

CHURCH *of* GOD

A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION, INC.

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

September 6, 2018

Dear Brethren,

Can you believe it? By the time you receive this letter we will be within days of the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. Earlier in the year the festivals seem to stretch out over several days and weeks, but when you get to the final four, it all happens within three weeks. This year we have approximately 5,300 brethren in the U.S. registered for the Feast, and we expect another 5,000-plus to attend in areas outside the U.S. We have more than 40 Feast sites around the world. We also have a record number of U.S. members traveling overseas—more than 1,200. They will primarily be attending our sites in Canada, Italy, France, England and the Caribbean, with small groups attending in other locations. It is truly an exciting time of the year.

Like all of you, I have been thinking about and praying about this upcoming festival season. We have received a lot of good news this past year, but there have also been a number of challenges. We are well into the construction of our new office in McKinney, Texas. In the next four months it should be complete. Recently several amazing things have taken place regarding the building. In two cases, individuals who have no relationship with the Church have made major financial donations toward the building. These were blessings that we had not counted on, but greatly appreciate. Why would someone who has no relationship with the Church make a donation to the Church? In both cases it was because of the example of a member.

The apostle Paul wrote, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:14-15). Often we don’t realize the importance of our example as “lights in the world.” As I mentioned above, we have two concrete examples where, because of the example of a member, individuals chose to donate to the building—building materials in one case and a substantial cash donation in the other.

And it isn’t just with the building that we have heard some amazing stories involving members’ examples. One of the more recent stories, which has nothing to do with the building, involves the establishing of a COGWA congregation in one of the most populous cities in the world—Kolkata (Calcutta), India.

For more than a decade, our lone members in Kolkata were all from one family. Tarun and Seema Ghosh and their daughter Priscilla came into contact with the Church around 2003. Tarun was baptized in 2008, and his wife was baptized a few years later. In his job as an educator, Tarun interacts with many people, and several began asking him questions about his religion. The major religion in India is Hinduism, followed by Islam and (a distant third) Christianity. These people wanted to know more about Tarun’s beliefs. Before long, they were coming to his house on the Sabbath and listening to sermons. After a few months, they asked to join with Tarun as part of COGWA. This past summer David Baker, the regional director for India, Asia and the Philippines,

visited the group and made it official. Here is a picture of the 17 individuals now attending our newest congregation in Kolkata, India.



This brings me back to the upcoming festivals. We live in this world, but during the festivals we desire to come out of this world in order to truly understand and appreciate what the future holds for mankind. While attending the Feast, we will be interacting with new people—strangers, who are not in the Church. How will they see us? Are we truly lights shining in the world? In the next few weeks we will have the greatest opportunity to show the world what God’s way of life is truly like. Our examples will not go unnoticed.

I was a Festival coordinator for a Feast site on Cape Cod, located in the state of Massachusetts, back in 1981. It was our first year to use the housing and meeting facilities on the Cape, and we were expecting what was a small attendance back in those days, about 4,500 people. But with that number of people, we would have a large presence, since the primary tourist season on Cape Cod comes to an end in October, after Columbus Day.

It was my first Feast as a Festival coordinator. That Feast was wonderful, but there were a number of challenges since it was our first year in that location. I remember vividly receiving a call from the man who arranged all our housing (we hired a housing agent for that first year), and he asked me to accompany him to one of the hotels we had used that year. When we arrived at the hotel, we were met by the manager, and he showed me one of the rooms that a member family had occupied. The hotel room had been trashed. I was so apologetic and offered to pay for all the damages. The owner of the hotel refused. He just wanted me to see what had happened. But then he told me, “This is not typical of your people. Your members are the best group we have ever hosted on Cape Cod.”

Even though I was mortified by what I saw, I took comfort in the words of the owner—“Your members are the best group we have ever hosted on Cape Cod.” Over the next few years we developed a wonderful relationship with all the establishments on Cape Cod, and they were truly disappointed when we had to move the site to upstate New York because of the sale of the meeting facility.

As we all depart for the Feast, let’s keep in mind the impact statement we make because of our claim to be followers of Jesus Christ—Christians. This year we have a number of new sites where people will meet us for the first time. I pray that when we return home, the people from the area and the owners of the establishments will say, “This was the best group we have ever hosted!”

Please pray for God’s protection as we all travel to the Feast in a few days. I hope you have a wonderful Feast this year—the best ever! And please don’t forget our many shut-ins.

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,

Jim Franks