

CHURCH *of* GOD

A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 1009
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February 8, 2018

Dear Brethren,

The year 2018 is off to a roaring start! Finally, after months of work, we broke ground on our new office building on Monday, Jan. 22! We produced a video to commemorate the occasion, which was shown on *In Accord* that same week. You can find this video posted in the building update section of the COGWA members' page (members.cogwa.org/new-office/).

January was an extraordinary month! Not only did we break ground on the new building, but we were blessed with our highest income for any January since we began in December 2010. It was very encouraging to see the increase over previous years. Of course, one month does not a year make, but as we begin February, we are ahead of last year with our income and under budget with our expenses.

We also received a few surprises in January. The city of McKinney informed us that they are now requiring us to have a longer driveway in order for the exit from our property on the north side to align with a future road that is part of their master plan. Needless to say, this was another unexpected cost. Having been involved with other building projects over the years, I know that these unexpected costs will come. We have done our best to be prepared, but it was comforting to see the increase in income in January! We are now in a better position to absorb some of these extra costs.

February looks to be another busy month. Sharron and I will travel to Barbados, along with Arnold and Ann Hampton, to participate in the 50th anniversary of the local congregation on the Sabbath of Feb. 10. It was on Feb. 3, 1968, that the Worldwide Church of God met for the first time on the island. Stan Bass, along with his wife Millie, was the first pastor.

Our annual Presidents' Day weekend is once again planned for Branson, Missouri. Mike Blackwell, the local pastor in the area, informed us that the hotel selected to host the event is completely full. We are sending overflow to another hotel nearby. Indications are that we will have our largest crowd ever in Branson. From the headquarters office, Clyde and Dee Kilough and David and Becky Johnson will attend the weekend.

Sharron and I will attend the annual "Super Social" in North Carolina the weekend of Feb. 24-25. This is a weekend when all the congregations in North Carolina get together for a combined service. This will be our first time to attend, and we are looking forward to it.

This busy trend continues into March, when we will begin our first series of International Leadership seminars. The first two will take place in Guatemala City, Guatemala, and Monterrey, Mexico, over the first two weekends in March, respectively. We expect close to 100 local leaders and wives to attend these two special weekends.

Even though it is only February, it isn't too early to begin planning for the spring festivals. This year the Passover will be observed on Thursday night, March 29. The Night to Be Much Observed

will be Friday night, March 30, followed by services for the first day of Unleavened Bread on March 31.

Sharron and I will be in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, for Passover and the first day of Unleavened Bread. Harold Rhodes is the pastor of our congregations in Mobile, Alabama, and DeFuniak Springs. He and his wife, Loree, will be in Mobile for Passover, and Sharron and I will be in DeFuniak Springs. On the Night to Be Much Observed we will meet with a small group in a private room in a restaurant, followed by a combined service on the afternoon of the first day of Unleavened Bread. For the last day of Unleavened Bread, observed this year on Friday, April 6, we will be in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, remaining over for the Sabbath. We look forward to spending time with the local San Luis Potosí pastor, Adan Langerica, and his wife, Rosario.

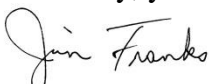
I hope this letter provides a helpful update on where things stand with the major projects taking place in the Church. We are always excited when we can report increases—our highest January income since we began and our highest attendance for special weekends—but we also know that we look to God to call those whom He chooses (John 6:44). Of course, there has never been a time in history when the true gospel was preached and some people did not respond. We have a responsibility to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). It is exciting to hear of the increases, but we must not lose our focus on who is in charge and pray to Him each day to add laborers to the harvest and to call new people.

On a more personal note, this year, 2018, marks the 50th anniversary of my entering Ambassador College as an 18-year-old, fresh out of high school. I was already a “veteran” of church attendance, having begun in Memphis in 1962, and I had spent a year in Spokesman Club, but I still wasn’t fully prepared for Ambassador College. I have to admit that during my first year, I considered packing up and heading home more than once. I wanted to be a civil engineer, designing highways, bridges, dams, etc. and had no plans to enter the ministry. But in the spring of 1969, things began to change. I was baptized on Monday, March 31, one day before the Passover, which took place on Tuesday evening, April 1, that year. So this year I will be observing my 50th Passover.

Part of my self-examination this year is to reflect back on the past 49 Passovers and ask what I have learned. I have titled my sermon for Barbados “50 Years in the Church—Now What?” I have to admit that part of what I plan to say was inspired by my own situation—my own 50 years since baptism. An important scripture that I will reference is Acts 2:38. This was the call to action by the apostle Peter that led to 3,000 people being baptized and the founding of the New Testament Church. Without repentance there is no conversion, and without conversion there is no Christianity. However many years we may have been in the Church, the most important thing for all of us is to maintain a humble and repentant attitude. I believe this is the key that makes the difference between those who have remained faithful and those who haven’t.

Self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5), followed by repentance (Acts 2:38) and a sincere request for forgiveness and mercy—these are important themes for the Passover each year. With Passover in eight weeks, it isn’t too early to get started! In fact, now is a good time to begin that self-examination!

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,


Jim Franks