



United News Canada

News of the United Church of God—Canada

Vol. 16, No. 2

www.unitednewscanada.org

April-June 2011

Anticipating the 2011 Feast of Unleavened Bread

There is so much hope and promise associated with spring. As a person ages, winter seems to last longer. Virtually everyone is yearning and pining for the end of winter and the beginning of spring.

Oh to see the first crocus and daffodil shoots emerge from the ground, and hear the first sound of a robin's chirp and then make a sighting! Oh how lovely are those crocus, daffodil and tulip blossoms! The first glimpse of an expanse of green grass is such a welcome sight even though we know we will soon have to cut it!

Each spring is like a brand new experience. Finally, the death grip of winter is shaken off and the landscape comes back to productive life. We anticipate the Passover, Night To Be Much Observed and Feast of Unleavened Bread in this same way. After the Feast of Tabernacles, the spring festival season seems so far away. Then, somehow the months elapse and the

spring feast is nearly upon us. We find ourselves with much preparation to properly keep this very special multifaceted occasion.

Even though this season is filled with so much hope and promise, it also has overtones of seriousness and gravity.

There are premises to clean of leavening and leavened products. There is a need to determine what to do for the Night To Be Much Observed and a need for menu planning, not just for the holy days but for the days in between. There is unleavened bread to buy and/or bake. It is an exciting and instructive time of year although somewhat tiring.

Repeatedly Leviticus 23 instructs us to 'proclaim' the festivals in their appointed seasons. And so we do – when we go to church, when we don't show up for work and school, by what we eat, think and talk about all week. We re-acquire our taste for flat bread or matzos. We see the need and value of living an unleavened life, not just during the week of the spring feast, but all year round.

Even though this season is filled with so much hope and promise, it also has overtones of seriousness and gravity. Nowhere do the scriptures enjoin Christians to observe Christ's birth, baptism, transfiguration, ascension or resurrection. All of these events are important but are not

supposed to be celebrated or commemorated. The only event associated with Christ's life that we have been specifically instructed to com-

memorate is His death. 1 Corinthians 11:26 instructs, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."



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There is the awesome promise of new life all around us in the spring of the year in the northern hemisphere. More important is the promise of eternal life in understanding and participating in God's awesome plan of salvation as rehearsed each year when we keep the festivals commencing with the all-important Passover Service. May this year's Feast of Unleavened Bread yield many transformative blessings for all of God's people everywhere.

In this Issue:

Anticipating the Spring Feasts.....	1
Antions Visit Toronto.....	2
Betrayed By A Friend.....	3
Preparation for Passover & U.B.	4
The Crippling Effect of Fear.....	5
Historic Conference Held.....	7
National Office Move Completed.....	8
UCG Northwest Weekend.....	9
Member Profile.....	10
National Conference Meeting.....	11
Beware of Leaven.....	12
News From Across Canada.....	14
Pentecost.....	16

Anthony Wasilkoff

Antions Visit Toronto – February 19-20

The Sabbath got off to a roaring start with Gary Antion, from the Home Office in Cincinnati, presenting the morning session titled “Christ-like Service - A Renewed Perspective.” Some background was given to set the stage for where we are going. Brethren took great encouragement from the session and are looking forward to getting on with the Work.

Enthusiastic conversation continued as we broke for lunch with homemade soups and sandwiches provided to warm and fill the attendees. This was a much appre-

ciated detail as the furnace in the church’s social hall was not working and to say “the room was cool” would be putting it mildly. We were blessed to have the maintenance man happily come and get the furnace fixed in time for the evening potluck.

The momentum of the day continued with afternoon services. Mr. Antion showed what is required of each of us to form unity. 1) Know-

ing and following the rules; 2) Look to the authority – God the Father and Jesus Christ; 3) Have humility and good will and 4) Having a supply of the Holy Spirit.

Following the sermon everyone was invited to share in the potluck meal, which was accentuated by beautifully decorated tables.

A question and answer session followed, giving everyone who wished the opportunity to ask questions and to make comments. The day went by too quickly, but everyone left enthusiastic and with renewed focus on seeing how

to deal with a crisis and move forward to do the work God has called us all to be a part of.

Sunday morning provided an opportunity for the deacons and elders to meet at our new offices for two sessions. Anthony Wasilkoff, Director of Operations, spoke on “The Heart of a Servant”. Mr. Antion then spoke on the subject, “Where Do We Go From Here?” There was time to ask questions and lively conversation carried on through lunch as we all enjoyed a meal together. It was all over too soon as we said our thanks and good byes and all headed home before a predicted major snow storm. Our sincere thanks to Gary and Barbara Antion for the time and service they so willingly shared with us all.



Top: Mr. and Mrs. Antion visiting with Deacons and Elders from the Toronto area.
Bottom: Fellowshiping after services.
(photo by UNC Staff)

United News Canada

United News Canada is published quarterly by the United Church of God-Canada.

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Layout: Paul Wasilkoff

United News Canada is automatically sent to all members of United Church of God-Canada,

and is free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members and co-workers of United Church of God-Canada. Donations to help share our free publications are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible.

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Etobicoke, On M9A 4X1

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Paula Horlick

Betrayed By A Friend

One of the best known accounts in the Bible is that of Judas' betrayal of Jesus Christ. Jesus was destined to suffer and die and there was a prophecy that He would be betrayed (John 17:12). Judas planned ahead of time that he would go to the priests seeking the 30 silver coins for his deed (Zechariah 11:13, Matthew 26:14, 15). Judas Iscariot was a thief amidst the disciples of Jesus, but only Jesus knew all the details. No doubt it pained Jesus to tell Judas to leave the last supper and obey Satan. Perhaps it was more painful because Judas betrayed Him with a kiss of friendship, recognition and brotherhood (Luke 22:48).

Somehow, betrayal by someone who is close to you and whom you trust is far more painful than if an enemy appeared and brought you harm. When we ask what pain is greatest, we can list that of infidelity in marriage among the worst. Infidelity in our relationship with God carries with it a far greater penalty (Hebrews 6:6). Abraham was a friend of God. Jesus called His disciples friends. The Bible tells us that a friend loves at all times.

We humans experience many problems in life. None of us escape and for that reason, we seek those we can trust to support and stand by us. When we find such a person, we slowly let down our guard and in time there are few areas of life that we will not share. We reveal that which lies deep in our hearts and we also become vulnerable because of the revelation of our weaknesses.

A friend is someone who stands by us in times of weakness or need (Proverbs 17:17). They are there to laugh with us when we are happy and cry with us when we are sad. We may expect danger from various places, but not from a friend. That is why the betrayal of this sort is the worst.

Family members are perhaps those we trust the most. One of the people we grow closest to in our lives is our spouse. Husbands and wives share what is one of the closest relationships possible. Our mate is the one we expect to be closest to until death us do part. Even for the most hardened criminals, a "stoolie", "rat", or betrayer is hated and scorned.

William Shakespeare captured the essence of the betrayal we feel in his play on Julius Caesar. In the famous scene where his fellow senators stabbed Caesar to death, the final and most unkind cut came from his friend. "Et tu Brute?" said Caesar." It is as though that was the cut that caused his death. In the funeral oratory by Mark Anthony, Shakespeare noted: "that was the un-

Somehow, betrayal by someone who is close to you and whom you trust is far more painful than if an enemy appeared and brought you harm.

kindest cut of all." Shakespeare grasped the additional pain that betrayal by a friend brings.

Jesus Christ was sent to this world to die for the sins of mankind. He noted that it is rare that one person would die to save another. His gift was so precious that we do not have words to

describe it, nor do we have the ability to fully grasp this gift in our minds. His blood cleanses us from all of our sins. When at baptism we accept His gift, our sins are forgiven and our names are written in the book of life (Philippians 4:3). Satan and the demons also take note of us - and Satan tries with all of his might to make us break our promises (I Peter 5:8).

One strong example of God's trust is found in the book of Job. This shows us that we have an enemy - the same adversary God knows. Before all the angels of heaven, God took the risk of making a claim to Satan that no matter what happened in the life of Job, Job would maintain his integrity (Job 2:3, 9). Satan tried and tried, but to no avail. Had Job slipped, God would have been deeply hurt.

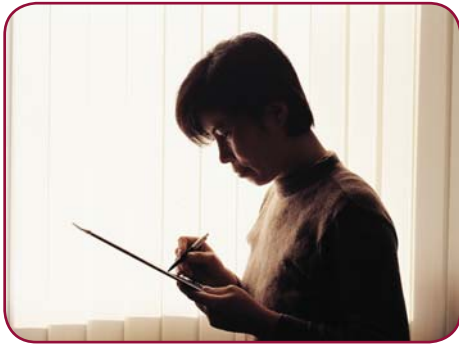
It did cause great pain to God when Israel betrayed Him. Israel was the wife God chose. She betrayed Him in that closest of relationships - marriage. That betrayal brought a great anger and wrath from God and He divorced the wife He had betrothed to Himself (Jeremiah 2:2).

Humans who accept the blood of Jesus Christ and who have their names written in the book before His throne are betrothed to Him. If they break their promise and bring shame to the One who loves them and died for them, they will be cast away eternally. There is no second or third chance for them (Hebrews

See "**Betrayal**" on page 6

Preparation for Passover and Unleavened Bread

It is easy to get overwhelmed this time of year. We have to clean our residences stem to stern as well as prepare special foods and special meals. There are additional church services to prepare for which necessitates asking for additional days off from work or school. What helps considerably is to start planning early.



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One of the first objectives is to find and get rid of leavening (see the list in the sidebar below). It is sometimes a daunting task.

There is a significant reason why a loving Creator God requires His people to conduct a meticulous physical cleaning of their homes. Perhaps it is because as physical human beings, we learn best through physical reminders. For instance, what can we learn when we find some unexpected leavening in our homes during the Days of Unleavened Bread? It is a given that we have faults, sins or shortcomings which need to be identified and overcome. Sometimes we have to look hard to see them in ourselves.

Of course, the most important part of preparing for the spring Holy Day season is to prepare spiritually. Clearly we have gone through some difficult times in our church of late. If we come away from our trials without learning something, then what will have been the benefit of the trial? So, rather than giving my-

self an annual physical (or, preferably a spiritual) checkup in the usual way, it is much more meaningful for me to ask myself what I personally learned from what has happened in the last year and what I need to do differently in the coming year. Here are some of my conclusions.

Gossip

Gossip has played a huge part in creating alienation and controversy. Accusations abounded during in-person discussions and even more on the internet. I heard things that no Christian should say about another person, let alone a fellow Christian. Could a division have occurred if no one at all had participated in any kind of gossip? So, how well do I do in avoiding gossip?

Anger

Everyone gets angry at times. There is such a thing as righteous indignation. At the same time we are emphatically warned to not let the sun go down on our wrath and to avoid the lethal root of bitterness. Can it be that when we hold on to anger (even if it seems righteous to us) it can progressively mutate into a root of bitterness? It seems that when there is sustained anger there is also an absence of forgiveness and a lack of allowance for another person's inadequacies – as we see them. During this past year, I saw and heard a great deal of anger expressed. So, how well do I do in shutting down my personal unbridled or misdirected anger?

Envy

This is a quirk of human nature that is so easy to spot in children. They are in the sandbox playing when one wants another's toy and then the

fight begins. Adults are usually more subtle. Sometimes, we even fool ourselves into believing we are modest and humble. I need to ask myself if I would leave the church because of being removed from a position or job? One pastor at the ministerial conference in Cincinnati earlier this year put it so well when he talked about having felt good about all he had done for God's work in the past. He came to understand what he did wasn't what was important, but that having humility was. So how well do I do in remaining humble instead of allowing myself to become envious?

These are some of the areas of my life which I will be putting under the spiritual magnifying glass as I do my spring cleaning. I hope that as I remove physical leaven from my home and premises, I can also identify and repent of my spiritual flaws.

Happy cleaning!

Linda Wasilkoff

List of Leavening Agents:

- baking powder
- baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)
- monocalcium phosphate
- sodium aluminum phosphate (SALP)
- sodium acid pyrophosphate (SAPP)
- other phosphates
- ammonium bicarbonate (harts-horn, 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 Crippling Effect of Fear

When the Israelites left Egypt they left with a high hand (Exodus 14:8). They were rejoicing, but God gave them a warning that they would be pursued by Pharaoh and his army. Somehow this warning did not have much of an impact upon them. They also forgot the promise that went with this warning. As a result they became over-anxious and panicked.

Do we ever go to pieces because of panic? God can help us. In fact there is a command in the New Testament to not worry. We find this instruction in Matthew 6:31-34. Let's concentrate first on verse 34 which says, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (New King James Version used throughout in all quotes). Why do we worry about the things that might happen when they might not happen? Do we paint a dark picture or do we believe that God will take care of us? Notice the word "therefore" in verse 34. In the preceding verses, Christ had been speaking of physical needs. The dissertation starts in verse 24 where He speaks of the problem of serving two masters.

In verse 25 we find this same word "therefore". Jesus is giving us the solution to the problem. Dropping down to verse 32 and verse 33, He summarizes it all by saying that God knows our needs. We should avoid mental conflict, put out doubt and concentrate on what is really important. Another significant point is made in verse 32, where Christ uses the words "your heavenly Father". Do we sometimes forget, the way the ancient Israelites did, that we have a relationship with our heavenly

Father? Many of us have children and we love them, but God loves us more.

To expand on the theme of physical needs, let's take a look at Psalm 33:17-19. Verses 17 and 18 explain that we should not rely on what is physical, but should rely on God.



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Verse 19 gets to the real point of it all. In times of famine we cannot eat money. Yet, God can look after us even when there is no food available. Remember Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings

We know that trials will come, but God will help us through, and provide a way of escape...

17: 9-16? Likewise, God can also deliver our "soul" (life essence - compare with Matthew 10:28) from death. This is a reference to the second death, because many of God's servants have been persecuted and put to death. As a general rule God will protect us from dan-

ger, but the absolute promise really refers to the second death. What is more important than this promise?

Let us return to the story of the ancient Israelites. We find the story of their exodus from Egypt (a type of sin) in Exodus chapter 14. In verse 4, God says to Moses, "then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them." God warned Moses what was going to happen, and presumably Moses told the Israelites. Then God went on to say, "and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army." Israel forgot the second half of this prediction. When Pharaoh pursued with his army the Israelites panicked. They became paralyzed with fear (Exodus 14:11-12).

Have we ever allowed fear to paralyze us? Extending the analogy, has Pharaoh (Satan) ever pursued us? Certainly he has (1 Peter 5:8). Have we ever panicked when he pursued us? I know I have. But Christ tells us not to worry. God has warned us that we will have trials (pursuit by Satan). However He has also said that He will deliver us (Psalm 34:17-19). He will not permit a trial that is too great for us to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Many years ago I said to my pastor, in referring to a particular trial

I was going through at the time, "I can't take it any more." He stopped me dead in my tracks. "Yes you can" he said. "You can take a lot more." Since then I have tried to never again complain about a trial. I was panicking, in a way, and not fixing my eyes on God.

Let us now take a look at the outcome of Israel's trial. Exodus 14:13 relates the story of Israel's deliverance. The situation looked impossible, but Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid." Stop panicking! "Stand still (calm down) and see the salvation of the LORD". We know the rest of the story and we know about the dramatic rescue of the Israelites.

We know that we are going to have trials. We know that we all will die, but we also know that God can save us from the second death. What else is really more important than that? We know that trials will come, but God will help us through, and provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Don't let fear interfere with our relationship with God. Our heavenly Father loves us more than we can

know and He will not let us down.

Don't let panic deter us from our goal of the Kingdom of God. One of the lessons of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is that God can save us from sin and help us overcome. With God's help we can put sin out of our lives, and make it into the Kingdom of God.

Ian Simons, MD

"Betrayal" from page 3

6:6). The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Betrayal of that great love and gift deserves to be punished.

One of the wonderful character traits God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ possess is that they never break a promise, and they did promise that they would never forsake us (Psalm 37:25). Sin cuts us off from God, but He provided a Savior for mankind.

Even though God may turn away for a little while when we need to learn some lessons about how to properly serve and love Him, He never really forgets His people. He will never betray those who follow Jesus' example. He will never betray a friend.

One of the first teachings Jesus gave as He began His ministry was to show us that we are to become like the Father (Mat-

thew 5:48). One of the ways in which we are to become like Him is in the category of not betraying a friend. Betrayal may sometimes be unintentional and that betrayal we might forgive. When it is deliberate and causes us hurt, we all have trouble putting it aside. God is betrayed when a person for whom the blood of Jesus Christ has been shed through baptism turns away from God. That betrayal cannot be rectified

Christ dying a second time (Hebrews 6:6).

Amazingly enough, this verse tells us that this act would put God to an open shame. The shame would be ours, but it hurts God when He has granted a person repentance and shed Jesus' blood for them - only to find out that this person treats that sacrifice so lightly that they simply go back to their old ways and old sins.

That is a betrayal seen by all the heavenly angels as well as His adversary. It shames God because He stood in the gap for us - He paid for our sins. How could we carelessly sin again after that? How can we kiss Jesus and call Him friend while we have made arrangements for thirty pieces of



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if it is truly a willful act. God speaks strongly when He says that betrayal that comes after one is enlightened will not be forgiven. It would amount to Jesus

silver with God's enemies?

We cannot. We must not.

Robert Berendt

Historic Ministerial Conference Held

Because of the recent church crisis, a special ministerial conference was held near the Home Office at the Holiday Inn Eastgate in the Cincinnati, Ohio area on January 31 and February 1. Three-hundred and thirty-five elders and wives were registered in attendance. Attending from Canada were: Michael Caputo, Dennis and Paula Horlick, Garry and Emmie Lucas, Patrick Read, Rainer Salomaa, Lloyd Teetaert and Anthony and Linda Wasilkoff. Attendees came from as far away as Peru, the Philippines, England, Germany and Australia. Several other elders connected to the conference by webcast.

With a theme of “Look to Christ: Advance the Work”, President Dennis Luker outlined three points of laying a right foundation:

1. Repent of pride and follow Christ’s example of humility
2. Change when God helps us see our sins and mistakes
3. Grow in Godly love

Chairman, Melvin Rhodes, drew some powerful lessons from 90 Jewish synagogues in Poland before WWII, emphasizing humility, submitting to one another, bearing with one another, and confessing our sins.

There was a question and answer session with the President and the Council of Elders. Questions covered issues such as Latin America, servant leadership, subscription records and copyright material.

During lunch breaks, meetings were held for those involved in this

year’s Feast of Tabernacles and summer camps. Break-out sessions were also held to discuss the three regions in the United States and international areas.



Conference attendees during a presentation (photo by UCGIA staff)

Victor Kubik, Operation Manager of Ministerial and Member Services, gave statistics showing that in early 2010 there were 492 credentialed elders in the United Church of God, an International Association. Of that number, 323 (66%) are still with UCG. We have retained 62 of 131 salaried field ministers (47%); 15 of 20 elders salaried by the Home Office (75%); 9 of 14 retired elders (64%); and 237 of 327 non salaried elders (73%). Mr. Kubik also said that in the United States we have retained about 70% of the membership.

He emphasized that Christ is the head of the church, a minister is a servant, the hard stuff is the soft stuff and showed how information can get distorted.

On Tuesday, Dennis Luker spoke on four critical reasons to practice Christ-centered servant leadership: it is critical for being in the Kingdom of God; it is essential for having an effective ministry; it is essential for building spiritually healthy members and congregations; and it is essential for healing the hurts of the past and the pres-

ent. Roy Holladay, Gary Antion and Victor Kubik, regional pastors for the three areas in the United States, continued the theme of leadership by looking to Christ and promoting spiritual gifts.

The second element of the conference theme, “Advancing the Work,” filled the remainder of the day. It began with Melvin Rhodes who quoted Mr. Armstrong’s statements about those who grow the most spiritually have their hearts in doing God’s work. He said that we still have a nucleus for doing the work around the world and that there is a commitment by the COE to preach the gospel, whatever it takes. He also pointed out that most problems stem from sin.

Peter Eddington, Operations Manager of Media and Communications Services, said that most of our media staff have remained with UCG. The Spanish edition of the *Good News* has not missed one issue. Subscription levels were brought back up to 20,000 through a two-week advertising effort with only a 79 cent cost per response. Mrs. Maryse Pebworth and a group in France are working on French translation for booklets and the French edition of the *Good News*.

Internet manager, Aaron Booth, enthusiastically showed how the church has formatted our booklets for various e-book readers (tablets and mobile devices). Most are available for download within the Apple iBookstore. Since first appearing in the iBookstore in early September, 2010, more than 41,000 copies have been downloaded for free! UCG booklets will also be available at the Barnes & Noble web site for the NOOK (and

NOOKcolor) e-Reader. This is a door that unexpectedly opened up to us while being closed to others.

He gave a demonstration of a redesigned church mega web site to be unveiled in May, which will contain around 20,000 pages and over 100 topics. It can be tailored for each user and will have social networking features. Aaron indicated that there is something BIG coming in May!

Reports on media were also given by Scott Ashley (*Good News* and booklets), Randy Stiver (*Vertical Thought*) and Peter Eddington (public lectures across the United States). The lecture series will have a theme from Mark 1:14-15 of, “The time is fulfilled,

the kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe the gospel.”

Wrap up comments were given by Dennis Luker. The meetings concluded with a closing hymn, “Go Ye Therefore into All the World”, and a closing prayer. All dispersed as another huge winter storm hit a third of the United States.

Here are a compilation of comments from some of the elders in attendance:

- “The conference gave a chance for people to express themselves.”
- “It was forward looking.”

- “It was good to have the re-institution of servant leadership, right down to the congregational level.”
- “The atmosphere was unifying and positive.”
- “It was beyond expectations.”
- “There was substance.”
- “It was fantastic!”
- “I have attended many conferences over many years, but I have never come away from one feeling so inspired.”

Rainer Salomaa

National Office Move Completed

The much awaited and somewhat dreaded moving day for the National Office arrived on Tuesday, January 11. The moving company originally allocated two days to complete the job. Packing and planning were done accordingly. When the movers arrived shortly after 8:00 a.m. on moving day, they made a last minute decision to complete the job in one day due to a snow storm being forecast for day number two. That left the office staff scrambling to finish packing the items that had been scheduled to be moved the following day.

By noon, everything had been loaded into two trucks (and a few staff cars). A diagram of the new office complex had been prepared with numbers assigned to each room. Every box and piece of furniture carried a room number label thus making unloading and

placement much more efficient. It was a long day, but shortly after 6:00 that evening the last of the staff left the office. The following day staff worked together to unpack and get things speedily organized.

Any move takes organization and planning to make it go smoothly. But, there are always unexpected things that happen – and items that seem to vanish! Nevertheless, this move went very well. One hiccup was the slowness of the telephone company to transfer the 800 number to our new phone number even though they had been contacted well in advance of the move. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Overall, the staff is very comfortable with the new location. It will make our work more effi-

cient. Some have remarked “this seems like a real office!” Our former office was quite adequate and served us well for the duration of our time there, but had some limitations. For instance, in recent years, exiting the premises at 5:00 p.m. had become increasingly dangerous due to steadily increasing traffic. We are grateful to no longer have that danger.

In the coming months, office staff look forward to hosting an open house for the southern Ontario brethren to tour the complex. In June, the National Council will have its first meeting in a brighter and more spacious meeting room. Members are welcome to stop by whenever they are in the area for a visit. Just be careful – you may be put to work!

Linda Wasilkoff

UCG Northwest Weekend: A Canadian Perspective

Attending the Northwest Weekend in Vancouver, Washington was a delight. Traveling from Vancouver and motoring down the I-5 meant a scenic Pacific drive. On crossing into Oregon from Washington, the mighty Columbia River was an impressive sight. Majestic Mount Hood stood in the distance during the four and one-half hour drive, and, further north was the infamous Mount St. Helens.

Traveling to the Northwest weekend was a time of keen anticipation. The seminar and social event is a major highlight of the year, second to God's appointed Feasts, and a nice break, sandwiched between the fall and spring holy days. I was informed that the weekend seminar has been running for some 50 years.

From December 24-27, 2010, Canadians were treated to the hospitality of U.S. brethren. They made us feel most welcome with their warm smiles, handshakes and words of encouragement. As a Canadian, I had the opportunity to meet US brethren which otherwise might not have been possible.

The seminar presentations were informative, articulate, and sometimes humorous. The facilities were excellent, the food tasty and plentiful and the activities edifying and informative. It was a wonderful opportunity for both fellowship and spiritual growth, while jam packing lots of activities into a brief time period.

It was a blessing to see the gifts and talents of the Portland and Salem choir. Their performance on the Sabbath was truly professional in every respect. The youthful members sang flawlessly, and

their efforts were appreciated. As a Canadian who is a member of a smaller congregation, I treasured the experience of hearing a large choir.

While at the event, I had the pleasure of seeing fellow Canadians Ken and Joyce Gibson, from the Victoria congregation. We shared anecdotes about the Canadian work and their spiritual journey towards attending the church of God. Also

Stiver, newly appointed executive assistant to President Dennis Luker, effectively expanded on topics including the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Satan and his demons and Christian values regarding military service and war. I spoke with Mr. Stiver and expressed appreciation for his presentations.

On the Sabbath, John Cafourek, UCG Salem pastor, provided the essentials on the fundamentals of



Xylin, Wendy, and Jayden Burton; Joyce and Ken Gibson
(photo by Dale Craniford)

in attendance was Wendy Burton, a member of the Vancouver congregation, along with her husband (Paul) and their sons (Xylin and Jayden).

The presentations were full of biblical knowledge, spiritual substance and interesting anecdotes. Rex Sexton did an energetic presentation on the seven church eras, and offered some interesting parallels to the Church of God throughout history.

Larry Walker expertly covered the first two chapters of the book of Colossians. He expounded on the first-century Christians' struggle to combat pagan beliefs such as Gnosticism while faithfully observing God's Holy Days. Randy

a Christian's spiritual, social, emotional, mental and physical growth. Robert Dick, UCG Portland pastor, discussed the three main principles a Christian should follow: living by God's unchangeable truths, being anchored to them, and valuing Godly principles as bigger than any person or circumstance.

On Saturday evening, there was a teen and adult dance. Sunday featured a variety of sports activities for the teens. Sprinkled throughout the events were liberal helpings of fellowship. It was a time of real spiritual rejuvenation. The Northwest Weekend is a yearly highlight, and I carried spiritual energy back to Canada.

Member Profile: Ruth Roy

Ruth Roy (McLennan) was born in Calgary on April 25, 1928. She grew up on an acreage in the area of Bowness outside of Calgary and attended Crescent Heights High School in Calgary where she was at the top of her class. She trained in a dentist's office and became a dental nurse, a job she didn't really enjoy, so at age 19 she got a job with an Alberta newspaper and worked there for a year and a half. Later she worked for a large grain company where she learned to operate a comptometer, which was a new technology at the time. Eventually, she was offered a job at the Bank of Montreal where she worked until her family moved to Edmonton when she was 21.

Ruth became interested in God when she was a very little girl. She would take her little brother with her to church. Since neither of her parents were religious, they did not attend with the children. Ruth was baptized in the Seventh Day Adventist church in 1951 when she was 23. She has kept the Sabbath ever since.

When Ruth was 18, a young man from Quebec named Paul Roy came to live with her parents to learn English. Eventually, he moved out on his own. When Ruth moved back to Calgary she met him again and within a few days of seeing each other again, he asked her to marry him. She said "yes" and the two were married five days later and moved to Montreal where he had grown up.

Paul had been stricken with tuberculosis while he lived in

Bowness (Calgary) and, unfortunately, it returned after they arrived back in Montreal. Ruth got a job at the Montreal Star newspaper but the Sabbath was an issue, so she went to work for the Cohen family who owned a large furniture store. Keeping the Sabbath was no longer a problem!

When Ruth became pregnant with their first child, the family decided to move back to Edmonton. Paul was out of the sanatorium but still very weak and tired as they drove back to Edmonton. They moved into her parents' home and Paul ended up back in the sanatorium in Edmonton. Ruth gave birth to a beautiful little girl.

After Paul recovered, they moved back to Calgary. Life was a struggle but Ruth always felt that God was with her and supplied her needs. Sixteen months after the birth of their first child they had a son. Eight years later they had another daughter. Months after their third child was born in 1969 Paul was killed in a tragic traffic accident.

Ruth was involved in many different ventures. She hosted

a television show called "Bible Time" for a year. It was a one-hour show for children that ran every afternoon. She also had a radio program called "Dear Ruth" which she operated from Wetaskiwin, Dawson Creek and Edmonton. At one time, she ran a hotel in Calmar, Alberta. She also operated several real estate offices including Sunshine Realty, Happy Acres, Happy Home Realty and RMAC Realty.

In the early 1970's, Ruth's daughter brought her a *Plain Truth* and she began to tithe. She remembered listening to Mr. Armstrong in the 1950's. She received the magazine for years but became concerned when things began to change in 1994/95. In 1995, she had a visit from a

UCG minister and learned about the Holy Days. She then became a member of UCG. She attended services faithfully until 2005 when her health took a turn for the worse. She remains a faithful member receiving DVD's of sermons to listen to from home. She appreciates all of the cards, letters, phone calls and visits that she has received.



Ruth Roy
(photo by Fern Berendt)

National Conference Holds Annual Meeting

The National Conference (composed of all UCG-Canada elders plus the two lay members on the National Council) held its annual meeting on March 6 by teleconference. All balloting for the business portion had been completed by mail prior to the teleconference. This year there was 100 per cent participation in the balloting.

In his presentation, the Director of Operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, referred to our Vision and Mission statements, stressing the need to review these frequently to prevent drifting off course. He cited the turbulent times we live in, pointing out that we continue to do a work of faith. We are now in a new office facility which is cleaner, brighter and more functional. The phones are continuing to ring. He finished his presentation by reading some of the letters recently received, showing that people are responding coast to coast. Several church areas have had new people express interest in attending church.

David Palmer reported on behalf of the Media Team. He confirmed that the key-word Internet campaign is continuing. With necessary budget cuts next year, we have cancelled the Beyond Today television program on the Grace network, which produced about 15 per cent of all responses from the program. If income exceeds the predicted amount, we hope to be able to resume telecasting on the Grace network.

Anthony Wasilkoff gave the Ministerial Services Team report.

He referenced Acts 20:38-30, which shows that ministers do not “own” their congregations. He said, “As a minister, I have an option to leave UCG, but I don’t have the option of encouraging others to leave with me or distribute my letter of resignation.” Hebrews 3:1-5 describes Moses as faithful in all God’s house. Faithfulness is important for ministers. It is defined as: to be trusted and reliable. He concluded that ministers of the United Church of God must be faithful on many levels: to God the Father, to Jesus Christ, to the Word of God, to their calling, to the brethren, to UCG and to one another.

The treasurer’s report was given by Edwin van Pelt. He began by talking about the current economy and noting that our members and donors have not been unaffected. Since UCG began, we have never had a year with a decrease in income from the previous year. This coming year may be the first. There will be increased costs that cannot be avoided, which necessitated looking for ways to reduce costs

Ministers of the United Church of God must be faithful on many levels: to God the Father, to Jesus Christ, to the Word of God, to their calling, to the brethren, to UCG, and to one another

in other areas to present a balanced budget for ratification by the National Conference. This has required tough decisions to be made.

For the chairman’s address, Rainer Salomaa drew on the story

Mutiny on the Bounty. The movie version seems to present those who mutinied as being innocent and the captain as the epitome of abuse and meanness. This has recently come into dispute in Caroline Alexander’s book, *The Bounty*. She claims that Captain Bligh was relatively lenient compared with other British naval officers. It was brought out that there are laws about mutiny and there are Scriptures about causing division. There are also consequences for actions. History shows that most of those who mutinied did not fare very well at all.

The date for the next annual meeting of the National Conference was set for March 11, 2012. The last item of business was for the Secretary to announce the ballot results. The 2010 Minutes and Auditor’s report were approved. The Strategic Plan, Operations Plan and Budget for the coming year were all ratified. The proposed amendments did not receive sufficient approval to be adopted. The balloting for council members selected John Erickson from the Prince George congregation to be the new lay member on Council. Larry DeLong was selected to serve another term on the Council.

There was a tie for the third position to be filled. As required by our bylaws, the National Council balloted to break the tie and in so doing selected Patrick Read.

Rainer Salomaa and Linda Wasilkoff



Why Did Jesus Warn “Beware of Leaven?”

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

ducees 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).

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” (I Corinthians 5:2). “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (Verse 6).

By analogy Jesus used three symbols of leavening, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and King Herod.

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 Dictionary*).

By analogy Jesus used three symbols of leavening - the Pharisees, the Sad-

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.

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.

Following Passover, we observe the “Days of Unleavened Bread”, an observance symbolizing the putting away of sin, as we remove all leaven products from our home. But we are also commanded to eat unleavened products symbolizing taking in more of Jesus Christ. When we partake of unleavened bread, that bread becomes part of us. We ingest it into our physical



body. It is a portion of the fuel that keeps the body functioning. When we observe the Passover and eat of the body and drink of the blood of Jesus Christ, it is spiritual fuel. To eat His body is to ingest into our hearts and minds more of an unleavened Saviour. We are continuing the covenant made at baptism, that we accept His sacrifice for our sins.

Observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread is our reminder of a spiritual commitment that will one day allow us an opportunity to enter 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 diabolical political chicanery of Herod.

We are to “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!

David Palmer

“Pentecost” from page 16

The disciples had kept the seven days of unleavened bread. They had kept these days without possessing the Holy Spirit, a lesson being that God expects us to endeavour to put sin out of our lives on our own efforts. Mankind has needed to put sin out for 7,000 years, but has not generally done so. Peter declared that anyone who has been called, repents and is baptized can receive the precious gift of God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). Through that gift, God helps us, but only after we first begin the process of removing sin out of our lives.

The harvest of spiritual fruit began with God’s calling of a small elect from the time of righteous Abel. That harvest accelerated on the day of Pentecost and continues to this day, ultimately culminating in a spiritual resurrection from the dead at Christ’s second coming. Scriptures describe those called out ones as firstfruits. The implication is that other fruit will be harvested later.

James wrote about converted Christians saying, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). Paul referred to brethren as those “who have the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23) and alluded to several first-century Christians as the firstfruits of God’s calling (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15). Christ is called the “firstborn of many brethren” in Romans 8:29 and “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” in 1 Corinthians 15:20. He is the “firstborn over all creation” and “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:15, 18).

All of this is closely linked to the Feast of Firstfruits. Jesus Christ instructed His church to go forth and harvest, preaching the gospel, baptizing and teaching believers to observe all things that He commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). The church that will constitute the harvest is also being used to do a part of the harvesting.

God will have used seven different periods of harvesting, as represented by the seven candlesticks in Revelation 1:12-13, 20. The work of the church must be complete before Christ returns. He will marry His bride, who will have made herself ready (Revelation 19:7-8).

An Old Testament parallel is found in the book of Ruth, where Boaz and Ruth culminate a union during the early barley harvest. A virtuous Gentile woman is grafted into an Israelite household, becoming part of the genealogy of the Messiah. Gleaning instructions are significantly given in the section of scripture having to do with the Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23: 22).

God is logical. He is organized. He has a plan. The blueprint of His plan can be found in the meaning of His festivals. The Feast of Pentecost is so rich with meaning – how He is calling a few firstfruits, how He provides the gift of His precious Holy Spirit, how ultimately He will pour out His Holy Spirit upon “all flesh” (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-17).

The later event is another, larger harvest. It is explained by the fall festivals.

Rainer Salomaa

News From Across Canada

Sanoy Anniversary

After services on October 30, the North Battleford congregation enjoyed fellowship and cake in a celebration of Peter and Adeline Sanoy's 45th wedding anniversary. In August 2010, after a span of 40 years, Adeline retired from being a 'second mom' to dozens of children at Grandma's Day Care. Peter semi-retired from his position as foreman with Jem Homes.



Peter and Adeline Sanoy
(photo by Marlene Hiebert)

The Sanoy's have two children, Perry (Becky) and Adele (Art), and five grandchildren (Cody, Cassie, Kali, Kenzie and Chloe). Peter and Adeline have been members of the Church of God for over 40 years and have served the North Battleford congregation for many years as Deacon and Deaconess. We wish them health and happiness and God's greatest blessings in the years ahead.

Marlene Hiebert

Blessing of Tex Spahich

Kevin and Lexie Spahich were pleased to have the blessing of their son, Tex, born May 8, 2010, occur on Sabbath, December 25, 2010 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Bruce Bird conducted the ceremony. While this ceremony is traditionally held after the Feast of Taber-

nacles, this was arranged to allow grandparents, Frank and Judy Spahich, to make the trip from Ontario for the special occasion.



Bruce Bird; Lexie, Kevin, and Tex Spahich
(photo by Judy Spahich)

The Spahich family wishes to thank the congregation for their support and the Birds for making the drive down for the occasion in spite of bad weather.

Kevin and Lexie Spahich

Toronto Socials

The church that eats together stays together ... and the Toronto congregation is definitely United!

Since the Feast of Tabernacles 2010, they have enjoyed five socials featuring a different theme each month.

In October, the brethren shared their Feast experiences with a recreation of favourite meals from their feast sites. There were contests to test how well they knew where others went to the Feast, and which bird was an emblem of the site they attended around the world. The evening ended with stories about memorable people they met at the Feast, new adventures in

which they engaged, lessons they learned, and more.

In November, the annual Games & Give Away social took place. The evening began with a meal of homemade soups, chili and sandwiches. While brethren could enjoy playing games brought from home, the highlight of the evening was browsing through the assortment of gently used or new household items brought in by others to glean that special find or watch others delight in what one had brought. There were 35% more items than last year, with a lot less left over, making it a successful demonstration of brethren helping brethren.



Brethren fellowshiping at the Robinson's
(photo by Amy van Zant)

In December, over 50 brethren enjoyed a spectacular day at the home of Gordon and Lillie Robinson, who exemplify Christ-like service. People began arriving at 10:30 a.m. and it was about twelve hours later, after much feasting and fellowship, when the last ones departed. Attendees had a choice of enjoying snowy outdoor activities and the warmth of the indoors with games, videos, singing and conversing. It was truly a time of bonding and fellowship.

In January, the congregation enjoyed a pizza dinner, featuring 12 varieties of pizza, and an evening of activities borrowed from the popular TV game show, *Min-*

ute to Win It. Participants had one minute to complete tasks such as moving a cookie from their forehead to their mouth using only their facial muscles, balancing a tower of five dice on a popsicle stick held in their mouth, or sorting 55 multicoloured jelly beans with one hand. There were 16 challenges in all. Prizes were awarded to the participants who completed the most challenges within a minute.



Young adults singing during a social (photo by Gary Haynes)

In February, cultural cuisine and entertainment was enjoyed by all. Twenty-three countries were represented in this diverse congregation. Needless to say, we thoroughly enjoyed a wide variety of delightful, delicious and tasty food that came from many regions around the world. From South Africa to Europe, Asia to North America, South America to the Caribbean with many points in between. The entertainment portion certainly broadened our knowledge of other cultures, and it allowed us to appreciate the tapestry of God’s handiwork.

In the coming months, socials being planned are bowling and tributes to our mothers, fathers and graduates.

Denise Masse, Trish Romeo, and Pat Ellis

Camp Wildrose

A fun and exciting children’s summer camp will be hosted by the Edmonton congregation again this summer. The camp location is near Darwell. It will run from July 12-20. The registration deadline for camp is June 1. For more information contact Susan Davis at sdavis@baydrywall.com.

UNC

Letters From Our Readers

“I truly enjoy the booklets and have also received the Bible Studies. I found your love after the loss of my precious son. You have helped me in words that I cannot explain, I should say God through you has helped me.”

Lepreau, NB

“A warm hello to everyone at United Church of God – Canada. I would like so very much to receive (five) booklets of yours please. I do wish so very much that I was able to send you some money, but I can’t. I am a 75 year old senior, with no family at all. I live in a retirement home. Your *Good News* and your booklets help me to keep going.”

Copper Cliff, ON

“Please accept my contribution. I enjoy your program *Beyond Today*. I am a Sabbath keeper of many years. Please put me on your coworker list. Would you please send me your *Good News* magazine?”

Prince Albert, SK

Montreal International Cuisine Potluck

On March 5th the Montreal Church and guests were blessed with a wonderful bounty of both spiritual and physical food.

Nick Lamoreaux gave a sermonette on “The Concept of Meekness”; and Pastor Dennis Horlick spoke of five questions we need to seriously ask ourselves and meditate on before we partake of the Passover.

After services there was an International Cuisine Potluck with such countries represented as Croatia, the Czech Republic, England, Ireland, Italy and Sweden to name a few. Everyone had fun tasting new, different and delicious foods! There was also a very fine dessert table which everyone enjoyed.



Members fellowshiping before the meal (photo by Sharon Descoteaux)

The great fellowship through the meal accentuated the whole event.

By all the positive comments received, it was without question a most enjoyable and successful event for all.

Sharon Descoteaux

Pentecost: a Vital Part of God's Master Plan

The book of Acts begins with about 120 disciples of Jesus Christ waiting during the interval between the Passover season and the Feast of Pentecost. They were following Christ's instructions found in Acts 1:4-8 where, "... He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' '...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'"

The Passover had taken place in A.D. 31. Christ had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, close to the time the Passover lamb was to be chosen (John 12:12-15; Exodus 12:2-3). He introduced bread and wine during the Passover meal and washed the disciples' feet. Later, He suffered horribly, poignantly demonstrating how our sins bring suffering.

On the Sunday morning after his Wednesday crucifixion, He was approached by Mary Magdalene, but would not allow her to touch Him

because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17). Why? It is because He was the wave-sheaf offering, pictured in Leviticus 23:10-11. This was a "sheaf of the first-fruits" that was offered to God. The early harvest season in Palestine

The disciples were told to gather together fifty days after the Sunday appearances of Jesus Christ to keep the next festival, the Day of Pentecost.

began with it being waved before the Lord on the Sunday morning, following the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Before Christ could be touched, He had to be accepted of the Father. Later that day, after appearing before His Father and then returning, He did allow certain women to touch Him (Matthew 28:9).

– the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), which is also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), or in Greek, the Feast of Pentecost, which means "fiftieth".

Acts 2:1 records that, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." On that day, a remarkable event took place. God

poured out His Holy Spirit on the assembled international group and used miracles of hearing and speaking in various languages to communicate to that startled group of believers.

That Pentecost in A.D. 31 marked the beginning of the early New Testament church. Thousands of years earlier, possibly on another Pentecost, God had given Israel the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, using similar types of attention-getting methods.

Now He had given mankind the ability to become godly in thoughts, attitudes and actions through the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, given to the embryo of the New Testament church.



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The disciples were told to wait. They did. They gathered together, fifty days after the Sunday appearances of Jesus Christ, to keep the next festival (Leviticus 23:9-22)

See "Pentecost" on page 13