



United News Canada

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Up For the Count!

By Anthony Wasilkoff

We've all heard the expression "down for the count." This applies to a boxer who is knocked down and unable to get back up again. The referee counts to 10 and the fight is over.

The apostle Paul was describing boxing when he wrote, "Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air" (1 Corinthians 9:27). He proclaimed that his fight was for real. He was not merely shadow boxing. He steadfastly avoided the possibility of a knock-out by staying extra close to God and drawing on divine guidance, direction and protection.

With the Feast of Pentecost rapidly approaching, we are aware of the requirement of counting to 50 in order to arrive at the correct date for keeping this important high holy day. The word Pentecost means "fiftieth." The Day of Pentecost, although always on a Sunday, is not on a fixed calendar date. Leviticus 23:16 expressly instructs, "Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath." Following that scriptural instruction, this year Pentecost falls on Sunday, May 28.

So the countdown is on and counting increases anticipation.

One way in which parents increase anticipation in their little children for the arrival of the Feast of Tabernacles (for example) is to create a colourful paper chain for them. This is usually

done a month or two in advance. Then every day the child, most often at bedtime, is allowed to remove one link from the chain thus indicating that the Feast is drawing closer and closer. In time a long chain becomes shorter and shorter heralding the arrival of the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles at long last.



A pair of boxing gloves
Image by Mikhail Nilov on pexels.com

Some years ago I used to run on an indoor oval track at a local YMCA. The number of laps I was eventually able to work up to was 60. The track was large enough to keep me from getting dizzy. The turns were banked and that was a big help. Furthermore, runners ran clockwise and counterclockwise on alternate days. Weather was never a factor and this made the indoor track quite popular.

Something that I eventually learned was that it was harder to run those dreadful 60 laps if I counted in ascending order. Even so, one would eventually become two and two would eventually become three and so on until

finally, at long last, 60 laps ultimately were reached. At times, depending on my conditioning, this seemed interminable.

However, I eventually learned, and I don't remember how, that it was much easier to start at 60 and count in descending order. Sixty laps to go at the start, then after one lap, 59 left and after one more lap, 58 to go and then 57 and so on until there were only 10 remaining laps and thereafter the count-down to zero went by surprisingly fast!

And so it is for us as we count down to observing this year's wonderful Feast of Pentecost. Are we up for the count? Are we anticipating observing the next vital festival on God's holy day calendar? There is so much we will be able to learn by observing it, especially when we can assemble with fellow believers in person or even online.

As usual, when it comes to God's festivals and our observing them, the realization exceeds the anticipation. 🌍

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An Anniversary to Remember

By Linda Wasilkoff

In May of 1996 my siblings and I planned a surprise fiftieth anniversary for our parents. Through the years, even though they had a good marriage, they rarely had occasion to celebrate their anniversary. We rented a local hall, invited relatives, church members and neighbours. It took some doing, but we were able to pull off the surprise and provide a highly enjoyable day for them.

Through the years, my husband and I also found it challenging to always be able to do something special on our anniversary. When our children were young we hit upon a plan to go out for lunch to a nicer restaurant for our anniversary. Lunch menus were less expensive than dinner menus and we didn't need a babysitter during school hours! That worked well and we had some very relaxing times.

When the United Church of God began, we suddenly found an even greater demand on our time. While we had thought that we would do something more exciting for major anniversaries, our twenty-fifth coincided with an early National Council meeting! What to do? Since

the meeting was scheduled to be in Victoria, B.C. and since our flight got us there about two hours before we could get into our hotel room, we toured the Butchart Gardens and had lunch at their tea room.

That Council meeting began a trend and for several years our anniversary was celebrated at a restaurant as we were surrounded by others on the board who knew nothing of the significance of the day to us. We could quietly wish each other a happy anniversary while sharing a meal with others. Not a bad thing, but not the most romantic of places and settings.

For our fiftieth anniversary, my husband and I determined that we would do something very special. We started looking at options and planning several years in advance. What happened? Our fiftieth anniversary was in the summer of 2021 – in the midst of COVID restrictions. All our plans came to nought. It was a bit disappointing in that we had made sure to avoid any scheduling conflicts that year.

Because of restrictions, we weren't allowed to go to a nice

restaurant since the only restaurants open were those with a drive-through. Somehow a hamburger just didn't fit with expectations of the celebration.

This required flexibility and a change of plans. In the end, we took a week off work, rented a car and made day trips with picnic lunches. In spite of it not being what we originally planned, it was a good week that was both memorable and relaxing.

Soon we will all be celebrating a very special anniversary – the anniversary of the founding of the Church. As we understand it, this anniversary also goes back to the time Moses received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

Congregations may have different plans for “celebrating” this day that has so much meaning for us, but what will be the same for us all is that there will be a holy convocation. Because it is a very special anniversary, we will not let scheduling conflicts interfere with our observance of it. Have a wonderful celebration on the Day of Pentecost! 🍷

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A Vital Power

By Mike Erickson

In revealing His plan for mankind, God chose annual Sabbaths – Holy Days focused on harvest seasons in Palestine (Exodus 23:14-17). The Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Firstfruits pictures the spring harvest.

Jewish tradition connects the Feast of Pentecost with the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. The physical nation of Israel at that time was committed to keeping God's Laws but they failed. In lamenting their failure in Deuteronomy 5:29, our God said, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all my commandments that it might be well with them and with their children forever."

We know from Scripture that what was missing was a power to transform their physical nature to a divine nature. What was missing was the power to transform their lives to a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17), one Christ prophesied would be given to His people (John 15:26-27; 16:12-14) when He was yet present on this Earth.

This power came in a dramatic way on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31 to those who were gathered together in one accord (Acts 2:1-4). Such was the power and transformation that took place that they were viewed as turning "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

Upon repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands by one of His servants, that power becomes a part

of true Christians (Acts 2:37-38) and begins the transformation. One enters a symbolic watery grave and rises in newness of life (Romans 6:1-6; Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5) as a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).



Dramatic power in nature
Photo by Pixabay from Pexels.com

Once purchased with our Savior's precious blood (Acts 20:28), firstfruits are expected to be undefiled with the world and to follow the lamb wherever He goes, blameless and without fault (Revelation 14:4-5).

Most of us reading this article know these things. Yet, our Creator saw fit many centuries ago to have us annually rehearse these feasts, as we need reminding, refreshing and encouraging. Even the Apostle Paul reminded a young minister to "stir up the gift of God which is in you" referring to His spirit, "a spirit of power and of love and a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1: 6-7).

Many times I have let my mind meditate on the expectations of firstfruits to "be (or become) Holy as He is Holy" (1 Peter 1:15), "to go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1-3).

This power "of love and a sound mind" is what makes it possible to do what the Israelites could not do.

Love defines our Creator (1 John 4:7-9). It must ultimately define us. "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).

Why must love ultimately define us? This may seem simplistic when one considers the entirety of what we are to be or become. If God is love and God is a family then all those in the family must be defined as love. Asking oneself, how I compare my life to the scriptures on "agape" love (1 Corinthians 13; John 3:16) is a worthy question as a part of self-examination.

A sound mind is a blessing of God's Holy Spirit. The power that dwells in us allows us to keep His words and become like Him. Although there are many Scriptures one could rightly look to as a standard, my favorite is 2 Corinthians 10:4-6, which is the standard of "bringing every thought into the captivity of Christ." Now that is a standard!

Let us all consider how to provoke one another onto love and good works (Hebrews 10:23-25) "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together even more as we see the Day approaching." We do this not by setting our mind on "high things" (Romans 12:15-17) or thinking too "highly of ourselves" (Romans 12:3) "but soberly," while thinking on Godly things.

Let's meditate on "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things

are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

As the Apostle Paul encouraged young Timothy, let us all "stir up the spirit" and strive to truly "provoke one another onto love and good works". 🍁

The Gift of Pentecost

By David Palmer

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 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 16:12-13). He also told His disciples: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).



Careful reading of Scripture

Photo by Mick Haupt on Unsplash.com

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 hear-

ing'" (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," (1Corinthians 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 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. 🍁

Pentecost - A Vital Part of God’s Plan

By Rainer Salomaa

The book of Acts begins with about 120 disciples of Jesus Christ waiting during the interval between the Passover season and the Feast of Pentecost.

They were following Christ’s instructions found in Acts 1:4-7 where, “... He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for

the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; 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.”

The Passover had taken place in A.D. 31 Christ had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, close to the time that the Passover lamb was to be chosen (John 12:12-15; Exodus 12:2-3). He washed the disciples’ feet and introduced new symbolic meaning for the bread and wine during the Passover. Later, He suffered horribly, poignantly demonstrating how our sins bring suffering. On the

Sunday morning after his Wednesday crucifixion, He was approached by Mary Magdalene, but would not allow her to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17).

Why? It is because He was the wave-sheaf offering, pictured in Leviticus 23:10-11. This was a “sheaf of the firstfruits” that was offered to God. The early harvest season in Palestine began with it being waved before the Lord on the Sunday morning, following the Passover during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Before Christ could be touched, He had to be accepted by the Father. Later that day, after appearing before His Father and then returning, He did allow certain women to touch Him (Matthew 28:9).

The disciples were told to wait. They did. They gathered together, fifty days after the Sunday appearances of Jesus Christ to keep the next festival (Leviticus 23:9-22) – the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 4:22), or in Greek, the Feast of Pentecost, which means “fiftieth.” Acts 2:1 records that, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”

On that day, a remarkable event took place. God poured out His Holy Spirit on the assembled international group and used miracles of hearing and speaking in various languages to communicate to that startled group of believers.

That Pentecost in A.D. 31 marked the beginning of the early New Testament church. Thousands of years earlier, possibly on another Pentecost, God had given Israel the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai using similar types of attention-getting methods. Now He had given mankind the ability to become godly in thoughts, attitudes and actions

through the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, given en masse to the embryo of the New Testament church.

The disciples had kept the seven days of unleavened bread. They had kept these days without possessing the Holy Spirit, a lesson being that God expects us to be willing to put sin out of our lives by our own efforts. Mankind has needed to put sin out for six thousand years, but has not generally done so. Peter declared that anyone who has been called, repents and is baptized can receive the precious gift of God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). Through that gift, God helps us, but only after we first begin the process of removing sin out of our lives.

The harvest of spiritual fruit began with God’s calling of a small elect from the time of righteous Abel. That harvest accelerated on the day of Pentecost and continues to this day, ultimately culminating in a spiritual resurrection from the dead at Christ’s second coming. Scriptures describe those called out ones as firstfruits. The implication is that other fruit will be harvested later.



James wrote about converted Christians saying, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). Paul referred to brethren as those “who have the firstfruits of the Spirit” in Romans 8:23 and alluded to several first-century Christians

as the firstfruits of God’s calling (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15).

Christ is called the “firstborn of many brethren” in Romans 8:29 and “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” in 1 Corinthians 15:20. He is the “firstborn over all creation” and “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:15, 18). All of this is closely linked to the Feast of Firstfruits.

Jesus Christ instructed His church to go forth and harvest, preaching the gospel, baptizing and teaching believers to observe all things that He commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). The church that will be the harvest is also used to do a part of the harvesting. God will have used seven different periods of harvesting, as represented by the seven candlesticks in Revelation 1:12-13, 20. The work of the church must be complete before Christ returns. He will marry His bride, who will have made herself ready (Revelation 19:7-8).

An Old Testament parallel is found in the book of Ruth, where Boaz and Ruth culminate a union during the early barley harvest. A virtuous Gentile woman is grafted into an Israelite household, becoming a part of the genealogy of the Messiah. Gleaning instructions are even given in the section of Scripture having to do with the Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23: 22). God is logical. He is organized. He has a plan. The blueprint of His plan can be found in the meaning of His festivals.

The Feast of Pentecost is so rich with meaning – how He is calling a small firstfruit, how He provides the gift of His precious Holy Spirit, how ultimately, He will pour out His Holy Spirit upon “all flesh” (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-17). But that is another, larger harvest and it is pictured in the fall festivals. 🍁

Pastors' Meeting

United News Canada

Ministerial Services Coordinator, Rainer Salomaa, called a meeting of Canadian pastors on March 13. Nine pastors met for just over an hour via Zoom. The purpose was to discuss trends, Passover preparation, challenges and plans for the Feast of Tabernacles. The meeting began and ended with prayer.

The main trend is that there continues to be a number of people who have not returned to attending services since COVID. More are content to watch a Zoom service. There are, however, new people making contact and some who were part of the church and are coming back after many years. There are some counselling for baptism and some planned ordinations. There also seems to be interest from one group wanting to join with us.

Areas that have had trouble finding halls in which to meet have now found suitable places for worship. The biggest challenge now seems to be health problems that come along with an aging membership. There have also been a number of deaths over the past year, which affects the congregations. Another concern is heretical teachings that are spread by a few. However, trials can also bring members together.

When individuals have been associated with the church for a number of years, there is a tendency to "coast" meaning they become less motivated spiritually. People are just getting tired and Satan will try to use this.

Plans for keeping a more nor-

mal Passover service in each area are in place. Joe Greene from Wisconsin will go to St. John's to help with the Passover. The Maritime group have rented a large house in which to meet.



In Winnipeg, 95 year old Mary Hofer is hosting the congregation for the Night to Be Much Observed in her complex so that everyone can have a place to go.

Feast of Tabernacles plans are also coming together with Calgary and Midland booked. There will not be a satellite site in Saskatoon this year. Larry DeLong will be coordinating the Feast in St. John's and giving Ellsworth Stanley a break. It is hoped to finalize plans for a Feast in British Columbia soon. Possibilities have been narrowed down to two potential sites. A challenge for many of the sites will be having manpower to run them – especially the technical aspect.

There was a discussion about the recent congregational surveys. Some were conducted using hard copies while other areas conducted an online survey. Both versions had the same basic questions. The Director of Operations is review-

ing them all. For the most part, the results are positive. Surveys will be conducted every few years.

A Leadership Seminar was conducted on March 12 for the East. Pastors invited leaders from their congregations to join. The two newest pastors (Sheldon Sitter and Wayne Ward) were also invited to join the Zoom seminar. Gary Antion and Randy Stiver were the presenters.

Another observation was the importance for a pastor to be hospitable – having members into one's home makes a big difference.

The latest Ministerial Journal about improving speaking is good. Some pastors have shared it with those who speak at church to improve the overall messages.

Plans for the all-Canada Ministerial Conference in June are coming along. Guest speakers will be Gary Antion and Rick Shabi. There will probably be a barbeque at the Waskoff home on Friday night and a potluck in Toronto after church on Sabbath and before the Saturday evening session begins.

On March 30, there will be a Young Adult Bible Study about relationships. The Bible Study will be conducted by Gary Antion and start at 8:00 p.m. EDT. Sheldon Sitter was asked to email a link to pastors that could be forwarded to any young person wishing to join the study.

While the next Pastors' meeting wasn't scheduled, there will be one after the Feast of Tabernacles. 🍁

Camp Wildrose

Wednesday, July 19–Sunday, July 23
Registration is open

**Camp Wildrose welcomes preteens and teens
and provides fun, fellowship, Christian living
instruction and opportunity to all who attend**

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March National Council Meeting

By Edwin van Pelt

All members of the National Council met on Monday, March 20, via Zoom. After the opening prayer, National Council Chairman, Lloyd Teetaert, had some opening comments and then reviewed minutes of the December 19, 2022, meeting. The minutes were approved as presented.

Paul Wasilkoff, a member of the Council of Elders provided an update on recent meetings held at the Home Office.

Ministerial Services Team (MST) Coordinator, Rainer Salomaa, followed with an update. There was some discussion about upcoming spring Holy Days as well as the Feast of Tabernacles. A summary of the recent member survey gave some very good feedback for the MST.

The Director of Operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, then provided a National Office update. He mentioned a number of the projects the office staff

have been involved in since the National Council meeting in December 2022 including the completion of the annual employee reviews and recent mailing to members, co-workers, donors and subscribers.

Treasurer Bill Dimovski followed with a financial update. He noted that First Tithe and Offering (1T/O) donations continue to be below budget but Holy Day Offerings are higher. Expenses are below budget, thus offsetting the shortfall in 1T/O income.

A Media Team update was then given by Dennis O'Neill. He highlighted areas: media based programs Media Team expansion, ucg.ca website update and projected updates based on changes at ucg.org.

Committee updates were next on the agenda. Strategic Planning and Finance Committee Chair, Michael Erickson, reported that an update on the Committee's work will be provided at the next National Council

meeting in June. Governance, Ethics and Pastoral Committee Chair, Jim Lucas, noted that an updated policy and a new policy will be presented to the National Council at the upcoming June meeting. At that time there will also be an update on the replacement for the Director of Operations.

The National Council approved the reappointment of MaryAnn Halcrow to the Amendment Committee for another three-year term.

The Secretary of the National Council then announced the ballot results for the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan, Operations Plan and Budget. All were approved by the National Conference.

Anthony Wasilkoff then provided an update on the upcoming Ministerial Conference to immediately follow the June 2023 National Council meetings.

The meeting concluded following the closing prayer. 🍁

“Work” from page 16.

has utilized the talents and abilities of human beings to bring His word of salvation to those whom He calls.

This world is winding down. Calamity is coming. We can't prevent it. We can't change it. But we can influence a few. If we let the light of Jesus Christ shine in our life, if we put our hand to the plough and our whole heart into the work of God then maybe we can help save some!

The work of preaching the gos-

pel for a witness to 'all nations' is not just apocalyptic. It is prophetic. It is a moral message. It not only tells us that an event will happen but why it is going to happen.

We are to reach out and make disciples of as many as the Lord our God will call, those He will call as a result of the work we have done, because we are His agents, instruments of salvation in His hand. The apostle Paul, knew and understood to the very depth of his being, that as an instrument in God's hand, he was involved in a saving work.

The work of the God's Church including, the United Church of God—Canada is helping to deliver the gospel to a weary world. A work that involves everything from modern technology to personal evangelism, so that by any and all means, we as individuals, might have enough influence to allow God to save some!

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). 🍁

Leadership Workshop

United News Canada

A leadership workshop was held via Zoom on Sunday, March 12. Pastors of congregations in Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland invited individuals from their congregations to attend. These pastors, along with two pastors from the west were online along with the invitees.

Randy Stiver started the morning session at 10:00 by covering a series of common doctrinal challenges such as the Hebrew calendar, new moons, eating out on the Sabbath and sacred names. It was a jam-packed presentation.

“The Stuff of Leadership” was the title of Gary Antion’s morning presentation. He gave five important leadership qualities using a model from Exodus 18 where Moses was given instructions on the qualities to look for when appointing leaders.

Following a lunch break, Randy Stiver finished his presentation on doctrinal challenges. He then went on to cover the subject of

“Successfully Contending for the Faith Once Delivered.”

Mr. Stiver emphasized that those who speak need to be aware of false doctrines. Understanding the basic doctrines of the church is crucial to warn people away from falsehood. He urged anyone in leadership to be aware of any problem and discuss them with their pastor. Mr. Stiver said that, in most cases, those who say they won’t talk about doctrinal differences unless someone asks them are really saying they are waiting for someone to ask. There was a follow-up caution to be careful about who is allowed to speak in a congregation.

The final presentation of the day was by Gary Antion who presented “To Become a Leader.” He emphasized the need to know the Way and then live the Way before you can show others the Way. He quoted a number of Scriptures to demonstrate these points. Mr. Antion asked, “What will God do when the Millennium comes?” People will need time to heal. The plagues will have been difficult. The world won’t be happy. Resistance will have to be broken down and we will need to be teaching effectively.

The last section of the day was reserved for questions and comments. A question was asked about when the Jews moved to keeping the Passover on the 15th instead of the 14th. Mr. Antion gave an involved explanation. Bottom line is that the 14th is when Christ was

killed. We observe the Passover in the evening following Christ’s example.

Randy Stiver added that traditional Judaism agrees that there were two separate services or meals – Passover and Night to be Much Remembered. They seem to have combined the two ceremonies into one during the time of the exile – probably for expediency.



Randy & Linda Stiver
Photo by UCGIA

There were also questions and discussion about how to prove that we are allowed to eat animal flesh and that Christ was not a created being.

While studying some of the topics covered can be a bit tedious, the presenters kept their presentations lively and were more than happy to answer questions.

In years past, these workshops were held in person at the National Office. Holding them by Zoom meant that more people could be included in the invitation. We greatly appreciate the time and effort that Mr. Antion and Mr. Stiver put into their presentations. 🌍



Gary & Barbara Antion
Photo by UCGIA

Alberta Ordinations

By Todd Sauve

On the First Day of Unleavened Bread in 2023, the Calgary congregation witnessed the ordination of two long-time members. Patty Whyte was ordained a deaconess and Rob Stolaryk was ordained a deacon. Both have been faithfully serving the church for several years. Patty and her husband Mike serve in the Calgary congregation and Rob Stolaryk mainly serves in the Red Deer congregation, though he has served the churches in Edmonton, Calgary and southern British Columbia.

Patty Whyte, a native of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, first learned some of the teachings of the church from her then future husband Mike Whyte in the early 1970s. Mike had discovered the Worldwide Church of God in 1969 and started keeping the Seventh Day Sabbath. Patty noticed Mike was not around their group of friends from school days on Friday evenings and Saturdays

and inquired as to why. Mike explained that he had learned from reading church literature and listening to the broadcasts that the Sabbath was from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday and felt God's strong urging to comply with it.

Patty soon realized that she was also experiencing the early stages of being called into God's church and began observing the Sabbath. In 1974 they both enrolled in Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, and graduated in 1976. They then went on to take university degrees in Ontario at Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier Universities. By 1984 they had settled in Calgary and were attending the south Calgary congregation. Today Mike and Patty have four children and eight grandchildren! Life has proven a rich blessing for them in God's gift of their children and grandchildren, and most importantly learning God's true way of life.

Rob Stolaryk was born into the Worldwide Church of God in the Shuswap Lake region of British Columbia near Salmon Arm in 1983. Rob is a third generation Christian. He grew up in British Columbia before moving to Red Deer, Alberta, with his family when he was a teenager. Rob's father was a finishing carpenter and Rob learned the trade, as well as the contracting side of the business, from his Dad. He continues in finishing carpentry to this day and enjoys it very



Rob Stolaryk

Photo by Heidi Poffenroth

much, gaining satisfaction from working with his hands and completing his various projects.

Rob has served various congregations of the church and you never quite know where he is going to show up! His services are in demand and he is often found delivering the sermonette anywhere among the above listed churches. Rob has also endured his fair share of life's ups and downs, but he keeps putting one foot in front of the other like the good soldier for Christ the apostle Paul urged us to be.

Both Rob and Patty know that it is only through many tribulations that we enter the kingdom of God and they have proven faithful servants over the decades. Everyone in the Calgary congregation knows of their service and was very happy to see them ordained. We all look forward to them being among us, and with us, in this journey for a long time to come. 🍁



Patty Whyte

Photo by Heidi Poffenroth

News From Across Canada

Camp Wildrose

Registration for Camp Wildrose, located in Alberta, is now open. If you are interested in attending, please visit the online information page (<https://www.ucgedmonton.org/camp/campDetails.jsp>). This year's camp dates are July 13-17.

UNC

100th Birthday

Mickey Schienle was born on a Mennonite farming community in Saskatchewan on March 30, 1923. She comes from a long line of Centenarians, her uncle being 107 and her father 100.

Young Mickey worked during World War II at Victory Aircraft, on the "Lancaster Bombers" as a Riveter. She would rivet the materials into the noses and fuselages of the planes.

She also worked in the Ammunition Factory, loading shells with TNT and Gun Powder for the bombers. After six months in the factory, she went on to get a Canadian Hairdressing License and began practicing in Toronto.

In 1960, she moved to Los Angeles where she obtained her U.S. Hairdressing License and bought two hair salons, one in West Los Angeles and the second in Santa Monica. Both were named, "Mickey's House of Beauty."

In 1962 Mickey married Jim Petro, an Engineer for "Air Research" in Los Angeles. Jim drew

up all the specs for NASA'S LEM (Lunar Pod) for the Moon Mission. Jim passed away in 1976.



In 1979 she married Larry Schienle, owner of an Auto Repair Shop in Santa Monica. Three months later, both Mickey and Larry decided to sell their businesses and retire in Kelowna, B.C. Sadly Larry passed away in 1997.

Mickey was baptized in 2016 by Pastor Michael Erickson. Mickey remains a member of UCG in Kelowna today.

Many more happy years to our "Centenarian" Mickey Schienle, from the members and friends at UCG!

Joye Dillmore

Vancouver NTBMO

On April 5, several Vancouver area brethren had a wonderful opportunity for fellowship. It was the Night to Be Much Observed, commemorating the night Isra-

el came out of Egypt. We, as the New Testament Israel of God are blessed to celebrate God's calling us out of sin and Christ's sacrifice, which made that possible.

We had a very pleasant and fun evening. Fellowship began with some hymns played on the piano and good conversation. This was followed by a delicious potluck meal, featuring a variety of dishes both hot and cold - God has blessed us greatly. We can be so thankful!

After food and fellowship, we played a Bible knowledge game called 20 Questions. It was great fun!! The game sharpened our knowledge of the word of God using Bible characters as a theme. One person stood at the front, and others who had the answer helped provide clues to the guesser's questions. We encouraged one another enthusiastically! A word association game was also played, again using Bible-based characters. The entire evening was a great success with memorable fellowship!! Time flew by and soon we realized we had to depart to get ready for the First Day of Unleavened Bread the next morning.



Vancouver NTBMO Gathering

Photo provided by Ralph Cortes

Thanks goes to Alex and Marlina Escasinas for hosting this wonderful evening in their beautiful home! Thanks to all who attended. We had a great start to another year, in our walk of faith to God and His plan of salvation.

Thank God for His manifold blessings!

Dale Craniford

Hamilton NTBMO

Brethren from Hamilton and Toronto gathered at our new hall to enjoy a potluck meal for the Night to Be Much Observed.

Decorations were specially selected to enhance the mood and meaning of the occasion. A wide array of dishes were lovingly prepared, including delectable desserts.



Hamilton Brethren at NTBMO

Photo provided by Paul Wasilkoff

After our meal, a custom-made "Plagues & Snakes & Ladders" game was played in the adjoining room. Special confections were included as part of the game.

We very much appreciate the work invested into the success of the evening and look forward to similar occasions in the future.

Paul Wasilkoff

Surrey Social

On January 28, 2023, the Surrey congregation enjoyed an extra special Sabbath.

Both Vancouver area pastors, Wayne Ward and David Palmer, were in attendance and gave encouraging messages. A potluck and fellowship followed services. Afterwards we had opportunity for a Bible trivia game. It was both fun and challenging. Questions were true or false, fill in the blank, a direct question, or multiple choice and covered a wide variety of biblical topics.



Bible Trivia Players

Photo provided by Wayne Ward

Everyone got a score card, and competed against themselves! It was good to both learn and to check our understanding on a variety of Bible topics. After sunset, ten brave souls went 5-pin bowling right along on this special day. It was fun!

As God's Word tells us, it is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalms 133:1). This can apply to whatever activity we enjoy.

Thanks go to all for making the January 28 Sabbath extra special. A good time was had by all. It



Vancouver Brethren Bowling

Photo provided by Wayne Ward

helped brighten up the winter season! We look forward to the next opportunity for extra fellowship and fun!

Dale Craniford

Joyce Greba Obituary

Joyce Greba was born on August 21, 1932, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Dmytro and Bessie Korman. Her father worked for the CNR and the family moved several times. She eventually went to teachers college in Saskatoon and taught for three years before attending St. Paul's School of Nursing in Saskatoon. After two years of further schooling and working with sick children, she determined to go back to her first love of teaching.



Joyce Greba

Photo provided by Rainer Salomaa

In 1958, she married Adam Greba and they farmed on the family homestead near Endeavour, Saskatchewan, during which time Joyce also taught at the local school. The Grebas were very involved in the Church and were baptized in the early 1970s.

Mrs. Greba loved visiting with friends of which there were many. She had a wide range of hobbies including: reading, crocheting, music, baking, gardening, writing poems, playing cards and games. She enjoyed many Feast trips with family.

She was predeceased by Adam (1987) and her granddaughter, Quinn Greba. She is survived by daughter Colleen (David) Hofer; son Russell (Teresa) Greba; several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She will be buried beside her husband and granddaughter in the Endeavour, Saskatchewan district. A service for her will be held later in June 2023.

Lloyd Teetaert

Joseph Hofer Obituary

Joseph Hofer was born on a Hutterite colony near Eli, Manitoba, on July 18, 1930, to Zacharias and Maria Hofer. He died on February 15, 2023. Mr. Hofer is survived by eight children, 16 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. One daughter predeceased him.

Joseph moved to Regina in the 1960s and began work as a mechanic. He was baptized in 1965.

His hobbies included tinkering with vehicles, hunting and hav-



Joseph Hofer

Photo provided by Lloyd Teetaert

ing a good time with his friends, many of whom kindly referred to him as "Old Joe." During the last two years of his life he lived in an Extendicare facility. He will be greatly missed by the Regina congregation. His funeral was on April 21.

Lloyd Teetaert

Irene Holowach Obituary

Irene Holowach was born on November 21, 1929, in Moncton, New Brunswick, and died in Saskatoon with family by her side on February 19, 2023, at the age of 93 years.

She lived in Montreal and Calgary as a child and later in Vancouver as a young adult.

Irene was never one to sit around. She worked two jobs and still found energy in the evening to roller skate.

Irene met her husband, John, in 1952 in Vancouver. The two of them were adventurous trying and owning many businesses. They were store keepers, building

contractors, ran a post office, had a logging company, were motel owners and even had a laundromat. There was nothing those two couldn't tackle—never a dull moment.

They then decided to try farming. First it was raising cattle along with tireless hours of planting and reaping an acre-sized garden to feed themselves and their three children, Carl, Terry and Shirley Anne.

Enough of cattle—it was time to try sheep farming. This is where Irene discovered wool. She was obsessed with the prospect of wool. She sheared the sheep, carded the wool and spun it into yarn. She self-taught herself to knit and with that new talent she knitted mitts, toques, scarves, blankets, sweaters and slippers for everyone. She was still knitting right up to the end of her life.



Irene Holowach

Photo provided by Lorrie Reichert

She began to show her wares at county fairs amongst other places, taking many awards for her work. She also took up crocheting, needle point, embroidery and

sewing -- all self-taught. There wasn't an art or craft she didn't want to try. Irene also loved doing puzzles and playing cards especially cribbage. She was known as the "GiGi" champion and never missed the opportunity to hear or tell a joke.

Irene and John's spiritual walk began in the late 1970's and they were very devoted church members to the very end. They were living examples of the attributes a Christian should be growing in.

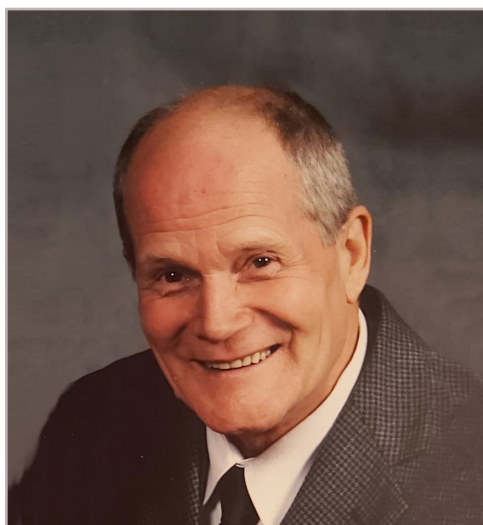
Irene was a very compassionate, understanding and giving person. If she had something, she shared it with all. She truly was short and sweet and will be sadly missed but very fondly remembered.

As her life was slipping away her friend said, "remember sister – the best is yet to come!"

Lorrie Reichert

George Rands Obituary

George Rands of Kelowna, British Columbia, died at the age



George Rands

Photo provided by Tuula Rands

of 78. He was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. George is survived by his wife, Tuula, five children, two step-children, numerous grandchildren and one sister. He was predeceased by his brothers, Earl and Mervin.

George lived most of his life in Western Canada and a number of years in the United States. He was a long-time member serving in the United Church of God in the Okanagan.

Tuula Rands

Peter Stopyn Obituary

Peter Stopyn was born on July 17, 1935, in Ituna, Saskatchewan, where he spent his childhood on the farm with his four siblings learning about God from his parents. In early adulthood, he moved to Hamilton, Ontario, where he would meet his future wife, Jacqueline, and together build a life. Along with his two brothers and Jacqueline, he learned about the Sabbath and God's way of life and was baptized into God's church.

Peter was a devoted family man and was an adored husband to Jacqueline Stopyn, married for 33 years and intertwined for 50 years. They had one daughter, Rhonda Stopyn who will eternally love and cherish her father who was affectionately called Paps by her. Peter had an infectious smile and laugh and was always ready for a discussion on any topic.

Peter was a strong man of faith who relied on God for everything in his life. He would often be found praying in English and Ukrainian and would quote Scripture in his daily life. A few

favourites were: Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 18:20 and Psalm 103. Peter attended the Hamilton congregation with his wife, daughter and brother William Stopyn.



Peter Stopyn

Photo provided by the Stopyn Family

Peter spent his life caring for his entire family and upheld that duty faithfully even when his health began failing. He died on October 4, 2022, in peace and comfort with his wife and daughter holding his hands.

He is predeceased by his sister Evelyn Danyliw (2011), brothers Matthew Stopyn (1997) and William Stopyn (2022). He is survived by his wife, Jacqueline Stopyn and daughter, Rhonda Stopyn who eagerly wait for the Resurrection to see their dear Peter again. Special thanks to the entire church family for their countless prayers and support.

Interment was held at Resurrection Cemetery in Ancaster, Ontario.

Rhonda Stopyn

A Saving Work

By David Palmer

There came a time in the ministry of Jesus Christ when His disciples asked a very poignant question. “Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘this is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent’” (John 6:28-29).

What exactly did Jesus mean when He said, “Believe on him whom He sent.” Did He mean that the only work required by a disciple is to have a simple form of belief? “Believe on the Lord and be saved” is a common phrase among hundreds of fundamentalist churches in the world of Christian theology. But is that what our Saviour meant? When we examine His reply we realize the question asked was “what shall we DO?” Jesus’ answer seems to invoke more than some spiritual feeling of the heart.

Was not one of the very last instructions given to His disciples to “teach all nations?” Did He not tell Peter “Feed My sheep”? Jesus Christ built His church, a church the gates of hell could never prevail against. A church that would never die. Notice Jesus’ own words, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12). What work? Why preach the gospel as a witness? What is God’s work all about? What is the one word that best describes the work of God?

Financial institutions advertise savings plans and various methods of securing one’s future. But the greatest savings plan on the face of the earth is God’s work. It is for this purpose we preach the gospel as a witness, as a warning. It is more than lifting our

voice like a trumpet. It is more than a voice crying in the wilderness. Banks save money. Unions try to save jobs. Doctors try to save lives. God wants to save the world! Salvation is at the very heart and core of the work of God (John 12:47, Luke 19:10, John 3:17). Scripture states unequivocally that God gave His only begotten Son so that the world through Him might be saved!

It is very evident in New Testament writings that the apostle Paul, believed with every fibre of his being, that his work, how he handled a situation, how he took care of the churches, and how he dealt with people made a dramatic difference to those people’s lives. It is obvious in his letters that Paul believed decisions he made regarding how he conducted his life, the number of hours he worked, his dedication, the sacrifices he made and the policies he pursued would have an effect on the number of people who might eventually be saved.

Can we make a difference in someone’s life? Paul certainly thought he could (1 Corinthians 9:18-22). Paul dealt with individuals from their perspective. Notice the admonition in one of Paul’s letters to Timothy, a man that Paul loved like

a son, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16).

Consider the remarkable implications in these Scriptures. “The work of God” includes preaching the gospel and proclaiming biblical truth. It includes a prophetic message, teaching people to observe all things that God has commanded, making disciples, baptizing people, taking care of people, reaching out into their lives, crying with those that cry, laughing with those that laugh, creating a community, a family and in the process of that work, we as agents of God can influence the potential salvation of an individual.

Paul made no apologies. He knew the decisions he made, his policies, his procedures and the way in which he went about doing things made a difference in the lives of people. People lived and died based upon the decisions of the apostle Paul. The truth is many people died painful deaths, because Paul was so diligent in doing God’s work, that those people were deeply converted, baptized into a heartfelt faith in Jesus Christ, and were willing to suffer persecution even to the point of death.

God’s work is a saving work! One of the great mysteries of Scripture, an underlying theme is that God is ultimately going to save this world. And He is going to use human beings called to His truth to help Him do it. From ancient times when God called a man named Abraham, to the saving of his people from slavery in Egypt by the hand of Moses, and from Old Testament prophets to the New Testament apostles God



A flock of sheep grazing in a pasture
photo by Markus Spiske on pexels.com

See “Work” on page 9.

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