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### Festival crowds growing

MOUNT POCONO — Every year since 1967 the mass of World Wide Church of God members attending their festival in Mount Pocono has been increasing in numbers.

This year's eight-day meeting is no exception. More than 15,000 World Wide Church of God followers will attend the services at their festival site this year, compared to 13,500 who attended the services last October.

One of the big problems facing the religious following, attending the annual gathering from outside of the region, is where they can take up lodging for the eight days of prayer and conference.

Visitors from the World Wide Church of God to the Poconos represent 17 states in the Northeastern United States as well as portions of western Canada.

The annual eight-day affair is billed as a "spiritual as well as recreational" period and has consistently drawn more and more members for the World Wide Church since its initial area meeting in 1967, when 5,000 guests crammed into a circus tent located on the site of today's \$200,000 auditorium which seats approximately 15,000 people.

Because of the increased number of followers who will be at this year's festival, a survey of local resorts, hotels and motels was taken in order to find out how many World Wide Church of God members will be housed in their buildings for the duration of the conference.

Probably the most outstanding example of how the religious denomination affects business in the Poconos is the fact that Mount Airy Lodge has all of its 500 rooms booked to 1,200 people from the World Wide Church of God.

Mount Airy, famous for its big game entertainment, will close all of its night clubs and not feature one show during the eight days the World Wide Church of God members are being housed on its grounds.

The popular honeymoon resort will even be closed to newlyweds during the conference.

Another example of the need for rooms is the fact that World Wide Church of God members are willing to travel more than 20 miles from Le Chateau to the festival grounds.

Le Chateau will house 450 guests in 185 of their modern rooms.

An official at Pocono Crest estimates the hotel has reservations for 244 rooms which will house close to 425 people.

Motels and hotels in Stroudsburg also are benefiting from the World Wide Church of God festival.

The Sheraton Inn has had 124 of its 134 rooms reserved for 260 World Wide Church of God members two weeks previous to the festival opening.

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