

The truth, translated

Fast

In his November 12 sermon, “The Land Cannot Bear His Words,” Pastor General Gerald Flurry called for a Church-wide fast for all members to be held on Sunday, January 15. Mr. Flurry said the purpose of the fast is to ask “that God would add laborers to this Church.” For members who may have a conflict with this date because of work, Mr. Flurry said that fasting on the Sabbath before (January 14) would also be acceptable.

Youth

Youths interested in attending Philadelphia Youth Camp can now apply online: PYC registration websites went live today. To apply as a camper, visit pyc.pcog.org. Visit pyc.pcog.org/worker if you would like to apply as a worker. Or visit pyc.pcog.org/edstone to apply for PYC-Edstone. The deadline for applications is March 1. Also, teens interested in entering the 2017 Teen Talent Contest can now find all the details at pcog.org/ttc.

Musical

The newest PCG musical, *The Widow’s Might*, plays on December 29 (7:30 p.m., CST), on December 31 (7:30 p.m.) and on January 1 (2:00 p.m.) in Armstrong Auditorium. A news segment on the musical aired on December 22 on KOCO, the Oklahoma City ABC affiliate. The performance will stream live at live.pcog.org. During the performance, check [Twitter.com/PCG_News](https://twitter.com/PCG_News) and share your reactions with a tweet to @PCG_News.

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ABOVE “How read we this website each one in his own language?” In 2016, theTrumpet.com became available to speakers of German, Dutch, French and Spanish. **Page 6**



TREASURER'S REPORT

2016 in review

EDMOND—We are just a few days away from the end of our fiscal year. It has been a great year of income for the Church, with an

BY ANDREW LOCHER
Treasurer

increase in donations to Herbert W. Armstrong College, the Key to David's City foundation, Philadelphia Youth Camp, and the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation. Although these categories do not make up major portions of the donation income, they all did receive large increases.

Holy day offerings increased in 2016 to the third-highest total in our history. Meanwhile, first-tithe and third-tithe donations will finish down just slightly compared to 2015, by about 1 percent.

Tithe of the tithe and excess second tithe donations have increased to our highest total ever. That is good news, because those funds will help other members next year who require special assistance. We are also able to use some of that surplus to reduce the costs of individual hotel rooms during the Feast. That subsidy helps us

contract with nicer venues for the same cost to the brethren as another site of lesser quality.

During 2016, we continued to build and to improve the landscape on the headquarters campus and the regional campus in England. We also continue to upgrade, repair and improve Edstone Hall. Many of the most-expensive renovations have been completed; now the focus is on the smaller projects. Using this building as opposed to renting office facilities and storage helps us recover some of our investment. Students in Edstone cover their costs of living through withholding from their work-study paychecks.

The Dwight Armstrong Performing Arts Conservatory is in use on campus at headquarters. This new facility provides classroom space and purpose-built facilities to accommodate music and dance. It also contains our most technologically up-to-date classroom. This large-capacity room is used primarily by the music department,

but also serves as combined Imperial Academy and Herbert W. Armstrong College bi-weekly forums, linking the schools at headquarters with the Edstone campus. Events in this room can also be easily recorded or streamed to in-home Imperial Academy students.

Construction costs of the music building came in on budget. We paid cash as the project proceeded, so the Church did not incur any debt in the process. However, we projected a stronger donation base for the building fund to cover these costs. Year-to-date donations to the building fund are down 27 percent. That has pushed back other construction project start dates to ensure that we will not incur any debt as we continue to build. We are praying for a rebound in donations to this special fund. Construction, improvements and general maintenance will always be a cost we have to cover.

Lastly, estate donations will finish the year down considerably from last year. In 2015, we were blessed with two very large estates. As we enter the early months of 2017, we anticipate being able to finish work on one of the two large estates received in 2015. This will give us a great start to 2017, which hopefully will return donations in this category to 2015 levels. Please pray that God continues to bless the Work with these special donations. Often, they come in a large, lump-sum amounts, which gives our bottom line a nice boost. It is not possible to correctly anticipate or budget for these donations, so often they are the funds that facilitate special projects.

Overall, 2016 has been quite a

blessed year. God has provided for expansion in nearly every department. We continue to expand the educational programs on both campuses. The Church carries no debt or obligation. With many exciting open doors on the horizon, please continue to sacrifice to support God's efforts. All of those who have donated to the Church, all over the world, have continued to sacrifice and support God's apostle. We are very thankful for those sacrifices, and we pray God will draw additional donors and coworkers into the Work. We can also pray that God prospers those who are already giving to the Work so that there is a larger financial base to launch new incentives as we wrap up our commission to warn this world. ■

The Philadelphia

news@pcog.org

© Philadelphia Church of God

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See Fundraisers
(Page 18)

2016 in Numbers

Pastor General Gerald Flurry led a broadcasting and literature work from headquarters that included dozens of television programs broadcasting on hundreds of stations and offering a large and varied amount of literature to all who are interested in the message.

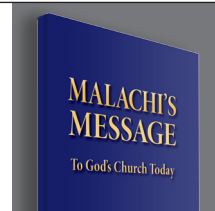
33

New episodes recorded by *Key of David* presenter Gerald Flurry, up 10 percent over the program's historical average.



210

Stations currently airing the *Key of David* program in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, Latin America and Australasia.

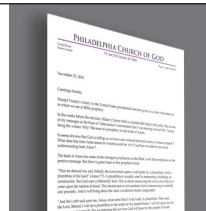


7,400

Copies of *Malachi's Message* requested, two thirds of which were through *The Key of David*. This is the highest number requested in the last 10 years, and more than double the figure for the next-highest year (2014).

42,700

Copies of *Malachi's Message* requested over the last 10 years.

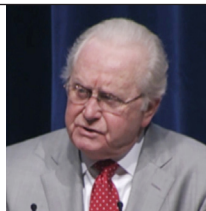


300

Pages of new text written by Mr. Flurry for the *Philadelphia Trumpet*, *Royal Vision*, three co-worker letters, two new *Pastor General's Reports*, two booklet updates and one new booklet (131,985 total words).

17

Total sermons delivered by the pastor general, including the opening night message at the Feast of Tabernacles.



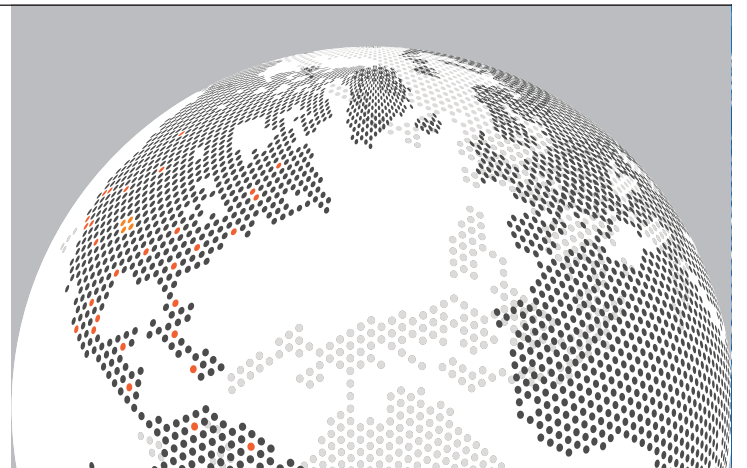
42

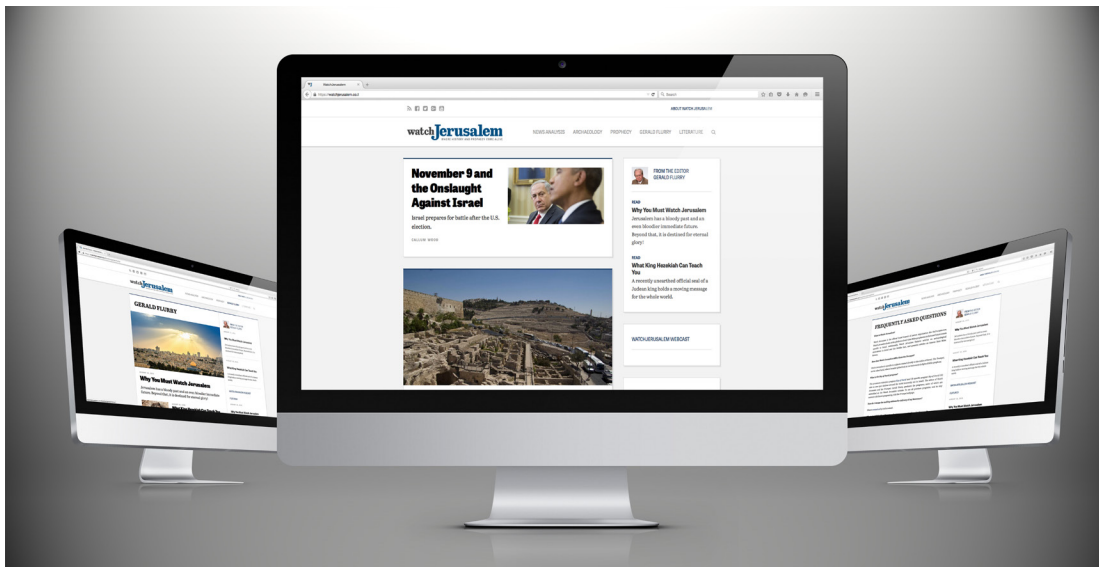
New *Trumpet Daily* (*Key of David-UK*) television programs recorded by presenter Stephen Flurry this year, up 5 percent over last year.



157,000

Telephone calls answered by the call center and WATS volunteers. About 11,000 (7 percent) of these were from first-time callers. *Key of David* programs with the highest responses included "The Mystery That Would Be Finished (Revelation 10:7)" (2,935) and "Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast (Repeat 14)" (2,494). The top months for calls were February (14,909), July (14,801) and August (14,451).





PICTURED The Watch Jerusalem website (left), and site manager and podcast host Brent Nagtegaal (above.)

‘Watch Jerusalem’ site, radio program aim to reach the Jewish people

Feature archaeology and geopolitics

BY GRANT TURGEON

EDMOND—The Jewish people in Israel and around the world now have a website and radio program tailored specifically for them. WatchJerusalem.co.il and the *Watch Jerusalem* radio program/audio podcast focus on biblical archaeology, biblical history and news from the Middle East regarding the Jewish nation of Israel. The site launched and the radio program aired live for the first time on November 20.

Pastor General Gerald Flurry commissioned the website and the radio program in September, specifically referencing Isaiah 40 in calling the Internet a “high mountain” from which to proclaim a powerful message.

PCG Jerusalem office manager Brent Nagtegaal, who is a staff writer for the *Philadelphia Trumpet*, manages the *Watch Jerusalem* website. He said the plan for the site is to keep adding features to the basic framework, including an online exhibit section, which will retell a biblical narrative using a series

of discovered artifacts. Nagtegaal also presents the *Watch Jerusalem* radio program via KPCG 101.3 FM in Edmond at 10 a.m. (Central Time) each Sunday. Listeners worldwide can tune in online at KPCG.fm or download the podcast.

“While a lot of our audience will initially come from the United States, the program is not designed for that audience, but rather to make Israelis themselves more aware of the stunning biblical discoveries that are being

made right under their noses,” Nagtegaal said. “Most of the program will be news-driven, both in the archaeological world and also in geopolitics, but it also will aim to educate the listener on some of the more impactful discoveries from biblical archaeology over the past 50 years.”

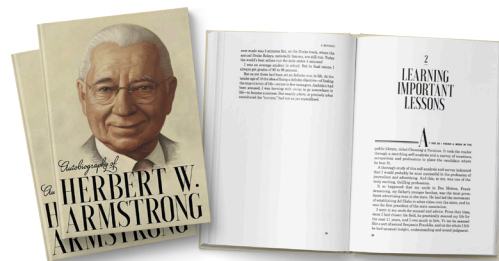
Nagtegaal said that archaeological discoveries tend to fade quickly from the headlines, even in a place such as Jerusalem that possesses rich biblical history. His

hope for the website and for the radio program, he said, is to keep significant archaeological finds in the public discourse. He also hopes to add interviews to the program.

“The Jewish people are so into technology—their major exports are in technology. [The Internet] may be a high mountain for us, as it says in Isaiah 40,” Mr. Flurry said on December 12. “From every report I’ve seen, the site is doing very well.”

Nagtegaal said, “It is hoped that the weight of archaeological evidence confirming and elucidating the Bible will impact the listener more than just a news story.”

Nagtegaal said visitors and listeners are welcome to send feedback to letters@WatchJerusalem.co.il. ■



3,048

Copies of *The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong* distributed worldwide since the book was printed in June (excludes copies distributed at the Feast of Tabernacles.)



25,000

First-time callers since mid-summer 2014. Over the past 2 ½ years that the data has been tracked, about 15 percent of total calls have come from first-time callers.

Bible correspondence course website launches on PCG's 27th anniversary

Herbert W. Armstrong College site allows users to study 36 lessons, take tests and receive certificates of completion.

BY GRANT TURGEON

EDMOND—Herbert W. Armstrong College's Bible study course, launched on December 7, exactly 27 years after the Philadelphia Church of God began. Bible students can now enroll, study and take *Herbert W. Armstrong College Bible Correspondence Course* tests at bcc.hwacollege.org. The new website allows students to bypass the wait for receiving tests and lessons through the mail system and the wait for submitting their test answers using the same method.

The course website states that 100,000 individuals have enrolled in the mail-in correspondence course prior to its online launch. Those who are interested in studying the Bible can sign up for the online course regardless of whether they have previously enrolled in the mail correspondence version.



Once enrolled, students can download lessons, submit tests, view their automatically graded scores and track their progress. After the student passes a test, he or she receives the next four lessons.

"We're hoping we can get as many people online as possible, registrar Jason Hensley said. "Even if they get their lessons in the mail, we hope they will take tests online to be scored immediately so they can get on with the course."

Hensley said the website represents "a huge upgrade for students in the rest of the world, especially." Bible correspondence course students living in Africa, South America and elsewhere have found that receiving and sending lessons and tests through the mail has proven to be not only time consuming but also frequently unreliable. International readers also pay significant postage rates for sending their tests to Edmond for grading. To help students avoid this fee, PCG regional offices in Canada, the Philippines and Australia collected tests from those nations and sent them overnight to Edmond for grading and processing. But compared to the site, even that method was very inefficient, Hensley said.

Instead of waiting months to receive four lessons and a test in the mail, mailing the completed test, and starting the wait all over again, Bible course students can take their tests and move onto the next lesson immediately. Hensley said that the site will reduce stagnation, which can result in enrollees quitting the course.

The website was conceived eight years ago, but underwent two long delays in the process. After the PCG's information services department completed the mammoth task of creating a new contact management system, *Cedar*, in May, programmers, graphic designers and writers continued in earnest with the online Bible course project.

The PCG won the copyright to the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* in 2003. "When you look at Herbert W. Armstrong's work, it's like a pyramid," PCG Pastor General Gerald Flurry said. "The Bible correspondence course is at the foundation, booklets and articles are on top of that, and *Mystery of the Ages* is the capstone."

Mr. Flurry said the course is "a fabulous breakthrough for us. As far as a good education spiritually, what else do we have that compares to the Bible correspondence course? It's a tool for teaching teachers and preparing them to help Jesus Christ rule the Earth."

Correspondence Course How-To



Herbert W. Armstrong College launched an online version of its Bible study course on December 7. If you are currently enrolled or would like to enroll, you can continue to take the course through the mail, or you can now enroll online, using your user-name and password for PCOG.org or theTrumpet.com. Select from these two options:

1. Have your lessons mailed to you and take your tests online.
2. View your lessons online and take your tests online.

If you choose one of these online options, you will not miss a lesson, your past progress will be carried over, and you will be able to track your progress. You will also be able to view prior lessons, and your online tests will be graded automatically and instantly, helping you advance through the course more quickly. If you have started the Bible correspondence course and have not completed it, now is the time to finish! To enroll, visit bcc.hwacollege.org.



LEFT The foreign language translations department includes 50 volunteer translators, include these members from Austria, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and beyond.

Dutch-language versions of theTrumpet.com launched at laTrompette.fr and theTrumpet.nl.

The French website features an archive of four years' worth of articles. It includes several videos translated from the English site by Canadian members Pierre Vernier and Tony Chiasson and recorded by Belgian member Paul Fontinoy, such as "[Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg en 90 Secondes](#)" ("Who Is Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg? In 90 Seconds") and a few *Key of David* programs.

The Dutch website features similar videos dubbed over with Dutch subtitles translated by van Halteren's wife, Irene, assisted in editing by Netherlands member Egbert Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt. TheTrumpet.nl literature library includes more than 40 titles.

The translations department plans to post new content every business day, including articles, *Key of David* programs, transcripts, chapters from books and booklets, and full books and booklets as they are completed. The department also hopes to produce occasional German-, Dutch- and French-specific news written exclusively for diePosaune.de, for laTrompette.fr and for theTrumpet.nl.

From its launch in November through early December, the French website attracted 803 page views and 114 video views, plus 125 downloads and 24 orders; its YouTube channel logged 246 views. The Dutch site logged 1,136 page views, five video views, 67 downloads and 13 orders; its YouTube channel recorded 65 views.

On November 30, the newest site, laTrompeta.es launched. The site so far contains 48 books, booklets and reprints, 91 issues of *La Trompeta*, and four videos. The site collected 346 page views, 67 video views, 12 downloads and

Translations dept. boosts production in 2016

Department innovates, shifts focus toward online content

BY GRANT TURGEON

EDMOND—The foreign language translations department shifted into a higher gear during 2016, creating four new websites, translating approximately 30 *Key of David* television programs, and producing piles of translated books, booklets and articles. And as another year begins, translators and editors have their sights set on even bigger goals.

The department translates the PCG's English-language literature and other media into Spanish, German, French, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, Finnish and Portuguese. It includes 50 volunteers, dozens of whom have been serving the department for years, who work remotely from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the

Netherlands, South Africa, Suriname, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In September, the department began freeing up resources to focus on translating content for new foreign-language versions of theTrumpet.com, which include translated voiceovers of Pastor General Gerald Flurry's *Key of David* program. The department has also opened associated accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and YouTube.

The crew of volunteer translators and staff members editors have filled the four sites with 30 videos, more than 250 pieces of literature and more than 60 lessons of the *Herbert W. Armstrong College Bible Correspondence Course*.

Websites

The department launched its first new site at diePosaune.de on **February 15**. The German-language

version of theTrumpet.com features a newly translated article each week, a literature library containing 50 quarterly editions of the *Philadelphia Trumpet* news-magazine; 27 books, booklets and reprints; and 17 videos. The literature is translated and edited by Austrian, Canadian, United Kingdom and German members Hans Schmidl, Emanuel Maximoff, Annette Ommen, Peter de Lauw and Herta Geisler. The videos are voiced over by Maximoff. The site was developed and launched by Netherlands member Aart van Halteren.

From its launch in February through the first full week of December, the German website logged 12,031 page views and 114 video views. Visitors placed 48 orders and downloaded literature 1,266 times. The *Schlussel David* on YouTube logged 15,250 views.

On **November 18**, French- and

The PCG Translation Team

Afrikaans: Linda Hoeksma*, Trevor Laubscher, Michelle van der Leeuw

Dutch: Aart van Halteren, Irene van Halteren*, Egbert Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt*, Odinga Seedo, Edwin Trebels*, Liesbeth Staal, Ronald Staal*

Finnish: Minna Millar*

French: Antonin Chiasson*, Paul Fontinoy, Elise Gorreux, Joelle de Harenne, Marc de Harenne, Deryle Hope*, Jean-Claude Lamontre, Robert Pare, Christian Sylvitus, Corinne Sylvitus, Pierre Vernier, Zenon Wierzbinski

German: Gert Geisler, Herta Geisler, Peter de Lauw, Emanuel Maximoff, Annette Ommen, Hilda Schmidl, Hans Schmidl*

Hebrew: David Blondeau, Christopher Eames*

Italian: Lucia Hope*, Angela Mak, Silvia Rossi

Norwegian: Eva Roelofszen*, Joop Roelofszen

Portuguese: Madeleine Bach Catussatto, Antonio Vidal

Spanish: Angelica Avalos, Daniel Castro, Jorge Esparza, Jorge Estrada, Carolina Furmanski, Adiel Granados, Carlos Heyer*, Sandra Heyer, Astrid de Jacque, Magda Rodriguez Lopez, Eliezer Zaldaña Nerio, Connie Rosas, Hector Pulido Torres, Jesus Valdespino, Miguel Valdespino, Marcela Varela, Natali de Valdez

*Editor

seven orders in early December; its YouTube channel had 151 views.

Trebels said that the sites' larger numbers probably include artificial page views (by search programs), but that he is encouraged by the figures for regular visitors and for literature downloads and orders.

Without any advertising thus far, the new websites have garnered a small-yet-loyal following. As of December 9, the German site had attracted 66 visitors who return to the site every day; the French site, 50; the Dutch site, 51, and the Spanish site, 24.

The department plans to produce an Italian version at laTromba.org in the coming months.

Literature

Meanwhile, translators, editors and staff continue to produce books, booklets, articles and correspondence coursework in earnest. In February, they completed correspondence course Lesson 8 and Test 4 in Finnish; *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast*, "The Fraud of Evolution" reprint and Lessons 19 and 20 in French; and the *Nahum* booklet in German.

In March, they produced an updated version of *Malachi's*

Message and a *How to Be an Overcomer* audio book in Spanish, correspondence course Lesson 21 in French, *Just What Do You Mean Conversion?* in Portuguese, and Tests 2 and 3 in Finnish. For the first quarter of 2016, the department mailed 1,975 pieces of foreign literature, including 1,664 in Spanish.

In April, the department produced *Daniel Unsealed at Last!* and updated *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* in French, and *Ezekiel: The End-Time Prophet* in Norwegian.

In May, translators produced *The King of the South* and *The Proof of the Bible* in German, and "The Times of the Gentiles" reprint in French.

In September, the department published *The Seven Laws of Success* and *America Under Attack* in German, as well as correspondence course Lesson 24 in French. A professional company was hired to translate one German-language article each week for diePosaune.de. The department suspended printing German, French and Italian versions of the *Trumpet* magazine to devote more of its manpower to online efforts.

In November, French

translators completed *America Under Attack*, Lesson 22 of the correspondence course and updates to *Jerusalem in Prophecy* and *He Was Right*. The department also completed *The Plain Truth About Christmas* in Norwegian.

Trebels said, "FLT is different at the start of 2017 over the start of 2016 in the sense that we are now able to respond to news events within a day rather than within one month in Spanish and within three months in German, French and soon Italian. We used to only produce a magazine that often, but with our websites and associated social media accounts, we can respond to an event immediately. At the very least, we can find articles applicable to the recent event from the archive and highlight those on the front page and post them on social media with the trending hashtags. ... We can also reach out to our e-mail newsletter subscriber list immediately."

Transfer

The department received an extra boost in July when Trebels transferred to the PCG regional office in England, where department head Brad Macdonald is also based.

Trebels said that living closer to so many non-English-speaking nations has helped remind him of the deep need for the work of the translations department.

The Future

"Our big goal is to reach the largest audience possible with the highest quality material possible," Trebels said. With websites and much of the literature library in place, the department aims to use 2017 to increase its offerings and to increase its offline and online readership, including the number of literature and reprint article downloads from the foreign-language Trumpet websites, webpage views, regular site visitors, literature orders, newsletter sign-ups, video views on the websites and on YouTube, YouTube channel subscribers, likes and shares on Facebook, and followers and retweets on Twitter.

"The websites are still young and continue to be fine-tuned," Mr. Macdonald said. "But we are doing our best with the resources at our disposal to support Mr. Flurry as he fulfills the full scope of the PCG's Revelation 10:11 commission."

Trebels said that the department is now exploring an effective digital marketing strategy for bringing the PCG's message to exponentially more people. "If you want to put it in farming terms," he said, "it does seem like there is a lot of 'low-hanging fruit' ready for harvesting in these foreign-language nations."

Meanwhile, the team's 50 volunteers will continue their work.

"The translators are people who donate many hours of their own private time as volunteers—several as many as 20 hours a week," Trebels said. "Others have full time jobs and sacrifice many hours outside of work in the evenings, or early morning hours, and on the weekends. From my experience, these volunteer translators are some of the most dedicated workers in the world and it is obvious they believe this is a message worth supporting and spreading." ■

Hope joins Translations

Local Elder Deryle Hope now assisting
Latin America Regional Director Carlos Heyer

BY GRANT TURGEON

EDMOND—The Work in Central and South America and the Caribbean received a boost on October 31, the day Local Elder Deryle Hope joined the foreign language translations department as a full-time staff member at headquarters. Mr. Hope assists Regional Director Carlos Heyer in serving approximately 300 members plus contacts in 44 Latin American and Caribbean countries. He also manages the new Spanish-language version of theTrumpet.com, laTrompeta.es, and continues to serve as editor



DERYLE HOPE

for *La Trompette Philadelphienne*, the French-language *Philadelphia Trumpet* newsmagazine, .

The Spanish department also includes part-time clerk Gladys Welsh, volunteer Sandra Heyer

and Herbert W. Armstrong College student Adiel Granados at the regional office at headquarters, along with four ministers: Mr. Jorge Esparza (Mexico), Mr. Francisco Luna (Colombia), Mr. Luís Fariás (Chile) and Mr. Sam Seebran (the Caribbean), plus 15 volunteer translators in the field.

Mr. Hope began translating and editing for the PCG as a volunteer in 1999. To date, he has translated for approximately 100 issues of French, German and Spanish versions of the *Trumpet*. His wife, Lucia, has also volunteered her time for Spanish publications and currently translates and edits the Italian version.

Mr. Hope, who is fluent in French, Spanish, German and Portuguese and has experience with other languages, previously

served as the director of international studies at the University of South Carolina, in Spartanburg. There he established relationships and agreements with foreign universities and interacted with foreign students and their families, often in their native tongues. Mr. Hope, who holds a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction, also worked with languages and international relationships during his career in secondary education and in business.

Now Mr. Hope serves a Spanish-speaking region that also includes four French-speaking nations and one Portuguese-speaking nation.

Mr. Hope said he counseled about a year ago with Pastor General Gerald Flurry about retiring from his position. At the time, Regional Director Alex Harrison had recently transferred to the Australasia-Africa region, Mr. Heyer, who said he never dreamed of administering the whole region, had become the new regional director, and he needed help serving the brethren in the region.

Mr. Hope eventually decided to retire from his university position. On June 30, he had been retired for less than 15 minutes when he received a call from headquarters. It was Mr. Heyer, offering him a new job.

"I was surprised," Mr. Hope said. "I didn't expect anything with Spanish. If anything, French. I knew and always respected Mr. Heyer, so I was very happy about it."

"We just have a brand new engine in the ship," Mr. Heyer said. "We can go both motors running, full throttle ahead." ■

Selected major milestones for Foreign Language Translations

1991

German-language and French-language translations of *Malachi's Message* published.

1992

Spanish versions of *Malachi's Message* and the *Philadelphia Trumpet* published and distributed through much of Central and South America

Late 1993

Dutch version of *Malachi's Message* completed

March 1994

Printing and distribution for Dutch-language *Malachi's Message*

May 1994

First issue of Dutch-language *Trumpet* published

August–September 1994

First issue of French *Trumpet* is published

1994

Church has 20 literature translations in eight different languages

June 1996

Malachi's Message publishing in seven languages; 18 books and booklets printed in languages other than English

1998

First issue of German *Trumpet* published

May 2011

Work begins on translations for the Hebrew language

2016

Four new foreign-language versions of theTrumpet.com launched: diePosaune.de (German, February 15); laTrompette.fr (French, November 18); theTrumpet.nl (Dutch, November 18); and laTrompeta.es (Spanish, November 30)

Did you know?

You can tap/click the orange box at the end of an article to leave a comment online at PCOG.org/news.



BEHIND THE WORK 2016 REMEMBER


BTW shows how members can help

Department managers say they need members' prayers

BY GRANT TURGEON

EDMOND—During the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles, thousands of members at 14 sites worldwide watched the 2016 *Behind the Work* documentary, which included updates on Editorial, Publishing, Television, Radio, Imperial Academy, Herbert W. Armstrong College and other departments, including archaeology in Jerusalem. Department heads mentioned several specific challenges that they are encountering, which members can pray for in order to help these departments achieve their goals.

- For the editorial department to expeditiously produce booklets and books that Pastor General Gerald Flurry has mentioned in his sermons over the past months and years.
- That the translations department can attract new visitors to the German, Dutch, French, Spanish and upcoming Italian versions of theTrumpet.com.
- For the final design and launch of an updated website for theTrumpet.com.
- For the WatchJerusalem.co.il website to reach the Jewish people.
- For resources to reach the “largest audience possible.”
- For writers, designers and presenters to be able to arrest the attention of readers and viewers who are inundated by a world of distractions.
- For the proper functioning of the technology used to tape *Key of David* programs, which Mr. Flurry usually records on Tuesdays.
- For *Key of David* content to be approved for airing by television station managers and government regulators.
- For the strongest possible content to be approved for airing on *The Key of David*—UK: programs that can discuss prophecy and specific world leaders but still be approved by regulators.
- For new PCG contacts in Britain, Europe and elsewhere to take root, grow and produce, as they develop their spiritual lives.
- For KPCG radio presenters to continue improving the quality of their presentations.
- For effective advertising, positive reviews and increased attendance for the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation performing arts series.
- For youth to dedicate themselves to God and the Work as a result of Philadelphia Youth Camp, Imperial Academy and Herbert W. Armstrong College. ■



Congrats, grads!

These young PCG men and women have recently graduated from their secondary and post-secondary institutions. Now they find out what the future holds for them—and what they hold for it. PCG News congratulates and wishes a bright future to:

Elias Bullock

*Stretton State College
Queensland, Australia*

Daniel Dannecker

*Kedron State High School
Queensland, Australia*

Rufaro Kennedy

*Churchill High School
Harare, Zimbabwe*

Leilani King

*Greystanes High School
Sydney, Australia*

Ellynnah Lamont

*Stretton State College
Queensland, Australia*

Toni McKee

*Clifton State High School
Queensland, Australia*

Dianne Meli

*Hills College
Papua New Guinea*

Emma Moore

*Elizabeth MacArthur High School
Sydney, Australia*

Carla Rimmington

*Woodcrest State College
Queensland, Australia*

Lessons from astonishing Church history

Powerful principles I have learned from over four decades in God's Church



CANADA—I worked at the World-wide Church of God headquarters in Pasadena, California, for more than 20 years, mostly in the accounting department. From 1974 to 1995, I had some amazing experiences and witnessed

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some astonishing history. I want to share some of these lessons with members of God's Church so we can prepare for what lies ahead.

Ambassador College

I applied to Ambassador College in the 1970s, but I never thought I would be accepted. I had never attended Church services, and I had never met anyone in the Church. Yet I was accepted in the fall of 1974. Soon I found out why: Ambassador was pursuing accreditation, faculty members were pursuing masters degrees, and the administration was greatly expanding the curriculum. They were accepting everyone who applied.

In 1975, while I was working in the kitchen, I asked one of my co-workers from Nigeria how he came to AC. He said his father was a tribal chief with 25 wives and that he had sons who were educated in Europe but none who were educated in the United States. After looking at college catalogs, he picked "Ambassador," thinking that this college must be suitable for the son of a chief. This student knew nothing about the Church!

In 1975 or 1976, administrators

told students that we could no longer graduate with a theology degree! Reluctantly, I switched my major to chemistry, where I struggled, and then to accounting, where I excelled.

Meanwhile, in the few theology classes that were still offered, some things were being taught that differed from the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* I had studied as a teenager. These new teachings did not make sense to me, but I presumed Mr. Armstrong had approved them.

I also remember a "protest" march on campus: a few girls marching around the auditorium holding placards, but I do not remember what they were "protesting" about.

In 1976, I became the team manager for the intercollegiate hockey team. We played in the same division as teams from USC, UCLA, UC Irvine and Cal State Northridge. The AC team was excellent (being mostly Canadian players) and included the league-leading scorer. Even though the Ambassador team avoided violence and dirty play, there was one game where they were greatly provoked. It ended in an all-out brawl: The police were called in, and one of the AC players was taken to the hospital on a stretcher. The fruits of being "unequally yoked" with worldly teams were indisputably tragic! That was the last game we played.

Meanwhile, pursuing accreditation was splitting the college from the Church in a big way. Assets and certain operations were being split

off from one another. For example, a whole new accounting department was formed within the college, separate from the Church accounting department. It got to the point that employees were arguing over which assets (including coffee urns!) could be used for "college" functions versus "Church" functions.

While all that was going on, Mr. Armstrong had been left out of the picture. He explained this in a co-worker letter dated June 8, 1979: "Brethren, a year ago God's Church was in very bad shape. Until my heart failure in August 1977, I was away from Pasadena an average of 300 of the 365 days in the year, and my son assumed authority beyond that delegated to him. Under him, God's Church, the Work and the college had been turned around until actually it was scarcely God's Church anymore. Everything was run as a strictly secular and worldly organization. I was shut off."

After his heart failure, Mr. Armstrong moved to Tucson, Arizona, in late 1977 or early 1978. In June 1978, his son, Garner Ted, was disfellowshipped. Along with the potential sale of the campus in Big Sandy, Texas, this led to an enormous conspiracy, lawsuit and attack initiated by a handful of disgruntled members.

The Receivership

I was transferred to the accounting department in 1976, and upon graduation in May 1978, I was hired full-time. The infamous day I shall never forget was Wednesday, Jan. 3, 1979. That was the day that

ABOVE Herbert W. Armstrong said God's Church, God's Work and God's college were each run "as a strictly secular and worldly organization" during the 1970s.

the State of California launched an attack on God's Church.

The deputy attorney general of the state, a court-appointed receiver and a cadre of other people showed up at the executive offices of the Hall of Administration. They said Mr. Armstrong was "no longer in charge," and the receiver was now in control of everything! However, what they really wanted, Church financial records and the mainframe computer, was located across the freeway in the data processing building, where all the Accounting and Finance employees worked. Only the treasurer and his secretary had an office in the Hall of Administration.

The treasurer's secretary managed to call our building. The assistant treasurer showed up at my desk and, without explanation or warning, ordered me to follow him immediately. We went to the building's alternate entrance and then, pointing his finger at me with great authority, he said: "Nobody, and I mean *nobody*, comes through this door without my permission. Got it?!"

We locked down, and we stayed in the building all night. One of our biggest concerns was that we had hundreds of thousands of dollars of third-tithe checks that needed to get out to the widows

that day. Not knowing how long we would be locked down, it was decided that we smuggle them out and get them mailed. After some investigation, one of the thinner male employees was able to escape out the roof through some air conditioning ducts and mail the checks. This was the beginning of the “exploits” of the IMF, the Impossible Missions Force, in the accounting department!

Meanwhile, from Tucson, Mr. Armstrong issued a press release appointing C. Wayne Cole, director of Pastoral Administration, as acting chief executive officer under himself in his absence until the matter of the receiver could be resolved.

The next morning, Thursday, January 4, we still hadn’t left the building. I was in my boss’s office when he received a call from Mr. Cole and was told to open the building, let the receiver in and cooperate fully. Miraculously, while he was on the phone with Mr. Cole, he received a call on the hotline from Tucson. It was the Church treasurer, who said Mr. Armstrong had changed his mind, that Mr. Cole was no longer in charge, and that we were not to cooperate with the receiver’s illegal attempt to take control of the Church. My boss literally had one phone in one ear talking to Mr. Cole and the other phone in the other ear talking to the treasurer. He wondered if the treasurer’s plea was genuine, so he asked to talk to Mr. Armstrong directly. He was told that Mr. Armstrong was not available. He chose (correctly, in retrospect) to trust the treasurer, and the building remained on lockdown.

That afternoon, the Church attorneys were in court. Control of the Church and its assets was legally restored back to the Church (although Mr. Armstrong never relinquished it). Also, the receiver was given no right to hire or fire employees or interfere with regular operations. However, he was authorized to stay to ensure that the records would be audited (which Mr. Armstrong would have

agreed to anyway, under legal proceedings). We got to go home that afternoon.

Friday morning, January 5, at 9 a.m., all employees were called to a meeting in the auditorium. We were about to find out what was going on. Mr. Armstrong explained it in an affidavit dated January 5: “On the morning of Jan. 4, 1979, in conversation between myself and [Church treasurer Stanley] Rader, I learned that Mr. Cole had not fully presented all the facts to me. I learned, for example, that far from a situation involving a mere investigation by the state attorney general’s office, a court-appointed receiver was in fact attempting to come in and administer all functions, both spiritual and temporal, of the Church.

“Indeed, I learned that the ... receiver himself had appointed Mr. Cole to replace me as spiritual and temporal leader of the Church. Mr. Cole’s acquiescence and cooperation in this attempt, and his purporting to act as the Church’s spiritual and temporal leader, was rank insubordination ...

“I will not submit to the government’s administering of the government of God’s Church and Work. Therefore, as the appointed apostle of Jesus Christ, I commanded Messrs. Raymond McNair, Roderick Meredith, Ellis LaRavia, Ralph Helge and Stanley R. Rader, in Christ’s name, to do everything possible to protect the Church’s operations under me ...”

At the all-employee meeting in the auditorium, most of these men spoke to the employees and set things straight. However, even though Mr. Cole had been relieved of his post, he and his supporters showed up. There was some shouting and verbal confrontation by his supporters at the beginning of the meeting, and Mr. Cole tried to commandeer the microphone at the end of the meeting, but the team Mr. Armstrong appointed prevailed.

Meanwhile, back at the data processing building, it was discovered that there was an attempt to

take over the mainframe computer the night before, after the lockdown was lifted and employees were given clearance to leave. It was perpetrated by none other than the department head of computer operations! The conspiracy to take over the Church was more widespread than anyone had anticipated. It was believed that they probably wanted to get their hands on the mailing list and send out some sort of letter.

The computer log showed that the department head tried to start up the computer. He had full access and all the necessary clearances. But it failed to boot up. When the computer operator on duty the next day came into work, he had no problem booting up the computer. He told this to me personally, and it was later documented. That was a miracle!

The Church was involved in many court hearings over the next few weeks and months. Some rulings were in our favor, some were not. Mr. Armstrong had been accused of siphoning off funds from the sale of various properties (primarily Church-owned homes occupied by ministers). At the time, I was the property accountant, and I personally knew those allegations were absurd, yet major newspapers and magazines just kept repeating the lies!

In order to vindicate the Church, Mr. Armstrong hired our own auditors: Arthur Andersen, the biggest auditing firm in the world at the time! There were often several auditors at my desk at the same time. Once, I remember counting six who were waiting to talk to me. Mr. Armstrong had actually ordered what is known as a “fraud” audit and said that he wanted the Church to be thoroughly audited—not just to ensure that the financial statements were “fairly presented,” but to search for any irregularities whatsoever!

Meanwhile, the receiver was spending money by the boatload for his salary and those of his staff. So, in a co-worker letter dated Jan. 18, 1979, Mr. Armstrong directed that

all U.S. tithes and offerings be sent to a post office box in Tucson. Also, sometime later, employees received a termination letter stating that we were no longer employed by the Worldwide Church of God! Thankfully, there was another letter underneath that stated a new corporation, *Herbert W. Armstrong*, a corporate sole, “had learned of the termination” and wanted to hire us. These were brilliant moves for a number of reasons. The fact that God led Mr. Armstrong to move to Tucson *just before* the attack proved who was really behind these masterful strategies!

In that January 18 co-worker letter, Mr. Armstrong also explained why God had allowed the state to attack the Church: “But, my dear brethren, let us stop and realize that Christ, the Head of our Church, has allowed this unprecedented monstrous attack by state government and state courts of law to come upon us. God will give us the victory in the end.

“But meanwhile we as God’s called and chosen people need to ask ourselves, why has God allowed it? He tells us all things work together for good to those who love and obey Him. In what way, then, has this very traumatic, monstrous injustice been allowed by our God? Not that He wanted to punish us. Not that He wanted to bring suffering upon us. But because we were drifting into a careless, lukewarm spiritual condition! God has allowed Satan to bring this upon us. First, to wake us up spiritually and bring us back closer to Him, and second, to draw us closer together, and third, to sift out from our midst some of the chaff from the wheat.”

Then, later in that letter, Mr. Armstrong made a prediction that has to be one of the most astounding statements of faith ever made: “But just as, once Job came to realize his sin of self-righteousness and repent of it, God restored to him twice as much as he had before, even so, my brethren—my own children in the Lord—God will restore to us and His Work

Church Growth in the 1980s

	1981	1985	% Increase
Plain Truth Circulation	2.2 million	7.4 million	336%
Good News Circulation	800,000	7 million	875%
Youth Circulation	191,000	2 million	1,047%
Books, Booklets, Reprints	2 million	6 million	300%
Correspondence Course Students	52,000	1 million	1,923%
Letters	2.5 million (U.S.)	10 million (globally)	400%
Telephone Calls	336,000	1 million	298%

**Sources: Herbert W. Armstrong co-worker letters (Jan. 4, 1985 and January 1986)*

double or much more than double, once His purpose, as I stated above, has been accomplished.”

I have to admit that—being an accountant and a young man who didn’t know much of anything spiritually, and who had seen the income stagnate and actually decline (when adjusted for inflation) year after year—that prediction seemed to me like hyperbole.

The operations set up in Tucson to process donations were, of course, top secret. After they had been set up, I was sent there to help process mail and bank deposits. We used different vehicles to go to the bank each day, followed different routes, and did all we could to remain “undercover.” The local brethren knew who we were because we would show up for Sabbath services, but they had no idea where we lived or where the processing center was (in the basement of a home about 20 minutes from where Mr. Armstrong lived). So we were depositing about \$200,000 a day on average, and the funds had been successfully diverted from the receiver!

After all that persecution and betrayal, what do you think happened to the Work?

The 1980s

The Arthur Andersen audit revealed not only that the Church’s finances were in order but that the record keeping was meticulous. The attorney general was forced to drop all charges and dismiss the court case on Oct. 15, 1980.

Furthermore, the California Court of Appeals completely vindicated the Church: “We are of the opinion that the underlying action and its attendant provisional remedy of receivership were from the inception constitutionally infirm and predestined to failure. It follows that the burden of the ill-conceived litigation, including the expense of the receivership and ... fees for procuring that receivership, should not be borne by the prevailing party—the Church.”

After such a dire time in the 1970s, what happened in the 1980s? The Work of God grew in spectacular fashion!

Let’s understand the context of that remarkable prediction Mr. Armstrong made: The income would double or “more than double” once God’s people repented.

The figures I’m about to share with you were extracted from audited financial statements. Note that total income varied from year to year by millions of dollars depending on the size of the college and its tuition income and depending on the number of concerts and their ticket sales revenue (both of these could vary significantly from year to year). I focused on tithes, offerings and bequests only as the true “barometer” of how the income was trending. These figures are only for the United States, as I did not have access to worldwide figures for the entire time frame I was looking at.

In the 1970s, the donation income in the U.S. was flat as a pancake. These were the years when Mr. Armstrong was shut out, Ambassador was way off track, the Systematic Theology Project was under development, the *Plain*

Truth became a newspaper, and the Church borrowed about a million dollars twice a year (in January and July) to tide things over until the holy day offerings kicked in.

The growth in donation income started to slow in the late 1960s, and by 1972, it stopped growing completely at just over \$50 million. By 1978, it was only about a million dollars more, at just over \$51 million. This was a *sharp* contrast to the 30-percent average annual growth the Church had experienced for almost 40 years. Adjusted for inflation, there were exactly seven years of negative growth in the ’70s. That was the context of Mr. Armstrong’s remarkable prediction.

Even though 1979 saw extensive persecution and significant rebellion, the income settled at over \$56 million by the end of the year. The growth had already begun!

The year 1980 brought in \$66 million; 1981 brought more than \$77 million; 1982 brought more than \$86 million; 1983 brought almost \$96 million; 1984 more

than \$110 million; 1985 more than \$124 million; and 1986, the year Mr. Armstrong died, ended at more than \$133 million. (Note again, that this was U.S. donation income only—total income, from all sources, worldwide, climbed to more than \$200 million.)

Compared to the 1970s, the 1980s were nothing short of breathtaking! True to Mr. Armstrong's prediction, God had "more than doubled" the income and in just seven short years! Who would have believed, in the midst of what was going on in 1979, that it would even be possible? God's Elijah did!

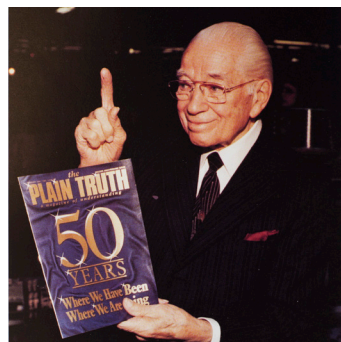
Think about how many people God had to call to make that possible and even how many co-workers God had to influence to support the Work. Co-worker and donor income in the U.S. peaked in 1986 at \$28.5 million. That represented 56 percent of the entire income in 1978. And there were a couple of recessions in the 1980s, meaning that the growth had nothing to do with the general health of the American economy. The only explanation is this: In the 1970s, the Church was off track and Mr. Armstrong was shut out. In the 1980s, God's people had a degree of repentance, the Church was back on track, and God's government with Mr. Armstrong was restored.

Even in the 1980s, there were people who lusted for power and wealth and, as Mr. Armstrong put it, "were waiting like vultures for [him] to die." As the property accountant, I was aware of some things that occurred and even gave a deposition to the Arizona state attorney general's office regarding stolen assets of the Church.

Sometime after Mr. Armstrong relocated to Pasadena, I was asked to take inventory of his home in Tucson; it was part of the divorce proceedings with his second wife. I was surprised to find that every window of his Tucson home had bars on it. Even a small skylight had bars over it. When I asked my boss's boss what that was all about, he said, "They wanted to imprison Mr. Armstrong in his own home."

In spite of all this, Mr. Armstrong pushed on and stayed faithful to the very end, and God blessed the Work! Below is a sample of how the reach of the Work grew in the 1980s.

These are truly remarkable statistics. For example, 10 million



letters worldwide meant that the Church was receiving almost 40,000 letters per working day in 1985. In the accounting office, we were absolutely thrilled at the turnaround and were content to ride this wave of euphoria until the Second Coming of Christ.

But then everything changed. I'll never forget the day my boss came to my office in the early morning to deliver the news. It was Jan. 16, 1986: Mr. Armstrong had died in his home at 5:59 a.m.

The Spiritual Tribulation

After Mr. Armstrong died, the income of the Worldwide Church of God continued to grow for a few years, but at a slower pace: 2 percent over three years, when adjusted for inflation. In 1990, God took away his presence and placed it in the Philadelphia Church of God. The income for the WCG stopped growing completely. Circulation of the *Plain Truth* had peaked at 8,270,000 with the issue that announced Mr. Armstrong's death. Immediately after that, it began to drop, falling to less than 7 million in less than a year.

God has shown Pastor General Gerald Flurry that at the time Mr. Armstrong died, Satan was cast down, the Laodicean era began,

and God's people plunged into the spiritual tribulation!

The new leadership of the Worldwide Church of God began subtly changing the doctrines God had restored through Mr. Armstrong. They even flatly overruled his specific directives. For example, instead of closing the Big Sandy

debating which one to give. One sermon was designed to "rein in" the minister and reassure the brethren that major doctrinal changes were *not* being made. The other sermon would acknowledge that major doctrines *were* indeed changing. He decided on the latter. That was the "infamous"

But just as, once Job came to realize his sin of self-righteousness and repent of it, God restored to him twice as much as he had before, even so ... God will restore to us and His Work double or much more than double, once His purpose, as I stated above, has been accomplished."

—Herbert W. Armstrong

campus, the new administration decided to relocate headquarters to Big Sandy!

The Church was secretly buying up contiguous land in Big Sandy on the other side of Highway 80 through various attorneys to maintain anonymity so local landowners would not raise their selling prices. The published acreage of the campus had gone from 1,600 acres to about 2,400 acres. Extensive plans were drawn up to move headquarters operations, which included space for employee housing. Why go to all this trouble? Apparently it would be easier to obtain accreditation for the college in Texas than in California. This was a classic case of upside-down priorities! The move never materialized.

For one minister in Atlanta, doctrines were not changing fast enough. This minister was causing quite a commotion with the local brethren. Pastor General Joseph Tkach decided to fly to Atlanta to address the situation. The flight operations manager (the husband of the accounting receptionist) told a few of us what happened on that flight to Atlanta, but at the time, what he said was hard to believe.

He said that Mr. Tkach had two sermons prepared and was

sermon where Mr. Tkach said the law was done away, working on the Sabbath was okay, tithing was voluntary, and so on. It was first given in Atlanta on Dec. 17, 1994.

Mr. Tkach delivered the same sermon in Big Sandy the following Sabbath, December 24. In Pasadena, he delivered it on either Dec. 31, 1994 or Jan. 7, 1995. My wife and I were there. Mr. Tkach actually held the Bible over his head, shaking it and saying, "We are no longer under this [burdensome] law!" I don't remember the exact adjective he used, but it was something akin to "burdensome" or "onerous." My wife and I were greatly shaken; we could not understand how God could allow this to happen.

Exactly 40 weeks later—on Sept. 23, 1995—within the hour of walking off the stage in Atlanta after delivering that sermon for the first time, Mr. Tkach died in Pasadena of brain cancer. Forty is God's number for testing and judgment. I do not think that is a coincidence.

Needless to say, the 1990s were a horrible time in the Worldwide Church of God. Sermons were given that churned stomachs and made people physically sick. Our son whispered to me during a sermon:

Nine lessons to learn from our astonishing Church history

1. The college exists to support God's Work.

The 1970s leadership under Mr. Armstrong lost sight of this and pursued accreditation to the point of splitting the college away from the Church! Satan used the college to destroy the Work. After Mr. Armstrong died, this pattern repeated in the 1990s. One alleged reason for moving headquarters to Big Sandy was to earn accreditation for the college, as if *that* were the all-important goal! But God accredits His college, and it exists solely to support the Work.

2. Cutting off God's apostle also cuts off the Head of the Church.

This happened in the 1970s, when Mr. Armstrong spent as much as 300 days per year traveling around the world and preaching the gospel to world leaders. Church leaders were not informing him or consulting him the way he needed and wanted to be. He stated that in his June 8, 1979, co-worker letter, which also stated that even leading ministers were personally threatened with firings if they informed Mr. Armstrong about what was happening in the Church. "When my son shut me off," Mr. Armstrong wrote, "he shut off all authority above him—and that means the living Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, and God the Father were simply left out of all consideration." As a result, growth ceased, the message struggled and the blessings dried up, while just the opposite was happening during Mr. Armstrong's trips around the world. As Moses's example (Numbers 16 and 20) and Zadok's example show us, even



ABOVE Ambassador Auditorium, symbol of Philadelphia and Laodicean eras.

though God's leaders make mistakes, God places great importance on their offices. Cut them off, and you cut God off.

3. The media often repeat lies.

When the State of California attacked the Church, I couldn't believe what I was reading in the newspapers and magazines. One allegation I heard claimed that Mr. Armstrong was selling property below market value and then siphoning off the funds. I was the property accountant at the time; I knew that claim was ludicrous! Satan is the *father* of all liars (John 8:44), and he has the media under his control. In the near future, we too will be persecuted by the media. Realize that you simply cannot believe or trust everything you read in the newspapers or watch on television just because it's in the news!

4. Persecution often advances God's Work.

What happened to God's Church in the 1980s after it was attacked? It experienced exactly what Mr. Armstrong said would happen. The

people repented, they grew closer to God and each other, the chaff was sifted out of the wheat, and the growth was nothing short of spectacular! (Read Acts 11:19-21.) This happened in the first century, and it happened in the 20th century. We can count on it happening again.

We should not fear

persecution, because it will advance God's Work and hasten Christ's return!

5. Be grounded in what God teaches.

The treasurer's office was located on the top floor of the Hall of Administration, in the executive wing, very close to the pastor general's office. During the time Mr. Tkach was changing the doctrines of God's Church, the treasurer told me something that I found shocking. He said (paraphrasing): "It's [two individuals]. They take these theology classes at Azusa Pacific University and confront Mr. Tkach with stuff, and he can't defend the truth!" 2 Timothy 2:15 applies to us more than ever. We need to be grounded in the truth to be able to endure the persecution that is coming. That requires diligent Bible study and daily prayer.

6. Lean not to your own understanding!

This is a lesson I have had to learn the hard way, after moving my family six times during 11 gut-wrenching years while *struggling* to find the true Church in the spiritual tribulation. And all of

"That's not right, is it, Daddy?" This was a gut-wrenching experience.

We were determined to "stay" in the Church because that's what we thought Mr. Armstrong had admonished us to do. (At the time, we did not understand the difference between the corporate entity and the spiritual organism that is, in fact, the Church.) I had reasoned that just as Israel had good kings and bad kings, so now we had a period of bad "kings" in the Church and we just needed to wait for God to set things right with a good king.

Meanwhile, income in the

1990s was crashing like a free-falling safe. In seven short years (1990 to 1996 inclusive), the donation income in the U.S. alone dropped more than \$100 million! You could not destroy a *Work on purpose* any faster than that. I did not understand at the time that this *was* being done on purpose!

We finally determined that we needed to leave. We attended various Church-of-God breakaways. Each time we moved, either my wife or I or both of us were hired, but we could never "settle" very long because we saw the inner workings of these groups. Each time, it

became obvious that God was not backing the leader in any of them.

One group actually started while most of its ministry was still employed in the WCG. This group had bank accounts, congregations and even at least one Feast site spring up "overnight." In reality, these had all been planned and built while the group's leaders were on the WCG payroll. Scores of ministers turned in resignation letters in April 1995 on the *pretext* that each of them was acting independently and could no longer stay in the WCG. It was carefully planned and executed. According to the man

who was instrumental in setting it all up, they didn't miss a paycheck.

In another group, a "leading evangelist" was telling would-be followers of his organization whatever they wanted to hear about its government structure: If they preferred "one-man" rule, it was one-man rule; if they preferred collegial, it was collegial. This controversy over government is basically what led that particular group to later split.

After this group split, I was employed as its chief financial officer. Reports came to me that there was gross financial malfeasance

this because I was always trying to “figure out” what God was doing instead of relying on Him and His Word to simply show me. (Read Proverbs 3:5-6.) This is an important lesson to learn in facing the unknown. We don’t know how God is going to work out the details—not yet, anyway. We don’t know exactly what we will face in the near future, so we have to learn to *live* by these verses and walk by faith!

7. God’s Work is always a work of faith.

Contrast how God raised up His Church using Mr. Armstrong with how men started their own churches after Mr. Armstrong died. Those men used their own human reasoning, trusted in their own ways, and obtained their own security first, instead of simply stepping out in faith and trusting God! The only man, and only church, that followed that pattern after Mr. Armstrong died was Mr. Flurry and the PCG. (Read Zechariah 4:6-7.) God did that for Mr. Armstrong, and no matter what we have to face in the turbulent and tumultuous months ahead, that powerful Headstone, Jesus Christ, will level mountains for us too!

8. Beware of vanity and entitlement.

When we survey the ruins of the Worldwide Church of God, all these years later it is still hard to believe the vast destruction and devastation that Satan wrought in that church, especially in the ministry. Never underestimate what Satan can do and what he *could* do to you and to me if we allow it. Mr. Armstrong taught that Satan has a government and a law, and that law is vanity. Vanity includes much more than just pride; it includes being self-centered, self-reliant, leaning to your own understanding, self-righteousness,

and self-exaltation in many forms. Vanity is the *opposite* of God’s love. God’s law is a law of love. Satan’s law is a law of vanity.

As I worked for many years with Church finances, one thing I observed repeatedly in the Laodicean ministry was that they always focused on entitlement and selfish gain instead of sacrificing for the Work! That can happen to any of us if we do not guard against it. One WCG minister submitted mileage reimbursement forms every single time he got into his car for a “business trip,” even if it was across the freeway (a quarter-mile) or to the upper campus (a third of a mile). WCG ministers completely remodeled their Church-owned homes solely because they (or their wives) did not like the décor and colors that the previous tenants preferred. These remodels cost the Church in excess of \$100,000 each. One minister tried to hide the costs as “maintenance.” Others insisted that the fine art paintings in these Church-owned homes were personally given to them by Mr. Armstrong, yet that was never communicated to accounting until after Mr. Armstrong died. Another minister submitted a reimbursement request for \$400 for alcohol purchased during the Feast in Mexico, supposedly as a business expense. Another who now leads a group that has supposedly restored all things that Mr. Armstrong taught submitted phone bills for reimbursement exceeding \$1,000 per month until I discovered that most of the calls were for personal reasons (business advice for a store he inherited).

Nehemiah didn’t have that kind of attitude. (Read Nehemiah 5:14-16 in the Revised Standard Version.) We are here to do God’s Work and to support God’s man, not focus on ourselves. God takes care of that part. But we do need to be fully

aware of Satan’s devices. With the ministry especially, Satan was able to exploit the vanity that is in all of us. If we do not always guard against it, we too can begin to feel entitled, but the only thing we are really “entitled” to is eternal death (Romans 6:23). Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Flurry have often given us the solutions to this problem of vanity and sense of entitlement: Put our hearts into the Work like Nehemiah did; that is why we are called. Mr. Flurry has often said that “we need to stay humble” and “we need to get ourselves out of the way.” That is profound. It was best exemplified by Jesus Christ’s attitude (e.g. Luke 22:42).

9. Never underestimate Satan’s power.

God warns in Ezekiel 34:2 that ministers are not supposed to focus on feeding themselves but on feeding the flock, the exact opposite of where most of the Laodicean ministers ended up. Now if Satan could do that to the Laodicean ministry, couldn’t he do that to anybody who isn’t continually on guard? In the end, Satan had the power to strike the Laodicean ministers and brethren, and they did not heed these lessons. We, however, *will* be shielded and protected from Satan’s attacks if we really apply the admonitions from God’s apostles. We must put our *hearts* into the Work, not ourselves; get ourselves out of the way; stay humble; and support God’s anointed. It takes the mind of God to do all of that with a pure heart, and it takes a lot of Bible study, prayer and occasional fasting. We are going to face tumultuous and turbulent times ahead that will not always work out the way we anticipate. We need to remember and *learn* from the lessons of our history, so we don’t end up making the same mistakes that the Laodiceans did. ■

occurring with the regional director of Canada. I was dispatched to check it out. After conducting an audit, I reported to my boss (the “leading evangelist” of that organization) that the allegations were true and that the regional director should be immediately fired. I’ll never forget my boss’s response. He looked me in the eye and said, “[He] was the first minister to follow me in Canada, and if we let him go, we’ll lose a lot of brethren.” Only after many months was the regional director slowly eased out: first demoted, and then completely replaced,

before he was finally let go. It was handled this way, evidently, to mitigate member losses.

My wife and I had been avoiding the PCG because of all the rumors, but the court case weighed heavily on our minds. *That Church had actually printed Mr. Armstrong’s books and then fought for them in court*, we thought. That and the other fruits of the PCG were hard for us to ignore. So, in spite of the rumors swirling around the PCG in these other groups, after prayer and reflection, we finally started to go in the right direction!

My boss (the “leading

evangelist”) could tell that I was about to bolt. As he tried to persuade me to stay, my eyes were opened all the more. Over a period of two weeks, and after several very long discussions, things came out that shocked me. He talked about all the “mistakes” (in his view) that Mr. Armstrong had made that caused the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God. He said that he had warned Mr. Armstrong of each and every one of those “mistakes.” So in his mind, Mr. Armstrong couldn’t possibly be the end-time Elijah.

Even after I showed him how

God greatly blessed the Work in the 1980s, he stated that the telecasts Mr. Armstrong made during that time, when he used his magnifying glass to read the Bible, were “terrible!” And when Mr. Armstrong wrote *Mystery of the Ages*, well it included “four to six major doctrinal errors.” Furthermore, according to him, Mr. Armstrong walked around in “a daze” at the end of his life and was undoubtedly “senile.”

This history teaches us lessons of what can happen inside God’s own Church, and what we must prepare for in the years and days ahead. ■



AA hosts jazz group

BY CALELA BROOKS

EDMOND—Three hundred eighty-six concertgoers watched the Turtle Island Quartet at Armstrong Auditorium on December 1. The Grammy-award winning quartet is known for mixing the traditional string quartet form with the American music styles of jazz and blues, defining the genre of chamber jazz. The quartet's program, "A Love Supreme," paid homage to jazz musician and composer John Coltrane with unique arrangements of his work, as well as the group's own compositions.

'Voice Meets Cello' at Armstrong Auditorium

BY CALELA BROOKS

EDMOND—Cellist Tess Remy-Schumacher and soprano Paula Malone brought 272 concertgoers to their feet at their November 10 concert "Voice Meets Cello," in the second concert of the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation's 18th concert series. The event was also streamed live on live.pcog.org.

Schumacher, a professor for cello at the University of Central Oklahoma, has performed solo concerts at Wigmore Hall in London, Jubilee Hall in Singapore and Carnegie Recital Hall in New York and elsewhere.

Mrs. Malone is a voice instructor at Herbert W. Armstrong College. She has played many title roles, including Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Christine in Yeston's *Phantom*, as well as roles in musicals written by her husband, Ryan Malone, and produced by the foundation.

The two artists were assisted on piano by Mr. Malone, who is also

the foundation concert manager.

The first half opened with an arrangement of Bach's classic Prelude from Cello Suite in G—with a twist. Oklahoma-based composer Samuel Magrill added Hebrew text to a soaring soprano melody over the deep timber of the cello.

Continuing with the Bach theme, Malone sang three secular cantata arias, assisted by UCO associate professor of flute Emily Butterfield. One of the arias, "Ei! Wie schmeckt der Kaffee süsse (Ah! How Sweet Coffee Tastes!)" produced laughs from the audience as Mrs. Malone paused her singing to take a sip from her mug.

The next set featured a collection of art songs (poetry set to music) for soprano, cello and piano in French, German, Italian and English.

The third set featured two operatic favorites, including the "Flower Duet" from *Lakmé* and "Poor Wandering One" from *Pirates of Penzance*. The first song, usually sung by two women, was arranged to give the lower melody to the cello.

Schumacher and Mrs. Malone spiced up the second half with

three songs from Latin composers. The final song in this set, "Aria (Cantilena)" from Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*, was originally scored for soprano and eight cello, but Mrs. Malone sang the complex vocalise (melody without words) rhythms accompanied by Schumacher and Mr. Malone on the Steinway.

The last set featured an arrangement of Richard Strauss's famous "Vier letzte Lieder (Four

Last Songs)," with Schumacher, Mr. and Mrs. Malone and uco violin professor Hong Zhu. As the last chord faded away, the audience stood and applauded.

Schumacher and both Malones stayed on stage for an encore. They performed "The Way of a Man With a Maid" from Armstrong's upcoming musical production *The Widow's Might*, which opens on December 29 at Armstrong Auditorium. ■

Imperial Academy, Armstrong College hold fall semester recitals

BY GRANT TURGEON

EDMOND—The music students of Imperial Academy and Herbert W. Armstrong College performed in their fall semester recitals on November 17 and December 8 at Armstrong Auditorium. The first recital displayed the talents of 31 kindergarten-through-eighth-grade soloists as they danced ballet and played the piano, violin, viola, cello, clarinet, harp and guitar. The evening also included several group performances from the beginning-level students of the Maguire Academy of Irish Dance, the beginning winds class, the third-grade recorder students and the Armstrong Youth Orchestra. Seven Imperial Academy high schoolers combined with 12 college students for the second recital, which included solo acts on the piano, cello, violin, bassoon, flute, clarinet and guitar, and a song from a solitary soprano.

Fields of diamonds

How Brisbane member Alex Bell discovered real treasure

BY BRIAN SHERWOOD

AUSTRALIA—As George and Violet Bell looked out over 650 acres of wheat fields and sheep and cattle pasture in Narrabri, New South Wales, in 1927, they likely wondered what the future would bring for their newborn baby, Alex.

Alex grew up on the farm, helping Dad milk the cows by hand and blocking calves from trying to sneak in for a drink. He traveled to school in the horse and sulky and spent hours on the farm's open spaces.

Alex left home four years later at age 18 and got a job as a process worker at an engineering firm in Sydney. The great coal strike of 1949 forced the firm to close, around the same time he was suffering a bad bout of homesickness.

"When I lived on the farm, sowing the wheat seed, watching it grow, the seedlings breaking through the soil, early morning dew glistening on the top of them, it looked like a field of diamonds," he says. It was time to return to the farm.

His father allowed Alex and his younger brother Peter to work the wheat side of the farm business. The venture struggled. The 3,000-pound debt to his father blew up to 25,000 pounds. Bell looks back on this and believes that it was the time when God began to work in his life.

"I thought that I was going to be this big, important man, buying a Twin Piper Comanche plane, flying to the Melbourne Cup horse race, but it all came to nothing," he says. "God was helping me to see that too much of my focus was on the way of get."

The Turning Point

Around 1949, Bell read an ad about the spreading threat of communism that had been posted by a Christian group in the local Narrabri paper. He attended the group's event, and he remembers the minister saying that Christ said He would build His Church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. After that night, Bell says, "I became very interested in religion and deeply anti-Communist!"

Meanwhile, he continued his work, which by this time was doing contract plowing for an American cotton farming company. The company could now sow all the land that had been plowed, so it gave Bell 1,000 acres to plant himself. This is where several miracles would occur.

But first, Bell experienced his initial contact with Herbert W. Armstrong through the *Plain Truth* magazine, shared with him by a friend. He was immediately interested, and traveled to the Church's regional office in Sydney to ask to speak to a minister. The minister emerged from his office, answered many of Bell's questions on the spot, and invited him to attend services.

After less than two years of attending with the Worldwide Church of God, it was time to go to the 1964 Feast of Tabernacles. At harvest time, God blessed Bell with a bumper wheat crop, providing almost 50,000 pounds in income. For the first time in many years, Bell was able to pay back the money he owed to his father.

The year 1967 was momentous. Bell was baptized, his brother died, and he moved to Newcastle. During this time, he attended Spokesman Club, graduating in 1971. After moving to Western Australia and back, he ultimately bought out his father and returned to the family farm in Narrabri.

Special Jewels

"I was a dyed-in-the-wool bachelor, almost 50 years old when I met Gerda Woythe," Bell says. "Initially Gerda did not want to marry, but I put one of the seven laws of success to use: perseverance!" After counseling, the two were married Dec. 18, 1977.

Bell clearly remembers the 1970s as a deeply difficult time for the Church with many government and doctrinal issues. When God used Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong to put the Church back on track from 1979, Bell says, "We felt at home again, safe, he really was a type of father to us at that time."

Bell remembers "Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of

a letter arrived from a Philadelphia Church of God minister informing the Bells about *Malachi's Message*, they were ready to read it.

Spiritual Treasure

After all the pain and problems that followed the death of Mr. Armstrong, coming into the PCG was "a wonderful moment in our lives," Bell says. He and his wife kept their first Feast in the PCG in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1991, meeting Pastor General Gerald Flurry and his son, Stephen. "We felt on safe ground, from the revelation that God was giving Mr. Flurry, and the fact that we were being fed and spiritually nourished again."

"All those years ago, when I



ABOVE Member Alex Bell currently attends the Brisbane congregation.

the Worldwide Church of God," a *Worldwide News* article that came out a few months prior to Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986. In it, Mr. Armstrong warned Church members, "[T]hink about and understand what happened to God's church in the 1970s, lest history repeat itself! I want you to see the fruits of rebelling against God's way and God's government." After Mr. Armstrong died, the Bells took notice of any doctrinal changes coming out of Pasadena.

It didn't take long: Changes came regarding cosmetics, the born again doctrine, healing, "fun with prophecy" and many other teachings. By 1990 or 1991, when

first heard this minister say that Christ would build His Church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against, even though this man did not understand those words, it really came to life for us, and to see how God fulfilled that prophecy right before our eyes is deeply moving," Bell says. "The last 25 years have been a wonderful experience. The knowledge we got from Mr. Armstrong gave us the spiritual base, the foundation, and the revelation that God has given Mr. Flurry has been incredible and built upon that foundation. We love the way that Mr. Flurry has remained so loyal to the truth of God."

Mr. and Mrs. Alex Bell continue to attend services every week with the congregation in Brisbane. ■



Fun fundraising ideas for 2017

Bond as a family—a profitable one!

BY CALELA BROOKS

ISTOCK



Want to work and grow with your congregation, and share more than a few laughs? Oh, and raise money for your congregation or for the work at headquarters? These concepts for raising funds might spark some great ideas that you can suggest with your minister for 2017. Whichever fundraising idea grabs your attention, make sure to research the idea and organize extra-thoroughly. Also ensure that every man, woman and child has a role in your teambuilding event. Pay special attention to any potential business licensing requirements, food handling restrictions or liability insurance that might affect your fundraiser. Your minister will be able to decide these issues with the help of your regional director and headquarters. And remember, the main goal isn't just to raise money; it is also to spend time and work together, getting to know your PCG family better. Do you have a fundraising idea or tips you've learned from your own experience? Need more ideas or tips? E-mail news@pcog.org, and we will be happy to see if we can help.

1. HAVE A BAKE SALE

Tie on your aprons and fire up your ovens for a bake sale! Ask for volunteers in your congregation to make cookies, brownies, cake, etc. You can set up shop in a variety of places from retail stores to outdoor festivals to school sporting events (just ask permission first!)

✓ **PROS:** Low cost

✗ **CONS:** Dependent on weather. Business licenses, food sales restrictions, and/or food handling courses may be required.

💡 **TIPS:** Include the children. Consider offering drinks for customers to wash down the treats. Put out a jar for tips or donations. Track your ingredients costs when calculating your profit.

2. CUT FIREWOOD

Timmberrr! Take advantage of the winter season and fallen trees by asking qualified volunteers to chop firewood to season and sell. The best firewood has been seasoned (chopped and dried) for about six months.

✓ **PROS:** Team-building, high profit

✗ **CONS:** Only experienced men can handle equipment. Considerable research and ongoing attention must be devoted to ensure safety. Only useful in colder climates. Few congregations have the necessary experience.

💡 **TIPS:** Do not attempt without men who have experience and a healthy fear of blades, saws, splitters and falling wood. You must keep everyone else well away from the tree felling and wood cutting areas.

3. DISTRIBUTE PHONE BOOKS

Pile some phone books in the back of a pickup truck or van (or two) and earn money by delivering them. Production Development Corp. allows for the distribution process to be completed by either individuals or a community group. All that's required is a valid driver's license (for those driving), proof of insurance for your registered vehicle and a simple seminar on company procedures.

✓ **PROS:** Short time frame, doesn't require selling, active

✗ **CONS:** Must be completed within a specific time frame

💡 **TIPS:** The more volunteers you can gather, the more money you can earn, so get everyone involved! Consider borrowing a trailer and/or dollies. Stay hydrated.

4. HOLD A YARD SALE

Gather up some of your congregation's unwanted items and sell them! Pick a yard, garage, flea market or parking lot that is visible to traffic. Volunteers can help with donations, pricing and hosting. Prepare beforehand by sorting and pricing everything. Recruit teenage boys and single men from your congregation to help move furniture and boxes.

- ✓ **PROS:** Low cost, clears clutter
- ✗ **CONS:** Weather-dependent, lots of labor required (not necessarily a con!)
- 💡 **TIPS:** Check local classifieds like Craigslist.org for free items to resell. Ensure your location has convenient and safe parking. Help the children set up a lemonade stand nearby. (Check if local restrictions apply.) Consider a mobile swiper and integrated app for secure credit card payment processing. Advertise in classifieds, online (Craigslist) and with plenty of signs. Retrieve your signs after the sale. Consider selling leftover items on Craigslist or Ebay or donating them to local charities like Goodwill.

5. WASH CARS

Grab some soap and sponges and scrub until those cars shine like new! Get permission to use the parking lot of a store or gas station visible to traffic to host the event and ask for congregational volunteers to advertise, collect funds, wash, rinse, dry and repeat.

- ✓ **PROS:** Easier to plan
- ✗ **CONS:** Dependent on weather
- 💡 **TIPS:** Organize volunteers into teams: Promotion, Sales, Washing. Sell refreshments if allowed.



And don't forget your camera!

Bring your camera or cameraphone along and be sure to get some snapshots of your fundraiser.

6. SELL FRUITS/TREATS

Meet a lot of strangers, sell a lot of fruit, make a lot of money! Coordinate with a distribution company that sells organic fruits or other treats. Offer them to neighbors, friends or coworkers, or try selling door-to-door.

- ✓ **PROS:** Short-term, big return
- ✗ **CONS:** Many volunteers needed
- 💡 **TIPS:** Sell fruit door-to-door and consider posting signs. Provide free home delivery (factor in cost of fuel when calculating your costs and profits).

7. SELL FLOWERS

Make flower arrangements and bouquets to sell at street corners or in parking lots to celebrate Mother's Day.

- ✓ **PROS:** Profitable, brief, simple, everyone can participate
- ✗ **CONS:** Dependent on weather, timing is crucial
- 💡 **TIPS:** Buy flowers wholesale online, or if you know someone with access to the wholesale flower market, ask them for help. Try preselling and delivering flowers. Make the arrangements the night before to preserve freshness. Ensure that your sales locations are visible to foot or street traffic, but safe and out of the way.

8. HOST A 5K RUN/WALK

Organize a 5K walk/run open to all ages of the public. Pick the size and location of the event, set a date and work with local officials for a fun run. In addition to advertising for participants (who pay a small fee), ask for sponsors to help raise more money. This fundraiser would likely require First-Aid staff and liability insurance plans.

- ✓ **PROS:** Low cost, high turnout, encourages active lifestyle
- ✗ **CONS:** Requires considerable planning, manpower and know-how
- 💡 **TIPS:** See if you can incorporate a fun theme (like a color run) or get permission to host the run at a national or state park. Just don't pick a location too big for you to manage, and know exactly what is required and expected as the event organizer.

9. SELL CONCESSIONS

Go team, go! Work with your city's local sports team or entertainment venue and sell hotdogs and drinks at a concessions stand.

- ✓ **PROS:** Well-organized, good return, licensing, insurance, taxes, etc. taken care of by others.
- ✗ **CONS:** Long hours, fixed dates
- 💡 **TIPS:** Take turns! Schedule different volunteers for each game to spread the workload. Make a good impression on the concessions manager and on your customers by keeping the Philadelphian standard.

Firewood for the Work

The story of a 14-year fundraiser fueled by a band of men in their 60s and up.

NEW ZEALAND—Earlier this year, I sat down at Mr. and Mrs. Roy Watson's dining room table, cup of tea in hand. We were reminiscing about their congregation's fundraising activity that had continued for the last 14 years: cutting and selling firewood to support the Work.

It was a poignant time to reflect. Mr. Watson had told me he thought it was time to "hang up the chain-

By Colin Hercus

Local Elder, New Zealand

saw" on this fundraising activity. At the age of 87, you couldn't blame him; cutting firewood is tough work even for a young man. For a few years, I had been suggesting to him that he slow down. I was conscious that he wasn't getting any younger and that his bad knee and pronounced limp were getting worse.

But he wouldn't have it. "We are here to do the Work," he would reply, quietly setting himself the goal of exceeding the previous year's fundraising effort, which we just about always did. I couldn't disagree with an attitude like that.

In the last 14 years, there has been an extraordinary fundraising effort by the Watsons and the congregation in Hamilton, New Zealand. They have felled, trimmed, cut, split, carted, stacked, delivered and sold an estimated 100,000 cubic feet of firewood. All of this was produced by a congregation of only 30 brethren, consisting mainly of young families and senior citizens, which was by now half the size of what it was when we started the fundraiser back in 2002. It is a story worth telling.

A meeting was held in 2002 to discuss fundraising options for the congregation. One idea was cutting firewood, using Mr. Watson's small farm as a base. But we did not know



ABOVE Roy Watson, 87, with a pile of the New Zealand congregation's handiwork.

how or where to source the wood. Two days later, Mr. Watson's neighbor, who owned a large orchard, asked his advice on removing a row of large, overgrown trees. The fact that this was a blessing from God was obvious. Mr. Watson replied, "I think I can help you there."

Not only did the congregation get a free source of wood right next to Mr. Watson's farm, but the orchard owner also gave our group a check for \$1,000 for our work.

For several years, the orchard owner provided the men of the congregation with hundreds of free trees and was grateful for our help.

God continued to grant us favor with the local community, and the owners of several other properties gave us hundreds of additional trees.

"The local community really noticed our work and were only too willing to help," Mr. Watson said.

In addition, the Watsons' neighbor gave us the free use of a tip truck for carting wood and a four-wheel drive tractor for pulling over large trees.

The congregation changed over those 14 years, and so did the fundraiser. In the early years, the congregation was predominately families; our firewood days were truly a

family effort. A job was ready and waiting for anyone who wanted it. The men would be tree felling, chain sawing, log splitting and driving tractors and trucks. Women, teens and children would toss the split wood onto the trucks and stack it in the Watsons' large barn. Senior ladies would prepare lunch for the ravenous appetites that came in after a hard morning's work.

"Some of my best memories of the time spent with our congregation in New Zealand were the firewood fundraisers," said Christopher Eames, who was a teenager at the time. "In many ways, it really helped to bring the congregation closer together in a common purpose, young and old alike."

The congregation got smaller as some families relocated to Australia and Britain. But this wasn't a cue to slow down, and a small band of men in their 60s, 70s and 80s, led by Mr. Watson and his trusty assistant, Malcolm McGregor (himself in his 70s), carried on, cutting wood once or twice a week during the summer to make up for the drop in numbers.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to financially support God's Work when, as a senior, you are on a limited budget," Mr. McGregor said, adding, "I miss firewood a lot, as it provided additional fellowship opportunities and deepened the bond amongst the men"

By the end of each summer, the Watsons' barn was full to overflowing with dry split firewood. But it still had to be sold. This job fell to the ever-dependable Mr. and Mrs. Watson. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers, and a regular clientele was built up over time. Mrs. Watson took firewood orders over the phone; Mr. Watson delivered the wood or helped customers fill their trailers.

"They really have been used by God to do a fantastic service, far beyond the age and strength of people much younger than them," Eames said, adding that "the funds raised helped myself and fellow teens to youth camps in Australia. All of it was really appreciated."

God blessed this activity in so many ways. I distinctly recall one incident when several large pine trees were offered to us on a nearby property. They were very difficult to fell and extract safely, due to their size and location. Our group of volunteers didn't have the skills or equipment to do the job. Upon inspecting the trees, I told Mr. Watson we would have to decline, which he dutifully did. Several weeks later, Mr. Watson got a call from the owner. He had hired a contractor to fell and extract the trees, and now he wanted to give us the wood!

These days and years of sawing, cutting, splitting, stacking, sweating, working, talking and laughing raised an estimated \$120,000 for the Church. But this was more than a profitable fundraiser. It was an opportunity for our small congregation to let its light shine and to be a witness to the local community as we worked hard together in unity. But most importantly it helped unify God's Family through the simple act of cutting firewood together and achieving a common goal for God's Work. ■



Chicagoans picnic

BY JAMES STEWART

ILLINOIS—More than 50 members of the Chicago congregation gathered at Wood Dale Grove Park on July 31 for their annual summer picnic. After a barbecue, many participated in games, including a three-legged race, relays, volleyball, bingo and walks around the lake. ■



Minnesotans picnic

BY DEADRA TAYLOR

MINNESOTA—After a week of hot, stormy days, Minnesota members gathered on a calm, sunny day on

August 14 for a picnic in St. Paul. Squirrels scampered, birds sang, and butterflies flew near the picnic pavilion. Members played board games, bocce ball and mini golf, rode carnival rides, and toured the nearby public zoo and botanical gardens. ■



Kansas City members picnic, paint together

BY MARK ARNFIELD

MISSOURI—Members of the Kansas City congregation got together for back-to-back social opportunities on two Sundays in July. Twenty-five members from the congregation picnicked together on July 10 at Quivira Park in Overland Park, Kansas. After a grilled lunch, some members played sand volleyball, walked together along a 45-minute hike along the nearby Indian Creek Trail and participated in a singalong.

“The singalong expanded our comfort zone,” member Cody Murphy said. “If you can sing together as a group, you can do almost anything together.”

The following week brought another opportunity to get together, this time for a work party. Seventeen members reassembled for a house-painting fundraiser on July 17 at the home of member Laura Harvey. Despite the 95-degree heat, the atmosphere throughout the day was positive, as members worked together to repaint the exterior of the house. Everyone from young to old pitched in, and those who were unable to paint made lunch or brought cold bottles of water to the volunteers.

Due to the volunteer effort, a total of \$750 was donated to the local congregational activity fund. ■

ABOVE Member Cole March reaches out and makes sure not to miss a spot while painting window trim at a fundraiser.

North Dakota, Kansas members connect for Club



BY MICHAEL OAKLEAF

NORTH DAKOTA—Seventeen members of the North Dakota Spokesman Club, along with their guests, met on June 26 in Washburn for a ladies gala. Meanwhile, over 800 miles away, 18 other spokesmen joined in via conference call at the Hereford House restaurant in Wichita, Kansas.

Although the Kansas club could only receive audio from North Dakota, spokesmen were still able to present tabletop topics. Kansas member Adam Garcia got nearly all of the guests on their feet with questions from “What is one word you would use to describe life without cell phones?” to “How will you remember the day that Brexit occurred?”

Three of the speeches came from the North Dakota club. In Kansas, member John Ellis delivered a speech on the “Art of the Handshake,” and Kansas club president Roy Heath informed the clubs about Joseph Gayety, the inventor of toilet paper.

In his lecture, visiting Local Elder John Krueger spoke about the course that the spokesmen sail and how to more effectively chart that course. He was then presented with a miniature sword letter opener to commemorate the theme of the club: The Fighting Sons of Zadok.

“Even though we had some technical difficulties up front, we overcame to have a great time together as family members,” Heath said. “Everyone truly enjoyed the day.” ■

Florida members head to the lake for family picnic

BY JIM KUPIEC

FLORIDA—About 60 members from the Central and South Florida congregations combined for a family picnic on August 7 at Lake Eva Park in Haines City.

Members and their children spent time at a large playground, a small beach alongside the pristine lake, and an enclosed dining area with

a kitchen where they could converse. Central Florida member Jerry Pattillo remarked that the park was one of the best in the area for family picnics.

Ominous weather loomed to the west of the park, and considerable rain was in the forecast. Despite the gloomy outlook, members gathered mid-morning for meal preparation, fellowship and playground activities.

Except for a few brief showers, all severe forecasted weather circled around the city, providing what members said was a miraculously

pleasant day to enjoy fellowship. Central Florida member Mark Smith organized several afternoon activities including bocce ball, tug-o-war, sack races and a water balloon contest, promoting teamwork and producing plenty of laughter.

“It was great to have good family fellowship. ... [Y]ou can see God’s joy radiating from one to another,” South Florida member Zachary Yocum said. “We are already looking forward to the next opportunity to spend quality time together.” ■



Sydney teens ski

BY ALEXANDER BARRETT

AUSTRALIA—Thirteen teens from the Sydney congregation boarded a caravan at the Hercus residence near Sydney on July 10 and headed to the Selwyn Snowfields in the Kosciusko National Park.

During the night, rain poured down and threatened to wash away the snow, so prayers were offered up for suitable skiing conditions. The next morning, the sky was gray, but the rain had cleared. The ski fields were still filled with snow, which many youths had never seen before.

The teens threw a few snowballs, the group skied down to the beginner slopes

and learned a course on how to ski from Local Elder Colin Hercus and member Sandy Richardson.

The three days of skiing were a mixed bag of weather conditions. On July 12, Mr. Hercus confronted the teens with the news that there would be a blizzard coming through later in the day. The good news: fresh snow. The bad news: The winds were forecast to be very strong, accompanied by snow that would make skiing conditions difficult. This didn’t dampen the spirit of the teens. The blizzard was delayed until the evening, and the teens saw God’s hand in the weather as they enjoyed another day in the snow. ■



Filipinos test their cooking skills

BY NESTELENE GALLARDO AND LAARNI CARA

PHILIPPINES—Twenty-four single ladies from Angeles City and Quezon City brought their cooking skills and their cooking utensils to the PCG regional office in El Rancho on August 21 to participate in a new type of event, the first

“Sisters’ Cooking Challenge,” an event that pitted cooks not against each other, but against time.

Each group made Indian, Mexican or Italian cuisine and was required to prepare a complete meal for 10 people within a given budget and time limit.

After 30 minutes of menu planning, the teams had 30 minutes to run to the market.

“The most exciting part for me, as one of my team’s market runners, was the action-packed trip to Pampanga,” single Heidi Rodis said, “budgeting the money, all while beating the traffic and the clock.”

As the clock counted down two hours, ladies laid out pots, pans, bowls and utensils and began a flurry of slicing and dicing while the judges circulated, inspecting each group’s progress.

“Two hours sounds like a lot, but it goes by fast,” member Daryl Tupas said. “It wasn’t actually as easy as I thought.”

At exactly noon, the teams, Cocina del Rancho, Exotica Tika Masala and Cucinare D’Amore, were ready for judging. Local Church Elder Benedict Marquez judged the appetizers and soups, Mr. Tongco judged the entrées, and Kristine Padua, who is a pastry chef, judged desserts.

“I think all the ladies displayed great creativity and resourcefulness with the dishes they came up with, knowing they have limited time and resources,” Mr. Marquez said.

Once judging was complete, everyone sampled the different cuisines. The day’s activity capped off with karaoke. ■

Milton members picnic, play

BY DANIEL DI SANTO

CANADA—About 50 members of the Milton congregation gathered for a family picnic on June 26 at Campbellville Ballpark in Milton.

“The location was very nice and centrally located,” member Susan Wagner said. “It really brought everyone together.”

After a barbecue, players of all ages went out to the softball diamond. Following the singing of the Canadian national anthem and the umpire’s call to “play ball,” the game began. Before the bottom of the fourth inning, the players paused to sing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” After seven innings, the game ended in a 9-9 tie.

Members also played croquet, bocce ball and horseshoes while children played on the playground.

“This year’s family picnic, my first as a



ABOVE Gabrielle Schlote’s pitch arcs toward Tiesto Vidal at the plate.

church member, was a truly enjoyable experience,” said Patrick Bown. “It really emphasized the unity, harmony, cooperation and togetherness in the PCG family.” ■



North Dakota members picnic in the summer sun

BY MICHAEL OAKLEAF

NORTH DAKOTA—Thirty-six members of the Dakota congregations and eight visiting from Oklahoma gathered for their annual picnic on July 24 at a Bismarck park near the state capitol and the Missouri River, playing Frisbee, horseshoes and wacky games or conversing under the shade of towering cottonwood trees.

Deacon Gerry Frederick said, “It was great to be together with brethren and God’s ministry at a beautiful park.” ■



Eastern Canadians enjoy each other's company

BY RONALD HANSON

CANADA—Twenty-three members of the Montreal congregation of the Philadelphia Church of God gathered at the home of Pierre and Lucie Vernier on July 24 for an annual picnic. Members played bocce ball and threw water balloons in the sunshine, which was veiled lightly by passing clouds. Rain only began to fall when the event ended.



Event draws 100 from four states

BY DON JACQUES

OHIO—Around 100 members from Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan gathered for the annual Midwest family picnic on August 14 at Armco Park in Lebanon, Ohio.

The event began with a heavy downpour, which most attendees rode out under the pavilion. Many of the children were unfazed by the rain, however, and took the chance to splash in the surrounding puddles.

“The downpour we started with only brought us closer together and made the day more memorable,”

member Leah Witt said.

Just after the meal began, the clouds parted and gave way to a sunshiny afternoon. Following lunch, the Flory family of the Cincinnati-Dayton, Ohio, congregation kept up their yearly tradition of treating attendees to six flavors of homemade ice cream.

Afterward, Cincinnati-Dayton members Keith and Amy Watts organized a series of children's games, including relay races and a water balloon toss. The children also used the nearby playground and tried their hands at tennis, using rackets and balls furnished by local members. ■

Canadians raise cash for building fund at HQ

BY CHRISTINA DATTOLO

CANADA—About 60 members from the Milton and London, Ontario, congregations gathered at the Dattolo home on August 21 for a annual picnic, auction and games day.

After lunch, Regional Director Fred Dattolo and Local Elder David Weeks auctioned items ranging from an autobiography by Hebert W. Armstrong to artwork. After an hour of good-natured bidding, members played games on the colorfully decorated lawn.

Members split into three teams—Azariah, Meshael and Hananiah—and competed in a water balloon toss, pouring water



ABOVE Regional Director Fred Dattolo hawks a potted plant at a fundraiser in Ontario.

over their heads into a cup their teammates held behind them, fill-the-bucket relays and a contest requiring members to arrange the books of the Bible. Spectators laughed as the teams sang the “Books of the Bible” song to help them recall the order.

“I liked the water balloon toss the best,” member Rachel Dattolo said. “It was funny to try to bounce

a water balloon into a basket someone else held on his head.”

After the games, members went inside to place their bids for the silent auction. As final bids were scribbled down, local ministers and deacons judged the pie contest.

In the non-fruit category, deaconess Elaine Armstrong finished second to Carrie Gauvreau. In the fruit category, member Raquel

Salinas finished second to member MaryAnn McCullough. By the end of the day, the two congregations had raised over \$1,000 for the PCG building fund.

Gabrielle Schlote said, “My favorite part of this activity is being able to fellowship with the brethren in a fun, family-style atmosphere. The picnic and auction is a great time to catch up with family.” ■

Australians attend annual Bornhoffen family camp

BY CORNELIA SMITHIES

AUSTRALIA—Seventy members of the Brisbane congregation arrived at the Bornhoffen campsite in the Numinbah Valley on July 15 for their annual Brisbane family camp.

After Sabbath-morning brunch, Preaching Elder Aaron Hudson gave a teen Bible study based on the books of Chronicles. The number of attendees swelled on Saturday afternoon as many members arrived from Brisbane for Sabbath services. Local Elder Brian Sherwood spoke about not showing partiality. Mr. Hudson spoke about how God uses trials to prepare His people for a future in His Family.

After the Sabbath, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Sherwood judged entries for the annual dessert competition. Member Alayna Wood won the award in the taste category for her strawberry-chocolate lace cake, and the Bullock family won the award for creativity with their hedgehogs-on-a-log cake.

Saturday night was spent playing cards and Boggle, while member

Mark Constantine used his guitar to lead a fireside sing-along.

“Bornhoffen was great for getting to know the brethren on a deeper level,” Wood said. “I think Saturday night, with the games, sing-along and dessert competition, was the highlight for me.”

Sunday morning was dedicated to decorating shields for display at the Scottish Highland Games a few weeks after the camp. Member Colin Morris provided pre-cut shields, stencils and spray paint, and many families researched their family name shields or simply made one up. That afternoon, member Shane Smithies led a bush walk up the mountain behind the Bornhoffen campsite. That night, campers went on an excursion a short distance up the road to the local glow-worm caves at the Natural Arch waterfalls.

Everyone pitched in for Monday morning breakfast and cleanup before heading back to Brisbane.

Member Shery Smedley said, “I enjoyed being together with everyone in a mini-millennium setting with great winter weather.” ■



Florida members fundraise for the Work

BY LESLAW FURMANSKI

FLORIDA—About 20 members of the Florida West and Georgia South congregations volunteered for their second-annual yard sale fundraiser on July 17 in Tallahassee.

Before dawn, the set-up crew erected a canopy tent and tables. Waves of shoppers scoured the sale, buying everything from books to power tools to clothes to glassware.

“So many donated a wide variety of items for the sale,” Florida South deacon Clay Smedley said. “One participant asked the local waste collection site to set aside good items people in the area discarded, and these items really boosted the sale.”

Thunderstorms began to form early in the day, but these did not affect the sale until the afternoon, when customers typically thin out and sales drop off. By then, the afternoon shower was a relief from the heat.

By the end of the day, the volunteers had raised more than \$2,100 for donation to headquarters.



ABOVE Rachel Frederick, Shelly Moolchan and Geeta Abdullah Muhammad, Israel Frederick and Levi Ali

Trinidad throws back to the '70s

BY LEON AND ESTHER SEBRO

TRINIDAD—Forty-three members of the Trinidad congregation traveled back in time to the 1970s for a social on August 14 in Chaguanas, Trinidad, that included finger foods, background music, clothing and hair reminiscent of that decade. Dancers and singers provided entertainment, as did musical chairs, a bran-tub event and a photo booth. Two attendees were recognized for attending in their most authentic apparel from the '70s.

Single Keith Moolchan said, “It was a blast from the past that left an impression that will last.” ■



Portland congregation holds pool invitational

BY JAMIE JAMESON

WASHINGTON—Twelve men from the Portland, Oregon, congregation met at Big Al's Bowling and Billiards on November 19 for a billiards double-elimination invitational. None of the men play often, meaning the playing field was even. Member James Carlson was deemed the winner after sinking the eight ball on the third try.

Member Joshua Crocker said, "The best part is the camaraderie in a totally different venue." ■

LEFT James Carlson takes the winning shot in the billiards tournament.

Sydney members entertain, dance

BY LEILANI KING

AUSTRALIA—Around 60 members of the Sydney congregation of the Philadelphia Church of God danced and entertained at Eschol Park School in Sydney on August 6 during the congregation's annual talent show, with a French twist.

After Sabbath, members decorated the hall in red, blue and white and transformed themselves into French mimes and artists by donning Basque-style berets on their heads.

After dinner, emcee Ray Simpson introduced the first act: a piano performance of the French national anthem, "La Marseillaise," by 6-year-old Isabella Micallef. Children as young as 3 years old gave performances, including piano, violin and Irish dance.

Following a dessert intermission, 9-year-old Jemma Romanos performed an Irish dance jig. "The night was lots of fun, dancing and being with my friends," Romanos said.

After the performances, the dance commenced. Teens who had attended Philadelphia Youth Camp introduced the congregation to the "Happy" line dance. Other dances included the twist, cha-cha and swing.

"It was an enjoyable night with exceptional talent," new member Cherie Sutherland said. "The highlight was being together with God's Family." ■

NY members picnic at lake

BY CHARLES SCLAVUNOS

NEW YORK—Fifteen members of the Batavia congregation relaxed at Lakeside State Park in Waterport on July 10 for a summer picnic.

Under the blue skies on the shores of Lake Ontario, members found shelter beneath a few trees and enjoyed conversation. While

burgers and hot dogs grilled, most of them men took the opportunity to test their golf chip-shot skills.

After the meal, most members participated in an 18-hole game of disc golf. The game took them through the woods and out into the sun several times.

Single Janessa van Order said that before the social she hadn't thrown a frisbee in years before the activity and thought the social was a fun experience.

Member Karen Croisdale said she enjoyed the quietness of the park while relaxing with fellow members. ■

Members share annual NW potluck

BY JAMIE JAMESON

WASHINGTON—Twelve seniors and nine singles from the Portland, Ore., and Seattle, Wash., congregations, along with Preaching Elder Gareth Fraser and his wife, gathered in Vancouver at the home of Bruce and Vickie Young on August 7 for the third annual seniors' activity.

The event began with getting-to-know-you bingo, causing everyone to mingle as they tried to find someone who "speaks more than one language," "has been to Mr. Flurry's home," or "has lived on the East Coast." A \$10 gift card was awarded to the person who filled in the most squares.

Mr. Fraser led a "fireside chat," sans campfire, with many participants reminiscing about examples of serving or being served by others of a different generation.

After a potluck, participants spent the final two hours playing board games and card games. ■

Missouri members picnic

REGINA FOJUT

MISSOURI—Sixty-seven members from the combined St. Louis and Galesburg, Illinois, congregations of the Philadelphia Church of God held their annual picnic on August 7 at Maryland Heights Vago Park. The previous week's weather had been hot and humid, but on the day of the picnic, members enjoyed a rare break from the steamy summer weather as cooler temperatures and lower humidity prevailed. Members said the weather was a blessing from God. After a barbecue lunch, members competed in games of chess, volleyball, horseshoes and co-ed softball. Children cooled off in a splash pad adjacent to the pavilion. Later in the afternoon, members took a break from the games to converse over cold watermelon, cantaloupe and homemade desserts. Local member Francine Watson said the picnic was "a glorious day. It was very festive." ■

Brisbane holds first Highland games event



BY CALLUM WOOD

AUSTRALIA—The kilts were on and the bagpipes were out on August 7 as about 80 members of the Brisbane congregation of held their first Highland games family day barbecue at the Wivenhoe Dam near Brisbane.

The men competed in challenging Scottish events of strength and skill. The activities included an open-stone, braemar-stone and weight-for-distance throws.

The kilted men were cheered on by friends and family as they tried various and sometimes unconventional styles of launching stones and weights through the air.

"I found the games more challenging than expected," member Shane Smithies said. "I enjoyed the encouragement from the fellow competitors."

Smithies was also the winner of the longest-beard competition.

After a barbecue lunch, the young boys tried their hand at the rock-throw event as well as the



Greenwich club holds ladies' gala

BY DAVID SZABO

CONNECTICUT—Seventeen spokesmen, 14 guests and Preaching Elder Greg Nice attended the Greenwich Spokesman Club's year-end ladies' gala on June 19 at the Radisson Hotel in Cromwell.

Club president Nathan Barkei brought attention to the long history of Spokesman Club since educator Hebert W. Armstrong established it on Oct. 2, 1958. Afterward, member James Brady led the crowd in a topics conversation with questions like, "What are your fondest childhood memories?" and "What did you think would happen after Brexit?"

After a break for lunch,

toastmaster Edward Teti introduced the speakers, likening them to battle-hardened warriors "holding to the last" at the Battle of Gettysburg.

"The ladies' gala is always a special time," club member and speaker Thomas Garstka said. "It brings out the best in the men, and it is simply a pleasure to give a speech before them."

"I really appreciated being invited to the gala," New Jersey member Harriet Barkei said. "What better way to get to know the brethren in the Church than by hearing their speeches and evaluations?"

In his final remarks, Mr. Nice explained the first of five directives that God gave human beings in Genesis 1:2: "Be fruitful." ■

caber toss. After that, a close game of tug-of-war was held for bonus points. Local youth Nicholas Constantine clinched first place. "I liked the pole flip because it was more challenging and required more skill to do," he said.

Before the grand finale, the men's caber toss, it was deemed appropriate to include women in the event as a token gesture. Local member Anne Hudson represented the ladies in the open-stone event, which she described

as tossing a "not-so-hefty pink and diamond-studded rock for a bit of fun."

Then came the event that pitted the men against a series of heavy logs: the caber toss. Each man was required to lift and flip a caber in mid-air. Member Colin Morris claimed first place overall.

"I really like to push myself and enjoy the games," member Mark Constantine said. "The camaraderie and getting together with brethren is what I always look forward to." ■

Perth congregation explores Penguin Island

Western Aussie members meet fairy penguins.



BY DARIUS RALLS

AUSTRALIA—Fourteen members of the Perth congregation went on an excursion on December 11 to Penguin Island, just off the coast of Rockingham, Western Australia.

“It was a very enjoyable day throughout,” member Ivor Stockwell said. “The picnic was great, and it benefited us having a walk around the island, observing the rock formations that the winds and tides have carved out.”

The island is part of an

archipelago that is accessible by ferry or by swimming. It is the only island open to the public. Fairy penguins (also known as **little pen-guins**) are the main attraction, but they were rarely seen by the group, as the birds hid under the wooden walkways and in the undergrowth covering the island.

The group also toured a rehabilitation center for orphaned and sick penguins, hearing a short, informative talk about the survival tactics and the traits of fairy penguins.

With the predicted rain staying off the coast, members were able to have a warm but cloudy day at the island as they kept their eyes peeled for a glimpse of the elusive creatures that gave it its name.

“I enjoyed a lovely day spent with brethren; it helped bond us together,” member Cheryl Jacobs said. “[W]e all have to be close to really help each other, and these kinds of activities—and we need more of them—really help us to achieve close family unity.” ■

Western Aussies give thanks together

BY LUKE UNDERWOOD

AUSTRALIA—Twenty-seven members of the Western Australia congregation of the Philadelphia Church of God shared a Thanksgiving dinner on November 24 at the residence of Local Elder John Woloszyn in Perth.

Although Thanksgiving festivities are uncommon in Australia, attendees celebrated the holiday several hours before anyone in the United States due to the time difference. With help from several members, the dining area was thoroughly decorated in a fall theme, complete with a larger-than-life blow-up turkey.

The evening began with a reading from the *True Education* youth magazine detailing the history and the importance of the memorial, followed by a short passage from President Ronald Reagan’s 1981 Thanksgiving Proclamation. ■

Philippines congregations hit the diamond for Bible baseball

BY CLIFF LILANGAN

PHILIPPINES—More than 25 members of the Quezon City congregation and around 80 members from the Angeles City congregation of the Philadelphia Church of God participated in their first Bible baseball nights on November 12 and 26.

Bible baseball consists of two teams answering trivia questions and playing by similar rules as the game’s namesake: baseball. Just like in baseball, there are three bases and a home plate. Each “batter” is asked by the “pitcher” to take one number from a box, representing a question ranging in difficulty from a single to a home run, and “hit” it (answer correctly). If the batter cannot answer the question in three attempts, he or she has “struck

out.” After three outs, the other team bats.

“It was exhilarating and truly challenging,” Quezon City senior Silvino Ramos said.

“It’s wonderful,” Angeles City senior Oscar Lavina said. “It makes you recall what you have studied and encourages you to read and study more.”

After the games, pizza and drinks were served while everyone watched a video of maestro Andre Rieu’s *Live in Vienna* concert. Brethren said it reminded them of Pastor General Gerald Flurry’s sermon earlier in 2016 about Austria as the cultural capital of the world and the impact that the biblical patriarch Abraham had on that country.

Single Debra Caser said, “The concert reminds me of the time when the whole world will experience such uplifting music when God’s Kingdom is here.” ■

Have an event coming up in your local congregation?

Let us know! E-mail us at news@pcog.org, or send us a tweet at [@PCG_News](https://twitter.com/PCG_News).



ELIZABETH MACDONALD

Sydney Spokesman Club hosts end-of-year ladies' gala

Members 'capped off a great year' at formal event overlooking North Wollongong.

BY ELIZABETH MACDONALD

AUSTRALIA—Fifteen members of the Sydney Spokesman Club hosted their annual end-of-year ladies' gala on November 27 at

Panorama House Restaurant and Function Center, situated on a hilltop with a view of North Wollongong.

Spokesmen and their guests arrived early in the afternoon for predinner drinks, snacks and

conversation on the patio.

Following a table topics session, four members gave speeches, including an instruct about how to make your own mayonnaise and an inspire about the difference between success and failure.

While a three-course meal was served, club director John Macdonald delivered closing comments. Trophies for the night were awarded to the most improved and most effective speakers and to the most helpful speech evaluator. A graduation certificate was also awarded to member Sam Romanos. Dale Abblitt, who was unable to attend the event, also graduated club this year.

"My favorite part of the evening was the presentation of Sam Romanos with his graduation certificate, because he has pushed through difficulties to graduate," club member Sandy Richardson said. "I also found the lecture and comments ... really inspiring and appreciated the encouragement all the men were given."

Mr. Macdonald said he noticed growth and change in the men. "The club has been very positive and has made great progress throughout the year," he said. "The bar was regularly being pushed higher. The final ladies' night really capped off a great year. It was positive, enjoyable and set a high Philadelphian standard. It really has been an honor to work with the club." ■



BY CALELA BROOKS

CANADA—Anna Mardian, 15, was recently recognized for being a Competent Communicator in the Toastmaster International program. The extracurricular

Canadian youth collects Competent Communicator award

program improves personal communication skills to develop leadership skills and daily interactions.

"I have seen tremendous growth in Anna's ability to communicate and to interact with others, especially adults," her father, member Jorg Mardian, said. "She has moved from being timid to being able to effectively work with others in a professional setting at work, as well as at home."

Anna's local minister, Preaching

Elder Timothy Oostendarp, noted that she comes from a small congregation where the only other teenager is her younger brother; he said that, under the guidance of her parents, she has enthusiastically participated in Toastmasters and other extracurricular programs.

"I am learning to inspire others through words, communicate effectively through everyday interactions, and show increased maturity with the public at my

place of work," Anna said. "This is helping me to rapidly grasp the concept of moving into adulthood."

Mr. Oostendarp said Anna's diligence "shows what you can do with limited access to other teens in the Church ... to stay busy and to stay hungry and growing and developing yourself in a manner to benefit God and His Work. We are all very proud of her efforts and her results."

Anna said that she hopes that after she graduates from high school, she will be accepted to attend Herbert W. Armstrong College and extend the communication and leadership skills she has learned from Toastmasters to the program there. ■

Births

CANADA—David and Jackie Friesen of the Calgary, Alberta, congregation are thrilled to announce the birth of their first child, **Joshua Owen**. He was born



on August 27, at 9:25 a.m. He weighed 7 pounds and 11 ounces.

MISSOURI—Corey and Caitlin Woemmel of the St. Louis congregation would like to announce the birth of their son, **Ian Edward**, born November 1, weighing 6 pounds, 15 ounces and measuring 20 inches in length. He is their first child and the first grandchild for the Woemmel family.



NIGERIA—Lucky and Olouchi Omogo are pleased to announce the birth of their son **Jesse Lucky Omogo**. He was born on November 26, weighing 8½ pounds.

THE PHILIPPINES—Gerard and Hannah Marquez are excited to announce the birth of their first child, baby girl **Hazel**. She was born



on October 28, weighing 6 pounds, 13 ounces and measuring 19 inches in length.

Ted and Elizabeth Acompañado are thankful to announce the birth of **Andrea**, their energetic and healthy baby girl. She was born December 13, weighing 5 pounds and 11 ounces.



Baptisms

OKLAHOMA—Hebert W. Armstrong College students **Gino Chi, Albert Clarke** and **Jordan Ellis** were baptized on November 20 by Evangelist Wayne Turgeon and Preaching Elder Eric Burns in the John Amos Field House in the presence of the congregation and student body.

ENGLAND—**Johnathan Mansour** was baptized on December 10 at Edstone Hall by Evangelist Stephen Flurry and Preaching Elder Brad Macdonald.

SOUTH AFRICA—On October 22, **Lucky and Olouchi Omogo** from Nigeria were baptized by Preaching Elder John Macdonald and Local Elder George Githembe.

Wedding

LOUISIANA—**Thomas Molden** and **Arnita Cousins** were united in marriage by Local Church Elder Sam Baxter on November 5. The



ceremony was held at the Radisson Hotel Baton Rouge. The couple will reside in Baton Rouge.

Anniversary

CANADA—**Bill and Marion Whalen** of the Newfoundland congregation celebrated their 50th wedding



anniversary on November 11. On the Sabbath of November 5, the members from Newfoundland and Regional Director Fred Dattolo surprised the couple with a celebration to acknowledge their milestone.

Obituaries

CANADA—**Lana Graham** of the Milton, Ontario, congregation died on October 19 after battling a brief and sudden illness. She was born on a small farm in Lobo, Ontario on April 26, 1946. At age 11, she heard *The World Tomorrow* on the radio for the first time. She became a lifelong follower of the teachings of God's true Church. Lana began attending the Worldwide Church of God in 1967 and was baptized nine years later. Several years after



Is there a special couple in **your** congregation?

If your congregation recognizes a marriage milestone with an event, don't forget to snap a photo of the happy couple and send your (minister-approved) writeup to news@pcog.org.

the death of Mr. Armstrong, she began noticing various doctrinal changes. She turned to God for help. One night, she stayed awake all night, studying her Bible and praying for answers. When she finally finished, she got up to eat and turned on the television. She found, to her delight, a program that reminded her of Mr. Armstrong's radio and television program that she followed all those years. It was *The Key of David*, and at the end of that same program, she called in to request the free literature—*Malachi's Message*. In 1993, she began attending the Philadelphia Church of God. As one of the longest attending members of the PCG in southern Ontario, Lana will be remembered by many for her steadfastness and resolute faith in God—a faith she actively demonstrated to her very last breath in this life.

ILLINOIS—**Juanita Pickett Haywood** of Melrose Park died November 8 in her 84th year. She was born December 1932 in East St. Louis and was one of 12 children. A few decades ago, Mrs. Haywood began studying and proving Mr. Herbert Armstrong's teachings to be true. Many years later, she discovered Mr. Gerald Flurry and realized the Philadelphia Church of God was a continuation of Mr. Armstrong's work. Mrs. Haywood was invited into the PCG in January 2011 and was baptized in November 2012. She was diligent in attending Sabbath services and loved to fellowship with the brethren. Even as her health was failing in her old age, she participated in most Church activities. She was a shining light and a dedicated lady. Quitting was never an option. Her good example will be remembered. She is survived by her daughter, stepson, sisters, grandchildren, four great grandchildren, seven great-great grandchildren, several nieces, nephews and cousins.

NEW JERSEY—**Margaret Swan Tindall** of the Morristown congregation died on October 16 at the



age of 82. She was born in Johnson City Tennessee on Oct. 6, 1934. She received a degree in education from East Tennessee State College and became a teacher for the Brevard County Florida school system. She was baptized in a swampy lake in Florida as a member of the Radio Church of God on April 2, 1967 and later became a member of the PCG in the spring of 1993. At that time, she moved to New Jersey and attended the congregation there for 23 years. Ms. Tindall was an inspiration to many of the brethren because while fighting obvious health trials she steadfastly trusted God and came to services despite them. Only in the last month of her life was she unable to attend. After her death, several members commented about the inspirational conversations they had with her on the Sabbaths. She was a widow who poured her heart into God's Work with prayers and offerings—a modern day example of the widow praised by Jesus in the Scriptures. She is survived by her four children Katherine, Kenneth, David and Jonathan; one grandson; sister Harriet Barkei; nephew Nathan Barkei, his wife, Anita, and their two children.

PHILIPPINES—**Elisito Suelo**, a member of God's Church in Bacolod City, died September 18 due to a heart attack at the age of 61. His history with the Church dated back to 1982 when he came across Mr. Herbert Armstrong's *The Plain Truth* magazine, which his sister subscribed to. He eventually became interested in reading other related articles including the *Ambassador College*



Bible Correspondence Course. But to his dismay, his subscription was stopped. Years later in 2006, while watching TV, he came across the *Key of David* program. He studied more about the Philadelphia Church of God and eventually wrote a letter to the PCG ministry for counseling. He started attending Sabbath services and keeping God's holy days. He was baptized in October 2006 at the Feast of Tabernacles in Cebu City. He faced fiery trials and obstacles in his life but did not waver nor give up because his heart remained in God's truth. He continued building faith until his last breath. His happy smile will be missed by those who knew him. Funeral services were conducted by Local Elder Broderick Tongco on September 28.

Mauricio Sistoso Sr. of Valencia, Bukidnon, died November 5 after battling cancer. He was 77 years old. He first heard Mr. Armstrong's



broadcasts in the Philippines during his stint with the Army. He went to Pasadena, while in the U.S. for school, to see Mr. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong was away at the time, so Mr. Sistoso prolonged his stay in America to be in the Church. He was able to hear the same doctrines again, long after

Ordinations

CANADA—Local Elder

Timothy Oostendarp

was raised in rank to the office of Preaching Elder by Regional Director Fred Dattolo on October 24. Most of the members attending the Feast in Invermere, B.C., were present to witness the event.

his retirement, through the *Key of David* broadcast, which eventually led to his baptism. He became part of the Cagayan de Oro, Mindanao, congregation, traveling four hours by bus to attend services there. He was able to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Clark during the last years of his life up until this year when he became too weak to travel. He is survived by his second wife and children.

WASHINGTON—**Dale Leland**

Ferry, loving husband, father and grandfather, died on July 14 at the age of 80. Dale was born in Nekoose, Wisconsin, on Aug. 29, 1935. At age 17, Dale entered the Army National Guard, serving the United States during the Korean War for two years. He then joined the Air Force and served an additional three years at Larson Air Force Base in Moses Lake, Washington. In April 1972, he married Diana, and the two enjoyed 44 years of marriage together. Dale enjoyed spending time with his five children, 15 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren. He lived a very active life, and he loved spending time in the outdoors with his friends and family. Dale joined his wife in attending the Philadelphia Church of God services in 1992 and was later baptized on April 6, 2006. Dale enjoyed potlucks and fellowshiping with the brethren. A memorial was performed with many family and friends, officiated by Local Elder Robert Morley.

Singles Winter Weekend: The Need-to-Know

Facts to know, prepare for and pray about for PCG singles to have a great weekend

EDMOND—The Philadelphia Church of God Singles Winter Weekend takes place from January 1–3 at PCG headquarters in Edmond. Singles will arrive on Sunday, January 1, with a Church shuttle transporting those who need rides to the headquarters campus from the Oklahoma City airport. After watching the final performance of *The Widow's Might* live at Armstrong Auditorium that afternoon, singles will attend a welcome event at the John Amos Field House, including dinner and group trivia. Monday, January 2, begins with brunch, conversation and topics at the field house, followed by an afternoon of split activities including

skydiving, painting or ice skating. The evening finishes with a progressive dinner, with groups of singles visiting three local homes for appetizers, a main course and dessert. Tuesday, January 3, begins with a coffee and tea social in the auditorium mezzanine and a live singles Bible study, then a catered lunch from local food trucks and an afternoon of board games, sports and conversation at the field house. Dancing instruction will also be available at the Dwight Armstrong Performing Arts Conservatory. The singles event culminates that evening with a semiformal dinner dance at The Springs in Edmond.

For more information on what to pack, review **"Upholding God's Standard in Dress and Appearance"** on PCOG.org. For answers to your questions, e-mail singles coordinators Joshua Sloan and Sherry Beezley at singles@pcog.org. ■

Need a hotel in Edmond?

The PCG festival office has organized discounted rates.

EDMOND—Dozens of Philadelphia Church of God members will visit the headquarters campus on December 29, December 31 and January 1 for showings of the musical production *The Widow's Might*, and from January 1 to January 4 during the Singles Winter Weekend. If you need to book a nearby hotel room for your stay, the festival office has secured discounted rooms:

Fairfield Inn

\$102.81 per night (tax included)
(405) 341-4818

La Quinta Inn & Suites

\$94.99 per night (tax included)
(405) 513-5353

Both hotels are located in Edmond near the intersection of Interstate 35 and 2nd Street. To receive your discount, mention that you are with the PCG when you call and book your room.

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Do you know a member with visual impairment who might like to receive audio versions of the *Philadelphian*? We have them available! E-mail your inquiry to news@pcog.org.



ATTENTION TEENS!

The 2017 Teen Talent Contest is now open for youths ages 13 to 19. Entries can include drawings, paintings, 3-D art, computer graphics, photographs, poems, essays, short stories, singing, instrumentals, dancing and more!

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