

CHURCHRIGHT

Doing church right

Why Are They Gone?

An online devotion by David Jeremiah pointed readers to a recent study by the American Enterprise Institute. According to this study, wrote Dr. Jeremiah, “. . . since the outbreak of COVID-19, a third of Americans who previously attended church have stopped going.”

Has your congregation suffered declining attendance during the last two-and-a-half years? If so, do you know why? Was it COVID, or was the virus just the excuse those who left were looking for?

If your attendance has declined in recent years, I suggest you ask those missing folks why they don't come. You might also ask what it would take for them to return and re-engage. Taking the time and making the effort to sincerely ask these questions might bring some missing members back into fellowship.

In his most recent book, *Trust: Knowing When to Give It, When to Withhold It, How to Earn It, and How to Fix It When It Gets Broken*, Dr. Henry Cloud posits that there are five essentials of trust: understanding, motive, ability, character, and track record. The essential that hooked me is *understanding*. Dealing with someone who has a track record of wrong motives and/or inabilities and/or poor character will certainly prevent or destroy one's trust in that person. But understanding?

Dr. Cloud describes how even a completely moral and capable person (or business/church) may cause people to distrust them simply by not taking the time and effort to ask questions, to understand the thoughts and desires and needs of those they are serving, and to show that they genuinely care about these people. Without that evidence of understanding, people soon ask themselves, *Is this person trying to help me or hoping to use me?*

The number of registrations and hotel reservations for our 2023 convention indicates that thousands of our members are longing to be together again, despite lower attendance in their local churches. Will you join us in Kentucky?

— Loren Stacy
GC President



Changing technology at the Bible Advocate Press means we can offer more products to our congregations. Have you thought about a directory for your local church, like the one pictured here? Because we're not bound by the need to produce high-volume quantities to be cost effective, we can print any number of directories you need at a price per piece. And you can have a colorful record of your members and attendees!

Interested? Start here:
<https://baonline.org/directory-information/>.



District News

Southwest

Contributors: Victoria (Tory) Capetillo, Maria Beard

SWD photos taken by SWD Media Ministry

Northeast

Contributor: Esther Winchell



LIFT-ed in Michigan. The first annual retreat of the LIFT (Living in Faith Together) women’s group (Owosso church) took place in Doweling, MI, April 14-16. Twenty-six women attended, and speakers included Stefanie Garcia, Becky Caswell, and Liz Fischer.



Used by the Master. Women’s Emphasis Sabbath was celebrated throughout the Northeast District in March and April with the theme “Vessels of Honor for the Master’s Use.” Participants were from Ossining, NY; Bridgeport, CT; Saginaw, MI; Fort Wayne-Lafayette, IN; and Lanham, MD. A blessed Sabbath was enjoyed by all as our sisters shared their gifts and talents for Christ’s glory!



Celebration. On Sabbath, April 22, the congregation in Fort Smith, AR, celebrated 100 years. The more than 260 attending were blessed with Superintendent Chip Hinds’ sermon titled “In God We Trust” and presentations by Elder Don Rodgers (pictured right). He shared the history of the church, founded in 1923, information about its previous leaders, and its current vision. Photos and other memorabilia were displayed throughout the building for everyone to enjoy. The church is ready for the next 100 years!



Super Sabbath. The Area 3 children’s ministry held a beautiful Super Sabbath on March 4 at the Olive Tree church, with 125 kids attending. The group shared in arts and crafts, worship, and other activities. Many thanks to everyone who helped with this service!



Church recognition. On February 11, Superintendent Chip Hinds and Area Director Manuel Salazar visited our sister church, Agape, in Austin, TX, to formally recognize it as a new church in the district. Please keep this congregation in your prayers.

New pastor. We thank God for allowing Otoniel Puente to serve as the new pastor of the Austin - Eva church. Superintendent Chip Hinds and Area Director Manuel Salazar officially welcomed him on February 11. Please remember to pray for Pastor Puente and his ministry.



Tea time. The Women's Department at the El Paso-Central church held a tea reunion on February 25. Sister Guadalupe Hernández shared a word, reminding the women how valuable they are in the eyes of our Savior. The ladies enjoyed fellowship with guests and others in the Women's Department. Thanks to Angie Meléndez and Sylvia Griego for organizing this meeting.



Baptisms. On April 1, Hilda Hernandez (El Paso - Central) and her three sons, Jeffrey, Alex, and Bradley, said goodbye to the old man and hello to their new life in Christ through baptism. On April 8, Hilda's fourth son, Dustin; her daughter-in-law, Johanna; Johanna's mother (Lorain Sierra) and grandmother (Antonia Sierra) were also baptized, as was Adriel Salinas. We can't wait to see what our Lord has in store for their new lives and walk with Him!

Upcoming Events

- June 3 - SWD CoG7 Young Adults Service
- June 11 - Dover Camp
- July 10-15 - GC Convention
- September 1 - Annual Hispanic Women's Retreat, Albuquerque, NM

Southeast

Contributor: Jo Allison Krome



Youth Leaders Meet

The Southeast District held a youth leader training and planning meeting March 17-19 at Camp Adrian, Georgia. Twenty-eight youth leaders attended.

Superintendent Steve Krome announced the appointment of our new district Youth Ministry directors, Jonathan and Elizabeth Unzueta, from Lakeland, Florida (pictured here with their family). Cesar Medrano is the new district music director, and



Jo Allison Krome will fill the role of district administrative coordinator.

On Friday evening, Cesar led a short worship service and prayer to open our time together. Jo Allison Krome concluded her time as the district youth retreat coordinator with the presentation “Understanding the Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations of the Next Generation.” On Sabbath morning, after worship in song, Superintendent Krome gave a message titled “Ten Guidelines for Youth Leaders.” Organization matters were discussed and plans made for the 2023 winter retreat, ending with an evening of fellowship.

We all came away refreshed, encouraged, and invigorated in the continuation of the youth ministry of the Southeast District.

West Coast

Contributors: Loren Gjesdal, Kelsey Gjesdal, Melva Smith, Aaron Carbajal, and Larry Zaragoza, Superintendent



Fun and Fundraising

Each year, the youth of the Eugene/Springfield congregation plan a missions fundraiser. On the evening of April 15, this event was a Talent Show, Dessert Auction, and Homemade Salsa Contest. The evening began with a dinner of plate tacos, which included the homemade salsa entries. Kadian Keim and Robert Watkins tied for first place!

The talent show included skits, songs, and a martial arts presentation. A lot of friendly bidding took place during the dessert auction, with Jerry Ogren as auctioneer. The highest bid was \$170 from Randy Chalus for a cheesecake made by Tracey (Chalus) Wascher.

What a great evening to show support for our youth!

– Melva Smith



Fathers and Daughters

On April 23, the Marion, Oregon CoG7 hosted a father-daughter blessing service. Fathers or grandfathers brought their daughters/granddaughters (ages 2-18) to the church for a dinner. They had fun dressing up and taking pictures together in front of a fairy light and pink flower backdrop.

The ceremony began with a reminder of our worth in Christ, based on Isaiah 43. We pray that our daughters find their worth in Christ, rather than in the things of this world.

In the blessing service, fathers told their daughters why they are loved, promising to be there for them and praying a blessing over them. It was refreshing to see this, especially in a culture that devalues the role of the father in the home. No earthly father is perfect, but each father, or father figure, has the privilege and duty to point their children to their perfect heavenly Father, who will always love and never leave or forsake His children.

– Kelsey Gjesdal



Welcoming Churches in the Northwest

Pastors throwing paper airplanes in church?! Yes – along with their congregations! As part of their instruction, Moses and Pete Capetillo used the exercise to illustrate how we do not always hit the target we aim for in being a welcoming church.

The Capetillos' insightful, motivating information was part of a Super Sabbath for Northwest churches that took place March 4 in Harrisburg, Oregon. Over 300 attendees learned how the art of being a welcoming church involves everyone, from the parking lot to the pew and back again. We all work together to create a culture that welcomes both the visitor and the member.

We had immediate opportunity to put our learning to practice as we welcomed the Lynden, Washington congregation into the General Conference. A new congregation, children's specials, excellent worship, prayer time, impactful teaching, and wonderful fellowship made a full day a truly Super Sabbath!

– Loren Gjesdal



Trimestral. On March 18, churches from Southern California, Las Vegas, and other nearby areas gathered in San Fernando, CA, for their quarterly reunion Trimestral. It was a beautiful day of worshipping together and listening to the Word of God from Daniel Flores, Jr. A total of 492 brothers and sisters attended during the morning and 420 in the afternoon, praising and glorifying our God together.



Portland meeting. The WCD board met in Portland, OR, on March 18 for an annual business meeting. Board members also worshipped with the Portland congregation and enjoyed a fantastic Ukrainian dinner Saturday evening. Board members pictured (L to R): Eddie Portillo, Reuben Zaragoza, Jorge Herrera, Greg Haffner, Pete Alvarado, Jose Hernandez, Jesus Manso, Larry Zaragoza, and Ruben Davila.

ASLEEP IN JESUS

Rayvin “Ray” Straub

1931 – 2023

Rayvin Lester Straub (91) was born December 6, 1931, to Emanuel Straub and Albina Weller Straub near Eureka, South Dakota. He died March 26 at his home in West Linn, Oregon.



Ray married Shirley Baker in 1953 and assumed his first pastoral role in Fresno. He pastored the church in Los Angeles and later in Marion, Oregon. There, in 1962, he organized and directed the first youth camp in the Church, held at Silver Creek Falls, Oregon.

After moving to Sacramento in the mid-1960's, Ray served as pastor, West Coast District superintendent, and national radio speaker on *Faith for Our Time*. In 1973, he moved to pastor the Lodi church and then helped establish and direct the Church's first post-graduate seminary in Denver (Ministerial Training Center, later renamed Summit School of Theology). Following his service in Denver, he moved back to Marion, Oregon, to pastor that congregation a second time.

During his ministry, Ray served on the executive board (board of directors) as vice chairman for many years. He joined Robert Coulter on trips to Mexico and the Caribbean Islands representing the General Conference.

Please visit our Memorials page (churchright.org) for more on Ray's life and ministry.



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Late-Winter Graduates

Congratulations to Emilio Carreto, Associate of Christian Leadership (Spiritual Formation and Discipleship); Pedro Estrada, Certificate of Biblical Studies; Dennis Farrar, Certificate of Biblical Studies.

Artios at Convention

Don't forget: Artios Christian College commencement will take place on Saturday, July 15, during GC Convention! Cheer on the graduates who completed their academic program since the Church gathered in 2019.

Join us Thursday, July 13, after evening services for our Open House and 10-Year Commemoration.

- Also, watch for our three workshops at convention:
 - Enhancing the Sabbath School Experience
 - Responding to Anxiety and Depression
 - The Equipping Model of Ministry



Translation of Vibrant Church

Vibrant Church was written to capture the General Conference's ten-point vision in simple, practical terms. Since its publication in 2019, the book has been warmly received, but with one complaint: It isn't available in Spanish!



The Artios Center for Vibrant Leadership is thrilled to announce that the translation into Spanish is in process, with the goal of making the book available at convention.

As with everything, this effort has a price tag, and you have an opportunity to lend your support through giving. Generous donors to the Artios Center for Vibrant Leadership who mention "book translation" will receive a free copy of the Spanish book, and copies picked up at convention can be signed by co-author Whaid Rose.

To donate:

- <https://my.artioscollege.org/en/give> (myArtios account required). Select "The Artios Center for Vibrant Leadership" and mention "Book translation" in the Note field.
- <https://cog7.org/giving/#Give>. Select "Other" and mention "Artios Center book translation" in the text field.
- Make your check payable to "The General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day)," and mail it to P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. Mention "Artios Center book translation" on your check's memo.

– Makayla Ross
Co-Director

Calendar Events

- July 15 - Graduation Commencement at General Conference Convention
- July 17 - Summer registration closes
- July 23 - Summer classes begin

The Lodi, California Church of God (Seventh Day) is beginning a search for its next pastor. Those interested in this position may contact Keith Nienhuis, Search Committee chairman, at knienhuis@juno.com.

Keith Michalak: 50 Years



You see his work on every page of printed material churned out by the Bible Advocate Press, but you rarely see him.

That's the way Keith Michalak likes it. As co-director of Publications, he prefers the background, sitting at his Macintosh computer and quietly finessing type and graphics for just the right look.

But in this issue of *Churchright*, we're placing Keith in the spotlight. In June of this year, he celebrates 50 years at the BAP. It's fitting that we recognize his outstanding work and dedication, not just to the Church of God (Seventh Day) but to the kingdom of God.

Here are some of the highlights of Keith's career. For a full version, please visit baonline.org (July-August BA, available July 1).

In the summer of 1973, LeRoy Dais, then-director of the BAP, hired Keith right out of high school. He learned all kinds of jobs. Some, he says, stained his hands with ink for many years.

Also in 1973 the BAP acquired new equipment: an offset press, paper cutter, camera, and plate-making equipment. Keith wanted to learn everything, and did. He credits George Tolbert, Gilbert Tuller, and Nolan Rincker for teaching him to run the folder and the cutter and other machines. He also helped Floyd Turner, a master electrician, run an electrical line to the equipment.

Keith learned how to operate other equipment and mastered all publishing processes. The toughest years, he says, were convention years. He often pulled all-nighters to print the needed materials.



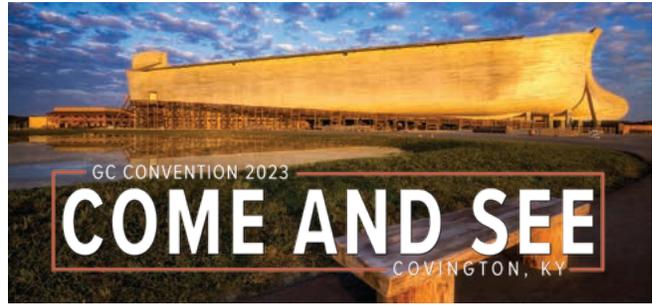
In 1988, the BAP purchased its first Mac computer for word processing and page layout. Keith loved it and learned it inside and out. In the 1990's, he was instrumental when the BAP jumped on the Internet, adding its Christian voice to the Worldwide Web.

At the time George and Gina Tolbert left the Conference offices, Keith became shop manager. In 2003 he was promoted to director of Publications.

Keith always looked ahead to needs coming in the future. The Heidelberg press, bought when the Conference offices moved to Denver in 1972, was showing its age and not printing well. Thanks to Keith's research and recommendations, the board approved a digital press in 2020. It allows the BAP to do print-on-demand and saves costs in paper and waste in consumables.

Keith reached retirement age last year, but he's not ready to go quite yet: "I feel like this is my ministry – not on the front lines but as the support to other people's ministries." Well done, boss!

*Sherri Langton
Associate Editor*



Coming to Convention?

Have you completed your checklist for planning your trip to GC Convention '23? It's almost time! We are looking forward to seeing you in Covington, Kentucky, July 10-15.

Hopefully by now you have registered on the Convention website (cog7.org/convention). It's not too late if you haven't registered yet. Here are a few more deadlines to keep in mind to help you complete your checklist:

June 16 - Group Excursion deadline to sign up or request a refund. These excursions include the Ark Encounter on Monday and the Creation Museum on Friday. You can make reservations to travel with us by chartered bus or drive there on your own (separate cost and no reservation required).

June 19 - Hotel reservations need to be made to receive the guaranteed room rates. You can find the available list of hotels on the registration website.

June 22 - Parental Consent forms need to be sent in for all minors. These can be emailed, faxed, or mailed by using the contact information on the form.

June 30 - Meal tickets must be purchased by this date. You won't be able to purchase them onsite.

More information about all these accommodations can be found on the cog7.org/convention website. If you need assistance with modifying any of your current reservations, you may contact Amber Michalak at amber.michalak@cog7.org.

Amber or one of our GC Convention Committee members will be glad to assist you with any questions you might have. But as far as packing your suitcase, you're on your own – unless you can get your mom to do it for you!

"Come and see" us soon!

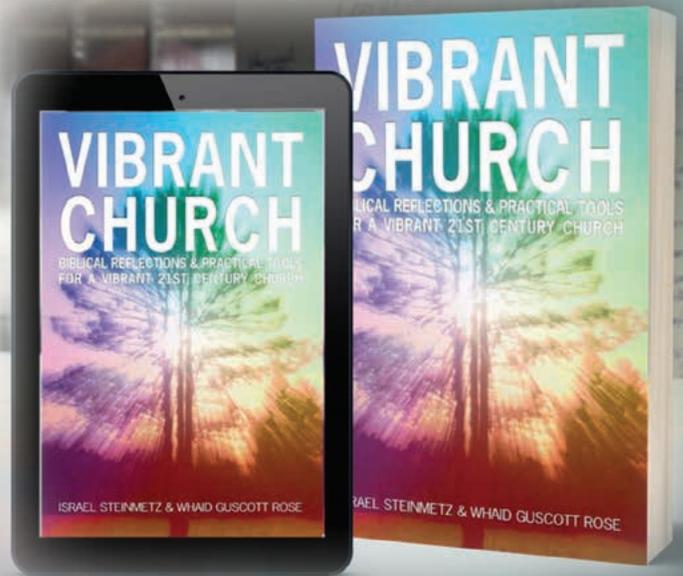
– GC Convention Committee



**THE ARTIOS
CENTER** FOR VIBRANT
LEADERSHIP

Coming Soon . . .

**Vibrant Church
in Spanish!**



To learn more about this project and making a donation to cover costs, please see page 6.

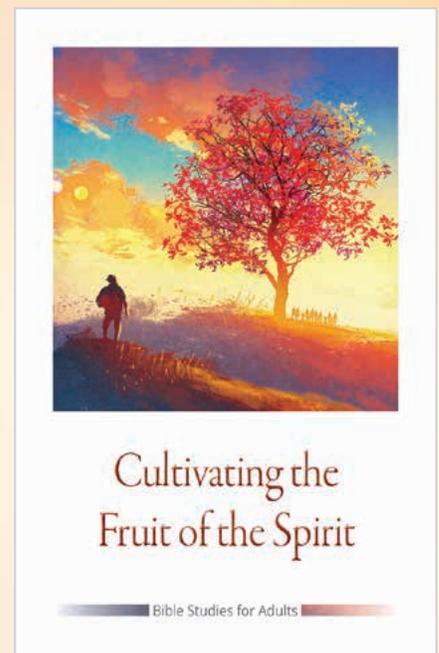
Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit

2023 Third Quarter Lessons

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Which fruit are we producing? Are we, as individuals and churches, thriving in Christ, or are we dying on the vine?

Challenge yourself with these lessons and let God produce His fruit in you!

To set up a standing order for Sabbath school curriculum, go to <https://cog7.org/online-store/>.



Bible Advocate Press

