

CHURCHRIGHT

Doing church right



Encouragement for pastors. *"Remain Faithful to the Lord" (Acts 11:23) was the theme for the pastoral encouragement and support Zoom event on December 16. Elder Jason Overman preached, with Elder Moises Capetillo translating into Spanish. Nearly 100 pastors prayed together and heard God's Word, that in our afflictions, we do not fall; we kneel before the Lord Almighty, who has all power to sustain us in doing His work. Please continue to pray for GC pastors and their families.*

Focus on Jesus?

The rallying cry of the Church of God (Seventh Day) United States and Canada is "Focus on Jesus and follow His plan." But what does it mean to focus on Jesus?

It means to fix our attention on His identity. He is our Creator (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He is our Lord and Savior (Philippians 2:11; Luke 2:11) and the long-awaited Messiah (John 4:25, 26). He is the One to whom has been given "All authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18, NASB throughout). He is Immanuel, God with us (1:23). To focus on Jesus, we must remember who He is. When He says, "Love one another; just as I have loved you" (John 13:34), it's not a suggestion; it's a command.

To focus on Jesus, we must follow His example. Jesus came as a servant and as a sacrifice (Mark 10:45). He set aside His position and power for the sake of others (Philippians 2:3-8). He endured interruptions and resistance and betrayals. He faced every temptation any of us face, yet He did not sin in word or deed or thought or attitude (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus' example is one of "love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22, 23). Anytime our words, deeds, thoughts, or attitudes are not marked by those attributes, we fail to focus on Jesus.

We must not look to anyone or anything else other than Jesus. If we fix our eyes on the world and the things of the world, we lose sight of Jesus. However, if we focus on commandment-keeping or on proving ourselves correct or others incorrect, we fail to keep our eyes where they need to be.

A steadfast focus on our Lord will lead us to being and doing everything He desires for us. A steadfast focus on anyone or anything else will lead us away from Him because we're replacing Him. It's worth asking ourselves, "On what are my thoughts and conversations and Bible studies really focused?"

I encourage you, focus on Jesus.

– Loren Stacy



District News

Southwest

Contributors: Jamin Teran and Moises Capetillo

SWD photos taken by SWD Media Ministry



United example. Area 3 hosted a Super Sabbath November 20-21 through our social media platforms. Speaking on the theme “Unity in Christ,” Elders Noe Reyes, Chip Hinds, and Daniel Flores urged the Church to be united in our example so that the next generation can reflect Jesus’ reign in their lives. The Houston area worship team led us into God’s presence during both days, and Moises Capetillo translated all the sermons.

Rising up. On December 11-12, the district held its last Super Sabbath of the year, hosted by Area 1. Elders Calvin Burrell, Ramon Ruiz, and Ricardo Mendez encouraged the Church to wake up and rise up during this time of tribulation and build bridges of reconciliation to the lost. The theme “Let Us Rise Up and Build” is God’s vision for years to come.



A Life Well Lived

Our dear sister, Lucille Mather Hinds (88), finished her earthly work on December 23, due to complications of COVID-19. She was born October 19, 1932, in Muskogee, Oklahoma.



Lucille is survived by her son, Clyde “Chip” Hinds and wife Mary, three granddaughters, five great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews, and other loved ones.

Read the full text of Lucille’s memorial on our Memorials page at churchright.org.



The “greeting parade”

Photo courtesy of Moises Capetillo

Adapting in Albuquerque

Not everything about the current pandemic has been negative. The Church of God (Seventh Day) in Albuquerque, like many churches worldwide, has learned to adapt and innovate as we continue to worship. The pandemic has forced us to close many worship centers, but the center of our worship, Jesus, continues to visit those who glorify the name of our almighty God.

God has helped us improve our inter-communication. Our commitment to fasting and praying deepens, and the worship to our Lord and Shepherd continues regardless of current limitations.

In March 2020, places of worship in our state could no longer be allowed to assemble in large groups. Our church took that as a challenge to ensure that families would continue to fight the good fight, socially separate, but be united as a body of Christ.

We have endured by carrying out a number of projects, such as a continuous “fasting chain,” church-wide prayer time, Bible studies, midweek virtual service, and a greeting parade, with signs of encour-

agement for each member's house and prayer for the families.

When the cold of winter pains a tree, it may seem that the tree has lost the battle. Its leaves are gone. However, during the winter, that tree digs its roots deeper into the ground in search of scarce water. When spring returns, it comes to life, more robust than before, its roots fixed in the soil.

In the same way, we as a church can and must allow this winter to take its course. However, we must not ignore the opportunity to dig deeper into the ground. When spring comes, may God allow us to be stronger churches because while we worshipped, we seized the opportunity to adapt and innovate.



SWORD retreat. The Wonder Worship Getaway SWORD retreat took place December 17-20 at Pineywoods Camp in Texas. Brother David Vasquez spoke on "Wisdom in Creation," and on Saturday night brother Ruben Alonso Jr. finished with the theme message. Around 75 attendees learned about the wonders that God has provided for us.

SWD Upcoming Events

February 26-27 • SWD Super Sabbath

Central

Contributors: Ken Lawson, superintendent, and Samara Harvey

The Well: Serving Others

In February 2016, the Marion, Iowa church held its first food pantry and clothes closet giveaway. The church had been hosting a clothing giveaway since 2012. Upon hearing about the opportunity to become a food pantry as well, members of the church jumped at the chance.

God's hand has been working through this ministry ever since. It started out as a small operation, but it has grown. Just this year, volunteers at the pantry obtained articles of incorporation, and now the pantry



People waiting to be served by the pantry

and clothes closet are officially a nonprofit organization known as The Well.

In years past, the pantry and clothes closet were held at the same time within the church's fellowship hall. Due to the pandemic, a drive-through system has been instituted in order to reduce contact and keep the pantry open during these trying times.

The week before Thanksgiving, a record number of households (220, representing 718 individuals) were served by the pantry. The rise in numbers speaks to the hardship many are experiencing during this time.

Though we wish there wasn't an increased demand, we are grateful God's grace and provision have allowed the Marion church to serve so many who are struggling. To date, The Well has distributed over 1.8 million pounds of food to eastern Iowans, and hopes to continue this impactful ministry for many years to come.



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COVID Care

Elder Oscar Mata, pastor in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, works long hours as a COVID-19 hospital chaplain. He is pictured here with Jose David Pineda, a longtime resident in Sioux Falls. In April 2020, the firm Jose worked for became a hot spot for the pandemic, and Jose became infected. He fought the virus for four difficult months.

The medical staff recommended withdrawing life support, sure that Jose did not have a chance to survive. But through much prayer, God performed a miracle. Jose is out of the hospital and recovering at home. He still needs oxygen support, but he is active in his faith. Jose is one of the many pandemic patients Oscar Mata ministers to as chaplain. He is now Jose's pastor.

Denver Staff Transitions

The first quarter of 2021 is bringing two significant transitions to our Denver office staff.

First, Elder Eddie Villalba has recently announced his retirement from his positions as pastor of the Aurora, Colorado congregation and as office/facilities manager of our General Conference office. Elder Villalba has served in these roles since late 2015, but he has worked there in one capacity or another for almost twenty years. We wish Elder Villalba and his wife, Socorro, God's very best in their new home, El Paso, Texas.



Second, Christopher Idemmili, head of the General Conference IT department, is getting married and moving to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Chris will continue to lead the department, but his departure means we need to hire a junior IT specialist. This person will serve within the Denver office to maintain our in-house network, computers, servers, etc., and to address other related tasks.



We are actively looking for capable individuals who may fill these roles in Denver. Email offices@cog7.org with the subject line "Career Opportunities" to learn more. Please reply by March 15, 2021.

ASLEEP IN JESUS

Carl "Earl" Lewis

1938 - 2020

Earl Lewis (82) passed away peacefully at home on September 15. He was born on March 27, 1938, in Carthage, Missouri.

Earl was a retired minister of the Church of God (Seventh Day), having served 35 years. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, their three children, twelve grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, and other family members

Read the full text of Earl's memorial on our Memorials page at churchright.org.

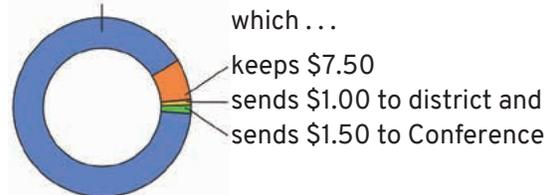


Habits of a Faithful Giver

Provide for the church and its ministries

For each \$100 earned

Giver keeps \$90 and gives \$10 to local church, which ...



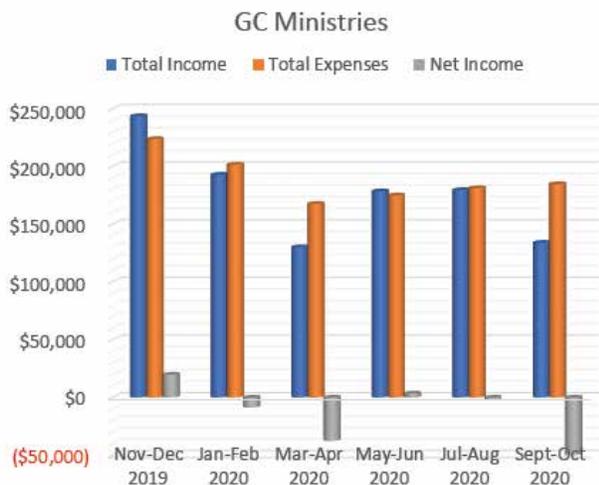
Ministries

- Local church ministries
- Local church retains 100 percent of its local offerings
- Local church retains 100 percent of its local fundraising
- District, national, and international ministries
- Local church forwards 100 percent of offerings designated for a variety of CG7 ministries

General Conference Ministries

Total Receipts and Total Expenses

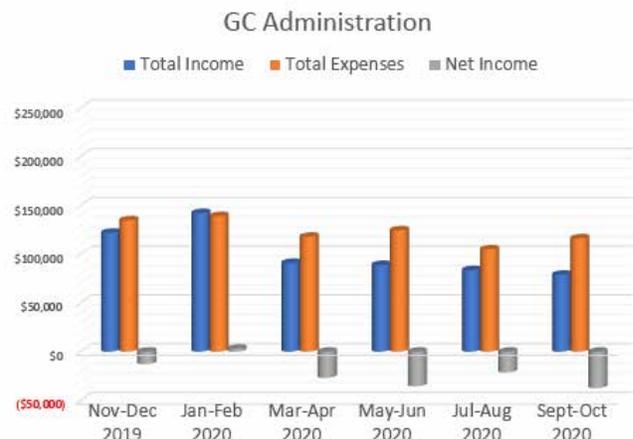
Artios Christian College, Missions, and Publications (Bible Advocate Press) are the current GC Ministries. They receive financial support from direct offerings and from a portion of the 15 percent of members' tithes received by the General Conference. Expenditures are guided by each ministry's annual budget. In addition, the General Conference manages the receipt and disbursement of your gifts to a variety of additional ministries, such as Orphans and Widows, SHINE, Cristo Viene, and Disaster Relief.



General Conference Administration

Total Receipts and Total Expenses

The General Conference administration (president, executive director, IT, finance, office management, and other staff not connected to a GC Ministry or district) receives financial support from 15 percent of members' tithes (minus what is then allocated to the GC Ministries) and direct offerings. Expenditures are guided by an annual budget.





ANNOUNCEMENT!
GC Convention
2021 is being
RESCHEDULED

GC Convention 2021

News has likely found its way to you regarding Convention '21, but confirmation is given here. Unfortunately, due to COVID-related restrictions, the decision has been made to reschedule our Biennial Convention.

While we had hoped restrictions surrounding COVID would be reduced by July, there was no guarantee that the needed meeting space would be available to allow a robust convention program. Therefore, in January, the decision was made to reschedule convention.

Through it all, God remains **faithful**. Let us also hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess. Plans and an alternate date will be announced as soon as they are available. We certainly hope to be with you all soon! Keep an eye out for updates at <http://cog7.org/convention>, in Church publications, and on the General Conference Facebook page.

– *Convention Planning Committee*





Career Opportunities

The General Conference office in Denver, Colorado, is offering full-time employment for an onsite office/facilities manager and for an onsite IT specialist. Email offices@cog7.org with the subject line “Career Opportunities” to learn more. Please reply by March 15, 2021.



Studying the Word of God at Home

Acts 5:42 tells us that after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the apostles never stopped teaching and preaching Christ in the temple and in every house. Because of changes in our world today, many believers are meeting in both homes and churches. Groups of saints gather on Sabbath for celebration and edification in area churches, building each other up. Our homes also are places to proclaim the love and salvation that the Lord has already given us.

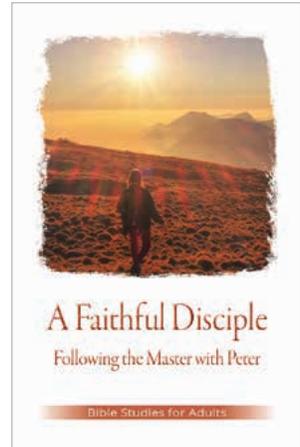
We encourage you to make your home a sanctuary for worship and preaching the Word of God in 2021. Refer to *A Faithful Family* and *A Faithful Disciple* for specific suggestions on leading your family in worship and study.

Faithful: Simon Peter

In the second quarter of Bible Studies for Adults, we turn to one of the New Testament’s most beloved characters, Simon Peter. We will learn from this lowly fisherman-turned-mighty-apostle how faithfulness relates to following. We will see what a faithful disciple looks like as we follow the Master with His most passionate and impulsive student.

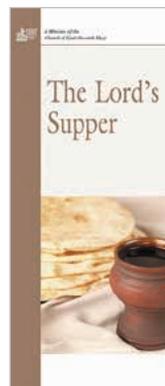
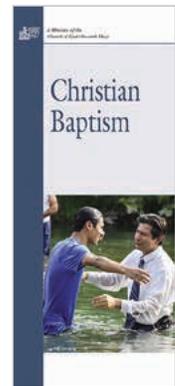
From his fishing boat to the upper room, casting nets in Galilee to preaching Christ to Cornelius, Peter’s journey is the way of transformation, the way of the Master. In Peter is someone we all relate to. He is as famous for his failures as he is for his successes. Who better than the earnest and flawed “rock” to direct our steps to follow Jesus – *the Way, the Truth, and the Life!*

To order copies of *A Faithful Disciple*, visit the online store at cog7.org.



Updated Tracts

Christian Baptism. The Christian ordinance of baptism is based on Jesus’ explicit instructions to His disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them” (Matthew 28:19). He intended it to be practiced until “the very end of the age” (v. 20).



The Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Supper service is a solemn Christian memorial of Jesus’ crucifixion. Introduced by our Savior himself on the night He was betrayed, it commemorates His death on Calvary’s cross as a sacrifice for our sins so that we might live!

Visit publications.cog7.org/ to read these tracts, and order copies from the online store at cog7.org.

A photograph showing three people in the foreground, each holding a camera and looking towards a waterfall in the background. The person on the left is a man with blonde hair, the middle person is wearing a hat, and the person on the right is wearing a blue cap and glasses. They appear to be documenting a baptism taking place in the waterfall.

Stay focused on Jesus!

Follow Jesus' example of service by getting involved in district ministries. Contact your local leaders for areas where you can make a difference. *Prayers and financial gifts are always appreciated!*

A close-up photograph of a man with short, dark hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a light blue polo shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a stone wall.

Faithful to Missions in 2021

With your help, we have sent evangelists (Cristo Viene), provided assistance through Disaster Relief (DRF), ministered to orphans and widows, provided training through Bible schools, supplied Bibles and gospel literature, mobilized short-term mission teams, and generated long-term income. Carry on the good work of the gospel!

Learn more at gcmissions.cog7.org and on Facebook: "GC Missions" and "IMC."