

# CHURCH *of* GOD

A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 1009  
Allen, TX 75013-0017

November 2, 2017

Dear Brethren,

The festivals are now complete for one more year! We began with a Passover service back in April, and in October we just concluded with the Eighth Day, the Last Great Day! Where did the year go? More important, what did we learn from this past year?

Even though I have been observing the festivals for more than 50 years, I felt that this year left an indelible impression upon me, more so than any year in recent memory. This year, Sharron and I observed the Passover with brethren in San Salvador, El Salvador. Our daughter Jamie married a member from the San Salvador congregation, Carlos Mendez, back in December, so we were excited to pay them a visit during the spring holy days. This would be their first Passover as a married couple, and we thought it would be special. Little did we know how special this Passover would be!

It was on a Sunday two weeks prior to the Passover that we received a phone call from Carlos informing us that Jamie was going in for emergency surgery. She had become violently ill after eating dinner the night before. It was suspected to be food poisoning of some sort. But it turned out to be much more serious. Emergency surgery revealed a bacteria in her system causing severe swelling of the stomach. The surgery required an incision in her stomach so that her organs could be washed because of the spread of the bacteria, similar to what would happen with a ruptured appendix.

The surgery was successful, but she still struggled to recover. Were there more bacteria in her system? On Saturday night before the Passover she took a turn for the worse, and we were called to the hospital at 3 a.m. and given some very difficult news by the doctor. They had to drain more fluid from her stomach area, and her organs were beginning to shut down. The physician on call gave her only a 30-percent chance of survival.

This all happened in the early morning hours of Sunday, April 22. We were stunned by the news. Of course, we were praying for God's intervention and at that time notified our friends back in the U.S. and a prayer request was sent out to the ministry. We spent some difficult hours, but around noon everything changed dramatically. She was now finally on the road to a full recovery. Needless to say, we attended the Passover that evening with a happy heart. Within about six hours Jamie had gone from having only a 30-percent chance of survival to looking forward to a full recovery.

Passover certainly took on a greater depth of meaning. I have anointed many people over the years, and in the prayer I ask God to apply the beaten body of Jesus Christ to the sick individual as we read in the Scripture: "by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). I have seen some dramatic healings, and I have seen individuals who were not healed. I have prayed earnestly for everyone I have ever anointed, and I have expected God to hear my prayer and heal the individual. At the very least, I knew that the sick person was in God's hands and that there is no better place to be.

Our faith was the same for our daughter—that God would hear and that He would answer. The difficult part was to wait, but we didn't have to wait long. It was surreal to be able to announce at

the Passover what our daughter had gone through and what the result was around mid-day. We went through a range of emotions, shedding tears of worry and sadness, which were followed by tears of joy.

Within a couple of days, she was released from the hospital, and now, more than six months later, her health has been restored. With the exception of the long scar on her stomach, it is as though nothing ever happened. As each festival came and went this year, I appreciated life and God's calling even more. I was also deeply appreciative and humbled that God did intervene for Jamie and that soon He will intervene for the whole world. The final four festivals of the year tell us clearly that God "so loved the world" that He will set His hand to save mankind (John 3:16-17). We can thank God for the miracles He has performed in our lives, but the greatest miracles are yet to come.

When all the blind receive sight, all the lame walk (Isaiah 35:5-6) and all the sick are made whole, there will be no more tears and no more death (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4). That is the world we want to live in! When we get overwhelmed by life and all the trials that occur, it is easy to forget the miracles that God has performed for each of us and the promises of the miracles that He will yet perform for this world.

For me, this festival year began with a memorable Passover and concluded with an emotional Last Great Day. I left the Feast with an incredible picture of a world that will no longer be suffering. I can hardly wait for the Passover next spring. I wonder what God will do next year. We are His children, and He will care for us and comfort us in time of trial.

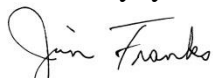
I truly hope you can look back on the festivals for 2017 and know that you were in the presence of God, that each time you knelt to pray God was with you. There will still be dark moments when we may feel all alone. I know—we went through that in the hospital waiting room, wondering what would happen to our daughter. The world stood still. I know that there are many of you who have experienced similar trials and even worse. There are some who have lost loved ones, and others who are suffering. But through it all, I am convinced that God has not deserted us, nor are we ever alone.

It is in the darkest hours that God promises to comfort us. Let's claim those promises as we look back on the 2017 festivals, outlining God's wonderful plan for all mankind.

I am finishing this letter on my way to South America. Sharron and I, along with Leon and Reba Walker, will be visiting brethren in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Peru. We will be gone for just over two weeks and three Sabbaths. I am scheduled for a sermon in Santiago, Chile, on the Sabbath of Nov. 4; a Bible study in Uruguay on Sunday, Nov. 5; a sermon in Bahia Blanca, Argentina, on the Sabbath of Nov. 11; a Bible study in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Sunday, Nov. 12; and finally, a sermon in Lima, Peru, on the Sabbath of Nov. 18, before heading home on Sunday, Nov. 19.

It will be a busy two weeks, but there is nothing we enjoy more than visiting brethren!

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,

  
Jim Franks