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Walking In Newness of Life

By Anthony Wasilkoff

After a while, routine can exact a toll on a person. Have you seen the movie “Groundhog Day”? A television station weatherman is mysteriously caught in a time warp resulting in him re-living the same day, again and again and again. At first, it was bewildering and then intriguing but, slowly and inexorably, it became debilitating and confining. He relived the very same day exactly the same way time and time again. In one of his especially memorable lines, the weatherman retorts, “How do I know there’ll be a tomorrow? There wasn’t one yesterday!”

One of the principles that a pastor often covers with an engaged couple are the dangers of routine. Even a blissfully newlywed couple can find their relationship eventually eroded by the wearing elements of predicable routine. A wise person once said that the main difference between a rut and a grave is its depth. Couples who keep their relationship fresh through thoughtful creativity avoid the debilitating effects of repeated routine.

It is especially sad for me to casually observe a married couple in a coffee shop or a restaurant spending an evening out together and rarely speaking to one another during the time they spent in each other’s company sharing a tasty meal. It is so

important to marry your best friend and to work hard at keeping your spouse your best friend with whom you always have so much to talk about for an entire lifetime.

What will this year’s Feast of Tabernacles observance be like for you? What are you planning? What are you anticipating? Will it be the same old, same old or will it have elements of something fresh and new? Something you haven’t tried or experienced before that would be especially Feast appropriate?

Romans 6:7 emphatically declares, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” For genuine Christians, being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit means we live a new kind of life in the real sense of the term and that this newness lasts for the remainder of one’s life.

Romans 7:6 adds, “...so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” Active Christians look for ways to serve others joyously with a newness of the Spirit and not mechanically following the oldness of the letter.

For the conclusion of the Book of Lamentations, the *Nelson Study Bi-*

ble includes the following insightful comment: “The Bible teaches that God alone is the One who makes things new, whether a new song in the heart of the faithful (Psalms 40:3), a new phase in His plan of redemption (Isaiah 4:9; 43:19), a new name (Isaiah 62:2), or a new heavens and earth (Isaiah 65:17).”

Each Feast of Tabernacles we observe annually, if at all possible, should include elements of something new (within reason) related to how we serve, how we participate, how we reach out to others, how we share, how we worship. For instance, maybe you haven’t participated in the Variety Show lately. Well then, this would be a good year for you to step up, prepare and submit a number.

There are many ways in which you can apply this important principle—whether you are forced to keep the feast at home, attend your usual local site or transfer to another Feast site. 🌍

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The Fifth Commandment

By Sally Parker

Exodus 20:8 commands us “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work, neither you nor your son nor daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the stranger within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

This is my favourite passage because it was the first time God opened my eyes to understand my first “wow” Scripture. I was five years old and asked my Sunday school teacher why we went to church on Sunday when the Bible said we should keep the seventh day holy. She said “they changed it.” The question of who “they” were was always at the back of my mind.

Seventeen years later, in the spring of 1962, my husband Ken and I began to observe the Biblical Sabbath. I now share with you

our Sabbath journey for the past 62 years.

In 1962 we lived in a townhouse community in Kingston, Ontario, with three children ages 1, 3 and 4. On the Sabbath, we put a “Do Not Disturb” sign on our front door and proceeded to read *The Plain Truth* magazine and booklets. We sent questions to Canadian headquarters in Vancouver. Every week we received answers from an AC student who many years later became our pastor. We read the answers, checked them with Scripture, read more booklets and wrote more letters. One Sabbath in the winter of 1963 Ken and I, unknown to each other, wrote a letter requesting baptism. A response stated there would be a baptizing tour in the summer, which would visit with us. Ken decided not to wait so we drove to New York City and were baptized on the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In the fall of 1963, a Sunday once-a-month Bible study was started in Toronto. We met two families and three single men from the Kingston area. Now we

no longer had to write questions to headquarters but could submit them at the Bible Study. The minister mentioned that if we lived within 100 miles of services we should attend every week. We were almost 400 miles from Detroit, so reasoned that we should attend once a month. We drove to Toronto on Friday evening, stayed at a member’s home and in the morning drove to Detroit for afternoon services.

Someone always invited us to stay overnight and Sunday we would drive back to Kingston. One member - a single father with four sons would always make a tuna casserole (his sons said that was all he knew how to make) and insist we sleep in his sons’ bunk beds (five of us in two single bunk beds) with mattresses so soft we slept in a V! We appreciated his hospitality more than you can imagine.

On the other three Sabbaths, we had the others in the Kingston area over for the afternoon and dinner. We would discuss the Bible, sing hymns and enjoy the fellowship. This was our Sab-

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bath keeping until the summer of 1964.

Then members and coworkers in Ontario were invited to an outdoor Sabbath service in Norland, Ontario. There were about 50 in attendance. The sermon began under blue skies but halfway through the message a dark storm cloud appeared over the lake, the rain was falling and coming right towards us. All of a sudden, a strong wind blew that storm away and we did not get a drop of rain. We were very happy that God blessed his fledgling church that day.

In August 1964, the Toronto church began with Gary Antion as pastor, and our Sabbath keeping drastically changed. Still living in Kingston, we piled into the car, drove to Toronto, went to church and then to someone's house for supper and drove back home. Our gas bills were huge so in late 1964 we moved to Toronto. Ken, who worked for the Department of Highways asked his boss in Kingston for a transfer. His boss flatly refused and said if he went over his head he would block him. Ken, always a man of faith, moved us to Toronto figuring he could come for the weekend, drive to work Monday, come back for Spokesman Club, drive to work Tuesday, stay at his mom's, come to Toronto for Bible Study on Wednesday, drive to Kingston on Thursday and once again stay at his mom's and be back for the weekend. His plan was to do this until he found a job in Toronto.

We moved on Sunday, Ken went to work Monday, came

back for Spokesman Club, drove to work Tuesday, stayed at his mom's, came back Wednesday for Bible Study. That night the phone rang at 11:00 p.m. It was the chief of surveys. He heard that Ken had moved his family to Toronto and asked him to come to the Downsview office the next day. There was a desk for him in the drafting office. God was very merciful, and we were very thankful.

Sabbath keeping changed again. On Friday night Ken had a Bible Study with the children and when we moved to Don Mills one member would invite different people over so he could get a lively discussion going about the Bible or world affairs. In the morning, we were able to keep up with our reading, attend services and either have company, go to someone's house or occasionally go to a restaurant. We had "making the Sabbath a delight" down pat!! From 1975 (when I started to work) to 1998 we almost always ate out with brethren after services.

Once we moved to Barrie in 1998, we were not working, but continued resting, prayer and Bible Study, going to church and often having a meal with brethren. When WCG left us in 2004, the Maranatha Church of God was born. We became very much a family and once we had our own place, after services people stayed for a long time. We would watch nature documentaries, have sing-alongs, or enjoy picnics in the park.

In 2017, we started attending UCG. Sabbath continued much the same until COVID hit in

2020. During this time, the Sabbath was still a delight with the Zoom services from Cincinnati.

Now Sabbath keeping has again changed somewhat. We tape the Beyond Today program and watch it Friday evening. The Sabbath is very much a delight when we fellowship with the brethren, sing and enjoy getting to know each other through the Scripture Club. After services we generally go home, do Bible study, read and occasionally meet with brethren for supper.

Ken has always said that Christianity is a thinking person's religion and I find it interesting that there are very few Scriptures telling us how to keep the Sabbath holy, how to make it a delight, how to keep from doing our own thing and not speaking our own words. We know Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. We know he went to the synagogue. We know he and the disciples walked through a field of grain on the Sabbath. He healed people on the Sabbath and gave us the ox in the ditch example. Keeping the Sabbath does require a lot of thought on our part.

We have six days to work and prepare for the Sabbath. Our week must revolve around the Sabbath just as our year revolves around the Holy Days.

The Sabbath is a wonderful gift from God, and I am so glad He opened my five-year old eyes 80 years ago to see on which day we should worship Him. Now I must continue the battle to keep from working, not seeking my own pleasures, not speaking my own words and truly keeping the Sabbath Day holy. 🍁

Which Is My Favorite?

By Linda Wasilkoff

Do you have a favourite colour? Movie? Song? Hymn? Scripture? Whenever anyone asks me what my favourite something is, I have a hard time responding. Usually the answer would depend upon the day, the circumstances or some other factor. On some days or weeks, I might prefer the colour blue while at other times I might prefer red or pink or some other colour.

The same is true of Bible Scriptures. It often depends upon what is happening at the moment as to which Scripture I would choose. However, I can tell you my least favourite Scripture! That would be James 1:2, “My brethren count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” If I am going through a trial, I really do not feel like counting it a joy – at least not until later when I can look back and see the lessons learned and benefits that came from the trial.

Likewise, I cannot pinpoint one specific Holy Day as my favourite, but I can remember which one became my most dreaded as a child. You guessed it—the Day of Atonement!

When my parents were baptized, there was no local congregation to attend. Additionally, the family car wouldn't make the long trip to Big Sandy, Texas, which was our nearest Feast of Tabernacles site. Thus, all Holy Days were kept at home. My parents did their best to make them special for us in some way, but that was hard to do when the

Day of Atonement arrived. And, it wasn't as if I could look forward to that day because right afterward we would leave for the Feast.

Atonement is a day of fasting and part of the problem for me was that at around age seven, I decided that I should also fast on that day. Probably that was a bit young for a full-day fast. Added to that was my thinking that if I ate a lot of food just before starting the fast, it would help stave off hunger longer. The result was that by mid-afternoon I would have a raging headache followed by dry heaves. Something I came to dread!



Children patiently waiting for their food to arrive

Image generated by DALL-E 3

By the time we had a local church to attend, we drove to Sedalia, Missouri, for many of the Holy Days. This was central for members from about five states. On Atonement, my family would leave our home at 4:00 a.m. (yes, in the morning) for a four-hour drive. My Dad was always on parking or some other duty re-

quiring him to be there early. We would have a two-hour (or more) morning services, a break at noon followed by another two-hour (or more) afternoon service. Then it took us four hours to drive home.

Memories from the Day of Atonement during that time are much better. For one thing, we had the Feast of Tabernacles to attend. But The Day of Atonement was a very long day for sure. The positive part was that we usually stopped part way home to break our fast. I distinctly remember one of those meals. As the family was waiting in the restaurant for our meal to be served, my siblings and I (at least three of us had been fasting) consumed every edible thing on the table—ketchup, sugar packets, coffee cream. It is quite possible that we embarrassed our parents a bit! I can't begin to imagine what that wait-ress thought.

Through the years, the Day of Atonement has become less dreaded. I've learned to cut back on caffeine prior to that day, learned to be well hydrated prior to fasting and learned to NOT overeat for that last meal, which helps to alleviate some of the adverse physical symptoms.

But, even more importantly, the spiritual meaning becomes more vividly significant to me each year so that it is less of a hunger strike and more of a spiritual feast.

I guess I am now at the point of having neither a favourite nor a least favourite Holy Day. 🍁

Planned Giving

By Michael Erickson

Throughout our lives, we need to reflect and to make financial plans including estate planning. Much of how we live and the decisions we make is affected by the economy, our knowledge and the resources we have available at various stages in our lives.

Please understand that this article is intended to cover Planned Giving. Due to constraints of space it cannot encompass all financial principles. In an effort to ensure Scriptural accuracy and balance within the constraints of this article many Biblical principles, although not fully expounded, are contained within the referenced Scriptures. These need to be read to completely understand the full intent of this article.

The foundation of personal financial management and planning is that God is in control and everything belongs to Him (Haggai 2:8; Psalms 50:10; 37:21). His primary interest is how each individual glorifies Him with all they have and all they do (Luke 16:10-12).

Our Creator Instilled Our Need to Give

Throughout the Bible, we find many instructions for giving back to God. Giving and other financial principles are used to amplify spiritual concepts in ways we would not otherwise understand. It is interesting to note that Jesus spoke directly about money and ownership, in 27 of His 43 parables.

Jesus Christ wants us to use

our resources including monetary resources for good. He teaches us to guard our attitudes toward money and its significant power in our lives.

Many charities are formed because people realize that giving to those in need has a blessing (or personal satisfaction) attached to it. As we see in Luke 6:38, through God, the blessing comes full circle.

As in all financial planning, planned giving balances your current and future needs with the opportunity to greatly assist God's work. It would not be prudent, nor is it God's will, to give to the extent that you become a burden to others. There will come a time, though, when the blessings God has given you can be released to be shared with others.

As one considers this topic, Paul's following instructions are especially applicable:

"But just as you excel in everything- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us -see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7, NIV).

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1 Timothy 6:17 NKJV).

The United Church of God - Canada relies upon the dona-

tions of its members, co-workers and donors to be able to fulfill its mission to preach the gospel and prepare a people. Again God's Word provides overriding principles regarding this topic:

"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8 NKJV).

Financial Planning is allocating your financial resources among various alternatives. Stewardship for Christians is defined as the use of God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals.

Christians are encouraged to hold every possession carefully as a testimony to all in the world. The amount of material goods, whether great or small, never distinguishes a believer from an unbeliever. However, how we view, handle and use our resources including our monetary resources does reveal our heart (Matthew 25:21-28).

To excel in anything including "the grace of giving" requires desire, knowledge and ability. This article has been written to assist in providing knowledge of planned giving methods. Below are the five most common "Planned Giving" methods for Canadians.

GIFT REQUESTS THROUGH WILLS

Whether one is considering planned giving or not, estate planning (a Will) is an important asset to you and your loved ones. A Will is the cornerstone of any estate planning and it is the last communication you will have with your family and a final opportunity to reaffirm your priorities and values to them.

As well as providing for your family (a good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren Proverbs 13:22), a Will is an excellent gift instrument and can be used to leave a legacy to the church or other favorite charities. You can designate a specific asset or group of assets, a specified amount, or a percentage of your assets in your Will to the United Church of God - Canada.

Without estate or tax planning in your Will, there is a possibility that the government could become a major beneficiary of your estate. A significant tax event occurs when a person who is single dies or if the remaining spouse passes. In most circumstances, tax sheltered funds - such as pensions and Registered Retirement Savings Plans - cannot be rolled over to anyone else. They must be taken into income and taxes have to be paid.

Charitable donations can offset those taxes to varying degrees. It is wise to consider how you might offset some of the tax implications when your whole estate is liquidated.

Remember the overriding Biblical principle: "So let each

one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." When preparing a Will, or doing other estate planning, it is important to seek legal and competent financial advice (Proverbs 1:5).

GIFTS OF APPRECIATED SECURITIES

You can donate almost any kind of property in many different ways. The most significant tax benefits will be available if you donate stocks, mutual funds and bonds directly to a registered charity. You will receive a tax receipt for the market value of your donated assets, and also avoid paying capital gains taxes - giving you a double benefit.

Giving appreciated securities directly to UCG - Canada could, in fact, be more beneficial in terms of taxes than giving cash.

If you donate listed securities, such as stocks, bonds, and mutual funds directly to UCG - Canada, you do not pay capital gains tax. However, when securities are cashed in, 50 percent of the appreciated capital gain is added into income and then is taxable.

After paying the taxes, the amount of your gift to a charity is reduced and, therefore, the amount of the donation receipt is reduced, decreasing your charitable donations tax credit as well.

By having your broker transfer the securities directly to UCG - Canada you give a larger gift, pay no tax on the capital gain and receive a larger donation receipt which generates a

larger tax credit.

GIFTS GENERATED FROM RRSPS

The tax advantage of a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) generates significant benefits during a person's lifetime. Prior to retirement, funds invested in registered plans are tax deductible and then these funds grow in the tax deferred plan. Eventually the retirement funds must be taken into income and tax has to be paid. How might you reduce these taxes?

The ultimate benefit of a RRSP is that once you retire and need to withdraw these funds you will most likely be in a lower tax bracket since you will be living off of a reduced income.

However, you may find during your lifetime that you are in a financial position to donate a portion of these funds to charity and offset the tax implications with a charitable donation receipt. Everyone's situation will vary, and you should be sure to consult your financial advisor about your individual needs and any tax ramifications.

In Instances of an Untimely Death

If a married person dies, the tax sheltered funds of an RRSP can be rolled over, tax free, to the surviving spouse. If the person is single, or the remaining spouse also dies, a significant tax occurs. Those funds that have been tax sheltered are now brought into the estate and are considered income, with all other income, and taxes are due

on the cumulative amount.

You can offset taxes if the funds, or portions thereof, are given in your will to a charitable organization. The donation receipt generates a tax credit that can, in most cases, offset the tax owing on the RRSPs.

Another option is making UCG - Canada the final beneficiary on a RRSP, Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF), or other registered pension plan. The gift bypasses the probate process and estate administrative costs are reduced. Again, the donation receipt can offset taxes owing on these funds.

GIFTS THROUGH LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES

Life Insurance is an excellent estate planning tool and it can be used to create a significant gift to UCG - Canada.

You can purchase a new policy, name UCG - Canada as the owner and the beneficiary, and maintain the policy by paying the premiums and receive a donation receipt for the premiums paid annually. At your passing, the life insurance proceeds would become a significant gift to the work of the church.

You can also name the UCG - Canada as a beneficiary or co-beneficiary of a new policy or any existing policy. As children age and leave home, many may find they are now holding life insurance policies with low premiums that will more than adequately cover our final financial commitments and leave an inheritance to loved ones. Should you name the church as a co-beneficiary of your existing policy then, at your pass-

ing, the designated life insured amount would go to the church as a gift and your estate would receive a charitable donation receipt to be used as a tax credit on your terminal return.

GIFTS OF REAL ESTATE

Property is often the largest asset that is more commonly given to charities in Canada, but is not easily liquidated. However, with proper planning it can be donated to UCG - Canada, resulting in significant tax benefits and a generous gift to the church.

When sold, property, other than your principal residence, is subject to capital gains tax, as half of the appreciated value or capital gains has to be declared as income. This gain is then taxed at your marginal tax rate. But if that property - residential, commercial or undeveloped real estate - is given to any registered charity, you would receive a charitable donation receipt equal to the appraised fair market value of your property. That donation receipt can be used as a tax credit, which should exceed the capital gains tax on that property, and help to offset other taxes as well.

If the gift is your personal residence, there would be no capital gains tax, and the tax credit generated would offset other taxes.

As one considers "Planned Giving"

The one noteworthy attribute of a true Christian is the absence of anxiety over the acquiring and perhaps even the loss of things, for their treasure is laid up in heaven (Matthew 6:20-21).

God created all things (Genesis 1:1), owns all things (Haggai 2:8). We are to be wise managers or stewards of the resources with which we are blessed (1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NLT).

One should always consult a competent Financial Advisor regarding each of these Planned Giving Methods and seek Legal Counsel in regards to Wills and Estate Planning (Proverbs 1:5).

Each of these options needs careful attention and prayerful consideration. The Biblical principle in giving is, and always must be, as one purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. Be grateful and remember from whom income and wealth really come from (Deuteronomy 9:18).

Humanity has been made in the image of a gracious and generous God. We give out of gratitude for what we have received. Our generosity can then be a blessing and a benefit to others (Genesis 12:2-3).

Legal, tax and financial requirements and laws change. Although care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, one should always consult a competent Financial and Tax Advisor regarding each of these Planned Giving Methods and always seek Legal Counsel in regards to the preparation of Wills and any other Estate Planning (Proverbs 1:5).

With careful planning and forethought, our desire to give to God's work can be carried out in a manner that truly "excels in the grace of giving." 🍁

June National Council Meeting

By Edwin van Pelt

The National Council held its annual in-person meeting at the National Office on June 6 and 7, 2024. All the members were in attendance along with a few spouses and the Treasurer, Secretary and Parliamentarian of the United Church of God – Canada.

The meeting began with opening comments by the National Council Chairperson, Lloyd Teetaert. He read a short excerpt from the book, *Tea Time with God*, explaining how we need to make adjustments from time to time. Strength comes from bending without breaking. Daniel 6:26 was cited.

The Minutes from the March 11, 2024, meeting of the National Council were reviewed and approved unanimously. This was followed by several reports.

National Council and Council of Elders (CoE) member, Paul Wasilkoff, reported on this year's General Conference of Elders held in May 2024. He also summarized the CoE meetings that followed. Several updated Study Papers were approved and are online for members to view. Other Study Papers are still being reviewed and updated as necessary.

Director of Operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, provided the National Council with a National Office update. He explained how the National Office Annual Planning Calendar works. The latest Subscriber Development Letter results were shared with the Council followed by a summary of the income for

2023 by members, co-workers and donors. A few hand-written letters from *Beyond Today* magazine readers were also read.

Treasurer Bill Dimovski gave the latest financial update to the Council. Work was done in preparation of the annual audit, which took place in July 2024. Earlier in the year there was an audit conducted by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) related to two recent filings of the United Church of God – Canada's public service body rebate. The rebate includes portions of the Ontario Provincial Sales Tax and the Federal Goods and Services Tax. The rebates were received shortly after the CRA was satisfied that our filings were in proper order.

Dennis O'Neill then updated the Council with the Media Team report. The Team meets on a regular basis. Much of the discussion revolves around technology and maximizing the effectiveness of the *ucg.ca* website. Production of the *Beyond Today* television program is being paused for the time being. One of our challenges is that attention spans are becoming shorter.

After a short break, the Ministerial Services Team Coordinator, Rainer Salomaa, gave a report via Zoom. Pastors across Canada hold quarterly meetings via Zoom. Several elders from Canada were able to attend regional ministerial conferences in the U.S. Several pastors and elders traveled to various parts of Canada for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. A

personal appearance by Daris McNeely is being planned for the Feast of Tabernacles in Calgary. Mr. Salomaa left the meeting following his report.

Anthony Wasilkoff presented an amended Administrative Policy 9.5 (Records to be Kept). After some discussion, the Policy was approved unanimously by the Council.

After lunch, unfinished business was discussed relating to the replacement of the Director of Operations following his retirement from that position.

Following this was a brainstorming session. Several ideas were brought up and discussed. Thursday's meetings concluded just after 4:20 p.m.

On Friday morning, meetings began with Committee reports. The three Committees giving reports were the Strategic Planning and Finance (Charles Desgrosseilliers as the Chair), Governance and Ethics (Jim Lucas as the Chair), and Compensation (Cindy Ridi as Chair).

Mr. Lucas, as the Replacement of the Director of Operations Task Force Chair, then led a discussion of two policies related to the same.

The meetings concluded at about 12:30 p.m. after which several Council members and spouses departed following lunch at the National Office. The next Council meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2024. 🍁

News From Across Canada

St. John's Pentecost

The St. John's congregation is a small but vibrant group. Their pastor lives over 2,000 kilometres away, their beloved elder, Ellsworth Stanley, lives a two-hour drive from the city, and brethren are scattered with some living many hours away making attendance each week impossible.

So, on a Holy Day, the group is thrilled at the opportunity to be together. The Pentecost weekend was such an occasion, and for most, the weekend began with a joyous reunion on the Sabbath. Anthony Wasilkoff and his wife, Linda, were there for the first time in almost two years. Thirteen individuals met in a bright and cheery room at the Hampton Inn in St. John's. Even though the hotel does not allow food to be brought in, it was a happy family reunion because both Betty Mayo and Mary Wells were in attendance and each live about four hours away—in opposite directions from each other!

On Pentecost, the group met at their usual location – the Lion's Club in Conception Bay South – an amazingly beautiful hall with windows that overlook Conception Bay. It is a good thing that there were blinds on the windows to prevent the beauty of the setting from distracting us from the speakers. Though the forecast had called for rain, it was a beautiful sunny day. Fifteen people were in attendance. Only one person whose health



Blessing of a child
Photo by Linda Wasilkoff

did not allow her to travel was missing.

Following services and prior to the potluck, a special event was conducted. Mr. Stanley and Mr. Wasilkoff were called upon to bless the six-week old granddaughter of one of the members. Mr. Stanley had blessed her brother five years earlier and that brother was politely standing by during this ceremony along with his mother and grandmother.



Post-service potluck line
Photo by Linda Wasilkoff

Chairs were cleared and tables quickly set up for the plentiful family-style potluck. An additional special touch was a Happy Father's Day cake to recognize all the fathers in attendance. The blinds were all opened to let in the lovely sunlight and allow everyone to appreciate the beauty of Conception Bay.

If you ever visit Newfoundland, you will find the vistas beautiful and the people friendly. But the brethren are even friendlier than most and very welcoming of visitors. One member said her prayer continues to be that they will remain a close and united group. Her prayers are being answered.

Linda Wasilkoff

Quebec Summer Activities

June was a month of special events for the Montreal-East Farnham congregation above and beyond a wonderful Pentecost.

On June 8, we had the pleasure of a visit from Mr. Lloyd Teetaert (National Council Chairman) and his wife, Helen. Mr. Teetaert explained a few things about the National Council and some of its functions after which he gave an interesting sermon on "Crossing the Red Sea; Why God Takes Us the Long Way." He presented seven points focusing on how going the long way prepares us for the battles that will come our way and prepares us to be the kind of children God wants. We have to learn to let go and

let God lead us where He wants us to go, trusting Him, seeking Him, and depending on Him. We have to learn to be patient and not to worry. We should not cry and grumble to God, but rather go forward and keep going forward.

Following services, the Teetaerts were able to fellowship with the brethren while everyone enjoyed some snacks.



Dining at the Delfino home

Photo by Duncan Robinson

Afterwards the Teetaerts, together with Bruno and Chantal Leclerc and Harold and Sharon Descoteaux, had dinner at the home of Pat and Marie-Anne Delfino, along and their son-in-law Duncan Robertson (who is also the pianist in East Farnham). It was a relaxing evening of chatting and getting to know one another with a variety of good music, good food, good company and good fellowship



Joyful picnic-goers

Photo by Sharon Descoteaux

that was enjoyed by all.

On June 22 after services, we had a picnic in a quiet little park next to the church. God provided lovely weather; it had been raining in the morning but stopped before services ended and was there was great weather for our outing. Everyone stayed and fellowshiped over a leisurely picnic lunch for about three hours. It was a very relaxing and enjoyable time together, making the Sabbath even more of a delight.

Sharon Descoteaux

Teen Summer Camp

It has been 20 years since there has been a teen camp in Western Canada. At the end of June, 14 teens and six volunteers enjoyed a five-day church camp located at the stunning foot of Mount Robson.

Interactive Bible Studies were conducted by Larry Delong and Rob Stolaryk. Activities including white water rafting just out of Jasper and two beautiful hikes: Berg Lake Trail and Overlander Falls Trail. Old and new friendships

were strengthened as attendees came from Prince George, Edmonton and Calgary. We all look forward to next year and hope to increase our numbers!

Heidi Poffenroth

Calgary Stampede Breakfast

Almost 70 people enjoyed Calgary's third annual Stampede Breakfast on July 7 at the Poffenroth acreage.



Sun shelter for the day's activities

Photo by Rob Stolaryk

The night before some stayed in tents on the property and had a barbeque. Music, bocci ball, corn hole and red neck golfing were also played. Consider saving the first Sunday in July on your calendar to join us next year!

Heidi Poffenroth



Teen Camp attendees at the hike parking lot

Photo by Heidi Poffenroth

Kitchener Campout

Camping supplies were already being deployed everywhere and people were asked to help others wherever they could. Familiar children were running around or taking their first rides on their bikes. There was a sprinkle of rain coming down, but it was warm and no one was deterred. Slowly and humbly in a small cedar grove while the river glittered by, something took shape. An image of God's Kingdom. Reflections of a place where, as in Micah 4:4 says everyone will sit under their own tree and vine unafraid.

About 30 members and family of the Kitchener congregation went camping on the second weekend in July at Riverside Resort and Bistro on the Styx River. This was truly a place with creation in full swing everywhere—both God's and the work of the owners. This resort is the passion project of Christian couple Dave and Paula, who seem to have had a true vision of community for the property since its opening four years ago. They were very kind and accommodating to us, and it was inspiring to listen to them share

their dreams and plans. These included the construction of a second bunkie and hopes of hosting more future groups for retreats of all kinds.

The outdoor Sabbath service took place right by the river, and we sat in the sun. The peace was felt by all as we listened to the soft babbling brook along with a recorded sermon. Then we shared a delicious potluck. Homemade bread, skewered meat and fresh baked desserts were just some of the features of an unforgettable meal. On the second evening, there was a live music show. We listened while enjoying some more food at the on-site bistro. Paula happened to be an enthusiastic cook, with culinary gifts of which we were certainly the blessed and eager recipients! Other highlights of our time together included laughing around the campfire, floating down the river, and seeing all the stars at night.

On Sunday morning as everyone began to help each other pack up, we were all of one mind about a couple of things. This is where we definitely want to have next year's campout and possibly all the

ones after that! Most importantly though, we all felt the same about the quality of our Sabbath and fellowship that week. Everybody went their separate ways feeling rested, restored and replenished; just like the resort motto of "rest, restore, replenish" promised we would.

Allison Steinman-Hodgins

Camp Wildrose

Camp Wildrose commenced on Wednesday, July 17 with an attendance of 35 campers and 25 adult volunteers. Camper's ages ranged from five to 18, but we were blessed with 16 of those children in the teenage group. Families travelled from British Columbia, various parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan and even Ontario.



The relaxed thrill of water tubing

Photo by Rob Teetaert

We were blessed with hot, sunny days, but no severe thunderstorms, which made for excellent conditions for our canoeing, boat tubing and water play activities. The giant slip n' slide and our traditional Drip, Drip, Drop game (duck, duck, goose with water) were very much enjoyed in the heat of the day. Camp Wildrose also introduced a few new activities.

The camp started with a Quest. The Quest involved completing



Kitchener campout attendees in the shade

Photo by Allison Steinman-Hodgins

tasks to earn materials that they needed to build a small fire and roast hotdogs for their lunch. They worked together as a team in mixed age groups to complete the Quest. The activity was enjoyed by all and was a change from the usual schedule we have had in the past.

Two new activities were pellet gun riflery and slingshots. Riflery did target practice with pop cans, while slingshots had a firing range of assorted tin pots, pans, and cans. Both were a big hit with our older youth. Campers also experienced archery, a challenging teamwork activity on a balancing platform, crafting paracord survival bracelets, geocaching, kickball and volleyball.

Our camp theme this year was “Building Friendships For Eternity” with sub-themes of “Iron Sharpens Iron” and “Reaping and Sowing Good Friendships.” This theme was enhanced throughout the camp in our daily Scriptures, morning sessions, Christian Living classes, Teen Talks and Sabbath sermons. Many of our games and activities also enhanced this theme in our expectations of teamwork, collaboration and working in unity. Many discussions focused on

choosing our friends wisely, what it means to be a good friend and how godly friendships build up godly character.

Many comments from the adult volunteers expressed thankfulness and appreciation for the efforts made for our youth. Our youth live in a dangerous and corrupt world, and need tremendous support and love from their church family, but this experience was not just for our youth. The adult staff also benefited immensely as they strengthened friendships and felt sharpened and built up by each other. Camp Wildrose is a unique experience of families living, working and playing together for five days in harmony, peace and safety. We truly felt God’s presence and His great love for us. The camp is a little glimpse of God’s Kingdom to come. Thank you to all the volunteers and our supervising pastor, Michael Erickson, for all the preparations, work and commitment put into this year’s camp. This great and fulfilling experience only happens with contributions from many people.

We hope that more will join us next year and our family can continue to grow! Camp Wildrose is always scheduled around the third

week in July. Please watch for announcements for camp registration in the spring.

Susan Davis

Calgary Baptism

We are so excited to welcome Melina McArthur to the family! On July 28, she was baptized by Rainer Salomaa in Calgary’s beautiful Lake Sundance.



Calgary baptism ceremony

Photo by Heidi Poffenroth

Melina has a greenhouse and often contributes her beautiful flowers for church services. We love her for her humble and serving personality.

Heidi Poffenroth

Abbotsford Recognition

On August 17, 2024, Mr. Anthony Wasilkoff, Director of Operations for UCG-Canada, and wife, Linda, attended services in Abbotsford, British Columbia. It was a delight to have them with us. That particular Sabbath came with extra meaning. It was a time to pay tribute and give appreciation to a long-time minister. Mr. David Palmer was honoured for his 40 years of loving, faithful service to the southern BC brethren. That is quite a milestone! His ministry was and is greatly valued.



Campers and staff posing for a group photo

Photo by Allison Rob Teetaert

To commemorate the occasion, Mr. Wasilkoff on behalf of the Home Office presented Mr. Palmer, and his wife, Ghyslaine, with a special gift. A gift to remember. It was a beautifully engraved desk ornament with a recognition inscription for 40 years in the ministry.



David and Ghyslaine Palmer recognized
Photo by Wayne Ward

Mr. Wasilkoff also gave an inspiring split sermon. He spoke on church members being good Christian athletes, with some reference to the recent summer Olympic games in Paris.

After services, we had opportunity for extended fellowship, which was very enjoyable. The Wasilkoffs renewed acquaintances with old friends, while making some new ones!

Dale Craniford

Windsor Celebration

On Sabbath, August 17, 2024, brethren in the Windsor, Ontario, congregation honoured newlyweds, Keith and Amy Rose Haab who were married in a private family ceremony in Michigan on July 28, 2024.

Mr. Haab, an elder in the Ann Arbor congregation, and his new bride originally from the Flint

congregation, received congratulations from the Windsor brethren with a corsage for each, made and presented by Anna Morle. Deacon Joe Brdar, presented them with a wedding card containing a monetary gift. This was followed by a special lunch with a wedding cake made by Slavica Radonic.

At the very thought of the possibility of a Windsor church years ago, Pastor Patrick Read and his wife, Jo-Anne, came weekly for a very small Bible Study that started on April 8, 2013, to see if there was interest. Mr. Haab added his welcomed support by crossing over from Ann Arbor to Windsor. The group was recognized as an official congregation on the Sabbath of October 5, 2013.

When Mr. Read asked Mr. Haab if he would fit a monthly Sabbath visit to us, he willingly agreed, and has served us every second Sabbath each month without fail (except during COVID restrictions). His many years of service to us has taught us to selflessly serve our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

We ask God to give Mr. and Mrs. Haab many happy years of service together as He continues to lead and open new doors at His will.

Marilyn Anderson



Rose and Keith Haab
Photo by Marilyn Anderson

Vancouver Tennis Outing

As Christians, it is good to serve. This can apply to tennis, pun intended! On the September 1, Labor Day weekend, seven Vancouver brethren got together to play tennis in Burnaby. It was a fun day, with lots of good exercise and fellowship. We had different levels of ability and experience, along with a good spirit of instruction and applying of skills. Kind of like our calling in God through Jesus Christ!



At the tennis court
Photo by Ralph Cortes

God blessed us with safety, sunny weather, plenty of water and good equipment. Thanks to Alex and Marlina Escasinas for organizing the event and supplying the equipment. It was a fun day!. Activities like this help build unity in the church.

Dale Craniford

Moulton Ordination

On Monday, April 29, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, William Moulton was ordained as a deacon.

Mr. Moulton, along with his wife, Rosanna, and their five children (Addison, Xander, Oliver,

Zoe and Evelyn), faithfully attend and serve the Ottawa congregation.

William attended Carlton University in Ottawa where he graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering – Electrical. A few years later, he was hired by a large multinational corporation where he works in the Global Strategy division. He also has strong IT skills that are very helpful in the local congregation.



William Moulton
Photo by Jim Lucas

Among his many interests, William and his family assist the natural world in their hobby as beekeepers. Not only does he collect and sell the honey, but he also takes an active part in helping to produce queen bees.

Since his father was ordained an elder about three years ago, the Ottawa congregation has been without a deacon – in title only. This ordination is simply a recognition of the qualities that Paul told Timothy to look for in 1 Timothy 5:8-13. It is a recognition of the service of not only William but of what his whole family contributes to the congregation in Ottawa.

Jim Lucas

George Hleboff Obituary

It is with a mixture of sadness and relief that I would like to announce that George Hleboff died on May 31, 2024, in Victoria, BC, a couple months short of his 83rd birthday.

We experience sadness at the loss of a beloved father, grandfather, friend and husband of more than 51 years, and yet relief that he is now free from the debilitating dementia that robbed him (and us) of a vibrant, adventurous personality; and also free from the affliction of enduring physical weakness and illness.

George started his church life in the Hamilton/Kitchener, Ontario area just before Pentecost 1969 and was baptized shortly thereafter. It is interesting that his physical life ended again just before Pentecost 55 years later.



George Hleboff
Photo by Joan Hleboff

In 1972, he travelled to South Africa with the intention of perhaps a year's stay in "exotic Africa." As it turned out, he met and married Joan Craythorne, had two children, Christina and George

Paul, and ended up staying for nine years before moving back to Regina, with his family after the Feast of 1980.

George loved the outdoors and had wonderful opportunities organizing church hikes, teaching rock climbing at summer camps in both South Africa and Canada; and savoured the opportunities to go on "foot safaris" while in Africa.

Flying was also a great love of George's and, since he had his private pilot's license (later commercial pilot), he had great pleasure in giving people rides at Feasts and perhaps teaching principles of flight whilst allaying any nervousness his passengers might have.

Through the years we had the privilege of attending Feasts in various locales and met many church members. Perhaps you are one of those who might remember "Senor Sombrero." If so, with me we can remember a life faithfully well lived according to God's way and together look forward to the time of the great reunion in God's Kingdom where there will be no more death, tears or pain!

Joan Hleboff

Shirley Hurd Obituary

Shirley Patricia McCaffrey was born on March 17, 1928, in the Beaches area of Toronto. She was the sixth and final child of Colonel Walter and Muriel McCaffrey. The McCaffreys were devoted and active members of their Church so she grew up with strong values.

Shirley had a love of music and

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studied the violin at the University of Toronto. As an adult, she moved to Ottawa where she met her husband-to-be. She married William John Hurd on August 18, 1951. The couple and their two sons lived in Ottawa, Winnipeg and finally in Scarborough as they moved due to Lorne's career.

Once the children were older, Shirley worked part-time at a local women's dress shop enabling her to purchase a number of stylish outfits - including hats. She liked to say that she would never have to buy anything more to wear.



Shirley Hurd

Photo by Amy van Zant

During retirement, she loved to garden (and had a well-manicured yard), entertain family, play cards and listen to the symphony. She was also an ardent Blue Jays fan. After her husband's death in 2002, Shirley was able to stay in her own home until 2018 when she went into a seniors' apartment complex.

Shirley began attending the United Church of God in the early 2000s and even though she was

a senior, she contributed to the congregation in many ways including helping with set-up. She participated in Variety Nights by reciting poems and enjoyed joining in a lively square dance.

Shirley was engaging, had a sharp mind and a good sense of humour. Conversations with her were enjoyable. She was a light in the Toronto congregation and is greatly missed by all who knew her.

Hurd Family

Barry Sherk Obituary

John Barry Sherk was born in Kitchener, Ontario, on March 11, 1945, and was the only child of John Wesley and Mildred Lucinda Sherk. He grew up in nearby Breslau, graduating from public school and attending the United Missionary Church in the village.

As a youngster, he took up the accordion and had opportunity to play over the local radio station and at Church. In school, he was part of a mixed quartet, which reached the finals in the 1959 Kiwanis Festival. As an adult, he fell in love with the unique sound of the theatre pipe organ and traveled to various venues to hear concerts. Additional interests included jazz and collecting records and sports memorabilia. He played in softball and bowling leagues, recreational hockey and golf. He also enjoyed crossword puzzles, board games and reading - especially biography and history.

Barry was raised as an evangelical Protestant from Mennonite roots, but was still a skeptical Christian with more questions

than answers. He believed key elements of Christ's message were being lost, ignored or misunderstood in the sermons he was hearing. Then he discovered the voice of the Worldwide Church of God and began seeing the gospel as written. He found the Toronto United Church of God congregation and began attending. There he said that he found the church's literature eye opening, compelling, thoroughly researched, scholarly, clear and concise. It was spiritual food for a starving truth seeker. He requested to be baptized and after counselling was completed, he was baptized on January 5, 2017.



Barry Sherk

Photo provided by Barry Sherk

As Barry struggled with cancer, he continued to attend services in Toronto as often as possible. He died on March 30, 2024 and was laid to rest at a private interment in Kitchener, Ontario, on April 20, 2024.

Barry Sherk

Guard Your Heart

By David Palmer

The reason God destroyed the world with a flood at the time of Noah is related to the condition of the heart. “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Genesis 6:5-6).

Notice the statement Jesus made to the Pharisees during one of the many times He took them to task, “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

If the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), why does God’s word tell us to “guard our heart?” In the book of Proverbs we are told “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). The *New Living Translation* puts it this way “Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.” *The Message Bible* tells us to “guard our heart above all else, because the source of life flows from it.”

There’s a Jewish Oral Tradition that says “the world stands on three pillars: Torah, work, and acts of kindness referring to what Judaism calls “work of the heart” — the Jewish definition of prayer.

Defining prayer as heart-based work is different from the typical definition of prayer. The word “prayer” comes from a Latin word that means “to beg” or “to entreat,” and for many people that is their understanding of prayer. When

we pray, we ask God for what we want and hope that He obliges.

Prayer is first and foremost about communing with God. The fact that we might get our requests met is a byproduct of that connection. It is why the author of Proverbs 4:23 understood the importance of guarding the heart, and why Jesus when asked by the Pharisees “what is the greatest commandment?” said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).

Why should we guard our heart? Because everything we do flows from it (Proverbs 4:23). Actions. Thoughts. Feelings. Emotions. Passions. Drive. Hopes.

In the Bible, the heart is viewed as the core of human existence, the centre of our spirituality and true essence of who we are. The heart is also compared to a well from which flows all that we think, feel and do, which means what we allow into our hearts is important. If we aren’t careful to guard what goes into that sacred space, we’re in danger of being polluted by those things that have the potential to steer our hearts away from the very One who fashioned us.

So how do we safeguard our hearts? In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians he gives us three powerful tools. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Notice the instruction Paul gave to Timothy. “The purpose of my instruction is that all Christians would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith” (1Timothy1:5 NLT).

There are several Scriptures throughout the Bible with references to the human heart. We are reminded that God does not look on our physical stature when David was selected by God to be King over Israel, “For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel:16:7). He was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22). But even King David, recognized the importance of having his heart right with God. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts” (Psalm 139:23).

The good news is that one day God will change every heart. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the LORD. “I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Why guard your heart? Because one day we all desire to see God as He is, and what Jesus told us, “Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God” (Mathew 5:8). 🍁