



# United News Canada

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## One Accord: The Mandate Continues!

By Anthony Wasilkoff

In Acts 1:14 we learn that the apostles returned to Jerusalem and entered the upper room where they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women who were there and also with Christ's mother and with His brothers.

According to the *Nelson Study Bible*, the term "one accord" is made up of two words that mean "same" and "mind". The phrase "with one accord" is describing a group of people who are thinking and behaving in a like-minded way. This does not mean that these individuals had become robotic or regimented and so were thinking about everything in the same way at all times. The phrase describes the early church membership as having the capacity to set aside personal views, focus on their calling as members of the newly formed church and do so for the greater good.

In John 13, Jesus instructed His followers to love one another and that doing so visibly would be proof to unbelievers that they were really and truly Christ's disciples. Proof of discipleship wasn't identified as doctrinal purity or prophetic superiority or even a plethora of divine healings.

In John 17, we are told that something in addition to brotherly love is supposed to make an impact on the world at large. In verse 21, we find

that Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me."



Unity is a work of the Spirit  
*Photo by Diva Plavalaguna on pexels.com*

This is repeated in verse 23, "I in them and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." Modelling unity is not an option. It is a requirement. Unity in the Christian environment is supposed to be observable by the world and when it is, an impact is made to confirm that Christianity is genuine.

Unity is a work of the Spirit. Division is a work of the flesh. For Christians to come together is not easy, and it is not natural. To have splits and divisions is what is natural and this happens all too often. To

seek one another out and to come together is rare but it does happen and when it does it is beautiful to behold.

The term "with one accord" appears 11 times in the book of Acts to describe the operation of the early New Testament church! What a wonderful testimony to how early Christians conducted themselves.

In the context of the Feast of Pentecost, we read in Act 2:1, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." This magnificent chapter concludes similarly with the following remarkable description preserved for us in verse 40, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart."

Christian love and unity are prescribed by our Saviour to model and experience every Sabbath Day and Holy Day including the Feast of Pentecost as evidenced in the book of Acts! 🌍

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# The Fifth Commandment

By Linda Wasilkoff

Did you know that if you do an Internet search, you can find 52 Bible verses about honouring your father and mother? Some verses are referring to what happens if you do not honour them, while others are referring to honouring the aged. Most, however, have to do with honouring parents.

Recently we observed a national holiday – Mother’s Day. Soon we will be observing Father’s Day. These are two nationally recognized holidays that directly relate to the fifth commandment that directs us to honour our parents. While honouring a parent one day a year is not sufficient to fulfill the commandment, it at least is a good reminder.

My Dad liked to tease and would often “complain” on Mother’s Day when our Mom received cards and gifts but he didn’t get anything! Sometimes we would spoof him by giving him a Mother’s Day card. Then he became a bit embarrassed since his joke backfired.

When I was a child, my parents did not make a big deal out of celebrating Mother’s Day or Father’s

Day. It was only as my siblings and I became adults that we made a greater effort to honour them at these times. This year it has been four years since I have had an opportunity to honour a parent during one of these holidays. I miss that a lot!

My parents’ anniversary was in early May. Eventually, the family decided that rather than giving a gift for their anniversary and something small for Mom on Mother’s Day and something small for Dad on Father’s Day, we would combine all three events. We all pooled resources to get a bigger gift for their anniversary. That turned out to be a good decision because they received items they really needed but could not afford to buy themselves. They were always surprised and astounded by the gifts they received. It became a wonderful tradition in our family and meaningful way to honour them. Along with the gift they received a card signed by each of their children and grandchildren.

Though I can no longer purchase a card and a gift for them, I still honour both my Mom and

Dad. I honour the memories I have, the many lessons they taught and the legacy they have left behind.

As various family events happen, my sisters and I often remark how pleased our parents would be to see their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren doing well. At the same time, when negative things happen in the world or in the family, we remark how thankful we are that they no longer have to experience any hardships or sadness.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons I have learned is that no matter how much we honour individuals while they are alive, when they are gone we see areas where we could have done better. We can either regret the past or move on and apply the lesson to what we are doing today. Another lesson I have learned is the importance of asking questions about their youth, about family history and the lessons they learned. I actually tried to do that while they were still alive, but there is so much more I wish I had asked and learned.

Honour your parents while you still have them! 🍁

## United News - Canada

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# 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 1:4-8. "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 the Passover lamb was to be chosen (John 12:12-15; Exodus 12:2-3). He introduced bread and wine during the Passover meal and washed the disciples' feet. 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 of 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), which is also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), 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 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 on our own efforts. Mankind has needed to put sin out

for 7,000 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 spir-



Pentecost pictures a small harvest of firstfruits

Photo by DESPIERRES Cécile at pexels.com

itual 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" (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 firstfruits, 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 for the fall festivals. 🍁

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### *"Gift" from page 16.*

His disciples "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 6:63).

God's wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit is also our source of wisdom and knowledge. Recall the promise Jesus made to His disciples (John 14:26. 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, character the Scripture calls, the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Jesus tells us, in 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 children 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 in 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). It is a gift that leads to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. 🍁

# Remember The Sabbath Day

By Michael Erickson

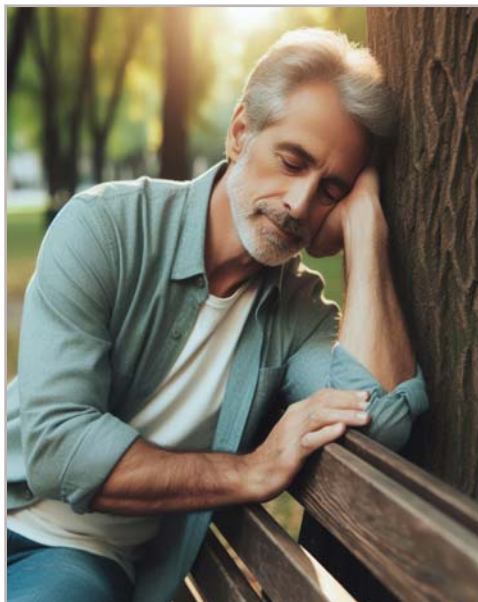
I want to start by asking a question to provoke thought. How do you feel about the Sabbath, the Lord of the Sabbath, His Kingdom, and His laws? Rather than the Sabbath being merely a forecast of Christ ruling people in the future, it is a special link that you have to those things right now. How you observe the Sabbath speaks volumes about how you feel about the source of the Sabbath, about the Kingdom of Heaven and His laws.

Consequently, God is offended by those who feel restricted by it and say, “When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?” (Amos 8:5). With the coming of each Sabbath, we should consider our association with it! God certainly does.

In Mark 2:27, Christ said that we weren’t made for the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath was made for us. But why did God make the Sabbath for us? He made it so that we come together to worship and honour Him; so that He can guide and direct our lives and teach us His ways. Exodus 31:16-17 reads, “Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made

the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” Notice that Israel was to “observe,” meaning to celebrate, keep, or adhere to in practice. It is to be “a perpetual covenant,” an agreement or contract between God and man. Furthermore, it is to be a sign, a critically important sign. We see from Exodus 31 that the Sabbath is an identifying sign.



Remember to consider and plan our activities through each week

*Image generated by DALL-E 3*

The correct observance of the Sabbath identifies people, not agreements. And so, the Sabbath day is a very important day and our observance is a sign between us and our Creator—identifying us as God’s very own people. As we worship, honour, and serve Him on this day, and as we grow in our understanding of the Sabbath; that observance and understanding has a deep and profound impact

on our lives.

So an important question to ask: Is it possible to avoid doing something the Bible clearly defines as being sinful on the Sabbath day and yet still fail to fulfill the Sabbath commandment? The short answer is yes! I would like us all to carefully consider that question and answer as we look a little more closely at the Sabbath commandment and see what we might be overlooking.

Exodus 20:8-11 says: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

The obvious focus of this passage is upon remembering the Sabbath day and maintaining its holiness. Man does not have the power to make anything holy, only God can make something holy. Here we find that God has clearly hallowed—made holy—the Sabbath, and it is our duty to see that this God-given holiness is not defiled. This passage clearly shows us that doing our “work” on God’s Sabbath day

would defile or “profane” its holiness.

Let us consider this concept of “holy” versus “profane” briefly. Everything in the Bible that is not specifically labeled as “holy” is automatically “profane” in this sense. When we use the word profane today, we are referring to something that is irreverent, blasphemous, or lacking appropriate respect. The biblical usage does not necessarily include that same negative emphasis.

One Hebrew word translated profane, *chol*, had an underlying meaning of “exposed.” The root word from the Greek, *bebelos*, originally referred to the threshold of a doorway, and refers to something that may be casually and without consideration, stepped upon. By extension, the concept refers to something that is accessible. Something that is profane is accessible to man and man then determines how he wishes to use it.

Something that is holy can be used legitimately only in the way God designates. In this sense, six days each week are “profane,” and we individually determine how the time will be used; while one day is “holy” and God determines how it is to be used. Scripture further reveals that when the religious leaders failed to differentiate between the holy and profane and failed to teach the people that difference, the people fell into sin by carelessly misusing what God said was holy (Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23).

This certainly is not an error any of us would consciously want to make. However, we should also note that the passage in Exodus does not begin by defining what can and cannot be done on the Sabbath day. It begins by telling us what we should do the rest of the week so that we are prepared to maintain the holiness of the Sabbath when it arrives.

The first instruction we are given is to “remember the Sabbath day.” The word remember can have different meanings. In this passage it does not refer to “remembering” as opposed to “forgetting,” which is a distinction we must consider. This term remember refers to having a daily awareness that the Sabbath is coming so that work can be planned out and accomplished in such a way that we have completed our necessary work before the Sabbath arrives. This involves all of our weekly (six day) activity. If we are to properly “remember the Sabbath day,” we consider and plan our activities throughout the week in such a way that we are properly prepared before the Sabbath arrives.

The Jewish Soncino commentary makes an interesting observation about the instruction to remember the Sabbath day: “The verb is infinitive and so is not limited in time. Always keep the Sabbath in mind during the week, so that if, for example, you come across a special article of food, set it aside for the honoring of the Sabbath . . . A person should so order his

affairs during the week that his mind is completely free of them on the Sabbath” (The Soncino Chumash, page 460).

Obviously, there is nothing wrong with our preparation for the weekly Sabbath on a Friday, but if that is the only time we prepare—the only time we remember, then we are misunderstanding the scriptural instruction. If we neglect preparing for the Sabbath until Friday, we may be exhausted by the time the Sabbath arrives. For some, the Sabbath has become not a “rest” day, but a “crash” day—a time when they are so worn out that they are unable to do much more than eat and sleep. Is that keeping the Sabbath holy? Is that what God intended His holy Sabbath day to be?

While refraining from work is essential to Sabbath observance, we also understand that there is much more to properly keeping the Sabbath holy. For example, we are told to “call the Sabbath a delight” (Isaiah 58:13). The Sabbath is not intended to be a day that we endure or simply sleep through, but a day we anticipate as the most delightful time of the week.

How can this day truly be a delight if a person has not properly remembered and prepared in advance? Will it be a delight simply because it arrives? Most of us can answer that question from our own experience. Those times when we have put forth diligent effort to prepare for the Sabbath, it was truly delightful. On the other hand, those times

when we have failed to prepare properly, we may have gone through the motions of keeping the Sabbath, but we could not honestly call it a delight.

It is encouraging to note that God does two special things each Sabbath day. Did you notice them in the passage we quoted from Exodus 20? The account of the first Sabbath day in Genesis 2:1-3 shows these same actions.

Notice the last phrase in Exodus 20:11: “Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” God says that He both blesses the Sabbath day and sets it aside as holy. Just as no other day of the week is holy, no other day of the week has this special blessing from God. That special blessing is not physical—we cannot sense it with our five senses. It is a spiritual blessing.

Another aspect of the Sabbath commandment that can be affected negatively when we fail to remember the Sabbath and prepare appropriately is the commanded “holy convocation” God provides for His people. Leviticus 23:3 says, “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.”

A convocation is an assembly called together by authority. It is not like a group get-together, a club meeting, or some social event. People are summoned to a convocation much in the way a summons is issued to a court

of law. A summons is not an invitation, it is an order from an authority. The fact that this is a “holy” convocation shows that the authority doing the summoning is none other than God. God would certainly want us to eagerly assemble before Him and with His other children. However, whether we’re eager or not, He summons us to appear.

Other Scriptures show us we should not attend in person when we are ill with some potentially communicable disease or illness. We must also acknowledge that occasionally, there may be an “ox in the ditch” situation that prevents our attendance. Age or other physical circumstances may also impact our ability to gather together; however, we must consider this as it is easy to become complacent and thereby profane the holy convocation.

In years past, many made considerable sacrifices to be able to attend Sabbath services regularly. At times we may have even been overzealous in our efforts. There may have been times when we could have been more balanced in our approach. But, have we now gone to the other extreme where seemingly trivial matters or even personal convenience may cause us to ignore God’s summons?

It seems that some routinely miss services because “I worked so hard this week, I was just too tired to come.” Other times events or personal desires may make it inconvenient to assemble together for Sabbath ser-

vices. We’re not talking about sudden, unexpected, uncontrollable events or important family occasions, or limitations beyond our control.

However, there are many other matters we could anticipate and plan for to ensure we are indeed able to assemble together for this holy convocation. If we fail to do so, are we really remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy in the way God intended?

There is no substitute for weekly Sabbath services and the ability to assemble together with those God has called and placed into His son’s body. What a pleasure it is to keep the Sabbath together; Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” The idea expressed here is that people grow from interaction with one another. Listening to the cybercast, or a video is important when truly needed.

However it is not the same as being together. For some connecting remotely is absolutely necessary, and I am not in any way trying to diminish that reality. However, we must remember God has blessed and hallowed the Sabbath day in a spiritual way, not like any other day and commanded a “holy convocation”. The strength we derive from fellowshiping together in person with God’s people cannot be duplicated by any other activity.

God blesses us with that opportunity on each Sabbath. If

we fail to remember and plan in such a way that we can take advantage of that opportunity when it comes, then I believe we are not remembering the Sabbath day in the way God intends.

Consider the encouragement to gather in worship and fellowship recorded in Hebrews 10:24-25: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Love and good works need to be stirred up – they do not just occur! One reason God’s people are to come together is to strengthen each other and to “provoke one another to good works.” We do indeed have a tremendous impact on each other, especially on His holy and blessed Sabbath. This is why we need to exhort one another to gather together.

Perhaps we could consider one more point from a minister’s (or other speaker’s) perspective. The attention and expressions from the audience can even at times guide the direction of the message. When we give sermons (or sermonettes), we usually have some idea about how effective the message has been. Sometimes we feel a message has been helpful and worthwhile, and sometimes, we feel the message wasn’t as good as it could have been.

Even so, it’s surprising how often someone will come up after one of those messages and

still thank us for something we said. It drives home the point that God’s blessing is upon His Sabbath day and His holy convocation, and He can produce good results even when we perhaps fall short. If we are in the right frame of mind God can bless the outcome of even what we may feel is not the greatest of messages.

We must all remember the Sabbath commandment is not a one-day-a-week commandment. If we fail to “remember the Sabbath day” and plan accordingly throughout the week, we may indeed be failing to fulfill the commandment. Unusual circumstances beyond our control will at times arise, but we can profoundly affect the impact of the Sabbath upon ourselves and our families by properly remembering and preparing each week to make God’s Holy Day a delight.

God wants children who embrace Him and His way of life, as represented by each Sabbath. Isaiah 58:13-14 says, “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.” The Sabbath is a wonderful gift that God has given us as His holy people.

Paul referred in part to the Sabbath as “a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17) is vital to always keep in remembrance. The Sabbath’s shadow is cast directly by the Lord of the Sabbath and involves His law, His Church, His second coming, and ultimately His Kingdom. Consequently, our response to the Sabbath (and observance of) shows our respect, or disrespect, for all that it represents (Exodus 31:13-17). How you and I feel about the Sabbath reflects how we feel about the Lord of the Sabbath, His laws, His Church, and His Kingdom. If you honor the Sabbath, you honor its Source. If you delight in the Sabbath, you delight in its Source (Isaiah 58:14).

If you remember to keep the Sabbath holy, you remember its holy Source (Exodus 20:10). Conversely, if you casually ignore the Sabbath, you casually ignore its Source. If you disrespect the Sabbath, you disrespect its Source. God responds in kind to our reverence of Him and His Kingdom: “For those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30).

Let us remember the Sabbath to ensure we don’t treat it casually in any way and thereby profane that which is holy. The Sabbath is a powerful sign between God and His people (Ezekiel 20:12). Never will their relationship be severed, as the Sabbath will always remain a holy time for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9). 🍁



# Edmonton Women's Enrichment Weekend

By Tonya Erickson

On April 5-7, 37 women and young ladies from across Western Canada come together for our third Women's Enrichment Weekend. It was again held in Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and was a wonderful weekend full of laughter, fellowship, bonding and thought provoking and enriching discussions.

The theme for the weekend was Putting God First in Our Lives, from Proverbs 3:6 and Matthew 6:33.



A sample of the decorations  
Photo by Synnove Teetaert

We started the weekend off with a homemade dinner followed by the Welcome by Evelyn Davis. Evelyn had created and brought beautiful floral arrangements for the tables that included all different types of flowers which represented all the different ladies (young, middle age, seniors) and the different personalities. We all are different but make up a beautiful bouquet. She put the largest rose in the middle of the bouquet as the focal point to demonstrate how that represented God. This really drew

all the different parts (flowers) together and completed the bouquet. A beautiful analogy.

We then had a "Speed Friending" get-to-know-you activity, which was a fun and fabulous way to quickly get to know something about the other ladies. Heidi Poffenroth and Trish Burke came up with this activity and it was a hit. We followed up with a dessert reception and fellowship where we were blessed with ladies who played background music on the harp and piano, which added a wonderful ambiance.

For Sabbath services we had two groups of very talented ladies perform lovely special music. The first group from Prince George consisted of Azalea Cartwright, Carmella Cartwright, Synnove Teetaert and Willetta Ellington. The second group from Calgary consisted of Melanie Davie, Heidi Poffenroth and Wendy Burton.

We were very blessed to have the following speakers on Sabbath and Sunday:

David Jones gave a very inspiring Sabbath message concerning our relationship with God. Do we truly understand Agape love? It means being confident in God's love, showing no fear, believing in His promises, trusting God

completely and following Him willingly. Putting God first in our lives is the journey of our lives. God doesn't just want us to do the steps of putting Him first, He wants us to live with Him first in our minds, hearts and souls. Mr. Jones expounded on the journey of Abraham and how he evidenced to God he would always obey, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. And God said, "for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

Joy Jones gave an encouraging and motivating speech titled, "A Beautiful Relationship: Growing in Intimacy with God." Discussing how our marriage relationships can, at times, be comparable to our relationship with God. The time, effort, love, and passion we put into our marriage relationship, can also be invested in our relationship with God. The negative things we bring into our marriage can also spill over and affect our relationship with God. Having real life discussions



Engaged in a group activity  
Photo by Heidi Poffenroth

about our relationships and the challenges that we go through and how important mentors and our spiritual family are. We are not alone.

Tracey (Nyhus) Jongerius discussed how to use values as a daily guide to our actions while putting God at the center of our identity. She noted ways that we can work to overcome internal or external barriers that prevent us from putting God first. She provided a summary of the book *Atomic Habits* and noted how changing our habits by just one percent can make a big difference over time.

We had short speeches by several ladies this year.

Heidi Poffenroth gave an encouraging speech emphasizing that putting God's way first isn't always easy with a busy life. Having people in your life who make an impact can help steer us. Keeping notebooks with the big five (prayer, bible study, fasting, meditating and fellowship) helps us to focus. And when we steer off the path, SNAP!!!!

Lee Kitt gave a very informative speech discussing the concepts of perfectionism, shame and self-compassion. Navigating life in our imperfection requires repentance and loving ourselves with the same self-compassion we give our neighbor.

Susan Davis gave a fun and very relevant speech on all the many varieties of hats we all wear each day - such as a wife



Participants pose for a group photo  
*Photo by Michael Erickson*

hat, mom hat, professional hat, friend hat, daughter hat or church hat. But there is one hat that we should always remember to put on first and that is our "God" hat. When we wear this hat, we are putting on the mind and character of Jesus Christ and God, the Father. Remember to put on God's hat first, then the hat you are wearing at that moment will shine with Godly character.

Tonya Erickson gave a self-reflection speech on how motivation is critical in performing the priority of putting God first in our lives. We all have different things that motivate us to perform our main priorities and she encouraged each of us to spend time meditating on what motivates us to put God first in our lives. Remembering God knows we will stumble in this life and when we do, He wants us to return to Him and strengthen the brethren, just as the apostle Peter did.

We had very lively table topic discussions, led by Brenda Thompson. Each table discussed items of Putting God first in our lives. Some of the benefits and challenges that occur in this area. We also dis-

cussed biblical examples that stood out to us as mentors or examples of what not to do.

We had table discussions, led by Colette Erickson. Each table discussed how we see God in the small things of our lives. A very wonderful topic to keep our gratitude towards God and all His blessings, big and small.

All the ladies did a wonderful job!

The weekend also included fun-filled time with group games, food (lots of food) and fellowship. The fellowship was bonding, and the discussions were very encouraging! Several ladies donated items to be gifted to others during the weekend. Items donated were beautiful croqueted coasters, fun and beautiful homemade eyeglass cases, decorative food platters, body scrubs, plants, the beautiful flower center pieces for the tables and an adorable keepsake box that went to the young lady for whom it was intended.

Thanks to all who attended and helped make the weekend a success! Many thanks to the planning team who took time out of their lives to ensure the weekend was a success. Most of all, thanks to our Heavenly Father who directed the planning, discussions, and fellowship. He worked out even the smallest details to bless His daughters as we congregated to bond and grow together spiritually.

We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's Women's Enrichment Weekend! 🍁

# Member Spotlight: Elsa Cornelius

By Allison Steinman Hodgins

“This is the most precious thing I could have done in my life.”

These are the bold words of Elsa Cornelius. It was a passionate response, given without hesitation. She was asked what it felt like to be baptized back in 1979.

The story of her divine calling began a long way from here -- over four thousand kilometres away in the small South American Caribbean-flavoured country of Guyana. That's where Elsa lived when she first heard the word of God preached over the radio waves. It was the voice of Garner Ted Armstrong, son of Worldwide Church of God founder, Herbert W. Armstrong.



Guyana's location on South America

Image by SurinameCentral on WikiCommons.com

Elsa shared that she never knew her father who died when she was just a baby. The family also lost one of her siblings at age three. Because her mother raised Elsa and four siblings as Seventh-Day Adventists, the concept of a Saturday Sabbath was nothing new or strange. She said she understood that the message she was hearing on “The World Tomorrow” broadcast was God’s truth. Along with keeping the Sabbath on Saturday, Mr. Armstrong also talked about the importance of keeping God’s commanded Feasts and Holy Days. After that, Elsa tuned into the radio station and the program; listening without fail every Sunday.

Soon she had the opportunity to come to Canada. While settling into her new life and home, Elsa had access to a television set for the first time. That’s where she found someone familiar. She was able to watch “The World Tomorrow” and see Mr. Armstrong on screen. Being able to put a face to the voice on the radio was amazing to her.

In 1975, she located a local congregation, and began to attend in person as directed. The first Feast of Tabernacles Elsa attended in 1976 was her most memorable as well, she recalled. She has many fond memories of tak-

ing the bus there each morning from her home in Scarborough,



Elsa Cornelius

Photo provided by Elsa Cornelius

Ontario, to attend the services being held in Etobicoke that year. While there, she was excited to have an opportunity to meet other people in the faith and was eager to learn much more about how to properly observe the Holy Days.

Elsa now attends services with the United Church of God congregation in Kitchener, Ontario. She is 87, and her gentle smile always lights up the room. Elsa is facing a serious medical issue and admits that being so sick has been one of her life’s greatest challenges. Her blessings however, loom larger. Elsa is quick to count among them a loving God, who has taken care of and protected her these many years. 🍁

# News From Across Canada

## International Potluck

On March 9, the East Farnham (Quebec) congregation was able to get together for a social for the first time since COVID.

Our Ethnic Cuisine consisted of many specialty dishes. We were blessed with delicious flavours from all the different countries and nationalities represented in our congregation. There were meat pies: classic beef from Australia served with Ketchup, limena from Peru, baleadas from Honduras, lasagna from Italy, bubble & squeak from Britain, shepherds pie from Ireland and the United Kingdom.

We also had BBQ chicken wings, humus and pita bread from the Southern United States, pate chinois and smoked chicken from Quebec and smoked salmon from the West Coast. Additionally, there were both egg and chicken sandwiches. Desserts included Quebec spe-

cialties of maple syrup pie and apple squares. An the Australian delight was tim tams.

After enjoying such a variety of luscious foods, we sat down to a night of fun and games. Taboo was a great success and so was Scrabble; then everyone joined in around the table for an ABC Game... naming Bible charac-



Games and music augmented the day

*Photo by Chantal Leclerc*

ters, then fruits and vegetables, animals, and more Bible names.

Background guitar music for the evening was provided by Dave Hebert and a fantastic evening was enjoyed by everyone. It was a fun event.

*Beve Hebert*

## Ontario Spring Holy Days

This spring Holy Day season, several southern Ontario congregations had the pleasure of a visit from Mr. Len Martin (former chairman/current member of the Council of Elders) and his wife, Julie.

On Sunday, Mr. Martin conducted the Passover service in Toronto along with pastor Paul Wasilkoff.

On Tuesday, the couple was back in Toronto for the First Day of Unleavened Bread with about 125 from the Hamilton, Toronto, Kitchener and Barrie congregations. The first split-sermon, given by Mr. Len Parker, a visiting elder from Bricket Wood, England, focused on the fact that God is the greatest Giver of all. The second split-sermon, given by Mr. Martin, focused on life lessons from the Days of Unleavened Bread.



Edible, on-theme decorations

*Photo by Trish Romeo*

The Holy Day service was followed by a potluck meal that featured wonderful fellowship, many delicious food choices and beautiful table decor representing the parting of the Red Sea and a land flowing with milk and honey. We are grateful to the Martins for their visit and to all who contributed to the start of an enriching Holy Day season.

*Trish Romeo*

## Surrey NTBMO

Nine individuals gathered

*Summer 2024, Volume 29, Number 2*



Delectable and varied dishes

*Photo by Chantal Leclerc*



Surry's group meal for NTBMO

*Photo by Ralph Cortes*

at our Surrey church building for a delightful evening of food and fellowship for this year's Night To Be Much Observed . We opened with a biblically related reading of the significance of this special evening, followed by a prayer for God's blessing on the meal.



Surry's group meal for NTBMO

*Photo by Ralph Cortes*

We were blessed! There was a variety of delicious food and lots of pleasant discussion, including anecdotes about our path towards becoming a part of God's church. Towards the end of the evening, we enjoyed a Bible knowledge game, which was both fun and educational!

*Dale Craniford*

### **Hamilton NBTMO**

Members of the Hamilton congregation gathered at the home of Jacqueline Stopyn. Jacquie and Mary Ann Halcrow

shared the hosting responsibilities to make the evening a success.

Those who were able to attend, including Mr. & Mrs. Len Martin, were greeted with lovely decorations. The potluck was well-organized, and presented balanced and delicious options for each course of the meal.



Awaiting the start of the meal

*Photo by Jacquie Stopyn*

After supper, we engaged in a game of Bible Jeopardy. Special focus was made to events around the Exodus. This activity allowed us to savour the meaning of the day.



Playing Bible trivia after supper

*Photo by Paul Wasilkoff*

We look forward to future opportunities to fellowship in similarly meaningful ways.

*Paul Wasilkoff*

### **Birth Announcement**

Marat Shikhverdiev and Jessica (Schut) Shikhverdieva are

pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Amelia Shikhverdieva on March 26, 2024, at 7:46 p.m. Amelia weighed a healthy 7 pounds 5 ounces at birth.



Amelia

*Photo provided by Jessica Shikhverdieva*

Mom and baby are doing well. Marat and Jessica would like to thank everyone for all the prayers and support!

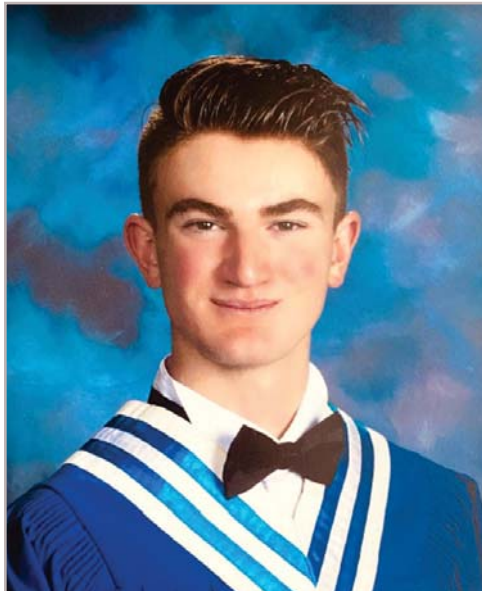
*Jessica Shikhverdieva*

### **Regina Graduation**

Keegan MacPherson at the end of June 2024 will graduate from Indian Head High School as one of the top scholars. He has been part of the Regina congregation for the last 12 years and has served by doing opening and closing prayers as well as take down and set up for services.

He will be attending the University of Northern British Columbia and pursuing a degree in Civil Engineering while living with his uncle Robert Teetaert. While studying he will be attending the Prince George congregation. Keegan will be great-

ly missed by all of the Regina congregation, but they are excited to see him pursue further education and will look forward to his visits home.



Keegan MacPherson

*Photo provided by MacPherson Family*

As he continues his studies for the next few years, Keegan will continue lifeguarding and teaching swimming lessons. He will also be enjoying the beauty Northern BC has to offer, while riding his mountain bike and having fun with friends and family.

*Lloyd Teetaert*

### Yap Wedding Celebration

Following the Sabbath service on May 4, the Toronto congregation assembled to celebrate the recent wedding of Mark Yap, youngest son of Sixto and Josie Yap, and Julia Stewart, only daughter of Scott and Jean Stewart.

Mark and Julia had a civil service performed in Toronto, Ontario, on February 29, and a formal wedding and reception on



Mark & Julia Yap

*Photo by Trish Romeo*

the Stewarts' homestead in Texas on April 8, the day of the eclipse.

Since the couple returned to Toronto just before the Days of Unleavened Bread, the congregation waited to celebrate (with cake) when the Days were complete. Mr. Anthony Wasilkoff congratulated the couple and presented them with gifts from the congregation: a gift basket that contained a variety of humorous items and a card that held cash for various newlywed needs.



One of the table decorations

*Photo by Trish Romeo*

Everyone enjoyed good food, beautiful table décor and a glimpse at wedding pictures strung along the wall.

*Trish Romeo*

### 50th Wedding Anniversary

Sharon and Harold Desco-teaux had a pleasant surprise after services on March 9. They were very aware of a planned International Potluck social. However, they were not aware the congregation would also be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

Their anniversary is actually March 16 so they did not suspect



Harold & Sharon

*Photo by Chantal Leclerc*

a thing! They were presented with a very beautiful, delicious cake made by Courtney Morasse and a card signed by everyone.

When asked about the secret to a successful marriage they both said, "We do things together and we talk to each other." Good advice and a positive example for us all.

*Beve Hebert*

## Emmie Lucas Obituary

Born in Dalfsen, Netherlands on December 23, 1935, Femmigje (Emmie) Lucas lived the first years of her life under foreign occupation. She was still very young when the Canadian army marched through Holland, liberating the country and forging a union that lasts to this day.

In her early 20's, she left her family, her friends and her home to follow a man two years her junior across the Atlantic Ocean to Canada to start her new life.

He had made the crossing in 1956 and after many letters, she made the decision to immigrate in 1958. Unlike her future husband Garry, she did not have any family to come to and yet still felt the call to leave everything for love.



Garry & Emmie

*Photo provided by Lucas Family*

Thankfully, her decision was not in vain, and they were married on June 6, 1959. Less than a decade later, and after having three children, they

began attending WCG church services in Toronto at the beginning of 1968.

In the 1970s, a WCG church was started in Barrie, Ontario, and Emmie was ordained a deaconess. With much help from her husband and family, she served God's people tirelessly and with great compassion and empathy.

Emmie lived up to her Dutch heritage and was known for her exceptional house-keeping skills. She was even known to scrub the driveway with soap and water in her goal of keeping any dirt from even entering the house.

Among her passions was knitting and crocheting. Babies as far away as Africa were the recipients of her handiwork and many feet today are still being kept warm by her wonderfully knitted wool socks.

She loved her God, her family, her church and her friends and they loved her back. Garry and Emmie embodied what God recorded in Genesis 2:24 in that they were truly one. She became a widow on May 31, 2021 and missed Garry dearly.

On the morning of December 28, 2023, Emmie breathed her last breath and now awaits the resurrection and return of Jesus Christ. She is survived by her three children and six grandchildren.

She will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

*Lucas Family*

## Dorothy Stanley Obituary

Dorothy Stanley, wife of Ellsworth, died on April 18 at age 81 after declining health over the past year. The Stanleys have faithfully served the St. John's congregation many years. The funeral was conducted on Monday afternoon April 22 by her husband Ellsworth who is the resident elder in Newfoundland.



Dorothy Stanley

*Photo provided by Stanley Family*

Dorothy was known for her smile, her wit and her energetic and efficient manner. She will be greatly missed by her husband and daughter as well as the St. John's congregation and the many other members who have attended the St. John's feast site through the years.

Dorothy leaves behind: Ellsworth, her husband of 53 years; her daughter, Alanna (Bradley) Brunet; five brothers as well as nieces, nephews and a large circle of family and friends.

*Stanley Family*

# 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 you might get a dozen different answers. Some might say good health, long life, or happiness. But there is a gift that Jesus referred to as being like a hidden treasure called the “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:44-46). To find that great gift, that 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 recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts. Following a miracle from God when each 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, Peter 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).

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). 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.

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, and when He finished reading, “...He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:18-21).



Different people value different gifts  
Image generated by DALL-E 3

The wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit works in different ways. We are, after all, different, unique, with different personalities, talents and abilities. Paul understood this. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,” (1 Corinthians 12:4-8). Same spirit -- 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 gift of the Holy Spirit. “For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). “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 1:8).

The Holy Spirit is our very source of eternal life Jesus told

See “Gift” on page 4.