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Spring Feast 2022: Great Expectations

By Anthony Wasilkoff

The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are nearly upon us. Each year, when the Feast of Tabernacles concludes, the spring Feast seems so far away that it is beyond realization. And yet, as we know, each year the winter months somehow elapse, spring arrives and with it comes the wonderful Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

That being said, what aspects of the spring Feast do we look forward to and what aspects do we possibly dread? The spring festival season requires much more preparation than any of the other annual festivals including the Feast of Tabernacles. Some of these preparatory steps are definitely time-consuming and highly demanding. Cleaning and de-leavening are not only time-consuming, they are also physically demanding. Baking and food prep can also be demanding and can also use up a considerable amount of physical energy. And then there is introspection otherwise known as “examining ourselves” which has a psychological and emotional component that most of us can find more than a little intimidating.

You have heard it said that we get out of something as much as we put into it. That applies to vir-

tually every aspect of human life. It most assuredly applies to Feast keeping, including the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Hopefully all believers in Canada will be allowed to keep the Feast together this year, at least to a greater degree than we were

Whatever the case may be, we can all seek to observe this year’s Passover, Night to Be Much Observed, the First Day of Unleavened Bread and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread (including the days in between) with a joy and enthusiasm we haven’t expressed for quite a while.

2 Chronicles 30 describes how the Israelites observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread during the time of Hezekiah with “great gladness and the Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day singing to the Lord accompanied by loud instruments.” The emphasis here is on worship, gratitude and praise to the Great Creator God. We, too, can be similarly expressive and demonstrative as we begin to rehearse God’s awesome Plan of Salvation by commencing to observe the annual festivals afresh. 🍞



Cleaning and de-leavening
Photos by Katie Pearse, Mae Mu and Erik Mclean on Unsplash.

permitted to last year and the year before. It will be awesome to spend time with one another in-person as much as COVID protocols permit.

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Enthusiasm Renewed

By Linda Wasilkoff

It was during the coffee hour following church services about 28 years ago that there was a discussion among some ladies about cleaning in preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Several expressed how much they dreaded and disliked what to them had become a tedious chore.

Shortly after that conversation, the church I was attending declared that the Holy Days no longer needed to be kept. Those same ladies were very happy and relieved to no longer have the “burden” of delevaning.

I have to admit, that year I was a bit discouraged and couldn't seem to be motivated to clean out the leaven as I once had. The job was done half-heartedly. Granted, there were years prior to that when I probably went overboard with cleaning. Hopefully, since that time a more balanced approach has been achieved – thorough but not burdensome or pharisaic.

What seems to work for me is to remind myself of what leaven

represents during the seven days of Unleavened Bread – sin in my life. Here is how I now I think of it.

There are obvious sources of leavening

The easiest aspect of preparing for the Feast is removing all leavening agents such as yeast, baking powder and baking soda as well as most breads, cakes and cookies. Late winter is the time to take stock of what you have on hand and begin to use them so there is less to throw away.

The spiritual lesson I get from this is that I do have obvious sins or faults to work on removing from my daily life. As I go through this easier routine of cleaning, it gives me time to reflect on these “routine” elements to work on in my life.

There is often hidden leavening in the house

Everyone with children knows that they can somehow spread crumbs everywhere – even when

they are required to sit at the table when eating! Pieces of snacks can be found stuffed inside favourite toys, inside shoes, under pillows and anywhere else the imagination of a child can take them.

Some pets like to hide their food for later consumption. I once found a piece of bread in a bedroom closet. Our dog had stashed it for later consumption.

These days, with no kids or dogs in the house, cleaning has become considerably easier. But ... crumbs still fall between the stove and counter. I still find them in places that make me wonder how they could have gotten there.

The spiritual lesson for me is that I need to dig deeper during my personal reflections as I prepare for Passover to see what I have inadvertently hidden from myself. Have I been selfish, self-righteous, uncaring or envious?

Some leavening is hard to recognize

When going through ingredi-

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Leavening can be found in food you wouldn't suspect it to be in.

Photo by Houcine Ncib on Unsplash

ents of food in the house, there are times when I have to look up what some ingredient is. Sometimes the leavening can be found in food you wouldn't suspect it to be in. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether something is or is not a leavening agent. Being able to search online has made this much easier than it once was, but there are still times when it requires a bit of effort. And, different websites can give different answers!

As we go through life, it is sometimes hard to always identify sin. There are times when we convince ourselves that something is quite innocent. On reflecting deeper on our motives, we sometimes realize that our motives or thoughts were not as righteous as we wanted to believe.

Some things that aren't leavened can appear to be leavened

Is that flat bread leavened or not? What about those cookies? I remember going to a potluck during the Feast of Unleavened Bread and seeing flour tortillas. Those purchased from a store are normally leavened so I assumed those at the potluck were. They weren't. They were homemade unleavened tortillas – a real treat for those attending the potluck.

We look at leavening as something that puffs up and that is true, but not everything puffy is leavened.

Likewise, I can look at situations and assume something is wrong or sinful without knowing all the facts. Especially when it is something someone else is doing. One has to be extra careful because as we judge so we will likewise be judged.

Prepare unleavened treats

For people new to observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it is easy to think there will be nothing to eat. After all, how can the day begin without that tasty piece of toast? But, there are so many wonderful recipes to try. One source for recipes is your own cookbook(s). Just go through and check the recipes without leavening. It is surprising how many you can find. Several church members have shared their favourite ones, which can be found online at: <https://www.ucg.org/members/recipes/unleavened-recipes/unleavened-bread-recipes>.

Preparing unleavened treats reminds me that preparing for the Feast of Unleavened Bread does not have to be a burden. God's Feasts provide remarkable opportunities to learn, to enjoy and to experience.

I hope and pray that I never again lose enthusiasm for preparing for and observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread. 🍞

Leavening or Not?

The following are leavening agents:

- baking powder
- baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)
- monocalcium phosphate
- sodium aluminum phosphate (SALP)
- sodium acid pyrophosphate (SAPP)
- other phosphates
- ammonium bicarbonate (hartshorn, horn salt, bakers ammonia)
- potassium bicarbonate (potash)
- sourdough
- yeast

The following are not leavening agents:

Brewer's yeast, yeast extract (a flavoring), corn starch and cream of tartar.

Cream of tartar acts as a neutralizer when used with baking soda but does not, by itself, cause dough to rise and thus is not a leavening agent. 🍞

The Power of Meditation

By Charles Ranchie

The world seems fascinated by war, movies, video games and news reports. Documentaries frequently describe and relive atrocities or glorify past and present wars. Whether we are engaged in it or even aware of it, we, as followers of Christ, are told that we are presently in a state of war. This is not the kind of war that involves guns or bombs or swords, but it is a very real war that presents a constant threat to our spiritual survival (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

We can join the battle or surrender but our involvement is not optional. If we surrender, or neglect to fight, we will be conquered by the forces of evil led by the devil. As the Apostle Paul told the Ephesians, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

If we chose to fight, we will be in very unfamiliar territory because we will need to use powerful weapons that are spiritual. Like any army recruit, to be successful, we will need to learn how

to skillfully and effectively use the weapons at our disposal.

Prayer, Bible study and fasting are some of the mighty weapons we learn to use along with truth, righteousness, peace, faith and hope of salvation.

Another powerful weapon not often mentioned that is at our disposal is meditation. The battles we face are primarily fought and won or lost in our minds. What we do or say does not happen spontaneously without our mind

just over four thoughts every minute of the day. Those thoughts are influenced by what we see and hear through input from various sources – some good, some bad, some accurate, some not. Perhaps many are generated from the “Prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) to lead us into temptation and sin.

Instead of allowing random thoughts to have free reign, we can use meditation to bring them into captivity.

Meditation is simply focused awareness or concentration on something consistently over a period of time.

Eliminating random thoughts from our minds is like removing air from a bottle. The easiest way is to fill the bottle with a liquid, which forces out the air.

Filling our minds with positive thoughts, thoughts about

God’s law and His mercy is an effective weapon in our spiritual battle. It was practiced by the patriarchs (Psalm 1:1-2) and was also encouraged by Paul (Philippians 4:8).

Meditation is not difficult to learn, but it takes time and practice to be able to use it proficiently. It is a powerful and effective weapon in our spiritual warfare. 🍁



We can use meditation to bring our thoughts into captivity

Photo by Niilo Isotalo on Unsplash

activating the words or deeds.

If we can “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” we can effectively win our battles!

According to a recent study at Kingston University in Ontario, people have an average of 6,200 random thoughts per day. That is

National Council December Meeting

By Edwin van Pelt

The latest National Council meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m. Eastern on December 6, 2021, using the Zoom platform. Eight of the nine Council members were present. In addition, Bill Dimovski (Treasurer), Linda Wasilkoff (Parliamentarian) and Edwin van Pelt (Secretary) were online.

After the opening prayer, the first order of business was to adopt the minutes from the September 12 Council meeting. Jim Lucas, Chair of the Ethics, Governance, and Pastoral Committee read the National Council Code of Ethics.

Dennis O'Neill provided the Council with a Media Team update. Mr. O'Neill reported that the team is working on ways to attract traffic to our websites. There has been a shift in media communications over the past decade or so. We used to speak to people – broadcast out; now people come to us. Drawing people in is more cost-effective. The Team continues to work on the “Profiles of Faith” series (taken from the *Good News* magazine). A number have been completed. The idea is to keep them short to draw people to our website.

Director of Operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, gave the update from the National Office. Our Subscriber Development Letters are sent throughout the year to *Beyond Today* magazine subscribers. We currently have 427 members on file, 159 co-workers and 486 donors. *Beyond Today* magazine subscribers stand at 18,381 across Canada. On November 4, most of the National Office staff at-

tended the annual Church and Charity Law Seminar. This year, like last year, it was held online. Topics that were covered this year included: The Essential Charity and Not-for-Profit Law Update, Key Issues in Drafting Employment Contracts, and Insurance Issues Involving Volunteers for Churches and Charities. Other presenters were the Public Guardian & Trustee of Ontario and the Director General of the Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency.

Mr. Wasilkoff noted that our annual insurance coverages were recently renewed. We must show due diligence in order to obtain or renew insurance coverage. He also noted that our National Office Planning Meeting for 2022 was scheduled for December 16, 2021.

The death of Patrick Read was sudden and unexpected. His church areas have been reassigned to Bruno Leclerc (Maritimes), Jim Lucas (London), and Paul Wasilkoff (Windsor). Anthony Wasilkoff will look after Newfoundland with assistance from resident elder and former National Council member, Ellsworth Stanley.

Linda Wasilkoff provided an update on behalf of the Compliancy Task Force. All UCG-Canada policies will be reviewed over the next several months. The annual review will be completed in time for the June 2022 National Council meetings.

Anthony Wasilkoff noted that if we go to court for any reason, the question will be asked: Has the church been following its own documents? If not, why not? The Com-

pliancy Task Force ascertains that our policies are in compliance with government regulations as well as our own bylaws and procedures and that they are being adhered to.

The 2022-2023 Operations Plan was presented by Anthony Wasilkoff. There were no substantive changes from the 2021-2022. Flexibility is important since there are so many unknowns.

Our Strategic Plan is a long-term overview while the Operation Plan is an intermediate to short-term plan. The Budget is the financial plan that lays out what we can afford to accomplish. As a church we are conservative in our planning and, most importantly, we rely on God. No comments, concerns or questions were raised and the Council approved presenting it to the National Conference for their ratification.

The next item of business was the presentation of the 2022-2023 Budget. Treasurer Bill Dimovski led the discussion. There are many unknown factors in planning a budget. One example is the current COVID situation. Mr. Dimovski noted that all the Holy Day offerings will be in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This fiscal year, we had only six Holy Days; the First Day of Unleavened Bread was included in the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Most of our costs are fixed and we have little discretionary income. The Budget was approved by the Council.

The last item of business was to discuss and approve dates for 2022 National Council meetings. The meeting concluded at 8:19 p.m. Eastern. 🍁

Beware of Leaven

By David Palmer

During His ministry Jesus often used the term “beware”. He told His followers to beware of men for they will deliver you up to the councils, and scourge you in their synagogues. Beware of false prophets that deceive. But there was another warning He issued, something He told His disciples to beware of, and the first time He warned them, they didn’t get it. “Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have no bread” (Mark 8:14-16).

The disciples at this point did not perceive what Jesus was really getting at. Bread itself was not the point. Leavening was! “How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:11-12).

“Leaven translated as sour dough, is the remnant of dough from the preceding baking which had fermented and become acid” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*). “A small portion of fermented dough used to ferment other dough and often symbolizing a corruptive influence” (*Holman’s Bible Dic-*

tionary).

By analogy Jesus used three symbols of leavening - the Pharisees, the Sadducees and King Herod. Leaven of the Pharisees represented hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). The name “Sadducees” means “righteous ones” but, in fact, they were leavened with self-righteousness and false teaching. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Luke 20:27, Mark 12:18). The leaven of Herod represented political and religious worldliness under the influence of the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Our world has been permeated (corrupted) with the leaven of the devil. And when Jesus referred to the sin of leaven, He was referring to sins of the heart. “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man” (Matthew 15:11). “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man” (verse 18).

Leaven has corrupted the true teachings of the Bible. Indeed too many religions, while claiming to be pious are, in fact, leavened with misguided traditions. Jesus had to address just such a concern among the Pharisees. For instance, the Pharisees meticulously cleansed the outside of their cups and dishes. However, inside they were filled with greed and self-indulgence. Jesus explained that external cleansing was not sufficient. Furthermore Jesus taught: “even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matthew 23:28-29). Misapplied and misunderstood traditions like permeating leaven can cause division even in the Christian church.

Paul dealt with a leaven problem within the congregation of the church at Corinth. An individual was committing incest, and in responding, Paul compared the problem to leavening the entire church. “And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:2). “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (Verse 6).

Each year when we observe the Passover we recognize that Jesus is indeed: our bread of life (John 6:35, 48); the true bread that came down from heaven; that He was without sin; the unleavened bread of life.

Observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread is our reminder of a spiritual commitment that will one day allow us an opportunity to be in the Kingdom of God.

We are reminded by the apostle Paul that we are to keep the Feast, that we are to put leavening out of our homes for seven days and to eat unleavened bread. But Paul meant more than just eating physical bread. “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. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor

with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

As we approach the spring Holy Day season, the Passover and the

Days of Unleavened Bread, we are admonished to beware of leaven, the puffed up self righteous hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the false doctrinal concepts of the Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod, this world’s demonic political and religious sys-

tem. We are “to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness;” and substitute “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”, with the guiding hand of the true Bread of eternal life, Jesus Christ of Nazareth! 🍞

Women’s Enrichment Seminar

Michelle Vautour

A Women’s Enrichment Seminar was held on Sunday, March 6 for Eastern Canada. This was the second year in a row we had a virtual seminar via zoom with the purpose of building stronger connections and getting to know one another better. There were 38 zoom connections, with 43 in attendance from various congregations throughout Eastern Canada and one lady in British Columbia and another in New York.

The theme for the seminar was “Encouraging One Another” based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

The ladies enjoyed an inspiring presentation by Linda Wasilkoff, with the focus on the word “courage” which is embedded in the word “encouragement. She shared examples of how we need “courage” to encourage others. One question was proposed for the ladies to think about: “What do I have to give to someone feeling down?” It’s not always easy knowing how to best encourage others, es-

pecially when you don’t know how to relate. One recent widower commented that a “hug” lifts her up on a difficult days and is a great source of encouragement.

The presentation was followed by ladies getting together in smaller break-out groups discussing several different questions on the theme with enriching discussions and quality fellowship time with each other. Following the break-out discussions, all the ladies resumed together and shared practical ways we can encourage others.

Here are some practical ways to show encouragement to others: send e-cards, good night texts; pray and fast for one another; send favorite scriptures – repeat daily; speak to people who are shy; create

a support grief group; listen with undivided attention; give a hug, share a smile; show appreciation with a thank you note; give the individual a purpose or task.

To encourage means make strong the inner most part of a person. When you reach out with a card, a phone call or a visit it is an act of worship. Friendliness or hospitality is a virtue that brings as much joy to the giver as to the receiver. We need to build bridges between our hearts and those of people we see who need a friend.

Several ladies commented that it really was an inspiration attending the event, how much they appreciated being able to participate and how they enjoyed it very much and had lots of fun interacting with the ladies.

Many expressed a desire to have more of these events throughout the year. There was discussion of plans for having Friday evening chats as well as starting a virtual ladies craft/activity group for those interested.

Never underestimate the power of encouragement! 🍞



Participants from the seminar
Photo by Amy van Zant

Christian Paradoxes

By Rainer Salomaa

We live in a very interesting age. Through human reason and inventions, we have mobile homes that don't move. We have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses, but smaller families; more conveniences, but less time. There is more knowledge, but less good judgement, more medicine, but less wellness.

Under communism in the former Soviet Union, some referred to the "six paradoxes of Soviet life:" (1) there's no unemployment, but no one works; (2) no one works, but productivity goes up; (3) productivity goes up but there's nothing in the stores; (4) there's nothing in the stores, but at home there's everything; (5) at home there's everything, but no one is satisfied; (6) no one is satisfied, but everyone votes yes.

During this time of reflection and self-examination we as Christians are also faced with some spiritual paradoxes. Here are a few of them, each followed by a scriptural reference:

1. To find our lives, we have to lose our lives. Matthew 10:39: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

2. To be exalted, we have to humble ourselves. Luke 18:14: "I tell you, this man went

down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

3. To be great we have to be servants. Matthew 23:11: "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant."

4. To receive, we have to give. Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

5. To be free, we have to become slaves. 1 Corinthians 7:22: "For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave."

6. To be strong, we have to become weak. 2 Corinthians 12:9: "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most

gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

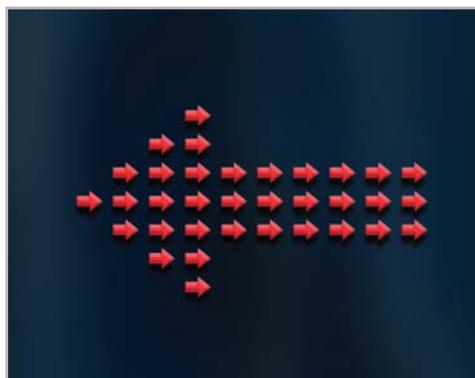
7. To be strong, we have to fast and pray. Matthew 17:21: "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

8. To please God, we live in the world, but are not of the world. John 17:14-15: "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

Based on faith, these Christian paradoxes work, but don't necessarily make sense to the carnal mind. We know that God's ways and thoughts are so much higher than our human thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). What seems right to a man, leads to death (Proverbs 14:12). The apparent foolishness (to the world) of preaching God's truth helps to save us (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Certainly at Passover season, when the Christian world emphasizes leavened bread, God's children seek to be unleavened and marvel again that Christ our Passover was crucified for us.

The powerful Son of God weakened himself to the point of death, so that we weak human beings can attain to strength and power in the family of God. That is indeed a profound paradox! 🍷



Christians face paradoxes

Photo illustration by Paul Wasilkoff

Patrick Read Tribute

By Michael Caputo

In the late 1980's, the pastor of the Kitchener congregation and I went to visit a couple that lived in a small, remote village north of Kitchener, named Ethel. It was a dark, very cold winter evening and with some difficulty we finally found a charming house surrounded by open land. The couple was Pat and Jo-Anne Read.

We were met by the warm and friendly couple and sat with them in their cozy family room for quite some time. Jo-Anne said little; Pat, on the other hand, quickly made it evident that he was a very gifted speaker. In short, he loved to talk.

It quickly became obvious that they were both very sincere and that they were embracing our doctrinal package quite willingly. I believe they were invited to services at the end of our visit. While sitting in that living room, I had no idea that years later Pat and Jo-Anne would have become very dear and treasured friends.

Some time later, my wife, Leonilda, and I left Kitchener and only saw them sporadically during our occasional visits. We reconnected fully years later when United was formed. He and a few others had refused to accept the heretical changes

and, by remaining faithful, they became the foundation to the Toronto UCG congregation.

By then, Pat had grown into a zealous, dynamic and service-oriented Christian like few other Christians I had ever known. Every week, he and Jo-Anne traveled a very long way, so as to get to church early to make sure that all was set up and ready to go. No brutal winter storm or dangerous icy roads were enough to stop them. That, of course, endeared them to the brethren who saw their spirit of sacrifice clearly manifested for years.



Pat & Jo-Anne Read
Photo by Rudy & Judy Rangel

Pat was also a very warm man with a pronounced sense of humour. Many may recall how during socials Pat loved to tease us starving ones in various creative ways, while directing people to the food table.

He especially loved to tease me with mafia jokes and I, of course, reciprocated with my

own humorous sarcasm, which he took with resilience. Our mutual teasing reached a crescendo at the Feast when I loved to remind all that he was the only man I knew who dyed his hair white. In spite of the ongoing mutual teasing, we remained good friends and loved to be in each other's company.

Pat served in the ministry with zeal and a genuine serving spirit. He loved serving the few who attended the London congregation and looked forward to his long trips to Windsor. He also savoured his trips out East, to serve the brethren there.

Pat loved his wife Jo-Anne, two children and four grandchildren dearly. Our discussions often gravitated toward his beloved family that he treasured very much.

I will miss my friend Pat. I will miss his support, his warmth, his sense of humour, his prayers on my family's behalf and the sincere smile that shone on his face.

I look forward to spending much time with him and his beloved wife, in God's glorious Kingdom, when painful good-byes will no longer be endured and when joy will never end.

So long my dear friend, Pat, and thank you for the legacy of love and service you have left behind. 🍁

An Interview With John Elliott

By Dale Craniford

Jesus Christ said "... the greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). For 47 years, our friend and pastor, John Elliott, has faithfully served God's people with love and care. On September 15, 2021, John officially retired from employment with UCG.

John and his wife, Merrie, have served God's people for parts of six decades, in ten different regions of North America as well as East Africa. John first pastored in 1974, in British Columbia.

Mr. Elliott reflected on his time as minister:

"It has truly been an honour to serve full-time in God's work for nearly five decades in one of the most meaningful roles a human can have. Nearly everything about a pastor's work is about promoting others to share eternity in God's Kingdom.

With God's inspiration and positive member support comes a sense of fulfillment in serving candidates for the God Family. All of our family and extended family members are in God's Church, which is a real blessing."

Mr. Elliott graciously answered some questions.

What brought you to Canada, where you first pastored?

"I was notified by both the U.S. and Canadian church administrators that each wished

to hire me. They ultimately required me to choose which country I wanted to serve in. Having already spent three years attending college in the UK and traveling extensively in Europe, I chose Canada."

What were the benefits of serving in different parts of North America?

"North America is populated with immigrants from all countries. Some settle in environments with topography that has similarity to that of their home countries. Serving at different locations on the continent allowed us to get to know people from many different cultural backgrounds."

How did you become involved in mentoring potential pastors?

"When I began serving as senior pastor to eight countries in East Africa, there was no other ordained person in the area at the time. Discovering how to mentor along with developing leadership training initiatives helped illuminate who Jesus Christ was calling as deacons, deaconesses, elders and eventually pastors, plus my replacement senior pastor."

What were the biggest challenges/adjustments you faced in serving as a pastor?

"Time management is difficult to master in serving members whose needs often occur spontaneously. There were years when members' needs demanded most of my time. Filling them often put our family in the position of

getting leftover bits of time and attention. Ministers are taught to prioritize their lives with God, family, then Church. But when needs are constant, that order can easily get scrambled."

What's the biggest change you have seen in society since becoming a pastor?

"As secular humanism has increased the love and respect for other humans has greatly diminished. Respect for all authority figures including parents, teachers and leaders has all but collapsed. 'I know best' is the prevalent mindset that has trickled into all aspects of society, including the Church.

Gone are the days when someone would contact the Church to learn God's truth. Instead nearly all contacts are about trying to teach the Church their truths."

What were the greatest rewards in serving as a pastor?

"Encouraging people in their development of godly character is the greatest blessing of serving in God's ministry. Relationships grow out of the love, joy and peace that result from spiritual development in all of us."

We appreciate the loving care, hard work and dedication to serving God's family that John and Merrie have demonstrated! Best wishes on their retirement. We know they will still mentor and serve in many ways. John and Merrie, good and faithful servants, thanks again! 🍁

Linda Wasilkoff Retires as Secretary

By Rainer Salomaa

After serving as the corporate secretary and being one of three officers of the United Church of God – Canada for twenty-five years, Linda Wasilkoff retired as Secretary on September, 2021, and relinquished her duties to Ed van Pelt.

It was at the first Canadian Organizational Meeting held at the Crossroads Hotel in Calgary over the weekend of January 27-28, 1996, that a motion to appoint her to be the Secretary to the Council was overwhelmingly approved. At that organizational meeting, there were twenty-eight in attendance. Also selected during those meetings were National Council members and members to a Women's Advisory Committee. After the meetings, Mr. Gary Antion wrote, "The meetings ended all too soon as we went our separate ways encouraged at the process of consensus and the working of God's Spirit to achieve unity."

Eventually at further meetings our Bylaws were developed and accepted. They help define the responsibilities of the secretary. The required job elements include:

1) Keep or cause to be kept, all articles and bylaws, and amendments to the bylaws;

2) Keep or cause to be kept, at the Corporation's National Office or such other place as the National Council may direct, a book of minutes of all meetings, proceedings and actions of the National Council, of National Council and Conference Committees of the

National Council, and of National Conference meetings. The minutes of meetings shall include the time and place of holding, whether the meeting was general or special; and if special, how authorized, the method of notice given and the names of those present, or otherwise represented at, National Council and committee meetings and National Conference meetings. The Secretary shall keep or have kept at the National Office, a copy of the Articles of Continuance and Bylaws, as amended to date;



Linda Wasilkoff as Secretary

Photo by Rainer Salomaa

3) Keep resolutions of members and any committee of members;

4) Keep a register of directors (National Council) and Officers and a register of members (National Conference) which shall include:

- a) Name;
- b) Current residential ad-

dress;

c) Email address if the individuals if the individual has consented to receiving information or documents by electronic means; and

d) The date on which that person has become a director/officer/member and, if applicable, the date on which that person ceased to become a director/officer/member.

5) Keep other records and documents as are required by law to be kept;

6) Cause to be given notice of all meetings of the National Conference and of the National Council, and notice of meetings of committees of the National Council required by the Bylaws to be given;

7) Utilize the seal of the Corporation, affix the seal, or cause it to be affixed, as appropriate.

8) Perform duties, as assigned by the Chairman, Director of Operations, National Council or National Conference, which are not inconsistent with these Bylaws; and

9) Sign, execute and deliver in the name of the Corporation, all other instruments incident to the office of Secretary that are not specifically reserved for the Chairman or the National Conference and which are not prohibited by these Bylaws.

Linda has faithfully and dili-

See "Retirement" on page 15.

News From Across Canada

Saskatchewan Feast Site

We are pleased to announce that the Feast of Tabernacles will once again be held in Saskatoon. Even though Saskatoon is designated as a “local” site it is a full-fledged site with special music, elders present to give live sermons each day of the Feast and a full set of activities for you to enjoy.

We have room for those that wish to transfer to Saskatoon but please note that to attend you must register with Larry DeLong as space is not unlimited.

As last year, the Feast will be held in the Shriner’s Hall at 1022 Saskatchewan Crescent West. The meeting hall is located on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River with walking trails along the river starting right off the parking lot. The site is also a couple of blocks from the large Diefenbaker Park, a great place for walking, picnicking, golf and a famous disc golf course.

Also nearby is the Western Development Museum, a must if you enjoy delving into our western Canadian history.

For accommodation, Saskatoon has an abundance of AirBNB’s and hotels, several within five minutes of the hall.

For more info or to register please contact Larry DeLong at lgdelong@shaw.ca or call 403-345-4051.

Larry DeLong

Quebec Feast Site

This year’s Feast site location in Quebec will be at the Château Venise, Venise-en-Québec pending all contracts being finalized. Opening night service will be at 7:30.

The condos are part of a beautiful private domain situated on the Champlain Lake. There are large communal rooms and private gardens. Bicycle paths are close by.

Meals can be shared according to the initiative of members. Spiritual food will be served in French.

Bruno Leclerc

Edmonton Charity Drive

The Edmonton congregation held a charity drive this year for local charities.

The congregation made a donation to the HUB organization last year and was able to donate again this year. The HUB organization offers various types of support or a hand-up to those with different needs in the local area. The two areas that we donated to this year at HUB were Coats for Families providing all kinds of winter wear to low-income families and Hope for Leduc Homeless with care kits that included blankets, toiletries, underwear, socks and meal cards for either Tim Hortons or McDonalds.

This year the congregation also donated to the Camrose Women’s shelter. The items that were need-

ed were grocery store gift cards, towels, hand towels, facecloths, women’s pyjamas and sheets for twin beds. Because of COVID restrictions, donations were limited to new items.

Tonya Erickson

Feast Coordinator Retirement

During the Feast of Tabernacles in Drumheller, Alberta, this past year, Rainer and Claudia Salomaa made the decision to retire from festival planning and organizing after a very commendable 23 years. On February 12, while Michael and Tonya Erickson were visiting, the Calgary congregation gave a formal “thank you” for the Salomaa’s hard work and diligent service as they passed the proverbial baton. They were given some well-deserved put-your-feet-up socks, some gift cards and a bottle of wine.

Anthony Wasilkoff has this to say about how it started: “It was the autumn of 1995. The Wasilkoffs were on their way to the first FOT that UCG was holding in beautiful Whistler. We stopped to have dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Hoeh, Rainer and Claudia Salomaa and a few others. Dr. Hoeh was warm and cordial and said he would not allow others to determine who his friends would be. Mr. Armstrong had his Japanese sons and Dr. Hoeh had his Canadian sons! It was at this FOT in Penticton that Dr. Hoeh emphatically stated, ‘if keeping the Law of God was ever a burden to you, it is because it was never written in your hearts.’ At the conclusion of that FOT, the

baton was effectively passed from Penticton to Whistler and thereafter to Kelowna for some years to come. We all have accumulated a tremendous treasure house of precious memories of Feasts observed with family and friends.”

Since that time, Rainer and Claudia have coordinated Feasts in Penticton, Whistler, Kelowna, Canmore, Cochrane and Drumheller. They have been highly praised over the years for how well planned their Feast sites have been. The spreadsheets that Rainer has created are still being used today by many Festival Coordinators. His army of volunteers willingly came back year after year with smiling faces to help where needed which speaks loudly to his trusting delegation skills.

Michael Erickson commented “I remember my first UCG Feast with Rainer and Claudia in Whistler in 1996. What a contrast to the prior year’s Feast. The next year Rainer and Claudia began their tireless service to coordinate Feast sites in British Columbia and later in Alberta.”

David Palmer mentioned “What made the involvement at the Feast a pleasant task was the pre-organization Rainer put in place. Once the Feast began, thanks to him and Claudia’s organizing of different activities the festival almost ran itself.”

One quite often would see Claudia at the coffee/cookie reception in the lobby of the Kelowna theater or tending to a beautifully arrayed table tucked to the side or back for the before and after refreshments. Her behind-the-scenes efforts for senior lunches, stunning stage

decorations and many other activities have not gone unnoticed and are widely appreciated by generations. The Salomaas were well known for their Family Dances, Family Day activities, variety shows and Penny carnivals that were well attended year by year.

Regarding how many Feasts they had off (before I asked the question, I first asked Tonya to cover her ears), Rainer held up two fingers. “Once in Hawaii, and once in Escondido, California.”

David Palmer also had this to say: “One year, 2008, Rainer requested an opportunity to take a break from coordinating. I was assigned the task, but following his lead made the assignment much easier, especially having many of the same volunteers for the various tasks and activities, including Mike Erickson in the important role of handling the business office and festival finances.”

Don Hooser was delighted to pass on something as well. “While Elsie and I were living and serving the Northwest Washington from 2004 to 2010, our assigned Feast sites were in Canada, and Rainer was the Feast Coordinator each time. It was always a delight serving under Rainer and spending time with Rainer and Claudia. They were always so easy-going and made us feel very comfortable. We always loved their great sense



Rainer & Claudia Salomaa
Photo by United Church of God, an International Association

of humor. Rainer always assigned me to be one of the song leaders and I used to joke about Canada and Canadian ways and often compared Canada with my home state of Texas. May God continue to bless Rainer and Claudia as they enjoy their retirement from coordinating festival sites.”

Kelowna at one point became a live webcasted site for shut-ins. In its infancy, the lagging of the video that came through added to Rainer’s already humorous announcements. When he would say hello to everyone watching the webcast, he would proceed to move around fast. The video could not catch up, so one watching this would see a strange version of him on the receiving end. However, you definitely knew it was Rainer because of the telltale, and beloved laugh, we all know him so well for.

Larry and Maureen Delong add. “We would like to say thanks a million times to Rainer and Claudia for all the work they have done to make countless Feast of Tabernacles so special to countless Feast goers. Most have no idea the

amount of effort, hours and stress that goes into planning just a single Feast, never mind for 20 plus years. You have graciously passed the baton to Mike and Tonya. They will do fine! So, after over two decades of Feast planning, we wish both of you a well-deserved rest, we love you both”

Mike Erickson sums it up well with this: “What a blessing they have been to so many for all their diligent sacrifice in organizing these annual Feasts and the many other ways they have served the brethren and God’s Church over the years. They have been wonderful mentors, dear friends and adoptive parents to me for many, many years. They have helped me beyond what words can express and I am forever grateful for their love. I will endeavour to continue their tradition of celebrating the end to a successful Feast. Thank you, Rainer and Claudia.”

Heidi Poffenroth

Edmonton Clothing Exchange

The Edmonton congregation held a clothing exchange on January 1 after services and fellowship. Many were able to enjoy going through and selecting items for themselves and/or family members. The ladies and young girls had a wonderful time with their new free finds (the men appeared to enjoy themselves as well). The selections included casual and dressy clothing, coats, ties, suits, scarves, purses, wallets and shoes.

The items not taken by members of the congregation were donated to the Jireh Centre in Leduc, a local charity. The Jireh Centre

gives out free clothing and toiletries to the homeless, needy and low income individuals or families. There were 14 large bags of clothing (women’s, men’s and children’s), as well as some purses and wallets, two or three medium-sized boxes of shoes and some new toiletry items donated to the centre. The Jireh Centre was very appreciative for the donations.

Tonya Erickson

Patrick Read Obituary

Patrick John Read was born on March 20, 1952, in Kitchener, Ontario. He died on November 28, 2021, after a two-year battle with colon cancer.

In 1972 he met his wife-to-be, Jo-Anne, through a mutual friend. They were married on July 8 of that year. They would have celebrated 50 years of marriage in July of this year. Patrick and Jo-Anne had two children, Judy and Tony.

The Reads began attending the Kitchener congregation in 1987. They were founding members of the United Church of God Toronto congregation when it began in 1995. Pat was ordained a deacon on the Day of Atonement in 1996. Then, in January of 2009, he was ordained an elder.

He was hired full-time by the church on October 1, 2010. During his time as a pastor, he served congregations in Ontario, the Maritimes and Newfoundland. At the time of his death, he was the pastor of Windsor and London (ON); and Moncton and Sussex (NB).

In addition to his pastoring duties, Pat also assisted in setting up the DVD and MP3 program for Canadian shut-ins as well as helping with various duties in the National Office. He served on the Canadian National Council for a total of three terms (nine years) and was the Feast Coordinator for Southern Ontario sites for many years.

Pat loved anything outdoors – from camping to landscaping – and he approached these things fearlessly. He was a Jack-of-all-trades. Anything his hand touched he turned into something beautiful. He loved cars and in recent years, restored an Oldsmobile that was gifted to him. Above all else, he loved God most and treasured his family deeply. Patrick’s faith was evident to all who knew him.

Several people submitted tributes. The following is a sampling.

From Brent Feiock: “As I got to know Patrick more and more, it became very obvious to me the kind of man he was. He not only loved his physical family, but his spiritual family as well. A true servant of God and a wonderful friend was Patrick



Patrick Read

Photo by United Church of God, aIA

Read. He will be deeply missed!"

From Jim and Almeda Lucas: "We can still remember how much he enjoyed the square dances we would have at the Feast in Midland. For Pat it was the joy of being among God's people and having a good time. Our prayers are now for his family as they have to move forward toward the Kingdom where they will once again be reunited and rejoicing with him in a world that we can only imagine."

From Paul Wasilkoff: "Over

the last couple of decades I had the pleasure of getting to know Patrick Read. During that time we journeyed through career changes to answer the call to ministry - though at different times. His encouragement, service-mindedness and humour made him a joy to work beside. We will dearly miss him. However, we are all the more determined to complete the Work God has set before us so that we can be part of the grand reunion in store for God's saints."

Pat will be greatly missed, not only by family, but also by

many colleagues, congregants and friends. He is survived by his wife, Jo-Anne; son, Tony; daughter, Judy Rangel (Rudy) and grandchildren, Simon and Landry Read; and Edie and Harry Rangel.

A memorial for Patrick was held on December 8 in Goderich, Ontario -- a place of significance to the Read family. While only family attended in-person, a great many friends and congregants were able to attend remotely via Zoom.

Read Family & UNC

"Retirement" from page 11.

gently performed her role and carried out these duties in an outstanding and professional manner. Over her twenty-five years of service she has sat in on about one hundred regular meetings (plus quite a few extra ones), the earlier meetings lasting for up to three days.

She faithfully took notes and created minutes. At times, my wife Claudia or one of the other ladies present would rub her shoulders as she was typing and at times, since she is short, she would have

an extra chair stacked on top of the one she was sitting on to prop her up into a better typing position.

Linda is very knowable of our governing documents and has provided valuable comments and advice when called upon during Council meetings.

One of her last tasks, over several years, was to mentor and train her replacement. It seems like she did a good job. Welcome aboard Ed!

Linda, the Canadian work thanks you deeply for your labour of love! The National Council, National Conference and I thank you. You helped me so much when I was the chairman for twenty years. We worked very well together. Well done good and faithful servant. Put your feet up, rest a spell and enjoy a Mai Tai once in a while as you reflect on so many experiences on our governing board. We have been blessed to have had you as our Corporate Secretary! May God continue to bless us all. 🍷

"Favour" from page 16.

during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Our human minds need annual reminders of what we are to be and do. God has provided the way for this reminder by giving us the annual Passover and Holy Days. Let us rejoice as we renew our thought patterns by drawing near to the Father and

Son so that we remain pleasing to them for the whole year.

We are called to be ambassadors for the family and Kingdom of God. We can only be ambassadors if we fully understand and support the beliefs of that Kingdom. The Passover season is designed to assist us in renewing and refreshing our understanding

of our calling. It is meant to reinforce the fact that we must love God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves.

We live the Passover message every day, but we refresh our understanding and Covenant during the Passover season. May your Passover season be rich with spiritual food this year! 🍷

In Favour with God and Man

By Michael Erickson

Luke records that Jesus and His family traveled to Jerusalem each year for the Feast of the Passover. It was prophesied that the Spirit of the Lord, of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of God would be with Jesus (Isaiah 11:2). Luke tells us that Jesus stayed behind to talk with the teachers of Israel, to listen and to ask questions to the point that they were astonished (verses 46, 47). He spoke with such wisdom that none were offended. It is possible that the teachers at the Temple were delighted with the demeanor, ability, intelligence and attitude of this young boy.

Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents and continued to increase in wisdom and stature as He grew into manhood. All that time, He was subject to His parents and “in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:5-52). We, too, are to be in favour with God and man.

When Jesus was a boy, the Passover lamb was sacrificed and prayers were made for forgiveness of sin. Death passed over those protected by the blood of the lamb. The people ate unleavened bread to emphasize the need to remain “unleavened” or pure before God.

Israel was to be a “holy people and holy nation” and the unleavened bread was symbolic of removing leaven or sin to make sure their homes and lives did not have sin present (Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6). They were to do this to be in favour with God.

It is only the presence of God that makes anything holy, so God had offered His presence to the nation of Israel. Israel failed right from the beginning – even before they left Egypt although there was always a number of faithful people within the nation.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the New Covenant was enacted. Anyone who repents and believes is eligible to become part of God’s holy people and holy nation (1 Peter 1:5, 14-16, 19; 2:9). Peter explained that Jesus Christ left us an example of how to live – that is, how to be in favour with God and man (verse 21). The Passover is not meant to enact forgiveness. Baptism does that. It is meant as a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which makes possible the removal of sin. Our part in that recognition is to believe in Him and resist sin all year long.

For the followers of Jesus Christ today, being in favour with God requires recognition of sin and a heart-felt repentance followed by baptism which cleanses a person from all sin (1 Peter 1:2). We are then to live the new life which is free of sin (Romans 6:2, 15). We remain in the grace or favour of God by the choices we make in life as we allow God as the Master Potter to fashion and mold us.

Converted people keep the Feast of the Passover every year. In our case, Christ is the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). We remove the leaven from our lives by remaining cleansed from sin. That

means we do not sin again intentionally. If we slip and repent, Christ is there to forgive. However the cost of our salvation is so high we ought to be diligent not to slip. We are to “offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:5).

Eating unleavened bread is commanded of us and is symbolic of our determination to fulfill our part of the Covenant. Jesus Christ was without sin and that is our goal and objective. It is attained through the mercy and love of His sacrifice and our love of God’s law which is only possible if we also love God who is the lawgiver (1 John 3:1-10) and are empowered by Him.

Loving our fellow man is part of what Jesus Christ asks of us. John noted that if we see a brother in need and simply pass by, God is not dwelling in us (1 John 3:13-18). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expressed the will of God in clear terms. We need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves as we strive to love even our enemies. Matthew 5, 6 and 7 are good chapters to read as we prepare for Passover. Examining ourselves and the direction our life has taken is part of the Passover preparation exercise.

Passover is the season to focus on the all-important steps of salvation we have taken. We need to rehearse what our behaviour will be throughout the year by putting special emphasis on our actions

See “Favour” on page 15.

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