

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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The Joys of Working with the Young

Dear Brethren,

In August, we wrapped up our Living Youth Program summer camps in the Northern Hemisphere. Soon, others will commence in the Southern Hemisphere. I had the privilege of visiting our North Carolina preteen camp for a day, and Carol and I were at the Texas teen camp for its entire duration, two full weeks, only taking two days off for *Tomorrow's World* Presentations in Dallas and Big Sandy.

Many of our old-timers know that I have been heavily involved in our summer camps in the Worldwide, Global, and now Living Church of God. I helped to start our very first Global Church of God camp in Missouri, started the preteen camp in Missouri, directed our Living Youth Camp in Michigan for ten years, and oversaw our 2009 canoe adventure in Minnesota, before officially retiring. I also directed our European camp in Belgium for one year. I mention these things because I want everyone to understand that I deeply love and care for our young people, as I know many of you also do.

Have you ever considered why we, as adults, enjoy working with young people so much? This may sound like a simple, unnecessary question, but think about it: Why do you enjoy being around young adults, teens, and preteens? Not everyone does, but I believe most of us do.

Some might point out that young people are fun to be around, and I would agree. Many enjoy their energy, enthusiastic smiles, and laughter—things we often lose as our adult lives become more serious and complicated.

We had a terrific obstacle course at our teen camp near Siler City, North Carolina in 1996 and '97, and I enjoyed watching our teens negotiate it. We gave them a five-gal-

lon bucket full of water to take along as they traversed the obstacles. Teamwork was essential. Timing and spilled water affected each dorm's score. At the end of camp, we had four girls and four boys take on the challenge of demonstrating to everyone how it could be done. The difference between the boys and the girls was interesting and instructive. The girls worked together as a team to hoist each other and the heavy bucket up and over an eight-foot wall, whereas the boys used their greater physical strength to leap and haul themselves over the obstacles. It was fun to watch and see how each team used their skills and strengths to get the job done. As Mr. Herbert Armstrong would say, "They mutually excelled one another."

So, what are the most relevant reasons why we enjoy working with our youth? May I suggest two that we might not immediately verbalize, but which are likely buried in our minds? The more obvious of the two is that we rejoice in their triumphs. The Apostle Paul encourages us, "Rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15), and later admonishes us that "if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). This rejoicing is easy when spending time with youths! We love to see them succeed!

We are forced to overcome obstacles from the time we are born. We learn to crawl, then to walk, and finally to run. Each step along the way has its bumps and bruises, but parents thrill at seeing their children take that first step without holding onto the chair. We thrill at seeing a young person hit or kick the ball for the first time, score that first basket, or beautifully play a piece for a piano recital. We love to see someone achieve a difficult goal, and young people do that at every turn, often picking themselves up from falls along the way. It seems

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that every day there is something new set before them, new challenges and opportunities for success.

The second reason that we may not verbalize is the hope that we have for them. As adults, we have made plenty of mistakes. Oh, yes, young people make their share, but for many of them, the mistakes are small, and the recovery short and complete. It is not always so with those of us who have lived a bit longer. Our sins have taken a toll on us. However, we see children and teens with the opportunity to “do it right.” They do not have to damage their lives with drugs or illicit sex, do not have to squander their precious years of preparation for later life. They look ahead to see the highway through the windshield. We see it through the rearview mirror.

We all hope that they avoid the mistakes we made, or the mistakes we saw our friends and others make. We have a perspective gained from having lived longer and seen the consequences of some actions that looked attractive for a moment, but which ultimately brought pain (Hebrews 11:25). In young people, we see what can be, rather than what could have been.

Perhaps those of us not blessed with our own children have a special appreciation for the triumphs of other people’s children. We love it when they succeed in school, and later, in the job world. We love to see boy meet girl. We love to see them date responsibly—though in all honesty, we cannot always know if that is the case. It is mostly when they do *not* that we take full notice, because of the evident negative consequences. One of the great joys of the Millennium I look forward to is seeing young people meet, fall in love, marry, have children, and live long, loving, productive lives together. We see that today among many of our children, but not to the degree that we anticipate in the future.

Solomon wrote the Proverbs hoping that his son would learn from and avoid his mistakes. “My son, hear the instruc-

tion of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (Proverbs 1:8–10). He wrote Ecclesiastes to tell us that he had “tried it all,” and that it had left him unfulfilled in the end. How can any of us compete with him? He had the proverbial “wine, women, and song” to a degree that none of us can match, yet none of that brought happiness. Did he have “fun”? No doubt! But he was left feeling empty!

By reading Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and even the Song of Solomon, one can understand that Solomon desired to pass along lessons to a younger generation (Proverbs 2:1–5; Ecclesiastes 11:9–10; 12:1–14; Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). He clearly had hope for young people and rejoiced to see

them succeed where he, and others he observed, failed.

I often say that young people are here to disappoint us. That is because we so often see a young person with great potential “blow it,” when we have so desperately hoped for him or her to succeed. Such an

individual will get up and go on, but sometimes the scars are deep, and broken *spiritual* bones do not heal quickly.

Personally, I am ever the optimist, because many young people do listen. They listen, and for the most part, do it right. Many become more successful than their parents, which is every normal parent’s dream. It is exciting to see parents today bring up children who are even more balanced, talented, and successful than they were. We can imagine what families will be like during the Millennium, but we surely have a foretaste of that when we look around God’s Church. To every family who is working hard and striving in the right direction: Thank you for your hard work and sacrifice in showing the way!



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Love Thy Neighbor

A lawyer asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” His answer? “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36–39).

Many people claim to love God, and the majority are probably sincere in that belief, but do they pass the biblical test? John, the Apostle of love, tells us, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him” (1 John 2:3–5). The *New Bible Commentary Revised* comments on these verses: “Next comes a test by which men can know whether, in spite of their failures, they are in a right relationship with God, and walking in fellowship with Him. The test is whether they *keep His commandments.*”

John continues a few chapters later, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). How many swallow the line that it is *burdensome* to keep God’s commandments? That is what I was told when I was coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Everything begins with our relationship with our Creator. Unless that is right, we cannot fulfill the second of the great commandments (James 2:10). John also reveals that no one who hates his brother loves God. “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20–21).

It is evident that loving God and loving our neighbor fit together. We cannot do one without doing the other. We do not love God if we do not love our neighbor, and we cannot love our neighbor *with godly love* unless we have God’s love in us through the power of His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

Who Is Your Neighbor?

This brings us to a vital question: How much love do we have for our neighbor?

Love is more than an emotion. Godly love requires action! Yet, some members do all they can to avoid their earthly neighbors. Perhaps you have heard one of these justifications: “Familiarity breeds contempt, so I keep my distance.” “We are to come out of this world and my neighbors are in this world.” “I don’t want to have to deal with questions about Christmas or the Sabbath.” Some churches go so far as to *command* their members not to fellowship with those outside of their organizations! How misguided! How sad!

It is true that we should prioritize helping those who are spiritually like-minded. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). We all have limited time and resources, and yes, our first concern is to those of the household of faith, but the Bible tells us to “do good to all,” and there are numerous admonitions in Scripture to care for *outsiders*.

One of the most well-known parables is that of the Good Samaritan. Jesus gave it in response to a self-justifying lawyer who asked, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). The parable is so well recognized that it requires little rehearsing. Jesus used it to demonstrate that our self-assumed status is not what matters. Rather, how we treat others is what matters. We read how a priest and a Levite passed by a man robbed and beaten by thieves, but a Samaritan, one despised by the Jews, went out of his way to give aid (vv. 30–35). Concluding the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And the lawyer replied, “He who showed mercy on him” (vv. 36–37).

We ought to be the best neighbors in our communities, helping where needed. Does this mean we should volunteer our time at “skid row” food kitchens? No one can deny that a warm meal is a service to a hungry person, but we need to make sure our heads work with our hearts. Such programs may make *us* feel good, as though we are doing something significant, but is there any lasting benefit? Have we done anything to help anyone off skid row and into a more productive life? Are we even capable of doing such a thing at this time? Is this how we should spend our energy and resources? Each of us must evaluate our own circumstances and opportunities.

Consider whether there are better ways to help. Are there closer neighbors? Checking on an elderly neighbor, mowing her lawn or shoveling his snow, may be of genuine benefit to someone who has a need and who may live as close as next door. Cooking a meal for a sick neighbor may also be appropriate. Watching over someone's home while he is on vacation and walking and feeding his dog may be much appreciated. Of course, this requires knowing our neighbors well enough to understand their needs, and well enough to be trusted by them. These may seem small deeds, but they can be meaningful.

My wife and I have some very good neighbors where we live. Two of them have stepped up to mow our lawn when we were out of town for a week. One traded out his vehicle and gave me a spare tire that fit mine. When I thanked him for mowing our lawn, or offered to pay for the tire, his reply was, "What are neighbors for?" Do we have the same attitude?

Love Made Visible

On the night of Jesus' last Passover, He instructed His disciples—and those of us who follow in their footsteps—in the importance of expressing love by observable actions. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). How can anyone know that we "have love for one another" unless they observe acts of love?

But this brings up another question. Did Jesus not tell us *not* to let our charitable deeds be shown? "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them" (Matthew 6:1).

The key is in the final phrase of the sentence: "to be seen by them." In other words, "showing off" should not be the motivation for our good deeds. Calling up the television station to let them know you have organized a work party in a flood zone is **not** the thing to do.

This happens all too often during natural disasters, as I have seen firsthand. So, it is a delicate balance. Or is it?

Jesus tells us that when He returns He is going to separate individuals as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. He will invite the sheep into His kingdom, because "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matthew 25:35–36). The righteous

then protest, "Lord, when did we see You" in these conditions? He replies, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (v. 40). The reverse is then recounted in verses 41–46.

One very hot day this summer when my wife and I had been doing yard work, our clothes were soaked with sweat and Carol was spent. It was then that a neighbor lady brought a couple bottles of cold water over to us. We took a break, the three of us enjoyed each other's company, Carol and I were refreshed, and then we finished the job. This lady was an example of a good neighbor!

One may counter that the actions described in Matthew 25 only apply to "My brethren" and not to the world as a whole. The point is that we, as the household of God, should not consider our good deeds extraordinary. We should not think, "I'm really doing a great thing by this deed." We should make it "second nature" to *do* right because it *is* right.

Living the Way

True Christianity is a way of life (Acts 18:25; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). That way encompasses many things. In the context of these references to "the way," the most obvious application is that those walking in it were followers of Jesus Christ, their Savior.

They understood Him as the Messiah who came to die on our behalf, but also understood that He is coming again. Keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days would not have differentiated them from millions of Jews living in the Middle East and Mediterranean countries in the first century. "The way" goes beyond those observances.

That way was and is different in many respects, and one is how we treat our neighbors (John 13:34–35). We are to do what Christ commanded and walk as He walked (Luke 6:46; 1 John 2:6). He expects a higher

standard under the New Covenant. We are not only to love our neighbor, but even our enemies, and that love is expressed in what we do. "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you... for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the

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What Parents and Youth Should Know About Vaping



By **Wyatt Ciesielka and Scott Winnail**

The use of e-cigarettes and vaping devices is becoming frighteningly common. Within the past two years, a specialized type of e-cigarette, in particular, has grown very popular: JUULs. Marketed by their creators, JUUL Labs, Inc., as “a safer alternative to adult smoking,” this power-packed, tastily-flavored vapor cigarette is likely creating the next generation of nicotine addicts. Using JUULs has even acquired its own name: “Juuling.”

E-cigarettes, including JUULs, are *electronic nicotine delivery systems* (ENDS), and they have surpassed traditional cigarettes in terms of usage among U.S. teenagers. What do parents and teens need to know about the risks of Juuling and of e-cigarettes in general?

JUULs and Nicotine

Unbeknownst to parents, many teens are flocking to this new, socially acceptable, and easily hidden vice, and are often misinformed regarding its dangers. Because there is no smoke from e-cigarettes—only scented/flavored water vapor and unscented chemicals—teens can smoke “e-cigs” without being caught. School bathrooms, hallways, and even classrooms are not unusual locations to find teens vaping. The CEO and president of the Truth Initiative recently ob-

served, “It is no wonder that JUUL e-cigarettes have rapidly caught on with youth—they look like a sleek USB flash drive, are easily concealed, and come in youth appealing flavors like mint, mango and crème brûlée” (*Tobacco Control*, April 18, 2018).

While e-cigs bring very real dangers *beyond* their nicotine hit, what many users do not know is that one JUUL cartridge can contain the same amount of nicotine found in *one to two entire packs* of traditional cigarettes (*Vox*, August 22, 2018)! While some e-cigarette brands have nicotine-free options, all JUUL pods contain nicotine, according to the company’s own website—something 63 percent of its users do not know. In fact, JUULs deliver nicotine to the bloodstream about twice as quickly as any other ENDS device does—creating the JUUL “buzz” known to their many users (*Tobacco Control*, April 18, 2018). Nicotine is well known for its addictive properties, and a recent University of Pittsburgh study found that e-cig users were **four times more likely** to start smoking traditional cigarettes than were those who do not vape (*Truth Initiative*, April 18, 2018).

The long-term impact of nicotine on the human body is well understood. Long-term nicotine use “is associated with cognitive decline and risk of Alzheimer’s Disease” (*National Institute of Drug Abuse*, January 2018). Teenagers who use e-cigs have higher levels of cancer-causing chemicals in their blood than non-smokers have (*Women’s Health*, May 4, 2018). According



to Carol Southard, R.N., a tobacco treatment specialist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, “Nicotine is extremely addictive and it can act as a neurotoxin and alter brain chemistry so the brain doesn’t function normally without it. This can be especially harmful for teenagers whose brains are still developing.” Although the research on e-cigarettes is limited due to the newness of these smoking devices, a recent study by the American Heart Association found that e-cigarettes will likely increase users’ risks of heart disease and stroke, just like traditional cigarettes (*Journal of the American Heart Association*, July 18, 2018).

Danger Beyond Nicotine

Yet, even when nicotine-free, using e-cigarettes may put users at risk for severe gum disease, “smoker’s cough,” weakened immune systems, and impaired wound healing (*Science News for Students*, April 25, 2017). Nicotine-free e-cigarettes (including the various flavored e-cigs) are still known to contain harmful chemicals that can lead to heart disease and stroke (*American Heart Association, ATBV Journal Report*, June 14, 2018). Numerous studies are now warning that even without nicotine, the *flavoring liquids* contained in e-cigs can be toxic and carcinogenic (cancer-causing) to the human body.

Science News for Students reported in a March 30, 2018 article that the University of North Carolina School of Medicine at Chapel Hill studied 148 e-cigarette flavoring liquids and found that many were toxic to human cells. The same arti-

cle, citing a March 2018 University of California, San Francisco study, found that teens who had vaped e-cigarettes *without nicotine* still “had up to three times the levels of five potentially cancer-causing chemicals in their bodies as did those who didn’t vape.” In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is considering a ban on all flavored

e-cigarettes because of an “epidemic of use” among teens and the addictive nature of the substance (*BBC*, September 12, 2018). Everyone needs to understand that when we put anything other than air into our lungs, we put ourselves at greater risk of sickness and disease! Many of the chemicals in e-cigarettes appear to be just as unhealthy, toxic, and carcinogenic to humans as those in regular cigarettes, if not more so!

There are plenty of known ways in which e-cigarettes damage the body, and more are likely yet to be found, but what does God think about their use? Can true Christians—whether adults or teens—somehow justify vaping? Is God really somehow “okay” with it? To answer these questions, we must consult God’s word, the Bible.

A Christian Perspective on E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes may be legal for some to purchase and use, based on the age of the consumer and what state or country the individual lives in, but just because something is “legal” does not make it right in the sight of God (1 Corinthians 6:12)! More importantly, we are told, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? **You are not your own**” (v. 19, *Revised Standard Version*). Considering all of the *known*

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health problems associated with e-cigarettes, a Christian cannot in good conscience use such a self-destructive device, and the Church’s judgment concerning smoking applies just as directly to e-cigarettes and vaping.



Why do young people begin using e-cigarettes and Juuling in the first place? Peer pressure is certainly a key factor for some. In many cases, the underlying *spirit of rebellion* is also a motivating factor. This is why young people sneak to use JUULs in school bathrooms, classrooms, their bedrooms, and even at church! Secretly posting photos of personal use on social media like Snapchat or Instagram direct messaging, *where it is easy to avoid parental and adult supervision*, is also a clear effort to publicize covert rebellion. Deceitfulness is unbecoming for a Christian, and rebellion, as God says, “is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Samuel 15:23). Young people face a lot of societal pressure today, and God is loving and forgiving, but it is simply not possible for anyone to truthfully claim that they are honoring their parents, or that they are setting a good example for others, when they are choosing to engage in something harmful to themselves.

Some have defended the use of addictive substances or devices like e-cigarettes by comparing it to alcohol use (which God does allow in moderation). But this comparison is inaccurate. God condemns alcohol use when it results in *drunkenness* and *addiction* (1 Corinthians 6:10), but alcohol use in moderation (1 Timothy 5:23)—say, one or two drinks imbibed in one sitting by a legal adult—is not condemned in the Bible. Alcohol use by adults in moderation is not addictive, and even has health benefits in some cases. However, e-cigarette use—especially the use of devices with liquid nicotine—is addictive, and studies are showing that it increases the risks of many health problems. God notes in Revelation 21:8 and 22:15 that unrepented-of-sins will keep one out of His Kingdom. Among the unrepentant who are excluded are “sorcerers”—translated from the Greek terms *pharmakeus* or *pharmakos* referring to those who use drugs, potions, or narcotics in their “magic.” Those who dabble “recreationally” with narcotics and hallu-

cinogenic drugs—whether marijuana, the many methamphetamine and opiate derivatives, or nicotine and its chemically induced and addictive “buzz”—may be building their own barriers to entry into God’s Kingdom.

Not only does vaping reflect poorly on us, it also reflects poorly on God, His way of life, and His Church. Furthermore, when young people know that their parents are against *any of these dangerous habits*, yet lie, hide, or deceive to cover these behaviors, they should prayerfully consider that they are violating *many* of the Ten Commandments. Young or old, none of us should put a substance or behavior before God (a violation of the First Commandment). All people should honor their parents (the Fifth Commandment), and no Christian should lie or deceive (a violation of the Ninth Commandment). Neither should a Christian covet (a violation of the Tenth Commandment). God is merciful, loving, and patient (Psalm 86:15)—and through Christ, we can have the strength to overcome all bad habits and sins (Philippians 4:13). But those who choose to engage in harmful practices quickly find themselves violating God’s instruction.

Making Right Choices in a Confused World

We understand that we live in a world that is *tremendously* influenced by Satan the Devil (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and his intent is to work “in the sons [and daughters] of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). One of his age-old lies is “a substance will not hurt you”—a trick he successfully played on Eve, all the way back in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4–5). Christians *of all ages* must avoid practicing self-destructive and rebellious behaviors, like the use of e-cigarettes. God wants His people to be “above reproach” (Colossians 1:22) and “holy” before Him (1 Peter 1:16). He does not want us to pollute our bodies and minds with harmful substances.

Building character and living as Christians in Satan’s world takes hard work and self-discipline. And today, young people are faced with more and more ungodly influences—many of which may seem marginal, or even harmless, but can nevertheless have horrible physical and spiritual consequences. But the blessings that come from making good and godly choices are numerous and long-lasting. God has called young people in the Church to be good examples now, and to eventually become members of His future spirit family! What an awesome calling and truth that we understand! To be in God’s Kingdom, all of us, young or old, must “resist the devil” (James 4:7) and choose a godly path in life—the path that leads to eternal life! Parents and grandparents must also do their part—being fully involved in the lives of their children and grandchildren and assisting in the fight for their eternal lives. Sometimes this fight includes saying “no” to a small, seemingly innocuous, chemical-filled device like an e-cigarette. (L)

2018 Texas Teen Camp— The Most Important Things



Since its beginning, the Church of God has often been small (Luke 12:32) and scattered (Acts 8:1, 4; Acts 11:19; James 1:1). Its members find themselves in a similar situation today. Some teens attend congregations in which there are few, if any, others of their age. This is one reason why they treasure the opportunity to attend Living Youth summer camps. They enjoy getting together with their friends and making lots of new friendships, many of which will last a lifetime. This contributes to the success of our summer camp programs year after year. It pleases God when we work together, have fun together, get along with each other (Psalm 133:1-3), and show love for one another (John 13:34-35), and all of this happens at camp. Every summer, young people come together to spend time with others of like mind and escape the world's pulls for two brief weeks. It is during this time that something special happens—the largest gathering of God's young people on the planet!

Lessons for Life

However, this is not the only important thing that happens at camp. When surveyed, the campers and staff consistently rate “learning more about God and His way of life” as their foremost reason for coming to camp. Yes, the main attraction actually is “the message”! They consider what is taught in the Christian Living classes, Bible Studies, and sermons to

be camp's most valuable part! That is what is placed at the top of the list—not the activities, not the sports, not the food, not even seeing friends and making new ones. Learning more about God and His way of life is number one!

In 2018, ten different ministers presented ten different Christian Living classes, all centered around the theme found in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.” The Presiding Evangelist, Mr. Gerald Weston, was one of the guest speakers, delivering a Christian Living class entitled “Seven Unshakable Unbreakables,” and also giving the sermon on the second Sabbath of camp. Later, Mr. Weston had positive things to say about the messages given by each of the ministers and the impact they had upon those listening. It was evident that all speakers assigned had considered the importance of prayerful preparation, and they demonstrated by the quality of their discourse their awareness of how precious this opportunity was. These men considered it an honor and a privilege to have the chance to reach such a unique audience of young people and staff.

In addition to the formation and strengthening of friendships and the presentation of dynamic messages to everyone in attendance (or listening via a live stream connection), many other extremely important things happened at camp. Let's take a look at a few.

An Activity-Rich Environment

Team sports such as basketball, volleyball, football, water polo, and softball provided ideal opportunities to teach *sportsmanship* and *teamwork*. As usual, coaches, instructors, game officials, and counselors strove to emphasize these essential values in their classes and during the games. Players at camp were taught the golden rule of sports—that is, to treat the people they played with and against as they would like to be treated themselves. Campers and staff were instructed to compete enthusiastically within the letter and spirit of the rules. They were taught to respect the judgment of the referees and officials, and to treat their opponents with respect. Players were shown how to handle both victory and defeat with grace and dignity. The benefit of teamwork was especially stressed. Dorm-mates were coached to work together toward a common goal, and to play with all their might. In the process, they built friendships, developed character, and learned important life skills, such as cooperation with others, taking responsibility for their own actions, and encouraging and motivating others to do their best. Instilling these Christian values in young people will have a lasting positive impact on their lives.

Another great lesson of the 2018 Teen Camp's activity-rich environment was that willingness to work hard and do one's best is an essential characteristic of Christians. Camp was hard work! In fact, a number of campers commented that one of their reasons for coming to camp was to get in better physical condition, and that they are more active at summer camp than they are at any other time during the year. Camp has always promoted an active and healthy lifestyle, and if you ask just about anyone who attended summer camp if it was hard work, you will be told that it *certainly wasn't easy*. It never is. However, you will also be told that it was fun, challenging, unquestionably exciting, and definitely worth all of the work and effort! We played hard and worked hard! Camp's active lifestyle challenged many campers and members of the staff, as it does every year. This is why three nutritious meals and more than a hundred gallons of cold, refreshing drinks were prepared and served daily. It is also why all sleeping quarters and the dining hall are fully air-conditioned, and why we gave great attention to preparing the master camp schedule. Participants burned a lot of calories and often operated beyond their comfort levels in order to be fully engaged in their responsibilities.

The Blessing of Selfless Staff

The camp staff also worked very hard to provide the best possible camp experience to every camper in attendance. When applicants for staff positions signed up to serve at camp, they knew that they were committing to working long hours in sometimes uncomfortable conditions for two full weeks! They also understood that they would have to pay their travel

expenses to and from camp, and that only food and lodging would be provided. (Several staff members even provided their own lodging, bringing travel trailers or RVs.) Many took time off from work in order to be there. The result? The campers saw and appreciated the sacrifice, time, and energy that the hard-working staff members put into making camp an exceptional experience for them. In turn, they put energy into their various scheduled activities, and thus attained the maximum benefit from their camp experience. What a fantastic result! Directors from other camp organizations marvel that so many parents and staff members volunteer to work for free, and even pay a small tuition (yes, staff members actually pay to come to camp) in order to assist at the Living Youth camps. These other camp directors simply cannot find enough volunteers who will work without pay, while we have the opposite problem: we often cannot accept all who apply to serve at camp.

Not only did ministers, their wives, and other members of the staff work tirelessly, they did a first-class job. In every department—the activities, the kitchen, the dining hall, dishwashing, the office, media, purchasing, mini-camp, yearbook, airport transportation, campus improvement, laundry, custodial, first aid, and special events—the staff aimed for the highest standards of work quality. It was refreshing to see such dedication and camaraderie. Not only were assignments fulfilled, but from Mr. and Mrs. Weston to the newest and youngest staff members, many volunteered to help wherever there was a need. These servant leaders washed dishes, cleaned the dining hall each night, helped with custodial duties filled many other gaps. They went well above and beyond the call of duty!

Counselors and their assistants served with little rest to inspire, motivate, and care for the impressionable young men and women in their dorms. Their personal examples of loving concern for their campers were evident throughout the camp session. These fine young leaders sacrificed much, giving their full attention to those entrusted to their care. They did a wonderful job of focusing their dorm members on God and His way of life (Daniel 12:3; James 5:19–20). They taught godly values in all that they said and did. They also worked to make camp fun! Camp would not have been such a success without them.

Another summer camp has come and gone, and we will carry many happy memories of it for years to come. We will remember the beautifully decorated dances, the great talent show, the thoughtful comments made during topics sessions, the amazing race, the engaging activities, the excellent food, the inspiring messages, and the friendships that camp made possible. A lot of important things happened at camp in 2018, and many more will happen in the summer of 2019. Plan to sign up to be a part of something great!

—Sheldon Monson

Get 'Em Started Young!

A few months ago, while my family and I were traveling home from Sabbath services, our four-year-old son, Cooper, asked if one day he would be able to fly. That day's sermon had addressed the incredible power and glory of God, and how we, as future newborn members of the God Family, will inherit the tremendous characteristics of our Creator. I had talked about God's ability to manipulate His own physical creation, travel faster than the speed of light, pass through walls, fly among the clouds, and disappear into thin air. At some point during the message, little Cooper had heard something that piqued his interest, something that grabbed his attention. But of course! Who among us doesn't get excited about the awesome potential of our future inheritance? So, my wife and I attempted to explain a few details about God's wonderful promises to His children. Does our little guy now fully understand the incredible human potential and our ultimate destiny? Absolutely not. Nevertheless, his journey has begun.

The Bible is God's mind in print. It is living and powerful. It is His word, His message, and the deepest desires of His heart—shared with His prospective family. We often dig through its pages hoping to uncover another piece of the puzzle, striving to catch a clearer glimpse of the coming Kingdom. And while none of us fully understand every detail of what is coming, we can be encouraged by what we know of the exciting promise and significant purpose given to those who choose to live God's way of life. As the Father draws us to Him, He requires us to share His encouraging truth with our children, and with this in mind, the Preteen Camps of the Living Church of God seek to reinforce the godly instruction our kids must enjoy at home. It's never too early to learn the powerful message of God, so let's "get 'em started young!"

In Deuteronomy 6:4–6, we are admonished, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart." But He doesn't stop there! He continues, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (vv. 7–9). His way of life is to be seen in everything that we do, and shared diligently with our children. Therefore, the primary mission of the Living Youth



Program is to partner with parents in helping these young ones connect to the wonderful truth of God.

At the LYP Preteen Camps, we strive to foster a fun and challenging environment, an atmosphere centered on God's way of love and encouragement. Preteen Camps are paced more slowly than Teen Camps, yet similarly formatted with procedures that have served us well throughout the camp program. Dorm life encourages children to build relationships with one another. Action-packed activities are opportunities to promote new skills and experiences. And of course, whether music, sports, arts and crafts, or our Christian Living classes, all of our activities make developing more of the mind and character of God the goal for each of us in all things. We strongly emphasize the need for campers to learn from the Bible's examples, and to apply biblical lessons daily. We teach them that the Bible is the word of the living God, not just a storybook with colorful characters, and that it describes the real lives of real people, just like us, along with a Father and Elder Brother deeply invested in our future.

It's true that for now, Cooper will struggle to fully comprehend the incredible gift and potential that is before him. Nevertheless, we're told in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." As parents, we have the joyful responsibility to share God's awesome truth with our young ones, and we pray that the Preteen Camps will continue to serve as a profitable complement to the godly instruction they receive at home. Let all of us continue working to unlock the mysteries of the Bible for excited children as they embark on the journey of a lifetime!

—Jason Fritts

A Camper's Point of View

I love camp. However, the day-to-day routines of a camper take a lot of energy. Trust me, I know. I've been a teen camper for five years in a row, having attended first the Ohio camp and now the Texas one. That being said, the energy spent is much like the servant's use of his ten minas in Luke 19: The investment is returned with exponential interest. The entire camp experience is filled with daily opportunities to grow in spiritual, physical, mental, and social abilities from the time you get up each morning to the time you go back to bed.

Every day starts the same way for campers: We wake up! This is the time to get out of bed, get organized, and get ready for the day. Having a good morning goes a long way toward having a good day. Once the dorm and its occupants are cleaned up and ready, it's time to head down to breakfast.

After breakfast, the first activity begins: Christian Living. These classes, coupled with the Evening Reflections, set the entire orientation for the camp experience. It's all about God and His way of life. Whether on the field, the range, or the dance floor, we are always encouraged to do the right thing and serve others. What makes camp so beneficial is this orientation toward God.

This orientation is bolstered for all of us by the fact that we are surrounded by teens of like mind. Camp lets me get

to know one of the largest groups of LCG teens to assemble anywhere in the world! It's fun to meet my neighbors from all over the United States and the world as we fellowship during and after meals. We can also catch up with friends at any of the several dances or activities we may have together. Camp can also be used to make new friends. A great ally camp gives me in this quest is the dorm system. Sharing activities and living space with the teens in my dorm helps forge friendships that last for years.

Another aspect of camp that keeps me coming back is the collection of quality activities. I personally enjoy the sports. Basketball, flag football, volleyball, softball—they all are great, and it is satisfying to increase your competence on the athletic field. There are also many non-sports activities, which are a lot of fun. I owe almost all of my dancing and archery skills to the Living Youth camps. Tons of other activities are rotated in and out of the program year after year, and it is often pleasantly surprising what a great time you can have doing something you never expected to do. (Who knew leatherworking was so much fun?) The desire to do better than you did the year before makes you want to come back to camp year after year.

As mentioned above, camp requires investments of energy from every camper who wants to fully reap its rewards. Thankfully, camp has always done a great job of helping me keep that energy going. The atmosphere of enthusiasm, combined with the robust camp traditions, makes it easier to put Ecclesiastes 9:10 into action: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might...."

Camp is great. For me, it has consistently been a wonderful experience that helps me enlarge the territory of my comfort zone a little more each year. It has also encouraged me to look to the horizon on my own, searching for new experiences and new people to add to that comfort zone.

I also really like the kind of guy I am when I am at camp. That's why I look forward to going back, every year I can—either as a camper, or, in the future, as a staff member.

—Benjamin Smith



The Greatest Thing About Adventure Camp!

Since 2005, the Living Church of God has conducted a dozen Adventure Camps in several of the top-rated national parks and national forests in North America! We began our first backpacking trip just a few short miles from Jackson, Wyoming, at the top of the Aerial Tramway above Teton Village, and ended over 40 miles later at the Jenny Lake Visitor Center. There were no Adventure Trips in 2006 or 2007, but they resumed in 2008 when adventurous young men and women hiked in Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest. In 2009, adventurers canoed in Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota. In the following years, there were trips in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado (2010); Baxter Park, Maine (2011); Glacier Park, Montana (2012); Yosemite National Park, California (2013); Yellowstone National Park, Montana (2014); Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming (2015); Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada (2016); Mount Rainier National Park, Washington (2017); and in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, Colorado (2018).

Beauty and Adventure

What made these among the most beautiful places on earth to conduct Adventure Camps? Majestic snow-covered mountain peaks, spectacular views, glaciers and icefields, crystal clear streams and lakes, thundering waterfalls, thermal features and geysers, dense coniferous forests, alpine landscapes, multicolored meadows of wildflowers, and abundant wildlife are only a few reasons to call these places some of the most beautiful in God's earthly creation. In the backcountry, campers and staff have seen bears, buffalo, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, wolves, foxes, beavers, otters, marmots, pikas, eagles, and a multitude of other species. On many of these trips, moose, elk, and deer walked through our campsites and between our tents or blocked a path. Our backpackers have been blessed to be able to camp in pristine backcountry campsites, far from the crowds, bringing to mind conditions prophesied to exist in tomorrow's world (Ezekiel 34:25).

Every Adventure Trip since the program's inception has included whitewater rafting. Those who have had the chance to attend these camps have known the thrill of rafting on the Class III rapids of some of the following waterways: Snake River, Wyoming; Colorado River, Colorado; Middle Fork River, Montana; Kicking Horse River, British Columbia; White Salmon River, Washington; and Cache La Poudre

River, Colorado. They've also braved the breathtaking Class IV and V rapids of the Tuolumne River in California and the epic Class V rapids of the mighty Penobscot River in Maine!

The courageous young men and women on various trips have also gone rock climbing and whitewater kayaking, soaked in backcountry hot springs, forded chest-deep mountain streams, swum in refreshing glacial waters, stood in the cool mist of majestic waterfalls, and even taken a 29-mile mountain biking journey from Trail Ridge Road (11,796 feet) to Estes Park, Colorado, a classic ride that most only see on television and dream of taking. These trips have allowed young people to walk through magnificent forests like the "Grove of the Patriarchs" at the base of Mount Rainier, Glacier Park's giant cedars, and California's giant sequoias. They have also stood in awe of amazing rock formations, such as the dome-shaped rocks of Yosemite and Devils Postpile National Monument. This unusual rock formation ranks as one of the world's finest examples of columnar basalt, and its symmetrical columns tower 60 feet high.

All of these are great reasons for having embarked on any of our world-class Adventure Trips, but not one of them is the greatest thing about Adventure Camp. So, what is? The answer might surprise you.

The Best Part

The best thing is not walking through lush green valleys or breathing cool mountain air. It's not the breathtaking view atop a high mountain pass. It's not catching trout in a glassy mountain lake or clear mountain stream and cooking them for dinner. These experiences are awesome! But they are not the best part of any Adventure Trip. The best thing about Adventure Camp is the *character built by those completing the hike!*

Did you know that every one of our hikers to ever set out into the backcountry on a four-or-five-day hike has completed the journey? That's amazing! Countless other hikers and hiking groups have set out to accomplish what we have but failed. Many of them have turned back, or taken an exit route and caught a shuttle back to their cars. This past summer, a group of backpackers attempting the same route, at the same time, and going in the same direction as our hikers had to set up tents and abandon the route, because some of their team experienced hypothermia. Even the manager of the hotel where we stayed after completing the backcountry trip was very surprised that all four of our

groups (each made up of eight hikers) completed the four-pass loop without anyone turning back or dropping out.

We've put a great deal of thought and careful preparation into selecting strenuous and challenging routes for these trips. We've chosen difficult but doable hikes—and tough



routes rather than easier options. Why? To challenge the campers and staff. Each trip has been designed to push hikers to their limits!

It seems that every year there is one day that stands out as an especially hard one, or one on which something happens to make the trip even more demanding than we had planned. The Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness trip this past summer was no exception. On Friday we were hiking over two mountain passes—West Maroon Pass (12,480 feet), followed by Frigid Air Pass (12,415 feet). Our packs were heavy, and it was to be a challenging day. The day started out with light rain, but before long the temperature began to plummet, the rain increased, and the wind picked up. By the time the last two groups began their final ascent over the first pass, the wind was blowing rain horizontally and ice pellets the size of peas were pounding everyone. The hail subsided after several minutes, but the wind, rain, and temperatures in the low 40s Fahrenheit continued to hammer us during the entire descent of West Maroon Pass and all the way to the summit of Frigid Air Pass. Hikers were cold and soaked to the bone as the rain found its way through all three layers of their clothing. The fingers of

many were too cold to work zippers. The slippery, muddy, rock-strewn path was treacherous. For hours, everyone prayed for the rain and cold to stop, but it persisted—and so did we. Everyone kept eating trail mix or other snacks, and drinking fluids to stay hydrated. Heads were covered to maintain body heat, and rain gear was zipped tight. All four groups pressed forward in an attempt to generate needed additional body heat. Many were pushing themselves beyond their perceived limits.

Members of the Navy Seals, an elite military group in the United States, teach what they call the “40 percent rule,” a concept they use to increase mental toughness. Their belief is that when your mind is saying you’re done, you’re really only 40 percent done. If that is true, several of our hikers pushed beyond 40 percent.

Eventually, we reached the top of the second pass. Then, something amazing happened. The rain stopped, the wind subsided, and within a few minutes the sun came out to warm our cold, shivering bodies. On this day, Frigid Air Pass did not live up to its name! Everyone began to pray once again, this time not to make requests, but to give thanks.

Challenge and Character

This is an example of what can make these trips so challenging and exacting. Adventure Camp hikers have seen the direct intervention of God’s mighty hand in one way or another on every Adventure Trip we have taken. In previous years, we have faced a variety of difficulties, including mosquito plagues. We even had to conduct Sabbath Services while sitting in a river with water up to our necks to avoid being bitten. We have also dealt with up to six inches of snow accumulating on our tents overnight, braved rain and cold throughout the entire five days in the backcountry, hiked in water over the tops of our boots for days on end, backpacked throughout the night, and encountered other adversities too numerous to mention. In each case, mental and physical toughness were put to the test.

At the end of each trip, we hand out Adventure Camp shirts to the hikers who have completed it (and to the members of the hard-working base-camp staff, too). When you see anyone clothed in one of these shirts, you can be assured that they have earned the right to wear it!

The next time you think you can’t do more, you probably can. These Adventure Camps have been challenging! The sense of satisfaction one gets from completing the hike and finishing the course is deeply rewarding. Seeing the effects of the mighty hand of God and experiencing His intervention firsthand when it was needed the most will stay in our memories forever. The greatest thing about these trips is how they strengthen and develop character in those who sign up!

—Sheldon Monson

Snapshots from Camp









Woman to Woman

Spiritual Growth in Stressful Circumstances

By **Faye League**

I will venture to say that most of us ladies, if not all, desire to live a life free of stressful situations that drag us down and hinder our spiritual growth. Stressful situations can come about for various reasons, but for now, let's explore just a few that we experience.

Avoid Letting Bad Habits and Attitudes Grow

Our spiritual growth is easier if we are not bogged down by ingrained, negative habits. This is why it is so important that we keep our children from developing such habits as they grow up, by teaching them to get along with each other.

I am very blessed to be able to say that my siblings and I were taught to love, care for, respect, and be protective of each other. If any negative behavior began to appear, my mother would nip it in the bud, just as godly wisdom instructs: "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Proverbs 17:14). I am thankful to this day for the peace I grew up with at home. It was priceless—and stress-free.

Observation has shown me what can come of not having that peace. I have known siblings (outside the Church) who literally hated each other due to negative habits they never outgrew.

I once knew a family (again, outside the Church) whose members, even though they had strong family ties, had difficulty getting along with each other, especially at family dinners or other get-togethers. Most of the siblings had strong-willed personalities and strongly differing views and opinions on various subjects. So, at family gatherings, their conversations would quite often turn into heated arguments—each one being "wise in his or her own eyes." This is a source of great contention: "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:7). How much better their relationships would be if they could follow GOD's instruction: "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion" (Romans 12:16).

Go the Distance to Make Amends

A few weeks ago, I came across a film that piqued my interest, called "The Straight Story." It is based on the journey of a man named Alvin Straight. In the film, Alvin, though ailing and elderly, decides to make amends with his brother, Lyle, from whom he is estranged. His brother lives several states away, and Mr. Straight cannot drive, so he has to find another way to reach him.

At the beginning of the film, Alvin is at a John Deere tractor supply store, where he buys a small tractor. After he takes the tractor home, he rigs a trailer to the back of it that will hold camping equipment and has space enough for him to sleep.

He has heard that his brother has been seriously ill and hospitalized. When people ask him what his plans are for the tractor, he tells them that he has been at odds with his brother for quite some time, and that they have not spoken in ten years. He says that if he can just humble himself enough, he is going to drive hundreds of miles across the country and make amends with his brother.

The film chronicles his journey in a heartwarming and effective way, as it shows people he meets along his route and the profound effect he has on their lives. I will relate one such incident here.

As Alvin drives along the highway, he passes a pregnant teenage girl who is hitchhiking. He perceives that she has run away from home. Later in the evening, he stops for the night, sets up camp, and builds a campfire. A few minutes later, the teenage girl comes walking up to where he is and asks if she can camp nearby for the night. Of course, he says yes, because he knows she will feel safer there. As they sit by his campfire, they talk about the importance of family, and the conversation apparently makes a positive impact on her. He knows that her family must be worried sick, wondering where she is and how she is doing. The next morning, the girl is gone. She has returned home to those who love her.

When Alvin finally arrives at his brother's home and parks the tractor, he calls out toward the cabin, which is a bit uphill. He calls three times before his brother finally appears at the door, holding onto a walker. His brother calls back, incredulously, "Is that you?" Alvin replies, "Yes, it is." So, his brother tells him to come on up. They each sit in a rocking chair on the porch, not saying anything for a few minutes—no words



are needed. It appears as if each one is trying to sort out his thoughts and emotions, yet savor the moment at the same time. In this touching scene, it seems clear that these brothers were once very close.

Finally, Alvin's brother asks him about the rigged-up tractor, almost in a state of disbelief: "Did you ride that thing all the way out here to see me?" Alvin replies, "I did, Lyle." At that moment, they both know that peace has been made between them—they are true and close brothers again.

The film is dedicated to Mr. Alvin Straight, who really did drive a piece of lawn equipment hundreds of miles to make amends with his brother.

Being at odds with others can cause unnecessary stress for everyone concerned. As Christian women, we must strive to eliminate this kind of stress by overcoming any animosity we may have toward others. We can do this through the power and help of God's Holy Spirit.

Learn to Avoid Regrettable Decisions

Other sources of stress that can hinder our spiritual growth are regrettable choices. A friend of mine asked me to write about an experience that she had in this area, in the hope that it might be of help to others. I told her that I would.

She had been speaking with a single person who had been searching for a mate in the Church, but to no avail, and who was seriously thinking about looking outside of the Church for someone to marry. This deeply affected my friend, who almost blurted out, "No! Don't do that! Don't even think about it!" However, she controlled her emotions and regained her composure. My friend then counseled the discouraged single that she had done that herself in her youth, and it had turned out badly.

Here is how she explained her experience, both to me and to her friend. From early childhood, she had attended Church services with her parents and siblings. However, when she was in her late teens, she stopped attending for a while. During this time, she met a young man and chose to marry him—against all wise counsel. She said that she just would not listen to anyone.

After a while, she began attending Church services again, and was subsequently baptized. Her marriage was relatively happy and sound for quite a few years, and her husband even at times tried to understand the Church's teachings, but he was apparently not being called to true godly knowledge at that time. My friend thought that things were still going along quite well—until the day her husband came to her with an unexpected request. He asked her for a divorce, saying that he had met someone else. He also told her that she needed to marry someone of her own faith.

This marriage had certainly not turned out well for her. In retrospect, she realized that she had, indeed, made a most regrettable decision in her life, which ended up becoming almost too stressful to bear. But with God's help, she came through it.

I am pleased to say that my friend is now married to a Church member, and they are serving hand-in-hand in God's Church, together.

Don't Let Physical Changes Inhibit Spiritual Growth

Another area that I would like to address, which I have written about briefly before, is that of going through menopause and its accompanying symptoms. For some women, menopause can take only a few years to pass, but for others, symptoms can begin at the age of forty and continue for ten or twelve years (twelve for me).

At the beginning of the process, a woman begins to lose estrogen, which creates a hormonal imbalance to which her body has to adjust and adapt. This, in turn, causes symptoms that for some may be somewhat mild but for others can be very serious and problematic, such as raw and jagged nerves, irritability, heavy flow, night sweats to the point of having to rise in the middle of the night and change the bed sheets (my husband never complained—he understood), lack of energy, and more. One week or two of a month can be more problematic than others. Prayer certainly helps, and it also helps to have an understanding husband, one who can discern when his wife can use a comforting embrace and when she may just need some space. It is also helpful for a husband to kneel down with her—at her request, when her nerves are about to get the best of her—and pray for her, asking God to calm her nerves and give her peace of mind.

It is amazing what God can do. There is calm and peace only He can give.

Seek First the Kingdom

It is very important not to neglect our spiritual lives during stressful times, but instead to keep growing in God's righteous character. No matter the circumstances, we can become productive tools in His hands and overcome stress—if we seek to be a part of God's wonderful family in His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33). ^(L)

Foundations and Reliability at the Northeast Men's Training Camp

On August 17, forty-three men from different areas of Canada and the northeast United States journeyed to New Hope, Pennsylvania to participate in a Men's Training Camp, with the purpose of building bonds of brotherhood, learning in a highly focused manner, and worshiping God together.

The camp started on Friday evening with the breaking of bread together over homemade chili. Mr. Adam West, along with local ministers Wayne Tlumak, Dennis Chornomaz, John Hunter, Michael Aviles, and Naas DeJager, led the weekend activities, which were all designed to drive home the theme of "Building a Solid Foundation as Men." Saturday activities included Sabbath services, Bible Study, and informational discussions of topics related to servant leadership and the importance of having a strong foundation as a man. In the evening, the men were divided into three groups, each of which was challenged to prepare a six-minute speech. The speeches were each to use focused scriptures and incorporate an element from a movie clip of the "Eve of St. Crispin's Day" speech from William Shakespeare's play, *The History of Henry V*. After fellowshiping into the night, Sunday morning brought more learning opportunities related to knowing God and preventing our personal foundation from being destroyed. The final session and concluding

remarks, titled "Become a Reliable Man," were given by Mr. West. Participants left the camp with stronger bonds of brotherhood and rejuvenated strength to face the world before them.

—Brent Mitchell, New Jersey

Memorable Travels in Southeast Asia

Recently we holidayed in Singapore, where we had the privilege of spending a few Sabbaths with Church members in that part of the world. In Singapore, we assembled with all three of our members there, including one originally from Malaysia, whom we had first met at the Global Church of God in Cheltenham many years ago. The other two members are from the Philippines, and both are second-generation Church members.

On another Sabbath we made a really challenging journey to visit with our little group in Johor Bohru in south Malaysia, where we were graciously hosted by the entire group. The shining examples of these faithful and isolated brethren, and the daunting challenges they face in daily living, are truly a marvel.

We parted from our Church family there, all of us looking forward to the autumnal Holy Days and Feast of Tabernacles, and the fellowship we would all enjoy there.

—Henry & Rosemary Cooper, Ireland

Births

Mr. & Mrs. Tim (Jessica) Daniels of the Springfield, Missouri congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter, **Nyree Grace Daniels**, born August 7. Nyree weighed 8 pounds, 10 ounces and measured 19 inches long.

Mr. and Mrs. Trae (Kaley) Dennis, of the Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, **Penelope Lynn Dennis**. Penelope was born on May 22, weighing 5 pounds, 7 ounces, and measuring 18.25 inches long.

Mr. and Mrs. Bruno (Jessica) Duval of the Montreal, Quebec congregation, announce with great pleasure the birth of their first child, **Michaël Jonathan Duval**, born June 16. He was in good health and weighed in at 3.3 kg. (7 lbs., 4 oz.). Mother, Dad, and baby are all doing well.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. Amancio Cuares was ordained an elder on August 18 by Regional Director Rob Tyler and elders Ryan Nicholson, Basilio Osillos, and Joseph Gonzales. Mr. Cuares serves in the Quezon City congregation in the Philippines.

Mr. David Grant was ordained an elder on September 1 by Regional Director Rick Stafford, pastor Paul Shumway, and elder Damien Weekes. Mr. Grant serves in the Chaguanas, Trinidad and Tobago congregation.

Mr. Lorne Ketch was ordained a deacon on September 10 by pastors Frank Best and Kinnear Penman. Mr. Ketch serves in the Halifax, Nova Scotia congregation.

We want to hear more about the happy milestones in the lives of our brethren. If your family has had a birth, marriage or major anniversary, please ask your local pastor to send word to the *Living Church News*, PO Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010 (or to send an e-mail to lcn@lcn.org).

In Loving Memory

Mr. John Androwski, a longtime member of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana congregation, died in March 2015, at the age of 63. Blind since shortly after his birth, Mr. Androwski was an overcomer and a friend to all. Glen Harrison, pastor of the Baton Rouge congregation, conducted the memorial service.

Mr. James Bollman, 66, of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana congregation, died of a heart attack while attending the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City, Florida. He is survived by his two sisters. Mr. Bollman will be remembered as a kind and gentle man who served the widows endlessly. Pastor Glen Harrison and elder Ray Joffrion conducted the memorial service.

Mr. Joe Hall, 79, died on January 11. He had been a member of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana congregation since 2010. Mr. Hall is survived by a son, a daughter, and four grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Linda. He will be remembered by his congregation for his warm greetings every Sabbath. The funeral service was conducted by elder Ray Joffrion.

Mrs. Margaret J. Hannah, 78, of the Anderson, South Carolina congregation, died on May 16. She is survived by two daughters, Roxanne Crump and Barbara Cheek, and son Phillip Gilbert, plus nine grandchildren, eleven great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild. Mrs. Hannah was baptized in 1981 and was a much loved and dedicated member of the congregation. Despite declining health in her later years, she regularly

attended Sabbath and Holy Day services and local church activities. Her strong faith encouraged many in her local church family, and she was a rock to her physical family. Always ready with a warm smile and hug, Mrs. Hannah made many friends from other congregations at the Feast of Tabernacles and shared with them the same warmth and loving concern she held for those closest to her. Mr. Ron Poole conducted the funeral.

Mr. Joe Salmon Hansen, Jr. died peacefully at the age of 82, surrounded by his family, on September 10. He was born in 1936 and lived almost his entire life in Dallas, Texas. Shortly after graduating from high school at the age of 16, he worked at a variety of jobs and ventures, ultimately settling on real estate investing, in which he was very active up until shortly before his death. He was also involved with his family and active in the Church. His special music and his wonderful bass voice will be missed in the congregation. Mr. Hansen had an outgoing personality and always had a smile for everyone. He was willing to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. When traveling to other countries, he'd always say in parting, "Come to Texas when you can." Mr. Hansen is survived by his mother, his wife, one brother, six children, one step-daughter, seventeen grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and other relatives.

Mr. Dorn Allen Keith, 67, of the Fort Wayne, Indiana congregation, died in his home on August 1. Born in Kentucky, he worked as a carpenter. For 18 years he was a maintenance foreman for the Indiana Department of Corrections. He enjoyed spending time

with his family, his grandchildren, and the brethren. Mr. Keith was baptized in 1970, and served as a faithful member. All who knew him will miss his gift for conversation. He was preceded in death by his parents, one daughter, and one son. He is survived by his wife of 39 years, Ruth Cox Keith; two sons, John Allen and James (Lisa); three grandchildren; and a brother. Associate Pastor Yancy Taber conducted his memorial service.

Mrs. Brenda Mann, 78, of the Pontefract, UK congregation, died on 25 July. She lived most of her life in South Africa, but loved to travel and was well known at congregations in South Africa, the North of England, and Australia. She had particularly enjoyed trips to Turkey, learning about places from Bible times. Mrs. Mann's lively character and smile will be missed by many.

Ms. Starlescica Maxwell died on January 23 at 85. Many of the Tri-Cities, Washington brethren got to know her very well over the almost seven years since her baptism in 2011. She was known for her love for everyone and her positive outlook on life, even though she had been through some very difficult experiences. She thought everything and everyone was "beautiful." She is missed by her church family, but we look forward to seeing her again.

Mr. Billy Frank Parker, 84, of the Fort Smith, Arkansas congregation, died on July 19. Baptized in 2004, Mr. Parker was a faithful member of the Church. He was preceded in death by his wife, Patty Delores Parker, and is survived by two daughters, Roxanna Broliier and Terri Scanlon of Greenwood; one brother, Darrel Parker of Glen Elder, Kansas; nine grandchildren, eighteen great-

IN LOVING MEMORY continued...

grandchildren and nine great-great-grandchildren. Mr. Parker will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him.

Mrs. Winola Pitre, 75, a deaconess in the Lafayette, Louisiana congregation, died on February 16 after a courageous battle with cancer. She is survived by her husband Errol and their two sons, Clint and Chad. Winola was a grand lady who loved and was loved dearly. Her lovely smile and positive attitude will be missed, but never forgotten. Area Pastor Glen Harrison conducted the funeral service.

Mrs. Florence V. Pfund, 78, of Pickens, South Carolina, died unexpectedly on

July 19 at her home. She was a native of Manitoba, Canada, and met her husband, Avon, when she attended Ambassador College in Pasadena, California. They were married for almost 58 years. Mrs. Pfund is survived by her husband, Avon; one son and his wife, one daughter and her husband, and one granddaughter. Mrs. Pfund's endearing nature was characterized by a gentle and loving spirit. She was devoted to many, but especially to her family, including her church family. One who loved all things in nature, she had a special fondness for birds and roses. Mr. Ron Poole conducted the funeral.

Mrs. Donna Woelfle, 77, wife of longtime elder Mr. Irv Woelfle,

passed her final exam and died in the faith and with dignity on August 4. With her parents and as a teenager, she began attending the San Diego, California congregation in 1955. She was baptized by Dr. Benjamin Rea in 1959. In February 1960, she and her husband were married by Dr. Roderick Meredith. They have three daughters, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Over the years, Mrs. Woelfle helped many people, setting an excellent example of faithfulness. She was a great assistant to her husband. As she had requested, her husband conducted her funeral on August 12. He has greatly appreciated the outpouring of love and support for him from around the world.

Weddings & Anniversaries

Virgil L. Avery and **Ruth S. Czech**, both longtime dedicated members of God's Church, were united in marriage on August 25. Area pastor Dr. Richard Franz officiated the ceremony. Friends, family, and brethren rejoiced with the happy couple in a beautifully decorated hall, enjoying the good food and fellowship that followed.

Mr. Jacob Bennett and **Miss Regan Trapp**, both of the Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation, were united in marriage on Sunday, December 17, 2017, pastor Gene Hilgenberg officiating. Many brethren from near and far attended, along with family, to celebrate this joyous occasion.

Mr. and Mrs. Ken (Eleanor) Edmonds of St. Albert, Alberta were honoured by the Edmonton congregation on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary on June 30. Joined by their family, they were presented with a cake and several gifts after services, and all enjoyed a congregational meal. Mr. and Mrs. Edmonds were married on June 29, 1968 and have two children.

On October 4, **Mr. and Mrs. Gordon (Margaret) Hill** of the Sevenoaks congregation, UK, celebrated their diamond (60th) wedding anniversary. In keeping with British tradition, they received a congratulatory letter from Queen Elizabeth II. Mrs. Hill heard about the Church first, in 1953, listening to Radio Luxembourg. She used to talk with her husband

about the Church until she read an article by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, entitled, "Don't Try to Convert Your Husband." As she delightfully puts it, the article got her "to shut up!" In the early 1960s, Mr. Hill asked her if she would like him to get a job as a lecturer in St. Albans. Wanting to be near Ambassador College at Bricket Wood, not far from St. Albans, she quickly agreed. Unbeknownst to his wife, Mr. Hill read her *Plain Truth* magazines when she was out of the house, and he, too, became interested in the Church. Both started attending services in London in 1962 and were baptized in March 1963. After the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, they filtered through other Church of God groups, before coming to the Living Church of God, where they are "happy to be part of God's Work." Mr. and Mrs. Hill have three children.

Congratulations to **Mr. and Mrs. Timothy (Diane) Jablonski** of the Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation, who celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on October 8. The congregation surprised them after services on the Sabbath with a special cake and a card signed by the brethren. Mr. and Mrs. Jablonski have two daughters.

The Tulsa, Oklahoma congregation honored **Mr. and Mrs. Alan (Ruth) Scalf** after services on February 24, in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Scalf were married on February 16, 1968. The couple are longtime faithful members of God's Church and very much loved by all who know them.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

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same?” (Matthew 5:44–46; see also Luke 6:27–36). Our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

During my first few years in the ministry, we visited many “GOTO’s,” people who had requested a visit or wanted to know about baptism or attending services. Street numbers are not always easy to read, but there was a common denominator when looking for a home: We could look for the most run-down property on the block! Yes, this is an exaggeration, but it was not a rare occurrence. The Apostle Paul would understand this

(1 Corinthians 1:26–29). Yes, God calls the weak of the world, but nowhere does it say that we are to *remain* the weak.

The world often judges by outward appearance, and let us be honest: We often do the same. Is this not what James warned us against in James 2:1–9? Does this mean that our outward appearance is not important? Is it not being a good neighbor to take care of our property and so lift the value of our neighborhood? Did not God command Adam “to tend and keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15)?

Being a good neighbor involves many things, far more than this article can list, but with a little thought, we can all come up with ways to show genuine concern for those around us. Practiced

thoughts and actions eventually become part of our character—again, “second nature,” as we often say. Godly character is expressed in the two great commandments. And who knows what long-term good may come from your example (1 Corinthians 7:16; Ecclesiastes 11:5–6)?

Our best friends and greatest service efforts ought to be among the family of God, but there are also plenty of opportunities to serve our closest neighbors: the homes around us, co-workers on the job, classmates, and let us not forget those who share our abode. Let us not forget Jesus’ admonition, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). ^(LW)

2017 Audit Available Online

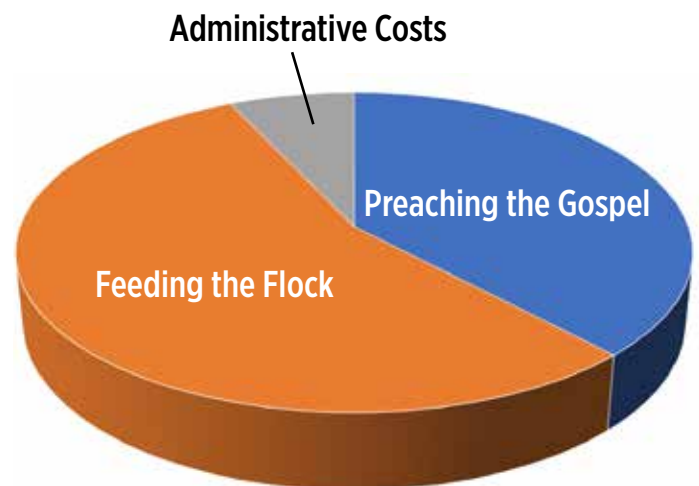
The Living Church of God continues to carefully manage the financial resources that God provides through our members and coworkers. For the year 2017, regular income was flat, but total income declined from that of 2016 due to some extraordinary income items that occurred in 2016 but were not repeated in 2017. Expenses were adjusted accordingly, so that net income and expenses were approximately equal for the year.

Demographics continued to play a significant role in the Church’s finances in 2017, with many of our older members moving into retirement. However, we were very pleased to see a growing number of young families and new attendees adding to the attendance of our local churches in the United States. The international Work continues to grow, especially in Central and South America.

The Church continues to evaluate and cut underperforming programs and media outlets in order to replace them with new opportunities to preach the Gospel.

As in previous years, the Church allocates the bulk of its resources to preaching the Gospel (38 percent) and feeding the flock (55 percent). Administrative costs were kept at a very low seven percent of expenditures.

The Church entered 2018 on a good financial footing and looks forward to a successful year for God’s Work. As in previous years, the Church was audited by the accounting



Breakdown of Expenses

firm, Cherry Bekaert, and the full 2017 audited statement (with notes) is available at www.lcg.org. To read it, click on *About Us*, then on *Living Church of God: 2017 Consolidated Financial Statements*.

—D. Jerry Ruddlesden and Dexter B. Wakefield

COMMENTARY

Memories of My Dad

My dad was a diligent and dedicated worker. He always had ongoing projects around the house and made sure his sons, in particular, were contributors to those projects. He knew how to work hard, but he also cherished play and instruction time with his children. He had little schooling, achieving only second grade, but he had an educated heart.

He and my mom reared a total of ten children—seven sons and three daughters. Many of them were born and grew up in the Depression years of the 1930s. I was born during the mid-1940s as the second youngest child. I had him on my mind and thought I would put fingers to keyboard for a moment and reflect upon some memories that have stayed with and influenced me over the years—memories of a dad who loved and cherished his children and grandchildren and who taught us so many things by way of example.

Dad worked in a brickyard, operating boilers. This was a back-breaking job he did for decades. It required him to do shift work for many years as his daily routine, and not once over the course of almost three decades did he ever miss a shift. For all of us, he set a shining example as a hard worker, dedicated to the care and welfare of his family.

Despite his long and irregular work hours and the erratic sleep patterns caused by such schedules, Dad always found time to spend with his children. I have fond memories of summertime in particular, when he would take his young sons to a beach and play a game of “rocks”—where the object was simply to throw rocks into small crater-like holes from a distance. Dad was very good at it, and he showed us how to have family

fun with the simplest of things. Those times with him were very special.

The time I spent with him was a time of security, and a time of pride that he was my father.

He taught us boys how to saw and how to hammer, and how to pull and straighten nails. Heading up a household during the depression required him to “waste not.” I straightened hundreds of bent nails as a young boy under this philosophy. He also taught us how to build a porch, putty a window, and plant a garden.

Indeed, fathers play a special role in family growth, instruction, and development. The Bible gives important instruction to both the father of a family and to his children: “Hear, O sons, the **instruction of a father**, and give attention that you may gain understanding” (Proverbs 4:1, *NASB*).

Fathers have a responsibility to impart understanding to their children—not only in physical matters, but in spiritual matters as well. This includes directing their children in developing a relationship with their heavenly Father. In addition, fathers are instructed, “Fathers do not provoke your children to wrath, but **bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord**” (Ephesians 6:4, *NASB*). Fathers must show patience and understanding during each child’s development, and always point their sons and daughters to God’s word as the prime source of instruction.

I look forward to seeing Dad in the not-too-distant future. At that time, I will give him a special, heartfelt “thank you” for his dedication to our family. So, fathers, set the pace and set the example—neither you nor your children will forget it.

—Winston Gosse