



United News Canada

NEWS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD - CANADA

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Winter 2024

Being There!

By Anthony Wasilkoff

Perhaps you have heard of the Woody Allen expression “80% of success is just showing up.” There is a lot of meaning packed into that short statement. Maybe you have experienced situations where someone you were depending on was a no-show. Perhaps there were times when we were that person. Making an appearance and being present make an important statement and tell others a great deal about ourselves.

Attending weekly church services (when we are not ill or are otherwise indisposed) is something that is ingrained and habitual to most Sabbatharians. There are three fundamental reasons we are determined to show up for church. First and foremost, we do so to appear before God. In other words, we typically attend church service each week because we wish to worship our Creator. This is of paramount importance to most Christians.

The second reason believers habitually attend church services is to learn something about the Bible. We assemble in order to receive spiritual instruction from the pages of God’s sacred word. Typically we receive teaching about doctrine, history, prophecy and Christian living. Occasionally we learn something new or somewhat new. It is often something we are already aware of, but need reinforcement or clarification. We earnestly pray in advance for

God to inspire the speaking and the listening, and we realize that inspiration is real and a most wonderful thing when it actually happens.



Being There

Image generated by DALL-E3

The third reason for attending a church service is for the important and vital purpose of fellowship. Christians need to spend time with each other as often as they can and an ideal time to do so is before and after weekly worship services. “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Spiritual fellowship with God and Christ are essential to our spiritual growth and development. Physical fellowship with fellow believer is also important for spiritual health and vitality.

Sadly, it seems some of God’s people feel that they don’t need to attend church if there isn’t going to be a live speaker present to deliver a message. However, a recorded message or a live webcast is still spiritual instruction based on God’s word and has

great value. It is still appearing before God irrespective of the message being live, pre-recorded or on-line.

Regardless of how the sermon is delivered, prescribed fellowship is always in-person, in real time and spontaneous. Fellowship is not incidental or optional. Fellowship is vital for the maintenance and enhancement of spiritual health. It provides the ideal setting for establishing a healthy and enduring wholesome relationship with the precious people of God. Fellowship is conversing with brethren who understand the same doctrines we understand and who are enthusiastic about living God’s ways just as we are. Spending time with one another gives us an opportunity to stir up love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25). If we don’t spend regular quality time with each other, how can we motivate and encourage one another?

“80% of success is just showing up” is a meaningful saying. The percentage is even higher when it is applied to faithfully attending weekly church services! 🌟

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Kelowna, BC Report

By Wayne Ward

Around 140 people from all over North America made the Okanagan valley their setting for the Feast of Tabernacles this year. The city of Kelowna served as host for daily church services and for many joyful gatherings of fun and fellowship.

Fourteen engaging speakers, including seven elders, fed us with rich spiritual knowledge showing the many aspects of what is represented in these Feast days through daily sermonettes, sermons and three Bible Studies. We also had a very endearing Bible Talk session by two of our very respected retired pastors and former Council of Elders members -- Robert Dick and Robert Berendt. Most of the registered

attendees turned up an hour and a half before church on the Sabbath to hear each of them share a personal lesson learned during their service to church as an encouragement to everyone to keep up the good fight.

Children enjoyed three fun-filled educational lessons prepared just for them

teaching them the basic harvest principles that are a part of God's Feasts. A giant Feast mural project was a major part of their learning plan and was on



Okanagan Lake
Photo by Trish Romeo



Seniors' Dinner Winners
Photo by Michael Scheid



The Congregation in Kelowna
Photo provided by Teagan Davie

United News - Canada

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display for all to see and enjoy.

We experienced inspiring music daily - singing hymns, enjoying the children's choir, a children's ensemble and many heartfelt solo piano offerings. We enjoyed many fellowship opportunities, including three catered activities - a Meet & Greet

Reception, a Seniors Banquet, and an Eighth Day Lunch.

Also, many enthusiastic individuals stepped up to take the lead in many of the activities in the area - including a wineries tour, golf, bowling, a VR escape room, food bank volunteering, thrift shopping and a family day

amusement centre outing.

We look forward to reprising this exciting Feast of Tabernacles experience in 2025. Please look for it in next year's Feast Planning Brochure. Then book as early as the 2025 Festival Brochure allows, since this location fills up fast. 🍷

Calgary, AB Report

By Michael Erickson

We had 200 brethren from across Canada, the USA, Ireland, Britain and the Philippines come together and rejoice in God's Feast in Calgary this year. A new family that had contacted the church just prior to the Feast and had planned to only attend the first two days, had what they described as "a crisis of conscience" and stayed the whole Feast. We were blessed to have Darris McNeely present a Beyond Today Per-

sonal Appearance on Friday evening with seven new individuals attending.

The messages were inspired by God to teach and encourage His children to remember the basics

of why we are here and to look forward to the time when all people will have their opportunity to know God -- a time when many people will come and say, "Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we will walk in His paths."

We had outstanding special music every day during the Feast including many inspiring solos, two festival choir pieces and the popular children's choir. Everyone did a wonderful job.



A View of the Canadian Rockies

Photo provided by Kaitlyn Anderson



Calgary Service

Photo by Kaitlyn Anderson



Beautiful Stage Decorations

Photo provided by Kaitlyn Anderson

We had several group opportunities to grow our relationships with each other. On the first evening, we had a reception prior to the opening night video. The first day of the Feast, we had a group buffet dinner followed by a family dance. In the middle of the Feast, we had the opportunity to visit the Calgary Zoo. To round out the week we had a group trip to Banff and an opportunity to experience the memorable gondola ride to the top of the mountain. We had

our traditional Seniors' Luncheon with many people volunteering to perform musical selections and share humorous stories for our seniors.

For our teens and young adults there was a Meet & Greet at the beginning of the Feast and a Bible Study later in the Feast. For the teens, we had a planned teen activity and an impromptu activity. Additionally, we had family mini golf and bowling. For our children we had children's lessons

twice during the Feast.

The October weather in Calgary was unusually warm although one evening and morning we did have a bit of snow, which quickly melted. An abundance of fellowship, bonding as brothers and sisters in Christ and feasting (physical and spiritual) occurred throughout the Feast. The experience was truly bonding as a spiritual family, rejoicing, and praising God together! 🍷

Midland, ON Report

By Paul Wasilkoff

Approximately 130 enthusiastic brethren gathered in the picturesque town of Midland, Ontario, situated on the shores of ruggedly beautiful Georgian Bay, to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a joyous crowd with some individuals keeping the Feast for the first time, some returning to larger group setting observance and still others who have kept it

for decades. The stage decor was fall-themed and even included a return of Lambert the Lion and Lionel the Lamb. The information table was likewise decorated in fall colors with much-appreciated Feast souvenir pens, delectable sweets and hand-folded paper flowers.

We have been meeting at the same location

for several years, so the hotel staff greeted us as friends and were very accommodating to our many needs. They gave us permission to use various areas of the hotel for get-togethers and even allowed us to have a baptism in the pool one morning.

Several commented on the meaty, inspired messages. Our high attendance on the First Day was 158; each service had several connections via Zoom. In attendance were a number of very talented musicians. Special music each day was wonderful as was the daily hymn accompaniment. The choir performed admirably well.

Activities were well attended, starting with a meet and greet and games after sunset on the first day of the Feast. Members continued with a variety of games in the gorgeous atrium area of the hotel throughout the Feast. The teens and young adults enjoyed a fun-



Meet & Greet Fellowship
Photo by Heidi St. Thomas



The Choir Presenting Music

Photo by Amy Van Zant



Bowling In Midland

Photo by UNC Staff

filled adventure at a local laser tag arena, followed by a Bible Study. On the Sabbath, the seniors were duly honoured with a brunch hosted by the attending ministry. We had an orienteering/escape activity that was attended by many of our outdoor-minded attendees. Our

family day activity was held at a local 5-pin bowling alley. We enjoyed the various acts presented at our customary Variety Night, hosted by Mr. Dennis O'Neill. Our last activity was a farewell luncheon between services on the Last Great Day and provided members a final

opportunity to spend quality time together.

Overall, it was a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles; we are already looking forward to next year's Feast. We hope you can join us in Midland! 🍷

Back to the Usual

By Linda Wasilkoff

Did you notice more pre-Feast trials than usual this year? I seemed to have heard of more than normal. Personally, just prior to the Feast, we had car trouble (brakes and transmission), a leaky roof, family sickness and other stressors. This was in addition to the usual concerns in church with sickness – one local member had to cancel Feast plans due to an emergency health situation.

Even so, the Feast was a wonderful reprieve from the plentiful stress with good sermons, a meeting of many friends, making new friends and attending many planned functions. It

helped to relieve the tensions and lift the spirit.

Then, back to reality! When we arrived home, the car was still in the repair shop and the house roof still leaked making it so easy to forget the vision that was rehearsed during the Feast. How to keep the vision until the spring festival season is the question.

Some are afflicted by seasonal affective disorder (SAD) when there are shorter days, less sunlight and a shift in the weather. There is trouble sleeping, energy is zapped and a loss of interest in usual pastimes. There can also be feelings of depression.

For some this could even impair cognitive function. There are ways to help relieve these feelings. Perhaps some of these methods can also help us fight off post-Feast blues.

Of course, for Christians, it is essential to continue the important basics of prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting. When we feel down, it is easy to let these slide. In addition, schedule in activities you find enjoyable – going for walks, engaging in hobbies, doing volunteer work and involvement in church activities.

One study connected mental health with the extensive quar-

antining that occurred during the COVID pandemic. It was shown that any long period of isolation has an impact on an individual. Depending upon your age, responsibilities and where you live, you may need to be creative in order to stay connected with others. Phoning others, especially those who are shut-ins, is an easy way to do this.

Another important factor is your schedule. If you have trouble sleeping, having a regular routine will often help. It can also expose you to light at consistent times. Exercise will also assist in this and doing so outside will give more exposure to sunlight. On days when you cannot get outside, it is important to let as much natural light into the house as possible.

Unfortunately, some find themselves drinking more al-



Some people have SAD

Photo by Mikhail Nilov at pexels.com

coholic beverages when they are stressed or sad, but this can cause even more depression. When we drink, it is important to ask, "am I drinking more than usual and if so why am I drinking."

For some people keeping a journal of thoughts can be benefi-

cial – even when the thoughts are negative. It can help to prioritize problems and identify triggers for negativity. This helps a person be better able to control how they are thinking and feeling. Perhaps a different take on this would be meditation. Find Scriptures that apply and take time to apply them to your own situation.

Only a small percentage of people have SAD, but many more have what is called the "winter blues." Depending upon circumstances, each of us can be susceptible to a degree of depression – whether mild or severe.

So, whenever the vision of the Kingdom begins to wane, pull out the FOT sermon notes and review them to recover, refresh and renew the vision. Before we know it, the Spring Holy Days will be here. 🍁

"Tradition" from page 16.

and that are found in his writings. Paul was thankful for being able to teach that salvation came through sanctification by the Spirit in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15). He knew God had called them by the gospel he and others taught and he strongly encouraged them to hold fast to the traditions they had been taught whether by word or epistle.

Paul had taught by word and example. His teachings did not cause or allow for disorder, but led to faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the effect of the indwelling Holy Spirit in each convert. Paul definitely taught traditions (2 Thessalonians 3:6-9). He taught love for a brother and godly conduct in all converted people. He admonished con-

verts not to have company with those who did not follow the epistle as he had taught them (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

Peter knew that truth and boldly wrote that brethren are to become holy in all their actions and words. They were to be on guard for the traditions they had received from their fathers which could lead to aimless conduct, and remember they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (I Peter 1:15-19).

God created various nations, races and peoples and knows there are differences among them. The differences must never lead to traditions that interfere with the intention of God's laws. Each generation of followers has the responsibility to faithfully pass

on the way of truth. It is to be an ongoing and seamless continuation of truth since truth does not vary. Customs and doctrines are extremely important. They were founded in the New Covenant by God and written in Scripture. They are also in our minds and on our hearts, so that we have clarity in how we live and please God. Paul admonished Timothy to hold fast to the pattern of sound words they heard from him. Timothy was told to commit those words to those who followed him, not to argue over words, avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, but to set a pattern of behaviour that is godly. It is good to be strong in the things we have learned if those things are true and godly. This war is not over (2 Timothy 3:13-17). Tradition, tradition, there is good and bad - keep that which is good and teach others. 🍁

Cincinnati Leadership Weekend

By Ellsworth Stanley

“The word of God is the foundation of Knowledge ABC 2002”. These words are written in stone on a large rock at the entrance to the Home Office in Milford, Ohio. This was placed there on behalf of the ABC class of 2002.



Decorative Rock With Engraving

Photo by Ellsworth Stanley

I was privileged to participate in the 2024 Leadership Workshop at the Home Office. This was my second time taking part in this conference.

The theme of the conference in 2012 was “The Stuff of Leadership - Christ-Like Service.”

This year there was a whole new roster of presenters, but the emphasis of Christ-like service and what it means to be a Disciple of Christ remained the same. To become a leader requires that we first of all be a disciple. A disciple is a learner. When we learn from the teacher, we can influence others to become disciples so then they can become effective leaders. A Christian leader then becomes more effective in influencing people to follow Christ. We are to

imitate the Teacher. A disciple is first of all a pupil then the pupil becomes like the Teacher. As pupils we lead like Him.

At the workshop, all 49 of us passed the weekend learning from the spiritual leaders of the Church of God. We learned what Apologetics is. How to give a defence for what we believe or, in other words, how to defend the Faith. As 1 Peter 3:15 states, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you yet with gentleness and reverence maintain a servant’s attitude.” This is important. We are not “drill sergeants.” We gently lead as the Master did. Our Christ-like example is always displayed front and centre.

From the beginning, Mr. Shabi set the tone for the whole conference. He had each of us stand and introduce ourselves and give a mini “ice breaker.” This was most effective as we got to know something interesting about each participant. We learned the in-



Attendees in Cincinnati

Photo provided by UCGIA



Meeting a VIP At The Home Office

Photo provided by Renée Avilés

ternational flavour of the entire group from Nigeria to Mexico, Chile, USA and Canada. Some used translators. We were all able to eat together in the Home Office. This gave us more valuable time to fellowship.

We were given a guided tour of the Home Office facilities. Everything worked together to make it a meaningful and rewarding conference.

We learned from Mr. Rick Shabi what our part is in this great work of God. From Mr. Steve Myers we learned how to develop the character of a true servant of God. A spirit of unity pervaded the conference room. It almost seemed like a mini Feast of Tabernacles.

After the daily sessions I was invited to the homes of Ken Japhet and Peter and Terri Eddington for a social gathering. They were very gracious hosts.

Over all, it proved to be an oasis of peace and tranquility as we learned by example how to truly imitate Christ. Even the weather cooperated to make the meetings valuable learning experiences with a part of the body of Christ. 🍁

2024 Audit

For many people, budgeting is a dreaded task. But it is one that is very important for household finances. For the church, budgeting is equally important. Additionally, since a charity's income comes from money freely given, it is important to ensure that those funds are appropriately used. Thus, each year the United Church of God – Canada hires an outside firm to audit the books according to established and acceptable account-

ing standards. This report is then sent to the National Conference for their approval.

When United Church of God - Canada began, a determination was made to be transparent. Even though anyone can go online to check on any charity's finances, the church wrote the Bylaws to require that the annual audit of the church's finances be published and made available to all

congregations of UCG-Canada. Originally hard copies were made available for all congregations. More recently, the report is published in the *United News Canada*. However, if you are a person who enjoys carefully going through financial statements and would like to see the complete printed version of the report, please contact your local pastor who would be able to obtain a copy for you to see. 🌍

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD - CANADA							
Statement of Operations and Changes in Fund Balances							
For the year Ended March 31st, 2024							
	Operating Fund	Festival Fund	Assistance Fund	Building Fund	Other Funds	2024	2023
Revenue						\$ 1,835,321	\$ 1,684,846
Tithes and offerings	\$ 1,778,969	\$ 29,689	\$ 26,663	\$ -	\$ -	61,949	14,520
Interest income	61,949	-	-	-	-	1,897,270	1,699,366
	<u>1,840,918</u>	<u>29,689</u>	<u>26,663</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>		
Expenditure						960,579	929,415
Salaries and benefits	960,579	-	-	-	-	129,876	128,052
Travel	129,876	-	-	-	-	26,010	27,942
Festival costs	-	26,010	-	-	-	997	464
National conferences	997	-	-	-	-	100,169	110,521
Office and general	100,169	-	-	-	-	27,198	26,983
Insurance	27,198	-	-	-	-	7,575	6,845
Telephone	7,575	-	-	-	-	155,280	152,046
Advertising	155,280	-	-	-	-	15,615	13,498
Professional fees	15,615	-	-	-	-	162,773	148,609
Hall rentals	162,773	-	-	-	-	18,009	19,817
Church supplies	18,009	-	-	-	-	-	85
Tape duplication	-	-	-	-	-	51,713	50,132
Rent	51,713	-	-	-	-	11,806	13,288
Equipment rental	11,806	-	5,760	-	-	5,760	4,650
Assistance	-	-	-	-	-	4,454	3,646
Bank and interest charges	4,454	-	-	-	-	(73)	(1,208)
Exchange loss	(73)	-	-	-	-	5,216	3,862
Amortization - (Notes 2(b) and 3)	5,216	-	-	-	-	1,682,957	1,638,647
	<u>1,651,187</u>	<u>26,010</u>	<u>5,760</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>		
Revenue over Expenditure for the Year	189,731	3,679	20,903	-	-	214,313	60,719
Fund balance at beginning of year	1,844,441	32,170	94,903	38,607	1,898	2,012,019	1,951,300
Fund Balance at End of Year	<u>\$ 2,034,172</u>	<u>\$ 35,849</u>	<u>\$ 115,806</u>	<u>\$ 38,607</u>	<u>\$ 1,898</u>	<u>\$ 2,226,332</u>	<u>\$ 2,012,019</u>

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD - CANADA
Statement of Financial Position
As at March 31st, 2024

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Assets		
Current Assets	\$ 1,615,429	\$ 1,646,172
Cash and cash equivalents	564,765	305,242
Term deposit	19,295	4,274
Amounts receivable	40,961	39,406
Harmonized sales tax recoverable	8,302	5,960
Supplies inventory	<u>43,340</u>	<u>37,512</u>
Prepaid expenses and deposits	2,292,092	2,038,566
	<u>21,352</u>	<u>12,809</u>
Capital Assets - (Note 3)	\$ 2,313,444	\$ 2,051,375
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
Current Liabilities	\$ 87,112	\$ 39,356
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	<u>87,112</u>	<u>39,356</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>2,226,332</u>	<u>2,012,019</u>
Fund Balance	\$ 2,313,444	\$ 2,051,375

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD - CANADA
Statement of Cash Flows
For the year Ended March 31st, 2024

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Cash Provided By		
(a) Operating activities	\$ 242,539	\$ 55,647
(b) Investing activities	<u>(273,282)</u>	<u>(2,989)</u>
Increase in Cash	(30,743)	52,658
Cash, beginning of year	<u>1,646,172</u>	<u>1,593,514</u>
Cash, End of Year	\$ 1,615,429	\$ 1,646,172
(a) Operating Activities		
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ 214,313	\$ 60,719
Amortization of capital assets	5,216	3,862
Change in non-cash working capital	<u>23,010</u>	<u>(8,934)</u>
Cash from operations	<u>\$ 242,539</u>	<u>\$ 55,647</u>
(b) Investing Activities		
Proceeds from sale of (purchase of) investments	\$ (259,523)	\$ (32)
Purchase of other assets	<u>(13,759)</u>	<u>(2,957)</u>
	<u>\$ (273,282)</u>	<u>\$ (2,989)</u>

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Members of United Church of God - Canada:

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of United Church of God - Canada (the Organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31st, 2024, and the statements of operations and changes in fund balances, and changes in cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Organization as at March 31, 2024, and the results of its operations changes in fund balances, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Accounting Standards for Not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Organization's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Organization's to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS
(Licensed Public Accountants)

July 31st, 2024
North York, Ontario

Conference & Council Meetings

By Edwin van Pelt

The National Conference met for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on September 15, 2024 as required by Canadian law. The meeting was followed by a regular meeting of the National Council. Both meetings were conducted by videoconference.

Nearly all the members of the National Conference (all the elders in Canada plus the two National Council laymembers) were present for the meeting, which began at noon ET. Treasurer Bill Dimovski, Secretary Edwin van Pelt and Parliamentarian Linda Wasilkoff also attended the meeting.



Dennis O'Neill

Photo by United News Canada Staff

The agenda included addresses and reports as well as a number of business items. After the opening prayer, introductory comments were made by the National Conference Chair Lloyd Teetaert. Director of Operations Anthony Wasilkoff gave the first address followed by a report from the Media Team Coordinator Paul Wasilkoff. The next report was given by Ministerial Services

Team Coordinator Rainer Salomaa. Treasurer Bill Dimovski presented the next address, which was then followed by Mr. Teetaert's address. Each speaker was allotted 20 minutes.

Next on the agenda were some business items. The first item was to approve the date and method for the next AGM, which is scheduled for September 14, 2025 via videoconferencing.

The minutes from the September 10, 2023 AGM were approved as were the financial statements for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

National Council members Larry DeLong, Dennis O'Neill and Anthony Wasilkoff had their Council terms end immediately after the close of the AGM. Mr. DeLong and Mr. Wasilkoff were returned to the Council for another three years and Dr. Daniel Berendt was selected to replace Dennis O'Neill. Mr. O'Neill was presented with a parting gift at the Feast of Tabernacles in Midland, Ontario.

Resolutions were then passed to approve the appointment of our auditor for the 2024-2025 audit and the appointment of the three National Council members. The meeting concluded with prayer a few minutes ahead of schedule.

After a short break, the National Council met. All members were present along with Mr. Dimovski, Mr. van Pelt and Mrs. Wasilkoff. The meeting opened with prayer. Mr. O'Neill was invited to stay and

left the meeting after some parting words. Dr. Berendt was re-introduced; he served on the National Council previously.



Dan & Fern Berendt

Photo provided by UCGIA

The minutes of the June 6-7, 2024 National Council meeting were approved followed by the approval of two forms that are required to be filed with the federal government of Canada. The auditor's reimbursement was also approved and the 2025-2026 Strategic Plan was also adopted. Meeting dates for 2025 were also approved.

Jim Lucas, who heads the Replacement of the Director of Operations Task Force, provided an update and led the discussion. A timeline and a questionnaire were presented, discussed and subsequently approved.

Compensation Committee Chair Cindy Ridi led the discussion of the final item of business. The Committee consists of all National Council members who are not employed by the United Church of God-Canada. 🍷

News From Across Canada

Correction

There was an error in the last issue of *United News Canada*. The title of the article by Sally Parker should have been "A Sabbath Days Journey." For those who were wondering, this was not an attempt to change the order of the Ten Commandments!

United News Canada

Surry Congregation In Victoria

2 Corinthians 2:12 states, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord," On this occasion recorded in Scripture, the apostle Paul availed himself of the opportunity to do good.

With this in mind, our Surry church building was not available for services on September 14. That turned out to be a blessing, as a door was opened to us. How so? We had



Surrey & Victoria Brethren Unified in Song

Photo by Ralph Cortes

opportunity to visit the Victoria brethren and to combine forces, so to speak. Eight of us were able to visit the island on that Sabbath. It was a delight!

A beautiful ferry ride and scenic drive saw us arrive safe and sound, thank God.

Richard Shiundu, deacon, and wife Maureen, warmly greeted us, as did all brethren. The occasion felt like a mini

Feast! Our pastor Wayne Ward and his wife, Denise, were there as well. Ralph Cortes of our Vancouver congregation provided a sermonette, and Wayne Ward gave the sermon. Both messages were well received.

It was a blessing to meet with old and new friends, to praise God, hear His Word and break bread together. God blessed us with a variety of delicious and plentiful food and lots of good spiritual conversation.

Dale Craniford

Windsor Special Service

Our regular Sabbath meeting hall was locked! Those arriving early to set up for the service found the building in McGregor, Ontario, inaccessible on November 2. So, we quickly made alternate arrangements and all met together in Kingsville at a member's home.

Everyone was willing to drive



Surrey & Victoria Brethren Sharing a Meal

Photo by Ralph Cortes



Windsor Brethren During Sabbath Service

Photo by Marilyn Anderson



Toronto Blessing

Photo by Amy van Zant

the extra 40 kilometres at the last minute. Services started a bit late as people had to be contacted on their way to church. The setup group waited at the hall for those who weren't able to be contacted by phone. God always goes before His people leading the way to worship Him on His Sabbath day of special worship.

Our pastor, Paul Wasilkoff, his wife, Coreen, and son, Jayden, had already driven 400 kilometres from Hamilton. Mr. Wasilkoff adapted easily as he spoke from the dining room ta-

ble to the 15 brethren.

After the service, fellowship over lunch was a very happy time, as we thanked God for His Sabbath and leadership.

Marilyn Anderson

Toronto Post-Feast Social

Traditionally, the second Sabbath following the Feast is the day for the blessing of little children. This year the Toronto congregation enjoyed this wonderful ceremony as one infant

was blessed. While many were away with post-Feast illness, the attendance was still higher than anticipated.

Following services, we enjoyed a post-Feast social. The dining tables were decorated with royal blue tablecloths, burlap runners, plates and silverware. The centerpieces were tree branches made to look like miniature trees. Affixed to the branches were small cards – leaves on one side and photos from the various Feast sites on the other side. Members were requested to submit the photos



The Dining Room/Podium

Photo by Anna Morle



Toronto Post-Feast Social

Photo by Amy van Zant



The food line with an array of selections

Photo by Amy van Zant

ahead of time so that these special “leaves” could be constructed. The table décor was rounded out with colourful leaves, gourds and mini pumpkins. It set the stage for a very enjoyable meal.

Members were encouraged to bring food representative of the Feast site they attended so there was lots of variety. There was even a special Black Forest cake large enough for everyone to have a generous piece. Everyone was encouraged to share Feast experiences at the table while eating. This was augmented as we enjoyed looking at the photos that were on the table from various Feast sites.

Gifts from the various Feast sites attended were given away at the close of the meal by drawing names. A new couple were attending their first Sabbath that day and stayed for the social. It was lovely to see them receive one of the gifts.

All an all, it was a wonderful occasion as we shared our experiences, food and treats.

United News Canada

Bean/Grayson Wedding

On Tuesday, November 5, 2024, Frank Bean and Alicia Grayson were married in a private ceremony at Rainer and Claudia Salomaa’s home in Calgary.



Frank & Alicia Bean

Photo by Claudia Salomaa

Following the ceremony, performed by Rainer Salomaa, there were champagne toasts and a group meal at a near-by restaurant. Claudia Salomaa baked a special tri-chocolate mousse wedding cake for dessert, which the restaurant served. Congratulations to a lovely couple!

Rainer Salomaa

St. John’s, NF Feast of Tabernacles

What do you do when you live nearly 4,000 kilometers from the nearest Feast site in your country? That is what the group in St. John’s, Newfoundland, faced this year. With some additional challenges, getting to a Feast site just was not feasible this year.



Brethren in Newfoundland

Photo by Ellsworth Stanley

Thankfully, Ellsworth Stanley was there as was David and Florence Squibb who usually look after the technical set-up each week. This meant that the group could watch live webcast services together and experience fellowship afterward to enjoy their own mini-Feast. They hope to have an official site there next year.

United News Canada

Tradition

By Robert Berendt

A song by the title of “Tradition” was in the movie “Fiddler on the Roof.” The movie was about a Jewish community that had come under pressure from outside forces. It was the traditions of the community and religious beliefs that kept the community strong.

Some traditions are strongly embedded in religion. Some have developed due to the circumstances of the people. *Chamber’s Dictionary* defines tradition as: “a handing over (law); oral transmission from generation to generation, especially of certain Christian, Judaic and Islamic doctrines and customs; a tale, belief or practice thus handed down; a long-established belief or custom; anything bound up with or continuing in the life of a family, community, etc.” Traditions add a pattern of living that a group has found to be comfortable and that result in the overall good of the individual and community.

When Jesus taught about the kingdom and how to live according to the laws and commandments God gave for their good (Deuteronomy 5:30, 6:24; Romans 7:12), He ran into traditions that had been added by those in authority. He was confronted by Pharisees asking why His disciples did not always wash their hands before they ate bread. Jesus countered by asking why their traditions transgressed the commandment of God (Mark 7:1-13). The example Jesus used was that the Pharisees taught that a gift “to God” was more important than honouring one’s parents with that gift. Thus, the fifth commandment was broken.

Traditions have always been,

and always will be, a part of life. When those traditions lead to the setting aside of the laws and commandments of God, they are not profitable. The Pharisees were fanatical about some of the actions they insisted upon such as washing hands in a certain way, washing pitchers, cups and many other such things. These were placed on the Jewish people they controlled.

Tradition gives a foundation upon which people can rely for stability and continuance in their daily lives. We need routines that benefit us and the community. But, many traditions are made for the benefit of a few and control of the many. Paul warned that the people of God need to carefully follow the teachings he and others had brought to the early church. He cautioned that there were those who would: “cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:7-8). Paul knew what he was talking about because he could look back on his life of persecution toward the church and his climbing over others to gain position and power because he was more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers (Galatians 1:13,14). Traditions were important, but only if they supported the commandments, statutes and laws of God.

The Apostles were deeply involved in developing the New Covenant church. They spent much time living and consulting with Jesus Christ about the laws of God which were to be placed in the mind and written on the heart of converted people (Hebrews 8:10-13). The abuse of the

Old Covenant led to ultra-strict thinking on the part of the Pharisees and Jews. Any time that the holy commandments of God are broken or impacted by a tradition, it is the tradition that needs to be changed. That was the dilemma the Apostles encountered wherever they went.

Paul was specially chosen by God to explain the change from the Old to the New Covenant. His writings reflect the difficulty he encountered. Even the apostle Peter found it difficult to turn from traditions that he learned as a child. Paul had carefully explained the truth God had given him to Peter, but 14 years later, Paul found that some were resisting the new teaching of truth. Some were still holding fast to actions that made them hypocritical (Galatians 1:18, 2:1-5). The teaching that justification came only through Jesus and not by the works of people was strongly pushing against traditions that had been set in place by men. The grace of Christ was a new experience for the followers of the Torah and traditions that countered that grace needed to change.

Paul was careful to introduce new traditions that pointed directly to the commandments and laws of God. He never contradicted the laws nor was hypocrisy allowed. Paul marvelled at the truth and spiritual intent of all that Jesus taught. He knew the old traditions of Judaism and he knew the Torah well. God opened Paul’s eyes, so that he could see. In seeing, Paul also developed traditions that would preserve the lessons of truth he was teaching

See “Tradition” on page 6.