

A floating Feast site

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By Martha McIver

SEATTLE, Wash.—Wow! What a ride! The Church of God Big Sandy sponsored a Feast site on a cruise from Seattle along the Canadian coastline to Alaska.

One hundred twenty people were on the cruise, and there were eight of us from East Texas in our immediate group: Vern, Jeanine and Vachelle Case; Caleb Fisher; Cynthia, my friend of 35 years; my husband, Neil; our son, Andrew, and myself.

Neil scheduled our flights for dawn on Sept. 21, 2010, so we were up at 3 a.m. and headed for the Dallas–Fort Worth airport with all our luggage and church equipment for the site: a piano keyboard, a sound system and four boxes of hymnals. We took 21 pieces of luggage in all.

Meeting and greeting

It was the first commercial flight for Jeanine and the first cruise for everyone in our group except Neil and me.

We arrived in Seattle and because of the time change we'd already had two meals and it was still three hours until lunchtime.

In Seattle we checked into a charming hotel (The Edgewater) built on a pier over Puget Sound. Each room had its own fireplace, and the food was magnificent.

At the "meet and greet" on Wednesday night, we met some new friends. But we were also thrilled to see old friends as well: Brett and Terry Ebright, Max, the Hutchisons, Dennis and Karen Benson and of course Dennis and Vickie Moulard (coordinators of the site).

Dave Havir, pastor of the Church of God Big Sandy, was there with us in Seattle for the first two days of the Feast. He gave a great opening-day sermon.

At lunch we went a couple of blocks away to a Thai restaurant owned by the sister of our son-in-law. The food was so very good.

Rejoice or else

Then Dennis Moulard gave the afternoon sermon on the first day. He pointed out that God commands us to rejoice.

We love Dennis's humor. At the beginning of the sermon he noted that the congregation in the afternoon was a little smaller than in the morning (which is typical). Then he mentioned that the joke was on the absentees.

His reason? He said that during the break they took the offering to the casino and doubled the money. Therefore they were going to give some money back as a present to those who came to this service.

We enjoyed Dennis's humor and the helpful points that he gave about rejoicing.

On Friday morning Mr. Havar spoke again. He gave a sermon titled "What Makes You Righteous?" He pointed out that self-righteousness is not good, but self-righteousness is better than unrighteousness.

On to three other sites

After the morning service Mr. Havar got on a plane to travel toward the other three sites sponsored the Church of God Big Sandy, and we prepared to board the Holland Cruise liner the M.S. *Zaandam*.

Although Mr. Havar did not join us on the cruise, we were treated to edifying sermons each morning on the boat. The speakers were Ray Stapp, Dan Vandivier, my husband, Neil, Dennis Benson and Dennis Mouland (who spoke on the Last Great Day).

Not only did we have the daily sermons, but people fellowshipped. Sometimes people talked about God, creation or the Bible. At other times they just spent time getting to know each other. And what a place to fellowship.

Our stateroom had a lovely balcony. I unpacked and organized while Andrew and Caleb explored the ship. We set sail at 4 p.m.

Weather got ugly

Unfortunately, as we headed out on the ocean for several hours, the weather got ugly. The crew said this type of weather was highly unusual for an Alaska cruise. The waves were 30 feet high. The boat was not just rocking, it was jolting. This caused the water in the swimming pool to splash out.

We heard that two thirds of the 1,200 passengers and the 1,000 crew members were seasick. At the church service the next morning (Saturday), our attendance was down, and many in attendance were green-hued and lying down.

Changing course

Later in the day the captain announced we were changing course. This was a bad-news-good-news announcement.

The bad news was that we would not get to go to Sitka, Alaska. The good news was that we were headed for calmer waters closer to shore and we would see parts of Alaska no one else ever gets to see.

The scenery is beautiful. Everywhere I looked I could see God's handiwork.

While on board we had two "formal" nights, on which we dolled up in our furs and baubles. We had pictures made.

By Tuesday when we reached Juneau I was ready to get off the boat for a while and plant my feet on terra firma.

Some toured the capital, most of the teens participating in a recreation called zip-lining, and some shopped.

I encouraged everyone to try new things to eat. Some of the selections were quite good. The cold Dutch-apple soup was delicious. Vachelle certainly met that challenge. She ate pate and sushi and was game to try anything new.

The next day, we went to Ketchikan, a really charming place to just wander around.

Back in Seattle

On Friday we arrived back in Seattle, packed up and left our shipboard home. Most every one of the Feastgoers traveled on to their homes that day. But we checked into the Marriott at Pier 66 on the boardwalk.

We shopped at the Pike Street Market and visited the Space Needle and Seattle Aquarium. I remember thinking over and over about how incredibly awesome our God is to create so many different kinds of fish and coral.

Alas, on Sunday morning we again rose at 3 a.m. to go to the airport to fly home. This time we had 24 pieces of luggage. (We had to buy three more pieces to bring home our souvenirs. And how is it that dirty clothes take up so much more room and weigh more than clean clothes?)

We made it home exhausted but truly refreshed and inspired. We were happy to have such wonderful memories of a trip of a lifetime.