

PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

TO THE MINISTRY OF THE
WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD



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FROM MINISTERIAL SERVICES

I'm very pleased to report that Mr. and Mrs. Mark Mickelson have become our newest additions to the U.S. field ministry. Mr. Mickelson will be moving from Pasadena, where he has served for the past five years as Fleet Manager, to his new assignment as ministerial trainee serving under Mr. Jeff McGowan in the Boise, Idaho and Baker and Ontario, Oregon churches. Mr. Mickelson graduated from Ambassador College in 1978, and his wife, Michelle, graduated in 1976. They were married in 1981. Both are enthusiastic about their new responsibilities and plan to arrive in Boise in early March. Mr. Dean May will assume the task of Fleet Manager.

As Passover approaches, all church pastors should be preparing the brethren for the Passover service. Many members are new and have never participated in a Passover service before. They, as well as other members, need to begin thinking seriously about the upcoming service and what it means. The Passover is a solemn assembly. Care and preparation must be taken to ensure that it be kept so. Remind the brethren a week or two ahead of time that there should be no visiting, talking, laughing, joking or conversation before or after the service. Afterward, everyone should depart quietly.

It would be advisable to reread Mr. Armstrong's material on the Passover in your black ceremony book a few weeks before Passover for other points you may want to give the brethren in preparation for the service.

The question often comes up about whether or not children, teen-agers, prospective members or interested unconverted individuals may attend the Passover service. Mr. Armstrong has instructed that only baptized members are to attend or participate in the Passover service, which is a sacred ceremony for Spirit-begotten children of God.

In the weeks immediately preceding the Passover, a few sermonettes and some sermons that clearly cover the meaning of the footwashing service, the bread and the wine should be assigned. God intends that we carefully and thoroughly remind His people about these important subjects at this time every year. We must never allow ourselves to feel that these topics have already been covered enough, or that it isn't necessary to "rehash everything again this year."

Ask God for interesting and creative ways to present His Word for the maximum clarity, impact and understanding of His people. But remember that God has ordained that we keep His feasts every year to keep us in remembrance of His plan. Never apologize for going back to the basics, especially when it comes to the festivals. The Apostle Peter certainly did not apologize for his repetition of God's truth. He said, "I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right...to stir you up by reminding you" (II Pet. 1:12-13, RAV). I think we all realize that Mr. Armstrong does not apologize for constantly reminding us of the basics of God's purpose and plan. We all need it!

On another subject, I am constantly reminded of the tremendous value that you wives are to your husbands' ministries. We can certainly appreciate God's vast wisdom in establishing the marriage relationship from the beginning, and the enormous benefit and blessing that relationship can be when God's laws are kept.

Your support of your husbands through encouragement, thoughtful advice and your example as Christian wives, plays a powerful role in backing God's Church as a whole. Thank you for your willingness to sacrifice your time for God's people, and even to sacrifice time away from your husbands when necessary. You don't have an easy calling, and often it may seem quite difficult to handle. But God is faithful, and He "is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love," as we're told in Hebrews 6:10. And indeed, your labor of love makes your husbands' ministries all the more effective and valuable to God and His Church. So thank you for your ongoing part in the calling God has given each of you in the work of His end-time Church!

Recent Ordination

During Sabbath services on February 2, Mr. Rolland Wile, who serves in the Franklin, Pennsylvania congregation, was ordained a local church elder. Hands were laid on Mr. Wile by church pastor Mr. Bill Jacobs.

International News

From Mr. Carn Catherwood 1984 proved to be a very good year for growth in all aspects of the work of God's Church in the Italian language. The beginning of 1985 portends even greater increase. January showed a healthy incoming mail figure--10,143, one of the strongest months to date. Responses to our READER'S DIGEST ad have topped the hoped-for 11,000 mark, with prospects of another thousand or so responses still to come. Our direct mail venture, though not completely mailed, has brought a respectable 4.0% return so far. We are planning for an even better response to further direct mailings scheduled for this year. The circulation figure for La PURA VERITA' had increased to 75,541 by the end of January--a 74.5% increase over January 1984. And our donor list dramatically increased by 25% in January!

The growth of the La PURA VERITA' list, as well as various means of advertising now being used, are having an effect in Italy. God is moving more and more people to become interested and we are receiving three to four visit requests every week. A visiting tour is planned for the latter half of February and another for April.

The small town of Fiuggi in the mountains near Rome will once again be a site for the Feast of Tabernacles. Most of the hotels used last year have agreed to give us accommodations again--at last year's prices! The town council and the hoteliers of Fiuggi are very much looking forward to having us back. Fiuggi will host approximately 700 Feastgoers in 1985.

Mr. Mike Caputo, a Canadian citizen who immigrated from Italy at age 14, has returned to Ambassador College, this time with his family, after having studied at the Pasadena campus for two years beginning in 1973. Mr. Caputo, along with his wife Leonilda and two children, Anthony and Julie, arrived in Pasadena in early January to resume his studies at Ambassador. If all goes well, they will relocate to Rome later this year, where he will be involved in service to the brethren and prospective members.

From Mr. Peter Nathan 1985 began at a steady pace for the office serving New Zealand and the South Pacific, with just under 5,000 items of mail received during January. The major factor affecting incoming mail was response to the November semiannual letter. We've now received 5,000 responses to Mr. Armstrong's letter, a return of 13%. First account income recorded a good increase of 11.1%.

January 14th saw the conclusion of another highly successful SEP camp on Motutapu Island. Some 122 campers and 72 staff enjoyed fine, warm weather throughout the 19-day camp. Six Ambassador College students and an Imperial Schools faculty member contributed greatly to the camp. Afterwards they enjoyed a brief tour of New Zealand.

On January 17th tropical cyclone Eric struck a devastating blow to the island nations of Vanuatu and Fiji, leaving 25 dead and 30,000 homeless. One Church family in Fiji had their home totally demolished and blown away, and another family's home was partially destroyed. In both cases, the families were living in company-owned houses. In the partially destroyed home, the walls collapsed in such a way that they covered the personal possessions of the family, shielding them from the fury of the winds and rain.

Cyclone Eric struck on Thursday night, and was known to be followed by two others feared to be of even stronger force. The brethren in Pasadena, alerted by our Fijian minister, Mr. Epeli Kanaimawi (who was on the Refresher at the time), and also the brethren in New Zealand were asked to pray about the situation.

The Eternal heard those prayers. On Saturday evening, the next cyclone hit Fiji, but with much less force than the first. The third cyclone suddenly disappeared. Our brethren in Tonga were also protected by God. The cyclones were heading towards Tonga, but veered away without causing significant damage. Auckland pastor Mr. Jack Croucher was immediately dispatched to Fiji. Mr. Croucher was able to use third tithe funds to quickly replenish the supplies of the few Church families who had suffered loss.

The following letter is from our only members in the devastated northern part of Vanuatu. It shows the powerful protection God afforded them.

I'm happy to say we are safe again after a hurricane has passed through Santo, and all the northern part of Vanuatu. It lasted for about three hours.... Most of the old people here had never seen the likes of it during their lifetimes. On the island of Pentecost the villages lost something like 3,400 houses. Nearly all the island people are without houses and all their gardens were wiped out. The northern part of Vanuatu has been declared a disaster area. Help with clothing, food and housing has been arriving here from the Australian and New Zealand governments. Nearly all the houses in Santo Town lost their roofs or were completely blown down--all around us. Only our house and our property (which is surrounded by a fence) were safe--even our fruit trees were safe. People keep on asking us, "Why was your area safe from the wind?" It made us know that we are the only people under God's protection here in Santo.

W. & C.D., Santo, Vanuatu

During January, our Business Manager Bill Hutchison and I traveled to Pasadena for the Regional Directors Conference. Mr. and Mrs. Hutchison stayed on afterwards for the 13th session of the Ministerial Refreshing Program.

The charts, diagrams and statistical reports prepared for the conference will be of use in February, too, as a visit to New Zealand is planned by Messrs. Don Mitchum and Bill Moreland, two BBDO executives from the USA, along with Director of Media Purchasing Mr. David Hulme. Meetings with our local advertising agency, Rialto Ltd., will shape our media plans for the rest of the year.

Mr. Gerald Waterhouse will also be arriving during February to take a tour of all the Churches in New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga. The brethren are very much looking forward to hearing his inspiring messages.

While Mr. Hulme and Mr. Waterhouse are here, I have arranged for a two-day Regional Ministerial Conference in late February. February is shaping up to be a very busy and exciting month!

Appreciation for Ministerial Refreshing Program III

Dear Mr. Armstrong:

I attended the eleventh session of the Refreshing Program in December. I returned to the churches in my charge feeling refreshed. Several of the members even commented to me that I looked refreshed.

Having the two weeks to put all duties aside and to concentrate on taking in spiritual knowledge is a boost to one's morale, but also of importance is the contact with other ministers. This renews the realization that we are not individuals working alone, but that we are a team. I am able to pray more meaningfully for my fellow ministers now. Thank you for giving us the opportunity of attending the program.

Carlton and Beverly Smith

Dear Mr. Tkach:

Dorothy and I have been reviewing our notes taken at the 10th session of the Ministerial Refreshing Program. We wish to convey to you our heartfelt appreciation for the tremendous amount of knowledge that was given to us. The classes were all outstanding. The material was presented in a very balanced way. Both of us feel that it was the most helpful and enjoyable Refreshing Program we have attended. Thanks to you and everyone who worked so hard to make our stay so pleasant and informative. We are anxiously awaiting the fourth MRP.

We also want to thank Mr. Armstrong and you for Dr. Hoeh's visit. It was a real boost for the churches and ourselves personally. The communication between Headquarters and the ministry has been improving steadily over the years. The unity we are enjoying now is certainly refreshing!

The congregations here in South Texas are solidly behind the Church of God and His Apostle, Mr. Armstrong. Our prayers are

for the growth of God's work according to His will, and His blessing and protection for Mr. Armstrong and those of you at Headquarters who directly assist him. Thank you personally for all the work you do on our behalf.

Bob and Dorothy Flores

Comments From Monthly Church Reports

From the United States

WASHINGTON, PA--JOHN DOBRITCH: The Church has very enthusiastically received information from the Refreshing Program regarding health, exercise and nutrition. Some of the long-time members said that they hadn't heard a sermon on nutrition in many years. New members were astonished that God has so much to say on the subject. Most have taken it to heart and have begun to make changes in their eating habits.

TUPELO, MS--ROGER WEST: We had an interesting experience with our newsstand program. One of our men was putting PTs in a stand at a truck stop when a man behind him asked for a PT. He then asked how he could get a stand in his store. He also had a friend who owned a store who would like a stand. That's the first time we've been asked to put in stands!

VICTORIA, TX--DENNIS VAN DEVENTER: Everyone is still talking about how great the Feazells' visit was. The members enjoyed meeting them, talking to them and having a special lunch of "snacks" for them. Thank you very much for sending them!

YOUNGSTOWN, OH--LLOYD BRIGGIE: Some parents are allowing their children to set the standards at home. There is a weakness with parents not "drawing the line" in a kind but strong way. Some have let their children "run loose" and have let go of the reins. I am taking the liberty to hold meetings with the parents once a month to help them. A number of mothers whose husbands aren't converted and single parents who have to work are having a more difficult time countering the influence of the world. Your prayers for the young people and parents are greatly needed and appreciated.

--Joe Tkach, Ministerial Services

UPDATE FROM MAIL PROCESSING

Multiple Thousands Reached Through "Gift Subscriptions"

One of the major methods God is using to reach people with the Gospel message is through gift subscriptions to The PLAIN TRUTH. For example, in 1984 267,000 subscribers asked us to send the PT to a friend or relative.

In order to ensure that these people wish to receive a full year's subscription, we send them a sample copy--the special 50th Anniversary edition. This magazine contains a reply card which the individual can return.

Over the past four years, more than 30,000 who received a sample copy have subscribed. Several hundred have gone on to become co-workers and donors, and 48 are now members.

Big Sandy WATS Experiences Sky-rocketing Growth!

Our WATS operation in Big Sandy continues to expand, providing essential backup to Pasadena. Seventy-five operators are regularly on duty during heavy periods of incoming calls. Big Sandy now answers about 45% of all calls. With additional computer terminals now available, more than half of all the calls they receive are processed by "direct terminal entry" via computer line hookup to the Church's main computer in Pasadena.

Without our Texas Telephone Response Department, we would be hard pressed to keep up with the ever-increasing response to "The WORLD TOMORROW." Since its inception, Big Sandy has taken over 200,000 calls--100,000 since the Feast.

Letters of Appreciation for Ministerial Visits

We continue to receive a growing number of visit requests. People who have been contacted by God's ministers often write to tell us how much they have been helped and encouraged. Not only are they impressed with the minister's thorough knowledge of the Bible, but also with his genuine, heartfelt concern. For many, their first contact with God's ministers is an inspiring and unforgettable experience, as the following letters show:

In light of Mr. Armstrong's "Personal" column in The GOOD NEWS where he made mention of ministers, we had brunch with one of your ministers. And I was (if I may use the word) impressed by his wide field of knowledge not only in the Bible, but the extension of it into the fields of human endeavor and his attention to the principles of success.

God created and desires us to succeed, yet we need to be taught. Here is a man, trained and dedicated to teaching us how to succeed in our lives, our marriages, our childrearing, our jobs; giving us the knowledge and counsel we need; helping us see where we are making our mistakes; spending his life to help us become obedient to God's laws. What a contrast to the "religious politicians" who are like the government politicians but only in a different field.

Having a true minister of the Living God near to call on is truly a great blessing and comfort; and to know he is continually improving himself by acquiring additional understanding and knowledge, which automatically makes him even more capable to help, is a continually increasing blessing. Thanks be to God for ministers of truth and knowledge, understanding and compassion. It was His idea and plan to send them, and we sure need them.

B.Y. (Yakima, WA)

I heard you for the first time on radio a long time ago. I then wrote and received some of your literature. For the first time I believed in God. All these years and many experiences later, I have come to realize that it is not just enough to believe, but I must obey. I am now taking the Bible course, studying really hard, praying hard and often.

Last night, I actually talked (via phone) to a minister of the Worldwide Church of God. I am waiting for a visit in my home and a chance to attend one of the meetings of the Worldwide Church of God and wish very soon to be baptized.

So sir, with tears in my eyes I am writing this letter to say thank you. Thank you so very much for obeying God so many years ago and working to get this Gospel to all the world.

M.A. (Mt. Airy, NC)

My husband and I are prospective members at the time of writing this letter, but by the time you receive it, we will have been baptized! With our baptism only a few days away, we felt this a good time to write and express our deep love and gratitude toward you for everything we learned through you.

We hope Ambassador College will continue to educate such fine ministers as the ones who have helped and instructed us along the way to our baptism.

Mr. & Mrs. J.C. (Amsterdam, NY)

When I talked with your minister, I was impressed with much of what he said. The most noticeable thing was that he pressed me to read and study my Bible and compare it with your literature to prove to myself whether your church really is God's Church. He also insisted that I wait until I had studied further before I even attend my first service, and said that I would not be considered for membership until I had attended for a sufficient period of time to be truly convinced that this was God's true Church and that I would be convinced enough to never again wish to change churches.

As someone who has changed churches four times in three years and been baptized into two of them, this was a refreshing approach. In the past, I've felt that I was being pushed to join, to meet some minister's quota of new members rather than being led into a congregation of believers with whom I would wish to remain for the rest of my life. Your minister gave me the feeling that he really cared.

The attitude of "study and wait till you're sure" is a much more comfortable and welcome one than that of "hurry up and join." It is an attitude I would expect to find in the true Church of God.

C.H. (Salem, OR)

--Richard Rice, Mail Processing Center