



Back By Popular Demand

Hollywood is very good at carefully timing and promoting “new releases” to the viewing public. The recent highly acclaimed release of a science fiction epic speaks volumes to that. It was further enhanced with a 3D version that made it even more desirable. Diehard fans could hardly wait until the long-awaited sequel finally arrived in local theatres. Promotion plays a great part in building audience anticipation and follow-through.

God’s festivals are similarly advocated in the pages of the Bible. In Leviticus 23:2 we read, “The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are my feasts.” The word “proclaim” comes from the Hebrew word “qara” which means “to announce, to call out loudly.” The term can also imply summoning or inviting.

In Leviticus 23:4 we read, “These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.” We find here that the festivals are to be announced or called out

loudly in their appointed times. That is, the times established by the Great God in His sacred calendar. Notice, too, that the festivals are identified as belonging to the Creator God. That is, they are His idea, His invention—His gift to mankind. The festivals were designed by God for the benefit of all human beings and then were designated to be observed at particular times of the year.

Next notice Leviticus 23:5-6 which states, “On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord’s Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord, seven days you must eat unleavened bread.” The first two festivals of the new sacred calendar year are Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which fall on April 22 (observed the evening of April 21) and April 23 through 29 this year.

As a body of believers, we “proclaim” the upcoming spring festival season both individually and collectively. The church officially “proclaims” the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread via the television program, its publications and via its websites and internet. The United Church of God is among the churches of God that actively advocate the value and validity of observing all the festivals the Holy Bible lists in Leviticus 23.

ing spring festival season by seeking time off from school and work. This gives us a golden opportunity to explain why we will be away and what we will be doing. Of course, we should do this in a tactful and diplomatic manner as explained in 1 Peter 3:15. We also “proclaim” the spring festival when we don’t bring regular sandwiches to school or work and others may notice and wonder why.

Someone I know shared, that when she was growing up, her cousin came to know about the Feast of Unleavened Bread and wanted to be told about it each year so she could partake of the wonderful delicacies associated with the occasion! The bread of affliction does not afflict everyone in the same way. Another person pointed out how beneficial it is for the human body to take a break from ingesting yeast and yeast products for a week. There are other benefits related to keeping the festivals of the Bible that can be similarly proclaimed by observant believers.

This issue of the UNC has articles relevant to the spring holy day season written by authors who have many years of experience keeping the festivals prescribed by the Holy Bible. These articles will help you prepare for and keep this year’s wonderful spring festivals and holy days.

We also “proclaim” the upcoming

Anthony Wasilkoff

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Let Us Keep the Feast

God created mankind with free moral agency – the ability to choose between right and wrong, good and evil. When the world chose the wrong path, God instituted a plan to save His greatest creation – the human race. Eventually he called an entire nation from slavery and gave them His laws, His statutes, His commandments. He also gave them choice: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). But rather than obey God, the nation of Israel chose the way of the devil, and our world today has followed that same path.

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

In his letter to the church of God at Rome the apostle Paul

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

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

gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:3-6).

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

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

We are reminded that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was designed to forgive the world of sin, eventually giving millions an opportunity for eternal life. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the

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

When we study the history of creation, we recognize that God, at some point in time, made a decision to expand His family, but when Adam and Eve, the first cre-

ated human beings, disobeyed their Creator, it allowed sin to enter the picture. God then instituted a plan of salvation, a biblical blueprint with seven annual Holy days depicting the fulfillment of that plan. Christ became the central figure in a plan that would allow the human race salvation and an opportunity to become members of God’s expanded family.

This world, including some who even observe the Passover, may not fully comprehend that this one-time-for-all-time sacrifice put the Holy Day Plan of Salvation into effect. Passover is a serious solemn occasion, a renewal of the covenant made at baptism when we accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. The blueprint for salvation then begins, with observance of

the first of God’s Holy days, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4-8; Matthew 26:1, 8; Mark 14:1-2).

Each year prior to the Passover observance, we are admonished to examine, not each other, but ourselves. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28). “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).

David Palmer

Ten Plagues Memory Aid

Jacques Gauvin, a member of the Hamilton congregation, has an interesting way to remember the ten plagues. This is how he remembers.

1. For the first plague think of the first miracle performed by Jesus, turning the water into wine. Wine represents the blood of Christ during Passover. So the first plague is the water turning into blood.
2. Now think of a creature that lives in water that would try to escape the first plague. The second plague is frogs.

3. Frogs have to eat and they mostly eat insects, small ones and big ones. The third plague is fleas. Some translations say lice, some gnats.
4. The fourth plague is flies.
5. Flies often bring disease so the fifth plague is the great murrain – cattle disease.
6. The animals that didn’t die from the murrain got boils, the sixth plague.
7. Now imagine that hail could crush those boils, so

hail is the seventh plague.

8. The hail flattened the crops and the locusts came to devour the remains. So locusts are the eighth plague.
9. There are only two plagues left. If your mind is blank, the ninth plague is darkness for three days just as Jesus was three full days in the grave.
10. The last plague is very well known – it is the death of the first born.

Jacques Gauvin

Them and Us

It is said the lesson of history is that men do not learn the lessons of history, which may be true, but God requires we learn. In fact, that is the point of human existence and the reason that the Bible was written. The apostle Paul tells us that “These things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10: 11).

It might be argued that Paul wrote almost 2,000 years ago and the end has not yet come. However, such thinking ignores two salient facts: first that the end for any individual is the moment they die (to sleep until their resurrection); and secondly the end of this age is not far from us today.

Psalms 105 and 106 are the two closing psalms of Book Four and record how God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt by means of many mighty miracles. Today there are those who are contemptuous of miracles, labeling them as superstitious and claiming God does not exist. But it is guaranteed the time will come when all must face reality. A time beyond the grave when science and technology will fail them and the theory of evolution goes down even as they stand up!

Psalm 105 records God’s wonderful care in redeeming Israel from slavery and supernaturally providing for their needs in the wilderness. The Psalm does not mention the ingratitude of the Israelites: their continual griping, rebellion and unbelievable desire to return to Egypt.

What were they thinking in wanting to return to Egypt? Did they imagine it was safe to go back because Pharaoh’s army was drowned in the sea? Did they forget that Egypt had been devastated by the plagues and there would have been little food? They had taken the wealth of Egypt with them when they left – belated payment for all the years of toil. Meanwhile, all the firstborn of Egypt had been killed in the last plague, both of men and beasts. The Egyptians would be intent on slaughtering Israelites in revenge and getting back their gold, silver and other precious things! Obviously, the Israelites were not thinking too clearly.

All they thought of were the pots of meat, fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic they desired (Exodus 16:3, Numbers 11:5). As for the nutritious manna, they didn’t want that! They lost the vision of a land flowing with milk and honey and just wanted to go back to Egypt.

Psalm 106 tells us how typical the Israelite thinking was. Here the gross ingratitude of that miserable congregation of malcontents is recorded for our admonition – and for the edification of mankind in ages yet to come. So ends Book Four of Psalms.

Book Five opens with Psalm 107 which urges us to be much wiser. The heartfelt plea is given in the first verse, and repeated time and again throughout the psalm: “O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

This time the psalmist is no longer addressing Israel alone, but mankind throughout the ages, particularly those whom God has redeemed from the world and brought into His Church. The psalm applies to all people whom He has rescued from peril on land or sea, or saved from enemies, slavery or imprisonment. It applies to those who have been gathered from hostile lands and settled in a peaceful country. It might include the Jews returned to the land of Israel at last, the first of the tribes who are to be resettled in the years just ahead. It applies to those who have been taken out of the confusion of Satan’s dark world and shown the light of God’s Kingdom.

His mercy endures forever – it is the very nature of God, and will ultimately be seen in the resurrection of every human being who ever lived. It is then that mockers will cease their scoffing, for nothing short of a mighty miracle will be needed to bring them back to life. The original Hebrew word for mercy here includes loving kindness, gentleness, goodness and compassion.

This is our God – the One who gave us life and breath and made this wonderful world filled with every kind of bird, beast, fish, insect and microbe, all designed to work in symbiotic unison with the vegetation to maintain things in proper working order on planet Earth.

However, man has polluted land, sea and air and induced sickness in all living things. We’ve done it in wilful ignorance, blinded by so-called science, disregarding the

Creator's instructions. And so man has brought the world to the brink of extinction - again!

Yet God will not allow mankind to kill off everything. Jesus Christ will come to the rescue as He did in the time of Noah. Terrifying times are prophesied when the Lord once more shakes the whole Earth (Isaiah 2:19-21). How few people believe God will do that and believe a new world is coming! Having been forewarned by His Word, we should give thanks indeed and

place ourselves in His all-powerful care.

Ultimately this is all that we can give: our grateful thanks to God for His loving kindness and mercy. Although we deserve death, He offers eternal life. Everything belongs to God, but He plans to share it all with us. He gave His only begotten Son as a sacrifice to redeem us from the penalty of sin.

Like Israel coming out of Egypt, we are being taken out of this

world and transported to a new and better one. The journey may be tough at times, but we are in it for the long haul and must continue to move forward. Let us then press on with trusting, grateful minds and hearts, reaching toward the Kingdom soon to come.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" as the apostle John wrote in the closing words of the Bible.

George Carter

What Do You Mean, Believe?

Many have been told that all they need to do is believe in God to be saved and to receive the benefit of all His promised blessings. "Believe" is a word that has puzzled many people in the Christian world today. Does "believe" mean that all you have to do is just acknowledge God to be saved, as many people claim? Others assert you need to do works. Who is right? What does the Bible say about this matter? Let us extract the correct meaning of "believe" as stated in God's word.

In the Old Testament

The Israelites who left Egypt with Moses must have believed God. They witnessed the miracles from God including the plagues that hit Egypt. They witnessed God's power when the Red Sea was divided. They obtained victory over Amalekites, received bread – manna – from heaven, witnessed waters flow from the rock and saw other

great signs and wonders. They even made a covenant with God saying, "...All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8).

But did the Israelites really believe God? "Then the LORD said to Moses: 'How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?'" (Number 14:11). They, except for Joshua and Caleb, failed to believe God by obeying His voice; by loving the LORD God; and, by clinging to Him.

In the New Testament

There are those who assert that believing in God is more than merely acknowledging Him, but requires following the instructions given by Jesus to His disciples. They will claim to be doing good works in God's name. "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord,

Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Why will God deny knowing them even though they are doing good works in His name? Because of sin, which is the transgression (or lawlessness) of the Law (1 John 3:4). They miss the point of God's two great commandments: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). The apostle John also stresses the importance of commandment keeping in John 5:2-3.

The conclusion is given to us by Jesus Christ: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Belief is not merely acknowledging Jesus in order to be saved or doing good works in the name of God. But rather to believe in God is to do His will.

God’s will is for us to know Him,

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:3-6).

Therefore, to believe is to have confidence in the truth and in the existence of God. He is looking for people who purposely obey His commandments and live according to His way. With that in mind, do you believe God? It is now time for us to evaluate ourselves whether we really believe God according to His will.

Sixto Yap

Spiritual Diagnosis

In 1998, I suffered a major heart attack. Then in 2013 I had a pulmonary embolism (blood clot in lung). Following this were numerous tests that showed I had an aortic embolism—a bulge in the aorta. I asked the surgeon, “How can this be so dangerous when I have no pain?” He said that I was missing the early signs of major problems and just getting by on luck, but I should have it looked after. He said he could have me in the operating room in 5-7 days, quite a record for the state of our medical care system. He also reminded me that sometimes people do not make it out of this surgery. Now he was talking serious business.

I needed a little time, I consulted with my family doctor, my cardiologist and they both said “Get on board before the opening disappears.” Then I made an appointment with a funerary firm as to what to plan for an end of life. That was a total surprise to my wife, Susan.

I called the surgeon in late Au-

gust and he wanted an echo-cardiogram, which showed blocked cardiac arteries and multiple heart attacks (MI’s). It also showed more enlargements to the aorta, which was now more than double the normal size. The seriousness of it all was now sinking in. I was booked for September 2, 2015, and showed up early for preparation about 9:00 a.m. with surgery scheduled for 1:00 p.m. I was well aware of what



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was going on around me and made my peace with God and my family. I expected to wake up in the Kingdom and now was actually looking forward to that aspect of it—leave this old dirty world behind and wake up in the Kingdom of God!

The next thing I heard as consciousness returned was “He’s breathing on his own.” What a disappointment! However, I got over that soon after. I do enjoy being back on good old earth, but found I was not prepared for the aftermath of this trip. I was scheduled to leave the hospital in five days which turned into 12 as there were complications to deal with. The pain was heavier than I expected.

The surgeon said my aorta was paper thin and he replaced it just in time. The coronary arteries also had to be cleaned of plaque before they could complete the bypass. They told me there is a year’s worth of proper recovery time, but I figured I was quite strong and would be working and running around in a couple of months. This turned out to be overly optimistic and now reality has settled in. I’ll have to work out healing time as the LORD says “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” So now I am understanding that I am not a superman but must remain a humble human for the time

now and must work on exercise and strength training.

The Bible describes God as the One who judges us. People find a way to justify everything they do, “but the Lord weighs the hearts” (Proverbs 21:2). When we come before the true God, we cannot hide what we’ve done. We must admit our mistakes and repent of our sins. For though we may lie even to ourselves, God knows the truth: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is

not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:8-9). Pharaoh actually confessed to sin twice (Exodus 9:27; 10:16); but he immediately reverted to his obstinacy both times, remaining deceived about himself and the reality he was facing.

How do we respond to God? Are we like Pharaoh? Do we confess sin only when we are being punished and soon harden our hearts again to disobey Him? Do we see ourselves

as we really are? Do we respond as we should to God’s gentle correction? If we choose a stubborn, self-deceiving hardened heart like Pharaoh, God will have to use stronger discipline to get our attention!

A major lesson of the Exodus is that God is always in control. When my heart (arteries) were physically hard as stone, it was God that carried me through the ignorance I had about my state.

Eric Frandsen

News From Across Canada

Ottawa Blessing of Children

The blessing of little children is always a joyous event.



William Moulton

It was especially so for the Ottawa congregation this past year as a fourth-generation little one was blessed. Levi Moulton along with proud parents, Ben and Samantha Moulton, were joined in the ceremony by Joseph Moulton (Levi’s great-grandfather) and Dennis Horlick, who together conducted this special occasion.

It is a wonderful thing to behold as we watch not only the physical

families grow, but also to see our church family grow.

Paula Horlick

Toronto Bowling Night

The Sabbath and our assembly together are always wonderful things to look forward to every week. This is even more so when a congregation holds a month-end social. The Toronto congregation held its bowling event following the Sabbath this past December, and it again attracted brethren from a sister congregation.

Thanks to good weather, a total of 32 brethren attended and displayed their various levels of bowling skills and finesse. Church bowlers, new and seasoned, young and old, displayed a wide spectrum of talent. However, no one achieved a perfect score.

What is precious about a bowling event is that it allows brethren to melt away any social or personality barriers. Sooner or later, just about everyone rolls their ball into the wooden lane’s adjacent gutters. Immediately after a gutter ball, you observe an unexpected release of funny and contorted body language, facial expressions, joy and laughter, supported by words of encouragement from God’s loving family members. With our guard down, the gutter experience serves to bring brethren closer together.

A bowling social, enables church members to develop friendships.



Gaetan St.-Denis

Warm greetings and conversations with one another continue over many Sabbaths that follow. With eyes on the pins, fellowship builds bonds that unify.

Gaetan St-Denis

Fondue Social

The Saskatoon and North Battleford, Saskatchewan, congregations held a combined service in North Battleford on the Sabbath of December 12, 2015.



Heather Hagglund

After services that evening, Boyd and Donna Yahn hosted another successful fondue social at their home. Great food and fellowship were enjoyed by 46 brethren. Families came from all parts of Saskatchewan and some came from as far away as Edmonton.

We would like express our thanks and appreciation to the Yahn family for their wonderful hospitality.

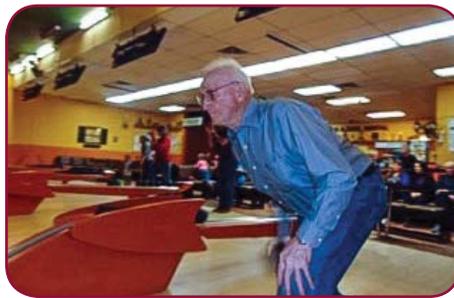
Donna Bird

Ottawa Bowling

On Saturday, January 9, the Ottawa congregation gathered at Kemptville Bowling Lanes to strike (pun intended) up a lively game

of bowling. A total of 29 bowlers turned up, ranging from 11 months to 92 years of age. The teams (five in total) were devised, pairing couples against couples, siblings rivaling siblings, parents opposing their children and naturally, friends facing off against friends.

The scores ranged from low numbers to high. There were great scores, bad scores and really bad scores but no-one was “spared” and high fives were delivered equally. In the end, it did not matter what score players attained. It only mattered that they had fun playing amongst people they fellowship with each week. After the fun evening, Alexander Moulton, age three, requested to have a “balling” excursion every week. His approval says it all – it was a success.



Heidi Lacroix

It was an evening of pleasant discussions, friendly rivalries and entertainment for all. I believe it is safe to say that we are all looking forward to next year’s evening of bowling, some to try and redeem themselves and others to maintain their titles as “Bowling Master.”

Heidi Lacroix

Edmonton Anniversary

On the Sabbath of January 16,

2016, the Edmonton congregation celebrated 20 years since its first church service. The congregation has met at King’s University for that whole span of time. The original founding families (Joe and Lynne Broschak, Rick and Heather Berendt and Dan Berendt) were present.

During the 20 years, the Edmonton congregation has grown from an original number of 14 to close to 110 potential attendees. Some live a long distance from Edmonton and cannot attend very often. Joe and Lynne Broschak have served as deacon and deaconess since its inception. Shortly after the congregation began Rick and Dan Berendt were ordained as elders. We also have Dave and Evelyn Davis as deacon and deaconess and many other faithful helpers in the church.

Anthony Wasilkoff began pastoring the congregation from Calgary in 1996, and Robert Berendt has been the pastor since 1998. Rainer Salomaa was also present at the anniversary and had visited and spoke in Edmonton on or near the first Sabbath. This celebration included a cake, which these three were asked to cut.

There were 109 people in attendance including several families



provided by Robert Berendt

from Calgary and North Battleford and about 25 cybercast hookups for the special occasion. We had a wonderful potluck dinner served by the church ladies. Anthony Wasilkoff and Rainer Salomaa gave split sermons and some of our young children played special music after the meal.

The anniversary was a happy occasion!

Robert Berendt

Hamilton Soup Social

On the first Sabbath of February, the Hamilton congregation departed from their normal routine to hold services in the afternoon. Paul Wasilkoff gave the Bible Study and Anthony Wasilkoff gave the sermon that day.



Mary Ann Halcrow

After services, we fellowshiped while enjoying a soup-themed potluck. True to any church meal, a well-stocked dessert table awaited those who still had an appetite. Two cakes were presented that day! One cake was presented to the Wasilkoff (Junior) family, officially welcoming them to the congregation and the second cake was presented to Jean Gauvin acknowledging the 10th anniversary of her move to Canada.

After sunset we began playing games: chess, cribbage, euchre, air hockey, frankencritter (a drawing game) and battleship were among the activities. We enjoyed fellowshiping in a relaxed and playful atmosphere where friendships were strengthened.

Paul Wasilkoff

Kitchener Ice Fishing

On February 14, hearty brethren from the Kitchener, Toronto and Hamilton congregations met for a day of ice fishing! During the preceding weeks many were concerned that the unseasonably warm temperatures would prevent the activity. Thankfully the weather cooperated and allowed for more than sufficient ice thickness for a safe and enjoyable day.

Sue Hodgins and her husband, Walter, arrived early to make preparations. Everyone who wanted to participate had equipment and gear, much of which was provided by Sue and Walter. After getting comfortable, the kids decided to take a break from sedentary angling and engaged in tobogganing and then ice skating.

A delicious lunch of hamburgers,



Mary Ann Halcrow

hotdogs and fixings were provided by our hosts along with veggies and snacks contributed by many who came. A number of fish were caught during the sunny, crisp day. They were all returned to the lake with a strict promise of continued growth until next year's repeat event.

At the end of the day, Sue and Walter presented a trophy to the young man who caught the largest fish. It has been reported that another participant returned home with one of the bait minnows as a pet. We appreciate the work of all who made the day possible and look forward to another day of ice fishing together next year.

Paul Wasilkoff

Vancouver Baptisms

It was a very special Sabbath on February 20, 2016, in Vancouver. Two baptisms highlighted the day. Margaret Pearson who has been attending in the Vancouver congregation for the past few years made



Ghyslaine Palmer

the important decision to become baptized into the Body of Christ.

Tina Kmodras, a young lady I have known since the day she was

born, and who is now 21, was counselled for baptism over the past six months. It was extremely special for me to be involved in baptizing Tina, as I had previously baptized both her parents and her older sister.

Tina and Margaret were baptized prior to church services that included both a sermonette from Tina's father, Richard Kmodras, and a sermon message from guest speaker John Elliott on the subject of a godly family.

Services were followed with a bounty of food and fellowship.

David Palmer

Edmonton BBQ

Every December, after hunting season, the Edmonton congregation gathers together for a winter social at the Davis farm. This year, 60 church members of all ages participated.



Wayne Ward

The day began with a hot-chili lunch – a good meal to fortify the body for the winter activities that were to come! Afterward many bundled up and headed outdoors to enjoy some winter fun. The weather was cold and sunny, but there was no wind making the day quite pleasant. The sparkly, frosted trees and snowy fields of God's creation

were truly breathtaking!

Two skidoos made tracks across the snowy fields. Children had great fun on the big toboggan hill. They found it especially thrilling to pile into a snowmobile toboggan at the bottom of the hill and get a ride to the top, where they could coast down the hill again!

Some headed to the lake situated at the south end of the farm where a skating rink had been prepared. The 200-foot rink had an area for hockey at one end and a skating area at the other end. An ice-fishing hut, complete with heater, provided a warm-up area. Meanwhile, a few non-skaters tried out the cross-country skis. Those who preferred to stay warm and cozy remained indoors and amused themselves with games of cards, chess, and cribbage.

As the sun went down, everyone headed inside the Davis garage for the barbeque feast! Deer and elk meat had marinated overnight and were barbequed to perfection. The salads and desserts, supplied by everyone, were extensive and varied. A delicious meal!

It was a wonderful day of fellowship and fun enjoyed by all who attended! The winter barbeque has become a tradition in Edmonton and one which we all hope will continue for many years!

Susan Davis

Guzman Birth

Aedan Raziel Guzman was born

early on the morning of February 6, 2016, at 1:12 a.m. He weighed 7.93 pounds (3.6 kg.) and was 21 inches (53 centimeters) long.



Rommel Guzman

Happy parents to this first-born are Rommel and Arlene Guzman of the Toronto congregation.

Rommel Guzman

Lesh Anniversary

On October 24, the Grande Prairie congregation presented Cliff and Tracy Lesh with a card and cake in honour of their 25th wedding anniversary.



Doug Lesh

Cliff and Tracy were married on October 20, 1990. They, along with their two sons Garrett and Adam, have been attending UCG since services were first held in Grande Prairie.

Beth Lesh

Levitt Anniversary

On the Sabbath of November 7, 2015, the Saskatoon congregation honoured Al and Joey Levitt as



Darlene Buck

they celebrated 60 years of marriage. The following day family and friends had a celebration with them in the town of Perdue where they live.

Al and Joey have been members of the Church of God since 1964. They attended first in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and then in Wetaskiwin, Alberta. For the past number of years they have been back in the Saskatoon area and are a great asset to the Saskatoon congregation. Al gives sermonettes and leads songs, while Joey is our pianist. They also serve in many other ways in the congregation.

The Levitts are very faithful members of God's church and very seldom miss a Sabbath even though they must travel about an hour into Saskatoon for services. They are both retired now but, in addition to the work they do for the church, the Levitts do a lot of volunteer work in the small town of Perdue where they live.

Darlene Buck

Detchkoff Obituary

Clara May Detchkoff died peacefully with her family by her side on October 7, 2015, at the age of 84. She is survived by her loving husband, William; her sister, Alfie Smabach; her daughters Linda and Leann; and many nieces, nephews and grandchildren. She was predeceased by her parents Kari and Olaf Halset.



provided by Bill Detchkoff

Bill and Clara have been longtime members of the Church of God and lived in Grand Forks, British Columbia. They attended services as often as they could with the Okanagan congregation.

Clara enjoyed spending time with her family and friends and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Michael Erickson

Granrud Obituary

Ed Granrud's parents immigrated to Canada in 1911 from Norway. They established a family farm in the Weldon area of Saskatchewan, and it was there that Ed was born.

Ed's mother was the pianist for the Lutheran church for 65 years. How-

ever, Ed began questioning what he had been taught from his youth. He came in contact with the Church of God 43 years ago and completed the 58-lesson Bible study course. After reading and rereading the Bible from cover to cover and being amazed by what he learned, he collected a library of Bibles and Bible aids. He loved to discuss Bible facts with many of the people he knew, some of whom attend church now.

Ed was a jack of all trades in farming and construction. He loved flowers and landscaping. He remodeled three houses—adding a fish pond to the last house.

Ed Granrud always thought cemeteries should have the convenience of an outhouse, so he went about constructing them at home, hauling them to the cemetery and digging the hole at night. He set them up and supplied them with church literature, Ten Commandments literature and booklets for people to read. It took a long time for someone to figure out who was putting them there.



provided by family

Ed struggled with cancer for many years but always had a smile and a positive attitude. His favorite saying was: "God be with you till we meet again." Ed died October 23, 2015,

and will be missed by family, friends and the Saskatoon congregation.

Stan Braaten

Mathison Obituary

Following Sabbath services in Vancouver on January 23, David Palmer conducted a memorial service for long-time church member Vera Mathison. Vera died after a lengthy battle with leukemia and rectal cancer on January 18, 2016, at age 86. More than 100 family and friends attended the service.

Vera was born on December 23, 1919, in Kitchener, Ontario. She had two brothers and two sisters. There she met and married Ken Presley, and they had four daughters.

Vera worked at several occupations throughout her life including, at one point, owning her own restaurant in Kitchener. She also owned her own driving school in Ontario and later in Vancouver. After retiring from the driving school, Vera worked as a personal support care worker until retirement in 1978.

Vera loved dancing, especially ballroom dancing, which was one of

her greatest enjoyments. It was how she and Don Mathison met. They both loved dancing and that eventually led to marriage. She and Don were married January 12, 2008.

Vera was an integral part of the Vancouver congregation. She took care of the cards sent to those on our prayer list. She organized the ballroom dance held at the Feast of Tabernacles in Abbotsford and was involved in many other church duties as well.

Vera was dedicated to the local congregation and her Saviour Jesus Christ and was a fine Christian lady. She is survived by her husband, Don, her four daughters, Carol Presley, Susan Schmiderer, Judy Stryker, Gail Spencer, and their families.

David Palmer

Saskatoon Obituaries

In just over two years, the Saskatoon congregation has lost six gentlemen to death. This has been quite a blow to our small congregation of about 30 people.

In August, 2013, Gordon Jonsson died suddenly while out in his workshop doing what he loved. Gord had moved to Saskatoon a number of years before from British Columbia. He lived with his son, Robert, and his family. He was always friendly and helped brethren where he could.

In September 2014, we lost both Al Kostyna and Jerry Buck four days apart. Al's cheerfulness, his joking and teasing is missed by everyone. Jerry served as deacon in

our church fulfilling his duties and helping where he could.

Ewald Glombowski was a long time member of God's church, died in March 2015. Everyone misses his wit, humour and stories.

We were shocked to hear of the death of Robert Jonsson in August 2015. This was an especially difficult time for the Jonsson and Glombowski families, losing not only Robert but also his father Gord Jonsson and his father-in-law Ewald Glombowski earlier in the year.

Ed Granrud died in October 2015 after struggling with poor health for many years. He was a kind, gentle man who was often weak and ill came to church as often as he could.

All these men, who were very devoted to God's way of life and His church, have left their mark on our Saskatoon congregation. We will forever remember them and look forward to seeing them at the time of the resurrection.

Darlene Buck

Northwest Weekend

The UCG Northwest Weekend is always a special event. This year marked the 45th occasion of the conference, and again the focus was on family. From December 22-25, 2015, as many as 400 people attended Friday seminars, Sabbath services, special music, sports and social activities. It was a fitting tribute to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.



Nicolas Sherry

Roc Corbett, pastor of Olympia, Washington, presented a seminar on Positive Principles of Christian Manhood. He showed that our testimony and service to others really matters. The message resonated with any age group, but emphasized youth as our future, and showed how they can prepare for that time. Fundamental principles of faith, love and obedience to God were provided. Also, older brethren's influence on youth must be seriously considered.

Rod Hall, a deacon from Seattle, Washington, delivered a motivational presentation on Strategies for Success. He gave principles for living a full Christian life. It was full of positive energy and practical tips

for overcoming life's challenges.

Rex Sexton, Portland and Hood River, Oregon pastor, spoke on End of Life Planning. He offered a wealth of information, including government law, personal financial management and using community resources. The seminar was U.S. based, but applicable to anyone.

Randy Stiver delivered an inspiring sermon, focusing on three Biblical stories especially relevant to youth: Jesus Christ at age 12; young Timothy; plus youthful visions from the book of Joel. The core of the message was appreciating God's awesome calling, holding fast to His truth, keeping the Kingdom vision and Christian liv-

ing in a hostile world. Youth's calling is to carry the torch forward in preaching the gospel and preparing a people. Mr. Stiver's admonition, encouragement and humour really hit the mark.

As the United Church of God's mission statement declares: "A Church led by God's Holy Spirit, joined and knit together by what every member supplies, with all doing their share and growing in love to fulfill God's great purpose for humanity to bring many children to glory" (Ephesians 4:16; Hebrews 2:10). The UCG 2015 Northwest family weekend gave many brethren that opportunity.

Dale Craniford

"Sacrifice" from page 16

did not have to kill animals.

Isaiah wrote that God does not delight in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. He wanted no more futile sacrifices. God's desire was that they wash themselves, make themselves clean, put away evil, cease to do evil and learn to do good (Isaiah 1:16-19). He wanted willing and obedient people to be His children.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was a horribly cruel and painful death that we would not want to see. God wants us to understand the seriousness of sin and the great cost it took to cleanse us in order to encourage us to stop sinning. Each time we sin, we lay an-

other stripe upon His Son. Each sin requires another drop of His precious blood—so to speak.

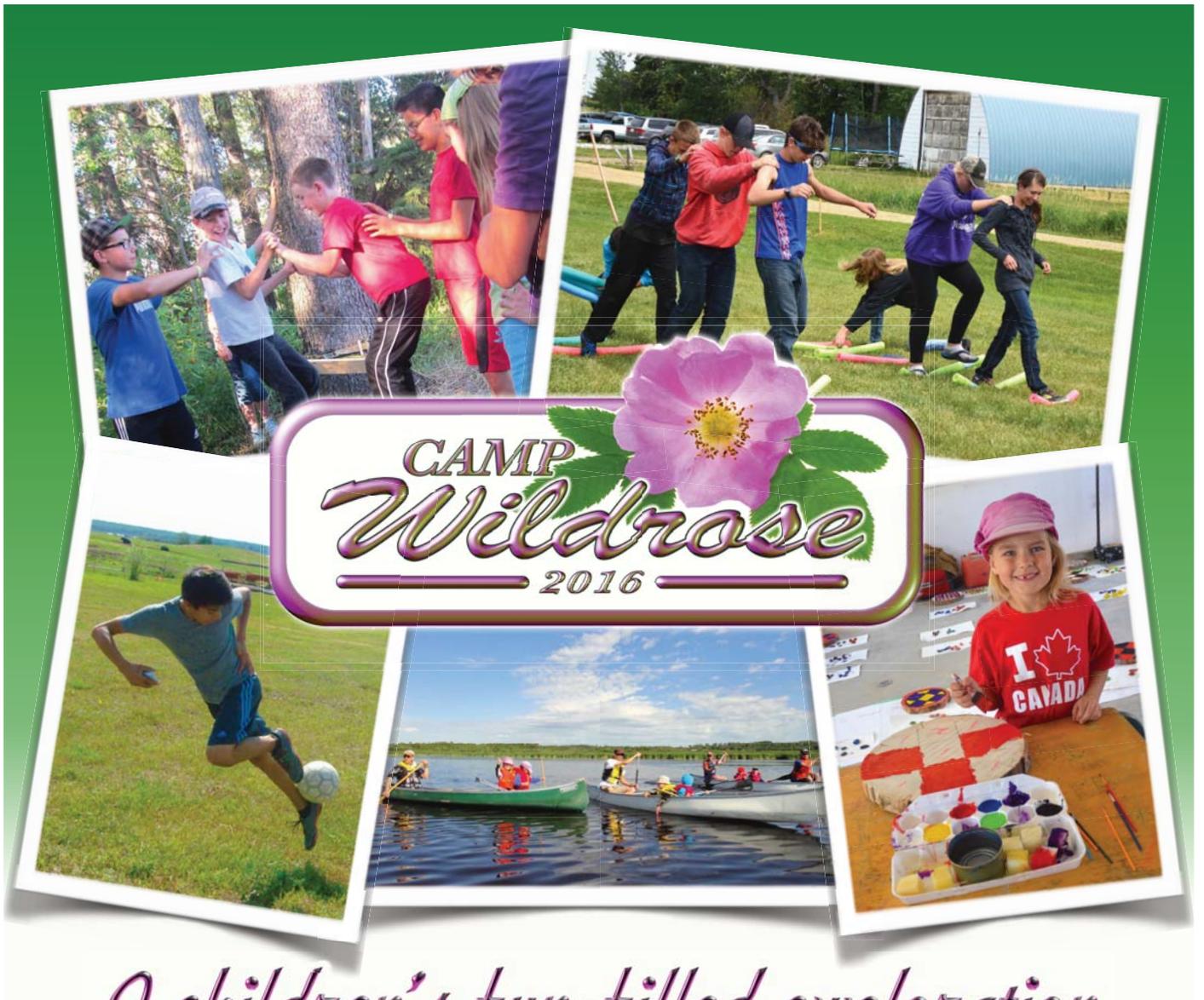
The Bible teaches us to shun sin and obey God. Paul told us all to look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith, consider His sacrifice and the hostility shown Him for our sakes and then resist sin. He goes on to say we are to pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:1-4, 12-17, 22-29). We are to serve Him with reverence and godly fear because God is the author of life and Creator of all that exists.

The Passover lamb that we now accept is Jesus Christ – and if we have strong feelings about sacrificing an animal, how much

stronger should our feelings be about needing the cleansing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God never intended that an endless line of sacrificial animals be brought before Him. He hoped people would hate killing animals enough to resist sin and obey Him. That is always His goal so that He can fulfill His offer of eternal life to mankind.

God wants His children to come boldly before His throne rejoicing that their sins have been removed, recognizing and appreciating the cost and determined to resist sin all their lives (Romans 6:1-2). Humans were only required to sacrifice an animal, but our Heavenly Father sacrificed His firstborn Son.

Robert Berendt



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National Council Meetings

The National Council conducted its last meeting of the year on December 14, 2015, by WebEx. All nine members of the Council plus the Treasurer and Secretary were online.

After the opening prayer and the approval of the September minutes, the National Office update was given. Anthony Wasilkoff provided statistics from recent subscriber development letters showing the cost per response and the total donation amount each letter generated. He also gave background on office lease renewal negotiations.

In his overview of church finances, Edwin van Pelt noted that there is a small but growing number of individuals using online donations. One person who has used it was not previously on our files.

An update of the December Council of Elders meeting was given by Rainer Salomaa. One area under consideration is planned giving. The COE also discussed the need to expand the Home Office building.

Committee chairmen were scheduled to give updates on what the committees are working on. The Strategic Planning/Finance committee had been working with the National Office in preparing next year's budget. The Governance Committee and Compensation committees have work scheduled for the face-to-face meeting in June.

Whenever there is change in council composition, there is often a need to re-align the committees and assign the new person to a committee. Michael Erickson requested to be moved from the Governance committee to the Strategic Planning/Finance committee. Peter Corrigan was then assigned to the Governance committee and the Compensation



Anthony Wasilkoff

committee. Since Bill Dimovski is now working for the church, he will no longer serve on the Compensation committee. These changes were unanimously approved by the National Council.

The 2016-2017 Operations Plan was reviewed by Anthony Wasilkoff. This plan has adjustments, revisions and updates year by year. Michael Erickson pointed out that hiring of Paul Wasilkoff brought the average age of the salaried elders down from 69 to 64.

The 2016-2017 Budget was presented by Edwin van Pelt. It is based upon a projected one percent increase in actual

donations received in the past year. There are the normal increases in expenditures. Also budgeted for is an additional salary for hiring a minister. There will also be a slight increase in the mileage reimbursement rate. Both the Operations Plan and Budget were accepted to be presented to the National Conference for their ratification in March.

A resolution to give the Director of Operations the ability to renew the National Office lease was put forth and adopted. Bill Dimovski gave an overview of the negotiations that have occurred prior to the lease extension agreement.

Michael Erickson presented a proposed "Records to be Kept" policy. This policy outlines which records are required to be preserved, how long they are to be kept and who is responsible for having the records stored. All these requirements have been met, but this policy will help ensure that regulations are met even when there is a change in personnel. Committee chairmen were reminded of the need to keep minutes of all their meetings. The policy was adopted unanimously.

The next National Council meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2016, by WebEx. The June meeting will be held in Calgary.

Lessons From Animal Sacrifice

Paul wrote that the first (old) covenant had ordinances of divine service, which were symbolic for that time (Hebrews 9:9-10). They were imposed until the time of reformation. The blood of animals was an indication of the acknowledgment of sin and need for blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins, and since the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23), the blood of the sinner is required.

All of the sacrifices looked forward to the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which actually cleanses us from all sin at our repentance and acceptance of His sacrifice (Hebrews 9:28). All of the sacrifices of animals were a reminder that people had sinned against God and needed His forgiveness. In time the sacrifices became hypocritical and unpleasant for God. The blood of animals could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). David understood that what God was seeking was a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart and not sacrifices (Psalm 51:16, 17).

Why then did God impose a system of sacrifices upon Israel? With a large population, there would have been millions of creatures put to death each year. Did God really want people to kill animals? Why kill something close to the person like a baby lamb or kid that grew up near the family?

Humans grow to love the animals in their care. We feel very protective towards them.

It would not be easy to have a little lamb that you take the best care for days, weeks or months and then cut its throat as a sacrifice would require. At the first Passover, a lamb was to be selected, carefully kept until the 14th day of Nisan and then sacrificed with the blood smeared on the lintels of the house and the lamb completely roasted and eaten. It would become known as the "Lord's Passover" because of the lessons learned by the people that the blood of the lamb would protect them (Exodus 12:3-10).

We understand today that this lamb looked forward to Jesus Christ who was the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). His blood and sacrifice has taken the place of the animals that God had commanded Israel to offer. Some think God in the Old Testament was a bloody God. Why would such a set of rules be imposed since the sacrifices were no longer required after the death of Jesus Christ?

When I was a boy (many years ago) we had a pet dog living in our home. As time went by, Weenie had six pups, but our town had a law stating that all female puppies had to die because there were too many dogs running loose. Animals were not neutered or spayed in those days, so the dog population was a problem. Our parents did not have the heart to dispose of the female puppies, so they hired John, the neighbor boy, to take our puppies and drown them. We all trooped along with him

to watch. This was the first time we children had witnessed animals being put to death. John put the four female pups in a bag with some rocks in it, tied a string at the top and threw it into the creek. A few minutes passed and John pulled the bag out so we could bury the puppies. They were not dead and were whining a little. He retied the bag and threw them in again. By this time we had all we wanted of seeing the animals we loved being put to death. We were crying and were sick to our stomachs. It was a lesson that killing an animal was not nice.

God wanted people to feel the cost of sin and to change their lives. Humans were to learn that their sin brought about the sacrifice of an animal – the best they had available. People were to learn to avoid sin so that they did not have to offer sacrifices like that. God was not looking for animal blood. He was looking for a repentant heart and people who would obey Him (Psalm 51:17).

God does not enjoy seeing animals sacrificed. Sacrifices were imposed because Israel was sinful. He was teaching through the sacrificial laws that sin is horrible and has horrible consequences. Sacrificing animals ought to make a person want to stop sinning. God stated that He looked with favour upon a person with a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:1-3). He wanted people to obey Him so they

See "Sacrifice" on page 13