

CHURCH *of* GOD

A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 3490
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March 5, 2020

Dear Brethren,

I am writing this month's letter from Guatemala in Central America, where Doug and Tanya Horchak joined Sharron and me for the second phase of the International Leadership Program, held Feb. 29 to March 2. Ralph Levy also joined us, serving as our interpreter.

This portion of the program is patterned after the Focused Mentoring Program (FMP) in the U.S., which has been very successful in providing ministerial leadership for the Church. Since we began this program seven years ago, we have hired 16 men, thereby replacing 25 percent of the U.S. pastoral ministry. We are hopeful that this modified version of the FMP that has been developed will be equally as successful in areas outside the U.S., where the need for ministerial leadership is critical. We have scheduled 10 regional weekends for training over the course of this year, which means an average of one per month, with the exception of the months when the holy days occur. We have three weekends scheduled in Latin America over three consecutive months—Monterrey, Mexico (January/February); Guatemala City (February/March); and Santiago, Chile (March/April).

Here is a photo of the group of 36 in Guatemala, preparing for the first round of classes on Sabbath afternoon, Feb. 29. The group included men and women from Guatemala and El Salvador, along with the four elders who care for the congregations in this region. Over the course of four days, we were able to get to know each of the couples. Language was not



a problem, since we had Dr. Levy along to interpret. He worked extremely hard to make sure we could communicate with everyone. One thing that is becoming obvious to me from our first two weekends is that we have a truly dedicated and converted group of men and women who have given, and continue to give, their lives serving God's people.

For Central America, we have asked Leon Walker (regional director for Latin America and international liaison for COGWA) to serve as the regional mentor. The local pastor, Luis Mundo, was appointed as the pastor/mentor for the congregations in Guatemala and El Salvador and will be assisted by Eleodoro Avila. Mr. Walker, Dr. Mundo and Mr. Avila will work together to continue the training of those invited for the weekend. For many years, we have sporadically held weekend classes for training, but in this case, we are planning a follow-up to these classes. The follow-up will consist of a special website for additional classes with access limited to those who attended the weekend classes. When completed, this new website will consist of 11 classes on

topics of leadership, speaking and doctrine. In addition to the website, there will be quarterly video classes produced from the office in Texas and distributed to the group

With hands-on involvement in the local congregations, including opportunities to speak and work with the local pastor, we hope to see some improvement in the quality of speaking and service to the brethren. We believe this is the most significant step in leadership development since our beginning as COGWA in 2010. We are already seeing fruit from the past two years of work, and we are looking forward to more over the next year. Congregations outside the U.S. are just as deserving of an educated and trained ministry as our congregations in the U.S. The 2020 International Leadership Program—Focused Mentoring is an aggressive program that has brought a new focus into our international congregations.

As you can tell from this and last month's letters, I am deeply involved in leadership development, especially in areas outside the U.S. One of the goals of the ILP is to have elders teaching as they have been taught. Consistency in teaching is an important part of promoting and maintaining unity. Paul stated it this way in 2 Timothy and then again in Colossians:

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:6-7).

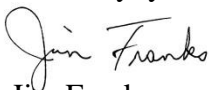
We are excited about the ILP. For the first time, we have a real plan for providing new ministerial leadership for the Church and upgrading the quality of our current leadership.

On the world scene, things are not so positive. Recently we witnessed the spread of the coronavirus (as it is popularly called). There is no doubt but that this is a precursor to what is coming in the near future. A fast-spreading virus, along with an out-of-control social media, has thrown the world into a panic, and it all happened in a matter of weeks.

To paralyze the world the way it has is nothing short of shocking. How it will affect travel in the next few weeks, as we enter the Passover season, is unknown at this point in time, but it is of some concern and something we should pray about. Those who are traveling currently and those who will be traveling for the Passover in a few weeks need God's protection as never before.

I hope you have begun your preparations for the Passover, which is only a few weeks away. As always, it seems to come at the right time. Many brethren are experiencing serious health trials and in some cases the loss of loved ones. As the world continues to deteriorate, the return of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God have never been more needed!

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,


Jim Franks