



## Anticipating Pentecost

When it comes to observing the festivals of the Holy Bible, there is so much for us to see and do year by year. There is so much to anticipate time after time. And, in so doing, there are never any unpleasant or negative side effects!

The third vital step in God's plan of salvation is portrayed for believers when they observe the Day of Pentecost. In 2016 this festival, also called the Feast of Firstfruits, falls on Sunday, June 12. It seemingly stands all alone between the early spring festivals and the four autumn festivals. And yet it delivers a very important lesson to followers of Jesus Christ about the Father's plan to bring about salvation for mankind.

Four times in Leviticus 23, the Great God instructed the children of Israel to "proclaim" His festivals. Today the church is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). The church in these end times has a duty to proclaim the festivals of the Bible to the world at large. Leviticus 23:4 states, "These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times."

Each of the seven festivals, including Pentecost, are supposed to be observed at their appointed time and not just any old time at all.

How are we expected to "proclaim" the festivals in this day and age? This proclamation occurs individually, and it also occurs corporately. To proclaim means to announce or call out loudly. This is done through the *Beyond Today* television programs. It is also done through articles in the *Beyond Today* magazine. It is done through individual Christians observing the festival by going to church instead of doing their usual things on this special Sunday, thus going to church two days in a row!

In Israel of old there were two annual harvest seasons. The first harvest was the relatively small spring harvest which took place shortly after the winter rainy season. It began on the day of the Wave-Sheaf offering and then subsequently concluded on the Feast of Pentecost.

In that sense the Feast of Pentecost represents the small preliminary harvest. Only a relatively small harvest of mankind during this era will be harvested at the time of Christ's momentous second coming.

At His first coming, after Jesus Christ was accepted as the fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf offering, the general harvest of the firstfruits could commence. Jesus Christ was a holy sacrifice and

was the first human being ever to be resurrected to immortal life. On the morning after He was resurrected, He presented Himself to God the Father for acceptance even as the High Priest under the Old Covenant was required to wave the barley sheaf for acceptance by God before the spring harvest could commence. When Mary saw Christ in the garden, she was not allowed to touch Him because His sacrifice had not yet been accepted in Heaven. Jesus Christ was the first of the firstfruits!

Each year those of us who live in the northern hemisphere look forward to the end of winter and the arrival of spring. We look forward to the return of green grass and green leaves on vegetation and trees. We anticipate the first edible fruits of the land. One of my favourites are chives and my very favorite is rhubarb! So many delightful desserts can be made from rhubarb which grows so abundantly even in the cool of the early spring. Sour though it may be, rhubarb is laden with vitamin C and is a tasty first fruit of the land.

Similarly there is much to look forward to as we together keep the Feast of Pentecost this year. Our Creator God has so much in store for us as we re-enact His remarkable plan of salvation. As we observe each of the festivals we confirm Psalm 34:8 which says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good."

*Anthony Wasilkoff*

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## March 2016 National Council Meeting

The Canadian National Council held its first meeting of the year via WebEx on Monday evening, March 14. All nine members plus the treasurer and secretary were online. Rainer Salomaa began the meeting by extending condolences to the Wasilkoff and Williams families on the loss of young Calvin, who was born seven and a half weeks premature in Houston, Texas, and lived for only one day.

The December 14, 2015, regular and executive minutes were adopted. This was followed by a National Office update given by Anthony Wasilkoff and Edwin van Pelt. Manpower needs have been a high priority and the Council was told that John Elliott will begin to pastor the Vancouver and Vancouver Island congregations allowing David Palmer to reduce his workload and become the associate pastor. This decision was made with input from David Palmer.

Another hire is Jim Lucas who will work part-time at first, helping mainly in Southern Ontario. Jim will continue his drafting business, but slowly reduce his clientele. Mike Caputo suffered a heart attack and will not be hired part-time in April as had been planned.

Our main media effort continues to be the *Beyond Today* television program. We have been checking the possibility of placing an ad in *Reader's Digest* but it is expensive and their readership has declined. Bill Dimovski will continue to be in touch with them.

It was noted that the income for the month of March is below budget; however the online donations are increasing.



Anthony Wasilkoff

Rainer Salomaa gave highlights from the recent Council of Elders meeting, mentioning that Victor Kubik was reappointed to another term as President of UCGia. He also mentioned that Jorge de Campos, the minister responsible for our efforts throughout the Portuguese-speaking countries, presented information to the Council about a

church in Angola with similar beliefs to ours. They have been very gracious in contacting us. Mr. de Campos plans to visit the leadership of the church in Angola after the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The committee chairmen reported that they will have work to do in June during the face-to-face meeting. The Compliance Task Force will be working on additional procedures for some policies in order to be in compliance with legislation.

Charles Desgrosseilliers would have finished his three-year term on the Amendment Committee at the end of March. By unanimous consent, the National Council appointed Kevin Ford to a three-year term on the Amendment Committee starting April 1, 2016.

The Secretary read the ballot results of a National Conference Action by Written Ballot Without a Meeting. The Strategic Plan, Operations Plan and Budget for the 2016/2017 year were all approved.

The next Council meeting will be a face-to-face meeting in Calgary on June 2-3, 2016.

Linda Wasilkoff

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## Member Profile: Guenter Brauer

Guenter Brauer entered this world on October 28, 1927, in the small town of Neu Lowenberg, Germany. He was a tiny baby of only 4 ½ pounds, but his parents, Max and Emma, loved him. He would grow up healthy and strong on the farm in the Pomerania region that his father purchased the year after his birth. Even so, he could never have imagined that it would be 88 years before he would be baptized in Calgary, Alberta, on Sunday, April 16, 2016.

When asked why he had waited such a long time before choosing baptism, he told me, “I felt it was time to make my commitment to God.” For Guenter, giving his word and making a commitment is a very serious affair, which he does not take lightly.

Guenter, a long-time attendee, is the second-oldest member of the Calgary UCG congregation and a favourite of his 50 or so fellow churchgoers. He loves to talk with everyone in the local congregation regardless of age. It is not unusual to see him bring a new toy for a small child or extra food for the after-service snacks and coffee.

Guenter has seen a great deal in his 88 years. He had the misfortune of growing up in Nazi Germany under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler and witnessed first-hand the horrors of World War II. Forced to endure the indoctrinations of the Nazi regime, his father, Max, nonetheless hated the brutal government and taught his children that it was evil. Before he died of cancer in 1940, Max had convinced Guenter’s older brother Herbert to forsake his enthusiasm for the “brown shirts” of the Nazi S.A. and distance himself from the party. Even

so, no one could escape the long arm of conscription into the German armed forces and all three boys in the family ended up in the army.

Fortunately Guenter was too young to be in combat. In 1944, when he was 18, he chose to work in a labour battalion in the eastern part of Germany. However, the labour battalion was eventually turned into a training group for the Hermann Goering Division of the German army in November 1944. Shortly after that, they were overrun by the Russian army in January 1945, before any of them could be added to front-line formations. Then Guenter ended up in a prison camp.



Rainer Salomaa

His two brothers, Herbert and Walter, spent years on the front lines where Walter won the Knights Cross for destroying 13 Soviet tanks, as well as other trucks and vehicles, with the two anti-tank guns he commanded. Tragically Walter was killed in action on January 18, 1945, not far from where Guenter was interned. Herbert later became a teacher and eventually received the highest civilian award for public service in West Germany and lived into his 70s. Guenter misses them both intensely and tells stories of how decent they were as human beings.

Guenter is convinced God saved him from death numerous times as he managed to be set free from the Russian prison camp shortly before almost certain deportation to the Soviet Union to perish in the coal mines. At length he escaped with his mother to the French controlled sector of occupied Germany. Thereafter he immigrated to Canada, as post-war Germany held only grim economic prospects for a young man. Guenter would hold various positions with Canadian National Railways, working in a section gang and as a fireman.

Guenter’s only sister, Ursula, who had studied art in Dresden, Germany, also came to North America, working in both Canada and the United States before marrying an American in Los Angeles, California.

Guenter’s wife, Elfrida Klein, likewise immigrated to Canada in order to marry him in 1958. He laughs when he relates that they had never even met each other, though he had known her sister, and that Elfriede’s family warned her that Canada was still a frontier country and the West was filled with Indians who were likely to scalp her! After being married, they settled in Calgary where he worked in the energy sector.

The Brauers later adopted a daughter, Karen, who grew up to be a lovely young woman and a very good student. Today Karen is married to Andy Lee, and their family lives in the Cleveland, Ohio, area where they serve in UCG as a deaconess and deacon.

Guenter has also had a long-time love of good quality audio equipment. His home has numerous ex-

amples of vintage stereo gear. He has been known to give away stereo equipment to members so they, too, can enjoy the love of music he has nurtured for decades. Guenter enjoys reminiscing about his life, repairing vintage audio equipment, driving his beloved Volkswagen automobile (es-

pecially in the nearby Rocky Mountains) and taking care of his home and yard.

He attends church regularly and wants people to know that the terrible events that tore his homeland asunder are prophesied to happen

again, and that we must make God our rock and salvation if we are going to pass through this age of troubles and into His glorious kingdom, where eternal life is promised and peace and joy will reign forever.

*Todd Sauve*

## Be Actively Involved

The United Church of God-Canada does strive to listen to input from members. In fact, here in Canada, we have reserved two of the seats on the National Council for laymembers. These two individuals then become “members of the corporation” – which is different from being a member of the spiritual body of the church. This gives you a chance to be actively involved in the church!

This summer each official congregation will once again be asked to nominate someone from the congregation to be considered for a position on the National Council. Who can take part? Because we must operate as a corporation, we must meet legal requirements. In this case, to take part in this selection process, you must be a baptized member of UCG-Canada. We must have your completed membership form on record. If you are baptized but have not completed a form—and wish to be an official member of the spiritual body of the church—see your pastor for the form.

If you have submitted the form, now is the time to start considering who in your congregation might be an asset on the National Council at this time. Some criteria to consider are:

- The person must be baptized and an official member of the church called UCG-Canada.

- The person must be able to attend a face-to-face National Council meeting each year (3 or 4 days per meeting) during his/her three-year term. The person must also be available to take part in three online meetings per year.

- The person must agree with and support the Fundamental Beliefs of the church.

- The person must agree with and support the policies of the church.

- The person must be able to communicate via the computer.

- The person should be someone of integrity.

Council business is sometimes tedious and sometimes exciting. A council member needs to have the ability to read the Bylaws with understanding as well as have the ability to plan for future growth.

So, how can you know who in your congregation would be a good choice? Most congregations will

have a list of those who are available to be selected. Start by looking to see who is on that list. Then pray for wisdom for your choice and especially for the collective decision of the congregation. Then, get to know your fellow brethren – their dedication to the church and our beliefs.

As you narrow down your choices, ask some questions of the individuals. Each year some are chosen who must decline because they would be unable to take the necessary time off work to attend council meetings. In other words – do your homework and be actively involved in this important process!

Through the years, there have been some very capable laymembers chosen to serve on the National Council. Their wise input has been valued. The collective ideas and the advice received from many different regions (from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland) and backgrounds have helped the National Council to make more balanced decisions through the years.

Don't miss this opportunity to be actively involved!

## Food Handling Safety

Our church has a reputation for having great potlucks. They are a very important part of providing an atmosphere for becoming better acquainted with each other and promoting unity.

Whenever a group of people get together and share food, it is important to take extra care to safely prepare, store, re-heat and serve that food. This becomes even more essential as hot weather approaches.

One outbreak of food poisoning would not only be physically dangerous to many of our dear brethren, but could also potentially have legal repercussions for the Church. If we all work together, we can greatly reduce the risk of food poisoning at any of our upcoming gatherings.

This article cannot cover all aspects of food safety, but will touch on the fundamentals. There are additional guidelines listed on many different websites, such as: Health Canada at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) and Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education at [www.canfightbac.org](http://www.canfightbac.org). These websites give helpful advice for preventing foodborne illnesses.

### At Home

Most foodborne illnesses are the result of improper handling. Bacteria can thrive in food that has been improperly handled and stored. Here are some tips to help reduce potential problems:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling food and when you switch

from one food to another.

- Be sure your kitchen countertops and utensils are clean and sanitized. Don't forget other areas that come into contact with your hands or food (dish cloths, faucet handles, sink, refrigerator handles, appliances, etc.)

- Have separate cutting boards for raw meats and sanitize after each use.

- Wash lids of canned foods just before opening to prevent contamination from getting into the food.



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- Air dry dishes and utensils if possible or dry them with clean kitchen towels if you are not using a dish washer.

- Thoroughly sanitize and wash anything that comes into contact with raw food before re-using.

- Store raw meat and poultry in containers on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator or freezer to prevent raw juices from dripping onto or touching other food.

- Remember that the danger zone for bacteria to grow is between 4 and 60 degrees Celcius (40 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit). Do not keep food in the danger zone for longer than two hours.

- Thaw food in the refrigerator to be sure it stays at a safe, constant temperature.

- Promptly cool and refrigerate foods to be taken to a potluck after they are cooked. Very hot items can be cooled at room temperature until steaming stops. Leave the lid off until the food is cooled to refrigeration temperature.

### At Church or Socials

Since food for potlucks is, for the most part, prepared in advance and warmed at church, specific precautions need to be taken.

- All kitchen help should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling food and when switching from one food to another.

- Be sure all countertops and utensils are clean.

- Keep all cold foods cold and all hot foods hot!

- Reheat food to a safe internal temperature of 74 degrees Celcius (165 degrees Fahrenheit).

- Bring all gravies, soups and sauces to a full, rolling boil, stirring during the process.

- Discard uneaten leftovers after they have been reheated.

- When heating in a microwave, stop the microwave midway through reheating and stir the food so that the heat is evenly distributed. If the microwave does not have

a rotating tray, rotate the container several times during cooking.

Let us all diligently do our part so that everyone can continue to enjoy the meals without any unwanted side effects.

Members of the congregation should also remember to minimize any undue risk to others and maintain a high level of hygiene.

Remember that it is not only bad manners, but also unhealthy, to eat while going through a food line as germs can be transmitted to food on the table or to the serving utensils. It is equally important to use the provided utensils (not your fingers) to obtain food from the serving trays so as to avoid cross contamination.

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## Fort McMurray Fires

Among the survivors of the fires of Fort McMurray were hundreds of animals that had to be left behind to be rescued later. In the approximately 2,500 homes that were destroyed, no doubt, pets died. However, the heroic work of many firefighters, police and others rescued hundreds of pets from homes and transported them to a large site in Edmonton where the SPCA, aided by animal peace officers, veterinarians and many volunteers set to work to care for, feed and nurse back to health cats, dogs, rabbits, snakes and other exotic animals.

My wife, Valerie Berendt, is a volunteer for the Humane Society in Edmonton and put in many hours of volunteer work at the location that housed the rescue effort. Volunteers worked 24/7 in shifts.

There are many stories to be told and some can be found on the website for Fort McMurray.

One that is truly special is about a small black cat that has been named TOAST. It was found inside a stove in a partially burned down home. Apparently the stove protected the cat from a fiery death, but it had burned paws, singed whiskers and was in need of a lot of TLC – which was gladly given.

Volunteers did everything from feed and comfort the animals to help arrange and main-



provided by Robert Berendt

tain the hundreds of kennels and enclosures that held them. Animals were held until owners

were contacted. For the few that were not picked up, other SPCA centers in Alberta will house them and eventually put them up for adoption.

It is amazing how strong the bonds can become between a pet and its owner. God had something special in mind when He created this sort of bond. More and more we are learning about the comfort pets give to people and the important part they can play in the life of a child or family.

The fires at Fort McMurray released a flood of good humane conduct and help for the thousands of people who had to flee, and also put a special focus on the value of a pet. This fire brought out the best in mankind at a time of crisis. No wonder God so loves this world He sent His only begotten Son (John 3:16).

Robert Berendt

# News From Across Canada

## 90th Birthday

In March of this year, John Howlowach of the Saskatoon congregation turned 90 years old. To commemorate the occasion, the family had a come-and-go tea at the condo where John and his wife, Irene, live. Friends and family joined together in wishing John the best and reminisced on his accomplishments during his 90 years.



Darlene Buck

John worked in many areas of our great country—from Ontario, to British Columbia and back to Saskatchewan, the province of his birth. He enjoyed a varied career which included dairy farmer, construction, logging and owning stores and a motel.

John and Irene have been married for over 60 years. They have one daughter, two sons and many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

They have faithfully lived God's way of life for many years. As the oldest seniors in our congregation, we cherish the great example they are for all of us.

*Darlene Buck*

## Toronto Socials

Following services on February 27, 2016, the Toronto congregation held an Arts and Crafts social. Members from Toronto, Hamilton and Kitchener brought in arts and



Michael Yap

crafts to display and some to be auctioned off. Displays included: paintings, photography, stained glass, quilts, doll clothes, knitted and crocheted items and other assorted crafts.

It was an interesting way to get acquainted with talents of individuals that might otherwise not be known. The "auction" was done by writing a bid on a piece of paper and putting it into a jar. The highest bid got the item. Funds raised will help to pay for future socials.

On May 7 the annual social to honour Mothers and Seniors was held.

*Linda Wasilkoff*

## Calgary NTBMO

Sixty Calgarians gathered together at the Bow Water Canoe Club to remember The Night to

Be Much Observed. The evening started with wine and cheese while we waited for all our beloved brethren to arrive to share in a meal together.

In the tradition and spirit of the evening, several children, teens and young adults recited a "Let My People Go" account of our freedom, from both physical and spiritual bondage and were reminded to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).



Claudia Salomaa

An elegant catered meal was shared by candlelight in a stunning black and gold array. Great company and lively conversation was buzzing all around as we indulged in scrumptious, delectable desserts made by some of the ladies.

Gifts were given to the teens and children as clues to the theme of the evening. Examples of the gifts were: a fly swatter (plague of flies), or wheel-repair kit (Egyptians' broken chariot wheels), and renewing cleanser cream (Christ cleanses us from sin and our continual renewal with him).

What an absolute blessing it

was to gather all together for this memorable evening!

Note: The Calgary pastor, Rainer Salomaa, wishes to give special thanks to Heidi Poffenroth and Belinda Bose for planning the evening.

*Heidi Poffenroth*

## Obituary

Olga Hrenyk of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, died peacefully on February 26, 2016, at age 88. She was preceded in death by her husband, John, in 2004.

Olga's death marks the end of a remarkable family history that goes back to the 1930's when the Hrenyk family met John Kiesz and Andrew Duggar who came to the Prince Albert area on an evangelical tour. (Mr. Kiesz and Mr. Dugger both knew Mr. H. W. Armstrong.) John and his father, Thomas Hrenyk, were following the teachings



provided by Robert Berendt

regarding the Sabbath.

Olga married John Hrenyk in 1950. They stayed in the Prince Albert area and raised eight children. The Hrenyk family attended the Church of God Seventh Day, but John and Olga followed the Radio Church of God, which later became the Worldwide Church of God. Life was not easy for Olga on the farm, and when the children grew up, they no longer continued in the faith as their parents had done.

Olga ran into health problems which resulted in the amputation of one leg and the last years of her life were spent in a wheelchair, living in a seniors' home in Prince Albert where she was well liked. She remained loyal to the truth and, even though she could no longer attend services, she received recorded sermons and read her Bible regularly. Olga had an amazing attitude and was at peace within herself and content that her life had run its course.

Olga was a sister of Anne Korneluk, a member of the North Battleford congregation. She was aunt to Bob Korneluk of Edmonton.

There were many people in attendance at Olga's funeral, including friends from the Worldwide Church of God. Robert Berendt officiated at her funeral.

Olga now is waiting for the resurrection.

*Robert Berendt*

## 2016 Leadership Workshop Weekend

This year the annual Leadership Workshop Weekend in Toronto was held over the first weekend in April. Thirty-three individuals attended from the following congregations: St. John's, NL; Montreal, QC; Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton and Kitchener, ON. One couple from western Canada was unable to attend.

The weekend began with church services and a sermon

titled "Change" given by Gary Antion. Following services, the Toronto congregation hosted a potluck supper. All who wished could attend the evening seminar "Self-Esteem – To Have or Not to Have" also given by Gary Antion.

The Sunday seminars were held at the National Office with a self-catered lunch provided. Presentations included: Living

Up to Expectations, Counseling Lessons We Need; and The Art of Passing & Receiving the Baton. Time was allotted at the end of the day for discussion and questions.

This was the first opportunity for several to attend one a Leadership Workshop. We, indeed, are preparing to pass the baton.



## Fifty Days and Counting

Prior to returning to Heaven, Jesus instructed His followers not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. Promises are important. There are those who make promises but often fail to keep them. There are those who make promises they never intend to keep. We know of a few rare individuals who, when they make a promise, do everything in their power to keep each promise they make. For this reason they make very few promises but when they do, they work very hard to ensure they deliver.

The Holy Bible is replete with promises. As early as 1 Kings 8:56 we read: “Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.” The God we serve is One who issues promises to His people. Then when conditions are met, He is pleased to follow through on those promises. His word is sure and He impresses upon His servants that His word is something His followers can depend on.

To wait for something we really want or need is not an easy thing to do. Delayed gratification is a mark of maturity. Children typically abhor waiting and prefer for something promised to be delivered with decisive immediacy. Adults can have the same desire. However, sometimes we aren't ready for something right away. A preparation process might be needed so that we are able to handle whatever it is we are hoping to receive. You may remember the promise of your very first

transportation device. Perhaps it was a tricycle, a scooter or a bicycle. You may have had to grow into it. Perhaps your dad had to attach wooden blocks to your tricycle pedals so that you wouldn't have to wait quite so long to ride it!

Another benefit of waiting is that it heightens appreciation. As we wait for the day when we can finally receive our very first something, we imagine how wonderful it will be when the realization finally occurs. There are the sweet anticipatory thoughts of what it will be like to finally receive the object of our affection. Memories may take you back to fond thoughts you had about someday being given your very own room, your very own bed or your very own bicycle. Or, you might have thought about what it would be like to have your very first pet to care for and be special friends with.



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The people of Israel at the time of Christ's first coming anticipated His arrival with growing ardor. In *The Day Christ Died* (by Jim Bishop) we read: “The Messiah was a sweet national obsession.

It was ecstasy beyond happiness, joy beyond comprehension; it was balm to a weary farmer's bones as he lay with his family waiting for sleep; it was the single last hope of the aged, the thing a child looked to a mountain of snowy clouds to see; it was the hope of Judea in chains; the Messiah was always the promise of tomorrow morning. This solemn surge of singing in the heart of every good Jew was the core of Judea at the time of Jesus. This was the top-most stone in the climb toward eternity.”

We know from Acts 2 that the promised Holy Spirit is described as a very special ‘gift’. That is, there is nothing we can ever do to earn it. There is nothing we can do to obligate God to give it to us. Even so, there are conditions we must meet, such as repentance, so that we may receive it. James 1:17 assures us that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.”

Not long ago we observed the Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed and the Feast of Unleavened Bread – giving due emphasis to the annual high Holy Days. Now we are on a countdown to the Feast of Pentecost when we will observe the next remarkable festival in God's Holy Day calendar. More than ever, we appreciate the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit and the opportunity to rehearse and review God's plan of salvation and the confidence we can have in each promise made by our Heavenly Father and His Son.

## Growing Fruit

Have you gone to the fruit market lately? Probably so. We delight in partaking of the many varieties of delicious fruit.

When we shop for fruit, we like to squeeze it—testing it for ripeness and freshness. In like manner, God tests us to help us bear good quality fruit. This is possible through His Holy Spirit. God is patient with us and as fruit growing is a PROCESS and takes time. Think of God's Holy Spirit as a seed and God's word as a seed which grows in us. A seed goes through stages of growth, as growing up into Christ is incremental and sequential. Sometimes the fruit we bear leaves a lot to be desired, but God continues to work with us, pruning out poor growth to make way for new growth.

In being nourished by God's word, God's seed remains in us. We are planted by God where He knows we can grow best. There are growing pains, since it takes time for humans to mature spiritually. It can even be painful. Physically, as kids grow up, from prepubescent to puberty, they can actually feel pains in their body. They seem to grow in leaps and bounds sometimes, especially over the summer months.

We can look at the process of bearing fruit as being new creatures in Christ, being formed and reshaped into His likeness to share true spiritual intimacy with Him.

For fruit to grow, a seed must first die. It is the death of the self that 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of. A germination process is required. "Foolish one! What you sow is not

made alive unless it dies" (1 Corinthians 15:36 MKJV).

Each seed has a life cycle. Some parts die, and the germ gets nourishment from the decomposition of the other parts so there can be more growth. Out of death comes life! We can consider the death of our old man. Romans 6:6 "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."



pasmalamanimagesRF/Thinkstock

God gives the increase, and believers cooperate with His working in them. "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

Fruit bearing will continue into the Kingdom of God.

"And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall

bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (Ezekiel 47:12 KJV).

Besides the literal application, there is a wonderfully symbolic picture in all this. Again, the river represents the outflowing of the Holy Spirit, bringing life to the lifeless. In the fruitful, medicinal trees we may see God's Spirit working in and through the lives of His righteous servants. For not only are the righteous to partake of the Tree of Life, they are in a sense to be trees of life themselves. Nourished by the stream of Holy Spirit, they are to produce godly fruit and be a life-giving blessing to others.

Fruit growing takes time, care and patience. It can be hard to discern how much fruit is being produced and the quality of it. God works patiently with His children, to bring forth fruits unto righteousness, as we are to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. In order for something to grow, something else has to die. We work on becoming dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ (UCG Commentary).

God's Holy Spirit is the life-giving agent which can produce good fruit in His children. Ultimately, the spiritual fruit of God's plan will grow greatly, as God will "pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17 KJV).

Let's be fruit inspectors, examining ourselves for Christian growth, and bearing good fruit to God's glory.

*Dale Craniford*

## Online Resources

As you prepare for Pentecost, there are a number of articles, available for you to tap into at: <http://www.ucg.ca/bible-study-tools/pentecost> Below is a sample of the articles found there:

- A Vital Part of God's Master Plan
- Counting
- Lessons From Childhood
- Pentecost and the Law
- Pentecost: A Vital Part of God's Master Plan
- Practicing What We Preach
- Raising an Army of Firstfruits
- The Feast of Pentecost
- The Firstfruits to God
- The Spirit of Pentecost
- Using our Talents to the Maximum

In addition, you can find a good selection of sermons (even some sermon transcripts) at <http://www.ucg.org/sermons>. If you type in "Feast of Pentecost" in the "Title" search, it will bring up a selection of sermons on the subject.

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they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit "...for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. . . But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:5, 8).

The Holy Spirit is our very source of eternal life. "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. . . It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life'" (John 6:53-54, 63).

God's wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit is also our source of wisdom and knowledge. Recall the promise Jesus made to His disciples: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit,

whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13). But that same promise is given to those whom God has called even today: "But as it is written, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things (mysteries) of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

It is with the guidance of God's Holy Spirit that we build Godly character, which the scripture calls the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Jesus tells us, in a parable, that

when we find the pearl of great price we should be willing to give up all that we have to purchase that one precious possession, meaning a change is needed in the way we think and act. We no longer follow the ways of this world. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God...The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:13-14, 16).

Our ultimate goal is to attain resurrection into the Kingdom of God, and the down payment that gives us the opportunity to inherit that Kingdom, is God's precious gift of the Holy Spirit. It's what Peter told his audience on the Day of Pentecost, repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) – a gift that leads to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.



## The Gift of Pentecost

What is the greatest gift God could ever bestow on the human race? If you asked a dozen people, the chances are you would get a dozen different answers. Some might say good health, others might say life itself and some might say eternal life. All of those answers would be acceptable. Jesus referred to that gift as being like a hidden treasure called the “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:44-46). To find the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, where do we start?

Let’s begin with a powerful sermon message delivered by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts, chapter 2. Following a miracle from God where every individual listening to Peter could understand his words in their own language (Acts 2:6-9) and, after a dissertation in which he makes reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he tells his audience (and by extrapolation) all of us, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

There is nothing we can do on our own, but in harmony with God’s Spirit and looking to Jesus Christ as our elder brother, Master and Teacher, we can have access to that hidden treasure. Recall what Jesus told His disciples: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when it, the Spirit of truth,

has come, it will guide you into all truth; for it will not speak on its own authority, but whatever it hears it will speak; and it will tell you things to come” (John 16:12-13). He also told His disciples: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).



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When Jesus stood in the synagogue and read from the book of Isaiah, He made specific reference to the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. When He finished reading, “Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:20-21). What’s interesting is earlier, in verse 16, the Sabbath referred to when this event took place can be translated “weeks” meaning that Jesus may have chosen to read these words from Isaiah on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

The wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit works in different ways. We are, after all, different and unique

with different personalities, talents and abilities. Paul understood this. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,” (1 Corinthians 12:4-8).

It is the same spirit, but just a different manifestation because of the personality, talent or capability of the individual. Paul goes on to show “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

God through the power of the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1-2) and brought His only begotten Son into the world, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, (Mary) and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Jesus promised His disciples that when the day of Pentecost came

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