



Back to the Basics

Vince Lombardi came into the world in Brooklyn, New York in 1913. Eventually he became the coach and general manager of the famed Green Bay Packers. While at their helm, Vince steered the team to five NFL championships. In addition to this, Lombardi led the Packers to memorable victories in Super Bowl I (1967) and in Super Bowl II (1968). This was no ordinary accomplishment. Decades after his death, Lombardi continues to be one of the most respected and admired football celebrities ever. In fact, his name is enshrined on the Super Bowl trophy itself.

One of the things that Vince Lombardi was most famous for was to begin a football season by holding up a porcine projectile and saying, "Gentlemen, this is a football!" Why do you suppose he did this time after time? Lombardi was absolutely convinced that athletes performed best when they were thoroughly established in the fundamentals. In every sport, the best coaches repeatedly take their teams back to the basics. This is always the essential place to start and to be totally clear on!

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And so it is with God's remarkable plan of salvation. Every spring (in the northern hemisphere) the beginning of the observance of the cycle of the festivals brings us back to the vital basics. Each year the cycle starts afresh with the Passover, the Night To Be Much Observed and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. This launches a review of Christ's awesome sacrifice, the wages of sin, the means to forgiveness and the joys of living in faith in harmony with God's perfect law of love.

It was for no small reason that the apostle Peter wrote: "For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Peter 1:12-15).

By observing the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread each year, and by assembling with the church at the prescribed times, we receive essential reminders about God's plan of salvation so that we remain established in the present truth. If we don't do so ever so faithfully, it is possible for us to drift away into cunningly devised fables even as brethren did back in

the days of the apostle Peter.

In his book, *God's Festivals In Scripture and History (part 1)*, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi wrote, "Many pastors go for years without taking their congregations through the central truths of the history of redemption: the life, suffering, and death of Christ; His resurrection, ascension ... A church calendar patterned after the religious calendar of Israel challenges pastors and members every year to explore more fully each of these fundamental truths of the plan of salvation. It can also serve as a deterrent against the temptation to use the Sabbath religious services to promote various kinds of secular agendas."

Dr. Bacchiocchi perceptively added: "At a time when many churches are seeking to bring about worship renewal by introducing into their church services jazzy music, drama, theatrical preaching, and loud-voiced congregational responses, a church calendar that focuses on the great truths of salvation challenges us to foster worship renewal by seeking for a deeper understanding and experience of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do for us."

Be sure your 2017 spring feast is a time of spiritual renewal as you get back to the vital spiritual basics!

Anthony Wasilkoff

Have a Great Day

Have you ever had anyone say to you “Have a great day” or “Have a good one”? Maybe it was the teller in the bank, or the checkout girl in the grocery store, or maybe even a friend. They are positive greetings that mean well, even if they do say it to almost everyone in passing. But, are you *really* having a great day?

Another question: Do you have pain – a pain anywhere? Have you had it for long? Is it a chronic pain?

If you answered yes to any of these, then, as the saying goes, “You have a pain in the neck.” By that I mean it is painful; it stops us from doing what we would like to do and, generally speaking, it slows us down and can make us downright miserable!

Do I have the solution to this? No. But I do know of one thing that I try to do every day (after putting God first) that helps me get through each day with a more positive outlook on life in general.

What is this wonder “drug”?

I’ve always been one who kept lists of things to do. I try to accomplish at least one thing each day that would be very easy to let slide to another day. Striking off just one thing gives me such a feeling of satisfaction. By doing this, I have done something, and my day has been a success.

That thing could be something as little as cleaning out a drawer that has needed it, cleaning the patio window, dusting the mantle, (who likes dust-

ing?), watching a DVD someone recommended or trimming a house plant that is overgrown.

Each of us will have a different list. How about writing a letter to someone? I will write a letter, card or email to someone three or four times in my head before I actually get it down on paper! But, when it is done, I am so pleased and feel that I have accomplished something and served someone at the same time.

Now, did my pain go away? No. But, for a while, my mind was on other things and other people and not on MY pain.

So, get moving, (even if it is at a snail’s pace) and “Have a great day!”

Bobbi Sheperd

Vital Valuable Victuals: Clean Meat

Lifesaving insights revealed the distinction between clean and unclean animals thousands of years before man learned the biological and scientific knowledge that helped us validate the designations

found in Leviticus 11. This brief article is intended to demonstrate the wisdom of the Bible in this matter.

Omnivores

Omnivores will eat almost anything from grubs to rats to carcasses and decaying plants. This often leads to them contracting worms, parasites and diseases. Furthermore, omnivores general-

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Managing Editor: *Anthony Wasilkoff*

Editorial Reviewers: *Michael Caputo, Kevin Ford, Joan Hleboff, Jim Lucas, Denise Masse, David Palmer, Linda Wasilkoff and Dale van Zant*

Layout: *Paul Wasilkoff*

National Council: *Peter Corrigan, Larry DeLong, John Erickson, Michael Erickson, Kevin Ford, Patrick Read, Rainer Salomaa, Lloyd Teetaert and Anthony Wasilkoff*

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Etobicoke, ON
M9A 4X1
www.ucg.ca

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ly have simple digestive systems with short intestines that do not thoroughly detoxify the food they eat. Therefore, toxins enter their muscles and fat rendering their meat unfit and unsafe for human consumption.

Examples of omnivores are: pigs, badgers, bears, coatis, civets, hedgehogs, opossums, skunks, sloths, squirrels, raccoons, chipmunks, mice, rats and chimpanzees. If consumed as food by humans, these creatures would cause a health hazard.

Carnivores

Carnivores in the wild generally eat the weak and diseased animals or their carcasses. They serve to clean the environment of health hazards and to weed out potential health hazards that might spread to various species.

The digestive system of carnivores is typically short and simple. They have only one stomach. This specialized digestive system is designed to process meat with relative ease but is not designed to process plant life.

Examples of carnivores are: cats, hyenas, wolves and some bears. These animals are not meant for human consumption.

Herbivores

Herbivores eat mostly healthy plants. They do not eat meat but naturally choose a diet of grass, grains and other healthy plant life.

Clean land animals, according to the Bible, are both herbivores and ruminants (they chew the cud) and have split hooves. Ruminants chew their food twice. This makes for better digestion. Ruminants have a complex four-chamber stomach. The food they eat is fermented before it reaches the true or main stomach. This process is called foregut fermentation. They also have very long intestines that enable them to further digest their food. This specialized digestive system renders their meat safe and healthy for human consumption. Examples of God designated clean ruminants are: cattle, sheep, deer and goats.

Examples of herbivores that are not clean according to the Bible are: horses, elephants and rabbits. These animals use a digestive system called hindgut fermentation which is not as effective as foregut fermentation. It allows certain volatile fatty acids to be absorbed into the blood and into their flesh which makes them not appropriate for human consumption. High concentrations of certain fatty acids and volatile fatty acids can cause cell death via apoptosis or, when concentrations are greater, necrosis in the consumer. There may also be other reasons these animals are designated unclean and not fit for human consumption.

God tells us not to eat pork (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8; Isaiah 65:4; 66:3, 17). Similarly clean fish and clean birds can be distinguished from unclean sea creatures and unclean birds.

Shellfish

Shellfish, including shrimp, prawns, oysters, clams and mussels invariably contain potent marine toxins which are known to cause food poisoning.

Shellfish consume toxin-producing algae, which are passed on to humans when eaten. These marine toxins can cause a range of respiratory, gastrointestinal, and neurological symptoms, and in some cases, can be fatal when eaten in sufficient quantities or by sensitive individuals.

These marine toxins are caused by ingesting bacteria and viruses from contaminated algae or marine organisms in the surrounding water. These toxins aren't deactivated by heat, so cooking shellfish is not enough to prevent poisoning.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that each year roughly one in six Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases. Additional information can be found on the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov>).

Although our food supply is probably one of the safest in the world, anyone can get food poisoning, which is contracted through direct contact with the causative bacteria, viruses, or other toxins in consumed food.

Be safe, eat clean – God clean!

Pre-Passover Trials

Each spring, in preparation for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, we begin the sometimes daunting task of ridding our homes of leavening. This annual activity is useful in that it teaches many lessons about identifying and removing sin from our lives. Each year as I do physical cleaning and study and pray to do spiritual cleaning, I learn more and more. Last year the process was an emotionally difficult but learning experience.

As 2016 began, my husband and I were eagerly awaiting the birth of our sixth grandchild. I was to make a trip to Houston to help our daughter after the birth. She and I discussed when would be the best time for me to fly down there. Finally a date was set and a flight was booked. I was to arrive just after the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The day after I booked my flight, we received a call letting us know that our daughter was in labour. It was March 11 and eight weeks before her due date. Later that day little Calvin was born. Even though he was early, it seemed that he was a good size and healthy. We were confident that all would be well.

The next morning (Sabbath), we called to see how the baby and mom were doing and were told both were doing well. We went to church relieved and excited about our newest grandson. With social media news spreads fast. Members were aware of the birth even before we arrived at church.

Shortly after services my cell phone rang. It was news that no parent or grandparent wants to

hear. Our little day-old grandson had died! What I wanted more than anything was to be home to mourn in private. The reality was that we were surrounded by a loving congregation who showed us care, concern and comfort when we needed it most. God was kind to us that day.

The next few days were a blur. We had to make sudden travel arrangements – not to help with an infant, but to attend his funeral. There were frustrations trying to change flight reservations – not easy. Then, after thinking all was in order, our flight out of Toronto was delayed causing us to miss our connecting flight to Houston. Each relatively minor difficulty seemed much larger than it normally would have.

One moment is indelibly etched in our memory. We had just missed our connecting flight and decided to get some lunch while waiting for the next available flight. A man who was trying to comfort a crying newborn infant walked past us. We both fought back tears as we realized we would never hear little Calvin cry.

Calvin's grave-side funeral was the day after we arrived in Houston. Our daughter, her mother-in-law and I sat together on the front row, just a few feet away from the tiny, white casket with tears streaming down our faces. Before and after the service, my husband and I took turns walking around that section of the cemetery reserved for infants in hand. There we comforted her by talking about God's plan, ex-

plaining to her that she would see her brother again.

The next few days were happy/sad days. As a family, we discussed the lessons to be learned from the experience, and looked at the applicable Scriptures and claimed the promises in them. Though we have been close as a family, this brought us even closer to each other.

Whenever you go through a trying time, you learn many things. You suddenly are aware that many events that seem to be "trials" are only inconveniences. You learn to have more empathy for others who are going through hard times. We learned first-hand how important sympathy cards and flowers are. We were touched by the many meals that were delivered at a time when the family could not even put together a grocery list! The kindness of members from several different fellowships helped ease the pain and was greatly appreciated.

Because this all occurred just prior to Passover, it brought to mind something I hadn't dwelt on before. Each year, we think of the tremendous sacrifice that Christ made by laying down His life for our sins. However, I had not given much thought to what God the Father must have felt watching that process. After all, it was His very own Son who was going through such a horrible ordeal. After sitting through the funeral of little Calvin, I was more aware of that aspect as I prepared for Passover last year and am grateful for that. This year's Passover will bring back those memories and lessons afresh.

Linda Wasilkoff



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Gethsemane

Very few events have been so carefully documented as those occurring in the Garden of Gethsemane almost 2,000 years ago along with the events proceeding that night. The remarkable resurrection of Lazarus just before this eventful season underlined many of the shocking, amazing and most unusual works that Jesus did. Everything He did was the work of God and not of a man. For that reason the fanatically determined monotheists controlling Judea were faced with the dilemma of proclaiming Jesus to be divine, or proving Him a blasphemer.

There have been many beliefs and religions that claim to give divinity to humans. Some Roman emperors, some Pharaohs of Egypt and some mysterious leaders in various lands have been considered divine. At the time of Jesus, there were perhaps no people on earth as strictly monotheistic as the Jews. The mere mention of Jesus as the “son of God” was enough for them to gather stones.

Yet, in this environment so sternly set against what was about to happen, God sent His Son Jesus Christ – and the events that unfolded brought about the unthinkable. Even the closest followers of Jesus had to climb the mountain of their skepticism before they could kneel before Christ and say: “My Lord and My God” (John 20:28; Matthew 28:9, 17). God did not leave any room for doubt – Jesus was the Logos and Word that was made flesh – in that He was

divine (John 1:14).

In the light of this understanding, the events at Gethsemane are astonishing. Jesus knew what was about to happen and had already sent Judas Iscariot on his way before the group descended from the temple mount area, crossed the brook Kidron and entered the Garden of Gethsemane which lies in the valley at the western side of the Mount of Olives (John 18:2).

All four gospels comment on Gethsemane but only record the event without digging beneath the surface. The evening itself was very unusual because Jesus Christ was deep in thought, showing signs of stress and acting in such a way that His closest followers grew silent and hesitant to talk with Him (John 13:21–26).

Jesus had spoken of betrayal, His death, their sorrow and some impending event that did not sound at all positive or hopeful. He wanted to be sure someone had a sword, and there were two (Luke 22:38). John records some detailed instructions from Jesus Christ as well as the puzzling words of his prayer (John 17). Those words were strong, encouraging and full of hope, but also full of troubles that seemed imminent.

With all those thoughts in their hearts and minds, the eleven slowly and soberly walked with Jesus to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30). It was dark and most likely they only

had the light from the moon and stars. On a trip to Jerusalem some years ago, I tried to follow what I thought might be the path they took from the temple area.

I soon realized that the sides of the hills just outside the temple were so steep that at night, a person would not want to try walking down them. No doubt, this group would have followed the road around the eastern wall of the temple and across Kidron.



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Gethsemane was just to the right of the crossing. The whole distance is less than a kilometer.

Jesus had been speaking with the disciples throughout the evening and perhaps on the walk to Gethsemane. Once they arrived, He told His disciples to sit together while He took Peter, James and John and went a few

steps away to pray (Matthew 26:36).

The three disciples were utterly astonished, dismayed and seemingly dazed at Jesus' extremely sad and depressed state of mind (Mark 14:33, 34). No doubt Peter's mind still lingered on the words Jesus had spoken to him earlier when Jesus said Peter would deny he knew Jesus three times before the rooster crowed (Matthew 26:313-34). No doubt, all the disciples were pondering Jesus' earlier words and actions. He had washed their feet and that was a new experience for them.

Jesus was sorrowful "unto death." To the disciples, He was always the One who encouraged and gave them hope. They loved Jesus deeply and were so disturbed and anxious that they felt exhausted. Jesus went to pray and the disciples who were to "watch" no doubt heard some of His words and saw His anguish. Jesus was in direct conversation with His Heavenly Father about the cup from which He was about to drink. The fulfillment of the purpose for His coming was in His mind.

He also knew that the next few hours would be horrible and beyond words to describe as the full power of Satan would be unleashed against Him through the hands of the Jews and Romans. Jesus had inspired the writing of Psalm 22 and He knew He was about to live those words.

About three hours later—

probably near midnight—Judas appeared with a group of Jewish soldiers to arrest Christ (Matthew 26:45, 46). Matthew and Mark state that Judas kissed Jesus (Matthew 26:49, Mark 14:45). Luke noted that Judas came to kiss Him, but Jesus asked Judas if he was going to betray Him with a kiss – not noting that Judas actually did (Luke 22:47).

While John does not mention the kiss (John 18:3), he notes that Jesus went toward the coming men and asked, "Who are you searching for?" When they replied: "Jesus of Nazareth," Jesus replied: "I AM!" John then states that the group of soldiers (and perhaps Judas who was standing with them) lunged backward and fell to the ground (John 18:6).

There was something in those words and in Jesus' demeanor that frightened them. Jesus authority and power were evident and may have been what the disciples hoped to see – but He surrendered that power. It seems the soldiers managed to get organized again. When Jesus asked them the second time who they were looking for (John 18:7), He indicated that He was ready to go with them.

Perhaps this set of events was what momentarily emboldened Peter to strike with the sword (John 18:10-12). Jesus confused Peter by telling him to sheath the sword and then He replaced the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest (John 18:11).

There was a short conversation (Matthew 26:52-55) and Jesus went with them.

We are left to wonder what went on in the minds of Malchus, Judas, each soldier and each disciple. Malchus is not mentioned again and Judas was in turmoil. There was something completely mind-boggling in what had happened. Each participant was affected differently. Jesus acknowledged that God had given Him over to those who planned His death and to the "power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

Jesus was concerned about the safety of the disciples and allowed Himself to be bound and arrested (John 18:12). That was too much. All the disciples panicked and ran (Mark 14:50-52). In the darkness, it may not have taken long for the disciples to realize they were not being followed as they could see the torches of the soldiers moving along with their prisoner – and Peter followed them. Perhaps the other disciples followed at a distance. Jesus was fulfilling His destiny and all others who were there were affected.

Gethsemane was now deserted. The moon still shone brightly and the stars looked silently on. Peace and quiet descended on this little garden. Prophecy was being fulfilled and the rest of the story was unfolding just as it had been written to be that night.



We Must Not Be Fooled By Satan's Cons

Almost immediately after the Israelites exited Egypt with a high hand, they were pursued by their arch enemy Pharaoh.

Pharaoh was none other than a type of Satan the Devil. Satan has no intention of ever allowing a sinner to escape the fetters of sin.

Today Christians, especially newly converted Christians, are often relentlessly pursued by their arch enemy the devil. Through stealth he will seek to impede the followers of God in every way he can. He will do everything possible to prevent Christians from entering the Kingdom of God. He will make every effort to impede Christians and entice them to return to the life they had escaped back in the land of spiritual Egypt.

The apostle Paul admonished the church in Corinth not to be ignorant of his devices. The apostle John gave an elegant summary of how Satan's devices appeal to human nature: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

In order for us to avoid being fooled by these devices, or cons, it is important to review them.

1. The Lust of the Flesh

The eleventh chapter of Numbers contains one example of the Lust of the Flesh. It seems the problem started with the mixed multitude who were among the travelling Israelites. In verse four we see them with a hankering for meat. Depending on the trans-

lation, their state is described as “strong craving”, “overcome with desire” or “lusted exceedingly”. The King James Version renders the phrase as “fell a lusting.”

Before long the Israelites started to succumb to the same craving. As a collection, the people began to lament their plight. After all, they didn't have meat! They only had the most perfect and versatile food ever made available to humanity: *manna*. In fact, it was so loathsome compared to meat they were no longer able to even look at *manna*.



The Lord was justified in His righteous anger at the infantile and rebellious display of ingratitude. As we recall, God sent an immense flock of quail for the Israelites. Rather than express remorse for their hissy-fit and without a thank-you to their God they began gorging themselves with fresh quail. Satisfying their lust for meat was the only concern and it cost them dearly. The burial place of the people who died in this incident is referred to as *Kibroth-hattaavah*, the graves of lust.

This unfortunate event is a reminder that we must not permit

our carnal physical appetites to control us

2. The Lust of the Eyes

The story of Gehazi is one of the Bible's examples showing the disastrous result of yielding to the Lust of the Eyes. In 2 Kings 5 we find the story of Elisha, Gehazi and Naaman. Naaman was a leprous commander in the Syrian army who had heard of Elisha's “power” to heal. With a load of cash (in the form of silver, gold and fine garments) along with the king of Syria's blessing he journeyed to Israel.

The purpose of the valuables was to be payment for being healed. However, Elisha wasn't in the business of peddling miracles since he saw himself as a servant of God, and therefore, compensated by God. Gehazi was not able to keep this larger perspective in mind. Instead, he was determined to obtain some of the loot for himself. He then snuck away to catch-up with Naaman, who must have seemed like a travelling sure-win lottery machine to Gehazi.

The ruse didn't fool God; and it didn't fool Elisha since God revealed to Elisha what had transpired. It isn't clear what happened to Gehazi's goodies. What is clear is that Gehazi inherited Naaman's leprosy as a result of not controlling his lust for the goods that were not his to obtain.

3. The Pride of Life

Jesus had an interaction with a

wealthy young man that is an example of the perils of the Pride of Life. This young man was so intent on learning how to inherit eternal life that he ran to obtain an audience with Jesus.

When he was able to ask his question, our Saviour responded by first reminding him (and all who have read the account) that there must be a baseline of righteous behavior in our lives. “Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour your father and mother,” were part of Jesus’ reply.

The young man replied that indeed he was already doing these very things and had been since he was much younger. Good for him! Yet Christ pointed out to him that there was more for him to learn. In Mark 10:21 His instruction to the young man was “sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow Me.”

This was too much for the young man, who had a great many possessions. Perhaps the possessions gave him prestige, or, perhaps they helped him have power or notoriety. Whatever the case, he was unable and unwilling to give up the privileges that came with his possessions. The pride of life became an obstacle between this young man and eternal life.

A Poor Example

Our adversary knows these devices, or cons, work on human

beings. He has been using them from the very beginning.

In his temptation of Adam and Eve he used all three. First, Satan pointed out to Eve that the forbidden fruit was good for food. Perhaps he even regaled Eve with a mouth-watering description of how juicy, sweet and tasty the fruit was. The lust of the flesh.

Then he highlighted the fact that the forbidden fruit was perfectly formed. The colour, shape, texture and size were just right: it was a Grade-A fruit. After all, why would God make something so tasty and so visually appealing but not allow his human creation to eat it. No, they deserved to eat it. The lust of the eyes.

Finally, Adam and Eve were told that not only would they not die if they ate, but they would become wise, like God, knowing good and evil. Surely God wouldn’t want to withhold such wisdom, would He? Didn’t they have a right to know these deep and wonderful things? The pride of life.

A Good Example

All three cons were presented to Jesus after He had fasted forty days in the wilderness.

The devil first tried to capitalize on Jesus’ hunger; no doubt he was very hungry after so many days of fasting. I wonder if the stone used in Luke 4:3 was shaped and sized just like the bread Mary used to bake. Jesus saw through the ploy. This appeal to the lust of the flesh failed.

The next avenue of attack was a visual display of all the kingdoms throughout time. No doubt the kingdoms were shown only at their peak of power and influence and not any in the state of decline. The devil promised to give Jesus authority over those kingdoms he had seen. Jesus did not surrender to the lust of the eyes.

The last temptation in Luke 4 dealt with proving His divinity. The Temptor tried to goad Jesus into hurling Himself off the temple pinnacle. Jesus knew that humans are not to tempt God. He also knew that surviving the fall from that height would show irrefutable proof of His divinity; and that was not part of God’s plan, for the people would not have been so easily swayed into calling for His death. Jesus triumphed over a test against the pride of life.

Thankfully, our Saviour was able to see through all three deceptions. He was able to maintain control over His hunger. He maintained control over His desire for what He saw. He maintained control over His ego. As a result of Jesus consistently and perfectly resisting temptations He died sinless as our Passover.

As the Passover draws nearer, it is important that we diligently examine ourselves.

Be aware of the devil’s ploys and seek to recognize them readily: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

National Conference Meeting Update

The September meeting of the National Council occurred immediately following the annual meeting of the National Conference on Sunday, September 18. Since the term of chairman is concurrent with the term on council, this meeting was chaired by a temporary chairman, Patrick Read.

Mr. Read thanked outgoing council member, Bill Dimovski and welcomed the new council member, Kevin Ford. Rainer Salomaa and Lloyd Teetaert were re-selected to serve another three-year term on the council.

The June minutes were approved with one abstention (Kevin Ford was not present at that council meeting). Edwin van Pelt led a discussion about reserves and the 80/20 guideline that for several years was a rule of the Canada Revenue Agency but now is only a guideline.

There is a need to keep a reasonable reserve amount in the bank in case of emergencies. There are restricted funds that can only be used for specified purposes. It was noted that there have been funds set aside in the budget for specific allocations, and we need to be careful they are properly accumulated and monitored.

The Council then approved the T3010 form to be signed by the Director of Operations and then mailed. Following this, the fee for the annual au-

dit was approved.

As is required each year, the Council adopted the Strategic Plan to be sent to the National Conference for their approval. Following this, the Council went through a process to select a new chairman. Rainer Salomaa was selected by acclamation.

The composition of the committees was scheduled to be re-evaluated during the December meeting. Kevin Ford is automatically a member of the Compensation Committee and was temporarily assigned to the Finance/Strategic Planning Committee.

The National Council's last meeting of the year was held by WebEx on December 12 with eight of the nine members online. In addition to Council members, the treasurer, secretary and Bill Dimovski were online.

The September 19, 2016, minutes were adopted. An update from the National Office was given by Anthony Wasilkoff. Mr. Wasilkoff discussed the ad being run in the January/February issue of *Reader's Digest* and gave credit to Bill Dimovski and Paul Wasilkoff for negotiating the space and creating the ad.

He announced that Robert Berendt will be retiring at the end of January and Michael Erickson will become the pastor of Edmonton. Plans are

underway for taking care of North Battleford, Saskatoon and Red Deer.

Board members are being held more responsible for all a charity does. Council members received a handout with a summary of the annual law seminar that members of the office staff attended. The notes included a legal check-up for charities.

Edwin van Pelt delivered a financial update. He related that in 2016 more people used the online donation method for donations and that the amounts being donated online are also increasing.

An update from the Council of Elders was given by Anthony Wasilkoff. He noted that in the U.S. the income is trending down just as Canada's is, but explained that the auditor said other charities are trending down even more than we are. Among the most significant decisions made during the COE meetings was permission for building a new TV studio.

Once a year the composition of committees is reviewed and revised as needed. For the next year the committees will consist of: Larry DeLong, Michael Erickson, Kevin Ford and Anthony Wasilkoff (Strategic/Finance); Patrick Read, Peter Corrigan, John Erickson and Lloyd Teetaert (Governance); Lloyd Teetaert, Peter Corrigan, Larry DeLong, John Erickson and Kevin Ford (Compensation).

There was a need to repopulate the Amendment Committee. Three possible names were put forth for consideration. By ballot, Denise Masse was chosen to serve a term on the Amendment Committee and MaryAnn Halcrow will be the alternate committee member.

Anthony Wasilkoff presented the proposed 2017-2018 Operations Plan. The National Council uses the “measurables” of the plan during the annual review of the Director of Oper-

ations each June. Council members had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments about the proposed plan. It was determined that the Governance Committee would do an annual review of policies. The Council approved the Operation Plan. It will be presented to the National Conference for its approval in March.

Edwin van Pelt then presented the proposed 2017-2018 Budget. Council members made some adjustments in

a few areas. After the changes were made, the Council approved the Budget to be presented to the National Conference for its approval in March.

The next meeting of the Council, which will again be held by WebEx, was scheduled for March 13, 2017. Dr. Donald Ward has tentatively agreed to attend the June National Council meeting and Ministerial Conference which follows.

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“Sacrifice” from page 16

Jesus died under the most cruel and inhumane method known at that time. A riotous mob, whipped into frenzy by the Pharisees and others, demanded He be put to death. “Pilate said to them, ‘What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?’ They all said to him, ‘Let Him be crucified!’ Then the governor said, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Let Him be crucified!’” (Matthew 27:22-23).

We are reminded that the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ was designed to forgive the world of sin, eventually allowing millions an opportunity for eternal life. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste

death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:9-10). “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:27-28).

We look at the history of creation and recognize that God, at some point in time, made a decision to expand His family. When the first created human beings disobeyed, it allowed sin to enter the picture. God then instituted a plan of salvation, a biblical blueprint with seven annual Holy days depicting the fulfillment of that plan. Christ became the central figure—the focus of a

plan that would allow the human race salvation and an opportunity to become members of God’s expanded family.

This world, including some who observe the Passover, may not fully comprehend that this one sacrifice, for all time, put the Holy Day Plan of Salvation into effect. Passover is a serious solemn occasion. It is a renewal of the covenant made at baptism when we accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. As a result, each year prior to the Passover observance we are admonished to examine, not each other, but ourselves.

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).



News From Across Canada

Pastor Retirement

A “Beautiful Journey” was celebrated as Robert and Valerie Berendt retire.

On Sabbath, January 28, the Edmonton congregation hosted a retirement celebration: “To honour our retiring pastor and wife by recognizing their relentless drive to preach the Kingdom of God and make disciples.” That evening, the annual church variety show paid tribute to their “beautiful journey” as messengers for Christ over many years and many miles. A slide show featuring an animated pulpit on wheels and scrolling odometer



provided by Rainer Salomaa

documented their epic ministerial journey across Canada and Europe, driving for more than four million kilometers or 100 laps around the planet!

Church areas they served in included Kelowna, Penticton, Logan Lake, Grand Prairie, Edmonton, Bonnyville, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Maple Creek, Ottawa, Smiths Falls, Kingston,

Pembroke, Cornwall, Nuremberg, Munich, Salzburg and Vienna.

Robert, a high school teacher, his wife, Joan, and a young family, joined the Edmonton church as it formed in 1964. Family camping adventures to the feast in Squaw Valley California led to graduation from Ambassador College Pasadena in 1970 and ordination into the ministry. After pastoring for 13 years, Robert’s wife, Joan, died in 1983. Robert feels he was blessed to marry Valerie in 1987 and for almost 30 years Val has been at his side.

Valerie, born in Malawi, from England, also has a university degree in education and a previous career as a physiotherapist. Both are very sports and outdoors oriented. Having grown up in the Rocky Mountains, Robert organized annual youth hikes, typically climbing a mountain peak on an ambitious 20 mile trek.

Across Canada, Robert’s enthusiasm for ice hockey led to popular hockey tournaments. His hockey evangelism even extended to Europe! In Germany, Robert and Valerie taught skiing for winter camps, and canoeing for summer camps.

Our church paused to celebrate with appreciation countless shared spiritual milestones during many years of faithful servant-leadership by Robert and Valerie. We have witnessed a beautiful journey culminating with their joyful return home to family, now spanning four gen-

erations in the Edmonton congregation.

Richard Berendt

Northwest Weekend

The Northwest Family Weekend is held in the Portland, Oregon, area every winter starting and ending around the time that many celebrate their winter holidays. For those in God’s church, getting away from it all is part of the appeal of the annual Northwest Family Weekend. It is not only about getting away but also about getting together with God’s people.

The 2016 event, the 41st occasion, included four S’s: Sabbath, seminars, social activities and sports.

On Friday presentations were given by Paul Moody (assistant pastor for the Spokane/Coeur d’Alene, Kennewick, Kettle Falls, and Lewiston congregations), Carrie Lippicott (an occupational therapist in the Portland region) and Rex Sexton (pastor for the Portland and Hood River congregations). That evening there was a hymn sing and opportunity for lots of fellowship.

The Sabbath featured split sermons from Roc Corbett, pastor of the Tacoma and Olympia congregations, and Mr. Sexton. Mr. Corbett employed a visual timeline illustrating the Israelite nations’ declining morality over the last few decades. Christians must widen the gap between worldly and godly thinking. Mr. Sexton

delivered a message on living a life free of regrets. Staying close to God and using our God-given talents is the recipe for receiving rewards and avoiding regrets. Christians will receive not only eternal life, but also rewards based on their life works.

Jack Scruggs superbly led an *a cappella* choir through a stirring rendition of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Saturday evening dances were organized for both teens and adults. The decorations were delightful, the music enjoyable and fellowship amiable.

Family sports activities were held on Sunday at the Columbia River High School in nearby Vancouver, Washington. Volleyball, basketball and other sports provided youth an opportunity to learn team building and building physical skills while improving their health.

The Northwest Family Weekend ended on Monday with a ski trip to the beautiful Mount Hood Meadows ski area. It was a chance to get together with friends old and new. The weekend is a welcome getaway in late December that provides a time of peace and joy as God intended!

Dale Craniford

New Brunswick Visit

It had been 44 years since my wife, Jo-Anne, and I were in New Brunswick. In 1973 my wife and I,

along with my parents, took a summer vacation driving from Ontario to Prince Edward Island.

We had rented a mobile trailer and set out on a trek across our beautiful Eastern Canadian country. Along the way, we visited some family members in the Sussex area and, of course, took in the Magnetic Hill attraction in the Moncton area before moving onto Prince Edward Island where we visited Anne of Green Gables.

Forty-four years later my wife and I had the privilege to return to the beautiful countryside of the Maritimes—this time for a completely different reason.

The purpose of this trip was to visit with the New Brunswick brethren. After the retirement of Mr. Dennis Horlick, I was asked to pastor the brethren in the area.

On January 14, we made our first visit. Although it would not be the best time of year to make the trip, God blessed us with sunshine and no snow. The temperatures were pleasant considering the time of year and it was not until after our return home that the weather changed and brought more snow.

The highlight of our trip was



provided by Patrick Read

spending quality time with some of the brethren and getting to know them on a personal level.

We met in the stately home of Mrs. Clara Wanamaker who is clearly a highly respected woman and considered the matriarch of the New Brunswick congregations.

Mrs. Wanamaker graciously and eagerly welcomes the small enthusiastic group every Sabbath. She truly is a lovely lady whose warmth, hospitality and obvious love for the brethren are a shining example and testament to our Heavenly Father. Likewise, it is obvious that the brethren have a mutual love and respect for Mrs. Wanamaker as well as a deep desire to love and honour God.

Since brethren in the maritimes are scattered throughout Moncton, Halifax and Sussex, it was thought best to meet in Mrs. Wanamaker's home. That required a sacrifice for some who had to make a lengthy trip. It speaks highly of the love and commitment to fulfill the need to meet together.

Although through the years this small flock has been through difficult times with rarely having a minister come and visit, their steadfast commitment to God and each other is a wonderful Christian example.

Patrick Read

Saskatoon Farewell

Robert Berendt has been our pastor in Saskatoon for the past 20 years since the congregation started. He and his wife, Valerie, have made the trip from Edmonton to Saskatoon and North Battleford twice a month to serve our areas.

On the Sabbath of January 7, 2017, we had a special pot-luck supper and farewell for them with all 26 of our members in attendance. They cut a retirement cake and took home some souvenirs of Saskatoon and a photo album to help them remember all of us.



provided by Darlene Buck

The Sabbath of January 21, 2017, they were in Saskatoon for their last Sabbath before Mr. Berendt's retirement at the end of the month. On this day, Douglas and Beth Lesh (who will be the new associate pastor for the area) were also in attendance.

We appreciate the care, concern and nurturing the Berendts have provided for our congregation over the many years they have served here. We wish them the best in retirement.

Darlene Buck

New Hire

For the past several years, UCG-Canada has been diligently working on leadership development with the goal of having more active leadership in the local congregations as well as developing men who can become part-time or full-time pastors of congregations.

As a result of receiving mentoring for a number of years from Michael Erickson and Rainer Salomaa, Douglas Lesh has now been hired part-time as an associate pastor. For the time being, he will continue to live in Grande Prairie, Alberta, while serving the North Battleford and Saskatoon congregations.

Doug is a native of California but spent much of his childhood growing up on the family farm in Alberta's Peace Country. After marrying Beth, they made the county of Grande Prairie their home and that is where the majority of their children and grandchildren are living. Doug has worked in the freight industry for almost 24 years.



provided by Adeline Sanoy

Mr. Lesh was ordained a deacon in 2007 and an elder in 2015. He, along with his wife, will continue to serve the Grande Prairie congregation. We wish Mr. and Mrs. Lesh well in their new duties and responsibilities.

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Welcome

After services on January 21, 2017, the North Battleford congregation welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Doug Lesh to the area with a cake.

Everyone is looking forward to getting to know them better as they serve the North Battleford and Saskatoon congregations. Mr. Lesh has been assigned to these areas as the Associate Pastor.

Adeline Sanoy

Ordinations

On January 21, 2017, Mr. Robert Berendt and Mr. Doug Lesh ordained Fred and Theresa Duhan



provided by Adeline Sanoy

of North Battleford to the office of Deacon and Deaconess. Fred and Theresa have been faithful members of God's Church for many years. Fred is retired after a career as a surveyor with Saskatchewan Highways. He now does some part-time mechanic work. Theresa is the receptionist at the local CJNB/CJNS radio station. They have two children Michael and Trista who are also members of UCG.

Adeline Sanoy

Square Dance

The winter months can lead to a little too much inactivity. So, the Toronto congregation spent an evening kicking up their heels to the

sound of square dance music led by a professional caller.

Some of our members were happy to help set the tone with bales of hay and some farming tools. Others decorated the walls with country scenery. We really did bring the country to the city!

After a pot luck meal, it was time to get moving. Our professional caller wouldn't take "no" for an answer, and pretty soon the floor was filled with smiling faces and dancing feet. Adrenaline can be pretty infectious, so the dancing continued for over two hours with a few much-needed breaks for a little liquid to wet the whistle.



provided by Gary Haynes

Even if you have never tried this kind of dancing before, it's quite easy to pick up with the directions given by a professional caller. In no time, you will be do-si-doing, swinging and promenading your partner to and fro. Yes, there were missteps, which lead to some laughter and more than a few jumbles on the floor, but that was all part of the fun!

Our dancers ranged from pre-teen to octogenarian. Even those who admittedly have two left feet couldn't resist. Fun was had by all

and, no doubt, a good night's rest followed.

Donna Checca

Kearse Obituary

Genevieve Norma Kearse died on January 29, 2017, surrounded by her family. She was a much loved member of the Hamilton, Ontario, congregation where her husband, Ron, is a deacon. Ill health had prevented her from attending services for quite some time and her last days were spent in the ICU of a local hospital.

Ron and Genevieve were married for 60 years. They became members in 1985 and were among some of the earliest members of UCG-Canada. Genevieve's warm smile will be missed by those who knew her.

Gary Antion wrote: "Having known Gen Kearse since 1995, I can confidently say she was a devout and genuinely kind person. Gen and her husband came with fellow believers to Toronto faithfully while I served as Pastor until a congregation was opened in Hamilton in 1999. It was an honour knowing her."



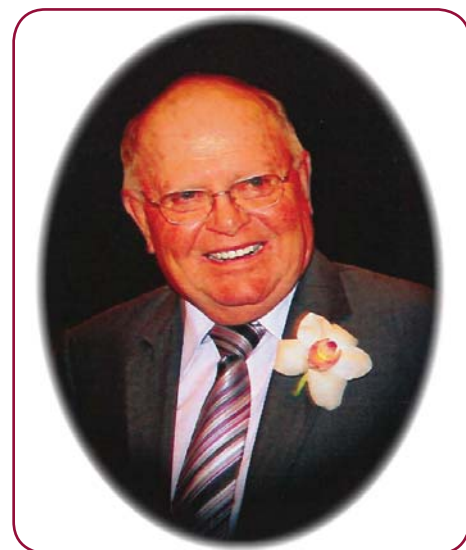
provided by Ron Kearse

Her funeral, conducted by Anthony Wasilkoff, was held on Thursday, February 2. She leaves behind her husband, six children (Ron, Norma, Frances, Jim, Joe and Gen); grandchildren (Joshua, Kendra, Lara, Bill Mike, Joelyn) and great-grandchildren (Madalina and Breanna).

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Rowbotham Obituary

Lyman "Austin" Rowbotham was born in Red Deer, Alberta, on July 9, 1935. He died on January 4, 2017, after being hospitalized for just over three years. Prior to being hospitalized, he attended services with his wife, Shirley.



provided by Shirley Rowbotham

Austin was known as a good man who was gentle, kind and loving to those he knew. He was a wonderful father with endless humour and love. Mr. Robert Berendt officiated at the funeral service on January 13. Austin will be missed by family, friends and brethren in the Red Deer and Edmonton congregations.

UNC

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Astronauts returning from a space mission have often commented on the incredible beauty of our planet as viewed from the space shuttle. Yet there was a time when our earth and the entire universe as we know it became devoid of beauty, and empty darkness covered the entire earth (Genesis 1:2).

Then God through the power of His Holy Spirit began to recreate the planet astronauts now admire as a beautiful sphere hanging in space. In the recreation of earth, God also created the image of His family, the human race; man created from the dust of the earth, woman created from man. A renewed earth was born from the chaos of Satan's rebellion (Isaiah 14:12-14).

But it wasn't long before the first couple disobeyed their Creator and fell for Satan's subtlety. Falling prey to the wiles of the devil, they allowed Satan to become their god. The human race has been under the influence of a false god ever since. Even the apostle Paul warned that Satan was, and is, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

God created mankind with free moral agency, the ability to choose between right and wrong, good and evil. When the world chose the wrong path, God instituted a plan to save His greatest creation, the human race. Eventually he called an entire nation from slavery, gave them His laws,

His statutes, His commands, but He also gave them choice: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). But rather than obey God, Israel chose the way of the devil. Like Adam and Eve they were more interested in forbidden fruit, and the whole world has eaten of the forbidden fruit ever since.

So God, in His forgiving love and mercy, gave the human race a solution – a plan of salvation blueprinted in seven annual Holy Days. The key to the plan was sacrifice. Sin, the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4), brought mankind the penalty of death, a penalty that required payment (Romans 6:23). In order to settle the debt and remove the death penalty, a loving, merciful God gave the world a sacrifice for sin (John 3:16).

In his letter to the church of God at Rome the apostle Paul put it this way: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). "For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, (Adam) much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

God's plan to save a sin-filled world involved one perfect sacrifice for all imperfection. "Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings that He said to His disciples; 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified,'" (Matthew 26:1-2) just as it was prophesied in the Old Testament. "He (Christ) is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:3-6).

One perfect human life of the Son of God as the debt for every imperfect human being that ever lived; but at the same time God did not remove mankind's ability to choose. Payment for sin is not automatic. We still have a choice to make, and that choice is to accept or reject the one who paid the price, the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf (John 6:51, 53).

See "Sacrifice" on page 11