



October 21, 2004 • Vol. 1, No. 6

PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Greetings, ministers and wives!

I want to remind you of some new revelation God gave us last December, for the 14th anniversary of the Philadelphia Church of God.

We are in a wonderful and terrible spiritual war. God has given us a big job in the midst of dangerous times, and He says there will be times when it will be *normal* to be afraid (Ezekiel 2:6). We should *expect* situations that are unnerving. But God still expects us to send a powerful warning to His rebellious people.

Ezekiel 2:7 through Ezekiel 3:3 are specifically talking about the little book, *Malachi's Message*. God wants us to *eat* this message—thoroughly digest it (Ezekiel 2:8). I have recommended in the past that we should be reading *Malachi's Message* about twice a year. God has strong feelings about this: He wants us to *EAT IT UP!* *That message should be sweeter today than it was when we first read it! And it should be MORE BITTER today than when we first read it!* We should be *GROWING* in these godly emotions. That is what it will take to get this job done.

Ezekiel 3:11 shows that we are trying to reach people who are in captivity to the devil. *THAT'S BITTER!* Almost the whole Church of God has been taken captive by the most evil being in the universe! For the first seven years of our work, we tried to reach the Laodiceans, “them of the captivity” (verse 15).

But then, in verses 16-17, God gives a different commission altogether. At the end of that seven years, God says, *I, GOD, have made you a watchman unto the house of Israel—you are to give them warning FROM ME!* This change in commission is discussed in our Ezekiel booklet.

It was seven years into the PCG's existence that we began printing *Mystery of the Ages*. Notice: We didn't even become a watchman work until we had that book to give to the world! For the first seven years, we weren't a *watchman* to the Church. The Church doesn't need a watchman. But then came *Mystery of the Ages*, and A MAN was given the title of WATCHMAN.

BEING GOD'S WATCHMAN ISN'T ABOUT WORLD NEWS—IT'S ABOUT HEARING THE WORD AT GOD'S MOUTH! We must always put world news in that context. World news is nothing if you don't know WHAT GOD SAYS about it!

That's why *Mystery of the Ages* is so important: It puts everything else in the right *context*.

God speaks through *revelation*—not world news. But we can put the world news in context. Israel is about to be massacred. Our message is about *why* they must suffer. Our message is about *why* they need to REPENT. That's the truth from God's mouth!

IN THIS ISSUE

Church Administration	3
Media Services	4
Business Office	5
Mail Processing	6
Buildings and Grounds	8
For Wider Distribution	9
Ministerial Training	11

This work is about *saving life*. Our work is about the mindset of God—saving people, physically and spiritually. If people don't turn to God, they're going to die! And if we fail to warn them—if we don't deliver the message from God's mouth—the victims' blood is on our hands (verse 20).

Now notice: “And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house” (verse 22-24). What is this talking about?

“But thou, O son of man, behold, *they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them*, and thou shalt not go out among them” (verse 25). Someone is putting bands upon us, after God gave us this watchman commission. This is specifically referring to what happened in the midst of our court battle. For a time, our message was stopped. We got bound up in court. We couldn’t reach the world with this message!

“And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house” (verse 26). We weren’t a “reprover” for a while—because without Mr. Armstrong’s literature, we didn’t have anything to reprove with! At one point we were off television for several months. All we were able to do was talk and work within the house! Notice: GOD LET THIS HAPPEN. *I will make thy tongue cleave*, He says. GOD CLOSED OUR MOUTH! God shuts things down sometimes. He has His reasons—though we don’t see them all.

Then read the inspiring conclusion: “But when I speak with thee, I WILL OPEN THY MOUTH, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbear, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house” (verse 27). God gave us VICTORY! We received ownership of the copyrights of everything we were seeking. Armed with this arsenal of material, God instructs, *Go back to your watchman work to the world!*

Mr. Armstrong’s literature is a “THUS SAITH THE LORD.” It is the word from God’s mouth!

The lesson in all this is, if we don’t have a message, there is nowhere to go. IF THERE IS NO MESSAGE, THERE IS NO WATCHMAN!

Why is the watchman here? To spread God’s message! Without a message, he has no job!

Habakkuk backs up this prophecy. In the first chapter, the first four verses talk about our court battle. Verse 5 prophesies about our victory: “Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you” (verse 5). Then notice what *immediately* follows on from that: “For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs” (verse 6).

As the PCG is rising, so is the Holy Roman Empire! It has always been our commission to warn about that power. We *must* get *Mystery of the Ages* out there to people, and warn Israel that the beast power is about to crush them.

Our copyright victory is coupled with the rising beast in this passage for a reason. God is telling us, *You’ve had a wonderful victory in court. But don’t sit on your laurels—the beast is accelerating faster than you can imagine!*

We have a strong message for the nations of Israel and the world. Some people tell me I need to get stronger on TV. I think about this a lot. Did Mr. Armstrong ever get bombastic on TV? I ask you ministers to continually pray that God would give me the wisdom to know how strong I should get. GOD’S MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED!

But what a wonderful sign of how active God is in His Work. Christ is the Head. No man could orchestrate something like this. This prophecy in Ezekiel is a strong sign of how God guides His marvelous Work!

With love, in Christ’s service,



CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

CHANGES TO MYSTERY OF THE AGES

by Stephen Flurry

A former member of the PCG has accused the Church of deceptively altering the text of *Mystery of the Ages* because of a sentence we omitted from page 245 of the book when we reprinted it after the court case victory last year. In response to his criticism, which he has voiced in an e-mail sent to some of our members, let me first quote from the letter Mr. Armstrong sent to *Mystery of the Ages* recipients in 1985:

Dear Friend: Here is your copy of the book *Mystery of the Ages* that you requested. ... Since writing the book, I have written another booklet that well could be the opening chapter of this book. And indeed, may be in future editions. It is on the mystery of the Bible itself. This booklet is titled *The BIBLE—Superstition or Authority? ... and Can You Prove It?* Can you prove that the Bible is indeed the very Word of God, and the supreme authority in life, in right and wrong, by which every person ever born will be finally judged? I feel sure you will want to read this new booklet, especially in connection with *Mystery of the Ages*.

We review this letter in Fundamentals of Theology at Imperial College each year. It's an interesting letter because it reveals that Mr. Armstrong might have actually expanded *Mystery of the Ages* had he lived longer.

As we have said so many times before, *Mystery of the Ages* is like a magnificent summary of Mr. Armstrong's lifelong work and his many teachings. It's a MASTERPIECE! Even during the court case, we insisted that re-writing such a book ourselves would be unacceptable because of the inspiration behind the way that book was put together. But that doesn't mean every single word of it is infallible, as Mr. Armstrong himself said before the sophomore class at AC in 1985:

When the Bible speaks, that is God speaking, not a man. Now it's true Moses wrote the first five books. But it wasn't really Moses writing it. God was having him write it. And it was God writing it. But that was really inspired. And then when we come to prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and

then when we come to the New Testament books, God inspired them. They are the infallible words of God. This book is not. I don't make any such claim for this book whatsoever. But I think in a way God inspired it. But not in the sense that it is the Word of God. It's as God inspired Herbert Armstrong. And I tried to yield myself to him. And I hope I was able to yield myself, if not 100 percent, 97, and 98, and 99 percent.

Now the Tkach administration twisted and distorted those comments and used them to excuse their dishonest and doctrinally false edits of the book. Their "edits," if you can even call them that, led to the book being destroyed just two years after Mr. Armstrong's death!

It goes without saying that the PCG has done NOTHING like that whatsoever—NOTHING! The whole reason we fought for the book in court for six years is that we wanted to preserve the very message the Tkaches were bent on destroying!

The sentence we removed from our 2003 version is found on page 245 of the older one, where it said, "No prophets are mentioned as having either administrative, executive or preaching functions in the New Testament Church."

We removed that sentence from the 2003 version, not because we are doing away with Mr. Armstrong's teachings, but because of what GOD HAS ADDED TO THE CHURCH since Mr. Armstrong died—the revealed truth that THERE IS, *in fact*, a prophet *guiding the Church* today who also serves an *administrative* and *executive* position within the Church. God did not reveal this to Mr. Armstrong before he died, just as He didn't reveal the specifics about the Laodicean rebellion—for obvious reasons.

Anyone familiar with the PCG knows that, from the very beginning with *Malachi's Message*, there were certain prophecies revealed and explained differently from the way Mr. Armstrong understood them. The teaching about the prophesied "man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2 is one such example. And there are several others. Mr. Armstrong knew the Laodicean era would emerge at some point, but he certainly didn't know many of the specifics concerning that era, like who would lead it, and so on.

In like manner, *there were no prophets* in the Church during the Philadelphia era—*throughout the entirety of Mr. Armstrong's ministry*—but God has since revealed

that THERE IS one leading His people during the Laodicean era.

Now we could have attempted to write another section to be included in *Mystery of the Ages* that would reflect this new revelation, but we felt it best to preserve the text as closely as possible to the original and simply strike that sentence and then let our other literature, like *That Prophet*, reflect the Church's new teaching on the subject.

In fact, the next time we print *Mystery of the Ages*, we will also cut a parenthetical phrase found on page 350—one that we overlooked last year. Again, in reference to the position of prophet, Mr. Armstrong wrote, “*of which there are none in God’s Church today since the Bible for our time is complete.*” Again, there is a prophet leading God’s Church today.

Other edits made in the 2003 version of *Mystery of the Ages* have updated certain statements. For example, on page 298, when Mr. Armstrong talked about what would happen in the latter days, we omitted the following line: “... *actually within the next two decades—this last half of the twentieth century!*” That, of course, has since passed.

On page 99, where Mr. Armstrong asked, “Can human life on earth survive even through the short remainder of this twentieth century?” we changed it to: “Can human life on earth survive *past this present generation?*”

Now when we printed the book at the outset of the court case in 1996, we didn’t make even the slightest

changes to the text simply because the *Worldwide Church of God* still owned the copyright. We were quite satisfied with just reprinting the book in its exact original form, as printed in 1985.

But since we now own the copyright, it’s different. Whenever possible, we will strive to keep all our literature—including *what we obtained in the court case*—constantly updated and doctrinally accurate when it comes time to reprint anything.

The new correspondence course, for instance, will have some major updates and improvements since we are working with text that, in some cases, was produced 40 years ago.

Obviously, though, with literature written by Mr. Armstrong or my father, we go to great lengths to preserve the text as near as possible to its original form—and, of course, any significant changes must receive final approval from THAT PROPHET.

In the case of *Mystery of the Ages*, while that book was clearly Mr. Armstrong’s best work, it *was not infallible*, as Mr. Armstrong himself said. And had he lived on for years after it was first published, even he would have updated the text to make sure it continually squared with the “present truth” God keeps revealing (2 Peter 1:12).

The big difference with all these edits and updates, of course, is that the “present truth” always builds on top of the “old truth”—it doesn’t undermine and destroy the sure foundation as the Laodiceans attempted to do after Mr. Armstrong died.

MEDIA SERVICES

By Andrew Locher

THE KEY OF DAVID—BRITAIN

Alex Harrison and member James Leigh (from Cyprus) have been working with representatives from BBDO, a prestigious global media agency, for several months in an effort to secure airtime for our program throughout the United Kingdom and the continent of Europe.

Considerable effort has been undertaken to secure the business arrangements with the media agencies that feel quite comfortable in their ability to find quality airtime. After much negotiation, Mr. Harrison (with Mr. Flurry’s approval) has agreed to final terms with the BBDO. Now the agency will be negotiating with a variety of stations to secure the best airtime.

We feel confident the program will be on the air by the end of this year. Though our focus has been primarily on the UK, we are also working options on the con-

tinental as well. We believe it will actually be much easier to find quality stations at reasonable rates throughout Europe. Our biggest challenge has always been Britain, and we believe we are working a good lead right now.

These new future contracts throughout Europe will certainly tax our Foreign Language Translation (FLT) department to produce the PCG’s inventory of literature in various languages, but with the addition of student Edwin Trebels working for Mr. Wik Heerma, we hope to add to our growing inventory of FLTs to offer those who respond to the program.

THE KEY OF DAVID—KHOUSTON, TEX.

Another Texas station has been added to our line-up of stations carrying *The Key of David*. Beginning December 5, the program will begin airing on KHOU—the CBS af-

affiliate in Houston, Tex. This powerful station reaches the entire Houston market, consisting of nearly 1.9 million households, or 4 million additional potential viewers.

We were able to acquire this time at a reasonable rate, but are most excited about the time of broadcast. The program will air right after the top rated religious TV program in the U.S. and right before the National Football League pre-game show hosted by CBS. Both the lead-in and the lead-out are very strong, which should deliver a sizable audience!

The program will air Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. on this CBS station. According to the Nielsen ratings, there are nearly 50,000 households tuned in to the program that airs just prior to our new time, so we should have tremendous viewership—and hopefully tremendous response!

THE KEY OF DAVID SCHEDULE

The schedule below applies to all stations in the United States, Canada and our website. Stations throughout Australasia and the Caribbean follow a schedule that is one week behind the U.S. and Canada due to shipping delays. The Philippines, South Africa and Malta all follow schedules that are a few weeks behind the U.S. and Canada for the same reason.

Program Title: *The King of the South* (Repeat)

Airdate: October 24

Literature Offered: *King of the South*

Synopsis: *America, Britain and their allies are presently in a war against terrorism. It's going to be a long, hard war. Can they achieve victory? Or will they be defeated? There are sobering answers to these questions, and they are found in both history and Bible prophecy! This week on Gerald Flurry discusses the ongoing war against terrorism.*

We begin our New Season of Programming for the last program of October 2004.

Program Title: *The Human Mind*

Airdate: October 31

Literature Offered: *What Science Can't Discover About the Human Mind*

Synopsis: *Many today believe that the more knowledge man obtains, the more problems will be solved. A quick look at recent history shows that is not true. More knowledge has brought about more evil. Today, man has the knowledge to be able to destroy every human on this earth! Why this paradox? Man is missing the basis of all true and right knowledge. This week Gerald Flurry discusses what science can't discover about the human mind.*

BUSINESS OFFICE

By Andrew Locher

We are busily processing the holy day offerings, in addition to the regular weekly contributions made to the Church during the Feast while the offices were closed. This is one of the most exciting weeks to work in the accounting department as most of the staff is mobilized in an effort to process and bank the generous contributions of the brethren from the fall holy day season.

Within the next few issues of the PGR, we will report on the amount of the holy day offerings in relation to past contributions.

This week has also brought in over \$50,000 worth of bequest contributions from a few different estates. Though we had a short period of time in which bequest income was down, we are once again banking some sizable deposits as a result of bequests.

Quarterly contribution statements will be mailed next week for all contributors in the United States and Canada for the quarter ending September.

FESTIVAL OFFICE

The month after the Feast of Tabernacles is spent in re-organizing supplies disbursed to the various sites, processing event payments, consolidating reports and analyzing the positive and negative comments about each Feast site. We are happy to report an overwhelming amount of positive reports.

We did have some problems at various sites, but for the most part those problems were small compared to the multitude of blessings. We will spend the next few weeks analyzing and working with Mr. Flurry to improve the Feast experience for the brethren as we prepare for Feast 2005!

I want to personally thank the ministry for the positive example and encouragement for the brethren as we work to provide the best Feast experience possible. We understand that it is not the Millennium yet, but we do work hard to try to create an atmosphere that God can

bless. Without a doubt, the ministry that serve during the Feast play an absolutely critical role in serving the brethren with a positive example to help them envision our lives in the coming World Tomorrow! Thank you once again for your hours of work, and sacrifice, and the joyful approach you have exemplified before the brethren. We certainly appreciate it, and I know God has enriched the brethren's experiences through your example!

SATELLITE TRANSMISSIONS

This year marked the smoothest transmissions of Mr. Flurry's sermons. We added a few sites this year that we had only provided phone-connection to in the past. It is obviously a highlight for everyone in the world to hear Mr. Flurry, and it is an added bonus for the brethren to be able to see him as well.

Ron Fraser and his staff of Carlos Heyer, Angelica and Marcella Luna contributed greatly to this year's program. With their assistance we were able to add To-

bago, Peru and Colombia to the satellite transmissions. Though we were not able to get the picture into Guatemala this year, we will work toward those ends next year. The Gautemalans were able to listen to the headquarters Spanish translation of Mr. Flurry's messages live this year over the phone.

It really is a marvelous effort that brings all of the sites on line. From the brethren that help us with this project, through the coordination efforts and technological assistance of PanAmSat, we were able to reach over 95 percent of God's people this year with the sound and picture of Mr. Flurry. Considering the fact that most of those volunteers who assist with this program don't do this type of thing throughout the year, it is a miracle to watch it all unfold, and this year, more than in years past, it worked without hitch—truly inspiring! Again, many thanks to those who contributed time and energy toward this project that made it so successful for the brethren.

MAIL PROCESSING

By Andrew Locher

CALL CENTER

With a limited staff, we attempted to answer inbound telephone calls to our advertised toll-free numbers throughout the Feast (with the exception of holy days). Student volunteers answered over 2,000 calls throughout the week. We also had the assistance from some of our in-home WATS operators who took phonecalls here at the headquarters call center. Altogether, we were able to answer 78 percent of all incoming phone calls during the Feast.

We are nearing our first full year back on television. Soon we will be able to make more meaningful comparisons between call volume we experience each month compared to the same month of the previous year. Television response continues to be quite strong, even though we have had to air more repeats than we normally would because of the Feast.

On the next page is a chart comparing our summer months (June through September) from 2002, 2003 and 2004 to show the increase in the number of calls we are currently taking.

As is clearly obvious, we have definitely experienced an increase number of calls this summer compared to the previous two years. This past summer brought a 28 percent increase over call volume last summer, which can be explained by the fact we are on television now,

and we were not last summer. But even if you compare the years of 2002 to 2004, we still show a cumulative 19% increase!

The month of October continues the upward trend.

MAIL DEPARTMENT

The mail department returned from the Feast to about 20,000 literature requests. With the continual increase in requests, we're interested to see how quickly the backlog can be satisfied. Prior to the Feast we were processing approximately 8,000 pieces of mail a week, some of which may have included two or three pieces of literature. A work party or two may be scheduled over the next two weeks to help move the backlog. We are finding it difficult to fulfill the growing requests, but amazingly, the job gets done. Most production-oriented businesses use the adage, "Where there's a will—there's a way!" But we're trying to follow; "Where there is faith, relax and let God find a way!" Sometimes it is truly miraculous how we can keep up with the volume having only two full-time employees and a handful of part-time students. What a wonderful Work we are a part of!

The students continue to be instrumental in our efforts. Apart from the two students who work in the mail department full time, we have three other students

who work 10 to 12 hours a week. The additional 30 to 36 man hours have proved critical—especially as we run up to deadlines. Apart from fulfilling literature requests, these students help update address and subscription information in the database. Prior to the release of one of our magazines, there is usually a rush to add new subscribers and make necessary changes to bad addresses or subscribers who have relocated. Each month, we may have to change 3,000 to 4,000 bad addresses and renew or add subscriptions for another 15,000 to 20,000. Some of the changes are made throughout the month but most are done within the last several work days prior to the magazine release. It's a daunting task that brings together several of our full-time headquarters' staff and part-time students.

Sunday is a HUGE DAY for the mail department. Currently there are approximately 20 people assigned to WATS on Sunday morning. While not taking calls, the majority of these operators, who tend to be students, are packaging mail. From 7 a.m. till about noon, we can usually pack close to 4,000 pieces of mail. This Sunday morning push, which is again facilitated by students, is crucial in helping the mail department stay on top of the growing requests.

-Mark Saranga

NEW INTERNATIONAL COURIER

Our international mail service can be broken down into two parts—the circulation portion, which involves the magazine distribution, and the international mail, which includes all books, booklets and other miscellaneous literature originating in Edmond from the MPC.

As many of our international ministers are aware, we

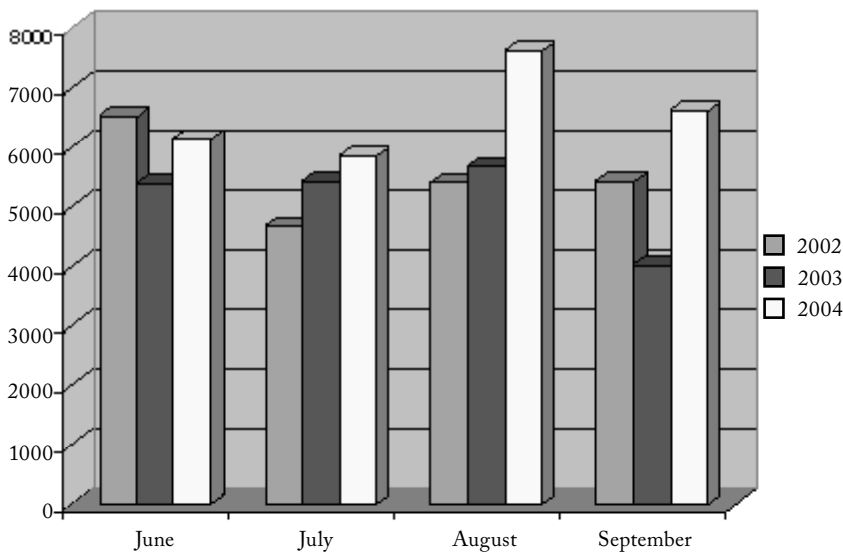
have struggled to find mailing solutions for our international subscribers and members. In the past we've experienced delayed delivery times for our literature. Specific problem areas were the Caribbean, Mexico and South America. What should take three weeks or 15 work days to deliver has taken as many as 8 to 10 weeks, which is unacceptable, especially when considering the urgency of our message. Our previous international courier, DHL, could not always explain the delays, which is also unacceptable. At times our DHL representative, who was an upper-manager for the company, was at a loss. Due to the problems we were experiencing, we were forced to seek a change, but making a change from DHL to another international courier was not an easy task to contemplate. Our circulation needs are unique—having magazines printed at various locations around the country and being sent to dozens of international locations in different quantities. Over the years DHL made the circulation job easier as they became familiar with our magazines and our circulation process. DHL also provided us with reasonable rates; going with another international courier meant probably doubling or tripling our international mailing costs.

Due to the continued delays, we chose to contract with a different courier for our international mail being sent out from Edmond and stay with DHL for our circulation needs—at least until God could help us find the right courier and the right solution.

Toward the end of the summer, God finally provided the right solution. Our DHL representative, whom I'd consider one of the most communicative, accommodating and diligent people to work with, left DHL. Because of previous acquaintances, he chose to go with International Bonded Couriers (IBC), an international mail service which specializes in service to the Caribbean and South America. IBC was established in the 1970s as a regional courier service to the Caribbean and South America, but now services all parts of the globe.

IBC seems to be the perfect solution to our international needs. Our representative is familiar with our special circulation needs and processes, and IBC has an excellent history in dealing with our problem regions. Another wonderful aspect of this miracle God provided is the cost. Our representative has kept us at the same pricing structure for most of our mailing needs. We're receiving better, more reliable and dependable service

Call Volume



at no additional charge. In some cases, especially international shipping, IBC is saving us money.

Thank you all for your continued prayers! The mes-

sage we're supporting is urgent and we're so grateful God is providing the means to deliver that message in an expedient, cost-effective manner.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

By Wayne Turgeon

HALL OF ADMINISTRATION

Finally, just before the Feast of Tabernacles, we received a long-awaited telephone call from the State Fire Marshall's Office informing us of approval for construction to begin on our Hall of Administration. The call was received by Roger Brandon at 2:30 p.m. September 27.

It was on this same day that the headquarters office complex, as well as the home of Joel Hilliker, were discovered to be in a state of flooding! At headquarters, a water filter had burst some time over the weekend which resulted in considerable flooding of the E and D units at our headquarters complex. A few hours later, it was discovered a broken water line at the Hilliker's home also had flooded portions of their home.

We were able to work with a professional firm that specializes in water damage to clean up the mess at both locations. The process took the better part of a week, but headquarters has been restored to its former condition (it will be at least a few more weeks before repairs will be finished at the Hilliker home).

There can be no doubt that Satan was upset with the multitude of positive advances for God's Work leading up to the Feast—especially the long-awaited approval from the fire marshall.

Throughout the Feast, the Church continued to receive quotes for pricing of the Hall of Ad construction. We will probably break ground next week as Rob Winn

is tied up at the moment trying to install the water line extension on Faculty Row before Oklahoma Natural Gas installs their line. But everything is in place for construction to begin!

GENERAL CAMPUS PROJECTS

We have been finishing up the interior of the new library trailer in anticipation of the relocation of the IC library. This temporary facility will expand our current library for students and faculty until we can relocate to the new Hall of Administration library.

A donated dump-trailer and communications tower arrived Thursday from California. These are currently located outside the maintenance building. The tower will provide two-way communication between the maintenance department and student laborers throughout the campus. In addition, we hope to add a low powered FM radio station to the tower and associated control room. We hope to have the tower erected by the Ministerial Conference.

There is an increased sense of urgency in the department since we returned from the Feast. The announcement by Mr. Flurry of the fire marshall's approval was met with excitement and we all arrived back and hit the ground running knowing that there is so much to accomplish in a short span of time.

FOR WIDER DISTRIBUTION

HOW TO OPEN AND CLOSE SERVICES WITH PRAYER

by Craig Winters

Leading in an opening or closing prayer for a service in God's Church is a serious responsibility. You are talking directly to God on behalf of the entire group assembled.

Study the following instructions, familiarizing yourself with each point. Review them from time to time to ensure you are ready whenever called upon to lead the prayer properly.

PRACTICE

If we are close to God in our personal prayer lives, on a daily basis, we are accustomed to addressing God openly, fervently and sincerely. In a congregational prayer we are doing very much the same thing, except now we are addressing our Father about those things which are appropriate for that service and the entirety of the group we are speaking for.

In our homes we should be leading our families in asking God's blessing on meals and other activities. If at all possible we should attend Spokesman Club.

NOT MEMORIZED OR REHEARSED

You should allow God to inspire you even as you pray to Him. Don't repeat a memorized or rehearsed prayer. Do not use notes or read your prayer. Avoid vain repetitions or repeating words or phrases. Some use "Father" or some other title as a filler while they think of what to say next. If necessary, rather pause while gathering your thoughts.

ADDRESS GOD FROM EVERYONE

This is a prayer to the Creator—not the congregation. Include the audience in your praise, thanks and requests: You should not be using terms like *I* or *me* or *mine*, etc. You are leading it, but this is *everyone's* prayer.

YOUR APPROACH

Your approach to the lectern should be discreet. Move with a minimum of noise or "show." Be reverent in your approach, return and attitude. You should be entering the stage area during the last line of the last stanza. At the end of the hymn you should only be a few feet away from the lectern, so as the song leader steps back, you can step forward.

DELIVERY

Remember you are LEADING the congregation. Don't begin speaking immediately upon arriving at the lectern but pause, looking at the audience. Then bow your head. By this the brethren will know to do the same.

Be aware where the microphone (if any) is and speak toward it even if you must raise your head up a little. THE CONGREGATION *MUST* HEAR YOU. Don't speak so close to the microphone as to cause a puffing sound when your exhale of air hits it. Do not mumble. Speak distinctly in a strong but not overly loud voice.

Don't be theatrical or showy. Avoid archaic "King James"-style language such as *thee*, *thy*, *thou* and *thine*.

Avoid overly flowery language or a show of your vocabulary. Be sincere, straightforward and unaffected. Get your mind off yourself. Be confident without being conceited. Avoid false humility or an emotional display.

CONTENT

An opening prayer should be about 1 to 1½ minutes long. The closing prayer should be about 1½ to 2 minutes.

You have NOT been assigned a sermonette. Do not sermonize. Do not get into controversial subject matter and do not condemn other churches in your prayer. Don't express personal opinions or say anything other than what is a standard Church of God prayer. Keep the prayer positive, encouraging and uplifting.

OPENING PRAYERS

■ The primary purpose of the opening prayer is to ask God's inspiration on all aspects of the service, especially the messages. Ask for God's presence sanctifying the meeting. Ask that everything would be done to His honor and glory.

■ Ask God to speak through His servants to provide the congregation what it needs most in the sermon and sermonette. Ask God to bless the hearing and understanding as well.

■ Be thankful. Express gratitude for being able to meet in peace, for the meeting hall, or for other ways God is blessing his Church (Ephesians 5:20).

■ It is appropriate to ask for God's blessing upon those who cannot attend for reasons of illness or great distance.

■ Be brief and to the point. The opening prayer is just that—it is meant to open services.

CLOSING PRAYERS

■ The primary purpose of the closing prayer is to thank God for what He has provided and to ask His continued blessing.

■ Thank God for the spiritual food and inspiration He has provided and for the opportunity to meet together as God's family for instruction and for fellowship.

■ You can *briefly* mention the main point of the sermonette and sermon. In no way add additional points to the messages or correct or critique what was said. Ask God to help the congregation achieve the objectives talked about by the speakers.

■ Mention important areas *brought out during announcements* such as news or illnesses within the Church or other important points about God's Work.

■ The closing prayer should include asking God's blessing on the afternoon or evening meal as well as the fellowship and activities during the remainder of the day.

■ Ask for God's protection as brethren travel home and ministers travel to other congregations.

These points are given as guidelines and are not a set of rigid rules. If you are called upon to lead an opening or closing prayer, thank God for the opportunity to serve and be sure your prayer is one to which the whole congregation can say "Amen."

MINISTERIAL TRAINING SERIES

HOW TO CONDUCT PROPER AND EFFECTIVE IN-HOME VISITS PART ONE: WHY VISIT?

by Dennis Leap

Herbert W. Armstrong taught that the Church had two main commissions. The first commission was to preach the gospel. The main responsibility for this job was assigned specifically to the apostles. Mr. Armstrong taught that the word *apostle* means “one sent forth to proclaim and preach.” All the members of the Church were called to help support the message being delivered by the apostle. Mr. Armstrong also taught that the ministerial rank of preaching elder through evangelist had the responsibility to preach the gospel locally. Mr. Armstrong believed, and the PCG fully agrees, that he fulfilled the end-time prophecy concerning the gospel as outlined in Matthew 24:14. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God has been preached around the world.

THE SECOND COMMISSION

Mr. Armstrong also taught that the second commission given to the church was to “feed the flock”—the members of God’s Church. Mr. Armstrong based his belief about our second commission on the following scriptures: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-20). These verses have been grossly misinterpreted by the so-called Christian ministers of today. Many “evangelists” have used these verses to justify their altar-calling and soul-saving campaigns. Many have used these scriptures to spread their false gospel, using missionaries to Africa and other Third World countries. God is not trying to save the world now.

Mr. Armstrong wrote in *Mystery of the Ages*, “To the shocking surprise to nearly every reader of this volume, I will state first what the Church was not and is not. It is not the instrumentality by which God is trying to ‘save the world.’ Few may realize it, but Jesus made no attempt to gain converts or to invite people to ‘give their hearts to him’ or to ‘accept him as their personal savior” (page 200). The commission Jesus Christ commanded

in Matthew 28:18-20 does not apply to the world in general but ONLY to those God the Father calls (John 6:44). These verses apply specifically to the Church. Christ commanded the original disciples to teach those to be called out “whatsoever I have commanded you.” So as Christ’s faithful ministers,, we are required to teach God’s *called-out* people the law, traditions and elements of character that Christ originally taught the disciples.

The Philadelphia Church of God has enjoyed remarkable success in conducting the first commission. Our message warns the Laodiceans, the modern nations of Israel, and the Gentile world of the coming Tribulation, and prophecies again the message proclaimed by Herbert Armstrong (Ezekiel 33:7; Revelation 10:11). However, while the “good news” about Christ’s Second Coming and the establishment of the Kingdom of God is spread throughout our message, the emphasis is on THE WARNING. This commission is being carried out powerfully through the *Key of David* broadcast, the *Philadelphia Trumpet* magazine and our other literature.

IN-HOME VISITING—A POWERFUL TEACHING TOOL

The PCG has the same second commission as that of Mr. Armstrong. We too must feed the flock. Jesus Christ told Peter three times to “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). At headquarters, we are working diligently to fulfill our second commission to “feed the sheep” through the *Royal Vision* and by distributing sermon and Bible study tapes. These materials are a spiritual lifeline for thousands of scattered Philadelphians. Mr. Flurry has also developed an effective local Church visiting program. In the U.S., during the holy day seasons, speakers are sent out from headquarters to the local regions. In addition, our U.S. and international regional directors schedule regular visits throughout their regions. Many of our local elders are also assisting with local Church visits.

There is another aspect to this second commission that I believe we ministers must focus on, especially in this last hour. I believe we need to add a concentration on in-home visiting. Here’s why. Visiting a Church area on

a weekend, giving a sermon and a Bible study and having a potluck are all very uplifting to the brethren. This kind of activity can sustain a local Church for a while. However, still more is needed if our members are truly going to overcome their problems and grow in character. All of our members need *personal, private attention* from their minister. Our members need to be discussing their problems with a minister. If they don't have access to us, they will discuss their problems with someone else!

The Apostle Paul used in-home visiting as a powerful teaching tool. We must learn to do the same. Luke records these statements by Paul: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. but have shown you, and have taught you publicly. AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:19-21, emphasis mine).

God's people need instruction as to their stupendous future. Oftentimes this must be handled personally. Remember the central purpose for the Church is to train kings and priests to rule under Christ. Every member will have significant responsibility in the World Tomorrow.

Mr. Armstrong wrote in *Mystery of the Ages*, "And just as God has not created all at once, but in successive stages, so he is bringing salvation to the world in successive stages. The Church is a necessary instrumentality preparatory to, and in order to, bring salvation to humanity. Therefore, once again, let it be emphasized that the purpose of the Church is not merely to give salvation to those called into the Church, but to teach and train those predestined and called into the Church as instruments God shall use in bringing the world to salvation" (page 228).

PERFECTING THE SAINTS

The brethren receive formal instruction on the Work and their future role at Sabbath services and Bible studies. By visiting our members, the ministry can assist a member in taking the formal instruction and making it more personal. Our job as ministers goes far beyond preaching and teaching at services and Bible studies.

Paul wrote the Ephesians on the purpose for the ministry: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the *perfecting of the saints*, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Paul states that the ministry is given to the saints for their "perfecting." This word in the Greek

is *katartismos* and means COMPLETE FURNISHING. The word *perfecting* means far more than just instruction, encouragement or inspiration. It means that the ministry must *work with* the members to help them overcome their problems and sins. Helping to perfect the saints is hard work. But it is a work that produces incredible joy in the member and the minister.

Mr. Armstrong also wrote, "Now why the Church? Christ came also to call out selected and chosen ones from Satan's world to turn from Satan's way into the way of God's law and to qualify to reign with Christ when he comes to replace Satan on the throne of the Earth. Those called into the Church were called not merely for salvation and eternal life, but to learn the way of God's government and develop the divine character during this mortal life in the Church age" (ibid., page 201). Resisting Satan and following God is a daily challenge. Most all of our sermons and Bible studies that we prepare for our flocks should reflect the subjects of overcoming sin, building character and training for the future! Warm, family-type discussion, in the member's own home environment, can help make those sermons, Bible studies and the Bible itself more applicable to the member's particular life and problems.

Think about this for a moment: Giving a sermon or Bible study requires us to speak for everyone in attendance. A balanced sermon or study should include points that are meaningful for the youth, teens, young adults, middle-aged and elderly. For some subjects obviously this will not always be possible. A sermon should never single out one individual and his or her particular problem. However, the in-home visit provides us with the opportunity to speak more specifically to an individual member. At times, all of our members will need personal correction. As much as possible, it is best to correct someone privately in their own home. Of course, correction must only be done in love by men who are spiritually mature (Galatians 6:1).

Combining local Church visits with in-home visits leaves a longer-lasting impact on our members. It is this kind of contact that builds and strengthens their spiritual endurance. Brethren who experience effective and positive in-home visits have a greater ability to withstand trials and tests. Our PCG members are in critical need of this kind of contact with the ministry.

MINISTER'S VISIT SHOWS LOVE

Christ said "Fear not. little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). "Little flock." No other words can best describe God's faithful people at this time in Church history. The PCG

is truly Christ's little flock. We are some few thousand people out of what used to be to 130,000. But we are Christ's and God the Father's flock. This fact is truly encouraging.

We all recognize that the Laodicean ministry has seriously damaged the unity of the body of Christ. We must realize that they have also destroyed the security and stability of the flock. Some of our members are still in shock because of what ministers did to them—personally and to others in their congregations. What we are experiencing now is one of the worst times in Church history. Thankfully it is the last time anything like this will happen again. This fact alone requires that all PCG ministers *use extreme patience, sensitivity and love when dealing with a member.*

Many of our members who used to meet in large groups now meet in much smaller groups. Many have lost friends and family. Some even must go it alone, only having weekly tapes and literature for support. Many of our members feel isolated and alone.

Christ's special message to the Church is "fear not." This is the message we as ministers must carry to our people. We must realize that it is hard for our people NOT to be afraid today. Being so scattered, our members are easy prey for Satan's attackers. Even some false brethren have entered our congregations, stirring up doubt and controversy and causing the sheep to be unsettled. The best way we can ward off the effects of Satan's attacks from false brethren is through our own personal attention. We must help carry Christ's message of "fear not" to each member. Our physical presence in their homes does much to ease their fears. Our visiting them shows how much we love and care for them.

The fact that our members are scattered also requires that the ministry make some additional sacrifice. Gone are the days where most of the members we are responsible for are located in close proximity to each other. We must put in some extra hours and travel time. This we should do willingly and lovingly and at the least cost possible.

Peter wrote to the elders under him, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:2-4). We all need to ask ourselves, do we willingly and thoughtfully work with the members that Christ has placed under our responsibility? Feeding the flock willingly and thoughtfully shows great love for them.

STRONG MEMBERSHIP—STRONG WORK

In addition to all of the above, one of the most important reasons for visiting the brethren is to keep their hearts and minds focused in this Work of God. Remember, their very salvation depends upon how well they do their part in this Work.

Mr. Armstrong wrote, "For that training—that spiritual development of God's character. God has given his Church a dual responsibility:

"1) 'Go ye into all the world' and proclaim the good news—announcement—of the coming Kingdom of God.

"2) 'Feed my sheep.'

"But in feeding the 'sheep,' developing in them God's spiritual character, God has given them their part in supporting and backing the great commission: 'Go ye into all the world.'

"This first and great commission was given to the apostles. To a lesser extent evangelists were used in carrying forth the message. Other leaders—ordained ministers—were stationary, yet even the local pastor of a church may hold evangelistic services in his area—not the 'soul-saving crusade' type, but lectures announcing and proclaiming as a witness the coming Kingdom of God (the true gospel)!

"The entire great commission—proclaiming the good news of the coming Kingdom, and 'feeding the sheep'—is a combined administration and function of the Church.

"The individual lay member has his vital part in proclaiming the good news (gospel) to the world. How? Not by going out and himself proclaiming Christ's message to the neighborhood or to the world. ...

"Notice a scriptural example:

"Peter and John had been proclaiming the message at the temple in Jerusalem. A miracle had been performed by Peter, and a large crowd had gathered. As a result, Peter and John were thrown in prison overnight and severely threatened. Their lives were in danger. They were unnerved.

"They went immediately upon release to the lay brethren (Acts 4:23). They needed the backing, support, encouragement of the brethren. They fervently prayed! Peter and John sorely needed this loyalty, backing and the prayers of the lay members. They were all a team together! ...

"The author, Christ's apostle, can say emphatically that the apostles, evangelists, pastors and elders could not carry on the Work of God without the loyal backing and continual encouragement of the lay members.

"Neither can the individual lay member develop and

build within him God's holy, righteous and perfect character without the operations of the apostle, [prophet,] evangelists, pastors and elders. All these various members God has set in His Church are interdependent—mutually dependent on one another. They form a team—an organized spiritual organism—utterly different from any secular and worldly organization!" (ibid., pages 265-268).

TEACH LOYALTY

Mr. Armstrong made God's purpose for the Church very clear. We must help God's people live up to their specific purpose—backing and supporting this Work! Our people also need to learn how to be loyal to this Work and ministry in the face of persecution.

Unfortunately, many rumors and accusations have been spread about Mr. Flurry and other PCG ministers. More accusations will come. Of course, no minister or human being is perfect. As Paul states in Romans, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). However, it is our job as ministers, especially the field ministers, to always be upholding the good reputation of the headquarters ministry, the regional directors and, in fact, all other ministers. Our brethren tend to develop favorites in the ministry. This is always very dangerous.

We need to help our people focus on the message and the fruits of the ministry. Jesus taught, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matthew 7:16). As men, ministers make mistakes. When we do fall short this naturally disappoints the people. However, when our people are focused on the message and aware of our fruits, mistakes are quickly forgiven. Everyone benefits.

Our people need to be constantly reminded that they have a very significant part in this Work! They must

fulfill their part in prayer, fastings and giving generous offerings. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (verse 21). It will be a sad day for us, if our members come up short in the resurrection, if we have failed to educate them concerning their part in the Work.

ONLY ONE WORK

There are now many WCG splinter groups, established after the beginning of the PCG, that claim to be doing the Work. This is the greatest deception spawned by Satan and the Laodicean ministers. People now feel they can go to the Church of God of their choice. This is not so! Mr. Armstrong wrote: "Anyone who 'joins the church of his choice' has not come into God's true Church. One cannot just 'join' the true Church of God. One is first selected and drawn by God the Father through his Spirit, brought to heartrending repentance, and changed in his total lifestyle, and has also not only believed in and accepted Jesus Christ as personal savior, but also has believed Christ" (ibid., page 229). This same principle applies to our time now. There is only one Church that has the lamp—the PCG (Revelation 2:5). Only the PCG is doing God's Work.

Our job is to put people back in a right relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ (Revelation 3:20). We must put people in touch with Christ's message. The single most important reason why people should be in the PCG is that they believe Jesus Christ is in the PCG! Do *we* firmly believe that? Those members who do not have their hearts and minds in God and Christ's Philadelphia Work simply will not make it. They will not make it to the place of safety. They will be plunged into the Great Tribulation. In the Tribulation they will have one final chance to prove their loyalty to God's Work.