



United News Canada

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Summer 2021

Pentecost 2021

By Anthony Wasilkoff

A person once asked me as we drove through a lush growing region along highway 400 north of Toronto, "Have you ever noticed how many shades of green there are?" I hadn't! But thereafter I began to notice that there are indeed many soothing shades of green and we can especially notice them in the spring of the year.

After a long arduous winter, spring is the time to plant our vegetable gardens. Then we wait for the various veggies to grow and eventually to yield some produce. I have fond memories of partaking of the firstfruits of the garden each year. The first few radishes were wonderfully tasty. Baby carrots were similarly delectable. Even early rhubarb was wonderful. Also delectable were early potatoes. My mother would "rob" a potato plant by digging carefully around the base of the plant and carefully extracting small potatoes to be served for supper without needing to be peeled! They were still so small and tender they had not yet grown a skin. Ah, fresh vegetables straight out of the garden and onto the dinner table. Potatoes, carrots, peas (in

the shell) and dill -- all smothered with butter. Firstfruits are especially tasty in late spring or early summer and lend themselves to a satisfying meal.



Barley Field
Photo by Simon Godfrey on Unsplash

The Feast of Pentecost is called the Feast of Firstfruits. It refers to the early harvest in the land of Israel. It began with the barley harvest and concluded with the wheat harvest. It points to the first phase of converts whom God will have brought to conversion in the first stage of His plan of salvation. Many more will be harvested later during the Millennium and beyond, as outlined by the mean-

ing of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day.

The spiritual harvest began with God's divine calling of only a few people through the ages beginning with righteous Abel. That harvest continued on a relatively small scale until the famous Feast of Pentecost of Acts 2 when it accelerated significantly for a short time. It continues to this day on a small scale and will ultimately culminate at the resurrection at Christ's second coming depicted by the Feast of Trumpets. Scripture describes those called out ones as firstfruits. The implication is that other fruit will grow and then be harvested at a later date.

A description of Christians in James 1:18 states, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that

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we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” Paul referred to fellow believers as those “who have the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23). Furthermore, Paul fondly identifies several first-century Christians as “the firstfruits of Achaia” (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15).

Christ Himself is identified as the “firstborn of many brethren” (Romans 8:29) and “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). He is also known as the “firstborn over all creation” and “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:15, 18).

All of the above references provide us with an enormous insight into the Feast of Firstfruits.

The Jewish community traditionally reads the Book of Ruth on the Feast of Pentecost and does so for good reason. In this amazing book, Boaz and Ruth meet and marry during the barley harvest season. A virtuous Gentile woman experiences what amounted to conversion and is grafted into the lineage of the Messiah. Significantly, specific gleaning instructions appear in the Feast of Firstfruits section of Leviticus 23 in verse 22.

In the vivid description of Ruth gleaning tirelessly during the barley harvest, we are told that she partook of “parched grain” at mealtime. Parched grain was a popular food of those laboring in the harvest back then. Freshly harvested heads of grain were carefully roasted over a fire and then after cooling were eaten by famished and appreciative field hands. Firstfruit is always especially flavourful.

The Feast of Pentecost focuses on the Church. Pentecost is not about a resurrection. It is about conversion. It shows how God has been calling a few through the ages to constitute His firstfruits. The firstfruit harvest ends at the time when Jesus Christ begins his reign on earth at which time He will begin to address the remainder of humanity.

Leviticus 23:17 describes a special offering that is very telling. The two loaves symbolize the Old Testament “church” (Acts 7:38) and the New Testament church (Matthew 16:18). Notice how this offering contains leaven! “Why?” one might ask. It contains leaven to teach us that in spite of our best efforts, sin is still found in the Church of God. Sin must be

put out and repented of whenever it is discovered. Jesus Christ was the only one who was completely devoid of sin.

Christians in this present age are part of the firstfruits. They patiently await the resurrection which will occur at the seventh trump which heralds Christ’s second coming (Revelation 11:15). 1 Thessalonians 4 clearly describes a singular resurrection with the dead rising first and immediately thereafter those who are still alive being caught up together with them in the clouds to always be with the Lord. A single resurrection of the firstfruits includes those of ancient times, all those faithful in the early church, the faithful today and those who repent and answer God’s call during the tribulation. There is no Biblical indication of a preliminary resurrection to a place of final training.

The plan of salvation is wonderful. The blueprint of His plan can be found in the seamless progression of the meaning of His festivals. The Feast of Pentecost is so replete with meaning – how He is calling a small number of firstfruits now and then a much larger harvest as portrayed by the fall festivals. 🌍

United News - Canada

Managing Editor: Anthony Wasilkoff

Editorial Reviewers: Robert Berendt, Kevin Ford, Jean Jantzen, Denise Masse, David Palmer, Patrick Read, Linda Wasilkoff and Dale van Zant

Layout: Paul Wasilkoff

National Council: Jeff Anderson, Larry DeLong, Michael Erickson, Jim Lucas, Cindy Ridi, Sheldon Sitter, Lloyd

Teetaert, Anthony Wasilkoff and Paul Wasilkoff

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UCG - Canada
P.O. Box 144, Station D
Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1
www.ucg.ca



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The Gift of Pentecost

By David Palmer

What is the greatest gift God could ever bestow on the human race? If you asked a dozen people, the chances are you would get a dozen different answers. Some might say good health, others might say life itself and some might say eternal life. All of those answers would be acceptable. Jesus referred to that gift as being like a hidden treasure called the “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:44-46). To find the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, where do we start?

Let’s begin with a powerful sermon message delivered by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Following a miracle from God where every individual listening to Peter could understand his words in their own language (Acts 2:6-9) and, after a dissertation in which he makes reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he tells his audience (and by extrapolation all of us), “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

There is nothing we can do on our own, but in harmony with God’s Spirit and looking to Jesus Christ as our elder brother, Master and Teacher, we can have access to that hidden treasure. Recall what Jesus told His disciples: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot

bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak; and he will tell you things to come” (John 16:12-13). He also told His disciples: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

When Jesus stood in the synagogue and read from the book of Isaiah, He made specific reference to the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. When He finished reading, “Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:20-21). What’s interesting is earlier, in verse 16, the Sabbath referred to when this event took place can be translated “weeks” meaning that Jesus may have chosen to read these words from Isaiah on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

The wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit works in different ways. We are all different and unique with different personalities, talents and abilities. Paul understood this. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the

same Spirit,” (1Corinthians 12:4-8).

It is the same spirit, but just a different manifestation because of the personality, talent or capability of the individual. Paul goes on to show “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

God through the power of the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1-2) and brought His only begotten Son into the world, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, (Mary) and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Jesus promised His disciples that when the day of Pentecost came they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit “...for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:5, 8).

The Holy Spirit is our very source of eternal life. “Then Jesus

said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day...It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life'" (John 6:53-54, 63).

God's wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit is also our source of wisdom and knowledge. Recall the promise Jesus made to His disciples: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13).

But that same promise is given

to those whom God has called even today: "But as it is written, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things (mysteries) of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

It is with the guidance of God's Holy Spirit that we build Godly character, which the scripture calls the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Jesus tells us, in a parable, that when we find the pearl of great price we should be willing to give up all that we have to purchase that one precious possession, meaning a change is needed in the way we think and act. We no longer follow the ways of this world. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you

will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God...The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:13-14, 16).



Pearl of Great Price

Photos by Dewang Gupta & Marin Tulard on Unsplash

Our ultimate goal is to attain resurrection into the Kingdom of God, and the down payment that gives us the opportunity to inherit that Kingdom, is God's precious gift of the Holy Spirit. It is what Peter told his audience on the Day of Pentecost, repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) – a gift that leads to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. 🌍

March National Council Meeting

By Edwin van Pelt

The National Council held its final meeting of the fiscal year on Monday, March 8. Chairman, Lloyd Teetaert called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. (ET) and it concluded just over 90 minutes later. All nine Council members were present and there were three others who took part in the meeting. A number of updates were given and items discussed. After the opening prayer, the first item of business was to adopt the minutes of the December 2020 meeting.

Director of Operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, gave an update on the latest Subscriber Development Letter as well as Feast plans for this fall. We are booking Osoyoos, Drumheller and Midland for the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Although plans are still fluid, general Feast of Tabernacles registration is scheduled to begin on April 11. Those planning to attend a satellite site must contact the coordinator or the local pastor. There will be satellite sites across the country as there were in 2020. He also mentioned that people are

inquiring about Sabbath services and beginning to attend.

Paul Wasilkoff gave updates on behalf of the Media Team as well as IT and website development updates.

Bill Dimovski gave a financial update. Income is above budget for the fiscal year and expenses are down primarily due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.

Anthony Wasilkoff gave an update on the February Council

of Elders meeting. He noted that the U.S. income is still very strong. More congregations in that country are acquiring their own buildings. The purchase cost is generally considerably less than in Canada. A special Sabbath service from Cincinnati was scheduled for March that was to be geared to prospective members and those who do not have a local congregation to attend.

Michael Erickson, chairman of the Strategic Planning/Finance

Committee, gave a brief update. We are looking at options to increase and improve the online donation experience. Currently, 10-15 percent of our donation income comes by electronic means. Mr. Erickson then presented an updated Moving Expense Policy. After some discussion and a few edits the policy was approved.

Mike Whyte was appointed to serve another three-year term on the UCG-Canada Amendment

Committee.

Anthony Wasilkoff gave an update on the upcoming June National Council meeting. It looks like this will be another online meeting. A Ministerial Conference, which will also be online, is also being planned.

The regular Council meeting concluded at 9:38 p.m. It was followed by a short Executive Meeting. 🌐

Online Donation Instructions

By United News Canada

The United Church of God - Canada appreciates the faithful dedication of members and coworkers who provide monetary support. In order to facilitate this process we have arranged for different mechanisms through which donations may be given. At present we have three methods available:

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

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

2. E-Transfer. If you already engage in online banking you very likely have access to e-Transfers. To send an e-Transfer follow these instructions:

- A. Log into your online bank or mobile banking app and select the account
- B. Select or add `online_donations@ucg.ca` as the recipient

C. Enter the dollar amount you wish to donate

D. A security question/answer is not needed if step 2 (above) was followed

E. In the notes/message box you must include your index number (C followed by 10 digits), your name and fund to which you are donating; i.e. First tithe/offering (1T/O), Festival Fund (FF), Assistance Fund (AF), or Holy Day Offering (specifying the Holy Day by name). If you don't have an index number please provide your complete name and address for income tax credit.

If you are not in our database and would like to a receipt for your donation, we will require your complete name and address.

3. Online Donation. If you would prefer to use our online donation form the instructions below will help guide you. NOTE: only certain financial institutions currently participate in this method.

A. To begin, go to: <https://>

donate.ucg.ca/

B. Answer the question at the bottom of the form: "Do you have a Subscriber Number with UCG-Canada?" If "Yes", then please include your subscriber number

C. Click "Start Donation"

D. Chose category

D. Click amount of donation in "Quantity" box

F. Click check out

G. Fill in "Bill to"

H. Fill in Payment Details page

I. You must include your email address for proper credit

We continue to evaluate other options to make this process easier; we will keep our members and coworkers updated with any new developments.

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

Feed My Sheep

By Garry Lucas

There was once a wealthy Farmer,
Who was rich, with many sheep.
So He looked for faithful shepherds
In whose care they'd safely keep.

First of all, they should be trusting
And possess integrity.
Deep respect for His possession,
Showing Faith, Hope and Charity.

So He hired many shepherds,
And instructed them at length
"Lead them all to MY green pastures"
"Never trust in your own strength.

Some of them were good at listening,
And others good in speaking skill.
Then there were those who were teachers,
Who opened eyes toward His will.

But then, something strange happened:
In the fields, among the lambs
Shepherds squabbling, fighting, striving
Sheep are suffering at their hands.

Now the sheep are even casting
Jaundiced eyes around the field

They too, get into the fracas,
Wond'ring to whom they should yield

Now we're left in great confusion,
What is happening, who is right?
Where's the Owner in this conflict?
Who can help us through this night?

In the distance, on a hilltop
Stands the Owner, worried deep.
And His voice sounds o'er the mountains:
"Love my lambs and feed my sheep!"

"Why are they so busy fighting?
My instructions were so clear,
Why are all my people quarreling?
Everyone confused, in fear?"

"One thing they all should remember:
And I'll lay it on the line:
All those sheep, now so in sorrow,
Are not YOURS, they all are MINE."

In the distance, on a hilltop
Stands the Farmer, worried deep.
And His voice sounds even stronger:
"Love my lambs and feed my sheep!" 🌍

Leadership Seminar

By United News Canada

It was just over a year ago that plans for the annual Leadership Weekend held annually in Toronto had to be cancelled at the last moment. At that time, COVID-19 was just becoming a major concern and our guest speaker coming from the United States would have had difficulty crossing the border. So, with reluctance, the planned event was postponed until this year.

As it happened, COVID-19 restrictions this time around were even more stringent than they were last year! There was a difference though. After months of restrictions that affected the ability to meet for Sabbath Services, alternative methods for online meetings emerged and have been refined over time.

On Sunday, April 11, a total of 48 individuals representing ten congregations from six provinces were online for a Leadership Workshop that had two guest speakers from the United States. Normally, attendance is limited due to available physical space at the National Office and to those who could easily drive to Toronto. So, in this case, there were some advantages to the restrictions we found ourselves under since there were attendees from across Eastern Canada and one individual from Western Canada.

Randy Stiver began with a presentation “Know Your Church History” during which he traced the history of the church from the beginning of the New Testament church. He highlighted the church eras listed in Revelation and

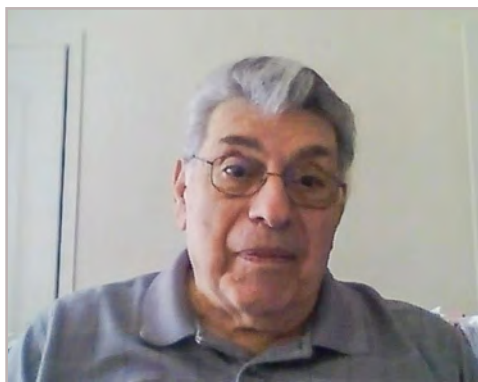
pointed out important events along the way until the present age. He admonished those online to remember what has gone before. He also recommended a number of books for those interested in further information.



Randy Stiver

photo provided by United News Canada

Gary Antion gave the second morning presentation, which was titled “Leadership Spelled Out.” He emphasized that leadership is badly needed and gave crucial ingredients for a good leader (**LEADER**—Leads with Love, Enthusiastic, Alert to needs, Delegates, Evaluates and Respects).



Gary Antion

photo provided by United News Canada

Following lunch, Randy Stiver presented “The Temper of True Leadership.” He noted that some

people have short tempers while others are very diplomatic. He spoke about righteous anger and categories of unrighteous anger and quoted Proverbs 17:27, which tells us that a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

Gary Antion rounded out the Workshop with “Godly Wisdom vs. Worldly Wisdom.” He gave definitions and elements of wisdom and examples from wise men of the Bible. The presentation provided instructions on benefits of wisdom and how to receive it. He ended by quoting Proverbs 4:7-13 and the admonition to employ Godly wisdom.

A half-hour was reserved at the end of the day for questions and comments. Since nobody had to drive home and there was lots of discussion, the time allotted to this was extended to 60 minutes. During the question and answer session, there was a reminder that UCG has a protocol for submitting doctrinal concerns. This is to help the church maintain doctrinal consistency and integrity.

One first-time attendee said, “Thank you for the leadership seminar – it was very informative and I thoroughly enjoyed it.”

Our thanks go to Mr. Antion and Mr. Stiver for the time and expertise they gave to the Workshop. Their material and handouts will provide much material for thought and reflection in the coming weeks and months. We also thank the technical staff for providing excellent assistance. 🌍

News From Across Canada

Eastern Canada Ladies Zoom result of COVID-19.

On February 21, 36 ladies from seven congregations throughout Eastern Canada joined an interactive online Zoom Ladies Event with the dual purpose of building stronger connections and getting to know each other better. The ladies enjoyed an inspiring presentation by Almeda Lucas, along with enriching discussions and quality fellowship with each other.

Denise Masse began the session with an opening prayer and Linda Wasilkoff welcomed the ladies to the event. She shared some of the challenges and difficulties many have been facing over the past year as a

The theme for this event was “More Precious Than Gold.” Ladies discussed the difficulties individuals have faced during the pandemic as well as how to prepare for the upcoming Passover season under current restrictions. Almeda Lucas gave an inspirational presentation based on 1 Peter 1:7 titled “Faith more precious than gold”.

After Almeda’s presentation, groups of 8-9 ladies were sent to breakout rooms to discuss a variety of questions with a common thread relating to keeping the Passover during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

Some of the questions and discussion included in the breakout session were:

What was one of the most difficult things you faced this past year as a result of COVID?

Difficulties that were mentioned included home-schooling as a new challenge, not being able to attend Passover/Sabbath services and missing family and friends’ important events.

What scriptures gave you comfort?

Some inspiring scriptures shared included: Ephesians 2:8, 1 Timothy 6:12 and Hebrews 11:6.

What lessons have you learned? How have you grown from the trial?

Answers included: Knowing God will take care of us despite the challenges we are facing; To step back and trust God and to know we have a loving extended family of believers to whom we can reach out to for encouragement when facing trials.

What impact did keeping Passover at home last year have on you? Will you do anything different this year?



Participants In A Breakout Room
photo provided by Amy van Zant

It was a challenge for those that were alone and were unable to participate in the foot washing. It gave more empathy for those who haven't been able to attend Passover in the past because of illness.



Almeda Lucas
photo provided by UCGIA

With more time to prepare and in light of the last year, how do you plan to make the NTBMO special this year to mimic the Israelites coming out of Egypt with a high hand – and us coming out of the world?

Some ladies commented on the importance of including those that are single/widowed and isolated. One suggestion was to invite them to join for dinner via zoom, if we are unable to get together in person. Another person reminded us of the importance to touch base with others, especially those in long term care homes. One family created a custom Bingo game for their children to make the evening extra special for them.

How do you remain positive during a lockdown?

Ideas included: The importance of getting out in nature and going for walks;

Spending extra time studying God's Word; Having more quality family time; Finding ways to be resourceful and creative in reaching out to others.

Many of ladies commented that the breakout rooms were a great idea! It was encouraging to see ladies who normally wouldn't feel comfortable speaking, opening up to one another. The time seemed to go by very quickly.

Here are a few comments from the ladies about the event:

"This was an excellent event and many mentioned that having a repeat either before or after the FOT is an excellent idea. The ladies actively participated and the questions generated many responses. There was warmth, togetherness and a sense of family as the questions were read and discussed. Of the six questions, we only made it to number four!"

"What stood out the most for me is the point about whether or not to read Scriptures at these events. Almeda mentioned that this was not a church service and the Scriptures are clear about the role of women in church settings but this was different. We can also rightly divide the word of truth as we strengthen and encourage one another."

"What struck me is the importance to reach out to people who feel lonely and to encourage one another, as events unfold."

Other ladies commented that being part of the event was an inspiration and how much

they appreciated being able to participate. Many expressed that they enjoyed it very much and spoke about how much fun they had interacting with the other ladies.

The overall opinion expressed was that it would be good to have more of these events throughout the year especially since some feel more isolated and need this contact with sisters of like mind. The event was described by many ladies as inspiring, encouraging and a profitable session.

Michelle Vautour

Ministerial Services Update

We have been concentrating on "train and ordain" to help with the ministry here in Canada. Because of God's blessing, we are happy to share two special announcements.

Sheldon Sitter has been appointed Assistant Pastor in Winnipeg, North Battleford, Saskatoon and Edmonton. He will be reporting to three pastors in that role.

It is with joy that we can announce that we have a new



Sheldon Sitter
photo provided by UCGIA

elder. On Sabbath, March 27, Wayne Ward was ordained by Rainer Salomaa and Robert Berendt during services in Edmonton. He moved to Kelowna on April 1 and will serve there as the Assistant Pastor to John Elliott.



Wayne Ward Ordination
photo provided by Rainer Salomaa

We appreciate that each of these men have borne fruit to be of increased service to God's people.

United News Canada

Windsor Baptisms

Ecclesiastes 4:7 states that "Two are better than one."

The Windsor, Ontario, congregation has recently been blessed to have not one, but two baptisms, adding to the body of Jesus Christ.



Greg Harrison
photo provided by Patrick Read

On Sunday, February 28, Mr. Greg Harrison was baptized, and then on Thursday, April 1, Mary Szczechura was baptized.



Mary Szczechura
photo provided by Patrick Read

Mary first encountered the Windsor congregation after accepting an invitation to an open house in November 2014 to hear Darris McNeely. She attended church a couple of times after that. However, due to health issues, she is unable to attend any longer. Thankfully, Mary has stayed in contact since that time.

Christ stated that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church and that was obvious in both Greg's and Mary's baptism. Both began counselling and were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately even a pandemic could not prevent the angels in heaven from rejoicing over not just one, but two repenting and receiving God's Spirit.

Not only the Windsor congregation, but also the whole family of God, have been blessed with another brother and sister in Christ. Welcome to the family Greg and Mary!

Patrick Read

Bless the Eternal (Based on Psalm 104)

My soul bless the Eternal
His greatness to proclaim,
With majesty and honour
Is clothed His holy name.
The light is but His vesture,
The heavens but His shade,
And over mighty waters,
His chambers He has laid.

He makes the clouds His chariot,
And walks on wings of storm,
His angels, flaming spirits,
His mission will perform.
The earth the Lord has founded,
Immovable to keep,
And spread as with a garment
The oceans wide and deep.

He sends the springs of water
Among the hills to flow,
To quench the thirst of donkeys,
In valleys far below,
And all the birds of heaven
May safely build a nest,
And sing among the branches,
As earth enjoys its rest.

Kevin Ford

“Pentecost” from page 12.

power of true, spiritual conversion for God’s people. Thus, Pentecost pictures the origin and work—or function—of the true Church of God in the New Testament era.

The Church prepares for Christ’s second coming by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness—“and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

That has been our focus from the time our era of the true Church of God began in the early 1930s.

Other ideas and challenges

There are, however, always challenges to the true gospel. They typically come from outside the Church – for instance the early persecution led by Paul of Tarsus who was later, after his conversion was known as the Apostle Paul (Acts 7 to 9).

One particular challenge has emerged of late. Some, attached to the historical Church of God movement, proclaim that the Day of Pentecost pictures an early resurrection of some of God’s people so they can stand on the Sea of Glass watching events transpire during the last days before Christ’s return and, supposedly at that time, they are to receive special knowledge and teaching from God.

This is not correct. The Bible proclaims no special resurrection to spirit existence before the second coming of Christ!

Notice this in the “resurrection chapter,” “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in

Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”.

Pentecost does not picture a resurrection, but rather conversion! It heralds the outpouring of God’s Spirit as the power of spiritual conversion by which God calls and draws us to His truth.

We receive a down-payment, as it were, of God’s Spirit after we repent and are baptized into the true faith of Jesus Christ. Then we faithfully follow our Saviour, growing in “grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18). Only at the return of Jesus Christ do we (provided we have faithfully endured) experience the resurrection to dynamic spirit existence in the Family of God.

Stay focused on God’s truth

Remember, Pentecost is about spiritual conversion—the natural outcome of our preaching and publishing the true gospel and God’s calling new people to His Church.

As one of God’s annual Sabbaths, Pentecost is also about service in the true Church of God (Prepare a People). It is about doing God’s work as faithful, living examples of His way, caring for our brethren, while proclaiming to the world as a witness (Preaching the Gospel), the gospel of God’s soon-coming Kingdom.

From Pentecost forward

There is no resurrection to eternal life before our Saviour’s return, and certainly no early resurrection of the saints to stand on a sea of glass watching the world go by.

Our resurrection to eternal life is heralded by the Feast of Trumpets which anticipates the second coming of Jesus Christ and the simultaneous resurrection of the saints (those who are Christ’s at His coming).

The Day of Atonement foreshadows the end of Satan’s lying influence on mankind. It celebrates the time when we are at-one, completely united in purpose and will with Christ and the Father.

The Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the Millennium—the one-thousand-year rule of Christ over all nations. That will be when God offers salvation in His Kingdom to all then living.

Finally, comes the last great Eighth Day when by a vast physical resurrection through which Christ and the Father will reach back in time to offer true salvation to all of mankind in history. Those people will live again physically, and will, finally, be called to the knowledge of the truth of God’s way and plan—which they never understood before.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). To come to repentance means faithfully choosing good over evil and the truth over false doctrines!

When all is said and done, God will have offered true salvation to every person in the history of the world. As we approach the Day of Pentecost in the coming weeks stay focused on God’s truth as we have been taught and know it! 🌐

Pentecost In God's Plan

By Randy Stiver

The Day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the true Church of God. Jesus Christ had told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were “endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). That power was the Holy Spirit. Thus, they and all those baptized during Christ’s ministry had not yet become converted with the power of God’s Spirit.

As prophesied, when the Holy Day came the apostles and brethren met, and in fact they did receive the power of God to go and do His work preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness while baptizing those who believed. The Church of God has clearly understood its prophetic meaning.

We all need to be so grounded in the truth!

Back to the Basics

God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ have existed for eternity. This fantastically vast universe was created by God the Father working with and through the Word who is Jesus Christ the Son of God (see John 1:1-3)—our Lord, our Saviour and the Head of the true Church of God.

What we refer to as the “plan of God” is the process through which God will call all people to His truth – the truth! They must then repent, overcome sin and remain faithful to God and His way until the end of their natural lives or the end of the age, whichever comes first. Finally, all of God’s faithful will be resurrected into eternal life in the Kingdom of God at Christ’s second

coming (see 1 Corinthians 15).

To keep that plan of salvation and our spiritual destiny clear, God called us into His true Church of which Jesus Christ is the head (see Ephesians 5:23).

Remember and beware though, there is a great false religious system in the world, and its teachings can corrupt your understanding of God’s truth.

In fact, in history and even modern times some teachers associated at some point with the true Church of God are fully capable of embracing false ideas and fallacious teachings. Never drop your guard!

God's Holy Days

The meaning of God’s annual Holy Days (annual Sabbaths which are commanded assemblies) both teaches and focuses our understanding on God’s great plan of salvation.



Moses & The Tablets of Stone
illustration by Gustav Dore/Shawn Venish

Passover commemorates the power of Christ’s sacrifice which

we must accept so our sins can be forgiven. Only repentant overcomers will enter the eternal Kingdom of God. The Days of Unleavened Bread teach us what sin is and the process of overcoming.

The Holy Day of Pentecost portrays the giving of God’s law to His people. Read the account in Exodus 19:1-2 of how God led the children of Israel out of sinful Egypt and to Mt. Sinai in the third month (of God’s calendar). At Sinai God delivered His law through Moses. The Feast of Weeks is the annual Holy Day in that third month.

The other names for this Holy Day are the Feast of Firstfruits and Pentecost, which is from the Greek, meaning “fifty count”. Beginning with a specific day during the Days of Unleavened Bread, 50 days are counted to ascertain the correct date for the Day of Pentecost.

As we shall see, Pentecost in New Testament times pointed to the existence of God’s true Church made up of those repentant and converted ones He had called out of this world.

God’s Church during our time near the end of this age has faithfully understood the meaning of Pentecost (or Feast of Weeks from Leviticus 23:15-22).

The founding of God's true Church

In Acts 2 we find that the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31 was the birth of God’s true Church by the out-pouring of His Holy Spirit as the

See “Pentecost” on page 11.

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