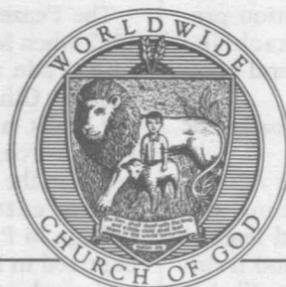


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# The Worldwide News



VOL. XXIII, NO. 20  
NOVEMBER 14, 1995

## Church celebrates most Christ-centered Feast ever

By Paul Monteith

Christ-centered teachings helped Feastgoers around the world focus on the reason for keeping the Feast—to worship God.

Many commented on the wonderful Festival atmosphere. "People came because they genuinely desired to be there; and the joy that abounded this year was palpable," said Mark McCulley, Festival Administration manager.

Pastor General Joseph Tkach, in his message carried by satellite to the church worldwide Oct. 9, asked: "Are you willing to become a church that truly belongs to God?"

From two domestic satellites, the transmission "was received flawlessly" at 25 sites in the United States and Canada, according to Larry Omasta, electronic media manager. The signal was also received in England and Australia by two international satellites. Two sites in England and one in the Bahamas viewed the services live. Eighty-one sites received a videotape of services.

Mr. Tkach's message was a call to discipleship, a call to truly follow Jesus Christ and become genuine Christians.

Using the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 as a comparison, Mr. Tkach pictured a church dedicated to God as being fervent for the things of

God, a church preaching the gospel of Christ, a church that lives in the world but is not of the world, a church reaching out to the lost, to the least and to those in need.

"God wants a church that is truly his church," he declared. "He wants authentic Christians. I ask you, Are you willing to be that church?"

### Our true identity

Mr. Tkach said that in the past our Christian identity was defined by the things we did or did not do. "But today we understand that we look to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. We look at what he has done and is doing for us, and what he will do for all humanity."

It is because Christ lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can live a godly life. It is because Christ lives in us that we can have love for others. If our identity is not in Christ then we are not Christians, he explained.

"So we must proclaim God's uniqueness and not accompany the gospel with other messages," Mr. Tkach said. "We must proclaim his glory, not how well we keep the Ten Commandments. We must proclaim his majesty, not our greatness.

"We must acknowledge that we are commissioned to proclaim the same gospel the original apostles proclaimed. We have not been commis-



**OUR MISSION**—Pastor General Joseph Tkach's address to Pasadena brethren was carried by satellite to Festival sites worldwide. Mr. Tkach called upon the church to recognize its identity as Christians and explained how the church's mission statement (displayed on easel) centers on Jesus Christ. [Photo by Sheila Graham]

sioned to preach a chronology of end-time events. We are servants of Jesus Christ, not Old Testament prophets.

"That's the legacy my father left us, the legacy Jesus Christ left us."

### Our vision, follow Christ

The pastor general explained that the church's mission is to focus upward, exalting Christ in all our worship, in all our outreach activities, in all our preaching and in all our publications.

First we emphasize God and Jesus Christ. He is the one changing us from the inside out. He is the one who motivates us to love one another. We also focus inward, ministering to those in our fellowship; and outward, evangelizing the world around us, encouraging others to embrace Christ and helping those in need.

Continuing with his plan for the church, Mr. Tkach said *The Plain Truth* has received a lot of praise over the past two years. "When peo-

ple hear the name Worldwide Church of God, we want them to connect the church with the magazine that proclaims Jesus Christ."

Mr. Tkach said the church will conduct annual pastoral reviews. The church will explore the possibility of having a few centralized mega-Festival sites and many local sites. More services will be conducted in the evening so the public can attend.

Ambassador University is launching a distance learning program and will make classes available to members to help them with youth programs, theology and Christian mission programs, and training for practical service and leadership.

The church will sell the BAC 1-11 airplane and the church property in Pasadena. "We only need a few acres to effectively do the work God has given us," he pointed out.

Mr. Tkach asked people to make a financial commitment. While tithing is not required for salvation, the Bible teaches that we should give as we are able. He thanked everyone for their financial support and asked members to decide on a percentage and be consistent in giving that amount.

The church will ask for donations on a variety of literature and produce video programs for sale.

"Serve God and become a living advertisement for the glory of Christ," Mr. Tkach concluded. "Let the fact that Christ lives in us be obvious and let us together move forward ... in the light of Christ."

After his sermon he mingled with members. The next day he flew by commercial jet to join his wife, Tammy, son, Joe, and daughter, Stephanie, at the Kona, Hawaii, site.



## Personal from...

JOSEPH TKACH

### Ease pain and hurt with understanding and forgiveness

God has shown such love and mercy to forgive our sins, and to forgive us for our wrong teachings as a church. How eternally grateful we will all be to our Lord and Savior who did not leave us in our errors.

The church has changed its position on numerous long-held beliefs and practices during the past few years. At the heart of those changes has been an acceptance that salvation is by grace through faith.

For decades we regarded the law of Moses as the basis of our righteousness. We attempted to relate to God through old covenant rules and regulations.

In his mercy, God has shown us that old covenant obligations do not apply to Christians, who are under the new covenant. He has led us into the riches of his grace and a renewed relationship with Jesus Christ. He has opened our hearts and minds to the joy of his salvation. The Scriptures speak to us with fresh meaning, and we rejoice daily in the personal relationship we have with our Lord and Savior.

At the same time, we are acutely aware of the heavy legacy of our past, and the pain that many of our former beliefs have caused us.

See Personal, page 4

### Holy Day Offerings

Festival attendance 78,500  
Festival sites 120

The combined offerings for Trumpets, Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day in the United States were \$6,966,465. Compared to last year this was a decrease of 36.81 percent. The per person offering (average \$38.57) was up 11.08 percent. The church thanks you for your generous offerings.

# Evangelist named director of Church Administration

By Thomas C. Hanson

J. Michael Feazell, 44, was named director of Church Administration Sept. 26, assuming the position previously held by Joseph Tkach Jr., when he became pastor general upon the death of his father.

Mr. Feazell will also serve as editor in chief of *The Plain Truth*.

Under Mr. Feazell, Church Administration will focus on training and developing the pastoral and leadership skills of the ministry, and training church members in active Christian leadership.

He wants the pastors to help members discover and develop their spiritual gifts and to equip them to use those gifts in lay ministry, serving the congregation and taking leadership roles in congregational outreach and evangelistic activities.

## Personal history

Mike Feazell was born June 17, 1951, in Monroe, Louisiana. He started attending Worldwide Church of God services with his mother, Marie, when he was about 4.

Marie's brother, Paul Smith, now a local church elder in Big Sandy, was the first in the family to come into contact with the church. Mr. Smith entered Ambassador in 1949. Through his influence others in the family were baptized, including Mrs. W.C. Smith, Mr. Feazell's grandmother.

Marie Feazell was baptized on what would later become the Ambassador campus in Big Sandy. She now lives in San Dimas, California, and attends the Glendora church.

The Feazells moved to Pasadena in 1957 when Mike was 6, and he entered first grade at the church's Imperial Schools. Others in that class were Collyer Wells, a deacon in the Pasadena P.M. church, and Kirt Merriman, who works in the church's carpentry shop.

Mr. Feazell entered Ambassador College in Pasadena in 1969. He was baptized in May of his freshman year and graduated from Ambassador in 1973 with majors in theology and elementary education.

Mr. Feazell worked as a teachers aide at Imperial during college and also worked on Imperial publications. After graduation he became a fifth grade teacher before Imperial closed in 1974. He went to California State University at Los Angeles for classwork necessary to obtain an Arizona teaching credential, and for the next three years he taught fifth and sixth grade at George Washington Carver School in Yuma, Arizona.

He returned to Pasadena and worked in the employee Recreation Department as equipment manager and tennis instructor, before becoming an assistant to the late Mr. Tkach in Church Administration in 1979.

He organized the Ministerial Refreshing Program, worked with ministerial transfers, ministerial assignments and speaking schedules for the Feast, and assisted Mr. Tkach in maintaining regular communication with the field ministry.

He was ordained a local elder in 1980, a preaching elder in 1984, a pastor in 1987 and an evangelist in 1990.

Mr. Feazell received a master of arts in religion from Azusa Pacific University in 1992 and a master of divinity from APU in 1995.

He met Victoria Brady of Columbia City, Indiana, at a Sabbath service in the Ambassador Auditorium in 1979. They were married May 10, 1980. The Feazells have two birth children: Jeffrey, 14, and Elizabeth, 12, and three adopted children: Christopher, 3, Jon, 12, and Katie, 12. Christopher joined the Feazells in March 1993, Jon in January 1995, and Katie in August 1995.



**FEAZELL FAMILY**—The Feazells are (from left) Elizabeth, Jon, Christopher, Michael, Victoria, Jeffrey and Katie. [Photo by Barry Stahl]

Victoria's father, Melvin Brady, works in moving and set-up in the Custodial Department at Ambassador University.

## Adopting children

Victoria received her bachelor of arts degree from Ambassador in 1989 and a masters degree in child development from California State University at Los Angeles in 1995. She works for Family Connections adoption agency. Victoria also holds a California teaching credential.

In an article for Ambassador University's alumni association newsletter, Mrs. Feazell told how she and her husband adopted children.

"Three years ago Mike and I decided to expand our family. We already had two wonderful biological children, Jeffrey, 10, and Elizabeth, 8.

"We decided to adopt internationally, in part because it is one of the quickest ways to adopt a young, healthy infant.

"About eight months after we began filling out what seemed to be endless paperwork our social worker found a child for us.

"Then came the longest six weeks I have ever experienced. We were

given some photos of a beautiful baby boy. The photos made everything seem so real, yet our baby was still in Seoul, South Korea. The waiting was maddening!

"Finally, we found ourselves on the way to Los Angeles International Airport to pick up seven-month-old Christopher. Our tears flowed as each of the adoptees came down the ramp to the arms of welcoming adoptive parents.

"When we saw the volunteer carrying Christopher, we recognized him from the photos. As he was placed in my arms, he looked so precious and felt so warm.

"Those who plan to adopt, and who already have children, should understand that it is not smooth sailing all the way," Mrs. Feazell observed.

"Adjustments need to be made by everyone, including the siblings. At times jealousy and anger will manifest themselves. With patience and understanding sibling adjustment will occur but it will not happen overnight.

"Prayer is vital to the process. Adoption is an important decision and our Savior, Jesus Christ, can be there every step of the way."

# Radio host says church changes are without precedent

By David A. Sheridan

CALGARY, Alberta—Almost 1,000 listeners of Hank Hanegraaff's Bible Answer Man radio talk program attended a meeting at the First Alliance church here Oct. 27. Mr. Hanegraaff is the president of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), which sponsored the meeting. Calgary is the Canadian headquarters of CRI.

The evening began with a video excerpt of Peter Jennings' ABC documentary on evangelicalism in America titled, "In the Name of God." Then Mr. Hanegraaff gave a 45-minute lecture on "The Counterfeit Revival."

Questions were then taken from the floor. The first was from someone who felt that his church was going through a revival, and this led to the question "What is a revival?" In his response, Mr. Hanegraaff

launched into his now familiar accolades for changes made in the Worldwide Church of God.

"The recent changes in the WCG are without historic precedent and were made at great cost," he said. "I have met their leaders. I like them. We should encourage the WCG as they come closer to the pale of Christian orthodoxy."

Mr. Hanegraaff added: "The WCG is a church with guts, prepared to let the Word of God rather than their tradition be the final court of arbitration."

He mentioned that the next issue of the *CRI Journal* will include an article by Pastor General Joseph Tkach. At one point, with no prompting, the audience broke into spontaneous applause for our church. Little did they realize that seven Worldwide Church of God members and I were in the audience.

After the lecture, Mr. Hanegraaff was surrounded by an enthusiastic group who asked him questions for an hour. Member Matteo Ferrara

commented: "He was warm and pleasant. I sensed his admiration for the WCG and found his comments encouraging."

Member David Crimmins commented: "I felt moved to thank Mr. Hanegraaff afterward for graciously praising our church. He then said that our church is in very capable hands under Mr. Tkach. He just couldn't praise Mr. Tkach enough."

Afterward I spoke briefly with Mr. Hanegraaff and showed him a copy of the Oct. 3 *Worldwide News*, which on page 8 included a photograph of him embracing Mr. Tkach at the funeral. The caption read "Kindling Friendship." He took the paper with him.

This was the first time I had been to an "outside" church in a long time. Over the years I have barely said more than a few words to "outside" pastors.

I came away with a deeper appreciation for our church leadership and their tremendous example of reaching out and giving us an entirely new perspective on the Christian world.

David A. Sheridan pastors the Calgary and Lethbridge, Alberta, churches.

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**DIRECTOR OF CHURCH ADMINISTRATION:**  
J. Michael Feazell

**MEDIA OPERATIONS DIRECTOR:**  
Greg R. Albrecht

**PUBLICATIONS MANAGER:**  
Norman L. Shoaf

Editor: Thomas C. Hanson; managing editor: Jeff Zhorne; senior editor: Sheila Graham; news editor: Paul Monteith; Ambassador University correspondent: Angie Fuessel.

**Regional correspondents:** Gerrie Belo, Nieuwegein, Netherlands; Charles Fleming, Caribbean; Pete Melendez, Manila, Philippines; Jerome Feltracco, French and Italian; Bill Hall, Vancouver, B.C.; Gary W. Hopkins, Bonn, Germany; Peter Hawkins, Southern Africa; Rex Morgan, Auckland, New Zealand; Salvador Barragan, Felipe Neri, Mike Medina, Al Sousa, Spanish Region; Aub Warren, Australia and Asia; Jacqui Eve, United Kingdom.

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# Festival of Faith '95

## United States: sharing faith in high spirits

Anchorage, Alaska's reputation for awe-inspiring vistas was matched by the singing of Feastgoers there who also gained a reputation.

A Russian immigrant attended services and some activities after hearing a song service, according to coordinator Leonard Holladay.

"A shopkeeper impressed by the singing asked our group to pray for her health and family problems," Mr. Holladay said. Several other new people also attended services.

A common refrain in Big Sandy, particularly from longtime members, was that this Festival was the most meaningful one they'd ever attended.

Chattanooga, Tennessee, was an open house site and several new people attended, according to coordinator Dennis Wheatcroft. Brethren donated food items to the Chattanooga Area Food Bank. Because of Hurricane Opal, the food bank had depleted its supplies sending aid to the Florida panhandle. Nearly 8,000 pounds of food and \$7,598 were donated.

Dayton, Ohio, was an open house site, and a number of *Plain Truth* subscribers and others attended, according to coordinator Jim Roberts.

About 1,500 Feastgoers who planned to attend the Pensacola, Florida, site, which was closed because of damage caused by Hurricane Opal, joined brethren in Daytona Beach, Florida, for the Feast, said coordinator Steve Schantz.

Charles Chase, a deacon in the Melbourne, Florida, church, and his wife, Cathy, contacted Salvation Army officials the day after Hurricane Opal. Rather than sending volunteers to the damaged areas the Salvation Army suggested a monetary donation, which the Chases organized. Members donated \$5,300.

In Daytona Beach, Ken Medford, a local church elder in the Fort Myers, Florida, church, and his wife, Tammy, organized a food drive that netted more than 12 tons of nonperishable food and necessity items for distribution by the Halifax Urban Ministries (HUM). HUM is an interfaith outreach ministry serving the Halifax area.

Midweek in the Festival, members were told by area supermarkets that members had purchased all available supplies of formula and baby diapers. Speaking on the behalf of HUM, Don Hughes thanked Feastgoers for their contribution and said they had donated in one week what

would take HUM almost a year to collect.

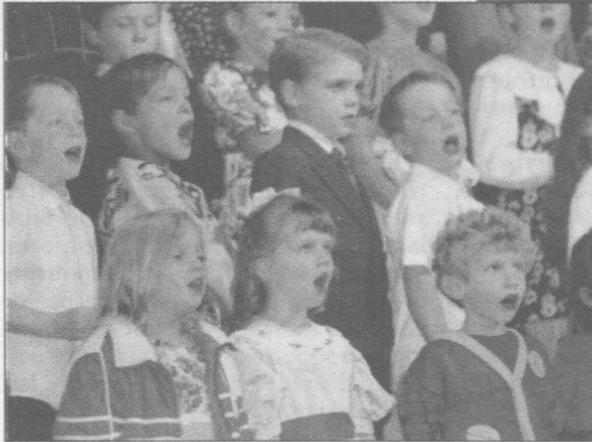
Fort Worth, Texas, Feastgoers contributed \$3,800 and about \$800 in food and dry goods. In addition, members responding to a request made this summer, gave 120 crocheted and hand-stitched or hand-quilted baby blankets for infants of underprivileged mothers.

The contributions will be shared by The Bridge, a shelter for teenagers, and Women's Haven, a shelter



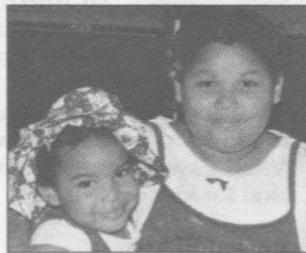
Pasadena

Photo by Mike Rasmussen



Seaside, Oregon

Photo by Dave Chambers



Daytona Beach, Florida  
Photo by Eva Obermeit



Wisconsin Dells

Photo by Carol Stirk

for battered women.

In Hot Springs, Arkansas, "brethren generously contributed food supplies to Jackson House and the Salvation Army," said coordinator Allen Bullock. Contributions were also given to the Family Rescue Mission, which takes in the homeless.

At Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, brethren gave more than \$7,000 to the Central Missouri Food Bank Network, said coordinator Ray Meyer.

Feastgoers in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, were treated to a spiritually enriching Festival, according to coordinator Greg Williams. "I was moved by the level of conviction of the speakers and their willingness to share their innermost feelings," he said. "It was inspiring to see the audience glued to the speaker desiring to be spiritually fed."

One member said, "We have had our heads involved in Christianity for a long time, now we are including our hearts."

In Niagara Falls, New York, "the Festival was the most 'needed' Festival we have ever attended," said coordinator Gordon Graham. "During the past turbulent year, almost everyone had seen family members and friends leave our fellowship, felt the impact of declining church income and witnessed the loss of our pastor general to cancer."

For eight soothing and inspiring days the convention center was filled with a family that needed to spend time together. "We diligently went to work weaving ourselves into new support networks to replace the ones tattered and torn by events," he said. Festival speakers urged everyone to wrap themselves in Christ's grace and power. The end result was a wonderful time of emotional healing, Mr. Graham said.

In Pasadena the theme Festival of Faith was evident in the messages and members' conversation and activities, said coordinator Guy Ames. Brethren enjoyed cappuccino, espresso, juice and bagels on the Auditorium plaza before services.



Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Photo by Charles Clark Jr.

Guest speaker Tom Lapacka gave a workshop about Sharing Your Faith. He said before a Christian can spread the gospel message to others a relationship must be developed. Therefore, Christians should use the natural relationships they develop to share their faith.

Hart Ranch, which puts on a rodeo for Rapid City, South Dakota, Feastgoers every year, gave a tribute to Joseph W. Tkach, cowboy style, with a riderless horse.

Rapid City Feastgoers had a successful KOTA Care and Share food drive. "KOTA made a great effort to publicize our contribution because they wanted members to know it is a much needed service to the community," said coordinator Tracey Rogers.

In Saratoga Springs, New York, women on the auditorium staff wrote, "The Festival is the highlight of the year here at the City Center!" according to coordinator Jim Rosenthal.

Brethren from as far as Australia and England gathered in Spokane, Washington, for the Feast. Wounds of the past year were healed as the salve of the Holy Spirit poured from the messages, workshops and fellowship, according to coordinator Glen Weber.

Convention hall staff remarked on the "change this year in your group." They commented on the friendly and more caring approach. A sound engineer who is the equivalent of a local church elder in the Dutch Presbyterian Church said: "You are to be commended for your



Vail, Colorado

Photo by Norma Wunderwald

teachings, even though there are less attending here as a result. You will grow in numbers again with your new message focused on Jesus Christ."

A tradition in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, is the special music. People were seen wiping tears from their eyes as they were inspired by the uplifting beauty of the musical performances.

"With a clearer perspective of the new covenant, God has given us a new beginning," coordinator Walter Neufeld said. "The sentiments expressed by many were summed up by a woman, not a member of our fellowship, who, after visiting a worship service, brought a spontaneous offering to the information booth. She said, "This was so incredible that I had to give an offering—because it was so moving."

To say that the Festival of Faith '95 in Wisconsin Dells was a resounding success would be an understatement, he added. Thanks be to God for his love, and for the leadership provided by Jesus Christ—the head of the church.

Anchorage, Alaska	256
Big Sandy	667
Chattanooga, Tennessee	3,049
Dayton, Ohio	1,834
Daytona Beach, Florida	5,600*
Fort Worth, Texas	1,794
Hot Springs, Arkansas	3,150
Kona, Hawaii	475
Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri	2,585
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina	7,356
Niagara Falls, New York	2,709
Norfolk, Virginia	1,967
Palm Springs, California	2,998
Pasadena	1,727
Rapid City, South Dakota	1,824
Saratoga Springs, New York	1,453
Seaside, Oregon	1,773
Spokane, Washington	741
Vail, Colorado	1,730
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin	3,055
Amman, Jordan	145
*estimate	

# Festival of Faith '95

## Caribbean sites carry church's mission in love

The Christ-centered focus was evident at Paradise Island, Bahamas, and indeed welcomed by all, said coordinator Robert McKinney. Pastor General Joseph Tkach's moving message was "just what the doctor ordered" for the church, he said.

In Barbados, brethren celebrated salvation in Jesus Christ as they met in the church's regular meeting hall, The Vista Auditorium.

It was a Feast with a difference, said coordinator Clifton Charles, as the spirit of the new covenant perspective added a new complexion and feel to the Festival of Tabernacles.

On opening night the atmosphere was warm and exhilarating as brethren from overseas met with local brethren, and old friends greeted and embraced each other. Throughout the Festival, song services were accompanied by a steel orchestra from Trinidad.

"This Feast of Tabernacles was the most spiritually rewarding Feast ever!" So said many of those attending at Grotto Bay Resort Hotel in Bermuda. The theme of faith and Christ-centered messages, along with



Port of Spain, Trinidad

warm fellowship, enabled brethren to experience a most inspiring festival, said coordinator Cecil Pulley.

In Dominica, as a community service project, 10 brethren helped clean up and reorganize the store room at the Grotto Home for the Homeless in Roseau.

At Dominica Night the focus was on local cuisine, for which Mary Vidal gave an informative introduction for visitors.

### St. Lucia

Overseas brethren joined St. Lucian brethren for services at the Caribbees Hotel in Castries. Two community service projects were

organized: painting rooms in the School for the Deaf and binding large-print books at the School for the Blind. Some brethren visited and took food to groups of elderly brethren unable to attend the Feast.

### St. Vincent

Fifty brethren kept the Feast at the picturesque Richmond Vale Academy. On youth day, 18 hardy souls climbed 4,048 feet to Soufriere volcano. Later in the Feast brethren visited Trinity Falls and attended a family dance.

### Jamaica

In Ocho Rios, Jamaica, brethren rejoiced as they received the live satellite transmission. Singing jubilantly with headquarters Feastgoers, the stage was set for an outpouring of blessings from above. The pastor general's message was not only moving and sobering, it was also instructing and uplifting. Brethren were left with a clearcut vision of our mission.

It was evident that a lot of prayers and hard work had gone into the lectionaries. With his wealth of experience and personal insight, guest speaker Bob Smith injected a special

perspective for those experiencing serious trials.

Mr. Smith said: "This Feast was a spiritual experience such as we had not hitherto witnessed. I reminded those in attendance that if Mr. Tkach would have lived a few weeks longer he would have been thrilled at the result of what Jesus Christ has accomplished in his church."

### Trinidad

In Trinidad a varied repertoire of musical performances at services and activities was a major highlight of the Feast. It was the 22nd year of the Feast here, and the venue was the church's own facilities at Arima. Among the more memorable messages was a moving delivery by Wayne Rajaram, "A Call to Prayer."

Paradise Island, Bahamas	347
Christ Church, Barbados	518
Hamilton, Bermuda	96
Roseau, Dominica	73
Castries, St. Lucia	180
St. Vincent	50
Ocho Rios, Jamaica	642
Port of Spain, Trinidad	535
Grand Anse Beach, Grenada	96
Georgetown, Guyana	85

## Personal: Restoring good relations within the body of Christ

Continued from page 1

### Overdue reconciliation

The Holy Spirit is working today in the body of Christ to heal historic wounds and restore good relations between offenders and offended. This is true not just in our own fellowship but in many others as well. *Plain Truth* writer Keith Stump has written an article "Healing the Wounds" for the March-April *Plain Truth* about this.

He writes: "As Christianity prepares to enter its third millennium, an important phenomenon is sweeping the Christian world. It is a wave of confession and repentance for past sins and offenses.

"Many Christian groups have recognized a need to repent for those times in history when they or their forebears deviated from the spirit of the gospel, injured others and brought shame upon the name of Christ.

"This mass expression of regret and contrition is unprecedented. Many Christians attribute this wave of repentance to a powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ worldwide.

"They characterize it as a surging tide of God's grace, designed to wash Christianity clean of its historic sins and achieve long-overdue reconciliation—the restoration of harmony and good relations with injured individuals and groups."

### We repent and apologize

It is my painful responsibility to acknowledge that the Worldwide Church of God has been among the offenders.

Our flawed doctrinal understanding clouded the plain gospel of Jesus Christ, and led to a variety of wrong conclusions and unscriptural practices. We have much to repent of and apologize for.

We were judgmental and self-right-

eous—condemning other Christians, calling them "so-called Christians" and labeling them "deceived" and "instruments of Satan."

We held to a works-oriented approach to Christian living. We exercised a strongly legalistic approach to church government.

Our former approach, based on the old covenant, fostered attitudes of exclusivism and superiority rather than the new covenant teaching of brotherhood and unity.

We overemphasized predictive prophecy and prophetic speculation, minimizing the true gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

These teachings and practices are a source of supreme regret. We've been wrong. There was never an intent to mislead anyone. We were so focused on what we believed we were doing for God that we didn't recognize the spiritual path we were on.

Intended or not, that path was not the biblical one.

As we look back, we ask ourselves how we could have been so wrong. Our hearts go out to all whom our teachings have misled in the scriptures. We don't minimize their spiritual disorientation and confusion. We earnestly desire their understanding and forgiveness.

We recognize that the depth of alienation can make reconciliation difficult. On the human level, reconciliation is often a long and difficult process over time. Yet we pray daily for it, realizing that the healing ministry of Jesus Christ can close even the deepest wounds.

We make no attempt to cover up the doctrinal and scriptural errors of our past. It is not our intention to merely paper over the cracks. We are looking our history squarely in the eye and confronting the errors we find there. They will always remain a part of our history, serving as a perpetual reminder of the dangers of legalism.

But we cannot live in the past. We must move forward. We say, with the apostle Paul: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

### Understanding the mission

Now, I want to spend some time taking stock of where we are as the Church of God and share with you some things I discussed at a meeting with headquarters personnel Oct. 31.

When people understand the mission of an organization to which they belong they are more likely to use their talents to help it succeed. Therefore, I want us all to understand why we are being asked to do the things we do.

Jesus Christ has focused our vision on the commission he gave the church—the commission he gave to the original apostles—to preach the gospel of Christ and make disciples of all nations.

It is not by human might or power that God's work is done, it's done by the Holy Spirit, by the strength God supplies. We will, as a church, grow as long as we remember our mission is to focus upward, exalting God in all our worship; inward, ministering to those in our fellowship; and outward, encouraging others to embrace Christ as their Savior.

To help us accomplish the commission we will need the full participation and dedication of all our employees and members.

In the past, our organizational model at headquarters and in the local congregation was like a pyramid. At the top of the pyramid a few people instructed those below to simply do what they were told. Employees and church members were not expected to think.

We now see that model as being unbiblical and we are moving toward a

model that recognizes everyone's spiritual gifts. This new model is inclusive and will require every church member to think and contribute.

This will require some reorganization at headquarters and within the local congregations so that peoples' skills and spiritual gifts are recognized and used in the service of God's work.

Such reorganization is not unique to our fellowship.

The most important factor of production in today's economy is no longer just the interplay of land, labor and capital. A key factor in success today is knowledge. For most of human history knowledge was available only to a few people, usually those at the top of society.

Today, however, technological advancement is making knowledge, or information, available to everyone. To succeed in the information age, the issue boils down to a full use of information and the best use of people's skills, talents and gifts.

For the Christian, knowledge includes action. It is to follow the teachings of the King of kings. God gives us knowledge and gifts of his Spirit to equip us to fulfill his mission. We all, ministers, employees and members, are part of God's work and he equips us all for the tasks he gives us to do.

At headquarters, reorganization means that employees may find themselves assisting in areas beyond their present responsibilities but for which their talents and skills make them suitable.

In the local congregation, reorganization means that a pastor will no longer be running a one man show. Church members will need help discerning the spiritual gifts God has given them so that those gifts can best be used in worship, in the

See Personal, page 15

# Festival of Faith '95

## British, African sites stress faith, family, friendship

Scarborough, England, Feastgoers enjoyed Indian summer with beautiful sunny days and warm temperatures, matching the ambience that prevailed among brethren.

Some described the atmosphere as electric, and many expressed reassurance over church teachings, said coordinator David Stirk.

Sermons were supplemented with two Bible studies, one covering the new covenant and Sabbath, and the second was a question-and-answer session.

In the opening message in Llandudno, Wales, the speaker explained that, because of budgetary restraints, this would be a no-frills Feast and that the members themselves would, with God's Spirit, make the Festival special. They did.

"The congregation was the warmest, most responsive Feast audience I have experienced," said coordinator Robert Harrison. "After months of difficulty and sadness, this Feast was sorely needed. The atmosphere of friendship, love, welcome and gratitude was so tangible one could almost touch it."

In Camber Sands, England, a family night of games early in the Feast helped break the ice. Keeping the Feast in a campground offered many fellowship opportunities, according to coordinator Russ Couston.

Brethren raised one thousand pounds (about \$1,600) for a convoy of supplies to needy people suffering in Bosnia.

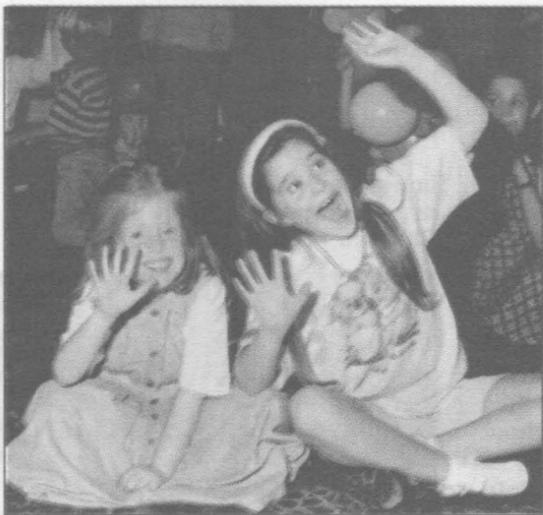
### Channel Islands

In Guernsey, Channel Islands, coordinator Barry Bourne gave an interview to BBC Radio Guernsey, and two independent newspapers on the island interviewed Mr. Bourne and John Halford, United Kingdom regional coordinator. Two area residents who heard the media reports attended services.

Visitors came from the British Isles and as far afield as Australia and Canada. Youths helped usher during services and take up the offerings.

### Ireland, Sweden

A warm Irish welcome greeted Feastgoers in Kenmare, Ireland. Members gave money to a Kenmare farmer who lost hundreds of bales of hay in a fire. A donation was also made to St. Vincent de Paul, a charity for the needy. Brethren felt uplifted



Kenmare, Ireland

Photo by Raymond Jordan



Hohoe, Ghana

Photo by Frank Ankutse

to attend the Feast in this relaxed setting.

At Idre Fjäll, Sweden, the northernmost Festival site, an intimate family atmosphere enhanced feelings of friendship and fellowship.

Guest speaker Randal Dick and members in the four Scandinavian countries met for planning and discussion meetings. This interaction added a new dimension to the Festival, said coordinator John Andrews, and greatly sparked the enthusiasm of the brethren.

### Ghana

This was the first year brethren gathered at two West African sites, Accra and Hohoe, Ghana. This was forced on us because of a lack of finances and accommodation problems, said coordinator David Bedford.

Alfred Ablordeppey, a local church elder, spent two days with members and families in Togo and gave two sermons in the Ewe language.

Many of the brethren in Hohoe spent the Feast together in a big house. They appreciated financial assistance from churches in England and the United States

### East Africa

This year brethren met for the Feast at eight locations in East Africa: three sites in Kenya, three in Uganda, one in Malawi and one in Tanzania.

International guests commented on the warm reception they received from African members, and many expressed a desire to return to these sites.



Lagos, Nigeria

Photo by Emmanuel Omotosho

Social highlights included a tea dance in Nairobi, a game barbecue of impala and hartebeest and dance in Dar-es-Salaam, a family afternoon at the Kibirichia (Meru) church hall, a trip to the Bamburi reclamation project in Mombasa, various communal meals at the Ugandan sites and an African evening in Blantyre.

Feastgoers were pleased to watch the video of the satellite transmission of Pastor General Joseph Tkach's keynote address, which arrived at most of the sites.

In past years the satellite video has often arrived after the Feast, but this

year there were no delivery problems.

The *Worldwide NewsReel* video was also shown, and most of the sermons revolved around the deliverance and salvation we have received through Christ Jesus.

After the Feast most visitors went on safaris to either the Masai Mara in Kenya, the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania or the Mvuu River in Malawi. A good number spotted the Big Five: lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and buffalo—exceptional for a two- or three-day trip.

### Nigeria

Brethren observed the Feast in church-owned facilities in Lagos, where favorable weather and a relatively tranquil political situation were

See Africa, page 11

Llandudno, Wales	370
Scarborough	768
Camber Sands	1,029
Guernsey, Channel Islands	302
Kenmare, Ireland	370
Idre Fjäll, Sweden	168
Accra and Hohoe, Ghana	450
Benin, Nigeria	114
Jos, Nigeria	144
Lagos, Nigeria	305
Owerri, Nigeria	286
Blantyre, Malawi	169
Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania	88
Kampala, Uganda	27
Tororo, Uganda	113
Meru, Kenya	96
Mombasa, Kenya	104
Nairobi, Kenya	228
Kinshasa, Zaire	220

## 'Exotic' tour brings members to African sites

By Fred Stevens

About 150 people from around the world met in eastern and southern Africa during the Feast. The "Exotic Africa Festival Tour '95" was an idea from Randal Dick, director of Church Administration International, and John Halford, now regional coordinator for the United Kingdom and Africa.

Those participating in the tour met in Johannesburg, South Africa, Oct. 7 for an orientation meeting and then divided into six groups to travel to African sites.

A group of 37 people went to Mombasa, Kenya. Another 28 people kept the first five days with members in Nairobi, Kenya, and then went to Dar-es-Salaam,

Tanzania, for the last three days. Twenty people started the Feast in Nairobi, then drove several hours north to visit with members living near Meru, Kenya.

Three other groups kept the Feast in Southern Africa: 41 flew to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe; 20 traveled to Lusaka and Livingstone, Zambia; and 11 others stayed four days at the Warmbad, South Africa, site and four days in Blantyre, Malawi.

In a tape-recorded message played to the group while in Johannesburg, Mr. Halford said: "Africa is a place filled with warm friendly people just like you. The ways that they are the same are going to be so much greater than the ways you will find them different."

And it was the people of Africa that made the biggest impression on the

visitors. African members gave richly to their guests in love, warmth, hospitality and fellowship.

Sid Boteler, a local church elder from Jackson, Mississippi, addressed brethren in Victoria Falls. He said that memories of the landscapes, animals and natural wonders of Africa will fade, but the memories of fellow Church members in Africa will not.

Bob Klynsmith, acting regional director for Southern Africa, said the impact of so many visitors to these sites contributed greatly to the success of the Festival. "The tour," he said, "was a success story."

Exotic Africa Tour 150

## Black Forest host for Germany

Brethren from German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) as well as guests from other countries, gathered for the 19th time for the Feast in Bonndorf in the Black Forest. They enjoyed unseasonably warm weather and participated in family day, a teen dance, a formal dance and a concert of classical music.

Bonndorf, Germany 650

# Festival of Faith '95

## Greater emphasis on worship at Canadian sites

By Bill Hall

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—With the addition of new Festival sites in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Edmonton, Alberta, the Festival was observed in each of the six time zones that span Canada.

While members gathered at 3 p.m. in St. John's in eastern Canada to view Mr. Tkach's satellite transmission, their brethren at Penticton in the west gathered at 10:30 a.m.

### St. John's

As one of the smallest sites in North America, the congregations in Newfoundland were hosts to 115 transfers.

Some set sail around the harbor and coast region of Cape Spear, the easternmost point of land in North America. Others stayed on land and helped harvest vegetables for the needy in St. John's. More than 100 brethren worked the fields, bringing in potatoes, carrots, turnips and cabbage, followed by a "boil-up and mug-up." Free time was scheduled so brethren could invite others over for meals or fellowship.

### Halifax

The greater emphasis on the worship service was responsible for the increased emotion that many experienced. A varied selection of music added to each day's theme, ranging from a sermonette in song to a bagpiper playing "Amazing Grace."

The highlight of the Feast was the Grand Ceilidh. Ceilidh is a Gaelic word for a "visit" or "gathering" accompanied by music, song and dancing. Nova Scotia has a rich

musical tradition and the brethren used this venue to share their talents.

### Mont Orford

Spontaneous acts of giving marked the Festival in Mont Orford. Frank Brown, Canadian director, commented: "There is certainly a wonderful spirit here."

Children played a larger role in the daily worship services this year. Members were treated to a children's choir presentation, and a musical play presented by the children from Montreal. Children were encouraged to perform acts of service throughout the Festival, and 39 were honored with gold medals on the last day of the Feast.

### Sherbrooke

Balmy weather and colorful fall scenery welcomed French-speaking brethren to Sherbrooke. Sermons, which were simultaneously translated into English, conveyed messages of hope, joy and a vision of times of refreshing. Canadian director Frank Brown delighted the brethren when he delivered a sermon in French.

Children under 12 were given copies of the New Testament in comic-book form, which they avidly read. Members shared their blessings with a food bank La Grande Table, donating \$1,522.11 and nonperishable food.

### Regina

As well as partaking in the spiritual food of the Feast, members enjoyed a family social at a burger stop, a medieval-style feast, a comedy dinner theater and a wild west barbecue. Seminars discussed small groups, Bible study and coping as single par-

ents. On the last day of the Festival, which fell on World Hunger Day, members contributed to a food bank.

### Edmonton

Since Edmonton was an open house site, people from the community were present at every service. Children made more than 300 cards



Edmonton

Photo by Marinus Roggeveen

for younger patients in University Hospital next door to the Jubilee Auditorium. These cards will be given to children on days when they have no mail from family and friends.

On the Last Great Day, 2,464 pounds of food and nearly \$1,000 in cash were donated to the Edmonton Food Bank, which was in particular need this year.

### Penticton

The spirits of Festival goers in Penticton were buoyed through the renewing of old friendships and making of new ones. A highlight was the baptism of Ruth Teddy, a member of

one of Canada's northernmost church families living in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, the Teddy family was forced to leave the Festival early. The five-day, 3,900 kilometer (2,400 miles) drive to their home required two river crossings by ferry and one of the rivers could have been frozen if they waited until after the Festival.

The congregation broke into applause and wished them god-speed when it was announced that Mrs. Teddy had been baptized and that the family was already on their way to their home.

After the Feast, in the Magog, Quebec, church, pastor Kevin Armstrong spoke on 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, which says that without Christ a veil covers our hearts, making

it impossible for us to be Christ's image. "God's spirit is at work among his people, and the fruit is evident," he said. "There is indeed a transformation taking place in the church."

St. John's, Newfoundland	315
Halifax, Nova Scotia	542
Mont Orford, Quebec	779
Sherbrooke, Quebec	674
Regina, Saskatchewan	740
Edmonton, Alberta	1,801
Penticton, British Columbia	1,514

## Southern Africa: 'Best atmosphere I can remember,' says coordinator

More than 2,100 brethren met at eight sites in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mauritius.

### South Africa

In Amanzimtoti acting regional director Robert Klynsmith said: "As in each area I visited, there was a renewed sense of commitment and vitality among the brethren."

Members meeting for the first time in Port Alfred were inspired by the Christ-oriented messages and by the care shown to all, according to coordinator John White.

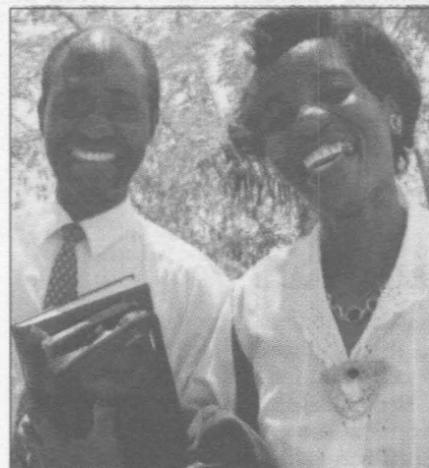
Feastgoers gave R2500 to a benevolent fund that feeds the poor of Port Alfred.

The chairperson responded: "Your church has shown us all what Christian fellowship is all about—the sharing with others—and although you are here for a short time of joyous worship and renewing of friendships, the poor of our town were not forgotten. Truly an example to us of other denominations."

"Aventura Warmbaths" can describe the experience members had at the Feast here, according to Cliff Rabe, associate pastor of the Johannesburg Central church. "It was an adventure as we experienced the pouring out of the warmth of God's Spirit.

"We experienced warm favor from the management and staff with whom we had contact, and sincere

cooperation from the community," Mr. Rabe said. "This was well-reflected in the words of a woman who said: 'We are convinced that favors shown to you will be returned to us by God.'



Zimbabwe

Photo by Norma Jean Fisher

"We drank deeply of the understanding God showered on us through inspired sermons. Members bonded as never before.

"Daily attendance, which fluctuated little, was a reflection of the renewed commitment to where Christ leads us. Those who kept the Feast at Warmbaths were truly inundated with 'streams of living waters.'"

In Strand, coordinator Ron Stoddart commented: "What a Feast!

Ron Washington [pastor of the Detroit, Michigan, South church] opened the Feast, and Neil Earle [Plain Truth international editor] gave the last two messages in the best atmosphere I can remember at any Feast I have attended in the past 30 years."

### Zambia

The Feast was conducted at two sites in Zambia: Lusaka and Livingstone. Coordinator Kalengule Kaoma said that earlier they planned to have the Feast in Siavonga on Lake Kariba. Because of inflation they canceled Siavonga.

Those who could not make the minimum contribution to go to Livingstone kept the Feast in Lusaka.

We had 20 visitors from Australia, Canada, Bermuda, Grenada and the United States. They came to Zambia on the Exotic Africa Tour, organized from the United States. Their presence added joy to our fellowship. We did most activities together.

Oct. 13, brethren enjoyed a visit with Chief Mukuni at his palace. The chief gave up his job in the corporate world to take up the chieftainship in the outskirts of Livingstone.

### Zimbabwe

Brethren in Victoria Falls appreciated those on the Exotic Africa Tour, who contributed much to the warmth and friendship, according to

coordinator Aldrin Mandimika.

Feastgoers ensured that those who could not pay for an activity were taken care of, Mr. Mandimika said.

Two senior citizens, Norma Fisher and Trudi Fassbender, rafted down the tough Zambezi River. Afterward Norma Fisher said, "I will be back."

### Mauritius

International speakers were a treat at the Feast in Mont Choisy, according to Art and Wendy Holladay. Speakers were Roger Guilbert and his son, Christophe, from Paris, Pierre Cosandey from Geneva, Yves Nayna, a local church elder in Mauritius, and Art Holladay, pastor of the Phoenix, Mauritius, and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, congregations.

Those who attended in Mauritius wished that they could package up the love, warmth and edifying experience and take it home with them whenever they needed a spiritual pick-me-up.

Amanzimtoti,	
Kwa-Zulu/Natal	420
Port Alfred, Eastern Cape	280
Strand, Western Cape	492
Warmbaths, Mpumalanga	432
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe	283
Lusaka and Livingstone, Zambia	83
Mont Choisy, Mauritius	123

## French and Italian sites bask in Festival warmth

"A warm place on the Belgian North Sea coast" would be a fitting description of the physical and spiritual settings of this year's Festival for French-speaking brethren in De Haan, Belgium, said coordinator Erick S. Dubois.

Many said they experienced a sense of spiritual closeness and togetherness rarely equaled at a Festival. Others said they were "on fire" for God's way and so thankful for the deepening of understanding.

Brethren collected funds for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and met for an uplifting prayer meeting.

In its second year as a site, the resort town of Evian, on the French shore of Lac Léman, welcomed 500 French-speaking brethren. The overall atmosphere throughout the Feast was exceptionally joyful, peaceful and people oriented.

Activities included an Alsatian evening, a YOU walk in the pre-Alps and a talent show. The diversity of talents provided by a variety of speakers provided members with a more complete, balanced and uplifting spiritual diet, said coordinator Donat Picard.

Festival 1995 was a historic event for the French Antilles as brethren from Guadeloupe and Martinique met together for a combined Feast at the beach resort of Saint Francois, Guadeloupe.

A first alert for Cyclone Pablo was in force as 200 brethren from Martinique boarded the ferry bound for Guadeloupe. Despite a rocky crossing and several upset stomachs, the Feast got off to a joyful start, according to coordinator Gilbert Carbonnel.

High points of this Feast included an evening barbecue animated by local songs and dances performed to the rhythm of tom-toms; an outing to Les Saintes, an island inhabited largely by fishermen; and a Saturday night dance with creole music by the

Martinique church band.

About 150 Italian members and 120 transfers gathered in the central Italian town of Fiuggi, Italy, known for its natural spring waters and spas.

An all-day tour to Tivoli featured the Villa d'Este with its well-kept gardens and numerous fountains, and Villa Adriana, an archaeological site from Roman history, said coordinator Daniel Boesch.

On the Mediterranean island of Malta, area brethren combined with

visitors from the United Kingdom, France, Norway, Australia and Jamaica to observe the Feast.

"The small size of the group enabled people to get to know one other fairly quickly and to have more meaningful fellowship," commented Neville Hutchinson, a deacon from Southampton, England.

Guest speaker Dean Blackwell, together with coordinator Carmel Gatt and Gus Roycroft, a minister from Belfast, Northern Ireland, performed a blessing of the children ceremony.

The children blessed were Mandy Borg, 3 months, and Benjamin Gatt, 6 months.

Brethren watched a video of Pastor General Joseph Tkach's satellite transmission.

De Haan, Belgium	327
Evian, France	503
Saint Francois, Guadeloupe	358
Fiuggi, Italy	257
Sliema, Malta	87



Fiuggi, Italy

Photo by Bill Adlington



De Haan, Belgium

Photo by Jerome Feltracco



St. Francois, Guadeloupe



Evian, France

Photo by Donat Picard

### Church launches Internet page

Visit the Worldwide Church of God Internet home page at <http://www.wcg.org/>

By Thomas C. Hanson

Portions of *The Plain Truth* and *The Worldwide News* are now available on the church's Internet home page at <http://www.wcg.org/>

Also on the home page are the church's Statement of Beliefs, Mission Statement and other material.

*Worldwide News* articles are put on the Internet every other Friday afternoon when an issue is sent to the press. By disseminating information quickly it is hoped that members will feel more connected with the church.

"We plan to expand the website by making the entire *Plain Truth* available beginning with the December issue, and eventually hope to accept donations through the website," said Monte Wolverton, home page task force coordinator.

### Reality of Christ centerpiece of Feast in Haiti

Tony Gallagher

This year the Feast was again conducted in Port-au-Prince. The majority of the members echoed the following comment: "God allowed us to experience a lack of material pleasure, which was amply compensated by the spiritual fulfillment. The role of Christ in our salvation and the reality of his life in ours was so clearly defined in the sermonettes and sermons that we can say that we've made a step forward in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Present for several days at the Feast were three men from an outer province, leaders of a group of 150 people who want to join the Worldwide Church of God.

As most people in the group are illiterate, the church in Haiti has set up a program called Alpha Evangelical Action, which aims to teach them to read and write the creole language, giving access to the creole Bible.

Port-au-Prince, Haiti	63
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Tartu, Estonia

### Estonia: freedom in Jesus Christ

Members and prospective members gathered in the historic city of Tartu, Estonia, to celebrate the Feast in the Kantri (Country) Hotel.

Formerly, Estonian members attended the Feast in Denmark or Sweden. However, a reduction in the church's income led to the decision to have a Feast in Estonia.

Felix Heimberg, pastor of the Dallas, Texas, churches, whose parents came from Estonia, provided ministerial support for the Feast site. He was joined halfway through the Feast by Willie and Ingrid Mandel, who pastor the churches in Vienna and Salzburg, Austria, and Munich, Germany.

As Estonian citizens were attempt-

ing to discover the meaning of political freedom after national liberation from 50 years of Soviet occupation and oppression, attendees at the Feast were discovering the implications of our freedom in Christ.

Sermons and Bible studies were translated from English to Estonian by Leo Kaagjarv, a deacon in the Tartu congregation.

The members in Estonia, though small in number, continue to be a supportive and loyal part of the body of Jesus Christ.

Tartu, Estonia	35
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# Festival of Faith '95

## Australian, Asian, New Zealand sites praise God

By Aub Warren

They came by plane, car, train, boat, on foot and even in open canoes.

They came from many nations, spoke a variety of languages and represented dozens of cultures. But with a renewed sense of unity, purpose and love for what God has done, more than 5,600 people celebrated their faith in Jesus Christ at 19 sites in 10 countries in the region at this year's Festival of Tabernacles.

In the course of the eight-day celebration members experienced new worship opportunities, enjoyed rich and Christ-focused messages and music, reflected care and concern for one another and reached out to their Festival communities with help and comfort.

"I think the quality of the messages, music and fellowship this year at the Festival underpins and validates the whole process of change we've been through in the church this year," said Randall Bouchier, a Melbourne, Australia, East member and Ulladulla music director.

"Nearly 600 people kept the Feast in Perth," said coordinator Kerry

cial music from contemporary Christian recording artists, scripture readings and prayer.

At the Gold Coast, Australia, site the song service was led each day by a small group of singers, rather than the traditional songleader. Each day the songleading groups represented different congregations attending the site.

Several sites found opportunities to reach out into their Festival communities.

members invited the managers of their holiday units.

Fellowship is always a key ingredient of the Feast, and this year's Festival provided too many fellowship opportunities to recount.

"People found themselves emotionally moved with compassion for the sick, pity for the weak and a new depth of love for one another as brethren in the same family," said Mr. Gubb. "People who had kept

India, site. "Some were not sure what to expect at the Festival this year. They were quickly reassured by the messages, attitude and love expressed among the membership."

In Nuku'alofa, Tonga, the 33 members who gathered for the Festival were saddened by the departure of the former elder and about half the members to another fellowship a few days before the Feast began.

"This established a strong bond of unity that could only be established under such tragic circumstances," said Epeli Kanaimawi, Fiji and Tonga pastor.

Saying that God's bounteous blessings were poured out on the group, Mr. Kanaimawi observed that "the group was vibrant, dynamic and happy. Their worship in songs was as beautiful and touching as could be experienced at any other bigger site."

In Fiji, the country was celebrating its 25th year of independence the first day of the Feast. Members watched parades and rejoiced with the nation at what was a festive time.

Some sites offered tea and coffee before and after services. In Caloundra, Australia, a children's corner provided a location for children to gather and play before services.

Fellowship in Papua New Guinea was enriched by the inaugural visit to the country by regional director Rod Matthews and his wife, Ruth. They also visited the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu during the Feast.

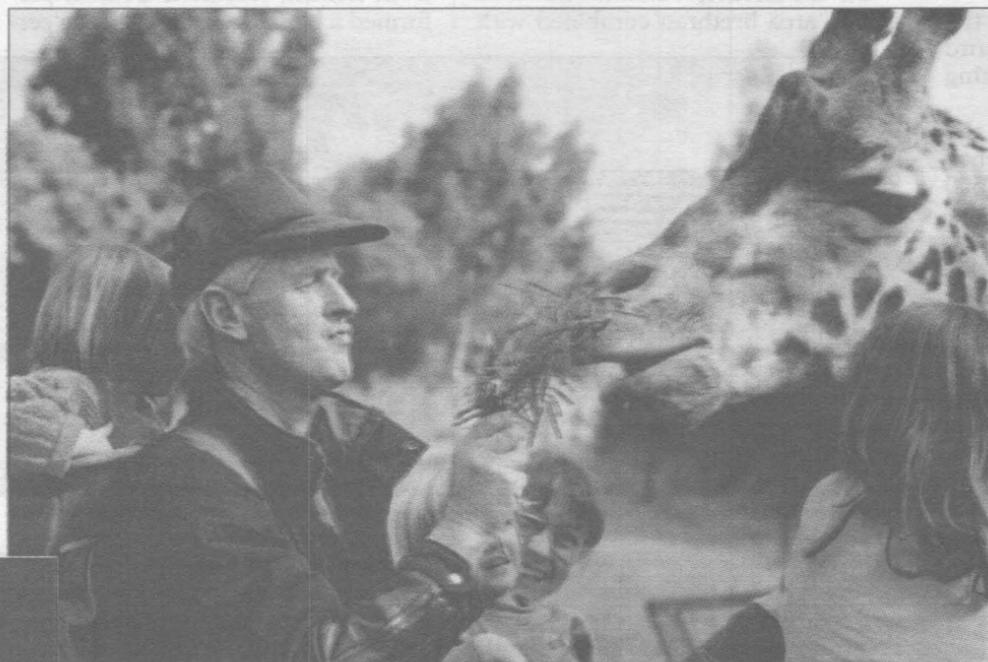
"The Feast is the only time the Papua New Guinea brethren are able to meet together in one place," said coordinator Hans Pedersen.

Papua New Guinea and Sri Lankan members were among those active in inviting people to attend Festival services and activities.

In Papua New Guinea members often brought along *wontoks* (relatives) to services.

In Sri Lanka the church conducted its first open house, inviting 97 *Plain Truth* readers to services, with members also inviting friends and relatives. Thirty-one guests came, including a priest and an evangelist who recommends *The Plain Truth*.

Ulladulla coordinator Peter McLean reflected the views of many when he said: "A wonderful spirit of love and goodwill prevailed. The site was filled with marvelous people who willingly pooled their labors to make the Feast an uplifting celebration for all."



Christchurch, New Zealand

Photo by Neville Fraser



Langkawi, Malaysia

Photo by Clement Lim

Hobart Feastgoers, after an address about homelessness by Lucas von Rijkwijk, Red Cross youth program coordinator, volunteered to pack Red Cross doorknock appeal kits. Later they were hosts at a party for church children, and they invited mothers and children from women's refuges. The invitations were received with almost effusive gratitude, according to coordinator Cliff Worthing.

"One of the mothers from a refuge expressed her appreciation and said it had been so long

since her child had been to a party the child had forgotten how to play party games," said Mr. Worthing.

In Sri Lanka members invited 40 children from children's homes to join family day activities.

"The children, aged 5 to 15, had a fantastic time and we had our children give gifts to them," said coordinator Bharat Naker. "Some of the adult helpers said the children rarely get to go out and this was a special treat for them."

Gosford children were the ones doing the giving and serving when they followed a "Dare to Care" activity with a fundraiser for the Dizon family in the Philippines, who lost their home and possessions.

In Merimbula, Australia, a public concert was staged by church musicians in honor of the senior citizens. About 190 people attended the afternoon event, which included afternoon tea served by YOU and other church members. Among the audience were 60 residents of retirement home villages who had been invited to the concert. In addition, several

their distance from each other because of mixed responses to developments in the church have put aside the less important differences and begun to exercise their fellowship again."

In Port Vila, Vanuatu, the Festival family—made up of 70 visitors and 50 Vanuatu members—enjoyed four meals together.

"Overseas brethren contributed so that all of the Vanuatu members could enjoy the meals," said coordinator Rex Morgan. Family afternoon began with all the local members forming a line to *talofa*, or shake hands with each of the overseas visi-



Port Vila, Vanuatu

Photo by Roy Everett

tors as they filed past and introduced themselves.

Many of the Feastgoers in the Solomon Islands traveled for more than two days by open canoe and inter-island ferry to attend.

"Most have limited income, yet make every effort to come so that they can be spiritually refreshed and re-establish friendships," said visiting speaker Chris Crawford.

"Some members in India don't have the opportunity to meet other brethren except at the Feast," said Joseph D'Costa, coordinator of the Bangalore,

Bandarawela, Sri Lanka	115
Bangalore, India	138
Caloundra, Australia	824
Christchurch, New Zealand	155
Frankston, Australia	494
Gold Coast, Australia	916
Gosford, Australia	477
Hobart, Australia	123
Honiara, Solomon Islands	80
Langkawi, Malaysia	199
Merimbula, Australia	312
Nuku'alofa, Tonga	33
Perth, Australia	591
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	45
Port Vila, Vanuatu	126
Suva, Fiji	159
Taupo, New Zealand	473
Ulladulla, Australia	387
Chiang Mai, Thailand	35

# Festival of Faith '95

## Spanish, Portuguese sites renewed in Christ

The church celebrated the Feast at two places in Central America: Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras; and Condovac, Costa Rica. In Copán, 98 brethren from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras met in an uplifting, loving and united atmosphere.

"It was inspiring to see our brethren so renewed in Christ, so enthusiastic about the doctrinal changes Christ has made in his church and so loyal to him, as never before," said coordinator Felipe Neri.

In Costa Rica, 116 brethren from Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama and the United States realized that human differences are not stumbling blocks for genuine fellowship once one gets involved in the culture of God, according to Jorge Suarez, a member from Costa Rica.

Mr. Neri and his wife, Paula, said this Feast was the most Christ-centered Feast they have ever had. "We thank God for helping us have this Festival focus on the plan of God: human salvation through faith in Jesus Christ," Mr. Neri said.

### New way of life

"In Merida, Venezuela, some who attended for the first time broke into tears at the end because they experienced a different way of life among the brethren during those days," said Salvador Barragan, Festival coordinator. "But of course they were willing to go back to their regular routines after the Feast to live in the way of our Savior."

On the first day of the Feast in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, a 7.5 earthquake shook the area. Thanks to God's protection, no members suffered harm, and facilities used by the church had only cosmetic damages, according to coordinator Jorge Diaz de Leon. A generous offering was collected for the Red Cross to help with the rescue operations.

In Veracruz, Mexico, "members felt their faith strengthened when they saw God's intervention in his protection of the Feast site from Hurricane Roxana, said coordinator Daniel Vazquez.

### Learning how to pray better

The most outstanding feature at the Villa Carlos Paz, Argentina, Festival site, was the happy mood and radiant smiles, said coordinator Albert Sousa. One member said about the sermon on prayer: "I am impressed by the way the church is teaching us how to pray better. It is good that we should pray together because that way the children learn about it in a much more meaningful way."

A deacon was ordained and a young man who traveled more than 2,000 miles from Patagonia was baptized.

Charles Fleming, Caribbean regional director, spoke to Feastgoers in Argentina and Uruguay.

The focus of the messages was by far the outstanding part of the Festival in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The brethren were inspired by the Spirit-led fellowship and love that prevailed throughout every service and activity.

Five sessions of Sabbath school were stimulating to the numerous children present. Small group prayer meetings were conducted in the evenings after "A Call to Prayer" was given at the second service.

Unity and harmony were the overall characteristics of a true Festival of Faith in Chile, according to coordinator Mike Medina. The brethren heard Christ-centered messages that led them in the hope and calling of our faith in Christ.

Lay leaders participated in the preaching and teaching, and in several small group prayer meetings. An open house service attracted 42 friends and relatives of church members. Five new members were baptized at the Feast, and two deacons were ordained—one for Chile and one for Bolivia.

The brethren are positive about future growth of the church in Chile.

### Mini-Feast in Brazil

To accommodate brethren in



Veracruz, Mexico

Photo by Ramiaez Monteclaro

northern Minas Gerais state in Brazil, a mini-Feast took place in the city of Janaba. The five brethren from that city, plus children, who would have had to go to Uruguay (about 1,300 miles), met with Graham Davies, editor of the church's Portuguese publications.

Since they cannot afford to travel such distances, the church decided to have a mini-Feast for them where Portuguese Bible studies could be conducted. A few Brazilian members attended in Argentina and elsewhere.

Mr. Davies was interviewed on two radio stations. After the Feast he visited members and prospective members in northern and southern Brazil.

No Feast took place in Paraguay or Bolivia this year. Several Bolivian members transferred to Chile and Uruguay and the rest conducted services on the Holy Days only.

### Rejoicing in salvation

Brethren meeting in Melgar, Colombia, rejoiced in the salvation God has granted us, according to David Mosquera, local church elder. "The ministers exhorted us to go forward with optimism, knowing that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is before us to guide us, comfort us and correct us."

The women of the church, with the funds they raised during the year, had a party for the children. They gave the gifts they had made to the children and to the women that live outside Bogota, the capital.

Five people were baptized and a deacon and a minister were ordained. "The brethren are happy because the problems related to the sad division experienced in our church were left behind," Mr. Mosquera said. "We have a renewed zeal to support the work of God."

In Talavera de la Reina, Spain, members from Spain, Portugal and other areas celebrated the salvation we have in Christ through faith. Feastgoers gave a special offering for members in Angola.

Brethren attending the Feast in Puerto Rico enjoyed hearing from a different speaker each day as seven local church elders and their wives attended the site.

### Solid foundation

For many people in Trujillo, Peru, this Feast solidified their faith in Jesus and the work of God. Whatever doubts



Talavera de la Reina, Spain

Photo by Lafargue Philippe

that remained dissipated, and a new enthusiasm and a fervent desire for the church were reborn. Brethren realized the new Christian focus of the Feast is more excellent and superior to the past focus. The biblical material presented was true spiritual nourishment usable for the Christian life.

Villa Carlos Paz, Argentina	135
Parque San Juan, Chile	110
Melgar, Colombia	145
Puerto Rico	335
Trujillo, Peru	154
Santa Rosa de Copan, Honduras	98
Condovac, Costa Rica	116
Janaba, Brazil	14
Veracruz, Mexico	165
Puerto Vallarta, Mexico	650
Rosarito, Mexico	151
Talavera de la Reina, Spain	163
Punta Del Este, Uruguay	106
Merida, Venezuela	65

## Sites of biblical, historical interest flavor Greek Feast

By Ronald Kelly

Seven Greek members joined 173 international visitors under sunny, temperate skies. Feastgoers spent the opening service in an outdoor theater underneath a star-studded sky, a full moon and gusty winds. The group spent the first half of the Feast at Hotel Poseidon Club and enjoyed the scenic Gulf of Corinth. The latter part of the Feast was conducted at the Divani Caravel Hotel.

Members visited sites of biblical and historical interest such as the Acropolis, Corinth, Mars Hill and the ancient site of Delphi. They also took a day-long cruise on the Saronic Gulf with stops at two islands. Other high points included sampling the local cuisine and a farewell dinner, dance and folklore show. Some members from New York experienced flight delays because of Hurricane Opal, but only a couple of travelers had to be rerouted.

Athens, Greece

180



Greece

Photo by Ben Bowen

# Festival of Faith '95

## Philippine sites extend to area communities

### Members and families meet at nine sites

In Legazpi City coordinator Ireneo Marquez said that brethren, friends and family enjoyed a happy feast of transition from an old to a new covenant celebration.

Members remarked that "before it was hazy, now it's clear," and that "if only those who left the church had stayed just a little longer," they might have seen it, too.

Open house services on the Sabbath had 40 new people in attendance, and on Sunday 16 new people attended.

The singles, instead of the usual get-together party among themselves, chose to reach out to the needy in the community. In addition to the Festival budget for their activity, they collected money among themselves and bought food for indigent patients at the Albay Provincial Hospital.

While going around the wards, some singles encountered a 2-year-old child with hepatitis. Talking with the child's mother, they found that she had no money to buy the much-needed medicine for her child. After a huddle and another passing of the hat, the singles came up with enough money for the medicine.

In Cebu City, a positive attitude about the new covenant observance of the Feast was evident in the brethren, family and friends. "We are very happy to have observed the Feast in a new covenant context, with Jesus Christ being the center-

piece of the celebration," commented coordinator Jessup Bahinting.

The high point was the open house worship services on Saturday and Sunday. About 30 new people attended, and members invited the visitors to lunch. Some new people attended services on the Last Great Day and even gave offerings.

Out of concern for the plight of our brethren and other people in the lahar (flowing mass of mingled volcanic debris and water) stricken Pampanga province, members gave donations that were sent to the regional office for distribution.

In Davao City, a large streamer welcoming people to the celebration of salvation was hung in front of the meeting hall.

Eighty-seven new people responded to invitations to attend the open house worship services on Saturday and Sunday.

Brethren went to the city's Boys Town (a shelter for unwanted children) and adopted 34 children for one afternoon. Members also collected relief goods for victims of mudslides in Cotabato. Donations were sent through the ABS-CBN television network.

Richard Roberts from the San Leandro, California, congregation, together with his wife and coordinator Bermie Dizon donated 10 quality soccer balls to the Davao City Football Association. For these gestures of service, the church was featured several times in the media.

New activities at the Feast includ-

ed a children's Bible class, prayer meetings and a worshipful family night show extolling Jesus Christ. The teen and senior citizens activities, traditionally conducted separately, received a new twist when they were combined. Many commented about how unifying this was.

Although attendance (813) at the main Feast site of Baguio City dropped from the previous years' 1,000-plus, the brethren's joy overflowed as never before, according to coordinator Valentin Joson.

The lower than expected turnout was partly because of difficulties brethren south of Pampanga Province perceived they would have in traveling through that lahar-devastated area.

Many expressed joy and satisfaction that this Festival celebration of Christian faith was made more meaningful through active service to the community.

Through the Festival Outreach Program, coordinated by Pampanga pastor Max Fabricante (himself a victim of lahar-caused flooding), the brethren were put into small groups that fanned out to various needy areas in Baguio for three days.

The groups visited and gave donations to orphans and institutions for the disabled, planted trees, cleaned up a stretch of road, helped collect city garbage (and treated the collectors to snacks) and visited hospitals, praying for some sick people and donating cash, food and clothing.

A newspaper ran an article on the church's outreach activities. Officials and residents expressed amazement at the generous hearts of the members and asked who we were and why we were doing this for them. Some requested church literature. One asked where the church meets in Urdaneta, Pangasinan.

In Bacolod City, through the help of a member who was a classmate of the hall's owner, the church was able to rent the hall at half its normal

price, according to Edmond Macaraeg.

The brethren showed their love and care for a Filipino expatriate from the San Francisco, California, church who suffered a heart attack while here shortly before the Feast. He was confined in a hospital all through the Feast. Many brethren visited and cheered him.

Because of difficulty in traveling through lahar-ravaged Central Luzon many decided to stay in Metro Manila instead of going to Baguio City for the Feast, according to coordinator Victor Lim.

Some members reached out to people at Golden Acres (a home for senior citizens), D.A.R.E. (a drug rehabilitation center), and House of Refuge (an orphanage for street children).

Feastgoers expressed their love for their countrymen in the lahar-devastated province of Pampanga by collecting and sending two vanloads of food and used clothing to the victims.

Zamboanga on the southwestern tip of Mindanao Island was a first-time Feast site.

A high point in the Feast were the two open house services, according to coordinator Ricardo Deligero. Thirty-one new people attended.

Besides the spiritual high of having the Feast here, the brethren enjoyed a tour of the city's historic sites or rummaged through the numerous barter trade markets. Some of the more daring ones made a quick cruise to Basilan Island and returned unscathed.

Bacolod City	206
Baguio City	813
Cebu City	307
Davao City	401
Manila	958
Puerto Princesa, Palawan	183
Musuan, Bukidnon	502
Zamboanga	133
Legazpi City	219

## Powerful typhoons hit Philippines

At least 500 people are dead and 280 missing in the most powerful typhoon to hit Luzon and Metro Manila in nine years, Bill Sidney, Philippine regional director, told the *WN* by phone Nov. 6.

"Our home was shaking with the power of the wind last Friday [Nov. 3]," he said. Power was off for 2½ days in some areas of Manila. Some outlying areas will not have power for weeks.

"As far as we know from pastors here in Manila, everyone seems to be OK," said Mr. Sidney.

Winds were clocked at 250 kilometers (155 miles) per hour in southern Luzon. A baby swinging in a hammock attached to the roof of a house was blown away along with the roof. Thankfully the baby was recovered alive.

At presstime Mr. Sidney had been unable to contact brethren attending five churches in the Bicol area, where there were many fatalities.

Only days earlier, another typhoon struck the Visayas region, claiming the lives of 221 people and destroying the home of one member.

Flooding and lahar flows have severely affected brethren in Pampanga. A number of families have had to leave the area, including the parents of the Dizons and two of the Dizon brothers and their families.

Other families also have been affected. Max Fabricante said when they leave the house, they have to pass through a knee-high buildup of silt and mud in their yard.

Mr. Sidney approved emergency assistance to the families affected.

Please remember the brethren and other Filipino families who have been severely affected by these storms.

## Festival of faith gives new hope in Angola

By Carlos Tavares

LUANDA, Angola—Noe' (Nkumbe tembe Nowa) waited anxiously at the airport in Luanda scarcely believing that at long last a Portuguese-speaking minister would arrive to help them keep the first Feast in Angola.

Fresh in his mind were two visits by ministers Bill Bentley, Jack Brunet and John Halford. The messages, encouragement and fellowship during those visits strengthened the brethren, giving them a new hope in the chaos, corruption and misery of their everyday lives.

Out of the war and a diaspora (people settled away from homelands) of nearly 20 years, God had called them out of Zaire, Namibia and Botswana—neighboring countries where they had fled as refugees.

We found an open air theater, and the local leaders of the church (Rafael Ukuakukulo, Paulino Kafu-

*Carlos Tavares is a local church elder in Lisbon, Portugal.*

ka, Abilio Dinis and others) began to get it ready for the Feast. We cleaned it, repaired broken chairs and installed the sound system. For a podium we used a kitchen table perched on an automobile wheel rim and taped the microphone onto an old lampstand.

Messengers spread the news and the attendance grew from 160 to more than 400, despite problems with transportation, which we also had to organize. People came in dilapidated war-tired trucks without seats or cover. They arrived tired, hot and dusty but smiling and singing hymns of praise and joy.

Opening prayers and sermonettes were inspiring and sincere. We used Portuguese hymnals donated by Pasadena, and they sang like only Africans can sing—naturally, melodiously and above all joyously with an underlying rhythm that made the old melodies come alive.

We had six meetings and on the last one more than 400 people enjoyed a beach picnic after services. We performed 12 baptisms and two marriages.

On the third day we prayed for and

anointed a woman who had been bedridden for several days, and also prayed for four sick children. With great joy we gave thanks to God when on the last day they joined us at the beach, healthy and happy.

Before giving the local leaders Pastor General Joseph Tkach's letter of welcome into the Worldwide Church of God, I read it to the assembly. They shouted "Amen," and we sang the hymn "God Be With You."

God has called and guided Angolans who have come through the crucible of war, misery and death to be a light to this great country.

Let us have them in our minds and prayers. Let us encourage and support them in their needs. They already have submitted to God's Spirit, they already have the leaders and the willingness to follow Jesus Christ. Let us help them with the "how to" as and when they need it. Let us make them feel part of the body of Christ.

Luanda, Angola	400
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# H.B. London gives address: Live above reproach

By Thomas C. Hanson

H.B. London Jr., vice president of Ministry Outreach and Pastoral Ministries for Focus on the Family, spoke to headquarters personnel and area ministers Oct. 27.

Mr. London's presentation, "Living Above Reproach," was videotaped to be shown at other ministerial conferences.

Focus on the Family is a ministry based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, that spreads the gospel of Jesus Christ by promoting traditional values and the institution of the family.

Pastor General Joseph Tkach introduced Mr. London. Mr. Tkach met Mr. London last summer when Mr. London addressed a Church of God (Seventh Day) conference in Colorado Springs. For several years Mr. London lived across the street from church headquarters in Pasadena.

## Pastoral advice

In his address Mr. London encouraged pastors and their families to:

1. Maintain an active spiritual life.
2. Cultivate a family situation that creates a sanctuary when the end of the day comes.
3. Develop a collegiality with one another and not just be cordial to one another.
4. To seek professional help if they need it.
5. Find ways to worship, and to

worship uniquely and genuinely.

When Mr. London started at Focus on the Family he sent a survey to 10,000 pastors. One question he asked was: What is the greatest challenge you face in your ministry today? The overwhelming response was the apathy of those who attend church.

Another question was "What is the greatest danger to your family?" The overwhelming response was not having enough time to meet the demands of spouses, children and church members.

Mr. London referred to a *Leadership* magazine survey two years ago in which 95 percent of pastors said they felt pressured to have an ideal family; 80 percent of pastors said their families felt pressured to be an ideal role model for a Christian family; 55 percent of pastors said they were very satisfied with their marriage; 31 said they were very satisfied with their family life; and 25 percent of the spouses said they were very happy with their family life.

Mr. London commented on a chapter in Charles Colson's book, *The Body*, in which he referred to staff meetings conducted by Chuck Swindoll, then pastor of the Evangelical



**FOCUS ON FAMILY**—H.B. London (right) chats with Pastor General Joseph Tkach after giving an address titled "Living Above Approach." [Photo by Thomas C. Hanson]

Free Church in Fullerton, California. His staff members periodically asked one another these seven questions:

1. Have you been with a woman anywhere this past week that might be seen as compromising?
2. Have any of your financial dealings lacked integrity?
3. Have you exposed yourself to any sexually explicit material?
4. Have you spent adequate time in Bible study and prayer?
5. Have you given priority time to your family?

6. Have you fulfilled the mandates of your calling?

7. Have you just lied to me?

Mr. London said that in the United States each week 50,000 people leave the church. The reason often mentioned is that church is irrelevant, and the next is that church people are so contentious.

## Background

Pastoral Ministries under Mr. London is a catalyst for the spiritual renewal and restoration of ministers and their families and assists them in better management of time, finances and family. The ministry serves nearly 130,000 pastors in 75 denominations.

Mr. London serves as a pastor to pastors. He communicates with hundreds of pastors and church leaders each week through "The Pastor's Weekly Briefing," a fax network, and produces a bimonthly "Pastor to Pastor" cassette and newsletter.

He has co-authored with Neil B. Wiseman the books *Pastors at Risk*, *The Heart of a Great Pastor* and *Married to a Pastor's Wife*. Mr. London is a first cousin of James C. Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, and the two grew up together.

## Africa: Brethren elated at church's new understanding and message of hope

Continued from page 5

blessings appreciated by brethren.

Activities included a children's party and family fun day. Youths entertained brethren with traditional dances, drama, songs and poems in a talent show.

Lagos will be remembered as a site "where our little physical resources were multiplied into spiritual abundance due to our faith in Christ," said coordinator Emmanuel Okai.

In Owerri, brethren were encouraged by a sermon titled "A Call to Prayer." Many came to coordinator Eke O. Udeagha in tears, thankful to hear a public acknowledgement of

our sins and shortcomings as a church in prayer and the need for God's forgiveness and mercy.

Some longtime *Plain Truth* readers and co-workers also attended. Members of the newest congregation from Awka attended on the first day and took part in a talent and cultural show.

Pastor General Joseph Tkach's message encouraged Feastgoers, many of whom wept openly as their commitment to God was renewed.

In the northern Nigerian city of Jos, brethren shared a couples seminar, a YOU play and songs and poems by the children. A lecture by a professor of applied psychology

titled "Reasons Why Families Have Problems With Adolescent Children" added to a family-oriented spiritual Feast, said coordinator Josef Forson.

A high point of the Benin site was members' understanding of Christ as the cornerstone of the Festival. "Brethren are elated at the new understanding and were encouraged by the opening message of the new pastor general," said assistant coordi-

nator Michael Ogunlase. Some described Mr. Tkach's sermon as a bold message of hope for the church.

Members made a modest beginning to their church building project by launching an appeal for funds.

"This year's Feast has gingered a great desire and zeal among the membership to reach out to our communities with Christ's message of salvation," Mr. Ogunlase said.

## Dutch Feast 'like a warm blanket'

By Gerrie Belo

**HOOGEVEEN, Netherlands**— "This Feast felt like a warm blanket in a cold winter," concluded church member Lamberta Danenberg. "It was great to be together with good friends and feel their warmth. That gave us the strength to all have an open and positive Feast."

Before the Feast the Dutch and Flemish churches went through a difficult period. Several brethren and ministers left the church for doctrinal reasons. People who organized the Feast had to be replaced overnight.

"We had to improvise a lot," said

Hans de Moei, pastor of the Dutch-speaking areas, looking back at the hectic preparation.

Church member Adrie Verduijn agreed: "This was a Feast we really had to make ourselves. The personal involvement of the brethren was more important than ever." Mr. Verduijn had been a choir member for more than eight years when he was suddenly asked to also conduct it.

"One week before the Feast the choir lost 10 singers, its conductor and the pianist. But the Feast wouldn't have been the same without a choir, so we decided to go on. And we succeeded."

Lamberta and Frans Danenberg, members of the Doorn church, organized a boat trip at Giethoorn, a village surrounded by lakes and channels, known as "The Venice of the North."

## SACS Committee Visits AU

By Thomas R. Delamater

A special committee representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) visited Ambassador University Nov. 6 through 8.

According to David Carter, associate executive director of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association, the purpose of the visit was to investigate informal inquiries about the university that were directed to SACS during the past several months. Committee members interviewed university administrators and members of Ambassador's board of regents, and spoke freely with students, faculty and staff during their stay.

"The committee members were cordial," said Russell Duke, president. "Our discussions were productive, and the committee members clearly sought to help the university remain in compliance with the criteria of accreditation established by SACS." At the conclusion of their visit the committee and Dr. Carter met with Dr. Duke and other university administrators to communicate their findings.

"The committee said that there would be one recommendation to improve the university and a few suggestions," said Dr. Duke. "We're confident that we will be able to respond favorably to the recommendation and the suggestions."

## Church Administration announces list of disfellowshipped ministers

It is with deep and sincere regret that we find it necessary to inform you that the following persons, former ministers of the Worldwide Church of God, have been disfellowshipped from the Worldwide Church of God, and their ministerial credentials have been

revoked: Bernard Andrist, Paul Kieffer and Winfried Fritz.

The church does not, and you should not, bear any ill will toward these former ministers. Rather, you should pray that God will grant them repentance.

# Christmas, Is it a sin?

By Ralph Orr

All Christians, whether they celebrate Christmas or not, are welcome in the Worldwide Church of God. Although traditionally the Worldwide Church of God does not celebrate Christmas, the New Testament gives no grounds for limiting Christian fellowship based on this custom. Christmas observance or non-observance is not a measure of Christian conversion.

Traditionally, the Worldwide Church of God has followed the historic Puritan practice of not observing Christmas. Understanding some of the reasons behind the Puritan rejection of Christmas is helpful in understanding our own position on this subject today.

The Puritans believed that the first-century church modeled a Christianity that modern Christians should copy. They attempted to base their faith and practice solely on the New Testament, and their position on Christmas reflected their commitment to practice a pure, scriptural form of Christianity.

Puritans argued that God reserved to himself the determination of all proper forms of worship, and that he disapproved of any human innovations—even innovations that celebrated the great events of salvation.

The name *Christmas* also alienated many Puritans. Christmas, after all, meant "the mass of Christ." The mass was despised as a Roman Catholic institution that undermined the Protestant concept of the Christ who offered himself once for all.

*Ralph Orr is managing editor of Reviews You Can Use, the church's bimonthly publication for ministers.*

The Puritans' passionate aversion to any practice that reeked of papal Rome caused them to overlook the fact that in many countries the name for the day had nothing to do with the Catholic mass, but focused instead on Jesus' birth. The mass did not evolve into the form abhorred by Protestants until long after Christmas was widely observed. The two customs had separate, though interconnected, histories.

As ardent Protestants, Puritans identified the embracing of Christianity by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the early 300s as the starting point of the degeneration and corruption of the church. They believed the corruption of the church was brought on by the interweaving of the church with the pagan Roman state.

To Puritans, Christmas was impure because it entered the Roman Church sometime in this period. No one knows the exact year or under what circumstances Roman Christians began to celebrate the birth of their Lord, but by the mid-300s, the practice was well established.

No evidence exists that the Christian leaders who began this practice consciously wanted to compromise with paganism. They may simply have wanted to celebrate the Incarnation.

However, modern scholars generally agree that the date they chose for Christmas was influenced by a pagan celebration on or about that same date honoring the "Invincible Sun."

Consequently, many customs unrelated to the birth of Christ that commonly characterize modern Christmas celebrations were also present in pre-Christian pagan celebrations. This blended character of most forms of Christmas celebration was enough for Puritans to avoid the hol-

iday as a compromise with the pure exercise of Christian faith.

Today, no churches call themselves Puritans. Yet their theological descendants—Presbyterians, Congregationalists and many Baptists—remain. Gone, except among their most fundamentalist offspring, is any concern about Christmas. Yet their history of attitudes toward Christmas is important for understanding our own story.

The Worldwide Church of God traces its origins through Sabbatarian and Adventist movements that arose in early 19th century America. Centered in New England, these movements were in turn influenced by earlier churches, many of which had Puritan roots.

The New England culture was permeated with Puritan values. For example, as late as 1847, no college in New England had a Christmas holiday. The fact that anti-Christmas sentiment

exists among Sabbatarian groups originating in that setting should not be surprising. In many ways, our own anti-Christmas concerns have reflected earlier Puritan concerns.

The central issue regarding Christmas observance is this: How much freedom do Christians have in the new covenant, either individually or as a church, to express their faith, worship and thanks toward Christ in forms not found in the Bible? Are Christians ever free to innovate in worship? May church leaders establish special days to celebrate the great acts of salvation?

Devout Christians sometimes confuse ancient forms with modern substance. "Once pagan, always pagan" is the way the Worldwide Church of God once reasoned. While we admitted the transforming power of Christ

See Christmas, page 13

## 'You must not worship God in their way,' Deuteronomy 12:30-31

Dedicated Christians have argued that all attempts to transform pagan customs into Christian customs are wrong. Those who think this way allow for no exceptions. "Once pagan always pagan," they reason.

We, the Worldwide Church of God, often thought this way ourselves. We understand and appreciate the sincerity of those who earnestly seek to please God. We don't ask them to do anything that violates their conscience. Yet we must ask, Are they correct? If something is once pagan, is it always pagan?

In the past Worldwide Church of God literature claimed that Deuteronomy 12:30-31 commands us not to borrow any custom of any kind from pagan religious practices. Nothing once used in idol worship is to be used in worshiping the true God. Absolutely nothing.

In earlier interpretations of this verse, the church had not considered the customs and traditions in Israel's religion that had earlier parallels in pagan religions—customs that God either commanded Israel to use or that he accepted, endorsed, promoted and blessed. Temples, priesthoods, sacrifices, sacred music, tithing, festivals, circumcision, all existed in pagan contexts and generally preceded those found in post-Sinai Israel. Such examples prove that although a custom may be pagan in one context, it may be commanded or permitted in another.

Take, as an example, the temple. Pagans built temples several thousand years before Moses. At Sinai God instructed Israel to build a tabernacle, not a temple. Four hundred years later David decided to put an end to the tabernacle and build a temple, though God had not instructed him to do so. David reasoned that since he was going to live in a house of cedar, then the ark of God should be in a temple.

In response, God reminded David that he never had asked Israel for a house (2 Samuel 7:6-7). Furthermore, David's plan effectively set aside much of the letter of the law (those portions concerning the tabernacle, its construction, maintenance and transportation). In principle, of course, what David proposed was quite noble. God was to be given greater honor than the king.

A temple was so alien to Israel's thinking that to build it Solomon had to rely on craftsman provided by the pagan kingdom of Tyre. Nonetheless, God blessed this and other worship innovations.

How then should we understand Deuteronomy 12?

The context of Deuteronomy 12 is God's command to utterly destroy the many pagan sacrificial sites that existed within the Promised Land (verses 1-3). The Canaanites, like many other pagans, had many sacrificial sites because they thought that various gods had power in various places. They believed that if the worshippers of these gods offered acceptable sacrifices, the gods would be forced to do what the worshippers wanted. Human sacrifice and temple prostitution were parts of their religion.

To discourage Israel from adopting the polytheism and immorality of paganism, God commanded Israel to have only one place of sacrifice, the tabernacle. It was only to the tabernacle that Israel was to bring their sacrifices, offerings and tithes (verses 4-18).

God expanded on this thought in verses 19 through 28. He told Israel where and under what circumstances certain meats were to be eaten. He emphasized that Israel was not to eat blood, and that they were to pour the blood of their sacrifices beside the tabernacle's altar, not just anywhere that they pleased (verse 27).

Then in verses 29 through 31 God repeated his intent to destroy the pagan nations occupying Canaan. He commanded Israel not to worship God in the pagans' way of worship (verse 31). The reason? Because their way of worship included vile and hateful things, such as child sacrifice. This was not a blanket condemnation. The passage does not condemn the adoption of those things that by nature are not hateful. We have already seen how the change from tabernacle to temple fit that pattern.

The final verse of chapter 12 commands Israel not to add or take away from what God has commanded. We emphasize again that God did not think that David's many innovations violated the spirit of this command.

Other human innovations that God subsequently approved included religious holidays not originally a part of the old covenant's festival calendar—including Purim and Hanukkah among others. These two days in particular celebrated great events in Israel's salvation history.

Christians know that God abolished the Levitical system and the old covenant itself through Jesus' sacrifice. His birth, death and resurrection are of paramount importance to our salvation history. Deuteronomy's focus on the Exodus, the tabernacle and its rituals no longer applies. We are dead to and released from the law (Romans 7:4-6). We do not have to worship God in old covenant places and in old covenant ways. We may add celebrations of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Yet the principle of avoiding vile and hateful practices in worship, such as child sacrifice, remains.

## Jeremiah 10 and Christmas trees

Christians opposed to Christmas have often argued that Jeremiah condemns Christmas trees. They believe that Jeremiah 10:2-4 is quite plain—Christmas trees are sinful.

But are these Christmas critics correct? Does Jeremiah 10:2-4 actually condemn the setting up of Christmas trees?

The King James Version reads: "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen.... For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."

On the surface it does seem that Jeremiah is describing Christmas trees. But let's look deeper.

An important key to understanding any passage is to pay careful attention to its context. Verses 2 through 4 of Jeremiah 10 are part of a larger context. That larger context is verses 1 through 16.

In these verses Jeremiah proclaims the Lord as the only God. "No one is like you, O Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due.... The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King.... God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding" (verses 6-7, 10, 12, NIV).

The gods that pagans worship are nothing compared to the Lord. "These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens" (verse 11). They are mere images made by men and women. "Every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. His images are a fraud; they have no breath in them. They are worthless, the objects of mockery" (verses 14-15).

Gold is not the only substance used to make idols. Verses 8 and 9 speak of "worthless wooden idols" on which workmen place hammered silver and gold, and rich apparel.

When we consider that these verses condemn idolatry, we can understand what Jeremiah meant when he said "the customs of the peoples are worthless" (verse 3). No wonder he tells us not to "learn the way of the nations" (verse 2).

Turning to translations other than the King James also helps our understanding. Where the King James reads "one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe" (verse 3), the New International Version says "they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel." The tool referred to in the passage is not a woodsman's tool, but that of a wood carver. Most modern English translations agree with the NIV.

Jeremiah is not condemning Christmas trees. He is condemning idolatry. The trees in Jeremiah 10 are cut down to carve them into worthless idols that will later be decorated with gold and silver. Jeremiah says nothing about Christmas trees.

## Feastgoers donate more than \$8,000 to Ambassador's KBAU radio station

Ambassador's new radio station, KBAU, received more than \$8,000 in donations from church members at U.S. Festival sites. "We're extremely grateful that members have shown this type of support," said Sarah Bilowus, director of promotion and development for the station.

KBAU, which signed on Nov. 6, offers programming from National Public Radio (NPR), reaching 165,000 East Texans in nine counties.

KBAU carries some of NPR's most popular and award-winning programs, including Morning Edition and All Things Considered.

Health, science, law and business features, movie and book reviews, programming for children and programming of interest to senior citizens is also featured on the new station.

KBAU's 6,000-watt station, known as The Breeze, offers light jazz and acoustic music in the day and light classical music in the evening. An automation system enables the station to broadcast 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You can help build KBAU by becoming an inaugural member of Friends of KBAU. Please see the form below for details.

### Friends of KBAU

Since public radio is supported by people who are interested in furthering excellence in education and the arts, we need your help at this critical time in the development of our station. You have an opportunity to help build KBAU by becoming an Inaugural Member of Friends of KBAU. Inaugural memberships will be awarded to the first 907 people who contribute \$100 or more. Inaugural members in this category will have their names inscribed on a plaque that will be displayed at the KBAU studios, and will be the first to receive KBAU's program guide this fall.

YES! I want to become an Inaugural Member of Friends of KBAU. Enclosed is my check or money order to KBAU for \$100.

YES! I want to contribute \$50 to KBAU and receive a KBAU coffee mug.

YES! I want to contribute \$35 to KBAU and receive a KBAU T-shirt (L and XL only).

Large  X-Large

YES! I want to give a general contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to KBAU.

YES! Please let me know how my business can sponsor programming at KBAU, and receive on-air recognition.

Contributions are deductible as charitable contributions within the limits of the Internal Revenue Code.

Name  Mr.  Ms.  Mrs. Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize KBAU to charge my pledge of:  
 \$100  \$50  \$35  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to:  VISA  MASTERCARD

Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_ Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## coming soon in *The Plain Truth*...

**Cover Story:** The Miracle of Jesus' Birth

The town of Bethlehem was home to the greatest miracle of all time. Yet the miraculous nature of Jesus' birth is often dismissed as irrelevant, or even as superstition or myth. Is the story of the Virgin Birth important to the gospel message?

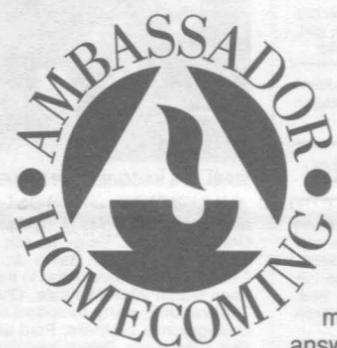
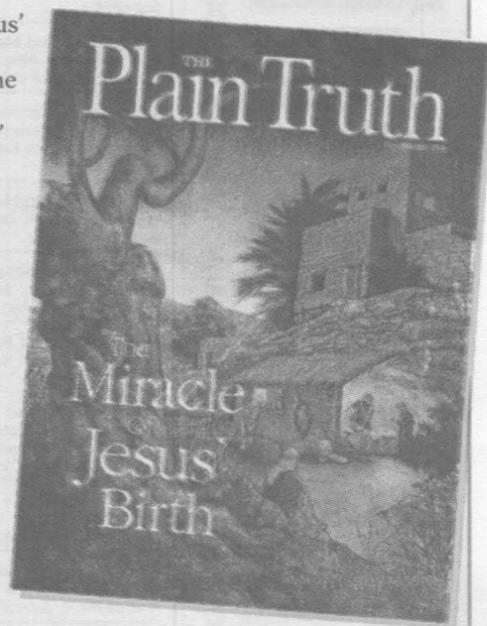
In our cover story, Keith Stump explains how the miracle of Jesus' birth demonstrates God's grace and love in fulfilling his promise of salvation.

Replacing the regular "About This Issue" is a memorial message from editor Greg Albrecht informing our readers of the death of our beloved Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach.

### Also in December:

Paul Kroll leads off a new series "What Is Christianity?" with an article titled "A New Life in Christ." More than a religion, Christianity is a rescue. Paul looks at what it means to our personal lives when we accept Christ.

Focusing on family issues, Sheila Graham addresses the subject of menopause in "What's Wrong With Mom?" and Norman Shoaf offers suggestions on how parents can nourish their children's friendship with Jesus in "Let the Little Children Come to Me."



### Ambassador alumni invited to homecoming in December

Ambassador alumni are invited to attend this year's homecoming Dec. 21 to 24.

Events include class reunion hospitality hours at faculty homes; dinner with entertainment in a setting of a '50s diner; a question and answer session with university administration; open house at several campus locations; an intercollegiate basketball game; and a family brunch Sunday morning. (See Aug. 15 WN for details.)

Cost for the weekend's activities is \$35 per person for members of the alumni association and \$45 per person for nonalumni spouses or alumni who have not joined the alumni association.

Reservations and payment must be received no later than Dec. 1. For reservations or more information or to request a homecoming brochure, please call the alumni association office at 1-903-636-2023. The fax number is a 1-903-636-2365 and the Internet e-mail address is [alumni@ambassador.edu](mailto:alumni@ambassador.edu).

For your convenience, you may pay using your Visa or MasterCard.

## Christmas: Decision is a personal matter

Continued from page 12

for people, we denied it for customs and traditions. Yet many of the practices God approved for ancient Israel had previously existed in paganism.

Temples, priests, harvest festivals, music in worship, circumcision and tithing all had ancient pagan counterparts. God transformed these customs into a form of worship devoted to him. Even the sun, universally worshiped as a god by pagan cultures, God used to symbolize an aspect of the Christ (Malachi 4:2).

Jesus taught, "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (John 7:24). Too often, Puritan criticism of Christmas was based on outward appearances and a strong anti-Catholic perspective.

When Israel added Hanukkah and Purim to its religious calendar—events that celebrated God's saving acts in Jewish history—these were acceptable to God. So, too, was the

addition of the synagogue and its traditions. Examples such as these have led many Christians to conclude that the church also has the freedom to add to its calendar festivals that celebrate God's intervention in human affairs, such as the birth of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus.

Unless we are to conclude that celebrating Christ's arrival as God in the flesh is a detestable thing, its celebration on what was once a pagan holiday is irrelevant. Christians who keep Christmas are not pagans. They do not worship nor regard pagan gods. They honor Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is true that certain customs attached to Dec. 25 are practiced in a pagan spirit by many people. But a truly Christian observance of Christmas does not include drunkenness, fornication, carousing or any other conduct unworthy of saints.

Of course no one knows the exact date of Jesus' birth. But this lack of knowledge does not diminish the value of celebrating his birth, any

more than not knowing when Christ will return diminishes the value of celebrating his return during the Feast of Trumpets.

It is the position of the Worldwide Church of God that it is not a sin to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. After all, his entrance into the world was a cause of great rejoicing and celebration, because it made possible human reconciliation to God.

At his birth people who loved God rejoiced in praise, and even the angels sang for joy (Luke 1:46-55, 68-79; 2:8-14, 28-32, 38).

Love, not command, is what motivates many Christians to celebrate Christmas. They love their Savior and they love their families. Christmas provides an opportunity for them to express both. To harshly judge those who choose to practice their faith in this spirit of devotion conflicts with many New Testament principles.

The fact that non-Christians or even some Christians celebrate Christmas as a secular holiday or in a profane way is no more a reason to avoid

Christmas than the fact that some people get involved in ungodly conduct at the Feast of Tabernacles or attend it merely for a vacation are reasons to avoid the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Worldwide Church of God no longer teaches that observing Christmas is a sin. The decision to observe Christmas, and if observing it, how to observe it, is a personal matter.

Members of the church are free to celebrate or not to celebrate Christmas. The church hopes that Christians who celebrate Christmas and those who do not are both seeking to honor Jesus Christ (Romans 14:5-6).

However, the official practice of the Worldwide Church of God is to exalt and worship our Savior during festivals founded on biblical precedent, rather than on days that entered Christianity after the first century.

Therefore, the church does not plan or sponsor an annual Christmas celebration. If members choose to celebrate Christmas with their families, we encourage them to make Christ the center of their celebration.

# Announcements

BIRTHS, ENGAGEMENTS, WEDDINGS, ANNIVERSARIES AND OBITUARIES

**KAMPMEIER**, Mark and Idell (Long) of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, boy, Cory James, Aug. 1, now 2 boys.

**KASDORF**, Timothy and Maria (Fredrickson) of Grants Pass, Oregon, boy, Nathaniel David, Sept. 13, first child.

**KERR**, Nigel and Melissa (Jacobson) of Calgary, Alberta, girl, Angela Ann, Aug. 22, first child.

**McMILLION**, Jason and Sabrina (Tackett) of Charleston, West Virginia, girl, Whitney Faith, July 9, first child.

**MELLO**, Jeffery and Kim (Meland) of Gresham, Oregon, boy, Kurt David, July 25, first child.

**MIDDLETON**, Timothy and Jennifer (Scott) of Joplin, Missouri, boy, Dejon Alexander, Aug. 12, first child.

**MILLER**, Andy and Susie (Yoder) of Columbia, Missouri, boy, Adam Ray, Sept. 7, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**MILLER**, Jim and Karen (McCormick) of Abbotsford, British Columbia, boy, Cameron James, June 15, now 1 boy, 2 girls.

**OESTERLE**, Loren and Blanca (Perez) of Glendora, California, boy, Jason Alexander, Aug. 1, first child.

**RINGLE**, Michael and Erin (York) of Albuquerque, New Mexico, girl, Andrea Marie, June 30, now 2 girls.

**RIZZUTI**, Gordon and Jeri (Cook) of Cleveland, Ohio, boy, Mitchel Grant, Aug. 24, first child.

**SCHULTZ**, Garry and Christine (Schlote) of Edmonton, Alberta, boy, Justin Alexander, Aug. 2, now 2 boys, 1 girl.

**SHAW**, Brian and ReNae (Wernli) of Joliet, Illinois, girl, Chelsea Marie, Aug. 11, now 2 girls.

**TURKINGTON**, Keith and Jackie (Kempston) of Belfast, Northern Ireland, boy, Joel David, July 11, now 2 boys, 1 girl.

**WIDDIFIELD**, Larry and Barbie (Maddy) of Portland, Oregon, girl, Jackie Leeann, May 12, first child.

**WURTZ**, Jeffrey and Sharon (Luban) of Anchorage, Alaska, boy, Reagan Michael, July 10, now 3 boys.

## Engagements

Ray and Betty Shoun of Diamond Springs, California, and Dave and Linda Fiedler of Waukesha, Wisconsin, are pleased to announce the engagement of their children, Beth Shoun and Nian Fiedler. A March wedding is planned.

Godelia Eusebio is pleased to announce the engagement of her daughter Virginia Eusebio to Cosmo Pusateri, son of Joe and Lena Pusateri of Toronto, Ontario. A May wedding is planned.

Ralph Dow of Anchorage, Alaska, and Donna Gilley of Denver, Colorado, are pleased to announce their engagement. A March double wedding is planned in Denver with Ralph's son, Tim Dow of Fairbanks, Alaska, and Pandy Reitz of Denver.

## Weddings

**DAVID & JANET EASTWOOD**  
Janet Leanne Selzer, daughter of John and Meta Selzer of Myrtleford, Australia, and David Scott Eastwood, son of Kevin and Lorna Eastwood of Montrose, Australia, were united in marriage March 12. The ceremony was performed by the groom's father, a local church elder in the Melbourne, Australia, East church. Elizabeth Miller, Margaret Cook and Bethany Zubovic attended the bride, and Graeme Eastwood and Erik Pederson attended the groom. The couple live in Montrose.

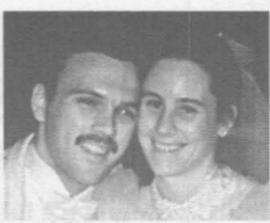
**RODNEY & IRMA LAIN**  
Rodney Lain of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Irma Persons of Birmingham, Alabama, were united in marriage Aug. 13 in Birmingham. The ceremony was performed by Robert Miller, pastor of the Birmingham church. The best man was Nate Epps, and the matron of honor was Marika Peters. The couple attend the Macon, Georgia, church.

**SEAN & JACQUELINE BARKER**  
Jacqueline Tracy Calhoun, daughter of Earnest and Margie Calhoun of Conroe, Texas, and Sean Anthony Barker, son of Conrad and Lorna Barker of Trinidad, were united in

**SHAWN & BETH CORTELYOU**  
Beth Corbitt, daughter of Ed and Patti Corbitt of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Shawn Cortelyou, son of Larry and Terri Cortelyou of La Harpe, Illinois, were united in marriage Aug. 6 in Knoxville. The ceremony was performed by the groom's father, a local church elder in the Macomb, Illinois, church. Georgia Cherry was maid of honor, and Dale Johnston was best man. The couple live in La Harpe.

**WILHELM & CHARLOTTE RADEMACHER**  
Charlotte Strohhahn and Wilhelm Rademacher were united in marriage July 14. Present were the groom's three children, Daniela, Anita and Michael, and the bride's children, Mara-Lisa and Hendrik Strohhahn. The family lives in Langenhagen, Germany.

**SAM & ANN TUCKER**  
Sam and Ann Tucker of Shelby,



**WILLIAM JR. & LIA JACKSON**

Lia Maxine Marvell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James N. Pope Jr. of Holland Patent, New York, and Chris Marvell of Paignton, England; and William Melvin Jackson Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. William M. Jackson of Davenport, Virginia, and Diane Martinez of Wayne, Michigan, were united in marriage May 17. The ceremony was performed in Gladewater, Texas, by Stan Murphy, now a local church elder in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Regan Marvell, sister of the bride, was maid of honor, and Ken Danes was best man. The couple live in Denver, Colorado.



**MATTHEW & MARISA DAVIS**

Marisa Michele Parton of Boaz, Alabama, and Matthew Todd Davis of Altoona, Alabama, were united in marriage April 29. The ceremony was performed by Paul Kurts, pastor of the Gadsden, Alabama, church. Kim Mizell was matron of honor, and Denman Davis was best man. The couple live in Altoona.



**EARL III & JACQUELYNN BAILEY**

Jacquelynn L. Switzer, granddaughter of Barbara Canales of Van Wert, Ohio, and Earl L. Bailey III, son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl L. Bailey Jr. of Elkhart, Indiana, were united in marriage March 25 in Mandale, Ohio. The wedding party included the bridegroom's brothers, Paul and Roy, sister-in-law, Robyn, and Taina Barientos. The couple live in Gate City, Virginia.



**WILHELM & CHARLOTTE RADEMACHER**

Charlotte Strohhahn and Wilhelm Rademacher were united in marriage July 14. Present were the groom's three children, Daniela, Anita and Michael, and the bride's children, Mara-Lisa and Hendrik Strohhahn. The family lives in Langenhagen, Germany.



**RODNEY & IRMA LAIN**

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**SEAN & JACQUELINE BARKER**

Jacqueline Tracy Calhoun, daughter of Earnest and Margie Calhoun of Conroe, Texas, and Sean Anthony Barker, son of Conrad and Lorna Barker of Trinidad, were united in

marriage Dec. 4 in Houston, Texas. The ceremony was performed by Chris Beam, pastor of the Houston North church. Clarette Walker was matron of honor, and Barris Calhoun, brother of the bride, was best man. The couple live in Tampa, Florida.



**JEFF & TINA SIEKER**

Tina Marie Dinger, daughter of Larry and Diana Dinger of San Diego, California, and Jeff Sieker, son of Andrew and Judy Sieker of Wyalusing, Pennsylvania, were united in marriage July 2 in the bride's home town. The ceremony was performed by the father of the bride, a local church elder in the San Diego North County church. Tammy Wheelchel was matron of honor, and Tim Yuschak was best man. The couple live in Irving, Texas.



**ANDREW & DEEDEE BITTNER**

DeeDee Haggard, daughter of Wendell and Linda Haggard of Manchester, Tennessee, and Andrew Bittner, son of Robert and Judy Bittner of Westmont, New Jersey, were united in marriage May 27. The ceremony was performed by Richard Weber, pastor of the Murfreesboro, Cookeville and Nashville, Tennessee, churches. Stacie Rowland was maid of honor, and Mark Bastian was best man. The couple live in Collingswood, New Jersey.



**JESSE & ANNIE BOONE**

Annie Asumbra, daughter of Esperanza Asumbra of Nagcarlan, Laguna, Philippines, and Jesse Boone, son of Joseph Boone of Makati City, Philippines, were united in marriage, June 11. The ceremony was performed by the groom's brother-in-law, Rey Taniajura, regional managing editor of *The Plain Truth* (Philippine edition). Tonette Lajom was maid of honor, and Jun Pasion was best man. The couple live in Makati.

## Anniversaries



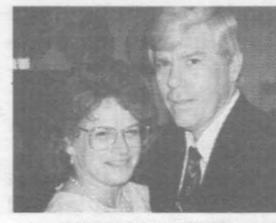
**PAUL & LINDA HAYS**

Paul and Linda Hays of Holden, Missouri, celebrated their 35th anniversary June 11. They have one son, Nathan; two daughters and sons-in-law, Bryan and Ann and Bob and Mary; and two grandchildren. The Hayses serve as deacon and deaconess in the Kansas City, Missouri, East church.



**HAROLD & DONNA KIRK**

Harold and Donna Kirk of Big Stone Gap, Virginia, celebrated their 35th anniversary Aug. 20. They had one son, Gregory, deceased.



**MR. & MRS. DERRICK MILWOOD**

Mr. and Mrs. Derrick Milwood celebrated their 25th anniversary July 18. They have three children, Michael, Tracey and Matthew.

Ohio, celebrated their 25th anniversary Sept. 12. They have four children, Jill, Sara, Jim and Julie. Sam is a deacon in the Mansfield, Ohio, church.



**AL & ROSE NEUMANN**

Al and Rose Neumann of San Dimas, California, celebrated their 30th anniversary July 24. They have three sons, Clint, Carl (deceased), and Mark; a daughter, Mitzi Bitner; a daughter-in-law, Jennifer; a son-in-law, Paul; and four grandchildren, Kyri Marie, Roy Al, Brandi Lynn and Brandon Taylor. Al is a deacon in the Glendora church.



**BILL & DORIS YORK**

Bill and Doris York of Indianapolis, Indiana, celebrated their 40th anniversary July 24. They have four children, Kevin, Lynnette, Eric and Erin; two daughters-in-law, Mary and Laurie; a son-in-law, Michael; and six grandchildren, Amanda, Brittany, Anderson, Kelsea, Danielle and Andrea.



**ROBERT & JUDY BITTNER**

Robert and Judy Bittner of Westmont, New Jersey, celebrated their 30th anniversary June 12. They have two daughters, Jennifer Curry and Stacey Damore; a son, Andrew; a son-in-law, Tony; a daughter-in-law, DeeDee; and three grandchildren, Lan, Elyse and Share.



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**HAROLD & DONNA KIRK**

Harold and Donna Kirk of Big Stone Gap, Virginia, celebrated their 35th anniversary Aug. 20. They had one son, Gregory, deceased.

## Anniversaries Made of Gold



**ED & ALBINA BEFORT & HELEN & GUS BEFORT**

Ed and Albina Befort (left) celebrated their 50th anniversary, and Gus and Helen Befort of Hays, Kansas, celebrated their 60th anniversary July 15. Ed and Gus are brothers and Albina and Helen are sisters.



**LEN & AILEEN ROBERTS**

Len and Aileen Roberts of Brisbane, Australia, celebrated their 50th anniversary Aug. 14. They have a son, a daughter and two grandchildren.



**EARL & HAZEL ORBAN**

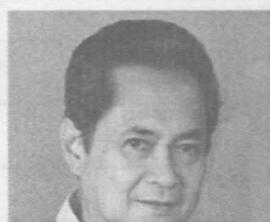
Earl and Hazel Orban of Brighton, Illinois, celebrated their 50th anniversary Oct. 23. They have five sons, Dave, Dan, Darrell, Don and Doug; a daughter, Darla; and 12 grandchildren. Earl and Hazel are deacon and deaconess in the Belleville, Illinois, church.

## Obituaries



**SYLVANUS STROMMEN**

STROMMEN, Sylvanus L., 74, of Blanchardville, Wisconsin, died June 7 of a heart and asthma condition. He is survived by his wife, Bonnie; a son and his wife, Sherwood and Carolyn; a daughter and her husband, Nancy Williams and Kenneth; and five grandchildren, Bryan and Cathleen Strommen, David, Heather and Michael Williams.



**ROBERTO N. GOPEZ**

GOPEZ, Roberto N., 65, of Manila, Philippines, died Aug. 26 after a bout with pneumonia. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Lota; three daughters, Antoinette Vinta, Bernadette Samson and Claudette Tomacruz; and four grandchildren. His youngest daughter, Dianette, preceded him in death in 1987. Mr. Gopez pastored several churches before he retired in 1993.

FITZPATRICK, Garland Lee, 64, of Delaware, Arkansas, died Aug. 31. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

SPELLMAN, Oliver Eugene Sr., 60, of Birmingham, Alabama, died Aug. 13 of respiratory failure. He is survived by his wife, Betty; three sons, Oliver E. Jr., Michael David and Ronald L.; and eight grandchildren.

WUNNENBERG, Robert, 51, of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, died Aug. 21. He is survived by his wife, Mildred; a stepdaughter, Carolyn McDaniel; three stepsons, James, Jerry and Daniel Self; his mother, Elvera; three sisters, Shirley Fenn, Delores Wunnenberg and Jean Hobbein; a brother, Richard; and two step-grandchildren.

GRIECO, George, 47, of Trenton, New Jersey, died Aug. 5. He is survived by three children, Davina, Adam and Linda; a son-in-law, Dennis; and two grandchildren, Katie and Dennis Jr.

# Personal: representing Christ the best we can

Continued from page 4

nurture of the congregation and in evangelization and community service.

My dad often quoted the motto, "Work smarter, not just harder." The motto expects us to think more about how we do our work and to find the best ways to accomplish the tasks with the skills and gifts God has given us.

I pray that we all share the desire to have every member of the church become active participants in the work of God.

If we are to be God's church we must all represent Christ to the best of our ability and be shining examples of Christianity.

## Tithing, moral commitment

At the employee meeting I also discussed the comment I made during my Festival sermon that church employees are required to tithe.

Also speaking at that meeting were Greg Albrecht, Mike Feazell and Bernie Schnippert.

A few employees have asked why they are required to tithe when the church does not require strict tithing as a condition of membership.

Let me answer by explaining our beliefs and practices. First, a comment about a misconception that some have about the new covenant. Living under the new covenant, being in Christ, and being freed from the slavery of old covenant requirements does not equate to doing whatever one wants to do. If we are in Christ, we voluntarily place ourselves under his authority. He is Lord of all.

Rumors that we condone adultery because we are under the new covenant are ridiculous. Such allegations betray a serious lack of understanding about what Christians commit themselves to because of their faith and belief in their Lord and Savior.

For Christians, tithing is not a requirement for salvation. That statement means that an act or a behavior, in this case tithing, cannot be a criterion for salvation. Salvation is freely given, by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing we do is a requirement for salvation.

But the New Testament is clear about the holy life that Christians live as a result of having been saved. Because we are saved, we are called to holiness in Jesus Christ. The New Testament has many sin lists and virtue lists that demonstrate that the Christian walk includes an extremely high ethical and moral standard, not a low one.

The old covenant included carefully delineated, exacting tithes, offerings and sacrifices. Giving in the old covenant was not voluntary. It was absolutely obligatory and required. Failure to comply with this system of tithes, offerings and sacrifices excluded you from being a part of the people of God. You would not be purified, you could not worship and you would be excluded from fellowship.

The new covenant introduces the concepts and principles of Christian stewardship. Christian financial stewardship is built upon the old covenant practices of tithing but is different in philosophy and orienta-

tion. In some respects, Christian stewardship is far more demanding than the old covenant practices of tithes, offerings and sacrifices.

Old covenant tithing was a matter of the law; Christian stewardship is a matter of the heart and attitude. It is an expression of our devotion to God. Christian stewardship includes not only the responsibility to give of one's monetary resources, but it also includes the moral demands that the gospel of Jesus Christ places on our time and our talents.

Therefore, it is entirely consistent that we would expect our employees who are members of the church to tithe. We expect a high moral behavior that is Christian in every respect.

And, because employees are employed by a church that is voluntarily funded by tithes and offerings,



Greg Albrecht



Joseph Tkach



Mike Feazell



Bernie Schnippert

it is reasonable to expect employees to exercise the principle of Christian stewardship in their lives.

Tithing is the foundation of Christian stewardship. According to the Bible, Christians should contribute cheerfully and liberally for the support of the gospel. Other churches recognize this biblical principle and expect their employees to tithe.

Some employees have reasoned the following: "I have not had a raise in a long time. Therefore, I will not tithe." In effect, they propose giving themselves a raise.

But, a Christian is obligated to give. Jesus gave us the greatest gift, his own life, for our salvation. We are absolutely indebted to him and voluntarily give of our substance so that others may hear the gospel and share in the gift of salvation.

Another perspective on this issue includes the fact that all employees are paid from money that is given to help proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We who derive our living from the gospel need to set the pace.

Therefore, employees have a moral commitment to support the church, which, in turn, provides them with their livelihoods. Members will be encouraged to know that employees, whom they employ with their voluntary tithes and offerings, are doing the same.

When members perceive a lack of commitment by headquarters personnel, then we cannot expect members to be generous.

Our policy is that we expect employees to tithe. However, I want it to be abundantly clear that we do not police our computer records, we do not go on a witch-hunt, nor do we make any effort to catch every employee who is not tithing.

Generally, we check to see if someone is tithing on three occasions: 1) when we are considering hiring someone, because we expect our employees to tithe, 2) when we are considering ordaining someone to an office of servanthood within the body of Christ, because those who are called to lead should be individuals who are generous, devoted, servants of Christ and good stewards of their resources, and 3) when we're consid-

ering promoting someone to be a supervisor or manager.

Another factor we are facing concerns our budgeting and cash flow. We have demonstrated that Christians walk by faith and not by sight when we announced that we could no longer require tithing as a condition of salvation. Before that announcement, in early 1995, we had an expectation of what our members would give.

As I also mentioned in my Festival sermon, we need the members to be consistent in supporting our gospel efforts. We cannot pay employees, plan for the future, or give pay raises until we have a basis from which to plan. Employee tithing is one component of our cash flow expectations.

Because of all this, it is not inconsistent for the church to expect

employees to tithe. If an employee does not tithe, we are not making a moral judgment about his or her salvation being adversely affected. We know, and acknowledge, that it is between that person and God.

employees to tithe. If an employee does not tithe, we are not making a moral judgment about his or her salvation being adversely affected. We know, and acknowledge, that it is between that person and God.

## Moving forward in Christ

Through the love and mercy of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit we have set our minds and hearts on Jesus Christ and have come to trust explicitly in him. I have never been more thrilled about the state of our fellowship!

We are pooling our energies and moving forward in preaching the gospel worldwide and equipping our local congregations to be healthy examples of the body of Christ.

We are learning to use the spiritual gifts we have been given, and are capitalizing on the intense dedication to Jesus Christ—now rightly channeled—which has long characterized our church.

So we stand today at the foot of the cross—the ultimate symbol of all reconciliation. It is the common ground on which estranged and alienated parties can meet. As Christians, we all identify with the suffering that took place there, and we hope that will bring us closer together.

It is only by the blood of the Lamb and the power of the Spirit that we can put the hurts of the past behind us and move forward toward our common goal.

P.S. On another subject, you will notice on page 12 of this issue an article about Christmas. As the article explains, and as we have explained at numerous question and answer sessions at ministerial conferences, we should not judge one another concerning this day.

Although various customs associated with Christmas were originally associated with paganism, many Christians believe that the customs long ago ceased to be pagan. Each person should be convinced in his own mind, but he should not judge his brother regarding such matters.

Remember, Christmas is not part of our annual celebrations, but it is not sinful to get together with family during this time. Neither is it sinful to read and reflect on the story of the birth of our Savior as recorded in Matthew and Luke. It is sinful, however, to practice idolatry, drunkenness and revelry. Sad to say, in the past this kind of behavior sometimes even occurred at the Feast of Tabernacles. We hope that such problems will remain in the past.

Those who are concerned about Christmas issues may want to read a book by Ralph Woodrow on this subject. Mr. Woodrow used to preach against Christmas, just as we used to. His new booklet, *Christmas Reconsidered*, explains the evidence that led him to change his approach to this subject. Copies are \$4 each, postage paid, or \$2.50 each for five or more copies. Send orders to Ralph Woodrow, Box 124, Riverside, California, 92502-0124.

## Credit card contributions

To make contributing easier, we are making it possible for donations to be made by credit card. This will benefit people who have credit cards that give them points toward buying an automobile, plane tickets or cash rebates.

Anyone can now make a credit card donation by calling 1-800-423-4444.

A new personalized envelope designed to handle credit card donations, as well as cash and checks, will be mailed in the next few weeks. In addition, we plan to have automatic credit card debiting for those interested. Information about automatic debiting will be released when we have the system in place.

## Property sale, relocation

Regarding church assets, we will not own a corporate jet or a limousine. The limousines have already been sold and we will sell the jet as soon as we have a committed buyer.

We have met with three of the largest real estate agencies in the United States—Grubb & Ellis, Cushman & Wakefield and Coldwell Banker. If we do not sell the property ourselves within a short time we will contract with the agency that gives us the best contract proposal.

To determine the final site of relocation a search committee has been established. The committee will be chaired by Bernie Schnippert and includes Leigh Sniffen, Rick van Pelt, Mike Feazell, Greg Albrecht and perhaps others. Employees are encouraged to give input about possible relocation sites.

Some criteria we will use to find a new home for headquarters includes reasonable cost of living; reasonable housing costs; tax friendliness; good schools; air transport; facilities conducive to our needs at the right price; and weather that is not severe.

Cities recommended by an earlier

# Update

NEWS OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS

## Thai temple conducts memorial service for Mr. Tkach

LOS ANGELES—A memorial service for **Joseph W. Tkach** was conducted at Wat Thai of Los Angeles in North Hollywood, California, Sept. 30. **Phra Wichian Thammakunathan**, abbot of Wat Thai, conducted the service along with three other resident monks: **Phra Sumana Sumanatisso**, **Phra Maha Suparb Siripanyo** and **Maha Thongsri Aopakaro**.

Gifts prepared by **Herman** and **Isabell Hoeh** were presented to the monks by church members **Raymond Epperson**, **Daniel Reedy**, **Ronald Reedy** and **Mitchell Vasseur**.

The memorial provided an opportunity for the Thai community to show their respect to Mr. Tkach, the church, Ambassador University and Ambassador Foundation.

After the memorial service, about 12 members and friends of the Worldwide

Church of God were given a tour of the temple and adjacent Thai school by Mrs. **Labor Anekanonda**, a longtime friend of Dr. Hoeh and others who visit Wat Thai.

Wat Thai of Los Angeles and the Worldwide Church of God have enjoyed a warm relationship for many years, including joint participation in teaching English and Western culture to Laotian refugees in Thailand from 1980 to 1985.

## Ministerial ordinations, transfers

Three men serving as regional pastors were ordained as pastors Nov. 3 at the regional pastors conference in Pasadena. They are **Craig Bacheller**, pastor of the Miami, Florida, North and South churches; **Don Mears**, pastor of the Big Sandy church; and **Fran Ricchi**, pastor of the Cleveland, Ohio, East and West churches.

## Ministerial transfer

**Gene Nouhan**, associate pastor in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Murphy, North Carolina, churches, was transferred to pastor the Tallahassee, Florida, and Moultrie, Georgia, churches this past summer.

## Vision for Southern Africa conference

CAPE TOWN, South Africa—Ministers from Southern Africa gathered at the regional office Oct. 30 for 2½ days of meetings with **Randal Dick**, assistant director of Church Administration International.

The church must seek opportunities to "go, preach, baptize and teach," Mr. Dick said. One session covered the empowerment of members

to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of all members and the work of the gospel. Many members are already active in using their spiritual gifts to visit widows and the sick, being hospitable, quietly and without recognition.

"We all felt the conference was a tremendous success in laying a foundation for reorienting ourselves and our congregations for the work that still lies ahead," said

**Peter Hawkins** of the South African Office.

## London South church fund-raiser

LONDON, England—Sixteen members in the London South church were given five pounds each and told to multiply it. To date they have returned more than 710 pounds.

The women sold Carib-

bean foods, luxury chocolates, marmalade and dried flower arrangements.

The men used their skills from tailoring and antiques to photography. Reports were shared at an annual gala lunch Sept. 3.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) offered to send a representative to meet with any who wanted advice to set up individual small businesses. *Jackee Brown.*

## Feast workshops add flavor, information

### Workshops augment sermons with hands-on approach

At the Palm Springs, California, site, 400 Feastgoers were introduced to the voices of contemporary Christian recording artists Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman, BeBe and CeCe Winans, Babbie Mason, Anointed, Gary Chapman, Kathy Traccoli and others with 90 minutes of concert video clips and portions of television specials.

The workshop was presented by Mike Hale, an art director for Media Operations in Pasadena and a member of Pasadena's team of worship leaders.

"For years people have asked for suggested albums to buy or songs to consider for special music or home listening," said Mr. Hale.

"I've spoken with and been to concerts of all the singers shown in these videos," he added, "and I feel comfortable recommending their work to any-

one looking for suggestions."

### Bible study

Ralph Orr, managing editor of *Reviews You Can Use*, a bimonthly publication for ministers, gave a workshop on Bible study in Palm Springs and in Pasadena.

Mr. Orr's purpose was to show the way many scholars approach Bible study in a systematic manner before they interpret a text. He hoped to increase members' appreciation for the hard work that goes into good scholarship.

He also tried to show that many of the techniques used by scholars can also be used by lay members.

### Marriage

In Palm Springs about 900 people attended a marriage communications workshop titled "Communication—Key to Your Marriage" presented by Dexter and Shirley Faulkner, who pastor the Topeka, Kansas, church.

Mr. Faulkner introduced the presentation with the statement: "The average couple spends 17 minutes in conversation each week. We

all can improve our communications skills in marriage. If you don't agree, just ask your mate. Communications can open doors for any marriage."

Mr. Faulkner recommended the book *Communications—Key to Your Marriage* by H. Norman Wright, a Christian marriage and family counselor.

The lessons members and visitors took with them were what God says about communication, why our words are so powerful, how to listen to your spouse and ways to stop nagging and start encouraging each another.

### Grief and loss

Jeff Zhorne, WN managing editor, conducted workshops in Pasadena and Palm Springs on how to work through loss and grief.

Participants learned about the tools and skills needed for resolving unresolved loss experiences, including death of a loved one, end of a relationship, loss of trust, loss of a job, retirement, moving, the empty nest and other losses.

Grief is cumulative and cumulative negative. If losses are not resolved properly, grief will continue to adversely affect our lives and the lives of those around us.

Feastgoers saw how faith in Christ empowers us to do human things such as taking responsibility for finishing the unfinished business in relationships.

## European conference: interacting within a uniting EC

By Charles Albrecht and John Halford

LA ROCHE SUR FORON, France—Ministers from 10 European countries met at the foot of the French Alps for a three-day European conference, Oct. 24 to 26.

The group met to answer administrative questions and develop an organizational structure and European vision for 1996. Attending for the first time were Carlos Tavares and Leo Kaagjarv, representatives from Portugal and Estonia.

The conference also included ministers from the United Kingdom who drove

from England to central France via the newly completed English Channel tunnel.

Paul Brown, pastor of the London South church, said: "I will never think of Europe in the same way again. It was so easy to travel within the EC and to get together as ministers." Thoughts like these helped develop one of the themes of the conference, specifically, the ease and need for ministers to interact within a united European community.

Ministers agreed that the changing face of Europe makes it possible for various European areas to consider themselves a single region. Further, by focusing on common interests, it became easier to see what cultural distinctions need to be preserved.

On the opening day Randal Dick, assistant director of Church Administration International, led a discussion on European vision. Participants agreed that four

aspects must be included as part of a European vision. These aspects are:

- The kingdom of God is on the offensive; the European work should be on the offensive.
- We are called to harvest.
- Everything must be geared to change lives.
- Everything revolves around a relationship with God and one other.

Mr. Tavares and Belgian pastor Jack Brunet gave reports from the Feasts in Angola and Zaire. It was a welcome reminder of the need for European churches to extend a friendly hand in partnership to the churches in Africa.

In addition, evangelist Carn Catherwood discussed the need for European unity, and John Halford addressed general European administrative issues. Other topics discussed were accountability, small group meetings and ways to capitalize on the strengths of the ministry.

Participants left sobered and inspired by the opportunity to work as a team in reaching Europeans with the gospel. Improvements in transportation and communication are helping European and British ministers work together yet maintain important linguistic and cultural characteristics.

### WN: Mailing is faster, cheaper

Because of changing postal regulations and cost savings, *The Worldwide News* is now mailed second class to U.S. members. If you receive this paper more than 14 days after the issue date, please call the church's toll free number 1-800-423-4444. Be ready to give the operator your personal identification number and zip code.

*Charles Albrecht is international operations manager for Church Administration, and John Halford serves as regional coordinator for the United Kingdom and administrative coordinator for Europe.*

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