing and playing musical instruments.

In his new role, Dave helps oversee, maintain, monitor, troubleshoot, optimize and upgrade server, network and desktop hardware and software. He also performs various other related tasks to assist the IT department.

Dave says "the work of the Church is the most important work being done on the face of the earth, and it's an honor and a privilege to be a part of the home office team!" **UN**

Leadership Workshop Held in Milford, Ohio



Darris McNeely presents "A Leader is First a Disciple."



Steve Myers presents "Partnership in the Gospel."

From all reports and feedback, the leadership workshop we held this year was especially enjoyable, rewarding and productive. The theme was "A Leader is First a Disciple" and we welcomed 33 UCG members from the United States, two from Canada and one from the United Kingdom.

Our last such workshop was in 2019, so it was great to resume this valuable resource for those who were recommended by their pastors to attend this educational opportunity. The workshop is designed to equip and inspire the participants to become even more effective in their service to the Church. All of the presentations, blended together throughout the weekend, served toward this purpose.

Sessions throughout the weekend were presented by Dar-

ris McNeely, Gary Petty, Steve Myers, Rick Shabi and myself. One of the highlights for the participants was the opportunity to collaborate together to "defend the faith" on a variety of issues and scenarios.

Mr. Shabi focused on the need for all of us to be growing and building our faith and trust in God, and in becoming one as we practice agape with one another. He pointed out that God is working with all of us in a "training program" so we may learn to better serve in His Kingdom and that God will illuminate our walk with Him as we strive to live by His every word.

Here is a sampling of some of the survey responses that we received after the event: "Difficult to suggest improvement when I found the entire time to be wholly inspirational." "Excellent

throughout." "We are very grateful for the opportunity to attend. It has been very beneficial and an additional reminder of where our focus and priorities should be." "Enjoyed it all more than anticipated." "We really appreciate the humility in service to the Church." "Thanks for the leadership workshop! I found it helpful, encouraging, and inspiring" "I enjoyed all the presentations. They helped me grow as a person." "I loved the weekend!" and "It was great to hear the openness and willingness to answer questions."

It was wonderful for all of us to witness the obvious dedication and humble service of all our attendees and it was clear why they were recommended by their pastors for attendance at the workshop.

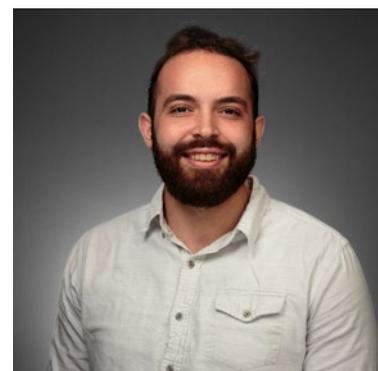
Mark Welch

ABC Student Council Chosen



L-R: Jonathan Api, Josh Vazquez, Guinevere Keeney, Gabriel Holzwarth, Kate Ledbetter, Sarah Erickson, Ben Lockhart, Elizabeth Ross, Sage Bensinger, Sophia Borton, Rhys Neilson, Anna Turgeon, Michael Api.

This year's Ambassador Bible College student council officers have been chosen. Josh Vazquez will serve as the ABC student body president, assisted by secretary Ben Lockhart and treasurer Anna Turgeon. Sophia Borton will lead the social committee and both Guinevere Keeney and Jonathan Api will lead the service committee.



Ensuring the room and materials are prepared for class each day, Rhys Neilson will serve as monitor for this year's ABC class. Sarah Erickson will keep the class updated on upcoming events and maintain the message board. Elizabeth Ross will ensure that cards are sent to the sick.

Technical support will be provided by Michael Api, including class audio recordings. Sage Bensinger and Kate Ledbetter will edit the ABC Times and class yearbook.

Serving as music coordinator, Gabriel Holzwarth will be assisted by Anna Turgeon and Jonathan Api as they prepare for the ABC chorale presentations this school year.

Heidi Braun

Nashville Holds Market and Hobby Church Social



After sundown on the Sabbath of Sept. 10, Nashville members set up tables in the fellowship area of the church hall to showcase their businesses, products and talents. From paintings to brisket, homemade candles to Medicare advisory services, local honey to sweet breads, there was a variety of things for sale, either made by or simply on offer from local brethren. Besides providing an opportunity to learn more about each other's interests, it was also a way to enrich the church community by doing some Feast shopping. Some came prepared with boutique-quality displays borrowed from their permanent booths in local shops. Mariah Stephens runs a booth in a local shop selling homemade candles, fragrances, necklaces and other handmade jewelry, all of which she had on display that night.



Yui Breedlove displayed canvas originals and inkjet prints of her original paintings as she does at local art shows. Others had things for sale with simpler set-ups, such as Kirk and Ronnee Ellithorpe, who gave samples of homemade jellies for sale in flavor combinations like strawberry habanero. Ever entrepreneurial in spirit, Bobby Simmons, age 10, charged \$2 to tell jokes to whomever would listen (and pay!).

Not all were selling things. Pastor Gary Petty brought a collection of historical memorabilia he'd collected, including WWII posters, authentic Roman coins and interesting books, which he displayed and explained to any who stopped to look.

The social was a huge hit with everybody who stayed to exhibit, shop, and build stronger bonds of unity with their fellow brethren.

Mitchell Moss



Portsmouth, Ohio, Youth Day



PORTSMOUTH, OHIO—The Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation held their youth day on Sept. 3, 2022. On this special Sabbath, Ethan Call and Seth McKinney shared songleading responsibilities. The sermonette time began with a play written by Guy Cornish, directed and narrated by Maya Warren and presented by the preteens. It was about Joshua and the battle of Jericho. After this,



Seth McKinney gave a short talk about his experience as a camper at Cotubic, followed by Ethan Call talking about serving on staff at Camp Pinecrest. During announcements, Leah Helderbrand was recognized for completing all of her memory work from Sabbath school. The congregation enjoyed this Sabbath with the youth's participation.

Kevin Call

“Sabbath in the Park” Potluck

On Sept. 17, a group of 55 Portsmouth, Ohio, brethren gathered for a potluck “Sabbath in the Park” meal after services. We had beautiful weather, great fellowship and delicious food. It was a great way for a lot of us to spend the afternoon together before going different directions for the Feast of Tabernacles!

Kevin Call



Portland, Oregon, Sponsors Third Annual Kids’ Rodeo



Children chased squealing pigs in one of the rodeo's many fun activities.

Squealing pigs being chased and squealing kids riding the big water slide were both part of the fun at the kids' rodeo hosted by the Portland congregation on Aug. 28. Held at the Sextons' farm in the hills above Washougal, Washington, over 100 youngsters and

60 adults spent the day enjoying fun and games.

The main attractions for the day were the 110-foot water slide, 140-foot zip line and the barbecue lunch cooked by Berkley Weis. Carol Morat brought small goats for the petting zoo, while Tia Christopher



One of the main attractions was a 110-foot water slide.

and Cheryl Reeves provided face painting, Dean and Angie Lindsey kept the kids in line for the pig chasing, Joe Leeman and his crew made sure the harnesses were tight and safe for the zipline and Mitch Shepler drove the tractor hauling the wagon full of kids for hay

rides. The archery crew, Mike Hunicke and Carl Kinsella, set up three shooting stations with targets on bales of straw and were kept busy all day by enthusiastic arrow shooters. Eloise Johnson hosted the “selfie portrait” booth for dress-up pictures. Some of the chick-

ens in the coop received much more attention than they wanted, especially the baby chicks that were carried around all day. The rodeo also featured a bouncy house and water balloon tossing.

Horses were brought in for three hours so the youngsters, some as young as 3 years old, enjoyed horseback riding around the pasture. To conclude the day, the hose was turned on a large pile of topsoil so the kids could enjoy playing in the mud. Afterwards they were hosed off in the horse trough before going home. Many of the youngsters remarked that this was the most fun day of their summer. Some of the adults who spent the day watching the festivities said they had as much fun as the youngsters.

Rex Sexton



**Alexandria Winnie
Rodriguez**

Sept. 23, 2022

Births

Alexandria Winnie Rodriguez

Alexandria Winnie Rodriguez was born on Sept. 23, 2022, at 7:05 a.m. to parents Omar and Emily Rodriguez of the Cincinnati East congregation. She weighed 7.12lb and was 20 ½ in long.

Weddings

Mark Anderson and Allison Montero

Bert and Tricia Merring of Orlando, Florida, congregation are excited to announce the marriage of their daughter Allison to Mark Anderson, son of Mike and Kay Anderson of Granite City, Illinois, on Aug. 28, 2022.

The wedding was officiated by Chuck Smith. The ceremony took place at Bridlewood Ranch in Clermont, Florida. The rain stayed away from the venue, so it was a perfect day for an outdoor wedding. The couple is now residing in Granite City, Illinois.

Jacob Bailey and Andrea Pacelli

Together with their families, Andrea Katherine Pacelli and Jacob Donald Bailey are delighted to announce their wedding that took place on Sunday, Sept. 18, 2022, officiated by William Bradford and surrounded by family and friends. The couple attends the Chicago congregation.

Cody Martin and Krystal Robinson

With great joy and excitement, the families of Cody



**Mark Anderson
& Allison Montero**

Aug. 28, 2022

Martin and Krystal Robinson announce their marriage on Aug. 21, 2022 in Melbourne, Australia. Krystal and Cody met in Kawana Waters, Australia, in 2017 while keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. They had some mutual friends and stayed in contact afterwards. Eventually they started talking on Facebook audio and video calls a couple of times a week. From there they eventually started talking with each other every single day.

After having many long conversations and strengthening their friendship over time, Cody and Krystal were able to meet up at a mutual friend's wedding in April 2019. It was during that trip that they decided to try dating and make a long-distance relationship work.

Krystal lived in Melbourne, Australia, and Cody was living in Cincinnati, Ohio, when their relationship started. They got to spend the Feast together in Merimbula, Australia, with Krystal's family in 2019 and then Krystal got to come back to the States to meet Cody's family.

It was at this time that they decided Cody would move to Melbourne first for several months and then he and Krystal would both move back to the States to figure out which location would work best for both of them. They decided that Cody would move out in March of 2020. This did not go as planned, since March 2020 was the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were determined to make it work, though. They started premarital counseling in May online with David Jones and after counseling with him they counseled with Stephen Clark. In January of 2021 they got engaged!



**Jacob Bailey
& Andrea Pacelli**

Sept. 18, 2022

It was a long engagement though—because of the COVID-19 restrictions Cody and Krystal hadn't seen each other in person in over a year at this point. It was difficult, but they hired an immigration lawyer to help with the visa process and as soon as Cody was finally able to apply for his visa, it was approved!

On April 1, 2022, Cody landed in Australia! This was the first time Cody and Krystal had seen each other in 2.5 years! As soon as Cody landed, they started planning the wedding and are so happy and thankful to be together at last!

Warren Weis and Adrianna Lockhart

Jeff and Alisa Lockhart, along with Berkley and Carmella Weis are happy to announce the wedding of their children, Adrianna Lockhart and Warren Weis. The Oct. 8, 2022, ceremony took place at sunset on the beach at Iberostar Rose Hall Beach Hotel in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The bride's father officiated this special union. Afterwards, the couple and 25 guests enjoyed a Hibachi dinner at the Samurai restaurant on the property, with chocolate cake for dessert.

Adrianna and Warren met at Winter Camp 2016 and started dating while at ABC in 2019. They live in Vancouver, Washington, and attend the Portland, Oregon, congregation.

Anniversaries

Hugh and Gloria Harden

In Boise, Idaho, long-time Church members Hugh and Gloria Harden of Caldwell, Idaho, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on



**Cody Martin
& Krystal Robinson**

Aug. 21, 2022

Aug. 25. They were married in 1957 and have four children, seven grandchildren (six of whom have spouses) and six great-grandchildren.

The Boise congregation hosted a celebration of this momentous occasion following Sabbath services on Aug. 27 with cake and personal comments from this special husband and wife.

Obituaries

Lyndal Hayden

Lyndal Hayden, 85, of the Little Rock, Arkansas, congregation passed away Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022. She was born in Malvern, Arkansas, on March 4, 1937.

Lyndal enjoyed cooking for her family, especially her famous chocolate pies. She was also an amazing seamstress. Lyndal retired from White Hall School District, where she was a cafeteria worker for over 20 years.

Lyndal, along with her husband Bill Baugh, Sr., began attending the Radio Church of God services in 1960, bringing Bill's father and mother with them. Services were held at the YWCA in Little Rock. Soon they were baptized by Ronald Dart and Burk McNair, who had just come to Little Rock to pastor the congregation of about 100 people from surrounding areas. They attended their first Feast of Tabernacles in 1961 along with their two young children, Vicky and Bill, Jr. Lyndal joined the United Church of God when it was formed in 1995.

Lyndal was a faithful servant in the Little Rock, Arkansas, church area for more than 60 years. She helped at Y.O.U. camps and in Y.O.U. activities. She also served at potlucks and



**Warren Weis
& Adrianna Lockhart**

Oct. 8, 2022

Passover services. She helped with cleaning at the Feast. She was a very hard worker, a trait she developed early in life by helping her family when her mother died.

After her husband died, Lyndal married Howard Hayden, a long-time friend of the family. They were married 10 years before she was widowed a second time. She is survived by her two children, Vicky and Bill, Jr., and by her grandchildren.

Lyndal was very loved by the other members of her congregation and will be missed. Her Church family is looking forward to seeing her in the resurrection.

Glenn F. McCormick

Glenn McCormick was born July 26, 1922, in Dinuba, California. His family moved to Seattle in 1925, where he later graduated from Seattle's Lincoln High School.

Glenn served in WWII in the 8th Division of the United States Army Air Force, stationed in England, as a cryptography technician. His unit received the Presidential Unit Citation military ribbon twice. He also served during the Korean War.

After the military, Glenn earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from University of Washington. Glenn worked as a senior auditor for Boeing for many years, then for the State of Oregon. He later worked in security at The Museum of Flight in the Seattle area where he retired, but the museum missed him so much they asked if he would come back, and he worked for another five years before retiring once again.

Glenn was a long-time Church member who came into the Church around 1961 after listening to Mr. Arm-



Hugh & Gloria Harden

65th Anniversary

strong on the radio. He was baptized shortly after and later was ordained as a deacon in the Portland South congregation. He lived and served in Bend, Oregon, for many years before moving and serving in the Seattle congregation. He had a formal and elegant style in conversations and life which will be missed.

He passed away just a few months shy of his 100th birthday. Glenn is now protected in death and awaits his crown.

He is survived by his daughter, Nora Smith, residing in Sedona, Arizona, four grand-



Lyndal Hayden

Mar. 4, 1937-Sept. 29, 2022

children and seven great-grandchildren, all living in Washington. He was preceded in death by two other daughters, Mary Ann Berg and Darcy Stier, and his parents Madeline and Glenn R. McCormick.

William Gene Nehk

William Gene "Bill" Nehk, 88, of Fergus Falls, passed away peacefully at his home on Sunday, November 6, 2022 after battling Alzheimers for many years.

Bill was born to William and Ruth (Bappe) Nehk on November 4, 1934 in Friberg Township. Bill was just two years old when



Glenn F. McCormick

July 26, 1922-April 15, 2022

his father bought the farm in Aurdal Township where he continued to live for his entire life.

On August 7, 1944, he married Donna Bauman at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls and together they had seven children. Bill was a hard worker and worked at many different jobs in order to provide for his family. Some of these jobs included road and building construction, driving a truck, a stint at M&R Sign Company, and farming (which he loved). He excelled at wood-working and built several items of furniture, including identical dressers for all 17 grandchil-



William Gene Nehk

Nov. 4, 1934-Nov. 6, 2022

dren. He also built cabinets and did all the wood flooring and trim throughout his home.

In 1968, Bill and Donna joined the Worldwide Church of God in Fargo, North Dakota and faithfully made the 120-mile round trip to Church every Sabbath until he was no longer able to travel. Bill converted two old school buses into "fancy" RVs, which made the annual Holy Day trips even more fun.

Bill enjoyed playing games and providing fun outdoor activities for his kids, including pulling all the kids across a frozen lake with a little tractor.

Announcements for *United News* can be sent by e-mail to:

un@ucg.org (preferred)

or by mail to:

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Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Please include a color photo. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and may be lightly edited by our staff.

Growing up an only child, Bill thoroughly enjoyed family and the companionship of a Boston Terrier. He also had a great love for country music and spent hours listening to the "old greats" while playing along with his steel guitar or accordion.

Preceding him in death were his parents; brother, Donald and grandson, Kerry. Survivors include his wife of 68 years, Donna; children, Kirby, Michael, Sherry (Lynn) Hebert, Kevin (Sandy), Joseph, Jerry, Donny; 17 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren. **UN**

End-of-Year Tax Considerations

As the end of 2022 draws near, here are some things to consider if you are required to take RMD's from your IRA or have appreciated stock you'd like to donate.

Tax Advantage of a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from Your IRA

If you are over 70½ years of age and have an IRA, you may be considering the required minimum distribution (RMD) you must take every year.

These withdrawals are normally fully taxable, but by using a special IRA distribution method called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), you can make a charitable gift to the Church and have a sizable tax advantage.

With the 2022 IRS standard deduction of \$25,900 for couples (\$12,950 for singles), those who used to get a tax deduction for their tithes and offerings may no longer reach this threshold. Therefore, if you make a donation to the Church (whether tithes or offerings), from taxable income, unless your total itemized deductions are over \$25,900, you will have no tax advantage.

But, with the advantage of the special QCD provision you could donate directly to the Church from your IRA and the amount you contribute would not be included in your taxable income for this year.

For a QCD to count toward your current year's RMD, it must be made before the end of the calendar year. The funds must be distributed directly from the IRA account, being made payable to United Church of God, an International Association.

Using a QCD may also help lower or eliminate your Social Security benefit taxation, the alternative minimum tax or the 3.5% investment surtax, and it may keep you from being bumped into a higher marginal tax bracket.

Some may also have 401(k) or 403(b) tax deferred annuities

(TDAs). These are not eligible for a QCD. However, you are allowed to move or "rollover" a 401(k) or 403(b) tax free into an IRA. Then you will be qualified to use the QCD from that IRA.

Consult with your IRA representative or tax preparer for more information. **UN**



Reasons to Consider Donating Appreciated Stock Instead of Cash

If you have appreciated stock or mutual funds, donating these to the Church may provide you with tax advantages beyond what you would receive by selling them and donating the proceeds.

Donating appreciated stock or mutual funds lets you save on your taxes in two ways: you avoid capital gains tax (usually 15%) on the appreciation, and you also can take a tax deduction on the value of the shares you donated.

A "capital gain" is the profit you make when you sell a share of stock. For example, if you buy stock for \$1,000 and sell it more than year later for \$1500, your capital gain is \$500.

A "capital gains tax" is the tax you have to pay on that profit when you sell that stock. In the case above, you would owe capital gains tax on the profit incurred by the sale. However,

if you donate this stock instead of selling it, neither you nor the charity have to pay taxes on it.

And, like most charitable contributions, stock or mutual fund donations are tax deductible. That means that when you file federal taxes, you can deduct the donation at the current market value (\$1,500 in the example above) from your taxable income if you itemize your deductions.

When you have stocks that are worth less than you paid for them it is wiser to sell them first and claim a capital loss.

The Church accepts donations of publicly traded stock, bonds or mutual fund shares. If you are considering this type of donation, please contact plannedgiving@ucg.org to get the name of the Church's brokerage firm to execute the transfer from your broker. **UN**

Columbus, Ohio, Hosts Young Adult Weekend



A Christian music worship concert was held at the Columbus Church hall.

COLUMBUS, OHIO—More than 100 young adults from across the United States traveled to Columbus, Ohio, for Labor Day weekend. Friday night kicked off with a Bible study led by our local pastor, Len Martin, and a dessert social. There was a lot of excitement in the air as people connected with friends and met new people.

Sabbath morning began with Apologetics Club. Two young adults defended their “pro” and “con” stance on the topic of, “Is the Bible the inspired Word of God?” followed by a lively discussion. That afternoon, two guest speakers gave message: Alan Waterhouse from Cleveland, Ohio, gave the sermonette, and Rick Shabi, our UCG president, gave the sermon. Saturday evening included a catered dinner, followed by an evening dance with an excellent DJ, Matt Puckett from Tennessee. The

sound, music, lighting, smoke and snacks made for a fantastic dance enjoyed by all who attended.

Sunday concluded the young adult weekend with two main events. The day started out with pancakes, games and fellowship at a local metro park. Following the fun at the park was a Christian music worship concert at the Columbus Church hall. Band members (Micah Gunn, Columbus; Chad Browning, Cincinnati; Ray Clore, Cincinnati; Jamie Schreiber, Cincinnati; Alan Waterhouse, Cleveland; and Sophie Hand, Columbus) performed 20 contemporary Christian songs while the audience sang along and worshiped God together. This young adult weekend was a wonderful opportunity for fellowshiping, worshipping God, and spending time with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Julie Berg

The Spiritual Balance of God’s Spirit

Love

Love (Greek agape—outgoing concern for others) also needs to be balanced so it doesn’t become bland or weak and a way of spoiling someone by being overindulgent. As Proverbs 29:15 says, “Wise discipline imparts wisdom; spoiled adolescents embarrass their parents” (The Message Bible).

Sound mind

Next comes a sound mind, which involves balancing everything by using good judgment and self-control.

Yet, these wonderful forces can be drained, so they need to be periodically recharged and renewed by drawing closer to God through prayer, Bible study,

meditation, and occasional fasting (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Christ was the perfect example of godly balance, having all of these three spiritual forces in complete equilibrium. For instance, He could eat with the Pharisees, which were religiously over-strict, and yet not become one of them. He could also eat with the Publicans, on the opposite side of the spectrum (religiously very lax), but not follow their examples. Jesus always found the happy medium between these two extreme groups by being internally centered through God’s Spirit.

While Christ never compromised with God’s laws, and neither should we, He applied them with love and concern toward others. As Paul mentioned about this same principle, “For though I am free from all men,

Send Off Party Held for Fikes



The Fikes were honored for their service.

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA—On July 30 this year, the Fargo, North Dakota, congregation gave a warm send off to Mike and Nancy Fike before they left for their long-awaited trip to New Zealand. We have been fortunate to have the Fikes serve in the Fargo, Bismarck and Minot, North Dakota, congregations and in Bemidji, Minnesota, for the last 18 months.

They will surely be missed in our congregations, but we are so happy they will be able to help our New Zealand brethren who really need a pastor in their country.

We thank the Fikes and are grateful for their selfless love and service to our brethren in North Dakota and Minnesota. We will miss them.

Dianne Skorseth

Continued from page 3

I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

So, to please God, we need to continue developing that inner balance in all things pertaining to our lives, both physically and spiritually, and seek the abundant life God wants for all of us. To help remind us of this—remember the gyroscope! UN

Columbia, Maryland, Luncheon Honors Seniors



Seniors in the Columbia, Maryland, congregation enjoyed a delicious luncheon.

COLUMBIA, MARYLAND—After Sabbath services on Sept. 17, the seniors of the Columbia, Maryland, congregation were honored at their annual senior luncheon. The tables were set with beautiful fall decorative arrangements, along with a gift plaque of gratitude for the 12 members in attendance.

Before the meal, some of the children (ages 9-11) sang a couple of hymns for the members in attendance. Next, the senior brethren were thanked for their example and service within the congregation.

The meal started with a butternut squash soup, followed with chicken salad on a croissant and a green salad medley with vinaigrette dressing. To complete their meal, the seniors enjoyed a chai mousse and were each given a slice of carrot cake that they could take home with them.

The entirety of the meal was served by the local teens and young adults. It is such a blessing to be able to show appreciation for the older members of the congregation each year. Thank you to all who attended!

Rhonda Diggins

Updates from Ministerial and Member Services

On the Feast of Trumpets, Sept. 26, 2022, Stephen Bouchette was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Sarah, serve in the Metro East, Illinois, congregation.

At the Feast of Tabernacles, Oct. 10, Robert Teetaert was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Synnove, serve in the Prince George, British Columbia, congregation in Canada.

We have greatly appreciated the dedicated and faithful service of pastor Steven Britt and his wife, Danielle. Due to family considerations, Mr. Britt resigned from the employment of the Church in October and now serves as an elder in the Central Georgia congregation.

On Oct. 23, Ray Clore was appointed the pastor for the Columbia (Maryland) and Northern Virginia congregations. Craig Scott was appointed the pastor for the Richmond (Virginia) congregation, in addition to his assignments in North Carolina.

Randy Stiver retired from the full-time ministry at the end of October; however, he continues to pastor the Rapid City (South Dakota) congregation on a part-time basis. We certainly appreciate Mr. and Mrs. Stiver and their service throughout many years in God’s Church.

On Oct. 30, Ken Skorseth was named the new pastor for the Sioux Falls, and Watertown, South Dakota, congregations. Mr. Skorseth is assisted in South Dakota by associate pastor Nick Lamoureux, and together they continue to pastor the congregations in North Dakota.

Please join us in praying for a smooth transition for these men, their families and the congregations where they serve.

Chris Rowland

offering that came down from heaven and lived a perfect life in the flesh, as a human being, setting an example for all of us (John 6:35-58). During the Days of Unleavened Bread, Jesus Christ was resurrected to eternal life. Yes, we strive to put spiritual leaven, sin, out of our lives as we attempt to glorify God the Father and Jesus Christ who now live in us by the power of the Holy Spirit that we received at baptism (Acts 2:38; Galatians 2:20), but we ought not to believe for one second that we are earning our salvation.

New Testament Pentecost

Acts 2 shows that God was full of grace as He granted His Holy Spirit to those He was calling on that first New Testament Day of Pentecost. The New Testament Church of God, our Church, began with the gift

of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon true Christians—those who accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and who repented of their sins (Acts 2:38-41).

Figuratively, this is where we all are now—the time in our calling, our day of salvation, represented between Passover and the coming fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets when we will be changed to spirit beings at Christ's return.

New Testament Feast of Trumpets

This Holy Day pictures the Messiah's return. Our Savior is coming back to earth (1 Corinthians 15:50-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) and we are privileged, as firstfruits, to rule and reign as kings and priests in love alongside Him (Revelation 5:10). What mercy, what grace, what forgiveness, what salvation!

New Testament Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement pictures the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, looking back to Passover and the killing of the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, for our atonement (John 1:29; Romans 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:10). It also pictures the binding of Satan the devil and his banishment to the abyss, the wilderness for 1,000 years, and then, ultimately, the fate of Satan as God wills (Revelation 20:2, 10).

New Testament Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures Christ's millennial reign upon the earth (Revelation 20:4, 6). What a glorious time that will be! God will graciously teach His ways to all mankind and all will come to know the

true God. His law will go forth from Zion, from Jerusalem, established as the world headquarters of God's Kingdom on earth (Micah 4:2). Satan is bound and is not around to influence and to tempt mankind for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

New Testament Last Great Day or Eighth Day

This Holy Day pictures the Great White Throne Judgment period and beyond into eternity. All people who have been deceived and were not called, or did not answer their call, will be resurrected after the thousand years are completed and they will have their day of salvation (Revelation 20:11-13). What mercy, what grace, what forgiveness, what salvation!

Those who have refused to repent and do not have their names written in God's book of

life will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

New heavens and a new earth are coming where only righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17; 66:2)! A spiritual Kingdom will be established that shall have no end (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33)!

God's merciful plan of salvation has been graciously revealed to all of us, as we shall certainly be saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)! This knowledge is another indication that now is your day of salvation! **UN**

Read more in our free study aid, *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*



Youth Camp Held in Zambia

Continued from cover page



Boating was quite an experience.



Open-air lessons on a manmade archipelago on the dam.



Budding an orange tree.



Campers enjoy a sumptuous dinner.

by residents of the compounds. Both skills were taught by Emily, a talented young female participant who recently completed secondary school under a LifeNets scholarship and is in the process of applying for a grant to start a small hairdressing business.

Kennedy, one of the group leaders, talked about the budding and grafting of fruit trees. Although perceived as a masculine topic, the demonstration of this craft was so captivating that it drew the interest of the girls as well. At the end of this particular subject, many campers expressed intent to establish a few budded or grafted fruit trees when they got back home.

Bible study was conducted on Wednesday evening after dinner followed by an exciting Bible quiz the following evening. Both

activities revealed the surprising levels of Bible knowledge displayed by some of the campers.

Recreation was a time of jollity for everyone. The campers broke into teams to play volleyball, darts and chess. These activities were only interrupted by the whistle indicating dinner time. The presence of a sizeable body of water in the form of a dam was of particular interest for the campers. In their free time, some of them sat or lay down on the grass on the bank to watch the ducks swimming and the water bubbles that revealed the presence of fish in the dam. Two small barges were available for hire and the campers took turns venturing onto the water.

On the last day of the camp, the campers treated themselves to a sumptuous dinner consist-

ing of all the different dishes they had been served from the beginning of camp. Soft mineral and fruit drinks were available galore to wash everything down. The occasion was accompanied by hymns, including "Onward Christian Soldiers" from the PA System.

The camp program was deliberately designed to flow into the Sabbath. In view of this, Sabbath-related lessons and activities were embedded into the daily program, whereby the campers were involved in hymn practice, song-leading and the preparation of sermons and sermonettes. As a result, the Sabbath service was conducted by the youth themselves on one secluded part of the bank of the dam. This was under the watchful eyes of the pastor, of course. Everything



The Sabbath service was conducted by the youth themselves.

went perfectly, with Chrispin in the role of songleader, Henry giving a sermonette on the subject of being called and Abiyud delivering a sermon on admission of sin as the key to repentance and salvation.

The camp went according to plan and the campers ex-

pressed joy to have been part of it. "We have enjoyed the lessons," said Goodson from Chikwoko in Katete. "As I go back, I aim to be an ambassador and inform my fellow youths about the wonderful lessons and activities that we have learnt and enjoyed here." **UN**

BEYOND TODAY

- Nov. 6-12 | **Laodicea: Truth Under Fire**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Tools for Spiritual Growth*
- Nov. 13-19 | **Read the Book**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *How to Understand the Bible*
- Nov. 20-26 | **Globalism and Prophecy**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *The Horsemen of Revelation*
- Nov. 27-
Dec. 3 | **Russia and Bible Prophecy**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Russia and Bible Prophecy*
- Dec. 4-10 | **God's Holy Day Plan**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*
- Dec. 11-17 | **The Ten Commandments: From Obedience to Virtue**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *The Ten Commandments*
- Dec. 18-24 | **Quitting Christmas**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*
- Dec. 25-31 | **Beware the Mark of the Beast**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Who Is the Antichrist?*



Periodicals Postage Paid
at Milford, Ohio, and at
additional mailing offices

BY THE NUMBERS

12,421

Attendance in person at UCG Feast sites this year.

Winter Family Weekend

Winter Family Weekend is back, beginning Friday evening, Dec. 23 through Tuesday, Dec 27. It will be a great opportunity for all to gather together again for Sabbath services, seminars, sports, dances and activities for all ages.

We're excited to be at a new hotel and conference center located on the north side of Cincinnati, Ohio. The good news is that we've negotiated very reasonable room rates—even lower than recent years!

A change this year is that everyone is asked to register, whether participating in sports or attending other activities. When you register, there will be a contribution required of each individual or family as a registration fee to help offset the additional event costs (of course, there is no cost for Sabbath activities). You'll receive the hotel registration code with a paid registration. See you there!

Registration fees:

\$25 per person

\$35 per person for sports participants

\$100 maximum per family (under 5 free)

\$140 maximum per family for sports **UN**

Northwest Family Weekend

The Portland, Oregon, congregation is excited for another Northwest Family Weekend! This year, the event will take place on Dec. 23-26, for a weekend of friends, fellowship and fun in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. The weekend will include Bible seminars, a teen and family dance, a sports day and plenty of time to fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Updates and registration information can be found at nww.ucgpdx.org. We look forward to seeing you there! **UN**

Winter Camp

Winter Camp will take place at Lake Geneva Youth Camp beginning on Dec. 26 in the afternoon. The facility offers many great activities for campers, including two indoor climbing walls and a full-sized gym for volleyball and basketball. If there is enough snow there will be snowboarding, skiing, and tubing. Additional activities include broomball, field sports, dance class, Bible class, two dances, an escape room, capture the flag, arts and crafts, and team building activities. The activity schedule will include plenty of time for socializing. We will again go off-site for snowboarding with the older campers and we will have a selection of live performances from some campers during our final dance. Visit ucg.org for full details and to apply. **UN**



The Church's UCG-Radio app, developed by our UCG-Australia office, had 121,183 listeners from July 2021 through June 2022. This is a 9.2% increase over 2020-2021. This came from 23,479 unique listeners (a 33% increase over 2020-2021).

Both of these figures have already surpassed the 2021/2022 goals. Please promote UCG-Radio on social media. Many listeners find it a convenient and interesting way to consume UCG content while driving, jogging or around the home.

You can download the UCG-Radio app from Google Play or the Apple App Store. You can also listen in your browser at <https://ucg.radio>. **UN**