

2024 Winter Clarion

A Newsletter of Christ Ministerial Fellowship

-a non-denominational communion of ministries with the purpose of mutual encouragement, like-minded fellowship, and love toward one another.

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In This Edition

Pages 1-2: Let Christ Arise
by Ric Vargas

Page 2-4: Missions Reports

Page 5-6: CMF Conference Report
Clayton Weller

Page 6: In Memory of Joe Nieves

Page 7 Announcements and
Prayer Requests

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Please enjoy books, past and
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of Conference messages.

LET CHRIST ARISE

Ric Vargas

I doubt that I'm the only one who feels we are currently experiencing times of sorrow and affliction of every kind. Not a day goes by without hearing news of a loved one's passing or heartbreaking diagnoses, or of some other dire situation. These can take a toll on our psyches and are compounded as our adversary whispers, "Where is your God now?"

I believe The Lord is using these various trials to remind us of His plan, and to reveal something about ourselves, Himself, His activity and His eternal purpose. I want to look at a few verses from Psalm 102 that can guide us as we endeavor to navigate these current dark waters. I'm especially grateful for the heading of this Psalm. "A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before The Lord."

Verse 11 is meant to remind us of ourselves. We are living in a time in which man's strength, abilities and independence are promoted, yes, almost worshipped; not only by the world but also within God's house. The Psalmist is reminded of his own limitations, frailties and passing. The present time of affliction is meant to remind us of our utter weakness, and dependency upon another. Like Paul, who was brought to the place where he gloried in his weakness, we too are being led to such a place. How soon we forget that our very next breath is dependent on the One who gives it! How foolish then are the boastings of our own accomplishments and abilities. Perhaps what has seemed to be God's silence or inactivity in our lives, has rather been His attempt to humble us and remind us of our true state before Him.

Verse 12 reminds us of Christ Himself. He is the only true independent One that was, and is, and is to come. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He has life within Himself and is not dependent upon anyone for anything. Long after we are gone and forgotten, His name shall be remembered. How we need to look away from ourselves and be reminded of the One who walks with us in times of affliction! The unchanging God who reigns from the eternal Throne is the one to Whom we must give account.

Verses 13 and 16a reveal His activity. God must arise and build in order for His purposes to be brought forth. I long for Him to arise once again in our midst and in the earth. Continually, through the years, we have seen men of renown arising and promising to bring revival and “the move of God.” It doesn’t take long to realize that all the aspirations and hope pledged by these men have left us disappointed and disillusioned again. It is reminiscent of when in Judges 16:20, Samson awakened from the lap of Delilah and boastfully proclaimed that he would “go out as at other times and shake himself”, but he did not know that The Lord had departed from him.

How we need The Lord to emerge as He did when Moses declared, “Let God arise and His enemies be scattered!” Does not Isaiah 60:1-2 also declare this? The call there for a people to arise and shine is only possible because The Lord Himself shall be the one to arise! Verse 16b reveals His purpose, His appearing that reveals His glory in and through His house that He has built. We hope and wait for that appearing. May we yield to these present afflictions and allow them to humble us before Him, so we will indeed become “the destitute” of verse 17, and that He will regard and answer. Until that day when Christ shall arise, may we see our true selves, His true self, His activity and His purpose. I pray that we will not faint in this present day of affliction and adversity. Let Christ arise! Ω

Mission Moments

Bolivia 2023 July

I will be heading home later today; from door to door my trip will be approximately 26 hours. I always find it difficult to express all that happens on these short mission trips. I’m never quite sure who truly benefits more, those who receive us, or ourselves. The love and care given us surely has a humbling effect.

There is one story I would like to recount. We are all familiar with the phrase ‘holy ground’ from the Scriptures. It’s that sacred place where God reveals Himself in such a way that one is broken by His presence and is in awe of Him. At the end of the service in Santa Cruz, people were responding to the word and coming forward, many of them kneeling. In front of me was a young girl in her teens, or early 20s perhaps. She stood there in silence, tears falling from her eyes. It was the only utterance she was able to give. I realized that I was standing on holy ground. For a moment I was tempted to reach out and pray for her, but quickly realized that what was happening between her and her Savior needed no outside intervention.

Each of us has been in the holy place, that sacred place where God makes Himself known to our heart in a fresh way. I am truly grateful for your prayers and support through the years. I know that the Lord also remembers, and He will surely reward you. I pray that in the coming days, you may have your own encounter in the holy place.

Love & appreciation, Ric



A Holy Place in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Bolivia July 2023



Ministry in Santa Cruz



Ministry in Cochabamba, Bolivia



La Paz, Bolivia 12,000' above sea level

Bulgaria October 2023

Tom & Marsha Worth in October visited Bulgaria after five years absence. They ministered in several churches where they have been joined to the people for over 30 years. Tom preached and taught from the Psalms in each of the churches visited. Marsha taught at women's meetings from the life of Rebecca in Genesis. If you talked to them, they would say that the personal ministry to the pastors was the most important aspect of this trip.



Above: Christian artist, Petrana Petsova. She hid her work from the police during communism in Bulgaria. At 93 she still paints. Her work is featured in Tom's book "Incarnation".

Top Right: Marsha in the midst of the women's group that she taught at the Conference in Silistra.

Right: Ivodor in the capital city, Sofia. He is pastor of the Mission Church, the pioneer of a unique prison ministry, a minister at the Crisis Center downtown which rescues street people. He was recovering from an auto accident where he shattered his left elbow. Pictured here with Tom & Marsha Worth are Ivodor and Jany with their adopted 10-year-old daughter Nicole, who they rescued from a life on the streets.



Alejandro and Maria Holguin, interpreters from Pereira, Colombia came to attend the CMF Fall Conference in Athens, PA. While in the area they made the Ghilardi's place their home base. They ministered at House of Bread Fellowship Church and Bethany Christian Fellowship.



A Day in the Life of the Missionary

Dear family and friends: It's been a busy few days since arriving here in Cali and today is our first break. After being fully boarded, our flight from Miami was delayed for about 3 1/2 hours while they switched planes. This changed our arrival to Cali to 1 a.m. By the time we got to the hotel, and finally got to sleep, it was after 3 am. We had to be on the road at 7:30 am for a Pastors' meeting in the south part of the city, followed by another meeting that evening. Saturday morning we were on the road at 5:30 am to travel 2 hours away to Buga for another Pastors' meeting. Both of these were new doors for us, and were meeting a new group of pastors and leaders. We were blessed and encouraged to see their openness to receive our messages and also the personal ministry. We were in two different churches yesterday morning and spent the evening with Cony and her family who I have known since my first trip here in November of 1997. It was a wonderful evening of fellowship, food and laughter. We have one more Pastors' meeting tomorrow morning and a meeting on Wednesday night. We will leave here on Thursday morning for Pereria, about a 4 hour drive away.

Our drive from the airport to our hotel turned out to be potentially more dangerous than we anticipated. I noticed that 2 motorcycles were following us, pulling up next to us and then falling behind us again, our "motorcycle escort." In Colombia, Cartels have long used men on motorcycles to commit assassinations or commit robberies. Their plan was probably to follow us to the hotel and once we exited the vehicle they would put their plan into effect. We would have to travel through the old part of Cali to get to our hotel where the streets are one way and also one lane, another place that is perfect for a crime especially at that hour. It just so happened that the garbage men were out and this caused us to have to stop for them for a couple of blocks. The presence of these workers clearly caused the "escort" to change their plans and they rode off into the night. This was another reminder of His watchful eye and protection. The next day, this was a topic of discussion amongst those that had come to pick us up. They had also noticed them and knew their intentions, but didn't want to say anything so as not to alarm us. So again we were reminded that we are safe thus far in His purposes. Blessings to each of you, and many thanks for your support. Ric

{This was an email sent from Lou and Ric's recent trip to Colombia-Nov. 16 through Dec. 3}

CMF Fall Conference in Review

Clayton Weller

It was wonderful to gather once again with brothers and sisters at Bethany Christian Fellowship in Athens PA for the CMF Fall Conference. For one reason or another, a few of us could not attend this time and were greatly missed. The gathering was a bit smaller, but that did not reduce the richness of the Word and the joy of fellowship we shared together. Gold, Judy and I were thrilled to once again be able to make the trip from Whitby, Ontario to be with you. The days of the closed border are thankfully behind us. I have been asked to write a brief report of our time together. What follows is a brief personal reflection on the things that were said.

The Conference opened with the chorus "Holy Spirit". That chorus contains three special words; "Your presence Lord." At that time, I felt that His presence would be a theme weaved into the messages. In his opening prayer Ric Vargas asked for "a word unique to our time," and that prayer was answered with messages concerning the state of the world,



the condition of the church and God's current work in both. The opening message, Lou Pressman addressed a painful reality that a portion of the church has been losing its way. He used as a backdrop the 2018 Bolivian elections, where the church had become deeply involved and explained that as a result the church had lost credibility. Considering the words of Paul in his first letter to Timothy, Lou warned of deception infiltrating the church, which was leading the church away from its foundation. There is now a struggle between the competing visions, and the true church is now perceived by many as backward for not embracing the modern views such as the definition of marriage. He declared that there will be people who will seek out the message of "The Way," wanting to keep themselves centered in Jesus and abiding in Him. He reported that the Bolivian church had recognized their

mistake and repented. All of us need to be united together in Christ and present a proper witness to the world.

In closing remarks, Ric Vargas reminded us of David's words in the face of Goliath's threats, "there is a cause." Today the church must take up the current cause, to return the Name of the Lord to its proper place, and proclaim who the Lord is, what He is doing and what He will do!

Thursday morning, Charles Willner spoke of a burden that had been in his heart for some time and used as his reference Matthew 11:12: "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." His message concerned the recovery and restoration of Israel. He warned that the Church has become content to live in comfort and was neglecting the call from Matthew to press in, to press into God's presence, and to participate with Him in His purpose.

Thursday evening, Ric Vargas talked about beauty, specifically the handsome man with long flowing hair, Absalom. Absalom was a master of presentation, traveling about in a chariot with fifty men running before him. He had a charismatic appeal which ultimately led to his seizing power and King David being forced to flee. In dark hours how are we to find our way through? Will God complete what He began in us? David's words in Psalm 42 record his meditation in light of this dark hour, as a guide for us. As the deer, pursued by the hunter, longs for rest and refreshment, David, needed God, and longed for his source of life. In our dark place, when all seems lost, we too must put our hope in God and draw near to Him. We are not alone, but part of a great company who share the same desire in troubled times.

Friday morning, Mark Waters, in passing commented, "We read our Bible too fast." That thought struck a chord in my heart and I have already found the practice of reading it slower beneficial during my morning reading.

Speaking from 1 Kings 6, Mark pointed out that the house of God built during Solomon's reign was constructed in silence. The shaping of stone was done far away in the quarry. Today, Christians feel they need to stir things up, make some noise, which is perhaps much like the noise made in a sports stadium. Rather a "subterranean" move of the Spirit is needed in our lives. He noted that when the work of construction was completed, the house was filled with the Glory of God. We too, in our silent pursuit of God's working, are edified by His presence.

The smaller crowd afforded the opportunity for longer conversations with different individuals, and I had a couple of very interesting discussions. It was also wonderful that Carolyn Johnson was with us from her new home in Fredericksburg, VA. David and Carolyn resided in Whitby, Ontario for many years, and were with us at our home church, Durham Full Gospel Church, for five years. They left a lasting impression upon Judy and I and are greatly missed.

In closing, Bert Ghilardi has always maintained that the conference concludes for him on Sunday morning at House of Bread, as he often has a guest speaker. I was pleased that the message, the Presence of God, fit with the theme that I felt was weaved in and through the Conference messages.

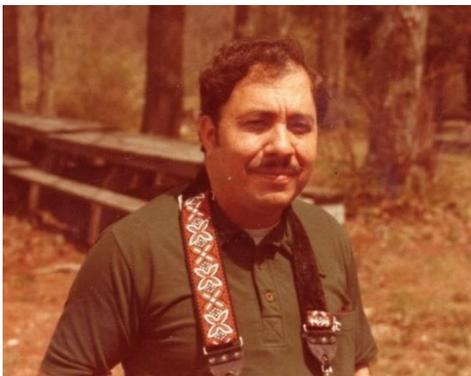
Let us all continue to seek the Lord for the great days we are expecting! Ω -Clayton Weller, Whitby, Ontario



In Memorial

Joseph Nieves d. August 7, 2023

On August 7th Brother Joe Nieves was ushered into the arms of Jesus to his heavenly reward. His long and fruitful life was celebrated at a Memorial Service on August 26 morning at the church which he founded, Emmanuel Fellowship of Allentown, PA.



Pastors Joe and Janis Csontos hosted the service and following repast. Gloria, Joe's wife of over 50 years reminisced how they met and answered God's call to go to South America in their second year of marriage. It was quite an adventure as they trusted God for their daily provision. She went on to testify of the goodness of God to them over the course of their life and ministry. Many others spoke, such as Ric Vargas, Tom Worth and Bert Ghilardi. Stories were told of times together with Joe how he taught and mentored them, and shared life

together with them on mission trips and as students. The service was wrapped up by Joe Csontos who gave a stirring message putting the life and death that we experience in the human realm into heavenly perspective. It was good to see everyone; it was very much like a reunion. We all expressed our thanksgiving in having known our Brother Joe. We are happy for him that he has gone on to receive his heavenly crown, no longer to suffer in this earthen body of "clay" but we are sorrowful for the great loss felt by Gloria, the Fellowship in Allentown and his students and friends. In a conversation a couple of weeks later, Gloria Nieves expressed to me how pleased she was that so many came, and how lovely the service was. Please keep her in your prayers. She's doing well, is attending church, but we can all imagine how it must be to suffer the loss of a spouse of over 50 years. Ω



Prayer Requests

For healing:

1. Jeff Fair of Emmanuel Fellowship of Allentown
2. Chuck and Stephanie Parrish-Dublin, OH
3. Joe and AnnMarie Faillace of Salt and Light Community Church in Montague, NJ
4. Bert and Arlene Ghilardi of House of Bread Fellowship Church, Endwell, NY

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invites you to listen to the
messages from the CMF Fall
Retreat
October 25-27, 2023

The Valori Family has released a link
to family photos and Sergio Valori's
Sunday messages given at Emmanuel
Fellowship Church in Mohrsville PA

[\(441\) Sergio Valori Ministries -
You Tube](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

Christ Ministerial Fellowship Spring Conference April 24-26, 2024

Bethany Christian Fellowship, Athens, PA
The registration is \$15/meal. Please see page two
of the attached Registration form.

We have booked a block of 10 rooms at the Comfort
Inn Hotel in Sayre, PA. Call (570) 888-1100 to make
your reservation. The hotel cost is \$97.02 /night and is
the responsibility of the registrant. The deadline for
registration is April 15. We hope you will join us for
fellowship and this important time of seeking the Lord.

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## Women's Retreat June 7-8, 2024

Bethany Christian Fellowship, Athens, PA

The registration is \$30 for the whole retreat or  
\$15/meal for part of the retreat. We have booked  
a block of 10 rooms at the Comfort Inn Hotel in  
Sayre, PA. Call (570) 888-1100 to make your  
reservation. The hotel cost is \$97.02 /night and is  
the responsibility of the registrant.

You never know what good things the Lord has in store  
for us at the Women's Retreat. For more information  
call Arlene Ghilardi (607) 754-3709.