

The Servants of the Word

Fall 2011



Beloved family and friends,

This is the first letter you are receiving from me as the new presiding elder of The Servants of the Word. On September 1, at a gathering of our brothers from around the world, Steve Clark, our founder, presided over a ceremony of commissioning. On behalf of the brothers who elected me, Steve charged me to direct the brotherhood and to encourage, support, and care for the brothers in faithfully living the life of The Servants of the Word. As I stood before the brothers I was greatly humbled that they had entrusted me with this role and greatly sobered by the responsibility that comes with it. At the same time I was greatly encouraged by the pledge of support and prayers that came from all the brothers. I ask that you also pray for me and for all the brothers of The Servants of the Word. Pray that we become all that the Lord desires us to be.

I replace John Keating in the role of presiding elder. John is not an easy act to follow! The love and the respect the brothers across the world have for John were greatly evident when all those gathered rose in spontaneous applause and acclamation as we briefly


honored him. John ended his eight years – the maximum allowed by our constitution – after having led our brotherhood to a time of great stability and peace. The way I would like to honor John most is by committing to imitating him in his love for the Lord and the brothers and in his example of holiness of life. Thank you, John, for your selfless service and for your sterling example of leadership!

As we were gathered we also rejoiced in God's blessings in adding new brothers to our life. We witnessed men from four different nations make permanent or temporary promises to live single for the Lord in The Servants of the Word. You can read of this blessing in this edition of our newsletter.

Many of you know that this year marks our fortieth anniversary as a brotherhood. This has presented superb opportunities to reflect upon and celebrate God's faithfulness to us through the years. Among the celebrations in North America was a get-together of our former affiliates for an August evening of barbecue, storytelling, and fellowship. We also had a more formal gathering of family and friends in September at which time we recounted our beginnings with both inspirational and humorous stories.

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This newsletter also gives you an insight into a constant reality of our life – change! As we grow and as some of us take on new roles of service, our places of residence change as well. Learn about some of those changes here.

As I close I would like, again, to invite you to uphold us in your prayers as we in The Servants of the Word celebrate forty years as a brotherhood and as we try to faithfully follow the Lord wherever he may lead. 

In Christ our Lord,



Ken Noecker

Brothers On The Move

As most people familiar with The Servants of the Word know, we are a brotherhood constantly on the move. During this fortieth year of our existence, some of our brothers have taken on new responsibilities that have, in turn, necessitated their relocation to enable them to fulfill their new duties. Below are a few of these more notable changes:

Ken Noecker: Ken was recently installed as the new presiding elder of The Servants of the Word, following John Keating who served in that position for the past eight years. Ken spent the last twenty-five years based in the Philippines, where he served our brotherhood there and also served The Sword of the Spirit communities throughout Asia. In addition to his role as presiding elder, Ken will continue to be involved in community-building work in Asia, with a special emphasis on India.

John Keating: Having completed two four-year terms as the presiding elder of The Servants of the Word, John has recently moved to Manila in the Philippines, where he will serve as the regional elder for The Servants of the Word in Asia over the next several years. From Manila, he will continue to serve as the vice-president of

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Our North American brothers at our 2011 Easter celebration.

Called From Many Churches, Races, and Nations

Brothers Celebrate Lifelong and Full Commitments



Francisco Aguilar

This past August The Servants of the Word celebrated the lifelong commitment of our Mexican brother, Francisco Aguilar, at the brotherhood center in Chelsea, Michigan. On the same day, Luis Arce (Costa Rica) renewed his full commitment. Also, renewing his full commitment June 18 in Northern Ireland but unable to attend the commitment ceremony in Michigan was our Bavarian brother, Michi Schöberl.

Making their first full commitments this year were Dale Arconado (Philippines), Noel Delgadillo (USA), and Joseph Fahd (Lebanon). God has blessed The Servants of the Word by adding to us men who are making fervent and wholehearted responses to his call. Adding greatly to the significance of this event is the fact that the six men who made these commitments hail from six different countries!

Some have asked, “How long does the discernment process take, and what does this process look like?” The lifelong commitment culminates what is typically an eight-year period of discernment that begins with the initial investigation and “trying out” of our life as an affiliate and is then followed by two years of being an affiliate

in training. At that point, the brother comes to our international formation house in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for a period of two years. Toward the end of these years of guidance and formation during which the brother matures in his understanding of our call, he discerns whether he desires to make a more significant commitment. That commitment is called the “full” commitment, meaning that the brother is fully a part of the life of The Servants of the Word. However, the full commitment is made for one year at a time for at least three more years, so that during this extended period the brother can gain experience in living out our life apart from the formation process. At the end of that time, the brother may request to make a lifelong commitment.

After having made his lifelong commitment, Francisco Aguilar, affectionately called “Panch,” now resides in Monterrey, México, where he is a member of the local Sword of the Spirit community, Jésed. He will continue his service working with university students in Monterrey.

Of his first full commitment, Noel Delgadillo said, “On the day of my full commitment I felt a deep sense of peace and at the same time an excitement that is hard to explain. If you’ve ever gone bridge jumping, you know there is this moment when the senses are heightened and you realize that you are fully alive. It can be exhilarating and dizzying all at once. I felt fully alive when I made my commitment to live with The Servants of the Word. I’m very grateful that the Lord has given me peace, joy, and grace to take this step in my life.”

This fall Luis Arce will travel with Luis Manuel Bravo to Honduras (four months), Costa Rica (four months) and Quito, Ecuador (four months) where they will run temporary households. Michi Schöberl will continue his work in Belfast leading the faith development work for Youth Initiatives, bookkeeping for The Servants of the Word, and leading the GAP program in Belfast.

Of the three brothers who recently made their first full commitment, Dale Arconado will be handling bookkeeping duties and serving in our university outreach in Manila. Noel Delgadillo is living in Grand Rapids,

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Michigan, and serving as the Grand Valley State University UCO chapter leader. Joseph Fahd has moved to London, where he is helping to start the Koinonia mission school and juggling various responsibilities in our brotherhood household there.

Our Servants of the Word Covenant states, “*We believe that he has called us together to be a brotherhood where men of many Christian churches and of many races and nations can live and serve the Lord.*” Looking back over the past forty years, we see that God has certainly done this. ▲

–Mike Kramer

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The Sword of the Spirit. He will also assume some responsibilities in Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon (The Joy of the Lord) – the local community in Manila – and in the Asian region of The Sword of the Spirit.

John Yocum: After serving seven years in the Philippines, John has returned to the United States. Having spent the past twenty-two years abroad, he is now living in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he leads our international formation household and serves as a coordinator in The Word of Life community. In addition, John is teaching at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and will work part-time on the teaching team for The Sword of The Spirit.

Dan Keating: Dan has now moved to Lansing, Michigan, to lead our household there in the Work of Christ community. He will continue as the regional elder for The Servants of the Word in North America, and as an associate professor of theology at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit. The “new” parts of Dan’s service – which he expects will stretch him – are teaching an online course for community leaders and serving on the teaching team for The Sword of the Spirit communities.

Please keep our brothers in your prayers as they adjust to their new roles and reestablish relationships with those serving alongside them in their new assignments. ▲



An international grouping of brothers at our recent commitment ceremony at Chelsea, Michigan.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

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