

CHURCH *of* GOD

A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 1009
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June 8, 2017

Dear Brethren,

I have been writing member letters each month since 2012, only missing a few along the way. My goal in each letter is to provide both information about the work of the Church and encouragement. With so much negative news in the world today, so much violence and so many tragedies, it is easy to be discouraged. My desire in these letters is to look beyond the negative events and focus on the wonderful plan of God.

With that in mind, I am happy to report that the recent ministerial conference was very successful! There was some sadness during the conference because of the death of a dear friend and fellow minister, Todd Carey, just the week before. I believe the timing of his death added a sense of urgency to our meetings, making it a very emotional conference. One minister described his experience in this way: “One minute I was laughing, and the next minute I was crying!”

Mr. Carey’s untimely death undoubtedly caused all of us to consider our own mortality. We live the reality of Hebrews 9:27 every day: “It is appointed for man to die once, but after this the judgment.”

A loved one’s death brings overwhelming sadness, especially if that death was unexpected. In the days following, it is difficult to find comfort, in spite of the fact that we know our real future lies beyond this physical existence. We know this because of the knowledge God has given to us as His people, those who are called out of this world to be part of His Church.

Just a few days ago we observed the Feast of Pentecost and revisited the founding of the Church and the arrival of the Holy Spirit, all recorded in Acts 2. Later, the apostle Peter described the Church as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Peter 2:9). Some approach the calling of God and the receiving of His Holy Spirit as though both were available to everyone. But that is simply not true. In this human experience not everyone will be called by God, chosen by God and remain faithful to God (Revelation 17:14). It will not be the masses who are called, but a “little flock,” as Christ described His Church in Luke 12:32.

During the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God in the 1990s, one of the most subtle and disturbing errors revolved around this very idea. The teaching that the Church was composed of called-out people and a chosen generation, as described by Peter, was dismissed. The term *Christian* began to be applied to anyone who professes the name of Jesus Christ, whether or not they understand the truth, keep the correct days or even know of the plan of salvation.

To believe that there are Christians in all churches—Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, etc.—dismisses the biblical truth of a special calling. It denies the importance of the truth itself. Yet prior to His death, Christ prayed that the Father would “sanctify them [His disciples] by Your

truth” (John 17:17). If the truth sets us apart (sanctifies us) from this world, there must be more to Christianity than simply accepting Christian values. Paul wrote that without God’s Spirit, we are none of His (Romans 8:9). In Acts 5:32 we read that God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him. So, we see there is more to being a Christian than just being a good person or holding Christian values.

Over the years, I have met Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists who practiced morality, honesty and other virtues taught in Scripture, but claimed no connection to Christianity. The fact that there are “good” people in other religions or different denominations of what is called Christianity does not change the biblical requirements for God’s calling: understanding His truth, repenting and possessing His Spirit.

Knowing that we have the truth—and that we have been sanctified by that truth—gives us the true hope for the future and for the present! As you probably heard in the Pentecost messages, we know that the Holy Spirit gives help in time of need (John 16:7), comfort in time of grief (John 15:26, KJV), and an understanding of God’s truth in a world that increasingly denies His existence.

Many brethren have reached out to give comfort to Todd Carey’s family with words of encouragement based on the truth of our calling and the help of God’s Holy Spirit. During the conference, several mentioned the fact that Mr. Carey was a wonderful church pastor, and indeed he was! He was also a devoted husband to his wife, Gloria, and a loving father to their two sons, Justin and Bronson.

Before concluding this month’s letter, I wanted to mention the death of Roderick C. Meredith almost three weeks ago, on Thursday evening, May 18, after a short battle with cancer. He was 86 years old. Many of us remember Dr. Meredith from our Radio Church of God and Worldwide Church of God days, and until his death, he was the presiding evangelist for the Living Church of God. Dr. Meredith was a prolific writer for the various church magazines and one of the early vice-presidents of the Radio Church of God and, later, Worldwide Church of God. He taught at all three Ambassador College campuses (Bricket Wood, Big Sandy and Pasadena). He was also one of the first to be ordained as an evangelist by Herbert Armstrong in December of 1952.

Britt Taylor (COGWA treasurer), David Baker (member of the COGWA Ministerial Board of Directors), Ron Kelley (local pastor for COGWA) and his wife Nancy, and I attended Dr. Meredith’s funeral service on Sunday, May 28, along with many others from various Church of God groups. Two of Dr. Meredith’s sons gave tributes, and the main message was delivered by Richard Ames, someone else many of us are familiar with from days gone by. It was good to see many old friends, but also sobering to realize how quickly the years have passed. After Dr. Meredith, there are very few left from those early years with Mr. Armstrong.

From the tragic death of Todd Carey and the exciting, yet sobering, ministerial conference, and from seeing many old friends at Dr. Meredith’s funeral, one thing is clear: Life is short and goes by quickly. We must continue doing the work God has given us to do—preaching the gospel and caring for the brethren—as long as we have breath left in our bodies and the energy to carry on. This was the message of the recent ministerial conference, which exhorted us to be “zealous for God’s work,” thereby “fulfilling the great commission.”

Please pray for all those who have lost loved ones, but most importantly, pray for the soon coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth. In God's plan it isn't the length of time that we live but what we do with that time. Our calling is very special, and it is a privilege to know God's truth and be a Christian in any age, but especially in this end time!

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Franks".

Jim Franks