

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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Loving the World vs. Loving God

Dear Brethren,

Church brethren have long described a Feast just past as “the best Feast ever.” Of course, not every Feast is going to be the “best ever,” as we sometimes spend part of it in bed with sickness or injury, and many other circumstances can put a damper on one’s personal Feast.

With that qualification, I must say that from all the reports coming to me, 2019 was an outstanding Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day for the majority of our members and at the majority of our sites—and no doubt “the best Feast ever” for many. Our membership seems to be at peace and happy, and this was reflected in record Holy Day offerings. Attendance topped 11,000 for the first time in our 27-year history since the apostasy of the mid-90s, when Dr. Roderick C. Meredith stepped out to preserve the biblical truths God used Mr. Herbert Armstrong to point out to us and to carry on the Work of preaching the Gospel to the world. We heard many positive comments about the outstanding and substantive messages, and I personally learned from both sermonettes and sermons.

One of the sermons I gave regarded the temporary nature of life, and this is a subject I would like to discuss further. Dwelling in temporary housing for a few days reminds us that we are sojourners passing through a very short course in the span of time. God is eternal. We are temporary. The reality of this sinks in more deeply with each passing year. I confess that I often talk about the fleeting nature of life because I am fascinated by the subject. A child or young person thinks it will “take forever” to reach the next milestone of turning 13, 16, 18, or 21. But reality begins to set in for many somewhere between the ages of 30 and 40, and the fact of how short our time really is becomes more apparent with each passing decade.

Eternal life is not something we are entitled to from birth. It is a gift from God (Romans 6:23). The brother of Jesus wrote, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive *the crown of life* which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12). Yes, eternal life is a crown and it is not automatic. It comes to *those who love Him*, but what does this mean? We may *think* we know, but *do* we?

A Vital Warning from the “Apostle of Love”

The Apostle John tells us that loving this world is incompatible with loving God: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:15–16). John was likely thinking of the Garden of Eden when he expressed these thoughts, for we are told that “when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree desirable to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of its fruit and ate” (Genesis 3:6). When preaching on these chapters of Genesis, Mr. Herbert Armstrong thundered to the Church that the majority of members didn’t get it. Time proved him correct! Do we get it?

These three motivations of human nature are closely related and often feed each other. Consider how even some in the Church are enslaved by the lust of the flesh. Teens and adults alike may take up vaping, cigarettes, or marijuana and other drugs to feed fleshly appetites and to appear more sophisticated to their peers. Some overindulge in alcohol. How many “just have to have” something that they cannot afford?

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It is not wrong to buy a new dress or a new boat, or to move into a larger home if one can afford it, but many only fool themselves into thinking that they can afford it. We live in a consumer society, and it is naïve to think we are unaffected. Everything is an infomercial! Society relentlessly tempts us to believe that happiness is found in acquisitions. The expensive sneakers of our teen years become the shiny new car of our working years. Neither are sins in themselves, but it is an illusion to think happiness is found in such things. The acquisition of goods and amusements, as an end in itself, has never produced lasting happiness—no lust of the flesh ever has.

The Internet certainly fuels the lust of the eyes. Pornography is a huge problem, affecting both men and women of every age.

David wrote a psalm in which he declared, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes” (Psalm 101:3). As my Bible says in its marginal notes, the word *wicked* in this verse may also mean *worthless*.

Worthlessness is not the only problem. There are sad consequences in our lives when we follow such lusts. Jesus famously instructed, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). No wonder David prayed to God to “turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things” (Psalm 119:37)—but as we know, in a weak moment in his life, David failed to do his part to resist temptation, and it became the biggest mistake of his life (1 Kings 15:5). His son Solomon wisely advised, “Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you” (Proverbs 4:25).

Focusing on Self or on Others?

The desire to exalt the self is ever-present in our nature and must be quashed. Education is a good thing when used rightly, but as Paul explained to the Corinthians, “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (1 Corinthians 8:1). God wants us to

be successful and to do our best, but never at someone else’s expense. Jesus focused on serving others rather than exalting Himself (Philippians 2:5–11). Seeking personal status rather than focusing on outward service brought down Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12–15).

The book of Ecclesiastes is often read during the Feast of Tabernacles, and it holds many lessons for each of us regarding the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are of the world, and John tells us “the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). Life may seem long at times, but it is actually incredibly short. Lust and pride caused our first parents to stumble. They had to choose between two trees, two different ways—and the same choice is given to us. The two ways lead to two different outcomes: a crown of eternal life, or the blackness of darkness forever.

Do we get it?

Jesus does not sugarcoat the challenge He gives us, but instructs us: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14).

John’s warning to us about loving the world must be more than memorized words—we must deeply understand what these words mean. We must wage a valiant war against the pulls of the flesh, mind, and heart. Only then may we obtain the crown of life that eludes so many.

Everything is an infomercial!
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Are You Fooled by the Devil's Infomercial?

The Feast of Tabernacles is a high point for members of God's Church, and we look forward to the time it pictures, when the craziness we see around us will come to an end. However, even after Christ's return, it will take some years for the world to come into harmony with His better way of life, as Satan's influence will linger in the minds of an angry, broken humanity. This is evident from Zechariah 14:16–19.

Brethren, do we see what is happening around us? By this, I mean: Do we understand how our adversary is not only stirring up hatred, but is also actively trying to distract us, the people of God, from our calling? Are we carefully monitoring ourselves concerning what we see, what we think, and what we feel—especially what we feel?

Distracted by False Teaching

God began to reveal to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong the doctrine concerning the spirit in man about the time I entered Ambassador College in 1965. I'm sure he spoke about it prior to that time, but I clearly remember that it was constantly on his mind as the truth of it sank in.

The truth of the spirit in man was in the Bible all along, but sometimes we focus on what is *not* meant by a statement or word more than on what *is* meant.

In this instance, Mr. Armstrong rightly understood that the concept of the immortal soul was a false doctrine with heathen origins. For example, Tertullian wrote a work titled "On the Soul" sometime between 196 and 212 AD. Where did Tertullian come up with his "understanding" about the soul? Was it the Bible, or pagan philosophy?

But his [i.e., Tertullian's] well-known question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" expressed a rejection of philosophy that was not true of his own work, since he demonstrated how pagan intellectual achievements could be made to serve Christianity (*Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley, p. 112).

Famed Catholic theologian Augustine also tied his thoughts on the immortality of the soul to concepts originating in paganism.

Augustine (354–430 C.E.) adopts Plato's approach when he teaches that the immortality of the soul follows from its participation in the eternal truths (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 14, "Immortality," p. 336).

In countering this doctrinal error, Mr. Armstrong had to explain how scriptures were twisted by this false teaching. He pointed out that whatever the soul is, it can die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) and it can be destroyed (Matthew 10:28). In spite of misrepresentations by false teachers who try to read this heathen concept into the Bible, even the *New Bible Commentary Revised* tells us regarding Matthew 10:28 that "The soul in biblical thought **is not immortal**, except when new life is conferred upon it through Christ (1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 1:10). Hell is therefore the place of its destruction as Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, was of the rubbish of Jerusalem" (p. 829, emphasis added). Clearly, immortality is not something we possess simply by being human. Paul tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," but that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:50, 53).

But let's not be distracted by what the Bible does *not* say. If it isn't an "immortal soul," then what *is* this "spirit in man" or "spirit of man" we read of in the Bible? Notice it in this passage: "Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him" (Zechariah 12:1). Solomon also speaks of a spirit in man, but in rather vague terms as to what happens to it at death. "Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?" (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

The Remarkable Spirit in Man

The spirit in man is something that gives man understanding far above any other creature. Some animals have larger brains, but they cannot comprehend science or advanced mathematics. They do not build hospitals or send rockets into outer space. The difference in intellect between man and even the most intelligent animal is so vast as to be beyond comparison—a difference scientists still cannot easily explain.

Notice what we are told about this spirit in the book of Job: "But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the

Almighty gives him understanding” (Job 32:8). Whatever this spirit is, it brings about heightened perception and introspection. “The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart” (Proverbs 20:27).

We are reminded of a passage from Isaiah: “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:8–9). But did God intend for this to be the whole story? He did not! The context of this passage clearly shows that it is addressed to the unconverted whom God is calling to repentance (see vv. 1–7). God intends for those who are His to learn to think as He thinks.

This becomes evident in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, where he clarifies the subject further. As with Isaiah, he points out that God’s thoughts are far above those of man. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). But Paul does not stop there. The verses that follow explain that those who have the Spirit of God in them can begin to think on the God-level. Notice verse 10: “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

Paul next brings out this wonderful truth with his comparison between the Spirit of God and the spirit in man. “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (v. 11). It is the spirit in man that sets us above the animal kingdom, and it is the Spirit of God in us that enables us to grow to a higher level of godly understanding. There are people far more intelligent—and a lot of them—than the ordinary people God calls today (1 Corinthians 1:26). Despite this, we understand things that they simply cannot because they do not have God’s Spirit!

We are called to be children of God in a very real way. This is something the world does not comprehend. After explaining that those who are led by the Spirit of God “are sons of God,” Paul tells us that the Spirit “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” and this makes us joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:14, 16–17). An astonishing statement! So how does God’s Spirit bear witness with our spirit? What does that mean?

The Apostle John explains. “Whoever has been born [more accurately, begotten] of God does not sin, for His [that is, God’s] seed [Greek: *sperma*] remains in him” (1 John 3:9). Just as the male sperm must join with the female ovum to begin the process of human life, so God’s Spirit, carrying His “spiritual DNA,” so to speak, must come together with the spirit in man to begin a new creation. Brethren, this truth that has been revealed to the Church of God is *amazing!* It is through the spirit in man that God transforms us—the spirit in man united with His own Spirit.

Vulnerable to a Dangerous Broadcast

So far, all of this is wonderful news. But we must be aware that there is *another* spirit being in our world who is also able to interact with the spirit in man—and that spirit wants to destroy us. That being is, of course, Satan the Devil, and there is a reason why he is called “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

Right now, there are scores—perhaps hundreds or more—of voices, words, and pictures surrounding you. You cannot hear those voices, read those words, or see those pictures unless you have an appropriate receiver, such as a radio, television, smartphone, or computer. The car next to you on the highway may have music playing from a satellite radio station, but you won’t hear that music unless you, too, are equipped with satellite radio and have paid for the same station. It is all a matter of having the right device to receive these signals.

And we do have the right “device” within us to receive some very bad signals from “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). That device, the spirit in man, is given to empower your brain, and even to unite with the Spirit of God so that you can understand spiritual things and finally be born into God’s very family. But we must learn to discern between two spirits: God’s and the devil’s (1 John 4:1).

I asked at the beginning of this article, *Brethren, do we see what is happening around us? By this I mean, do we understand how our adversary is not only stirring up hatred, but is also actively trying to distract us, the people of God, from our calling? Are we carefully monitoring ourselves concerning what we see, what we think, and what we feel—especially what we feel?*

We understand that Satan does not generally broadcast in words, but in moods and attitudes. One who has true spiritual discernment recognizes the source of the hatred and unrest being stirred up today. It is a challenge for each of us not to get caught up in it. The immoral agendas and disturbances we see at home, abroad, and invading every walk of life are so crazy that we find ourselves at a loss to express in words what we feel. It is not wrong to hate evil, but we must monitor our thoughts and feelings. Many in the United States—and some in other countries, as well—are taking up arms to protect themselves from what they believe is coming. On a carnal level, that may seem to make sense, but is it a godly response? What did Jesus say when Peter chopped off the ear of the high priest’s servant (Matthew 26:52)?

Around 30 years ago, homosexuals began coming out of almost every sitcom closet. Two women kissed in a beer commercial. Katy Perry was seen on Canada’s CTV morning show singing “I kissed a girl and I liked it,” with an audience of tween girls dancing and singing along with her. Should not a thinking person recognize an agenda here? Even HGTV, the “Home and Garden” cable TV channel, is in on the act today, with “non-

traditional” couples. All of this was—and is—a clear attempt to *normalize the abnormal* and desensitize an unsuspecting populace to behaviors that were considered unacceptable in previous eras. And it works! In recent years, we have seen individuals who *brazenly declare* their LGBTQ status voted into high offices in Western countries.

Why is it that people follow the crowd no matter where it goes? More importantly, what is influencing the purveyors of these behaviors? Do *they themselves* know? Yes, they know what they are promoting, but do they know who is influencing them? Consider bizarre hairstyles, immodest dress, body piercings, and tattoos. Then there is vaping and veganism. The spirit of this age comes through the five senses, but there is also a sixth sense—the spirit in man—that receives broadcasts from the spirit of this age. The prince of the power of the air works with and influences society in general, but he also influences the individual, and we must be aware of this. He broadcasts moods and attitudes. He stirs up hatred, racism, and partisanship.

Paul gave essential advice to the church at Ephesus. He instructed them, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). We must never take lightly the fact that the devil is a wily, crafty, and deceptive adversary. We must understand his methods and tactics. Paul continues, “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” (v. 12). Paul then details the specifics of our armor: truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (vv. 13–17). These are more than words. They have meaning!

The Same Tactic Again

I am reminded of something that stuck in my mind when I saw it more than 45 years ago. A new product that came on the market was described as good, old-fashioned “lemonade drink.” The first clue was the word *drink*. Why wasn’t it simply “lemonade”? Why “lemonade drink”? The wary consumer notes that the word *drink* in fruit products is not the same as the word *juice*. And sure enough, reading the label confirmed that the “lemonade drink” was made from mostly everything *but* lemons. Yet, almost immediately, it became a commonly offered beverage when I was visiting members and prospective members as a ministerial trainee.

Now, this was not sin, and it was perfectly okay for someone to serve it. Though I question how healthy it might have been, anything with ice was appreciated on a hot summer

day in Louisiana! However, I was struck by how quickly people went out and bought the product and considered it to be old-fashioned lemonade when it was not. Advertising works!

But that is relatively easy to see through. What are *not* so easy to see through are more subtle forms of advertising that communicate their message indirectly. As David Kupelian points out in *The Marketing of Evil*, the real “advertising” that goes on around us is of the subtle and more insidious variety. He quotes University of Illinois communications professor Robert McChesney as saying, “Everything on MTV is a commercial.... That’s all that MTV is. Sometimes it’s an explicit advertisement paid for by a company to sell a product.... Sometimes it’s going to be the set that’s filled with trendy clothes and stuff there to sell a look that will include products on that set.... But everything’s an infomercial. There is no non-commercial part of MTV” (p. 66).

The same is true with just about anything on television or at the movies. Motion pictures, television, society magazines—all are infomercials. They are there to sell you on a way of life. I loved Popeye cartoons when I was young, not realizing that they were being purposefully used to promote canned spinach and to sell it to children who otherwise might never eat it. Even if it was yucky, it would make us strong like Popeye. Cigarette companies made sure their products were in the fingers of sophisticated, big-name movie stars. Car companies make sure their products appear in movies. They don’t have to point these things out—your mind picks up on them.

Walk Circumspectly

So, it comes down to whether or not we recognize the messages being broadcast to our minds. Eve fell prey to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15–17). She was manipulated by a crafty being who appealed to her inner senses and desires. Similarly, when we hear music that appeals to us, see trendy but immodest clothing, notice the uptick in body piercings and tattoos, hear public praise for accepting particular ideas and approaches to life, an inner voice tells us, without conscious thought, “I need that.” But what is being sold to us through those things?

Brethren, we must walk with eyes wide open and our minds on high alert to what Satan is selling. What is the current drumbeat around us? What philosophy or idea is the world pushing? What social trend do you see that wasn’t there 20 or 30 years ago? Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the same letter in which Paul instructed us to put on spiritual armor, he also instructed, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise” (Ephesians 5:15). ^(L)

The spirit of this age comes through the five senses, but there is also a sixth sense—the spirit in man—that receives broadcasts from the spirit of this age.

Understanding Marking and Disfellowshipping

By **Dexter B. Wakefield**

In the Church, we may occasionally hear that someone has been “disfellowshipped” or “marked,” as the *King James Version (KJV)* puts it. Thankfully, these are rare events. But, perhaps because of this rarity, these practices are not always well understood. Can a person who is *not* a member, attendee, or adherent of the Living Church of God be disfellowshipped? *No*. Can a person who is *not* affiliated with the Living Church of God be “marked”? *Yes*. There are differences between the two. Can you explain them? These are two different ecclesiastical practices, each taken from the Bible. Let’s take a closer look to understand them better.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark** them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17, *KJV*). What does this word, “mark,” mean to you? In *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel set in Puritan New England, an adulteress is required to wear a red letter “A” to identify her sin. Is that what Paul meant by “mark”? Even today, some groups have the practice of completely “shunning” members they disapprove of. Was Paul instructing us to do that?

“Mark” My Words

When the word “mark” is used in the *King James Version*, it is in the sense of “Mark (or note) my words.” The word translated “mark” in the *KJV* comes from the Greek word *skopeo* and is rendered differently in most modern translations. A better understanding of the use of this word is helpful. Consider these definitions of *skopeo* from several lexicons:

- [1:] To look at, observe, contemplate [2:] to mark [3:] to fix one’s eyes upon, direct one’s attention to [anyone] (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).
- To look at, behold, watch, contemplate (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*).
- Consider, take heed, look at (on), mark (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*).

It is interesting to see how the word *skopeo* is used in the Bible in some other contexts:

“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (Luke 11:35, *KJV*).

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; *considering* thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1, *KJV*).

“*Look* not every man *on* his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:4, *KJV*).

Given the various ways the word can be understood, we can see why modern translations of Romans 16:17 usually render the word *skopeo* somewhat differently than does the older English of the *KJV*. For example:

New King James Version: “Now I urge you, brethren, **note** those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”

Revised Standard Version: “I appeal to you, brethren, to **take note of** those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them.”

New American Standard Bible: “Now I urge you, brethren, **keep your eye on** those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”

New International Version: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, to **watch out for** those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

We might describe it this way: Let’s say that in my neighborhood there lived a big dog that would walk up to people on the street, looking at them expectantly. When someone put out a hand to pet the dog, it would suddenly snap at them savagely. Ever know a dog like that? Imagine you and I were walking down the sidewalk and this dog approached us expectantly. When you reached out to pet it, the dog gave you a vicious bite. Then, as you tried to stop the bleeding, I remarked, “Actually, I knew that dog would bite you. It does that to everyone who tries to pet it.” You would probably be very upset with me, and you might say, “You should have

warned me to *mark*, to *note*, to *keep my eye on*, to *watch out for* that dog, and avoid it!" And you would be right.

Paul was saying that the Church has a similar responsibility. This is why the ministry, after careful consideration, will sometimes announce to a congregation or to the Church as a whole that someone may potentially do harm and needs to be "noted" or "marked." It's rare, but it happens, and the individual may or may not be a member. This is done when you need to be warned, and the person taken note of can be anyone who poses a threat of some kind, spiritual or otherwise.

What It Means to Disfellowship

Sadly, it is sometimes necessary for someone to be suspended or even dismissed from the fellowship of the Church—that is, to be disfellowshipped. Disfellowshipping is quite different from the marking or noting described above, in that it always involves someone who is a part of our fellowship, and the local members *may or may not be told* about the action. Also, a person may be temporarily suspended for some problem without their congregation being told (often called a "suspension"), and then return weeks or months later. Or members *may* be asked, depending on the circumstances, to avoid social contact with the person for a period, pending repentance. Usually, this restriction does not include business contact. Determining how to handle business contact is the responsibility of the individual member, but seeking counsel from the ministry can help you decide what is most helpful in each individual case.

In 1 Corinthians 5, the Bible presents an example of disfellowshipping involving a man who was committing, on an ongoing basis, a sin that involved having an affair with his stepmother (see Deuteronomy 27:20). Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.... But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.... Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person'" (1 Corinthians 5:2, 11, 13).

However, in the second chapter of 2 Corinthians, we find that being disfellowshipped helped the man. He had repented and was to be accepted again by the Church. Paul wrote, "This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things" (2 Corinthians 2:6–9).

How, then, should we feel toward those who have been marked or disfellowshipped? It is very important to remember that the *membership should not bear any ill will against the person*. These practices have a constructive and protective purpose, and should never be construed to encourage feelings of animosity.

Paul instructed the Church, "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:13–15). Even when someone is attacking our faith and practice, Jesus said we should love them: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:44–45).

In Summary

The meaning of each of these biblical practices can be summarized very briefly:

Disfellowshipping

- involves only someone in our fellowship.
- may involve a temporary suspension, or it may be permanent.
- generally involves cases of promoting doctrinal error, causing division, personal sin, or some other issue—pending repentance. Its purpose is to *help* the person spiritually and to *protect* the Church spiritually from sin or division.

The congregation may not be informed of a disfellowshipping, particularly in the case of a suspension. This is a judgment call made by the minister, who carefully considers what is in the best interests of the individual and of the Church.

Marking

- means "taking note of" or "watching out for."
- can involve someone who is in our fellowship or not in our fellowship.

This practice may be used to protect the Church congregation when people make adversaries of themselves. The "marked" or "noted" people may cause harm, and the brethren are being told: *Beware*.

Disfellowshipping and marking are two different practices, but both are used for the health and protection of the Church. Neither practice should ever result in animosity against the individual involved. ^(LM)

Festival 2019: An Inspiring View of the Future!

By **Rod McNair**

The Feast of Tabernacles has always been the highlight of the year for God's people! It's a time to learn about the coming Kingdom of God. It's an opportunity to refocus and get re-energized. It's a chance to renew old acquaintances and make new friends. It's an opportunity to build priceless memories between parents, children, brothers, and sisters, and to also get to know our *spiritual family*! And, as life gets more challenging in a society increasingly rebelling against God, it's a time for His people to enjoy a respite from the world. As one Festival Coordinator said as this year's Feast began, "Feast-goers heaved a sigh of relief, having left behind the business of the past year, dramatic and traumatic for many." What a blessing the Feast is!

Overall, Living Church of God Festival 2019 attendance was 11,069, a 4.7 percent increase over 2018's Feast and the first time that either the Global Church of God or the Living Church of God has passed the 11,000 mark. The Feast was observed at 61 locations in 37 countries. Eleven of these Feast sites were organized in the United States, with a combined attendance of 5,219. Fifty other sites were outside of the United States, with a combined attendance of 5,850.

What were the highlights of the Feast for you? In the following pages, we will review some memories of the Feast of 2019—the inspiration, the encouragement, and the focus on our fabulous future!

Spiritual Meat in Due Season

God's word shows that we are to participate in the Feast to "learn to fear the LORD your God always" (Deuteronomy 14:23). How does that happen? In the book of Nehemiah, we find that when the exiles returned from Babylon, they kept the Feast of Tabernacles. Here is how they kept it: "Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he [that is, Ezra] read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner" (Nehemiah 8:18). The pattern of gathering at the Feast to learn from God's servants was set millennia ago.

At 2019's Feast, God's ministers gave sermons with titles such as "Why Are We Here?," "Embrace the Fear of God," "The Sabbath and the Millennium," "Our Magnificent Transformation," "Character of Kings," "Utopian World Economy," "We Are the Teachers of Tomorrow," and "A Future Full of Peace," to name a few. These and other messages helped all of us focus our minds on the future. They guided us in understanding what God is doing in our lives and how to handle the challenges we face. And they opened our eyes to a better understanding of our calling and how we fit in His Work.

With members and guests hailing from many different countries, messages were given in and translated into numerous languages, including English, Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Swahili, Cebuano, Tagalog, Indonesian, and Karen. Many brethren commented on how inspiring and helpful the sermons were. One Feast-goer attending in **Carry-le-Rouet, France**, observed, "God was really present at the Feast site. Very instructive messages were given by excellent speakers!" A member keeping the Feast in **Punta Leona, Costa Rica**, commented on the "strong spiritual meat delivered by the sermonettes and sermons." Another in **Montego Bay, Jamaica**, commented on the "eye-opening" quality of the sermonettes and sermons given at the Feast, "knowing that one day all this will become a reality."

And it will become reality! That's the central message of the Feast of Tabernacles. The messages we hear form the cornerstone of the teaching that helps us see the reality of God's coming Kingdom more clearly. And it's a full plate—in the one-week period of the Feast, we hear about 11 percent of our yearly intake of sermons. Clearly, God wants our Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day experiences to leave profound and lasting impressions on our minds.

Don't let the spiritual lessons and impressions of this past Feast fade into the distance! Maybe you were inspired to make changes in your life. Perhaps God helped you to see new ways to apply His word to situations you face. Maybe He inspired you to face challenges with renewed zeal. The Feast of 2019 may be in our "rearview mirror," but don't let those lessons end up there as well!

Millennial Atmosphere

For many decades, the Church of God has sought out aesthetically pleasing and naturally inspiring Feast sites. As we immerse ourselves in the beauty of creation, we can find it easier to get into the mindset of worshiping and learning from our Father and His Son. While “big city” Feast sites can be very exciting locations, sites with access to natural wonder often seem to provide a special blessing all their own.

From Hilton Head, South Carolina: *“The messages helped me to focus on lessons to be learned and to apply them as I seek to develop a higher level of spiritual maturity.”*

With such variety in God’s creation, 61 Feast sites around the world meant a vast array of climates and scenery for Feast-goers in 2019. In **Taupo, New Zealand**, attendees were treated to views of beautiful Lake Taupo and distant, snow-capped mountains. Brethren in the Hill Country of **Boerne, Texas**, were treated to regular encounters with curious deer in the evening, even in a parking lot! In **Davao City, Philippines**, brethren stayed together in the refreshing environment of a water-surrounded compound dotted with trees and grass, while the Feast site in **Orap, Vanuatu**, was situated beside a stream that flowed gently into the ocean. Here is how one Feast-goer summed it up at **Seaside, Oregon**: “Coastal sites are wonderful to reflect God’s handiwork of creation. I envision His hand swooping down to the water and creating the oceans and waves, the sound, the voice of His doing.”

Clearly, whether you’re surrounded by the majestic mountains of **Midway, Utah**, the dazzling autumn colors fill-



ing the valleys near **Mt. Snow, Vermont**, or seeking respite near the tranquil, glittering waters of **Kendu Bay, Kenya**, on the shores of Lake Victoria, immersion in the natural beauty of God’s creation is a high priority when it comes to keeping the Feast.

Peace, Safety, and God’s Intervention

Perhaps one of the most important millennial attributes of a Feast site is simply its safety. Many of us live in environments and neighborhoods that are relatively free from crime, but in some parts of the world, security and safety are never taken for granted.

Just before the Feast of Tabernacles began, protests and violence erupted in **Haiti**. Festival Coordinator Wilner Pierre had been planning to spend the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles with brethren in **Port-au-Prince, Gros Morne, and L’Asile**, but regrettably, as a result of the violence, the international airport in Port-au-Prince was closed and all flights were canceled. With curfews imposed and rioting rampant, transportation in and around the city was difficult. In spite of all these challenges, however,

From Lake Geneva, Wisconsin:

“The messages were very applicable to life today.”

God blessed our Haitian brethren, who helped one another with needed supplies and necessities when shops closed, and they were able to attend services together in peace.

South Africa has also been troubled in recent months as violence against foreigners has intensified. With brethren travelling by bus into South Africa from neighboring countries, this was a great concern as the Feast approached. However, God blessed the South African Feast sites, and brethren were able to travel and meet together safely. Numerous attendees commented on the Feast surveys that one highlight of this Feast was simply being safe and secure. God protected our brethren, and we were able to have sites in three places in South Africa—**Stillbaai, Port Shepstone, and Roodeplaats Dam**.

At the **Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri**, site, brethren witnessed a special miracle. A member fell down early in the Feast, and was taken to the hospital and into surgery. Complications arose during the operation, and he experienced uncontrolled bleeding. For several days he was in a very precarious situation, and doctors were concerned that they might lose him. He was

anointed, prayers were requested at services, and the bleeding began “inexplicably” to slow down. Everyone was excited and grateful to God to see both him and his wife—who had also fallen and had broken her hip—attend services on the Last Great Day, knowing they were witnessing a miracle!

Spending Time with the Family

Some brethren are blessed to be able to share the Feast with many family members and extended relatives.

In **Cathedral City, California**, coordinator Stephen Elliott reported, “Four generations of one family

attended, and two of their babies were part of the Blessing of Little Children.” As the years go by in the Millennium, multiple generations of family attending the Feast together will become the norm rather than the exception! But growing as a family at the Feast goes far beyond just spending time with our blood relatives. In the ultimate sense, we have more in common with our spiritual family than our physical family, because we share the same “spiritual DNA,” so to speak. The Feast is a chance to get to know that spiritual family better!

During the Feast, we are blessed with ample time to share wholesome and inspiring activities with our Church family. Why do we do this? Actually, we are following the example of God’s people in Scripture. When the exiles returning from Babylon rediscovered the fall Holy Days, Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites told them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time to see this in action. Festival Coordinator Richard Franz reported that in **Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri**, some brethren went out of their way to help a newly-baptized member attend the Feast who otherwise would have been unable to, showing a spirit of caring, giving, and selflessness. In **Baguio City, Philippines**, brethren showed their generosity by “hosting other brethren, new attendees, and the visiting minister for Sabbath fellowship dinner.”

Feast coordinators exercise great creativity when it comes to planning ways for God’s people to share their resources and time in an enjoyable and educational setting. In **Orap, Vanuatu**, for example, brethren participated in a Bible quiz on Friday night. In **Carry-le-Rouet, France**, “the

activities were tailored for all age groups: arts and crafts for children and adults, board games and outdoor games, a blind test on French and Anglo-Saxon songs of all kinds during the singles’ night, and a special lunch for seniors.” Coordinator Simon Muthama reported that in **Ukerewe, Tanzania**, “the children presented a skit demonstrating how God separates His people from the world when we make the choice to obey His laws, based on the article written by Mr. Dexter

Wakefield, ‘The Theme of Separation in the Fall Festival Season.’ Immediately after the presentation, a program began with brethren singing in

groups and even giving thanks to the speakers through singing.” Brethren in **Vouliagmeni, Greece**, appreciated group activities for making it “easier to meet new people and bond... It was inspiring to walk where the Apostle Paul might have walked and talked. The temples made with hands offered a unique contrast to our celebration of the coming Kingdom of God.”

In **Port Shepstone, South Africa**, brethren participated in the “Family Day BBQ and Amazing Race.” Coordinator Lawdi Ferreira explained, “While two sheep were prepared on the spit-braai [spit roast] eight teams made up of families and groups of five people participated.... The activity consisted of twelve specific stops.... The challenges created good opportunities for laughter, teamwork, thinking, sharpening

your concentration, and working together.”

In **Georgetown, Guyana**, as with a number of other smaller sites, brethren gathered in settings where they spent much of

the Feast cooking, sharing meals, and fellowshiping together without the busyness some larger Feast sites are known for. Circumstances such as this create a unique experience, along with many opportunities to fellowship and serve one another. Though there’s certainly nothing wrong with larger sites, Feast-goers often remark that smaller sites offer some of the best opportunities for really getting to know their spiritual family members.

In **Port Macquarie, Australia**, “teens and preteens were thrilled to have the opportunity to have an exhilarating surf lesson together.” As Festival Coordinator Anthony Mew commented, “This unique opportunity was a great way for all these spirited youths to build friendships.” The Scriptures reveal the Millennium to be a time when young and old will join in a dance (Jeremiah 31:13) and children will

Highlight of the Feast: *“Meeting brethren for the first time and much learning for our first Feast.”*
—Cathedral City, California

From Gimli, Manitoba: *“Thanks for making this Feast one of learning and applying what was learned in our daily lives.”*

play in the streets (Zechariah 8:5)! Capturing a vision of the future under God's government includes activities that are fun for the whole Church family and leave no regrets—they are fun tomorrow as well as fun today. That certainly was experienced in 2019. As brethren enjoyed bunco in **Lake Geneva, Wisconsin**, curled in **Gimli, Manitoba**, engaged in team-building activities and beach games at **Pebbles Beach, Barbados**, or experienced an authentic Tejas Rodeo in **Boerne, Texas**, the Feast once again provided a unique and special time in which to grow together as a Church family.

Old-timers and Newcomers

It can be frightening to come into a group where you don't know anyone. Yet for newcomers to the Feast who are willing to take that leap of faith, the rewards are profound. This year was no exception. Festival

Coordinator Felipe Casing reported that in **Davao City, Philippines**, "some first-timers cried" with joy at their experience of the Feast. Another first-

timer, in **Warrnambool, Australia**, reported to Coordinator Martin Montgomery that "the hairs on his arms stood up as he heard aspects of God's plan that he had never heard or understood before explained in sermons." Another first-time attendee, in **Port Shepstone, South Africa**, mentioned that she was "overwhelmed by the love, respect, and family atmosphere that prevailed among God's people." Their example encouraged her, she said, to "become baptized and completely follow God's way of life."

Coordinator Adam West explained that in **Mount Snow, Vermont**, "One first-time attendee mentioned how he had been to church 'retreats' and conferences before, but this time was different. He always walked away and just kept doing as they had done before, but attending God's Feast made him feel that he had changes to make but with the added motivation to follow through." Many brethren attending the Feast in **Djougou, Cameroon**, were keeping it for the first time. As Festival Coordinator Urbain

Hazoumé reported, the Feast was an excellent opportunity to be "instructed on important points of our doctrines, in particular the tithes, is it good or not to wear a veil for the women, the preaching of the Gospel, the governmental structure in the Church, etc." The messages and even the "question and answer" games "clarified areas of uncertainty and built each other up." To all of our newcomers to the Feast of Tabernacles

From Williamsburg, Virginia: *"The spiritual food we received was wonderful. Plenty to study and go back over once home."*

Highlight of the Feast: *"Much-needed urgency in the messages; the encouragement from our ministers and each other."*
— Boerne, Texas

and the Living Church of God, welcome! We're glad you're here!

But we are not only thankful for our newcomers—we are also grateful for those who have steadily, faithfully obeyed God by attending His Feast for 40, 50, or even 60 years. Festival Coordinator Paul Shumway reported that in **Pebbles Beach, Barbados**, "Attendees even included several members who were present for the inaugural service with Mr. Herbert Armstrong and Mr. Dibar Apartian, 51 years ago!" As Festival Coordinator Simon Roberts described, in **Harrogate, United Kingdom**, "Two members were attending their 60th full UK Feast and sharing their memories of Bricket Wood, Ambassador College, and Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong." One of our longtime members, attending in **Seaside, Oregon**, commented, "I feel very strongly that

God was not only refining our focus this year at the Feast, but also seemed to be drawing together in the spirit of unity those of us who are inspired to have that focus."

Letting Our Light Shine

Wherever in the world we are keeping the Feast, we should let our light shine as Jesus commanded us to do (Matthew 5:16). Whether to people we meet in the supermarket, on the street, or in the hotel, the Feast of Tabernacles is a prime opportunity to provide a positive example. And it's gratifying to hear that there were numerous reports of venue staff being very pleased with members and guests attending the Feast in 2019. Festival Coordinator Simon Roberts reported that in **Harrogate, United Kingdom**, "The Hotel staff described the brethren as the best conference group they had experienced. They were very sad to see us leave, recognizing that the different atmosphere from the previous nine days no

longer existed." One hotel staff member was so interested in the Feast that Mr. Roberts invited him to stay and listen to the services!

Festival Coordinator Anthony Mew mentioned that in **Port Macquarie,**

Australia, the supervisors of the venue commented that "this was the best conference they have been involved with in a very long time, and that the brethren were always polite, positive, happy, and quick to help." Richard Franz relayed that in **Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri**, "The staff at the Lodge of Four Seasons was very impressed by the manner and decorum of all the brethren, especially those who

needed to interact with them—i.e., sound crew, head usher, head greeter.”

It’s encouraging to hear positive comments from venue staff—especially positive comments about our children! Festival Coordinator Gary Stein commented that in **Boerne, Texas**, “The Bevy Hotel staff commented on how well-dressed everyone was. They loved our children and how nice and friendly our people were. One indicated that ‘we were dreading a church group coming in as most are difficult to deal with and to please, but yours has been a very pleasing experience.’”

Setting a good example is more than just leaving a good impression with the hotel staff. It’s about understanding that we represent Jesus Christ to the world, and that we are preparing to take the lead, under Christ, in showing the world a new way to live. In that light, it was very meaningful when one hotel staff member told one of our ministers in **Seaside, Oregon**, “The world needs more people like you all.” Yes, that’s what we’re preparing for!

Rewarding Service

Service comes in many forms, such as parking duty, running the sound, setting up stage decorations, or serving at the Business Office. It may involve providing music at the Feast or giving assistance as an usher or greeter. The secret is that serving actually helps us enjoy the Feast all the more. As one Feast-goer at **Lake of the Ozarks** put it, “I served as a greeter, and I absolutely loved it!”

Sometimes brethren aren’t able to attend the Feast for health reasons. Those of you who are in this situation know how vital the service of the phone hookup or video stream is! Here is what one shut-in wrote regarding “dialing in” to services at **Cathedral City, California**:

“We were scheduled to come to Cathedral City, but various health issues kept us at home attending through web-cast, and we wanted to say how thankful we are for it.” Another grateful member, assigned to **Midway, Utah**, wrote, “I attended via computer. Thank you very much as it was great to be able to attend.... I’m in a nursing home and everything was perfect, except I wasn’t there in person. Hope to be with you all next year. Thank the GREAT GOD that made this possible.”

The Feast is about training, and in some cases, it provides a prime time—or the only time—to train local leaders. In **Port**

Moresby, Papua New Guinea, Festival Coordinator Graeme Hemphill reported that one afternoon was spent training men to lead hymns. It is also a wonderful time to make beautiful music together in praise to God, an act of service that stirs many to gratitude. Festival Coordinator Lascelles Fraser passed along this report from the **Caribbean**: “Many brethren expressed how well coordinated the choir was and their appreciation for the inspiring music.”

Others find simple joy in just being able to come together and share their talents, and serve with their sheer enthusiasm. During a dance in **Lowlands, Tobago**, those who did not join in the actual dancing still sang along to the music, to the delight of all on the dance floor.

In one way or another, we all serve each other at the Feast. Everyone’s contribution is needed and appreciated, and that’s the way God designed it. As one Feast-goer in **Pigeon Forge, Tennessee**, noted, “I was most impressed with the way all the brethren jumped in and helped with the meeting hall setup and breakdown, and with the overall serving attitude throughout the entire Feast, but that’s how God’s people are!”

Summing up this year’s Feast, one member who attended in **Penticton, British Columbia**, noted, “God’s Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day was a memorable time for me, personally, from the wonderful and meaningful sermons to the special music, activities, and fellowship. I’m grateful to God, to the organizers, and all assistants, who together made everything work wonderfully.” Another

Feast-goer, attending in **Williamsburg, Virginia**, described how important attending the Feast is to confronting the loneliness that many isolated brethren deal with throughout the rest of the year: “I am the only member where I live

and before the Feast I was quickly sinking into a depressive state, but being able to serve and fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ changed that very quickly. Thank you so much.”

God richly blessed the Feast of Tabernacles activities and services of the Living Church of God in 2019. He inspired us to take what we learned and go forward as we press toward the Kingdom! As was said in **Stillbaai, South Africa**, we now must “byt vas,” or “hold fast,” as we persevere with faithfulness until our Savior returns. God speed that day! (L)

From Port Macquarie, New South Wales:

“We had a number of guests attending the Feast... [who] commented numerous times that they were blown away by everything, especially the messages. Comments included ‘a noticeable air of reverence’ and ‘I think I have found what I am looking for.’”



Pigeon Forge, Tennessee



Pigeon Forge, Tennessee



Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri



Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri



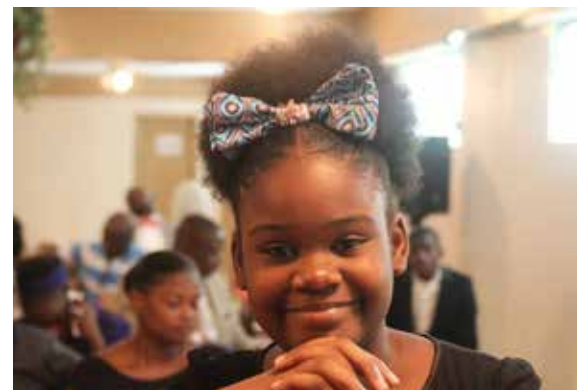
Mount Snow, Vermont



Mount Snow, Vermont



Gros Morne, Haiti



Gros Morne, Haiti



Harrogate, England



Harrogate, England



Greece



Ukerewe, Tanzania



Greece



Davao City, Philippines

10 14 2019



Cathedral City, California



Stilbaai, South Africa



Stilbaai, South Africa



Port Shepstone, South Africa



Port Shepstone, South Africa



Port Shepstone, South Africa



Gimli, Canada



Georgetown, Guyana



Gimli, Canada



Midway, Utah



Midway, Utah

Titus 2:3-5

Woman to Woman

Hard Times: *What Do I Do Now?*

By Priscila Lyons

My alarm goes off again—just another weekday. As I try to open my eyes, they feel puffy, and I remember: I cried myself to sleep last night. All of the night's thoughts and feelings come right back, leaving me a crying mess at 6 o'clock in the morning. Not how I want to start my day.

Sometimes life is difficult. Sometimes it stays difficult. You've figured that out already, or will soon. Maybe you're going through hard times right now. Fighting the spiritual battles women face during trials can leave us drained and heartbroken, wondering how to handle the emotions that, some days, seem to overwhelm us completely no matter what we do. How do we change the way we feel? Is God listening to our prayers? I'd like to share with you some lessons I have learned that help me handle hard times.

There Is a Time for Everything

It is very difficult to be happy when severe trials hit. We read in Ecclesiastes 3 that to everything there is a season: "A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (v. 4). There is nothing wrong with needing time to be sad! Take your time to cry and mourn. Allow yourself to *not* be

okay, to prayerfully process your emotions.

But—and this is a big "but"—as Christian ladies, daughters of God, we cannot allow ourselves to stay in those emotions for long. Your Father does not want you to be depressed! He wants you to have joy, a fruit of His Spirit (Galatians 5:22). When you and your world are crashing down, take it all in, be sad and weep, but remember: This is just a *season*. It does not define who you are.

Talk to a Friend (or Two!)

As women, we have the need to communicate and *share*—share thoughts, share feelings, and bounce ideas off people we trust. Some situations can be very personal and private, so you might not feel comfortable sharing them with just anyone, but what about a good friend in the Church? What about an older lady you look up to? What about someone you know who has gone through a similar situation and made it to "the other side," or someone who is going through her own trial right now? Someone like that will often be more than happy to listen and to share a burden.

My husband and I have been blessed with wonderful friends in the Church. On one particular Sabbath, we were both feeling very low during a time when our family members

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ORDINATIONS

Mr. Olumuyiwa Akin-Ogundeji was ordained as a deacon on October 9, 2019, by Regional Director Peter Nathan and elder Oladele Akin-Ogundeji. Mr. Akin-Ogundeji serves the brethren in Nigeria.

Mr. Colin Arthey was ordained as a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets, September 30, 2019, by Pastor Dexter Wakefield and elder Hugh Stewart. Mr. Arthey serves in the Sevenoaks, Kent, congregation in England.

Mr. Jesse Cole Burkes II was ordained as a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets, September 30, 2019, by Area Pastor Glen Harrison and elders Ray Joffrion, Chip Wheelahan, and Curtis Lambright. Mr. Burkes serves in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, congregation.

Mr. Benson Cudjoe was ordained as a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets, September 30, 2019, by Pastor Dexter Wakefield and elder Hugh Stewart. Mr. Cudjoe serves in the London congregation in England.

Mr. Urbain Hazoumé was ordained as an elder on October 7, 2019, by Regional Director Peter Nathan

and Area Pastor Rees Ellis. Mr. Hazoume serves in the Libreville, Gabon congregation.

Mr. Juvenal Karibwami was ordained as an elder on July 17, 2019, by Regional Director Peter Nathan, Area Pastor Rees Ellis, and elder Ephraim Abok. Mr. Karibwami serves in the Bujumbura congregation in Burundi.

Mr. Alex Pomictor was ordained as a deacon by Regional Pastor Rand Millich and elder Brian Pomictor on September 28. Mr. Pomictor serves in the Omaha, Nebraska, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel (Sylvie) Tremblay were ordained as deacon and deaconess during the Feast of Tabernacles in Rockland, Quebec, by Evangelist Stuart Wachowicz and Area Pastor Yvon Brochu. They serve in the Quebec City congregation.

Mr. Felipe Torres-Valentin was ordained as a deacon by Area Pastor Gary Stein and elders Alex Celan, Dwain Crisman, and Marshall Moluf on the Feast of Trumpets, September 30, 2019. Mr. Torres-Valentin serves in the Dallas, Texas, congregation.

Births

The Anngow family from Timaru, New Zealand, is excited to announce the safe arrival of **Isabella Gracie Rose Anngow**, who was born on Tuesday, August 13, 2019, weighing 8 pounds, 7 ounces. Her parents, Mark and Sarah Anngow, are overjoyed to add their daughter to the family, as is older brother Daniel-Peter.

Manu and Gilda Kalsai of the Orap, Vanuatu, congregation, are happy

to announce the arrival of their son, **Jeffrey Kalsai**, born on May 20, 2019. He weighed 3.5 kilograms and was 53 centimeters long. He is their fourth child.

It gives Stephen and Rebecca Mew, from the Brisbane, Australia, congregation, great pleasure to announce the birth of their first son, **Samuel Douglas Mew**, on July 30, 2019; he weighed 8 pounds and was 52 centimeters long.

Willie Naguy and his wife, Sabrina, of the Orap, Vanuatu, congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their fourth child, **William Naguy, Jr.**, who was born on April 15, 2019. He weighed 3.4 kilograms and was 45 centimeters long. The Naguys have three girls, and are very excited to welcome a son into the world.

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

In Loving Memory

Mr. Matthew Caruana, 86, died on July 20, 2019. He was a faithful member of the Adelaide, Australia, congregation since his baptism in 1987. Mr. Caruana was a caring, loving man with a great sense of humor. All who knew him look forward to seeing him again in the Kingdom.

Mr. Johan De Hoog, 86, from the Auckland, New Zealand, congregation, died peacefully in his sleep on July 27, 2019. Mr. De Hoog grew up in Indonesia but moved to New Zealand in his early adult years. He is survived by his beloved wife Tonny; they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary two years ago. Mr. De Hoog is remembered as a faithful and humble man who endured to the end. Despite declining health in his last years, he set a fine example of determination to attend Sabbath services faithfully.

Mr. Gerald Dulaney, 87, of the Winchester, Virginia, congregation, died in his sleep on September 28, 2019. Mr. Dulaney was a member of God's Church for 55 years, and a longtime elder. He served in the U.S. Army from 1952 to 1954, and later worked in newspaper advertising. He was known and loved for his kind, gentle, and giving spirit. He is survived by his wife Margie of 40 years, three stepdaughters, nine step-grandchildren, and five step-great-grandchildren. Area Pastor Jason Fritts conducted his funeral service.

Mr. Josefino Gale, 64, from San Fernando, Philippines, died on June 23, 2019. Mr. Gale was a very generous and faithful member of God's Church. Though he suffered from health trials, he always shared with and encouraged others, and he will be greatly missed by the many who loved him. Mr. Gale is survived by his wife Leonila and three children.

Mrs. Betty Gulley, 82, from the Columbus, Georgia, congregation, died on July 20, 2019, after complications from a stroke. She was preceded in death by her husband Charles, a deacon. Mrs. Gulley loved being with God's family each week at Sabbath services and attended regularly despite her disability. She will be missed, and remembered for her warm smile and loving disposition. She is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, and numerous great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Alene Hagmaier, 82, of the Akron congregation in Ohio, died peacefully on October 18, 2019, surrounded by her family. She is survived by her husband Rodger, a longtime elder; one son; two grandchildren; two siblings; and numerous other relatives. A member of God's Church for 52 years, Mrs. Hagmaier was a longtime deaconess, and known for her hospitality at the "Hagmaier Hotel." She was full of life, devoted to her family, and a master homemaker, cook, and gardener. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Mrs. Addie Doice Hedge, 94, of Mena, Arkansas, a faithful member of God's Church for 64 years, died peacefully on September 12, 2019. She was predeceased by her husband William, to whom she devoted herself for 67 years. She was a dedicated mother of nine children and had 15 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren. She loved gardening and tending her flowers. Mrs. Hedge was much loved and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Mrs. Bobbi Rosenthal, 46, of the Pawtucket, Rhode Island, congregation, died peacefully at home on September 7, 2019, with her husband Jeff by her side. Mrs. Rosenthal was diagnosed with late-stage cancer just eight months earlier, and chose hospice care. She was baptized in 2006 and was a dedicated member of the Church and an active member of the congregation. Mrs. Rosenthal loved the brethren and her flower garden. She is survived by her husband, a son and a daughter, her mother, eight siblings, and several other relatives. Associate Pastor Michael Aviles conducted her funeral.

Mrs. Mishel Tarry, 76, of the Adelaide, South Australia, congregation, died on September 16, 2019, after a long illness. Baptized in 2009, she will be greatly missed by all. A memorial service was conducted by Area Pastor Michael Gill.

Living Education: Learning from Community

In our modern world, community service is often treated as a punishment—a judicial sentence for committing a comparatively minor crime. In tomorrow’s world, however, community service will be known not as a “slap on the wrist” for criminals, but as the responsibility and privilege of the righteous. At Living Education–Charlotte, faculty and students strive to foster this true sense of what it means to serve the community, and they do so through volunteer efforts, music, and that great unifier: food.

This semester, Living Education students and faculty assisted the Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, an organization devoted to providing resources to impoverished members of local communities. “The people at the food bank were very happy to see us,” said Dalton Mooney, a current Living Education student. “We had a great time. We sorted Walmart goods and had fun with it—we danced to some music while we scratched out bar codes. Everyone seemed to enjoy it.”

But these activities aren’t reserved for the students alone. The Charlotte congregation’s outreach activities are open to all members of the Church, and William Williams, who works in the Editorial Department at Headquarters, frequently attends. “It’s definitely something that gives anyone a chance to contribute,” Williams said. “Second Harvest, out of the three most common activities I’m familiar with, seems to be the most accommodating on several levels. It usually takes place in the evening rather than the middle of a workday, and it doesn’t require special talents—anyone can show up and pitch in. It’s just what it needs to be: casting bread on the waters without any need or temptation to know where it ends up.”

Students’ service extends beyond fulfilling physical needs. Living Education’s Christian Music course culminates in an end-of-year recital to lift the spirits of a few in the local community. “The end-of-year recital is an important aspect of Living Education’s music program—its main benefit is in the students being able to interact with the community in a different way,” said Rebekah Ross, music instructor for Living Education. “The audience gets to see the face of Living Education and interact with different people. For example, last year, we had the end-of-year recital at a retirement home. The people there were very happy and ex-

cited that we came. They really enjoyed seeing us perform, but also talking to us and to the students—to have that time to be visited.”

Often, the best way to serve people is simply to talk with them, and one of the most natural occasions for a conversation is over a meal. This past November, Living Education invited neighbors to a barbecue at the men’s dorm, giving students the chance to get to know the neighborhood they share. “It’s a good thing for the people in God’s Church to reach out to the larger community,” Mooney said. “We got to meet about five of the neighbors. [One of our neighbors] lives down the road from the student houses—he was actually the builder for those houses, along with all of the houses in the area. The family living across the street from the women’s house came, and they’re very nice people. They brought a bunch of delicious desserts.”

In an age when nearly anyone can easily locate and limit themselves to a group of people very like themselves, interaction with those who are *not* so similar is an important skill to develop—one that should foster a broader sense of empathy. “The students are learning that there’s a community outside their own,” Miss Ross said. “We can get caught up in the idea that if we’re serving in the Church, that’s the community—and it is, but there’s a whole world out there of people who can also be helped and served, people who need love and compassion. It’s vital that we in the Church don’t miss the fact that the people in the world are important.”

“There are a lot of great examples of people who are trying to do good in the world,” she added. “Often, we don’t take the time to look at those people and really appreciate them for what they’re doing. When you help out at the food bank, you see a whole charitable organization set up just to reach people who are in need, who don’t have enough of something. The people in these organizations are very selfless, kind, and serving. A lot of times, we think of ourselves as the example, but we can also look at these people and realize that *they* have an example to show *us*. Sometimes we need to take a step back and see that we can learn from the people outside, as well. We can learn from that greater community—it has a lot to teach us!”

—Editorial Staff

Adelaide Fellowship Weekend 2019

With another Adelaide Fellowship Weekend done and dusted for 2019, it has been wonderful to hear so many positive comments from brethren who attended. This year we had 18 guests join us from beyond Adelaide—not only from states around Australia, but from overseas, too!

Our theme for this year’s weekend, held at the Kangarilla Recreation Centre July 5–8, was “Philadelphian Christians.” Regional Director Robert Tyler focused on this topic because we in God’s Church all need to have Philadelphian love and concern for one another. This love is a massive part of what the world lacks, and one reason we see the world decaying is that Satan’s way is the absolute opposite to this.

Friday night started off in the best possible way as our brethren fellowshiped and became reacquainted over a variety of very hot and tasty soups. After dinner, Mr. Tyler gave a Bible study, setting the foundation of the weekend by explaining the history of the Church eras, including when and how the Philadelphian era started.

On the Sabbath, we had the opportunity to hear from two of our travelling ministers. Mr. Martin Montgomery, from Melbourne, gave a sermonette titled “Come Out of Her My People.” Mr. Anthony Mew, from Brisbane, followed with his sermon, “A Philadelphian Approach in the Laodicean Age.” Both speakers were able to elaborate on these titles and describe invaluable ways to harness a Philadelphian mindset daily.

As the Sabbath ended, our Philadelphian fellowship continued. The sun went down and we enjoyed a wonderful catered meal. During dessert, we had the opportunity to watch

the LYP New Zealand 2019 camp video, which gave us all an insight into the wonderful benefit camp is to our youth.

On Sunday morning, we enjoyed two hour-long lectures. Our first speaker was Sydney Pastor Mr. Graeme Hemphill, who spoke on the challenges Philadelphians face in this end time and how we can best keep the Philadelphian spirit alive. Our second lecture was given by Mr. Mew, who explained God’s perspective on Philadelphian Christians and our exciting future. As the lectures ended it was lunchtime, and we enjoyed a light barbecue meal before we went to our planned activities.

Those wanting a quieter afternoon enjoyed a game of lawn bowling at the local bowling club. Others visited a few famous local wineries in the Adelaide region, where wine tasting and canapés were on offer. Concluding the afternoon, we made our way back to the hall for a dinner of pizza and salad. Following the meal, we reminisced over a “Behind the Work” video from the Feast of Tabernacles in 1983, titled “From Sardis to Philadelphia.” Before we concluded, we gathered around two fire pits and toasted some marshmallows. This was a superb way to spend our last evening together.

The following day concluded the weekend, but not without a lunch and browse around Hahndorf, a very famous German-style village near Adelaide, to cap off a wonderful and uplifting weekend. Truly, the whole weekend was a memorable mark in the Adelaide congregation’s history. We encourage any and all of our brethren to plan to join us for next year’s Adelaide Fellowship Weekend. You will thoroughly enjoy it as much as we will enjoy having you here. See you then!

—Adam Jennings

LYP Philippines Camp 2019

Our latest LYP Philippines Camp was held May 21–25, 2019, on the peaceful grounds of the Lantaw Bukid facility in Davao. This was the first time in many years we have conducted a country-wide youth camp in the Philippines. Twenty campers and 16 staff came from Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon to attend.

Our campers enjoyed five days of learning and working together in sports such as basketball, volleyball, and Ultimate Frisbee. Boys were introduced to song-leading, while the girls were taught modesty principles. Social skills in communication and dance were also a vital part of the activities.

The camp theme was “Remembering Our Creator,” inspired by Ecclesiastes 12. The ministry had the opportunity to impress on the minds of campers some basic biblical doctrines, and campers benefitted from a Bible study about avoiding the traps of youthful lusts. On the Sabbath at the end of the camp, our Davao brethren were able to spend time with the youth and enjoy activities with them in the evening.

Youth camps reflect the larger Church, teaching a servant leadership approach based on the foundation of God’s holy and righteous government. The attitudes of our young people at camp reflected the childlike humility that we all

need to develop, fostering unity and love among camp participants. When everyone works together under the same banner of belief and truth, no wonder youth camps are a delight for all involved.

Campers and staff enjoyed the whole camp program and are looking forward to the next camp. It was truly a privilege to be a part of the camp, as the number of campers was just a fraction of all the teens who could attend. It is our hope that many more can be part of this program in the future—not only teens in the Philippines, but also the teenaged children of Church members in other Asian countries.

—Joseph Gonzales

Nairobi Family Day, November 3, 2019

The Nairobi congregation held a very nice Family Day activity on Sunday, November 3 at Mr. and Mrs. Mwanzia's place in Kajiado. The brethren arrived at 10:00 a.m., and had breakfast after the blessing of the food. Mr. Simon Muthama read a few scriptures as he spoke about God the Father and Jesus the Son as a family unit based on love, who have been continuing to build a family with us. He explained why God instituted marriage and the purpose of mothers and fathers in this process. He reminded us that God has not "reached His mark" yet, as people are still being born, and that after He has finished His Work needed in this age, Christ will return to set up His Kingdom. Mr. Muthama encouraged brethren to have a spirit of love and then blessed the lunchtime meal.

It was a fun day, with good socializing and great food and drinks. The event ended by 3:00 p.m. with a prayer.

—Simon Muthama



"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." —Acts 2:42

Building the Living Church of God Thai Foundation

The Living Church of God has recently established the *Living Church of God Thai Foundation*. For those of you not already aware of it, we are excited to share with you this new journey in preaching the Gospel to this region.

We have already enjoyed some significant growth in this program. In the early half of last year, doors opened to preach the Gospel in Thailand. However, with the opportunity came numerous challenges. Due to local regulations, the best way to reach the people there was to register as a foundation. One requirement for a registered foundation is to support Thai society in terms of education and living. To satisfy this, the Living Church of God Thai Foundation has developed a strategy

not only to preach the Gospel as our first commission, but also to be lights and examples to the wider community through our charitable works.

Since Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist nation with very limited knowledge of God (and even less of the Bible), the typical direct method of preaching the Gospel is not always as effective as it is in the West. Information in Thailand tends to travel through word of mouth or association, so, through the Foundation, the Church can indirectly preach the Gospel through our example within the community.

Currently, the Foundation is supporting local schools in the Tak province of western Thailand. This has given impoverished students much-needed school supplies such as

notebooks, pens, pencils, rulers, and sports equipment. We also provide some food for their families, greatly improving the quality of education for these students.

The Foundation has also formed a working relationship with the Maeku Municipality School—a local primary school with approximately 700 students in grades 1–7. Our volunteers will be able to assist English Thai teachers in the delivery of their classes. This project seeks to help school students develop greater confidence in the English language and open up new career pathways. This volunteer program is to be trialled this November/December, with two volunteers from Australia sent to assess and finalise program logistics.

Alongside all of this activity in its “Education Project,” the Foundation is also exploring an “Agricultural” project, establishing a gardening scheme that will give impoverished populations in Thailand the opportunity to learn sustainable agricultural

and gardening skills while developing a broader sense of community awareness. Local residents would be able to share in the planting, caretaking, and harvesting of the produce. As this effort is still in the developmental stage, we hope to open up an opportunity for

volunteers to participate in this project in the future.

As it unfolds, we hope to share more with you of the exciting work being done in Thailand. So, as our telecast presenters would say, “Stay tuned!”

—Sarah Berardo

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were struggling with health challenges, and some of those friends invited us to their house, where we talked about our situation and found encouragement. God can use your Church family to lift you up and give you the words you need to hear. Talk to your mothers and sisters in Christ—let God use them to encourage you.

When Your Heart Is Broken

Have you ever thought, “Is God listening to me? I’m praying every day, but He doesn’t seem to hear.” I know I have. I also know that, in those moments, Satan is trying to make me believe the lie that God doesn’t care about me. During the darkest hours of your life, during the hardest times you have to face, God is not only hearing your prayers—He is listening carefully to them. He is leaning close to you to catch every word, because “the LORD is near to those who have a broken heart” (Psalm 34:18).

Your Father wants to console you. You are not alone—He is by your side, counting your tears and wanting to comfort you as only He can. When you are feeling brokenhearted, remember: “God is near to me.”

We Are Helpers and Givers

“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Let that sink in for a moment. Now you might be wondering, “What does this have to do with hard times?” Well, trials have a way of causing us to focus on *ourselves*, on *our* problems, and on all the negative things surrounding *us*. Giving, though, has the opposite effect. It makes us think of *others* and what *they* are going through—their needs and their trials. Helping others is part of a woman’s design (Genesis 2:18). Embrace that!

Happily, giving does not have to be expensive or time-consuming. We can meet for lunch with a widow in the congregation, help someone finish a sewing project she has been struggling with, babysit for a busy momma, make a meal for someone in need, write a beautiful card, or dedicate part of our intercessory prayer to those who need encouragement or even miracles in their lives. I can assure you that when you take your mind off yourself and your problems—

as big as they might be—you will feel better. *Because God says He will bless you for giving to others, it truly is “more blessed to give than to receive.”*

The Bible’s Words Are True

Can you imagine a world with no physical or emotional pain—no sorrow, no reason to cry, and even no death? Can you imagine your life without suffering? Well, that time is coming! The Bible talks about it: “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Ladies, do we believe these words? I hope so, because they are **true**.

When we understand this reality, when we understand that God will heal our wounds, fill every hole in our hearts, and give us so much more than we can think of, we can have hope during our struggles. Despite our present pain, we have hope of better times—times that might not be in this life, but times we can be sure are coming. Ensuring that these words are real to us, deeply feeling that God’s promises are sure, can help you deal with trials as you remind yourself that *all* hard times will end.

What’s Next?

All of us will find ourselves facing trials in our lives. Such times can be lonely and challenging, but there are actions we can take to turn them into growing opportunities. Through such difficulties, we can learn to accept our vulnerabilities and serve others even when we are hurting.

There are wonderful examples in the Bible of godly women: Sarah, Deborah, Abigail, Rebecca, Mary the mother of Jesus, Hannah, and so many more. All of them went through hard times, and some of them suffered a lot, but God was always with them and will ensure they all receive their reward. Then and now, God has used trials to perfect our character, because He wants us in His Kingdom! As Dr. Meredith often told us, “Never, ever give up!”

So, when hard times come, trust God and keep doing your part. Take comfort in knowing He will deliver you. Soon enough, today’s hard times will seem as nothing compared to the rewards our Father and Future Husband are preparing for us. God speed that day! (LM)

LYP U.S. Summer Camps: Are You Ready?

The cold weather will soon begin to fade and the summer sun will be back again! It is time to start planning for this year's Living Youth Program camps, where Church youth come together in a fun and challenging environment, with an atmosphere of love and encouragement centered on God's way of life. Here's a quick rundown of our U.S. camps for the 2020 season.

This year we are planning three preteen camps in the United States. Times and locations may change in some cases, but this is the latest information.

- **Missouri Preteen Camp:** Lake of the Ozarks State Park, Kaiser, MO
Dates: Sunday, June 28–Friday, July 3
- **Texas Preteen Camp:** Lone Star Camp, Athens, TX
Dates: Sunday, July 26–Friday, July 31
- **West Virginia Preteen Camp:** Glenwood 4-H Campground, Princeton, WV
Dates: Sunday, July 26–Friday, July 31

Ages for preteen camps: Camper: 8–12; Mini-Camper: 7 and under; Sibling Camper: 13–14; High School Worker: 15–17; Adult Staff: 18+

Preteen Camp Costs

	Application Fee	Tuition
1st Camper in Family	\$5	\$150
2nd Camper	\$5	\$135
3rd Camper or More	\$5	\$115
Mini-Camper	\$5	\$25
Sibling Camper	\$5	\$150
High School Worker	\$10	\$50
Adult Staff	\$10	\$50

The Teen Camp is back once again at Lone Star Camp! Renovations and improvements are underway as we continue efforts to provide a unique experience for campers and staff. All your favorite activities are back again this year, including archery, aquatics, basketball, campus improvement, Christian living, dance, flag football, leatherwork, music, photography, public speaking, softball, volleyball, waterskiing, and more. Come join us in the adventure—unlocking the mysteries of the Bible, practicing God's way of life, and preparing to reign with Jesus Christ in the coming Kingdom of God!

- **Texas Teen Camp:** Lone Star Camp, Athens, TX
Dates: Sunday, July 12–Sunday, July 26

Ages for teen camp: Camper: 13–18; Mini-Camper: 12 and under; Staff: 18+

Teen Camp Costs

	Application Fee	Tuition
1st Camper in Family	\$5	\$300
2nd Camper	\$5	\$250
3rd Camper or More	\$5	\$200
Staff (18–20)	\$10	\$100
Staff (21+)	\$10	\$50
Mini-Camper	\$5	N/A

—Jason Fritts