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The Heart of a Champion

Dear Brethren and Friends,

It was inspiring to see the young athletes in the recent Olympic Games “give their all.” Those young people from all over the world spent *years* working, training, disciplining themselves and *driving* themselves toward a GOAL. They usually put that goal *above everything else*.

Yet all too often, we, as Christians, *fail* to even *begin* to have the tremendous zeal and dedication toward our *supreme* goal—experiencing eternal life in the Kingdom of God, becoming *full* sons of God with glorified bodies and participating in a joyous, zestful life of accomplishment throughout the entire universe! All too often, we get our minds completely *off* the great GOAL set before us.

God inspired the Apostle Paul to compare our efforts with those of the Olympic-class athletes: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Corinthians 9:24–25). Note that a top athlete must be “temperate” in all things. He or she cannot smoke at all. If one is to drink alcohol, it must be in *real* moderation—and even then not just before a performance. Athletes must be “in control” of their bodies, their minds and their emotions at all times. They must “think positive,” be “keyed up” and DRIVE themselves to be the very best they can be!

Anything less will doom them to failure, for they are not preparing for an afternoon “pick-up” softball game with the boys. They are competing against the very top athletes of the entire world. They *know* that most of those other young people will be deeply motivated to WIN for their personal honor, the honor of their family and friends and the honor of the *entire nation* that they represent. They know that the American athletes, for instance, will be moved profoundly by the thought of standing on the victory platform, seeing the American flag featured and hearing the rousing notes of the trumpets, the trombones and all the instruments playing “The Star Spangled Banner” in *their* honor—and the honor of *their* nation.

WOW!

What an *inspiration* this is to the vibrant young athletes who set for themselves the goal of winning a gold medal in the Olympic Games. Achieving that goal will be a high point—perhaps *the* high point—of their

entire lives on planet Earth. For all of the arduous early morning and sometimes late evening training, often in addition to regular jobs or careers—all of the self-sacrifice and self-discipline, all of the missed parties and missed socializing—will have been more than worth it to these athletes in their moment of glory.

At the 1960 Olympic Games, Jeff Farrell was America's top hope in swimming. Just six days before the Olympic trials, Farrell was taken to the hospital for an emergency appendectomy. The rest of the story was told in *Parade Magazine*, February 18, 1996:

With the stitches still not removed and against doctor's orders, Farrell entered both the 100- and the 200-meter trials. "I finished third in the 100-meters and missed making the team, since only the first two finishers were selected," recalled Farrell. "But then I learned that two relay teams would be selected from the first six finishers in the 200-meters."

Farrell made the relay teams and swam the anchor legs, leading the U.S.A. to two gold medals and two world records. "I wanted to win an Olympic gold medal, and nothing was going to stop me," Farrell said.

"Nothing" was going to stop him from winning? That, my brethren, is the "attitude of a champion"! A true champion goes ALL OUT to achieve his goals. He does not keep looking behind him to see if the "other guy" is catching up. Rather, with all his being, he goes straight forward—"flat out" as we say—and drives himself to the finish line.

After describing his profound desire to attain his GOAL—to participate in the resurrection from the dead—the Apostle Paul wrote: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

Paul said, "I PRESS toward the goal..." How many of us are headed "flat out" for the Kingdom of God? How many are truly disciplining themselves to get up early enough each morning to PRAY earnestly and at length before anything else can interfere? How many are disciplining themselves in the "spiritual Olympics" in which we are all involved and "making time" for regular, intensive Bible study, meditation and fasting? How many of us are truly giving our LIVES to God in order to be with Him FOREVER?

In the 1960 Olympic Games, America's top discus thrower was Al Oerter. He was given little chance to defeat world-record-holder Ludvik Danek of Czechoslovakia, who had won 45 straight competitions. Again, the above-mentioned article in *Parade Magazine* tells us the rest of the story:

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What Is Your Breaking Point?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Once or twice a year, I look through old *Envoys*—yearbooks from Ambassador College. I note the leaders from my student years, and from the better part of 35 years I spent as a teacher. Where have these “leaders” gone? What happened to most of the student body presidents and even many of the *evangelists* in the Church of God?

It is genuinely terrible to contemplate. For most of them fell away. In one way or another, the majority of these select individuals left the Work of God, left the Truth and left all that they apparently stood for when they were appointed or ordained as “leaders.”

WHY?

Only God knows the complete answer in each individual case. However, as one who taught many of them, as one who was “Men’s Guidance Counselor” for many years, I have meditated about and prayed about this matter many times. When I look back on these young men and recall their attitudes and the words and phrases they sometimes used, one key issue keeps presenting itself. Even though these men often came from church families, then came to Ambassador College and were taught by Herbert W. Armstrong, Herman Hoeh, myself and others, they often lacked one single, yet profound, characteristic.

Most of these student leaders or evangelists had Bible knowledge, reasonably good personality and motivation, but they lacked the very *first* characteristic which God’s Word tells us must come *before* true wisdom, understanding or spiritual knowledge.

The book of Proverbs tells us: “The FEAR of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). Again, God’s inspired Word tells us: “The FEAR of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

So *genuine* wisdom and understanding begin with our profound realization of how REAL and how GREAT God truly is and how much we NEED Him. And *faith* also comes from this basic understanding of the REALITY of God and His power: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must BELIEVE that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

With this deep awareness of the reality of God and a genuine AWE of God’s greatness and power, Abraham—the “father of the faithful”—was moved even to be willing to sacrifice his own son (Genesis 22). At the last moment, however, God stopped Abraham from carrying out this act because Abraham had already proved that he did have the profound *awe*, the *reverence* and the “fear” of His Creator. God told

Abraham, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I KNOW that you FEAR God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (v. 12).

Unfortunately, many of the early ministers and student leaders in the Work did not have the real fear of God. Rather, as I contemplate their words and actions, I can now see clearly that they were simply trying to “play the game” and trying to “be successful” in the human *organization* that we called “the Work.” In fact, a few of them literally said in my presence, “You’ve got to learn how to please the fourth floor!” By this, they meant the highest floor of the administration building in Pasadena where Mr. Armstrong, and later Mr. Tkach and other top leaders, had their offices.

Within the context of their statements, I began to realize that these men were trying harder to please Mr. Armstrong and other human leaders than they were to please God. In their carnal reasoning, they forgot that the real BOSS of the true Work of God has His office WAY ABOVE the “fourth floor”—*or any other floor!*

Because God was not real to many of these men, they would often “play up” to, flatter, or go along with their superiors in the Work even IF those supposed “leaders” were forsaking the right way of doing things or even—as *happened later*—forsak-

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What Is a Calling from God?

Have you been called? What are you doing with that calling?

By Douglas S. Winnail

The Bible speaks of people being called by God. But what does that mean? Just what is a calling? Have you been called? Is God calling you? How would you know? What proof do you have? Is everyone who believes in God called by God? Why does God call people? Does God call people for a purpose other than just to know Him and love Him? Is a calling the same as conversion?

In this article we will examine what the Bible reveals about a calling. We will find out what constitutes a calling and why it is such a unique opportunity. We will also learn why it is vital to understand what Scripture reveals about this important subject. Many questions that cause division among Christians arise today because some have forgotten—or never understood or do not believe—what the Bible plainly states about a calling.

An Old Testament Calling

In the book of Isaiah, we find several references to a calling from God. Isaiah refers to a “Servant” of God, an “Elect One,” who is *called* by God to be a “covenant to the people and a light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1–6). These verses are speaking prophetically of Jesus Christ and the role He was to fulfill. However, they seem to contain a *dual* reference to the nation of Israel, which the previous chapter describes as the “servant” of God (Isaiah 41:8–10). This same parallel reference to Christ and Israel is found in Isaiah 49:1–6, where the servant of God is *called* to be a light to the Gentiles. The Hebrew word translated “called” is *qara*, which means “invited, requested, ordered.” These scriptures indicated that God called both Christ and the nation of Israel *for a purpose*—to do a job. We will see that this same meaning—being called for a purpose—carries over into the New Testament.

Jesus Explains

In the book of Matthew we read that “out of Egypt I *called* my Son” (Matthew 2:15). Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with the infant Jesus to save His life (Matthew 2:13–14). However, this refuge in Egypt was only temporary until the family could return to their home in Nazareth

(vv. 19–23). Jesus was *called* out of Egypt to fulfill a mission—to preach the gospel, train disciples, give His life as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind and raise up a Church to continue His work. As we will see, God calls people into His Church not to hide from the world—or just to socialize together—but to take part in a vital mission.

To the disciples He called, Jesus clearly outlined the purpose of a calling. The Greek word translated “called” means *to be invited* or *to receive an invitation*. Christ invited the disciples to “follow” Him and become “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18–22). They were invited to follow His example and instructions—and to do His work. They were not invited to question, criticize or second-guess their Teacher. They were not invited to *ignore* His instruction to preach the gospel or to *innovate* upon His teachings. They were called for very important reasons—and to receive a specific reward!

Jesus also stated “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13). We are not called because of our goodness or because we deserve to be called, but because *we need to change!* The Bible plainly states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In spite of the message of the old Protestant hymn, a person is not called to *remain* “just as I am.” We are called to repent and change, to grow and overcome and to learn to live by the laws of God—for a truly awesome purpose that is outlined in numerous scriptural passages.

Jesus told His *called* disciples they were given spiritual understanding not available to other people—not even to others who professed belief in God. When asked by His disciples why He spoke in parables, Jesus answered: “Because it has been *given to you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to them [other Jews of that day] it has *not been given*” (Matthew 13:10–11). Jesus then quoted Old Testament prophecies that indicate people who are *not called* will *not see or understand* what His *called* disciples would understand (Matthew 13:12–16). The parable of the sower warns about taking a calling for granted, about giving up on our calling during trials and letting the cares of this world distract us from our calling (Matthew 13:18–23). Jesus told the disciples He had already called “unless you are converted... you will by no means enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 18:3), revealing that a calling is not synonymous with conversion. Jesus also cau-

tioned, “many are called, but *few* are chosen” (Matthew 20:16). In essence, He said a calling does not mean that a person will automatically be in the Kingdom of God!

In the book of John, Jesus makes another surprising observation about a calling. He states that “no one can come to Me unless the Father *draws* [calls] him” (John 6:44, 65). In other words, in spite of what people are told today, you cannot become a real Christian just by attending the church of your choice. A calling is not just a matter of deciding to give your heart to the Lord. God must first call you—and understanding must be *granted* to you! Jesus then launches into a very spiritual discussion that many of His disciples did not understand (see John 6:60). Those that did not comprehend simply ceased to follow Him (vv. 63–66). This means that while people may sincerely believe in God, if their minds have not been opened to grasp the plan of God and the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, they are not being called right now. Millions of professing Christians and people believe in God. But if they reject the Truth—that Christmas is a pagan invention and an offense against God, that going to heaven is not the reward of a Christian, that God is not a Trinity, that the Holy Spirit is not a person and that the Sabbath and the Holy Days should be observed by Christ’s followers today—they simply have *not been called*. A calling, which God grants for a specific reason, is a *very special invitation* by God to understand His plan and the purpose of human life.

Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus did not go running after followers who did not understand His message to try to get them to change their minds—so they could be saved! Jesus knew that God was calling those who were given to Him and that others were simply not being called at that time. Other scriptures reveal that their calling—their opportunity to understand—would be at a later date.

Paul’s Perspective

The Apostle Paul was inspired to reveal additional details about a calling. He explains that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the *called* according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). He explains that in God’s plan of salvation He predestined (or predetermined) to call an *initial* group of people who would be justified by Christ’s sacrifice to become glorified spirit beings as the *firstfruits* in God’s kingdom (Romans 8:23–30). Paul shows that if we accept that calling and are willing to be led by God’s Spirit (following what God opens our minds to understand) we will have the opportunity to become “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:14–17). That is an awesome opportunity, as we will see!

Paul goes on to emphasize that one must respond to the gospel preached by God’s true ministers—ministers

“sent” by God (Romans 10:13–15). “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (v. 15). Only those who “call on Him,” believe the gospel and act on it will be saved.

Paul also explains that God is calling an “elect” (Romans 11:5) but that his own countrymen, although they believed in God, were temporarily blinded from fully understanding the plan of God because they did not believe Jesus Christ was the Messiah (Romans 11:8–25). Paul explains that while their calling (to be the chosen people of God) is irrevocable, they are currently in a state of disobedience, in contrast to the elect who are being called now (Romans 11:28–32) to learn to live by every word of God.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “you see your calling brethren, that *not many wise* according to the flesh, *not many noble* are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). God is only calling those who are humble enough to follow His instructions as recorded in His word—the Bible. God is not able to work with people who like to argue over the Scriptures or who want to interpret the Bible according to their own feelings. Paul *repeats* Jesus’ words that the Holy Spirit imparts **special spiritual understanding** of the mysteries of God to those who are *called*—understanding *not* available to others in the world at this time (1 Corinthians 2). This is a key aspect of a calling from God. If you can clearly see what the Bible reveals as the plan of God—if the gospel of the Kingdom of God makes sense to you—you have tangible proof that you have received a calling from God! The question is what are you doing with that calling? We are also told in Scripture that God gives His Spirit to those who *obey* Him (Acts 5:32; John 14:14–15). This means that if we begin to compromise the truth of God, argue with the Scriptures and follow our own ideas we will begin to *lose the discernment* that God’s Spirit imparts (2 Timothy 1:6–7). We could then be deceived, and we could lose out on our calling!

Paul’s writings also discuss other aspects of a calling. He told the Corinthians who were called but were still in slavery or had an unconverted mate, “let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (1 Corinthians 7:20). A person called as a slave might seek freedom (v. 21), but freedom in itself is not the chief goal for a true Christian. We are not called to change the world now—that will come in the future—we are called now to *change ourselves!* The main purpose for our calling is to learn to *live by* the commandments of God (v. 19). Paul urges the Ephesians to “walk worthy of your calling” in humility, gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:1). He explains we are called into *one* unified body and *one* faith—not into many different groups and versions of the truth (Ephesians 4:3–6). He warns *called* Ephesians not to

be deceived by returning to the works of darkness they had been *called out of* (Ephesians 5:1–14).

Paul similarly advises the church at Thessalonica that we have been *called to holiness* (1 Thessalonians 4:7). This involves learning to avoid the lusts and evils of this world (1 Thessalonians 4:1–7). If we reject *living by* God's instructions we will, in essence, reject God and our calling from God! We understand that it was Paul who in Hebrews told those who were called to inherit salvation, “to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, *lest we drift away*” (Hebrews 1:14; 2:1). Paul asked the same audience of called individuals: “How shall we escape if we *neglect* so great a salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3). The Scriptures plainly reveal that a calling is not something to take lightly!

Peter's Principles

The Apostle Peter reiterates many of the same points that Jesus and Paul made about a calling. Peter writes we have been *called out of darkness* (our former religious or irreligious background) to be a special people “to proclaim the praises of Him who called you” (1 Peter 2:9). He warns that some may *stumble* over the word of God (1 Peter 2:8) by getting involved in fruitless arguments or developing doubts and lose out on their calling. Peter goes on to show (as did Paul in Ephesians 5) that our calling involves learning to follow God's instructions. We are to be subject to government, servants are to be subject to their masters, women are to be subject to their husbands, husbands are to love their wives, children are to honor their parents and we are all to be of one mind (1 Peter 2; 3). We are called to learn God's way of life so we will be able to teach it to others—both now (1 Peter 3:15) and in the future Kingdom of God (Isaiah 30:20–21).

Peter stresses the “exceedingly great and precious promises” that we have been *called* to receive, promises of eternal life, a knowledge of God's purpose for human life, to be *partakers of the divine nature* [become members of God's family], and to escape the corruption [deception and depravity] that permeates this world—once our minds have been opened (2 Peter 1:1–4). Peter admonishes us to “**make your calling and election sure**” by *adding* specific qualities to our character—courage, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and brotherly love (2 Peter 1:5–11). Peter is saying that Jesus does *not* do everything for us! There are things *we must do* to make our calling sure!

Peter also explains that those who are *called* will be given a “**more sure word of prophecy**” (KJV), so they can accomplish their mission of warning the world of events that will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ (v. 19). And he states clearly that the Scriptures are *not* for private interpretation (v. 20). Peter also warns that those who are called

must be careful to avoid being deceived by false teachers who spread heresies, who despise authority and are self-willed, who promise freedom, yet bring people into bondage to misleading and wrong ideas (2 Peter 2:1–19). He observes that a Christian willingly returning to false teachings after being called is like a dog returning to its own vomit (v. 22). That is a strong statement, but it is how God views someone who turns away from His calling! But *why* is God calling a special group of people *now* before He calls the rest of mankind? What is the ultimate purpose of our calling?

A Calling—the Ultimate Purpose!

Some of the most exciting details of a calling are found in the writings of the Apostle John in the closing books of the Bible. John reveals that we are to be “called children of God” and that “when He is revealed, we shall be *like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1–3). Our purpose for being called is to learn to become *like God*—to think as He does and to act as He does. This will require serious effort on our part (1 John 3:4). Those who accept this calling to repent and change and grow in their understanding and application of the laws of God will be given the opportunity to *reign as kings and priests* with Jesus Christ when He returns to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 11:15–18). Those called now are *invited* to become the **firstfruits**—a small, specially trained nucleus of individuals that God will begin to build His kingdom around (Revelation 7:1–4; 14:1–4). They will become founding members of a world ruling government that Jesus will set up in Jerusalem to bring peace and justice to this planet (Isaiah 2:2–4; 9:6–7). They will have the opportunity to teach God's way of life to all mankind (Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:9).

But what will it take to achieve this incredible goal? Who will actually have the privilege of accompanying Jesus Christ at His return? Again the Apostle John's inspired writings reveal the answer. In the book of Revelation we are told that Jesus will return to this earth in triumph as King of kings and Lord of lords, “and those who are with Him are **called, chosen and faithful**” (Revelation 17:14). As we have seen, those who are *called* are given special spiritual understanding that is not yet available to the rest of mankind. This understanding enables them to grasp the true purpose of human life and the overall outline of God's plan. Those who are *chosen* have accepted their calling and repented and are being led by the Holy Spirit to grow and change. They have learned to live by every word of God so they can teach others. Those who are *faithful* will endure through the trials and temptations of this life. They will avoid being deceived

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The Hebrew Calendar—Part 1

Is It Valid for the Church Today?

By John H. Ogwyn

Since 1986, the calendar has been a recurring source of doctrinal controversy in the Church of God. Many articles and papers have proposed different methods of calculating the dates of the annual festivals, and at least a half-dozen different calendars and calculation methods have been offered.

This has troubled many sincere brethren who want to do what pleases God. With all the controversy, they are unsure. But does God really expect each individual Church member to become an expert on calendar matters?

We can understand the “calendar issue” by asking three simple questions, and then answering them from the Bible. Do the rules of the current Hebrew calendar conform to Biblical principles and guidelines? Does God expect each Christian to determine the calendar for himself, or did He entrust some authority to make calendar decisions? And can we really know what calendar Jesus Christ and His Apostles used?

Is the Hebrew Calendar Based Upon the Bible?

Does the Bible give guidelines regarding the calendar we should use in observing God’s festivals? If so, what are those guidelines and

where do we find them? First, let us ask whether the calendar should be based on physical sighting of the new moon, or whether it should be based on calculation. Some argue that the only valid way to begin a new month is to actually see the faint crescent of the new moon. Does the Bible resolve this argument? Absolutely!

The Hebrew word *chodesh* is translated “month” in most English-language Bibles. Its root meaning involves “making new” or “repairing.” The moon orbits the earth, going through its phases as its position changes in relation to the sun and the earth. Approximately every 29-and-a-half days, the moon comes into exact conjunction between the earth and the sun, and the three orbs are in a straight line with one another (though not necessarily on the same plane). In conjunction, the moon is totally dark, reflecting none of the sun’s light. As it moves westward, away from conjunction, it again begins to reflect light. Depending on the observer’s location and the earth’s position at conjunction, the new moon will generally not be visible until one or two days after the conjunction.

Note that basing the new month upon physical sighting of the new moon would require keeping the Feast of Trumpets for two days! An

observer cannot know, in advance, on which day he might see the new moon. Depending upon the exact time of conjunction, he might see the crescent on either the 30th or 31st day after the last new crescent. Since days begin at sunset, observers would have to keep the 30th day after the new crescent of Elul (6th month) as holy time, as they might see the new crescent that evening, though they would more commonly see it on the following evening.

For this reason, even in the land of Israel, Jews who follow the Pharisees’ traditions observe the Feast of Trumpets for two days back-to-back. Without making it a two-day celebration to ensure that the right day is observed, it is impossible to base the celebration of the Feast of Trumpets, the first day of the seventh month, on physical sighting of the new moon. Yet upon examining Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29, it is clear that the Feast of Trumpets must be observed for one day rather than two. This alone mandates a calculated calendar, in which the new moon day is determined in advance.

Another even more significant issue—the intercalary year—also requires a calendar calculated in advance. Intercalary years are those in which a 13th month is added. Twelve lunar months are equal to just over 354 days. A solar year is

equal to just over 365 days. Using a calendar based only on 12 lunar months, this 11-day difference would cause the festivals to occur about a month earlier every three years in relation to the solar year and the seasons. Yet Leviticus 23:10–11 mandates that the priests should offer an omer of barley as a wave offering to God on the Sunday during the Days

to celebrate Passover in their own area? Significant numbers would either have been a month early or a month late! Remember, they could not call ahead on the telephone or check someone's Web site! There was either an established pattern followed, or there would have been confusion among Jews throughout the Diaspora.

How could a calculated calendar have been figured anciently? In antiquity, man had only two ways of knowing the time of the new moon. One was by physical sighting of the crescent; the other was by calculation based upon the average time between conjunctions.

of Unleavened Bread, beginning the 50-day count to Pentecost. Clearly, this required that the first month, Abib or Nisan, could not be allowed to fall so early that no ripe grain would be available for the offering. This required the addition of a 13th month about every three years. But how was this addition determined?

Those who argue for direct physical sighting assert that the priests examined the grain crop each year before the end of the 12th month, and if they saw that it would not be ripe soon enough they added a 13th month to postpone the first month for about 30 days. The only alternative would be a regular cycle, calculated by the priests, to determine which years had 12 and which had 13 months. Is there biblical evidence as to the priests' practice? There certainly is!

Acts 2, for instance, reminds us that Jews came to Jerusalem from all over the known world. If the decision regarding the 13th month were made a few weeks before Passover, how would Jews all over the world have known when to come to Jerusalem—or, for that matter, when

How could a calculated calendar have been figured anciently? In antiquity, man had only two ways of knowing the time of the new moon. One was by physical sighting of the crescent; the other was by calculation based upon the average time between conjunctions.

Some today wish to offer a substitute calendar based not on averages or observation, but on figures they have obtained from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) or the U. S. Naval Observatory. These figures are derived from satellite observation and are supposed to be more exact than the averages from which the traditional Hebrew calendar was calculated.

Please understand, if there is one calendar that we can absolutely *prove* that Christ and the Apostolic Church DID NOT use, it is one based on satellite observation! The **only calculated calendar that could possibly be used until after about 1968** was one based upon the average length of time between conjunctions.

How were these averages obtained? Conjunctions of the sun, moon and earth are invisible except during a solar eclipse. Solar eclipses can occur only at the time of the new moon. Because the moon's orbit is normally a few degrees above or below the plane of the earth-sun orbit, it is usually invisible when it is lined up in a direct line with the earth and sun—the time of conjunction. However, when the moon is on the exact plane of the earth-sun orbit, it will block the sun as it moves across, thereby making an eclipse of the sun.

A lunar eclipse, which can be seen on earth far more frequently than a solar eclipse, is the exact opposite of a solar eclipse. It can occur only at the time of the full moon, exactly halfway between conjunctions, when the moon is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. By carefully recording the time of such eclipses and calculating the amount of time between them, the ancients were able to arrive at the average length of time between conjunctions. We speak of an "average" because the actual length can vary from month to month by a few hours, primarily because of the earth's elliptical orbit around the sun and the resulting variation in the sun's gravitational pull on the moon. While satellites may enable us to record conjunctions that are invisible from earth, **ancient man could only calculate based upon averages.**

Using eclipses, the average length of time between conjunctions of the sun, moon and earth can be calculated. This figure can then be used to calculate the new moon for years—and centuries—in advance. While the exact conjunction (invisible from earth anyway, except during a solar eclipse) may vary from the calculated *molad* (a Hebrew term referring to the "birth" of the moon) by up to a few hours, the calculations average out over time. And

they are always *very* close; not accumulating lost or gained time even over many centuries.

The Hebrew calendar uses 29 days, 12 hours and 793 parts (an hour contains 1,080 parts) as the duration of the average lunar month. This works out to 29.53059 days in decimal form. According to the 15th edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, modern astronomers using satellites and computers have come up with the figure 29.530589—one one-millionth of a day difference!

How did the Hebrew calendar come to use such an accurate figure for the average length of the month? Some contend that they adopted their number from Babylonian or Greek astronomers. There is a problem with that theory, however. The figure used by the Greeks, Babylonians and Egyptians was not as accurate as that used by the Jews! If we grant that Israel of old borrowed the number from one of their ancient neighbors, then why did they modify it? How did they know to modify it just the right amount, making it more exact than the one used by anyone else? Remember, the figure used anciently to calculate the Hebrew calendar, 29.53059 days per month, was the same one used by NASA up through 1968 when satellite and computer technology allowed them to take the number out one more decimal place. How could an ancient Israelite mathematician have arrived at a more exact figure than his contemporaries? Exodus 31:1–11 shows that God's Spirit empowered two men, Bezalel and Aholiab, to have special understanding and knowledge in being able to craft the items needed for the tabernacle. Did God's Spirit also lead someone to have special ability for making astronomical calculations to fix the calendar? Clearly, someone did make a calculation that remained unsurpassed until the decade when the United States put a man on the moon!

Does the Bible support using eclipses to calculate the length of time from one new moon to another? It certainly does! Notice Genesis 1:14. God set the sun and the moon for signs and seasons. The Hebrew word for sign, *'ot*, is a term that often refers to remarkable and dramatic signs. It is used in Exodus 4:8–9 for instance, to describe the dramatic wonders that God worked in ancient Egypt. There are no more dramatic signs designed into the interaction of the sun and moon than solar and lunar eclipses. These signs provide the basis of a calculated calendar.

Additionally, the heavenly bodies were for what the *King James Version* calls “seasons” and the *Jewish Publication Society Version* calls “appointed times.” The Hebrew word is *mo'ed*. This is the term used in Psalm 104:19 where we learn that God “has appointed the moon for seasons [*mo'ed*].” In other words, the phases of the moon determine the progression of the month. God's annual festivals are either connected to the new moon at the beginning of the month or the full moon at the middle of the month.

Other biblical guidelines concern the seasonal timing of the Passover festival and the Feast of Tabernacles. We are told that Unleavened Bread is to be celebrated in the month of Abib, which means “green ears” (Exodus 23:15). From Leviticus 23 we also learn that once Israel entered the Promised Land there was to be a priestly ceremony involving the offering of the wave sheaf, the *omer*, on the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The grain harvest could not begin until after that occasion. These stipulations require that Passover come in early spring.

Also, Exodus 34:22 refers to the Feast of Tabernacles as coming at the “end of the year” (Hebrew, *tekufah*).

This term literally means a “circuit” or “revolution” of time—a cycle. In later Rabbinic Hebrew, *tekufah* became a technical term referring to the equinox and, by extension, to the season following. However, we must be careful about ascribing to Moses the technical usage of medieval rabbis. The term, used only four times in the Old Testament, was originally more general in its meaning. It is the term in 1 Samuel 1:20 that refers to the cycle of time between Hannah's conception and the birth of Samuel. In 2 Chronicles 24:23, *tekufah* refers to the time of the year when Syria attacked Judah. The other place it is used is in Psalm 19:6 where it refers to the sun's daily circuit across the heavens. Exodus 34:22 thus implies that the Feast of Tabernacles should occur when the cycle of the agricultural year is complete, about the time that summer gives way to fall. This point is made in a slightly different manner in Exodus 23:16. Again the *King James Version* translates that the Feast of Tabernacles is to occur at the “end of the year,” but this time uses a completely different word, meaning literally “the going out” of the year. It is the same term used in Exodus 13:8 to refer to Israel going out of Egypt. In other words, the Feast of Tabernacles comes at “the going out” of the harvest season of the agricultural year, right after the time when the harvest would be gathered into barns (that is why the term “Feast of Ingathering” is used), to protect it from the upcoming rainy season. This festival season of the seventh month was celebrated when summer was giving way to fall. To insist that *tekufah* could not refer to so much as one day before the autumnal equinox is to take a definition from the Talmud—not the Bible—and insist upon reading it back into scriptures written more than 16 centuries earlier.

We have seen that the Bible gives guidelines that require a calculated

calendar, such as Trumpets being celebrated for one day and not two. It also shows that the interactions of the sun, moon and earth were to be factored in so that the numbering of the days of the month would be connected with the phases of the moon. We have also seen that celebration of the festivals is tied both to the beginning of the grain harvest and to the time when crops were to be gathered into barns at the end of summer. But are other aspects of the calendar, such as the so-called “postponements,” also necessary and based on biblical guidelines?

We must note that in the Hebrew calendar, the new moon of the *seventh month* (Tishri) is calculated, rather than the new moon of the first month (Abib). As this is the only new moon that is designated as holy time, it is also the new moon that is most essential to determine. The other holy days are figured from it. There is also an astronomical reason for this practice, since the time from the vernal equinox (spring) to the following autumnal equinox (fall) is about a week longer than from the autumnal equinox to the following vernal equinox.

The “postponements” are simply calendar adjustments that determine which day should be proclaimed as the first day of Tishri. While there are generally said to be four postponement rules, actually there are two primary ones. The other two are just logical extensions of the first two, to ensure that a year does not have too many or too few days.

The first rule we should look at states that if the calculated conjunction, the *molad* of Tishri, occurs after noon on a given day, the first day of the month is “postponed” until the following day. This rule results from the way time is measured on a round earth, and the length of time the moon takes to move out of conjunc-

tion and beyond the arc of the sun. After all, the term for “new moon” in scripture refers to the “repairing” of the moon. While a calculated calendar does not require that the visible crescent be sighted, it should at least be theoretically possible to sight that crescent. And it takes six hours past the conjunction before the moon has moved far enough beyond the sun’s arc to begin reflecting light once again—the “repairing” of the moon. Whether or not a reflection is actually seen is purely incidental, as the calendar is based upon the calculated averages. Clearly though, this postponement rule is not merely based upon a Pharisaic tradition, rather, it is mandated by Scripture and by astronomy.

The other main rule is that if the calculated *molad* of Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, the first day of the month (which will be the Feast of Trumpets) is considered to begin on the following day, i.e., Monday, Thursday or Saturday. What is the scriptural basis for this? In Leviticus 23, where God first gave Moses a detailed list of His festivals, He explained that these days’ levels of sanctity fell into two categories. For six of these days—the first and seventh Day of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, the first day of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day—Moses was to instruct Israel that “no servile work” be done. However, the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement were different. On these two days, “no work whatsoever” was to be done. Clearly God placed these two days in a slightly different category than the others. Additionally, in describing Trumpets, the first day of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day, the term *shabbaton*, translated “Sabbath,” was used. For the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement a different descriptive term—*shabbat shabbaton*—was used, translated “a Sabbath of rest.”

Recognizing that God set the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement apart in their level of sanctity, the Levitical priesthood sought to implement these instructions in proclaiming the festivals. They realized that the Day of Atonement, a *shabbat shabbaton* upon which “no work whatsoever” was to be done, should not be the preparation day for the weekly Sabbath (which would occur if the first of Tishri came on a Wednesday). Additionally, they avoided the weekly Sabbath being the preparation day for Atonement, which would happen if Tishri 1 fell on a Friday.

This practice also avoided the weekly Sabbath, *shabbat shabbaton*, being the preparation day for the other three fall holy days which were only *shabbaton*, (this would occur if Tishri 1 came on a Sunday). Note that according to Exodus 12:16, the first and seventh days of Unleavened Bread in the spring were in a different category; God had specifically approved the preparation of food on these days. And Pentecost, of course, always fell on Sunday as a result of God-ordained calculation.

Two other rules concerning postponements are really just logical extensions derived from the first two, regulating the number of days in a year so that the first of each month stays connected with the new moon.

The calendar adjustments regarding Tishri 1 are based upon instructions God gave to the Levitical priesthood through Moses in Leviticus 23. God made clear that two days—Sabbath and Atonement—had a special degree of sanctity, and based upon those instructions the priesthood sought to conform their celebrations to His wishes.

(Editor’s note: In the January-February 2001 Living Church News, John Ogwyn will explain in part 2 of this article who has the responsibility for keeping the calendar.) 

Christian “Soldiers”

By Robert J. Thiel

Since World War II, the United States Army has had an elite fighting force called the Rangers. The Rangers were called “triple volunteers,” since most volunteered for the Army, all volunteered to become paratroopers and all volunteered to be Rangers. Ranger training was tough as well as multi-faceted. Rangers were trained to use all types of weapons and to fight in all types of situations. The Rangers were highly disciplined troops meant to spearhead battles and to go (and fight) behind enemy lines.

Being a Ranger was not easy. Rangers ran everywhere in training, often while carrying 30 to 90 pounds of gear. They often slept outside, even in the rain. Since they were outdoors more than most soldiers, they more often ate the Army’s simplest canned rations. Though diligent in training and in battle, Rangers had an extremely high casualty rate.

Rangers rarely surrendered. Sometimes, when surrounded by an adversary, they would simply fight at one spot in enemy lines and break through. Often the Rangers succeeded at this; when they failed, they died in the attempt.

During the Korean War, one unit of Rangers was surrounded, vastly outnumbered by the enemy, and was attacked all night. They had to be vigilant since not only were they being attacked from afar, but many enemy soldiers also tried stealthily to enter their bunkers to destroy them. The Rangers killed so many of their adversaries that to continue fighting they had to move the enemy soldiers’ dead bodies out of the way. The morning after that battle, a non-Ranger unit commander came by with

his troops. After seeing the tremendous number of enemy dead, he told his troops, “See, this is what happens when you do not panic”—implying that the Rangers would all have been dead themselves if they had not resisted so hard nor endured the hardships of their training.

Christian Training

Somewhat like the Rangers, Christians are also an elite group, though they are not to take up arms as do the Rangers. Jesus said, “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it... For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 7:14; 22:14). Jesus said that, like some Rangers in battle, “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:4–5). Christians must be separate from the world (James 1:27) and live according to God’s rules (1 John 2:3–5). A Christian must not be like the one who receives seed among the thorns, “who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

Christians must be balanced. “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and

bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:25–27). Christians must be disciplined.

Christian “Weapons”

Paul taught, “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ... Be diligent to present yourself approved of God” (2 Timothy 2:3, 15). But Paul acknowledged that Christians’ battles are different. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ’s, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s” (2 Corinthians 10:4–7).

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done

all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:11–18).

It is amazing that carnal humans will voluntarily subject themselves to severe military discipline, severe athletic discipline, or other hardships for non-spiritual pursuits, while some who claim to be Christians will not. Some professing Christians seem to forget that “the world is passing away... but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17).

Are we who claim to be Christians so disciplined? Are we skilled in all the “weapons” at our disposal? When Paul writes, “above all taking the shield of faith” (Ephesians 6:16), do we remember that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17) and that “prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21) can help deal with the “unbelief” of those who claim to be believers (v. 20)? Do we pray always? Do we fast regularly? Do we study the word of God regularly so we can use “the sword of the Spirit”?

Christians Love Their Enemies

In addition to our weapons not being carnal, there are, of course, other differences. While many are taught to hate their enemies. Christians are taught to love theirs (Matthew 5:43–44).

When surrounded by enemies, we do not do what the Rangers do—we do not love our enemies by killing them. Jesus said: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men” (Matthew 10:16–17).

Diligent Christian Soldiers Do Not Lose

Just like the Rangers, Christians have often had to face an enemy, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him” (1 Peter 5:8–9). But unlike many of the Rangers, we do not have to become casualties, as Jesus said: “Behold, I give you authority... over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19).

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10–11).

If elite, carnal soldiers take their missions so seriously, how much more seriously should we, as Christian soldiers, take our calling? ☐

What Is *Your* Breaking Point? (continued from page 3)

ing the ENTIRE Truth of Almighty God! Some were simply “afraid” that they would lose their incomes, their jobs, and their careers in the ministry—because the true GOD was not real to them! Others, in their utter carnality, were “playing the angles” to get ahead in the organization.

If you or I forsake the Truth or the *faithful* leadership, which Christ *always* has made available somewhere in His Church, will we find “security” in numbers—in just “following the crowd”? Listen to GOD’S comment on this attitude: “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they JOIN FORCES, none will go unpunished. In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the FEAR of the LORD one departs from evil” (Proverbs 16:5–6).

Clearly, even if six million or even six BILLION people would all “join forces” in opposing God, it *doesn’t make any difference!* The man or woman who has the *genuine* FEAR of the Everlasting God will triumph in the end.

Of course, once you prove where Christ is now working, you are commanded by God to show *deference* and *respect* to His true servants. “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:7–8). And again, “OBEY those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (v. 17).

Obviously, in all practical and administrative matters, be submissive to the ministry and leadership in

the true Church of God. *Do not* always be the stubborn or recalcitrant individual with whom everyone has a “hard time.” But, on the other hand, in basic doctrine and Truth, remember the statement, “Jesus Christ is the SAME yesterday, today and forever.”

Most of the spiritually “weak” individuals who left the Truth—even during the days of Herbert W. Armstrong—were not walking in the FEAR of God. Therefore, some allowed themselves to get their “feelings hurt” and LEFT the Work of the Living Jesus Christ. Others, lacking

Apostle John’s pointed critique of the Pharisees: “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; *for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*” (John 12:42–43). What are you doing to ensure that NOTHING will ever cause you to fall away? That, in spite of God using imperfect men and women to do His Work, *nothing* will ever cause you to become bitter, resentful, overly discouraged or even disoriented so that you would *turn*

What are you doing to ensure that NOTHING will ever cause you to fall away? That, in spite of God using imperfect men and women to do His Work, *nothing* will ever cause you to become bitter, resentful, overly discouraged, or even disoriented so that you would *turn away*?

the genuine AWE of their Creator, simply slipped away into the morass of worldliness as Jesus warned: “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

Think carefully: What is your “breaking point”? What will it take to get your eyes off God and on the “around”? As those former ministers were concerned about the “fourth floor,” are you too concerned about just “getting ahead” in the Church organization as such? Do you get upset or resentful if *someone else* is ordained a deacon or deaconess, or given some other honor in the Church?

Are you too concerned about what *men* think? Remember the

away from the “body” which Christ is using to preach His Truth and do His Work?

Listen to Isaiah’s inspired advice: “SEEK the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6–7). And again, “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who TREMBLES at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Let us be sure that we sincerely seek for and are motivated by the proper *awe*, *reverence* and FEAR of the Great God. Let us pray that everything we think, say and do will be governed by this, *the ultimate reality.* ☞

What Is a Calling from God?

(continued from page 6)

by false teachers and resist being distracted and derailed by the cares of this world. They will hold on to the truth and not compromise the beliefs that God has opened their minds to understand. They will receive the reward of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:20–22, 50–54) to rule on earth as glorified spirit beings among the very first members of God's growing family. This is the ultimate reward for

those who have been called and who remain true to that calling!

Brethren, do you *see* your calling? Do you *really understand* why you are being called? Do you grasp the incredible opportunity that you have been given—to be among the *firstfruits* in God's plan? Are you *determined* to take advantage of that calling? As we approach the end of this age, do not take your calling lightly! Do not take for granted the unique spiritual understanding that God has granted to you! Do not let the cares of this world side-

track you from that remarkable calling. Do not let anyone deceive you and rob you of your crown. Make your calling and election *sure* by developing the knowledge, character and skills that God will be able to use in the years just ahead. You have been *called* to share an awesome reward—the opportunity to play a major role in setting up the Kingdom of God on this earth. Do not miss out on the *special invitation* God has offered to you! Now is time to ponder the question “What are you doing with your calling?” ☐

The Heart of a Champion

(continued from page 2)

It would be difficult to defeat Danek even if I was in top physical condition,” said Oerter recently. “But about a week before the competition, I tore cartilage in my rib cage. The pain was excruciating, and my doctors said there was no way I could compete. Given any other environment, I would have quit. But I remember clearly saying, “These are the Olympic Games, and you DIE for them.” I really felt that. So, on the day of the competition, I decided I would make the supreme effort on just one throw and endure the pain. So, on my fifth attempt, my next to last throw, I let it all out. The pain was unbelievable. I did not see where the discus landed. I was doubled up for a few seconds and blacked out. Then I heard this tremendous roar and it was announced that I had broken the Olympic record and was in first place. The throw held up for the sixth and final round, and I was Olympic champion.

Remember Oerter's key statement: “These are the Olympic Games, and you DIE for them!”

How much MORE should this statement resonate with us who are striving for the absolute *supreme* GOAL in all the earth—to become *full* members of the very Family of God? We must NEVER *take our calling lightly!* Rather, as Paul told Timothy, we must “stir up” the gift of the Holy Spirit. With the help and inspiration of the Living Jesus Christ within us, we must motivate ourselves powerfully to

join Him and the glorified saints in the air above Jerusalem. Then, with Christ, we will descend to this earth in GLORY to join our Savior in RULING over all the nations. With all our being, we must each strive to be part of the glorious *first* resurrection: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

Brethren, though many of our physical bodies are getting old, each of us can and must develop the “heart of a champion.” We must come to understand and profoundly appreciate the magnificent GOAL which God Himself set before us when He called us. Then, we must be willing to go “all out” and even DIE for that goal if necessary!

We ought regularly to review the lesson of the “pearl of great price.” For Jesus taught us: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45–46). Are you and I willing to sell “all” that we have in order to gain that “pearl”? Are we willing to *discipline ourselves* continually, as the young Olympic champions do, in order to achieve *our* ultimate goal?

Even though many of us may not be “champions” by nature, we *can* be champions for Jesus Christ! We *can* surrender to Him and receive *His* strength, *His* nature and *His* character. For *if* we are sincerely trying hard, God Himself will give us all the help we need: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, WORK OUT your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is GOD who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13).



2000 Feast of Tabernacles

Girdwood, AK

Situated amid the incomparable beauty of Alaska's snow-capped mountains, the Feast was attended by about 60 brethren at a world class ski resort, the Westin Alyeska Prince Hotel. Dr. Meredith's opening night message drew us together to keep God's Feast with a right heart and recharge our spiritual batteries. Our identity was the first day's theme, as festival coordinator Mr. Gary Ullerick explained how understanding "first-fruits" is key for us, and Mr. Gary Ehman's illuminating message showed that we are children of light. Taped sermons from Mr. John Ogwyn and Mr. Carl McNair were interspersed between Mr. Ehman's and Mr. Ullerick's live messages throughout the Feast.

In addition to appreciating the awesome beauty of the snow-capped peaks, of Turnagain Arm fjord with its changing tides, and of nearby glaciers, members had opportunities to participate in organized activities. "Alaskan Hospitality Night," held after the first day in members' hotel rooms, featured smoked salmon (the Alaskan "national" dish) and created an atmosphere of fun and fellowship that lasted throughout the Feast.

Although the weather was often rainy, brethren's spirits were

not dampened and numerous other activities were held. These included a visit to Iditarod headquarters near Anchorage, a Feast dance, seniors' luncheon, and teens' and singles' Bible studies. The Alaskan youth choir warmed our hearts with spirited singing. Brethren enjoyed an educational visit to the Alaskan Federation of Natives conference display in Anchorage, where they observed varied arts and crafts.



Baptism of the Living Church of God's first native

Alaskan member was another high point, as Viola Grossier was added to the Body of Christ. The Feast concluded with Last Great Day sermons by Mr. Ehman and Dr. Meredith, after which brethren reluctantly parted—till another Feast brings us together once again.

—Linda Ehman

Kerrville, TX

Feast 2000 in Kerrville, Texas, was full of good spiritual food, good physical food (barbecue) and plenty of activities for everyone. Mr. Richard Ames was the guest speaker for the first half of the Feast, giving three very inspiring and uplifting sermons.

Mr. Keith Walden and Mr. Jonathan McNair coordinated the activities that included trips to San Antonio's Sea World, River Walk, the

Alamo, The Farm (a family recreational farm) and Fredricksburg (a German tourist town). We enjoyed a family dance, a special teen outing and a seniors' luncheon.

The weather was mild with some overcast days that made for cooler temperatures—a blessing, especially for the older brethren. We were blessed with a small but wonderful choir and very fine special music.

After a spiritually and physically full Feast we had a 300-balloon send-off into the blue Texas sky and everyone enjoyed Texas-shaped cookies and peach tea on the patio of the Y.O. Convention Center. We had something for everyone—spiritually as well as physically. Happy trails to all.

—Keith Walden

Jackson Hole, WY

About 200 brethren felt a spiritual oneness surrounded by the magnificent and powerful Grand Teton Mountains in Jackson Hole, Wyoming—perhaps the only Feast site that collects offerings in authentic Wyoming cowboy hats!

On Monday a group of brave souls hiked those towering mountains and the teens, singles and seniors enjoyed dinners and outings. Youth Day was a success, started off by teen Patrick Bukowski leading the congregational singing, and the children's choir singing "God is Bigger Than Big" and "It Won't Be Long Now" led by Mr. Brant. Family Day activities included horseback riding, dinner and dancing at a local cowboy ranch.

Our speakers included Mr. Dave Burson, Dr. Scott Winnail, Mr. Dana

Glatz, Mr. Harold Way from Hawaii, Dr. Jeff Fall and festival organizer Mr. Ben Whitfield. They admonished us to keep focused on the vision of tomorrow's world, and reminded us that the pain we suffer now is insignificant compared to the end result. We were reminded of the spectacular majesty of God and His Way through great slides, and analogies were used to show us that we do not want to be tares or packaging material in God's household, but Spirit-led children.

Our visiting evangelist, Mr. Carl McNair, took us through history to show us how the Last Great Day proves that all other religions are in error. We were drawn visuals through words and given dramatic descriptions of the difference between today's world and tomorrow's world, as well as the importance of tithing, family and staying focused. We heard the analogy between temporary dwellings and our bodies, and how as the body wanes, the spiritual gains.

—Ally Maddox

Lake of the Ozarks, MO

Fall colors peaked at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, and provided the setting for the most beautiful Feast in recent memory. The consensus from over 675 members and visitors was that the spiritual food given was nothing short of outstanding. Guest evangelists John Ogwyn and Dr. Roderick C. Meredith brought encouraging messages picturing the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles and describing the fulfillment of prophecy in today's world. Karl Beyersdorfer traced the origins of today's Mideast

conflict and showed that peace will eventually come to all peoples.

On the second day of the Feast, 60 singles from all age categories fellowshiped around a steak and salmon barbecue. This activity provided singles an opportunity to renew acquaintances and meet new friends.

Family Night had something for everyone. Mike and Holly Beyer presented children's games and crafts with the help of many able assistants. Brian and Brenda Scarborough set up a photo shop where everyone could have his picture taken



with a lion and a lamb, the treasury in Petra, the pyramids, or a succoth in the background. Gary Jones spun the tunes for a family dance and a 12-minute video of LYC 2000 was shown during the evening.

Other Feast activities included the seniors' luncheon. This year, entertainment and a dance followed the buffet. About 80 teens and young singles attended a dance provided for them. Although many of the local attractions are closed in October, several members contacted a go-cart establishment and paid to have it opened for those wishing to race.

Many felt this was the best Feast ever because of the inspiring messages, the enjoyable activities, and the wonderful spirit of cooperation, outgoing concern and warmth.

—Gerald Weston

Panama City, FL

A wide range of activities provided ample opportunity to let "love permeate this feast" as Dr. Roderick C. Meredith admonished us in his keynote address.

The "Big Event" appealing to one and all, especially to families (350-plus attended of the 950-plus at this site), was the beachside family day. What a spectacular show it was to see 40-plus kites decorating the sky. It was also a father/son/daughter activity. We even had a helicopter come by to check out the kites and beachside excitement. With the aid of talented families and individuals, and even youngsters, the sand evolved into captivating images of mermaids, pirates, alligators and sand castles.

Challenging games entertained children and volleyball and ultimate Frisbee entertained others. Our enthusiasm caught the attention of the locals. Josie, the kite lady, remarked that she had never seen such a family oriented group. She also asked to receive the *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

Good food and music combined to make a fun-filled night for the older singles and dance loving couples. The next night the younger singles also enjoyed eating, meeting and dancing the night away.

Each morning teens gathered in "The Room" to catch up on the latest teen news, announcements and answer trick questions (or try to). They also had opportunity to display artistic flair as they signed their names on "The Wall". Making new friends and renewing old made "The Room" a popular place. Teen activities included a semi-formal dance and a bowling and pizza party.

What made the senior citizens' luncheon unforgettable were the perceptive and humorous comments of Mr. Richard F. Ames and songs of Mrs. Pat Morris and Mr. Jeff Peterson.

The setting, food and informative comments of Mr. Lambert Greer produced a memorable luncheon for the elders, deacons, deaconess and hosts. From beginning to end, love did "permeate the Feast" in Panama City!

—Randall Kobernat

Pigeon Forge, TN

Spectacular colors shimmering in picture-perfect weather formed the backdrop for the Feast of Tabernacles in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. About 750 members and their families rejoiced in uplifting sermons, fellowship and singing psalms.

During the Feast, many activities provided opportunities for making friends and enhancing relationships within God's begotten family. Single members enjoyed a "kick-off" get-together luncheon of hors d'oeuvres dipped in cheese and fruits dipped in chocolate. Later in the week, the more adventurous rafted down one of several "white water" rivers in the Smoky Mountains.

The teens and families savored the thrill and excitement offered at Ober Gatlinburg, which included a scenic tram ride, ice skating, go-carting, bungee run, Alpine Slide, and a breathtaking ski chair lift ride.

Highlighting the Feast this year were two well-attended banquets. Eighty hosts, deacons, elders and department heads took part in a special dinner, followed by encouraging comments from Dr. Roderick C. Meredith. One hundred fifty-three seniors attended the luncheon. Mr. John Ogwyn gave those attending the luncheon special insights on the meaning of "tabernacle."

One of the many opportunities for organized fun and fellowship for God's people was the annual Feast Family Dance. Approximately 400 brethren danced to a wide variety of popular music appealing to all age groups. The beautifully decorated fall theme and brilliant grand ball-

room chandelier, tables and refreshment area added to the ambience, making for a most enjoyable evening of fellowship and fun.

Many brethren commented on how thankful they were for God's Feast days, the inspiring sermons, the sacrifice of all the volunteers and the incredible calling that these days picture!

—Dan Hall

San Diego, CA

Just over 300 brethren attended the Feast in San Diego, California, where powerful messages, good weather, good food and good fellowship created a memorable Feast for all.



Featured speakers Dr. Jeff

Fall and Mr. Martin Fannin joined local speakers Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour, Mr. Don Davis and Mr. Ron Wheeler in providing a diet of nourishing spiritual "meat" for those attending. Sermons emphasized millennial themes, with such topics as "The Peaceful Kingdom of God," "Transformed to Spirit" and "Pioneers of the Kingdom."

Mr. Dave Polosky directed the choir and arranged special music throughout the Feast, with contributions by Jessie Attenborough, Lynn Jacobson, Sheila Jacobson, Hilary Ransdell, Mr. Richard Sedliacik, Mr. Gerald Shoquist and Patricia Thomas. The children's choir, directed by Debbie Woods, moved the brethren with a performance of "It Won't Be Long Now."

Brethren enjoyed singles' and seniors' luncheons and Headquarters tours. At the Family Day outing in nearby Felicita Park,

the fellowship flowed as freely as the free food and drinks, while brethren enjoyed horseshoes and Frisbees and a variety of outdoor activities. Many enjoyed a group excursion to the San Diego Wild Animal Park, where all marveled at the beauty and wonder of God's creation. For Family Fun Night, Mr. Fannin donned a "Robin Hood"-style cap to host the event, in the meeting hall redecorated for the night with a medieval England motif, while several acts displayed their talents at singing, dancing and comedy.

Next year the Auditorium will be divided into cubicles for a growing company in the RB Courtyard office complex, so the Feast will not be able to return there. But though we may not be back to this location, our memories will no doubt return often to the enjoyable time shared by all at the Feast in San Diego this year.

—Don Davis

Ballina, Australia

The town of Ballina, nestled on the north coast of New South Wales, was once again an ideal site for God's people to worship Him. God blessed this Feast with magnificent weather—a little much-needed rain, and mostly beautiful semi-clouded days to moderate the temperature for our outdoor activities. Our numbers this year grew to exactly 100 people registered, up from 78 last year. Brethren came from every state in Australia.

We were also honored to have two visiting ministers and their families from the United States: Mr. Rand Millich and Mr. John Blanchard. Mr. Millich kept the first half of the Feast with our New Zealand brethren before joining us here in Australia. Other speakers included Mr. Bruce Tyler,

Australasian Regional Pastor, Mr. Dayrell Tanner from Brisbane and Mr. Michael Gill from Canberra.

Members heard a variety of topics dealing with the Festival season. They were encouraged to focus on the spiritual aspects of the Feast, the Work and the future.

The Feast activities this year provided an excellent opportunity for developing new friendships and having lots of fun. It was a time to put aside for a short while the daily worries we all have in this world and to think about the happiness that will come when Christ returns. Activities included a family barbecue at one of Ballina's local parks, followed by games including volleyball, cricket, paddleboat rides and swimming. Feastgoers also enjoyed a singles' and young marrieds' dinner, a rainforest bush walk, an informal dance evening, a fun show followed by the popular "beetle or bug" game, and a family day at beautiful Byron Bay, where some of the brethren learned to "fly" on a real circus flying trapeze—in perfect safety and with professional instructors.

—Dayrell Tanner

Wewak, Papua New Guinea

From our young teenage years, my wife Margaret and I remembered Papua New Guinea as a land of war and death for many—100,000 Japanese and many thousands of Allied soldiers, sailors and airmen died here between 1942 and 1945. Yet, here we were, coming to remind those whom God had called to his Feast, of the future peace, prosperity and joy of God's soon-coming kingdom.

The brethren here lack the opportunity to get together each Sabbath as most of us do, because

they live in isolated areas on the island. So, to come together for eight days to hear God's Word expounded in tapes and extra sermons, sermonettes and Bible Studies was something they really appreciated. Up to 30 people were able to attend the meetings each day and enjoyed the hospitality of the local deacon, Mr. Peter Devis, the Holy Day luncheons and the picnic at Wom Beach, supplied by the church.

Though they enjoyed the view portrayed of Tomorrow's World, they also wanted to be reminded of the fundamental doctrines of the Living Church of God.

Papua New Guinea gained independence 25 years ago, yet there is still much poverty, unemployment and crime, and even though it is rich in minerals and mining the benefits do not seem to flow to the general population. So for those who could gather in Wewak at this year's Feast of Tabernacles 2000, it was a real inspiration to hear of God's purpose and to visualize through Bible study the changes that will occur and the prosperity that will follow. God speed that day!

—Ken MacLeod

Rotorua, New Zealand

New Zealand members, several Americans and a couple from Vanuatu met in Rotorua to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. God again blessed us with a full eight days of beautiful spring weather. We were able to thoroughly enjoy the wonderful physical environment as well as greatly benefit from the sermons and wholesome fellowship, which the feast site encourages.

A holiday park, right on the lake shore, provided most feastgoers with motel accommodation and con-

tained the conference room where we held services and evening social activities.

The visiting minister this year was Mr. Rand Millich, accompanied by his wife and daughter. We were also delighted to welcome Mrs. Carol Contardi and her son Dan.

Mr. Millich explained that God's feasts were created for all of mankind, not just Israel or the Church. One day every nation will be at the Feast of Tabernacles. Our loved ones and extended family members will also understand God's plan of salvation and joyfully share it with us.

We also heard two sermons by local elder Mr. Kinnear Penman. He spoke on the place of safety and how the three festival seasons embody different aspects of our ultimate salvation.

Feastgoers enjoyed a range of planned and impromptu activities. We shared a barbecue together early in the feast. We later enjoyed a picnic lunch and walked through a redwood glade to a large fresh-water spring. One evening we shared a meal consisting of foods that may have been on the menu in Old Testament or Apostolic times.

The Rotorua district provides many scenic attractions and adventures. Members enjoyed diverse activities such as visiting the thermal lakes, white-water rafting, trout fishing, bungee jumping, four-wheel off-roading and other thrills designed to test the nerves.

—Kinnear Penman

Port Vila, Vanuatu

Faithful brethren held the Feast of Tabernacles on the outskirts of Port Vila, Vanuatu. This small nation in the South Pacific is composed of many islands and friendly people. Here as in other parts of the world, God is only calling a few at this time.

Although members and families total about 50, for various reasons only 33 were in attendance this year. As in some previous years, services for all eight days were held in a small “tabernacle” constructed of traditional materials and owned by a friend of the Church. Adding interest to the first night’s service was the lack of electricity, so services were held by candlelight. Visiting minister Mr. Irv Woelfle brought sermons and sermonettes; Mr. John Tahireve provided daily transportation to the Feast site for him and for others.

Provisions were made that on some days all could eat together. Planning for these meals and for the whole feast was done by Mr. Lafa Liben who is the deacon in the area. There was swimming and volleyball for the younger set and there were other activities for everyone. One highlight was the Fun Show and Island night. There was a great variety of foods, which gave the visiting minister and his wife the opportunity to sample local dishes, including *laplap*, that had been prepared over hot stones. At the conclusion of the Feast a group sang “Family Now and Forever” and everyone agreed it was easy to say “hello” at the beginning, but now it was hard to say “goodbye.”

—Irv Woelfle

Penang, Malaysia

Warm sunshine greeted the approximately 70 brethren who attended the Feast of Tabernacles at the Paradise Tanjung Bungah Hotel in Penang, Malaysia this year. The

seaside location afforded an ambience of peace and serenity, giving the site a millennial setting. International flavor was added by four Aussies and one who came all the way from the United States.

Feastgoers appreciated the diversity in both the sermons and sermonettes, although the central

theme of all the messages remained the Kingdom of God. Many commented approvingly of the “meat provided in due season”!

An array of activities

fostered unity and togetherness. Catering to all age groups, activities were largely held indoors, where games and such events as a lively Bible quiz generated a spirit of camaraderie among old and young alike.

Special focus was also given to the church youth. They were reminded that the “youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow,” and were encouraged to rise to the occasion, drawing strength and guidance from the elders of the congregation. A youth club session was conducted to promote awareness and courage among potential second-generation believers.

Members got together for combined luncheons on both of the high days, which coincided with the weekly Sabbaths this year. Although a sudden downpour quashed the much-anticipated barbecue night, it failed to dampen the spirit of the brethren. Joy and happiness prevailed over the meals and members fellowshiped in true Christian fashion.

For the third consecutive year, the brethren witnessed a baptism ceremony during the feast. Mr. Rajan Moses baptized Mr. Julian Kok, a longtime reader of the church publi-

cations in the icy-cold waters of the swimming pool.

Everyone agreed it was the best Feast ever.

—Rajan Moses

Bentota, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka had what was perhaps the most exotic Feast of Tabernacles site in the whole world. Bentota, on Sri Lanka’s “Gold Coast”—specifically, the Induruwa Beach Resort at Induruwa, Bentota—was where 34 adults and eight children celebrated Feast 2000. The resort, 40 miles south of Colombo, is a star-class hotel on the beach with 90 spacious rooms, including six luxurious suites, each with its own private balcony with a view of the turquoise blue Indian Ocean.

The hotel’s Rainbow restaurant was converted into a conference hall, which facilitated congregational worship services and other indoor Feast site activities, including a superlatively good talent show featuring song and dance items by members who excelled themselves in their various performances to the great delight of all. Members also enjoyed fun-filled Family Day games there.

We also visited some historical sites at the ancient port city of Galle, 32 miles from the resort. The brethren enjoyed a wonderful game of cricket played by the children and the adults on two separate days. The rapport between the hotel staff and the brethren was truly harmonious and a wonderful Christian way of life was impressed on their minds. The brethren enjoyed the excellent videotaped sermons that were so inspiring and encouraging, which reinforced the fellowship that is so strong within this small congregation. Everything was peaceful and the foretaste of the Kingdom was indelibly etched in everyone’s memory—until He comes!

—J.B. Muller



Philippines

God's people around the Philippines rejoiced in the Feast of Tabernacles 2000, with inspiring



messages, good weather and uplifting fellowship and activities. Five sites were held this year: three in Mindanao, one in the Visayas and one in Luzon, with a total high attendance of 558.

The beautiful mountain-top city of Baguio was again host to the Feast with a total of 144 brethren and guests attending, including four from the U.S. and England. Feast activities included the launching of the new Youth Feast Program, where young people had the opportunity to attend classes in photography, dance, success, and the Bible. Other activities included a singles and youth hike, family day, dance night, children's party, seniors' luncheon, and fun show.

In Tacloban, on the island of Leyte, 53 brethren from this region of the Visayas gathered for the Feast in a new venue, the Cawaksi Training Center. This compound was ideal for a pleasant backdrop to the messages, fellowship and activities focusing on Tomorrow's World, such as a family day, seniors' party, beach outing, and talent show. Pastor and coordinator Eleno Cabahit also conducted a public Bible lecture, entitled "The New Millennium World Order and

You," with six new visitors in attendance.

Ninety-nine adults and children enjoyed beautiful weather, superb fellowship and good health while staying in the coastal Victorio's Beach Resort, in Davao City, Mindanao. Messages from Dr. Roderick C. Meredith and other speakers were highlights in the encouraging, uplifting Feast days. Pastor and coordinator Felipe Casing ordained one elder, Benito Parbo, during the festival. Mr. Casing also conducted a public Bible lecture on Sunday, October 15, entitled, "Because of God's Love," with 11 prospective members attending.

The Feast site in Don Carlos, Bukidnon (central Mindanao) was a new site this year, and had an attendance of 135. Brethren met under a large tent procured for the meetings, which kept the falling rain from dampening the spirits of the Feastgoers!

The M a r a n d i n g , N o r t h w e s t M i n d a n a o , Feast site had a high attendance of 127 on the Last Great Day, with a number of new guests. Everyone throughout the Feast felt an atmosphere of brotherhood, giving and sharing. Children enjoyed classroom-type educational activities organized by the Church. There were six baptisms conducted by Pastor and coordinator Eustiquio Benitez. The video offertory by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith on the Last Great Day made an impact on the brethren, inspiring them to pray for this great, worldwide Work.

—Rod McNair

Port Bail, France

Over 250 happy brethren from eight European countries, the United States and the Philippines rejoiced before God in the small fishing village of Port Bail on the Normandy coast of France. Family-style common meals at noon and dinner encouraged the brethren to make new friends from different countries in an intimate and uplifting atmosphere.

Strong, helpful sermons discussed holding fast to the trunk of the tree in doctrine, appropriate government in the church, learning to live abundantly, how Jerusalem and its environs will look in tomorrow's world, teamwork, the difference between faith, hope and humility and the need to shine as lights in a dark, confused world. A Bible study on the night before the Last Great Day covered many biblical questions, news of the Work, and Mr. Apatian was also able to discuss

issues and ideas circulating in the Church of God at large.

Two outings were scheduled. The first was to Utah Beach, one of the D-



Day landing sites in Normandy. The other excursion was to Mont St. Michel, a village and medieval religious complex built on a massive rock spire in the middle of surrounding tidal flats. Other activities included folk dancing, a talent show, combined church dance, manual crafts, a children's coloring contest, horseback riding, sailing, tennis, walks on the beach and visits to surrounding towns. Many brethren visited and shopped in the port town of Cherbourg. Many also visited Bayeux, site of the famous Bayeux tapestry,

which depicts the Norman conquest of England in 1066.

Many useful meetings were held during the Feast to discuss how we could more effectively and efficiently preach the Gospel in Europe. Some exciting ideas include setting up Internet sites in the Dutch and Czech languages to serve as gateways to the gospel.

—Ray Clore

George, South Africa

Thirty-two years ago God first hosted the Feast at George on the south coast of South Africa. This year, more than 130 brethren met there again in the picturesque setting of the Outeniqua mountain range to the north of the town, and the beaches of the Indian Ocean to the south.

In previous years the motorcar registration of George, CAW, was often interpreted to mean “cold and wet,” or “calm and wonderful,” thus describing



the often-changing daily weather patterns experienced at the time of the Feast. This year, however, CAW could only be interpreted in one way, “caring and warmth,” summarizing the Feast feeling among the brethren.

The brethren dwelled together in godly love and unity as never before, despite intense personal trials prior to the Feast, along with some physical difficulties in reaching George. Some of the newcomers to God’s truth were almost taken aback when they witnessed the excited hugs and squeals of delight as old friends met on the opening night. Such brotherly

love and the “instant” friends they made completely overshadowed the personal difficulties experienced before the Feast. First-timers also felt the astounding impact of increased personal understanding of God’s plan.

Brethren who had been keeping God’s Feasts for more than 30 years agreed that they had not before witnessed in others and experienced in themselves such intense joy, unity and outgoing love as this year. Activities such as the Senior Citizens’ Lunch and the Family Day were enjoyed with much enthusiasm. The special music, highlighted by several excellent performances by the



Children’s Choir, added inspiration to every day.

God had indeed prepared a veritable feast of spiritual food for us in the messages we received, whether presented

by our local ministers or the videotape sermons, so lovingly prepared for us by God’s team in San Diego. Our caring Father and Jesus Christ are keeping us warmly ensconced in their love and mercy.

—Darrell Hull

Bamburi, Kenya

Described by many brethren as the “most beautiful and peaceful Feast site” they have ever attended, Cowrie Shell Beach Apartments, Bamburi, Kenya provide a real sense of the millennium. Located just across from the

sea, the gentle breeze there was a joy and refreshing to everyone.

The vast majority of the 55 brethren at the Feast in Kenya this year were from the Ndhiwa congregation, with others from Nairobi and Mombasa. More were expected but, due to economic problems afflicting many Kenyans, a few

families were not able to attend. We tried to stretch ourselves to the limit financially in order to help.

The sermons and sermonettes were uplifting and spiritually rejuvenating. In the middle of the Feast, five more individuals were added to God’s church through baptism. The ceremony was performed at the site’s swimming pool with the majority of the brethren attending the occasion.

Another highlight of the Feast was Seniors’ Day, when Festival administration treated the seniors to a luncheon. Since all the brethren were accommodated at one site, fellowship was wonderful. Problems and achievements were shared and fixed as necessary.

The most inspiring aspect of the Feast, however, was daily services with fascinating local live and videotaped Headquarters messages. The “Behind the Work” film was truly uplifting to the brethren.

—Ernest J. A. Owino

Tobago

This year’s Feast provided many opportunities for the 57 brethren who attended (including 13 from overseas) to learn, rejoice, fellowship and serve. Most stayed at the Golf View Apartments at Mt. Irvine, while services were held at

the spacious conference room of the beautiful Grafton Beach Resort.

Brethren were first treated to two inspiring sermons by Mr. Mike Norris and three enlightening video sermons from Headquarters. Mr. Bob League, the visiting minister, arrived at the midway point of the Feast and delivered four encouraging and uplifting sermons in four days. Mr. League “volunteered” to stay on as our pastor but alas, we could not afford to keep him!

An emotional and inspiring event was a baptism performed by Mr. League. While proceeding to the beach, Mr. League fell on the rocky steps. In normal circumstances, he would have badly injured his spine. However, he escaped with only a minor bruise, and proceeded to perform the baptism. This was indeed a wonderful miracle, for which we all were very thankful.

Our social activities took us to beautiful locations including the Buccoo Reef and Nylon Pool, the Pigeon Point Beach facility for a buffet lunch and seaside fun, and Speyside, at the opposite side of the island. Healthy fun, lively talk and laughter, breathtaking scenery and good food made these events very memorable. Lastly, our exhilarating talent show, sumptuous dinner prepared by the local ladies, and dancing to a variety of music played at our dinner/dance helped everyone to rejoice.

The love and service shown at the feast was truly “Philadelphian.” This year’s celebration was indeed a time of spiritual renewal, building of friendships and great encouragement to brethren as we continue to fortify ourselves for what lies ahead. We felt truly blessed!

—Zalayhar Sankar

Guyana

Thirty-six attended the Feast of Tabernacles in Guyana at Camp Kayuka, a camping facility about 25 miles from the city of Georgetown, situated in a secluded, heavily forested area about three miles from the highway.

The camp consists of eight cabins, each with three quadruple bunks. A large building serves as auditorium, dining room and kitchen. Electricity is provided by gasoline powered generators. There are no telephones or other communications equipment available, so we were virtually cut off from the world for eight days. At night it was easy to understand what King David meant when he wrote Psalm 8:3–4, because nothing interrupts your view of at least two million stars just beckoning to you—they seem so near and so bright.

Early in the morning, one could view the monkeys playing and picking fruits from the trees, or could listen to the parrots, macaws or any of a dozen different species of birds. In the early evening, the crickets, owls and other nocturnal creatures made beautiful melodies. The morning dew provided wet grass and trees that looked so fresh.

Among the highlights were a walking race on family day between some 70-plus-year-old ladies, a hike that allowed some to climb 20 and 40 foot sand hills and a trip to a resort where the youth enjoyed kayak piloting and canoeing.

The feedback received from members was that this was the best Feast ever.

Even the caretaker and his family kept reminding us of how different we are from all the other groups who use their facility. They said that they always look forward to our visits.

—Fitzroy Greeman

Jamaica

The Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day were observed in Jamaica at the Jamaica Grandiosa Resort, Montego Bay where we had a spectacular view of the Caribbean Sea and the surrounding hills.

Fifty Jamaicans and 53 overseas brethren celebrated the Feast here. The sermons were inspiring, helpful and well received.

Mr. Rodger Bardo was our Musical Director. The orchestra, which accompanied the song service and special music, consisted of Mrs.



Teresa Fischer and Mrs. Nancy West on keyboard and Ruth and Pearl Roach on violins.

On the Last Great Day the Jamaica Festival Chorale performed “On Eagles Wings,” and Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus.”

There was a Jamaica Night on the hotel’s open terrace, where we

had entertainment by the local brethren and a mento band. The Family Fun Day was held at a private beach.

Twenty-two brethren attended the Seniors' Luncheon at a Chinese restaurant, and a youth activity was held at the Walter Fletcher Beach Fun Park. Many brethren also enjoyed a tour of the famous Rose Hall Great House

We had a truly great Feast and many brethren expressed their intentions of returning next year.

—Hugh Wilson

Argentina

Four hundred miles south of Buenos Aires, in sudden contrast with the flat horizon of the Argentinean pampas, rises Sierra de la Ventana; its green hills offered a cozy environment for a Feast filled with brotherly love. Those coming from Chile crossed the lofty Andes range to join their Argentinean brethren.

It is a good land, you can taste it in the food: succulent beef, delicious French fries, crisp salads and good wine, were excellent counterparts to the spiritual food we were served from the Word of God. One subject discussed was, how will divine beings interact with physical human beings? The Argentineans were happy to realize that in Genesis 18, God Himself came down with two angels and was served beef, bread, butter and milk by Abraham. It will be no different in Tomorrow's World!

—Mario Hernandez

Colombia

In a country torn apart by continual and cruel guerrilla warfare, mixed with urban terrorism and the violence generated by drug trafficking, it sounds like a miracle to hear the com-

ments of the Colombian brethren. They gathered together to keep the Feast not far from Medellín, the infamous former drug cartel capital.

The following is a message from a long time church member in Colombia.

"I want to comment that of all the Feasts I have ever attended, this has been the best in every sense. The best because of the knowledge the Eternal imparted to us; the best because of the unity of criteria and the brotherly love among us. The best because of the excellent food and the beautiful site God provided for us and, above all, because of the feeling of His marvelous presence every single day of the Feast."

—Rodolfo Bonilla

Metepec, Mexico

As it was last year, the Feast was held in the vacation center of Metepec, in a land of hills and valleys in the heartland of Mexico. It was full of sunny days and flowing with the milk and honey of the Word of God. The average attendance was around 70 happy people. It was the only Feast site having an active volcano in the background. The Popocatepetl volcano is one of the earth's highest mountains, and this year it was visible all through the Feast thanks to exquisitely clear skies.

God granted what we asked during the Feast: excellent weather, excellent messages and the excellent

atmosphere of God's people celebrating the future in advance—a millennium of Sabbath rest, peace and happy singing (Isaiah 14:7).

—Raul Colon

Guatemala

This year the church held the Feast in Quetzaltenango, the second largest and most important city of Guatemala. About 50 of God's people came to celebrate the Feast. Most had connections with Guatemala except the visiting minister, Raul H. Reyes. Noticeably absent was the church's local elder and patriarch, Mr. Rocael Balda, who died shortly before the Feast.

The highlight of the Feast was hearing three of Dr. Roderick C. Meredith's messages translated by Mr. Mario Hernandez (Director of the Spanish Work) on the opening night, the first day of the Feast and the Last Great Day. In between, we heard taped sermons from Mr. Hernandez, live ser-



mons by Mr. Reyes, and sermonettes by Mr. Vicente Enriquez (a deacon from the La Crescenta, California, congregation), Mr. Sergio Roca, Mr. Ramiro Sanchez and Mr. Manuel Cardona (all from Guatemala).

There were several church activities. On both holy days, all the

members were able to get together for a meal between services. On Wednesday, there was a family day with an emphasis on the children. On Thursday, the members went by bus to see a Mayan archeological site consisting of a series of plazas, stepped pyramids, temples and a ballgame court. A group picture was taken where, years before, human sacrifices were held at the top of the temple. There were human sacrifices there that day too, but they were living sacrifices (Romans 12:1).

The church also visited the nearby origin of the San Juan River. Literally out of the belly of the mountain flows the river of water. It brought to mind John 7:38: "...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters." How symbolic of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day when God's Spirit will go to the entire world.

—Vicente Enriquez

Charlottetown, PEI

Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island is always a treat for young and old alike. The grass is very green, the soil is extremely red and the trees at this time of the year are sporting fall coloring of red, yellow and bright orange. It is truly a wonderland.

A few minutes outside the city and you are in a pastoral and millennial setting of thousands of acres of pasture, dotted with huge rolls of hay, with hundreds of farms scattered along the landscape.

The weather at this time of year is wonderful, with cool nights for sleeping and warm days for enjoying the island's beauty.

Our teens enjoyed a canoe trip into a deep valley and were treated to an extraordinary view of a large bald eagle sitting motionless in a tree overlooking the stream. Eagles

are fairly numerous on PEI. The coastline, where seals can be seen sunning themselves on large stone outcrops, is within view of many of the cottages offered for rent. Several of the brethren sighted whales from the shoreline. Those who attended the Feast this year in Charlottetown were in complete agreement, that this was a marvelous experience and their greatest Feast ever.

—Jim Arnaldo

Cranbrook, BC

Brethren experienced the beauty and peacefulness of the Kootenay mountain range of the Canadian Rockies. About half of the 280 attending came from Canada, and half from the United States.

The brethren were in a spirit very supportive of God's Work, and expressed this in many ways. A number of U.S. brethren gave offerings toward the Canadian arm of God's work, while giving their regular festival offerings back home. Many gave of their excess second tithe to help others of less financial means attend activities or stay overnight after the Last Great Day.

Opening night was filled with God's Spirit, as Dr. Roderick C. Meredith's message set the tone for God's Festival. The sermons and sermonettes by other elders from the U.S. and Canada, and Mr. Carl McNair's messages in the middle of the Feast, gave encouragement that we are involved in the very Work of God.

Many expressed their thanks for the "Behind the Work" video and hope it will become a tradition each year. The all-church talent evening was a fine success, and the special music and Festival Choir (singing "Onward Ye Peoples") gave evidence of the unity and joy of God's people working and serving together.

Activities including volleyball, bowling, horseback riding, softball and a family day barbecue encouraged the good fellowship that many expressed. Dr. Meredith's closing sermon gave us the solution to the world's troubles; that only by righteous government will mankind experience real happiness and lasting peace.

—Eng Monson

Saint Sauveur, QC

Two hundred and fifty happy brethren assembled in the small hamlet of Saint Sauveur Quebec, Canada, to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

Warm temperatures prevailed as Feastgoers experienced the beautiful surroundings of the Laurentian mountains. Although there was no snow, the ski lifts were operating, taking members high above the valley and giving a panoramic view of the surrounding area.

Highlights of the Feast were sermons by evangelists Carl McNair and Charles Bryce, along with messages by Presiding Evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith.

Family day was a visit to a local amusement park which opened for our convenience. When asked if the day was profitable enough to have opened, the owner said "Oh yes, I have met so many wonderful people."

One exciting visit was a trip to Mount Tremblet with its ski lift and many small boutiques. Everyone who attended the Feast in Saint Sauveur agreed that there was an atmosphere of warmth and friendship they had not experienced at a Feast for many years. Members experienced the charm and hospitality of the French culture as they visited the many restaurants and establishments which catered to our needs.

—Frank Best

Coming Soon:

A NATIONAL YOUTH PROGRAM!

By Gerald Weston

At a Council of Elders meeting this past August, I was asked to spearhead the building of a national youth program for the Living Church of God. This article is intended to give an overview of where we are today and to discuss steps we can take to build an effective youth program.

It is accurate to say that if you do not know where you are going it is likely that you will not end up where you want to be. The first law of success is to have a goal. We need to have a vision of what we hope our end product will be. Our product in this case is our children. If we hope to have young adults who reflect God's way of life, we must begin creating the atmosphere in which that end result will blossom. Or to quote another, "We must create a culture that incubates purity, since the dominant one [culture] does anything but" (See *Christianity Today*, July 20, 2000, "Losing Our Promiscuity").

This is what Ambassador College did for many of us in the 50s and 60s, and to a lesser extent in later years. There we were taught the true definition of love—an outgoing concern. We were taught to raise our standards and appreciate finer things. We were taught how young men and young women should conduct themselves with each other. We strove to "Recapture True Values." We learned that "The Word of God Is the Foundation of Knowledge." We heard, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." And we learned manners and protocol.

When I entered Ambassador in 1965, we were discouraged from holding hands and letting relationships become physical. Hugging and kissing among singles were considered inappropriate behaviors, but by the time I graduated in 1969 these standards were beginning to be relaxed and Ambassador eventually succumbed to the ways of this world. Rules that once created a safe atmosphere and guided behavior to stay within the secure haven of God's laws began to be ridiculed and laughed at as old-fashioned.

One might ask: "What were the results of the two different approaches?" Were relationships better under the

more liberal approach? Did hormone-driven pairing off add or subtract from the stability of long-term marriage relationships? While no studies have been done, empirical evidence would say the results were not good.

When you compare life at Ambassador College with that of the outside world in the mid-60s, we see that we were living in a totally different cultural environment. Outside was the drug scene, the hippies, the peaceniks and orgies called "love-ins." Music was more a wail and a scream than a melody. Longhaired men and bra-less women, neither of whom bathed regularly, traveled the country shacking up in communes. Yet at Ambassador we lived in a beautiful uplifting culture, isolated from that insanity. Some would say that we did not live in "the real world"—and we would agree (1 John 2:15–17). The question is: "Who wants to live in THAT 'real' world?" We did live in a real world, but it was not *the* real world of this age. We were living a better way, practicing for the higher world that will soon be here. Not everyone got the message, but some of us did! The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the announcement that this temporal evil world is going to pass away and a better, more permanent world is coming. We look forward to the fulfillment of that message when we will be born into the very family of God. The values in that Family bear no resemblance to today's degraded society.

Our youth are swimming in the culture of this world that John condemns. They are bombarded with its messages at every turn. As parents and ministers we must define practical and specific examples of what it means to come out of this world's culture and what it means to live within a godly culture. Our challenge, collectively, is to "sell" that better culture—that better way of life—to the children of God's Church. How can we do this?

Our first priority must be to create a godly culture in our homes. The ministry can assist in this by helping to define and remind everyone what this means. We must learn strategies for removing Satan's influence and replacing it with God's influence. We need to know in understandable terms WHY the TV must be turned off or

severely restricted. Then we must learn to discuss with one another HOW to use that time more effectively. Without a proper alternative we will only produce resentment and rebellion in our children. We need family sermons (on topics such as marriage, child rearing, how to work or play as a family, how to select a mate for life, how to remove Satan from influencing your family, how to invite God into your family, how to insulate your family from drugs and alcohol abuse) sent out regularly from Headquarters. Each minister with children in his congregation should also plan to speak on family subjects at some regular interval.

We must also use other available tools. For example, we could produce a series of videotapes discussing parenting at different stages in development, from infancy through the teen years. Of course, this would only be of value if parents desired such a tool and would use it. This is where we need your feedback. How do you feel we can help you the most? What constructive ideas do you have to offer? This must be a team effort! While we wait for further input from parents and other concerned individuals, here are some steps we can take.

Our youth must have regular occasions to be in the presence of other youth who are being brought up in tomorrow's culture. We try to create this culture of tomorrow's world at Living Youth Camp, but this is not enough. We must take the same approach at the Feast of Tabernacles. The same values of outgoing concern, of dancing decently, of making sure that no one is left out, of honoring and respecting those of the opposite sex and of dressing modestly must be taught and apply there. But, as one teen lamented, "It's a long way from the Feast to Camp." How right he is! Most teens can think in terms of three months, but eight or nine is another matter.

A partial solution could be to plan regional family activities—one in the winter (during the school break at the end of December) with the second one in the spring around the Days of Unleavened Bread. This would fill the gap. By doing this we would then have quarterly activities for a good many of our teens—LYC, the Feast, a winter family activity and an Unleavened Bread family activity.

We must understand that we are not talking about "throwing" activities at our teens—and we are certainly not talking about building a "sports league"-type program. Our first priority for LYC, for the Feast and for winter and spring breaks is to educate teens and their families in a different culture. This can only work if we all "speak the same thing" and promote the same values. While activities may vary, the approach to these activities

must be harmonious. For example: if there is a dance, we ought to have the same rules and traditions at all locations and at all levels. We do not allow "freestyle" dancing at LYC for a reason. Therefore, freestyle dancing should not be allowed at a regional or local activity. Ultimately we hope that all families will come to understand why we do not have this form of dancing, and will adopt this cultural value in their private lives. To do otherwise would send a mixed signal to our youth. While we can make a good defense for not allowing freestyle dancing, even if someone views this as an arbitrary rule, it is better for us to agree to speak the same thing than to have a double standard.

The Internet can be a valuable tool in our present scattered circumstances. We are developing an official Youth Web page that we hope will be active and exciting to our youth, with such features as links for LYC, teen Bible studies, Festival information, and regional activity announcements and reports. In time we may want to set up a forum or chat room.

We have already published more than 20 teen Bible studies on a private web site where we have been gaining experience, and we have another 14 nearly ready to go. We plan to post one every Friday. These studies will cover doctrine as well as Christian living, giving teens the opportunity to become really familiar with the Bible and what the church teaches. Parents and teens can work through them together, or a teen may choose to do them individually. In either case, parents ought to be familiar with these studies.

We need to find every opportunity to establish the ideal of a "tomorrow's world culture." For example, Church youth would benefit from short and inexpensive regional camps for 8- to 12-year-olds, helping them form godly values long before they are ready for LYC. If enough parents are interested and can help, this may in the future become a reality. And we hope in the future to provide more youth-oriented educational materials, such as a Bible Study Course for children ages 5-12, to help them build a foundation of true values before they are overwhelmed by the false values of this world. As God opens doors to make such programs possible, we must be ready to walk through them with the vision of just how important our youth are to God, and to the future of His Church.

We are in a cultural war—or, to put it more accurately, a spiritual war for the hearts and souls of our children. Satan is fighting the battle every day, all day long. We must learn how better to wage war against this enemy and to fight this battle relentlessly. This is a battle we can win if we work together with God's help! ☞

Ordinations

New ordinations mark the steady growth of the Living Church of God. Six new elders and a deacon were recently ordained. Four of the elders are in the United States, one is in South America and one is in the Philippines.

Regional Pastor Dr. Douglas Winnail ordained **Phil Sena** in Denver on September 16. He was joined in laying on hands by area pastors Benjamin Whitfield and Glen Gilchrist, and elder Jim Stewart.

Regional Pastor Jonathan McNair ordained **Fitzroy Greeman** as an elder in Georgetown, Guyana on September 27. The ordination took place during Mr. McNair's recent tour of the Caribbean nations.

Several ordinations took place on the Feast of Trumpets. Dr. Winnail and Benjamin Whitfield ordained **Dr. Scott Winnail** as an elder in Laramie, Wyoming.

Area pastors Dr. Jeffrey Fall and Rod McNair ordained **Tony Mora** as an elder, and **Rod Coons** as a deacon, in Sacramento. In Danbury, Connecticut, area pastor Paul Shumway and elder Jim Arnaldo ordained **David Chornomaz** as an elder. Mr. Chornomaz's brother Dennis is an elder in New Jersey.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, area pastor Felipe Casing ordained **Benito Parbo** as an elder in Davao City, Philippines (see page 20).

Wedding Anniversary

The Fayetteville, Arkansas congregation celebrated **Harvey and Chloe Taylor's** 60th wedding anniversary after Sabbath services on September 9, 2000. The Taylors were married on September 7, 1940 and baptized in 1965; Mr. Taylor is a long-time deacon in God's Church. They have four children, seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Guatemalan LCG elder **Rocael Ralda**, age 66, of Coatespeque, Quetzaltenango, died on September 7. Mr. Ralda had suffered from a serious liver condition for more than two years. Consuelo—his wife of 43 years—eight children and 12 grandchildren survive. He was a pillar of strength to his family and in his community. Mario Hernandez, Director of the Spanish Work, conducted the funeral.

Isabel Stiles, age 88, of Chula Vista, California, died of a stroke September 5 at her home. She was a long-time church member baptized with her (now-deceased) husband in the 1950s. Mrs. Stiles had no surviving family. Dr. Roderick C. Meredith conducted the funeral.

Mrs. Ruby Rummins, age 89, of Holt, Michigan, died peacefully in her sleep August 2. She was baptized in 1978 and was a member of the Lansing, Michigan Living Church of God congregation, but was unable to attend due to health problems. Her husband preceded her in death. Two daughters and one son survive along with many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Long-time Church member **Donald Erickson**, age 70, died peacefully in his sleep on October 7 at his Willow, Alaska home. A deacon and a pillar in the Church in Alaska, Mr. Erickson was active in serving his family, the Church and the surrounding community. He is survived by his wife Helen, his daughter Melanie Magee, his granddaughter Champagne and great-grandson Christian. Mr. Erickson worked as a professional Alaskan guide. A veteran of the United States Air Force, he worked for the University of Alaska prior to his retirement in 1993. Memorial services were conducted by Mr. Carl McNair on October 29.

Philip Lester, age 46, died August 24 of complications from diabetes. Mr. Lester, a lifelong bachelor and a Church member since 1985, attended the Atlanta congregation of the Living Church of God where he was considered a dedicated and zealous member. Messrs. Rand Millich and Jack Lowe performed the funeral.

“Smart Teens and Sex”

By Dr. Roderick C. Meredith

Smart teenagers do not have sex. A recent study at the University of North Carolina has discovered that bright teenagers delay their first kiss and become sexually active later than adolescents of average intelligence. Teenagers of average intelligence are up to five times more likely to have had sex than are teenagers with higher IQs, according to Dr. Carolyn Halpern, assistant professor of maternal and child health at UNC. Her team analyzed data on approximately 12,000 teenagers, and detailed information on the levels of sexual contact among 100 boys and 200 girls.

Dr. Halpern observed, “The association between intelligence and refraining from sexual intercourse was stronger for girls than for boys and stronger for older teens.” The relationship between intelligence and postponing sex existed even with kissing or light petting, said her report in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Researchers commonly assume that the link between good exam results and sexual postponement comes from teenagers’ wish to preserve options such as university education. But Dr. Halpern noted, “Our results suggest that this is not the whole story. It is hard to believe that teens avoid kissing because they see it as the start of a slippery slope to possible pregnancy.”

Why are smart teenagers resisting the temptations of premarital sex? Certainly they are not just following society’s trend, which is growing more accepting of premarital sex. In the 1960s, 25 percent of young men and 45 percent of young women were virgins at age 19; by the 1980s, fewer than 20 percent of males and females were, according to a report in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*.

A recent *U.S. News & World Report* poll revealed that 39 percent of Americans believe it is better to have sex with a few different partners before marriage, rather than remain chaste. Asked if it is a good idea for couples to cohabit before marriage, 50 percent either “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed.

But the facts disagree; studies have shown that cohabiting couples who marry are 33 percent more likely to divorce than couples who did not live together before marriage. Similarly, virgin brides are less likely to divorce than are women who became sexually active before marriage. Avoiding premarital sex is smart, indeed!

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:22, exhorts Christians to, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Smart teenagers who avoid premarital sex are laying a foundation on which they can build a life of faith, love and peace, and a relationship with their Savior, Jesus Christ.

This commentary can be found on the Church Web page, www.livingcog.org, in the Commentary Library, along with many other commentaries on key topics facing our world.