

CHURCH *of* GOD

A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 1009
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Dear Brethren,

When I wrote last month's member letter mentioning the death of Todd Carey, I had no idea that in this month's letter I would be writing about another ministerial death—that of Manuel Quijano, our pastor in Peru. Mr. Quijano died of an infection in Lima on Friday, June 16. He had been diagnosed with liver cancer earlier this year, but it was completely unexpected for him to die so soon.

Mr. Quijano's death was so sudden that the Church was not prepared to immediately provide a permanent replacement. Manuel was only 54 years old. He is survived by his wife, Clara; his son, Alec; four brothers and one sister; along with his parents, who were among the very first members baptized in Peru when the Worldwide Church of God raised up a congregation in the country back in the 1970s.

The day that Mr. Quijano died, Sharron and I were in Williamsburg, Virginia, visiting with Todd Carey's widow, Gloria; their two sons, Justin and Bronson; and the local congregation. We traveled to Williamsburg to encourage the family and the brethren, but I believe they did more to encourage us! Larry Lambert is the new pastor for Williamsburg and, with the help of his wife, Wilma, will now pastor three congregations in Virginia and West Virginia.

On the Friday following our visit to Williamsburg, in the wake of Mr. Quijano's death, I flew to Peru to meet with the local congregation on the Sabbath of June 24. This was extremely emotional, since he had died only a few days prior to my visit. We had a large crowd present in Lima, with a number of members coming from outlying areas. Some traveled more than 400 kilometers by bus to attend the service. During my sermons on both Sabbaths, I focused on the future, when Christ will return and make everything right, and I paid tribute to the wonderful work done by these two men. We lost two truly fine pastors within one month. Mr. Carey died on Monday, May 15, and Mr. Quijano died on Friday, June 16.

After discussing the situation with Leon Walker, our regional director for Latin America, the decision was made to appoint Carlos Saavedra (an elder serving in the Lima congregation) as the interim pastor for the four congregations in Peru. Mr. Saavedra and his wife, Maribel, are a fine couple with a great family. Manuel was Maribel's brother, thus providing a family connection to the Quijanos. Mr. Walker and I believe the congregations in Peru will be in good hands until a final decision on a pastor can be made. Mr. Walker has been unable to travel in recent weeks because of surgery performed back in May, but as soon as possible, I know that he and his wife, Reba, will be on a plane to Peru.

There are always things to learn when we go through emotional life events such as the death of a loved one. I have reflected on these two deaths, and while I don't have a good answer to give to the families when they ask why, I know that God is in charge and that He allowed these deaths to occur. One of the major lessons that struck me during these two visits is how easy it is to offer praise and pay tribute to individuals after their deaths, but neglect such praise when they are alive. I had to ask myself how often I thank the ministry for their dedication and service and for the good

job they are doing as elders and pastors. I believe the ministry of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, is as fine a ministry as I have seen in the Church in my 40-plus years as a minister, but why should we wait until someone dies to express that appreciation?

There is an example in Luke 17, where 10 lepers were healed by Jesus Christ. Only one came back to thank Him, and that one was a “foreigner,” a Samaritan. Imagine being a leper, isolated from society, expecting to spend your life without a future, always living alone in a community of other lepers. Then suddenly one day all that changes. When the one returned to give God glory and to offer thanks, Jesus asked about the nine, but they were nowhere to be found. Their lives changed dramatically, but only one returned to thank Christ for the miracle he had experienced. Christ made the point that the one who did return to give thanks is the one who did the right thing.


Should we wait until a friend, a minister, or a family member dies to express our love and appreciation? I really hope not. Do we forget to give thanks for a good deed or a good sermon? What about a healing or a miracle in our lives? I can say without hesitation that I loved and appreciated both Mr. Carey and Mr. Quijano. They were truly my brothers. But did I express this to them? Did I ever tell them how much I appreciated their work? I am disappointed to say that I did not, at least not as much as I should have.

In 2 Timothy 3 Paul lists the major traits that will be present in the end of the age. He mentions “unthankful” in the same list as “unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers” and more. Every Sabbath I appreciate that I have a congregation to attend, brethren to fellowship with, and a pastor and elders who show genuine love for the brethren. I remember when I was very young that we had no congregation and no local pastor. For 10 years, my mother, my sister and I kept the Sabbath alone. I remember the day we walked into services in Memphis, Tennessee. It was so exciting to find other people who believed the same way I did! But, as with so many things in life, over time, it becomes easy to take it all for granted or just expect that these things will always be there.

We live in a society that spends more time making crude and hateful remarks about others than saying words of praise and thankfulness. In the world of social media, outrageous statements made about others go viral! That is rarely true about words of praise or appreciation. Our society is also becoming more demanding and less appreciative of living in a country where God’s blessings have been so evident throughout the course of our history. Rather than being thankful as we approach national holidays such as the Fourth of July, there are more demands and more personal criticism. American society has become crass, violent and unthankful! Sadly, this does have an effect on the Church.

Seeing two deaths from among our pastors in one month is really a wake-up call for all of us. Can we tell our pastors, elders, deacons, deaconesses, brethren, husbands, wives, and children how special they are and how much we appreciate being part of their lives? I consider it a great privilege to know so many of you, and I appreciate what you do every week in service to the brethren. We may not always publicly recognize your service, and sometimes we wait until after a death or a tragedy to express that appreciation, but God does not forget those who have shown themselves to be true servants. “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,


Jim Franks