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Let Us Keep the Feast - But How?

By Anthony Wasilkoff

The Apostle Paul earnestly admonished the Church of God in Corinth, "Therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:8). Of course, he was referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread but his words would apply equally to the Feast of Tabernacles.

Early August in a memo to all local Feast coordinators, the UCG Conference planner wrote, "It is very possible that restrictions for large groups might be more severe than last year by Feast time. Plus what if some states or businesses mandate vaccinations to enter? Many people eat out at restaurants daily. We have to be prepared for worse case scenarios and be prepared to communicate our plans to the members."

James 4:13-15 emphatically states, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.' Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'"

The very same caution applies to observing the Feast of Tabernacles.

Feast planning has become a major source of stress for all Feast coordinators. You can verify this by asking any one of the Feast coordinators what it has been like for them lately. They'll tell you that due to corona virus and related protocols, there are an enormous number of variables and restrictions that make planning much more difficult than it has ever been. They would all appreciate our earnest prayers.

One way or another, we are all looking forward to keeping the Feast

"assembling" is from a compound form of the word "synagogue" describing a literal physical gathering of Christians. As ardent believers, we look forward to attending the Feast of Tabernacles this year either in person, on-line, in a combination of the two or in whatever way the Great God provides.

Although I greatly miss the physical in-person assembly that has been our mainstay for so many years, I have come to appreciate Zoom church services that allow us to approximate what has been taken away from us. In times past brethren who stayed at home had to attend services by playing an audio or video tape. Later it was a DVD or MP3 and this was pretty good when one considers the alternative back them.

Somehow, someday, we will keep the Feast of Tabernacles this year. If we supply the will, our Heavenly Father will most assuredly supply the way.



Attendees gathering in-person

Photo by Peter Corrigan

of Tabernacles this year. It remains to be seen exactly how our Heavenly Father will make it possible for us to do so. Hopefully, it will be in-person at local sites even as we have become accustomed to doing annually for many, many years.

Hebrews 10:25 admonishes, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some." The Greek word translated

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Canadian Ministerial Virtual Conference

By Rainer Salomaa

Every two years, the ministry and lay members of the Canadian National Conference have a ministerial conference in June. Previous meetings have been held in Toronto over a weekend.

This year, however, because of COVID-19 restrictions making travel difficult, the conference was held via Zoom on Sunday, June 6, beginning at 12:00 Noon Eastern Time. The meeting lasted close to six hours with 31 connections. The technology worked flawlessly. A big thank you goes to Paul Wasilkoff and Warren Poffenroth for taking care of the technical details.

Anthony Wasilkoff, Director of Operations, asked Robert Berendt to start the meeting with prayer. Then we were shown a short PowerPoint presentation of photographs from past conferences including photographs of deceased elders and elders' wives.

Robert Dick gave an insightful presentation on "The History of United's Founding" tracing events from 1992 up to the General

Conference of Elders meeting in December 1995. Some of these he said were of Biblical proportions. This topic had been assigned to him for presentation at the May 2020 General Conference of Elders meetings, but the pandemic hit and it was never presented. It is wonderful to have this material archived for future generations as well as for some present who had never heard some of these details.

Gary Antion gave a two-part presentation on "Facets of the Ministry" covering Pastor, Preacher, Counselor, Visitor, Personal Life and Family Life. To begin he read a poem, "Requirements for Being a Shepherd" written by one of our recently deceased elders, Gary Lucas. He covered a handout with Scriptures from the Amplified Bible on 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3. He also covered Scriptures from another handout, "How to Look on the Congregation." There was a third handout he referred to by Edgar A. Guest, "I'd Rather See a Sermon Than Hear One Any Day." In the synopsis of his presentation,

he wrote, "The ministry is a multifaceted responsibility. It's important to be attentive to all facets of the ministry if we are to effectively lead and care for those whom we serve. Whether pastor, elder or trainee, we all can benefit from being refreshed as to the various facets of serving the precious people whom God has placed in our care!"

John Elliot was on-line from Tulsa, Oklahoma. He gave a thirty-minute presentation entitled "Mentoring in Action." He shared an extensive handout, "Pastor's Mentoring Program for Elders." At the end, he left time for some heartfelt discussion about priorities and usage of our time. A part of the presentation synopsis said, "Mentoring is not a program, nor a duty. It's an action that one engages in to alleviate oneself from limiting responsibilities that others would benefit from taking on. A mentor leaves a wake of responsibilities managed by a growing number of people. From mentoring infant children to budding church leaders your legacy can be one of actively transferring responsibilities to

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others in order to pursue more important things at hand.”

After a fifteen minute break, Rainer Salomaa gave a PowerPoint presentation on “Becoming Whole Again.” He had taken part in a two day virtual “Working Stronger Conference” put on by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Alberta division. That conference was designed to help employers create and maintain mentally healthy workplaces despite the obstacles experienced in 2020. He shared material from a presentation by Dr. Susan Biali Hass, MD, on Becoming Whole Again – foundations of mental health, healing and resilience. The focus was on burnout, what it is and how to protect from it building resiliency.

Next, Sheldon Sitter presented a topic entitled “The Conversion of our Congregations” in which he discussed some of the challenges during the COVID pandemic where we have seen our congregations and church services go from in-person gatherings to online meetings. In his synopsis, he wrote, “If government restrictions on gatherings are lifted, will our members return to assembling and fellowshiping in person; or will they be more comfortable, stay home and participate in an online service? If some of them opt for an online service, will that service be ours? As congregational leaders we must be prepared and ready to serve all of God’s people, whether

in-person or remotely. How do we do that? What does this mean for each of us from a practical point of view? We could look at this congregational conversion as a threat to our current method of operation, or we could also choose to see it as an opportunity. So what exactly is the opportunity, and how can we make the most of it as we do our best to serve God?” Sheldon then left time for discussion at the end of his presentation.

We were honoured to have



Victor Kubik, the President of UCGIA on-line with us during the entire meeting. He took about fifty minutes to discuss “The Future of the Church” and what we need to be doing now to prepare for the next phase. He wrote: “We are living in a momentous time of transition for mankind. It is also a time of transition in the churches and the ministry of the United Church of God. We already are preparing the way for new overseers and a new generation of leadership.” He spoke about steps we are currently taking to facilitate this progression. He asked, “How are we reaching out to the world and how are we caring for the people whom God has called without altering God’s unchangeable doctrines

and values? What are we doing in the proclamation of the Gospel, training ministers, and caring for our brethren?” Victor Kubik also took time to respond to questions before and after the presentation.

Robert Dick’s final presentation was entitled, “Yardsticks to Measure Sermons and Speakers.” He shared his experiences as being part of a pilot project in a group of eight elders who listened to and evaluated each other’s sermons. He admitted that he entered into it with a bit of trepidation, but said it turned out to be a delightful experience which helped him to get to know the fellow elders involved much better. He took time to share some thoughts on speaking.

Michael Erickson, the chairman of the Compliancy Task Force reviewed two policies that are required to be presented to the National Conference -- our Anti-Spam Policy and Sexual Misconduct and Youth Protection Policy.

Before we were dismissed in prayer, given by David Palmer, there was time allotted for questions to the presenters.

The day went fast and we look forward to having a face-to-face ministerial conference in June 2023. Additionally, Canada plans to have two Zoom mini-conferences, one for the East and one for the West. 🌐

National Council Meeting

By Edwin van Pelt

The June 14 meeting of the National Council began at 10:30 a.m. (ET) with all Council members present. After an opening prayer, the Chairman read some excerpts from the book, *Coffee Break with God*. This was followed by the adoption of the minutes from the March 8 meeting.

Paul Wasilkoff gave a summary of his first Council of Elders meetings which were held following the General Conference of Elders meetings in May.

Director of Operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, provided an update from the National Office. He covered a variety of topics including a report on the Operations Plan. He noted that most of the numbers were higher than projected while a few were down possibly due to old age attrition. There are still subscribers on file who responded to the very first ad we placed in *Reader's Digest* back in July 1997 as well as some who responded to one of the ads placed in *Alive* magazine in 2003 and 2004. The most recent Subscriber Development Letter was sent to nearly 2,300 *Beyond Today* magazine subscribers in May.

Larry DeLong commented on this year's Ministerial Conference. Although it was a virtual meeting, it was the best one he had attended. There were several speakers from Canada and the United States who participated. The Conference lasted nearly seven hours — much longer than originally planned.

The question came up about

resuming in-person Sabbath services and holding the Feast of Tabernacles. At this point, the plans are still in place to hold the Feast in Osoyoos (BC), Drumheller (AB) and Midland (ON) along with several satellite sites. Provincial governments are loosening restrictions at different rates. Some are allowing larger gatherings while others are not.

Paul Wasilkoff gave a Media update. He noted that the highest responses to the television program this year was from the program "Beware of the Mark of the Beast." Most responses are generated from prophecy-themed programs. The PDF format is the most popular for downloading our publications. The Media Team is working on some new ideas for our website designed to increase interest in our material.

Treasurer Bill Dimovski provided a Financial Update. Our annual audit began with a three-day visit to our office by our auditor in early June. We ended the last fiscal year with a

surplus; donations were higher than budgeted while expenses were lower than projected.

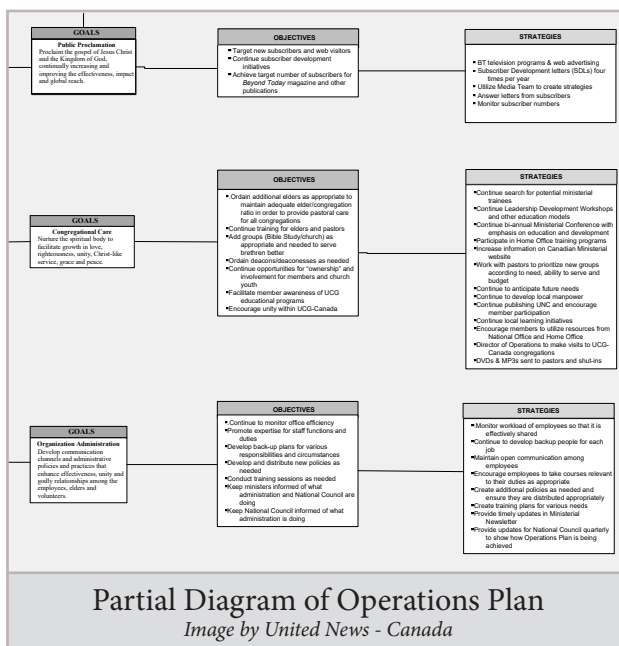
Michael Erickson gave a report from the Strategic Planning and Finance Committee meeting of April 27, 2021. A number of topics were covered including electronic donations and our investment policy.

After a brief lunch break, the meetings resumed with a report from Jim Lucas, Chairman of the Governance, Pastoral and Ethics Committee. The major scope of work currently being done is a succession plan to replace the Director of Operations upon his planned retirement in a few years.

Compensation Committee Chair, Cindy Ridi, followed with an update on salary ranges and mileage reimbursement. There was much discussion about renting vehicles for longer out-of-town trips. While renting can save the Church a considerable amount of money, there are other factors that enter into the equation.

Michael Erickson then presented the Compliancy Task Force report. A new policy was presented dealing with office employees working remotely. A number of updates to policies were presented and approved by the Council.

The Council meeting concluded just before 3:00 p.m. ET with a closing prayer. It was followed by the annual review of the Director of Operations. 🌐



One Man's Journey to God

By Dale Craniford

It has been said that every journey begins with a single step. As Church of God members, this expression likely conjures up memories. Those of us on the west coast are no exception.

A recently baptized member, Ralph Cortes recalls, "My journey started back in the Philippines when I was still in high school. One Sunday I came across a television program from a Church of God group. I then started researching, reading about the Church of God history and Herbert W. Armstrong. I started subscribing to magazines and booklets."

During Ralph's research, he came across the United Church of God and says "I became interested in United." Ralph, still in high school, got the *Good News* magazine and some booklets. He had curiosity, but was not keen on attending church yet. Both of his parents were devout Catholics.

Ralph stopped researching for ten years until he started working in 2016. He says, "It took me a while to mature as a believer."

The year 2016 saw Ralph in Canada studying in a ten-month program for freight forwarding and logistics. After that, two MBA applications and two permanent residency attempts were rejected. Things didn't work for many reasons, but it was a turning point. Having been refused, he rethought his plan.

Ralph asked himself, "Why am I experiencing this kind of trial?" He almost returned to the Philippines and says, "I hadn't been praying about my plans, but focused on myself." After praying and consulting with his family, he went to an immigration consultant. He determined that if God would help with his study permit, he would search for the Church of God in Vancouver and he found the United Church of God.



Ralph Cortes
Photo by Dale Craniford

The nearest congregation was in Surrey. Ralph prayed, "God if you help me, if all goes well, I'll stay in that congregation." He admits it took him out of his comfort zone to be going to a place where he didn't know anyone. He was happy to meet fellow Filipinos – Marlina and Alex Escasinas! He describes the meeting as "a breath of fresh air, and a friendly group all around."

Originally surprised with the small size of the congregation, Ralph realized that Paul wrote of an apostasy in the church, so that a small group was remaining.

"I feel like I am really part of the congregation. As Paul said there is no Jew, no Greek. I don't see any division, only a unified church in Vancouver. I find there is incredible humility, support, encouragement and understanding. I felt at home and accepted."

Ralph thought back to his childhood and wanting to be a priest! He relates, "Every town has its own saint. I used to serve in a chapel, a small church in our community. Filipino communities and families revolve around church activities."

"In Surrey, if I can volunteer to help, I will. I help with recording, sound booth, visuals, projector and skills I learned through the MBA program."

Ralph believes that what distinguishes the Church of God are God's Festivals and realization that He is the Creator. Also, that one day all will know His Plan. In the meantime, we have real hope. For Ralph, being part of the church the last four years has been a blessing after putting things off for quite a long while.

This man's journey began with a single step, and may God bless his Christian walk. 🍁

A Good Name

By Linda Wasilkoff

“Never do anything to hurt our good name!” My Dad said this to his children too many times to count. He would explain that our family was known for its honesty and integrity. He would go on to emphasize that it was up to us to be sure that our family’s reputation was not spoiled.

Of course, some years later when I was married, I changed my last name. But the concept of keeping a good reputation for the family name continued. Dad’s instruction came to mind when I saw an example of a family with a bad reputation. The children had to work hard to earn a good reputation – establishing a good name for the family.

We have all heard (and most likely memorized) the sample prayer located in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. Through the years we have heard a number of sermons based on this section of Scripture. Recently I realized that I had not completely focused on the fact that it says that God’s name should be hallowed. One meaning for “hallowed” is to mentally venerate. I

take it to mean that we consciously recognize that God’s very name is holy and, once we recognize that, our prayers will automatically take on more reverence.

As Christians, we are responsible to make sure we do not bring disrespect on our Christian name – on our Church. We are observed more than we may realize. It can be a little scary to realize that our neighbours, our classmates, our

coworkers and even our relatives may judge the Church by our actions. Of course, people will be more inclined to notice our bad actions rather than the good ones. Some may use the excuse, “If that is Christianity, I want nothing to do with it.” Or, as Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying, “It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.”

Soon it will be time to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a time when communities, restaurants and hotels will know who we represent. What we do and how we act will reflect on the Church – whether good or not so good. It is very important for us to not bring a bad reputation upon the Church – and thus on the One we are there to worship and whose name we are commanded to “hallow.”

The Feast of Tabernacles also points us to a better time for the whole world. It will be a time of renewal, which includes a new Jerusalem. And ultimately, according to the Book of Revelation, we will be given a new and better name. 🌐



News From Across Canada

Camping/Rafting Weekend

On the August long weekend, a group of over 50 brethren, family and friends from Alberta and British Columbia gathered at the Robson Shadows campground for fun, fellowship, camping and rafting. This weekend has become

an almost annual tradition for the Edmonton brethren and we were extremely pleased to be joined by brethren from Prince George and Prince Rupert this year.

Everyone gathered at the campground group site that is just west of Mount Robson Provincial

Park on Friday afternoon and evening. It was a happy reunion of brethren who hadn’t seen each other since last Feast or longer. There was an excited pre-Feast atmosphere about the gathering and people stayed up late Friday night catching up on each other’s lives.



Exhilarated Rafting Participants

Photo by Kim Eckert

On Saturday, the Edmonton brethren prepared a pancake breakfast for the crowd. After breakfast was cleaned up, a large tarp was set-up to provide shade and brethren assembled underneath for Sabbath Services. Four members from the Edmonton and Prince George churches provided four sermonettes, while hymns were sung to the accompaniment of an instrument ensemble from the Edmonton church. After church, some cooled off in the cold waters of the nearby Fraser River or took a drive to Moose Lake to take a swim, while others visited Rearguard Falls and Overlander Falls. The children enjoyed playing in the large nearby field or in the nearby trees. In the evening, brethren gathered around the fire for fellowship, games and a marshmallow roast.

On Sunday morning, 27 people gathered at 9:30 at the Mount Robson Whitewater Rafting to prepare for a guided whitewater rafting trip down the Fraser River. Five rafts challenged the rapids of the Fraser River and were victorious! After making it through the rapids, everyone had an opportunity to take an icy swim in the Fraser off

the side of the rafts before pulling the rafts out of the river and taking a bus ride back to the campground.

On Sunday afternoon, brethren organized a float trip down a calmer upstream portion of the Fraser using their own rafts and equipment. Many of the younger children and adults who did not go on the whitewater trip were given an opportunity to participate in the float trip. Twenty-five people went down the river in three rafts and a kayak. Judging by the happily singing children, the trip was very much enjoyed! Sunday evening was another chance for fellowship, games and roasting marshmallows.

On Monday morning, everyone broke camp and said their goodbyes. The Edmonton group headed for Jasper Park for a planned rafting trip on the Athabasca River, while the Prince George brethren headed home. Because of rainy, foggy conditions, the rafting trip was scrubbed in favor of lunch and a visit to Maligne Canyon in Jasper, after which, everyone headed home. Overall, it was a successful weekend that renewed and strengthened bonds between brethren. As said

by one family who enjoyed the weekend, it felt like “a prelude to the Feast.”

Kim Eckert

Saskatoon Ordination

On Pentecost 2021, the Saskatoon brethren were blessed and very pleased to witness the ordination of Bill Wall to the office of Deacon. In front of the small close-knit congregation, Bill was ordained by our Pastor Larry DeLong and our Assistant Pastor Sheldon Sitter.

Bill has been a faithful member of the church for 41 years and with the support of Annette, his loving wife of 39 years, he has served the Saskatoon congregation with unwavering integrity. He continues to develop the skills and sensitivity of godly character, which are expressed in his words, actions and decisions at all times with the brethren.

Every Sabbath, Bill brings his knowledge of all things technical ensuring that services run smoothly.



Bill & Annette Hall

Photo by Trista Duhan

In addition, Bill chooses many of the video sermons, additional studies and uplifting music for the brethren to enjoy. He always tries his best to find the topics we have recently been discussing, which provides the brethren with the tools to receive the messages of God's Word, our spiritual food.

Saskatoon brethren as well as our extended family in North Battleford and Lethbridge are truly thankful for such a calm, gentle and supportive pillar God has placed in our midst.

Trista Duhan

Josephine Damania Obituary

Josephine, the darling wife of Mehernosh Damania for over 47 years, was a very lovely child of God. She said her prayers daily, first thing after she woke up, dressed well for Church services, took great pains in preparing meals and refreshment for Sabbath and Holy Day services, volunteered to work in the kitchen and eventually volunteered to send out congregational Get Well and Condolence cards.



Josephine Damania

Photo by Amy van Zant

Josephine was the third of five children of a Singaporean Eurasian couple, Joseph David and Jane D'Cruz. She was named Josephine Margaret D'Cruz after her father, Joseph. Josephine was the favourite child of her father, who was a deacon in the local Roman Catholic Church.

Josephine was a very good student. She got grade "A" in Senior Cambridge "O" levels (General Certificate of Education examinations) and even in English Language got an "A". For a non-English student to get a Cambridge examiners Grade "A" was a remarkable achievement. She would later correct all her husband's grammar and spelling mistakes, which he will miss very much.

She could beautifully recite several poems and even Shakespearean passages from memory and did so beautifully during various church socials.

Josephine had a talent for sewing and cooking, and was better than her husband at fixing things in the house. She had a strong bond with her family and even supported or took care of the needs of her brother and sisters.

After graduation from school, Josephine took on the noble profession of nursing. She received a scholarship under the UN's Colombo Plan and was sent from Singapore to Australia where she graduated as a Nurse Tutor. She eventually became the youngest Nurse Tutor with number three position in the Singapore Nursing hierarchy.

God was working His plan. Josephine met Mehernosh at a ballroom dance class in Singapore.

Although Josephine was born as a Roman Catholic she was a subscriber to the *Plain Truth* magazine where Biblical truth opened her eyes.

For Josephine to marry her husband was no small thing. Mehernosh's family forbade him to marry a non-Parsee. However, God worked things out for them so that a proper marriage took place.

One month after they married, Josephine's husband had to leave Singapore as he was scheduled to be posted to Nigeria. Josephine had to stay in Singapore for seven months due to an unusual delay. This most unusual delay had God's blessing. The Church led by Mr. Guy Ames came to Singapore and Josephine was baptized. They both knew that scriptural truth had been perverted by the clergy over the years and it was important to stick to the truth found in the original source.

Finally, when Josephine joined her husband in Nigeria after seven months of separation, the Church was established in Lagos, Nigeria. Harold Jackson and Ebenezer Washington came to Nigeria to lay the foundation and organize the annual Feasts. As a non-Christian, Mehernosh started attending services as he wanted to understand what the ministers were teaching Josephine, so that as husband and wife they would be one and have no disagreements. They always put God first and kept Him in the center of their relationship. This is how Josephine's husband got to know through the Church about the Bible and Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Josephine suffered much during the last three weeks of her life due to a severe coronavirus infection.

However, we know that as stated in Psalm 116: 15, “The death of one that belongs to the LORD is precious in His sight.”

We look forward to meeting Josephine with an incorruptible spiritual immortal body in the millennium. We look forward to spending time with her for all eternity.

Mehernosh Damania

Lillie Robinson Obituary

Lillie Everetta Robinson was born on May 8, 1934, in Canada's most southerly town, Kingsville, Ontario, to Everett and Miriam Saunders. Fifteen months later, she was joined by her only sibling, Marilyn (Anderson).

From her childhood, Lillie was blessed with many gifts and talents from God. She skipped three grades in elementary school and graduated from grade 13 at the age of 16, at which time she served as coach for the Kingsville High School girls' basketball team. A year later, she graduated from teacher's college at age 17 and began teaching at age 18. Though she taught a variety of grades and subjects, such as art, the bulk of her teaching career was spent in grade one.

Lillie met her future husband, Gordon Robinson, while singing at the wedding of mutual friends. Four years later, the two met again at those same friends' home, and six months later, were engaged on February 14, 1958. They were married on August 16, 1958, and eventually had two children: Brett and Patricia (Romeo).

Lillie was a gifted illustrator, painter, 3-D crafter, and had an eye for architecture, interior design and flower arranging. She spent five summers taking courses with the Ontario College of Art and joined an art group that travelled to different areas around Peterborough to paint and sketch on site. She designed the family home, which Gordon built, and many of her paintings hung in the home.

Lillie was a talented seamstress and began sewing as a young child. Her interest was sparked by a tiny Singer sewing machine, turned by hand, that was given to her by her parents before she started school. She began by making outfits for her dolls and as she grew, sewed articles of clothing for herself, her immediate and extended family, and friends. She designed her own wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses. She also designed and sewed her daughter, Patricia's, wedding gown.

Lillie was a talented musician and earned degrees in both voice and piano. She earned her ARCT from the University of Toronto as a solo performer. While living in Peterborough, she was actively involved in community music and played the lead role in an on-stage operetta drama. For many years, she sang with a concert choir and opera group in Peterborough, and performed in the annual production of “Handel's Messiah”. To keep her voice trained, she participated in many singing contests in both Peterborough and Toronto, and often won first place, including three Rose Bowls in the Kiwanis Music Festivals.

In 1970, Lillie and her husband, Gordon, were baptized together by



Lillie Robinson

Photo by Brett Robinson

Mr. Gary Antion. Lillie spent her life in service to not just her physical family, but also her spiritual family. She was a wonderful cook and hosted countless dinners at the family home in Bethany, Ontario. She hosted annual ski weekends for the Y.O.U. group in the WCG and winter family weekends for brethren in the Toronto UCG; sang solos, duets and in the choir at church services and at most Feasts; directed the choir for the Toronto UCG and at various Feast sites; provided decorations and floral bouquets for many weddings in both WGC and UCG; provided decorations for church socials and Holy Days; and served as a deaconess since 1997.

After Gordon's death in 2017, Lillie moved back into the home in Kingsville in which she was raised. She lived the remainder of her life with her sister, Marilyn, who had moved there six years prior. Dementia led to Lillie's decline, and she died in the early hours of July 5 in the home in which she was born, with her sister, son, daughter, and son-in-law present. Lillie was buried in Toronto with her beloved husband, Gordon, of 59 years.

Trish Romeo

If I Could Keep the Feast Again

By Patrick Read

There are many reasons for why we might desire to keep the Feast over again. It is like a two-sided coin. On the one side, it might have been the BEST FEAST ever. On the other side, there may have been personal difficulties, health difficulties or even the death of a loved one that prevented us from rejoicing. At times, we may have fallen prey to the Adversary and allowed him an open door to plant in us a wrong attitude, discouragement and doubt.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the only Feast that we normally are able to spend seven full days with others of like mind. For many, who are isolated and rarely able to attend weekly Sabbath services, it becomes the highlight of their year.

Leviticus 23:40 gives us more than a “good suggestion.” It commands us to rejoice before the Lord. The Feast typifies a time when the world as we know it will have come to an end. Satan will be bound, and all the many trials and difficulties we have experienced are left behind. For seven days we devote our attention to God, serving our fellow man, letting our light shine and setting a good example for everyone that we come into contact with to glorify our Father in Heaven.

Unfortunately, we still live in a world that is in the hands of our adversary, Satan. We are subject to his diabolical ways and attempts to destroy us. This sometimes can result in not rejoicing as we should.

It may be inconceivable for

most to think anyone could ever have other than a good Feast. However, it does happen. For the sake of those who have had a less than perfect Feast, and for those who have never had a less than perfect Feast, here are some thoughts to ponder.

Regrets represent what we feel after the fact. They can be positive if used properly. Regrets can cause us to ponder what happened and what to do to prevent it from happening again.

Paul admonishes us to take heed, lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:12). All are subject to the subtle workings of the Adversary. Not only does he hate God, he hates God’s children. He hates the idea of us receiving what he has thrown away – a chance to be part of the great work of God in His Kingdom. Satan also hates the Feast of Tabernacles. He despises the very idea that we rejoice for seven days, as God commands us to do.

We have little or no control over some things. We cannot prevent the loss of a loved one or myriad other circumstances, but we can certainly make the choice to never allow Satan to influence the way we keep the Feast.

I have had some “Not So Perfect Feasts.” One year my mother died during the Feast. We went home for the funeral then returned in time for the Last Great Day, which was extremely meaningful that year since my parents were never in the church.

Another year, I was ensnared

in an ongoing negative attitude that lasted throughout the entire Feast. During the drive home, I was confronted by my wife and daughter about how my attitude hurt their Feast experience. I would give anything to go back and do that Feast over, but that is not possible. The Apostle Peter certainly had regrets after denying Jesus Christ three times. I’m sure if he had the chance to do it over again he would not have made the same mistake.

Here is what I learned from that Feast. I learned that our Adversary is far more powerful than I had previously thought, and that it takes constant hard work to fight against his powerful influence on us. I learned that “our problems” are not JUST our problems. I came to realize that “when one member suffers, all the members suffer” (1 Corinthians 12:26) – that includes family members. I learned that “joy” is a choice. We can make the decision to rejoice, or we can allow things to bring us down. I also learned that God means what He says and says what He means when He tells us to rejoice.

Although I may desire to go back and observe the Feast that was “not so good” over, I have a greater desire to keep a Feast over when it was the “best Feast ever”. If you desire to keep the Feast over, I hope that it was because it was your best Feast - full of fond memories, wonderful messages and spending time with family - all of which will help you through the year ahead. I hope to see you next year and hear why you wanted to keep this year’s Feast over. 🍁

“Trouble” from page 12.

a Volkswagen dealer and asked him to give us a repair estimate. He told us that the transmission was a mess. Although we did have a credit card, we had very little cash left over from the Feast, and we certainly did not have the five hundred dollars needed for the repairs. We decided to drive on as best we could.

A few miles down the road we stopped and I said to the children, “We need help. Let us ask God to help us. We have come all this way in order to obey Him because we love Him and deeply appreciate the gift of his Son, Jesus.” During the prayer I reminded God (not that He needed reminding) that we had come all that way in order to please Him, and now we needed His help to get home.

Off we went and with confidence. I shifted into fourth gear. It popped out! Again I tried. Again failure. Then I realized that if I held the gearshift firmly in place it would stay. That is how we traveled for the next thousand miles (1,600 kilometers). We arrived home just in time for me to go to work at the school. We were so excited about the help God had given us. He did not do the whole job for us, but we were confident that He definitely helped. My arm was stiff as a board for the next three days, but that only reminded me of God’s mercy upon our family.

In the weeks after our return home, still short of funds, I delayed taking the car in for repairs. But after three Sabbath trips from Edson to Edmonton, the gear would not hold even if

I gripped it with all my might. I took the car to our local Volkswagen dealer. Before I could explain the problem and ask for the repairs and perhaps for delayed payments, he said, “I have been trying to get hold of you; we need a bookkeeper and I will pay \$100 a month...Will you take the job?” I did not want to show my relief or excitement, so I hesitated for a millionth of a second...and said “YES!”

As I reflect on these and the numerous other blessings our family has had over the years, I wonder – I wonder what it would take for us NOT to attend the Feast. (Yes, there ARE some proper circumstances that would prevent attendance). But some say that it is “a hardship.”

I wonder why nobody told Jesus and His followers that it was too hard for them? I often think of our Lord and Saviour who attended the Feasts in Jerusalem three times a year. He walked from Galilee accompanied by dozens of His followers, men, women and, no doubt, children. The distance between Galilee and Jerusalem is 85 miles (140 kilometers) ONE WAY! Jesus and His disciples slept in orchards. They endured cold and hunger, rain in the spring and dangers along the way. I wonder, and I ask myself, “Would I have walked this distance with Jesus to attend the Feasts?”, and I ask myself, “Would I do that today?” I wonder what God thinks in all this?

Scripture tell us that God dwelt with us in the flesh. So I think I know what He thinks... and I think I know what He would say and what He would do! 🌍

Offering Reminder

A number of congregations will not be able to meet in-person for at least some of the Fall Holy Days. The following options are available if you cannot give your offering in-person.

1. Canada Post. Please feel free to send cheques (for safety’s sake, not cash) to our mailing address:

United Church of God – Canada
P.O. Box 144, Station D
Etobicoke, ON
M9A 4X1

2. E-Transfer. If you already engage in online banking you very likely have access to e-Transfers. Be sure to the following e-mail address for the recipient:

online_donations@ucg.ca

3. Online Donation. If you would prefer to use our online donation form at: <https://donate.ucg.ca/>

Where possible please include your name or your subscriber number to facilitate our staff crediting your account for year-end tax purposes.

All donations are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about donating online please contact the National Office by phone (800-338-7779) or email (canadian_office@ucg.ca). 🌍

Too Much Trouble?

By Robert Berendt

The first Feast of Tabernacles our family observed was in 1965. We had been in the Church just short of a year. We had read the clear statements about God's Holy Days, and we knew that Jesus had observed them every year in Jerusalem. Armed with this knowledge and the determination to obey God, we began to plan. A plan was needed as we had three small children and very little money. The nearest Feast site was Squaw Valley, California and we had never even been out of Canada! We DID plan to the very best of our ability!

The first hurdle was for me to get time off from my teaching position. This was no easy matter, but after gentle and yet strong persistence I was asked to present myself to the Supervisor of the School District. After I showed him my interest in the classes I taught (mainly Grade 12 Chemistry) and my strong desire to attend the Feast, the Supervisor stood up, put out his hand to me, and said, "It is a pleasure to have someone on our teaching staff that stands up for what he believes... enjoy the trip!" That was a good start.

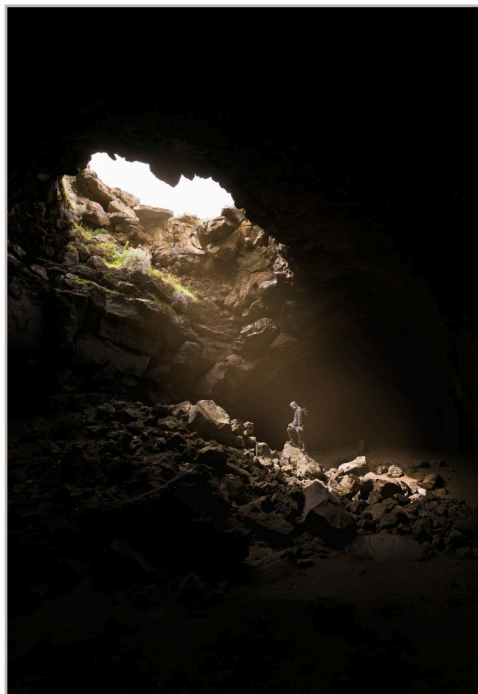
My wife, Joan, and I quickly loaded the used Volkswagen we had just bought. Taking camping equipment and three children entailed removing the back seat and packing everything in. Finally the children (our two sons, Rick and Dan along with our first daughter Cathy) were lying down like rugs in the back. Seat belts were not mandatory in those days!

Off we went and our adventure began! The trip south went well, and in two and a half days we were there. We pitched our tent by Lake Tahoe, and then went off to services. There were two services each day and all of us were enthused. The spiritual level was high and the sermons inspiring.

California was the land of sunshine and warmth; or so we had been told. That year we had rain and sleet—not just showers, but drenching, freezing rain! After three days we were forced

arrived all too quickly, and we were out of money except for the few dollars we had budgeted for the return trip. There we were on that last day, stopping in front of a restaurant, but our real objective was the grocery store across the street. We had just enough for some buns and cheese. Looking back, I don't remember one complaint from our children or from ourselves. We were just happy to be there. But, quite unexpectedly, along came a Church member we knew from back home in Edmonton, Dr. John Kuruliak. He waltzed over to our car and said, "Just the people I am looking for...I would like to take you to supper." That was a lovely meal with all the trimmings. Dr. Kuruliak urged us to order whatever we wished. We thought he might have been an angel...or at least that he had been sent by God.

But now the time had come for the rushed trip home. Rushed because I needed to be back in the classroom. On the trip down to the Feast, with the crowded conditions in the car, every so often a little foot kicked the gearshift out of fourth. In a Volkswagen, without fourth gear you can't travel very quickly. Suddenly on the trip home, the gear began popping out by itself. By the time we had been on the road four hours the gear had grown steadily worse until it reached the point where it would not stay in at all. Slowing us down this much would be a disaster so far from home. At Boise, Idaho, we found



Determination Over Difficulty

Photo by Ian Chen on Unsplash

to move out of our tent into the living room in the home of some wonderful Church members who took pity on us. There we stayed all together for the whole Feast. We formed some lifelong friendships in that week.

The last day of the Feast

See "Trouble" on page 11.