



An Invitation Like No Other

Do you remember the first invitation you ever received? Perhaps you were still in elementary school and you were given an invitation to a party. Of course, the acceptance or declining had to be handled by your parents. Nevertheless, it was still surprisingly exciting to be personally asked, in writing no less, to attend a special event.

Through the years, you have probably been invited to attend someone's graduation. At one time, graduations were mainly from high school and then either college or university. These days there are even graduations from kindergarten. In any case, graduation is an important milestone, and to be invited to attend one is an honor.

Most of us have received wedding invitations fairly frequently through the years. We realize that when a couple plans a wedding they can only invite a limited number of people. Budget plays a major role in determining how many people to invite. If we receive an invitation, we feel honored and make every effort to attend.

If we are not invited, we understand and do not take umbrage knowing how these things work.

Invitations are often accompanied by an RSVP. That is, we are asked to let those issuing the invitation know by a specified time if we can accept the invitation or not. This allows the organizers to plan accordingly since numbers are very important.

a strategic spot with a special vantage point in order to participate vicariously in the royal wedding. Some camped out for days having brought along all that was needed to subsist under limited circumstances but yet included flags and other accoutrements befitting the royal family and the royal occasion.

Can you imagine being on the guest list for the recent Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II?



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This stellar occasion received special attention from the media around the world. Dignitaries from many nations attended this remarkable milestone. They took time out of their busy schedules to be there. Various commemorative events took

place over a period of several days. Even street parties were held in honor of the Queen's remarkable 60-year-reign.

Tributes were paid to the popular monarch by many individuals including Prince Charles who said: "Your Majesty, millions we are told, dream of having tea with you. Quite a lot nearly had a picnic with you in the garden of Buckingham Palace.... Your Majesty a Diamond Jubilee is a unique and special event.... So as

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a nation, this is our opportunity to thank you and my father for always being there for us. For inspiring us with your selfless duty and service and for making us proud to be British. Proud at a time when I know how many of your fellow countrymen are suffering such hardships and difficulties. Proud to be lining the banks of the Thames in their millions, despite the rain and the cold. Proud to be part of something as unique as the Commonwealth, which through your leadership has given us that essential sense of unity through diversity.”

Each year the people of God receive a special invitation to attend the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. Jubilees come only once in a great while whereas the Feast comes every year. Each year we, too, can experience a type of unity through diversity as empowered by God’s Holy Spirit.

A few years ago an octogenarian member remarked one morning over breakfast during the feast: “Here I am keeping the Feast of Tabernacles and I have been invited by the Almighty God.” This gentleman has since died, but his words remain with me and now I share them with you. To be at the Feast of Tabernacles is very much accepting an invitation from the Creator God as issued to his dear children.

One noted scholar described the weekly Sabbath as a 24-hour vacation with God. That is an apt description. We are to leave our labours and worries behind us and enjoy a full day’s reprieve with our Creator. The seven days (plus one) in the autumn are more of the same but in a much more sustained and impactful way.

In a very real sense, we have been invited to appear at a royal occasion. The Feast of Tabernacles heralds a time when the King of Kings will have commenced His rule from Jerusalem over all of the earth.

In the parable of the wedding feast recorded in Matthew 22, Jesus Christ explained that the kingdom of heaven was like a monarch arranging a marriage for his son. The king dispatched emissaries to summon each of those who had been invited to this very special wedding. However, those on the guest list were unwilling to attend. The king subsequently sent more emissaries to implore the invitees to attend, this time giving more details about the amenities they would be partaking of. Even so, those on the guest list did not respond positively. Some thought it was funny and went their various ways heeding this life’s demands and distractions. Regrettably, others treated the emissaries with overt hostility to the point of causing injury and death.

Christ further explained that the king did not take too kindly to this horrific behavior and took appropriate action. Thereafter he created a brand new guest list. This time the emissaries compelled all kinds of people to come to the wedding and come they did filling the hall to the full. Sadly, one of the guests made the egregious error of not wearing the proper wedding attire. This also was dealt with by the King and not ignored as some small thing. The parable concludes: “For many are called and few are chosen.” To be called is to be issued a very special invitation. Not all who are invited by God will be among those who are ultimately saved because not all will truly act on their calling.

The book of Isaiah put forward a highly compelling personal invitation from God to His people: “Come to the waters: and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price ... listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear and you shall live ...” (Isaiah 55:1-3). The Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day are such a remarkable time for God’s people everywhere!

Anthony Wasilkoff

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Simplicity that is in Christ

Humans seem inclined to make complicated something that is intended to be simple. God is far more complicated than our minds can imagine – but He knows the heart, intent and limitations of humans (Hebrews 4:12, 13). Furthermore, He has a message for all of mankind. Some education is required because we cannot choose between good and evil unless we know what they are – and God insists that we make choices. Sadly enough, when knowledge is abundant,

the will to do what is right by God's definition is often missing. Often, people know what is right, yet still make the wrong choices. Even pagans like Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar knew about the God Daniel worshipped (Daniel 5:22; 2:47) but pride, vanity, stubbornness, carelessness, deception and peer pressure played a part in their denial of what is right – choosing to obey God. The same holds true for us.

God is looking for those who will obey Him (1 John 2:3). He is hoping people will see the love, goodness, hope and future that He offers and just do what He says (Proverbs 15:3). God has done everything He can to help us understand His love. He taught the law of life directly

to humans and to the entire world through Israel at Mount Sinai. He presented the Ten Commandments and preserved them in the Torah for thousands of years. He worked miracle after miracle (Hebrews 3:9). He provided a Redeemer and Saviour when mankind had no way

ty of His offer of eternal life and forgiveness through the blood of Christ and who repent of their sins. He wants those who resist sin and choose good (His laws) for the rest of their lives. Conversion requires consistently choosing His way as we live among wicked

people and are confronted by Satan. It sometimes takes suffering to loosen the chains that have bound us for years. Bad habits and the influence of the mind of Satan in our decisions and choices do need to be broken. Jesus, who never sinned, always obeyed God and fought the temptations that so easily assail us (Hebrews 2:18).



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back from sin. He became flesh to show us we can live and not sin and He took upon Himself the payment for our sins (Romans 6:23).

Only when God opens our minds to understand can we know His truths (Luke 24:45). He will not force people to make the right choices. It is the heart (attitude towards God) that counts. The hard heart of humans is softened through pain and suffering, but that is not what God prefers. He wants us to obey Him because He is our Creator and Father and holds eternity in His hands. He wants to bless and give good gifts to His children.

What is God looking for? He seeks people who grasp the beau-

ty of His offer of eternal life and forgiveness through the blood of Christ and who repent of their sins. He wants those who resist sin and choose good (His laws) for the rest of their lives. Conversion requires consistently choosing His way as we live among wicked people and are confronted by Satan. It sometimes takes suffering to loosen the chains that have bound us for years. Bad habits and the influence of the mind of Satan in our decisions and choices do need to be broken. Jesus, who never sinned, always obeyed God and fought the temptations that so easily assail us (Hebrews 2:18).

God shows us the path and makes a bridge for our return to His good graces and freedom from sin. The reward is eternal life with a body that never ages or is sick and a position as a king or priest. More than this, God planned for us to be His children and like Him in every way (1 John 3:2).

God is looking for individuals willing to obey Him. What God asks is not impossible, or He would not ask it. We humans can understand because God did not make His commandments impossible for us to obey or understand (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). The problem is us! God is disappointed when people turn away from Him.

When God put the choices to Israel and told them of the blessings and cursings, He encouraged them to work for the blessings (Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 16). They could have kept His laws, but instead they “would not” obey Him (Deuteronomy 28:62) and that is a long way from “could not” obey Him.

When God created a wonderful world, even the angels shouted for joy. He created humans and spent time with them. He planted a beautiful garden and told them to take care of it. He told them about the only tree of which they must not touch or eat of its fruit. If Adam and Eve had obeyed, they could have eaten of the Tree of Life, which was also in the garden and available to them. When

they chose to disobey and follow what their eyes and thinking assured them was a “better way”, they sinned and lost the opportunity for all the gifts God offered, allowing sin to enter into all of mankind from Adam onward (Romans 5:12). Why are we humans like that?

God is now watching to see what we choose to do. The formula is simple. See what is offensive to God, repent of it with all your heart and soul, accept the gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Then keep His laws and do not let the temptation of sin influence the rest of your life. We are to obey Him and live – recognize the pain we have caused our loving Father and accept His offer of the cleansing blood of Christ. Will we re-

solve to resist sin – or will we turn away, spurn His offer, and stay in darkness?

Once humans have had enough of self-inflicted pain, misery and sorrow, and they turn to God and His promise, He will hear and listen (Jeremiah 23:23, 24). Even those carrying loads of sin can be forgiven (Isaiah 1:18). God looks to see if any are wise, if any look for Him and if any are willing to obey. It is simple. God tells us not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He tells us how painful that could be and then, as a loving parent, He lets us choose. We will learn that He is always right. As a loving God, He offers to rescue us through Christ.

Robert Berendt

Meet the New Brunswick Congregation

Greetings from the UCG-New Brunswick congregation!

This congregation is a small yet diverse one. New Brunswick is the only Canadian province that is officially bilingual, which is reflected by our brethren as well. Out of 25 members, nine are French speaking

of Acadian origin, and the others are Anglophones.

The brethren are scattered throughout the southern part of the province. Yet God gathers us all in unity once a month in Moncton, one of the largest cities of New Brunswick, where we can have much needed fellowship and worship. Some members have a two-hour drive to Moncton while most of us have about an hour. On the other Sabbaths, we arrange to meet in two smaller groups.

In addition, if you could visit our Moncton congregation, you would see three children running around

and a baby sleeping. You would also meet interesting young adults, lovely families, inspiring adults, as well as a lovely elderly woman in her nineties who we feel is the spiritual grandmother of us all. Our pastor, Mr. Dennis Horlick, lives in Ontario but comes to visit us two or three times a year.

Our church currently has no resident elder and we feel a sense of loss with that, but we pray and are confident that God will provide support for our congregation. Please pray for strength, unity and that God will add labourers into His work.

Chantal Vautour



Our New Brunswick brethren after services (photo provided by Chantal Vautour)

Beyond Today Update

On May 21, 2006, the first Beyond Today television program aired in Canada from coast to coast. Twenty responses were received from that program. From that modest beginning, our responses now average about 75 per week.

Three-hundred and thirteen weeks later, we entered our seventh year of airing the program in Canada.

During that time a total of 23,388 responses have been received. Nearly 80 percent of those responses have been phone calls from viewers of the program on Vision TV and the Grace Television Network (formerly The Christian Channel). Just over 20 percent of all the responses have been from the beyondtoday.tv website with the balance coming via mail.

Vision TV is available with most basic cable television packages in Canada while the Grace Television Network is available to digital and satellite television subscribers. Vision Television typically brings in about 80-85 percent of the phone responses due to its more widespread availability.

New people account for well over half of all the responses received. Nearly 13,000 new people have been added to our database in Canada as a result of the Beyond Today program.

There have been three changes in the airtime of Beyond Today since it began airing in Canada on Vision TV. The airtime on The Christian Channel/Grace Television Network has remained the

same – 10:30 a.m. EST on Sundays. Meanwhile, on Vision TV for about the first two and one-half years in Canada, Beyond Today aired at 2:00 a.m. EST on Monday mornings. That meant the program aired in British Columbia at 11:00 p.m. Sunday and in Newfoundland and Labrador on Monday at 3:30 a.m. In September 2008, we were able to negotiate an earlier airtime of 10:00 p.m. EST on Sunday. This resulted in the program airing at a more favourable time across the country – 7:00 p.m. in British Columbia and 11:30 p.m. in Newfoundland and Labrador. The airtime on Vision TV changed once again in April 2011 when we went to 10:30 p.m. EST Sunday (7:30 p.m. PST and midnight NST).

Our cost per response has dropped by over 50 percent over the past two years primarily as a result of the increased number of responses.

In September 2010, the Canadian office mailing address was added in the program. Since that time, we've received about 200 letters from viewers. These letters account for 0.8 percent of all the responses received to date.

One such letter was from a viewer who recently wrote, "I watch Beyond Today at 10:30 p.m. Sunday on Vision TV. I find it very interesting and it helps me to go to my Bible and search." Another viewer stated, "I am a regular listener of your television programming. It's inspiring and educational. I would like to continue to be a regular subscriber to your magazine. I do enjoy reading them." Yet another

viewer wrote, "On the Beyond Today TV program you told us the importance of listening and abiding by God's instructions regarding clean and unclean meats. Would you send a copy of this booklet?"

While a large number of viewers only respond to one program, many others respond to multiple programs. Some have started attending Sabbath services.

As we enter our seventh year of airing Beyond Today in Canada we look forward to many more positive results endeavouring to fulfill the words in Matthew 28:19-20.

Media Team

Resources You Can Use

The UCG-Canada website contains a listing of all feast sites in Canada. Included is a description of each site, the address for services, time of the first service as well as other useful information. You can find all this information at: www.ucg.ca/resources/feasts/. There is a link to the current FOT Planning Brochure located there.

The Home Office has dedicated a website for feast information, which can be found at: <http://feast.ucg.org>. There you can find information about all 2012 festival sites. You can also watch past feast videos as well as check out some frequently asked questions.

KOG Seminars – May, June

Calgary

One woman came who was actually visiting from Salmon Arm, BC. She applauded at the end of the seminar and took a large number of booklets. She was given information about services in the Okanagan. The week before the seminar, a family of four (originally from Colombia) came to services. They were back for the seminar. They found us on the Internet and are aware of the other Church of God groups in the area.

Edmonton

Five new people attended. The man who came to a previous seminar is fitting into the congregation quite well. The members were happy with the presentation.

Grande Prairie

Although none of those who had signed up attended, one member's son and grandson came as did a member of another Church of God, subsequently the member's son has requested additional information on the subject of baptism.

Hamilton

Three individuals came for the seminar. All three stayed for the whole presentation as well as for coffee and extra fellowship. Most did not leave until members did.

Kitchener

The seminar went well. There were 12 who had signed up initially, but that number dropped to six before the seminar date. None of those who signed up came. However, the pastor had an email from the community centre where we meet letting him know that someone had asked how to get in touch with the Church. He called the lady and she mentioned she was looking for a "normal" church that meets on the Sabbath. She was invited to the seminar and came. She left after the seminar with a number of our booklets and called later in the evening with several questions.

Lethbridge

Since nobody came specifically for the seminar, it was cancelled and the sermons from the General Conference of Elders were played on that day.

Montreal

Four people registered in Montreal. As services began, none of them were there. About five minutes into the presentation three new people arrived. They stayed through the entire presentation. A fourth person attended two previous weeks and came again on this Sabbath. There was a member from Michigan visiting. The brethren enjoyed the Power-Point presentation, finding it a good change of pace.

Nanaimo

Two new people attended – a man and his adult son. An additional lady, who signed up over a month before the seminar, did not want to wait for the seminar so she called and asked if she could attend services prior to the seminar, which she did.

North Battleford

The seminar was held on the long weekend. No new people came. The format of the seminar was changed somewhat and was well received by the members there.

Okanagan

The seminar was held on June 5 and two new people attended. There were also two additional people who had attended services the previous week. One of the new individuals has subsequently attended Sabbath services and appears excited!

Ottawa

There were two people registered. The one gentleman who came had some connection with the Church in the early 1980's when he attended for about four years, but he never became a member. From there he went to the Seventh Day Adventists and currently attends an Anglican church. He seemed to come to show his own knowledge. He was

friendly but it is doubtful that he will be back. He did mention that he appreciated the warmth of the congregation.

Prince George

There were no new people who attended the Prince George seminar. However, the congregation appreciated the presentation and was happy to know what we are collectively doing around the world.

Regina

One senior lady came to the seminar making a four-hour round trip with her former sister-in-law to do so. This was followed up with a visit by the pastor.

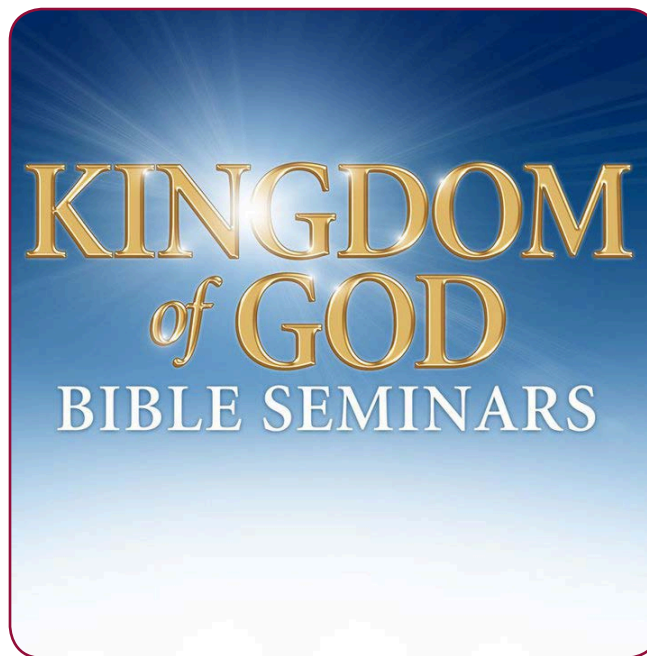
Saskatoon

Four new people came. Another three, who only attend services occasionally, also came for the seminar. Two of the people who attended were a brother and sister from the Philippines who have connections with another Church of God group. Another young man who attended was visiting with family in the area who had strong ties with a different church.

Toronto

Eight new people attended as a

result of the seminar. Three left at the halfway mark. The others stayed until it was over and remained for much of the fellowship time. Additional people were there to hear Edmund Macaraeg who, following a break to fellowship and enjoy finger-foods, gave an update on the work in



the Philippines. One of the new people stayed for the presentation and got a ride home with UCG members (she had come to the service by public transit).

Vancouver

Vancouver had four new attendees. There were also another two people who had attended a previous seminar. All four new attendees expressed appreciation for the presentation. All attendees including the individuals who had visited the first seminar said they learned of the seminar

from the Beyond Today program as well as the invitation letter sent from the National Office. Recorded copies of the first two seminars were made available and all four attendees took those along with other material. One gentleman took a copy of every booklet and magazine (including *United News Canada*). Following the seminar, he sent an email expressing his desire to continue attending services.

Winnipeg

Nobody registered for the seminar. However, a man, his teenage son and daughter came. He has been receiving the *Good News* for several years. He watches the Beyond Today program, which is where he saw the lectures advertised. He also accesses our literature on the Internet.

He left immediately after with an invitation to return for services. Members were positive about the presentations. One couple who attended the September seminar now regularly attends services.

The next Kingdom of God seminars are scheduled for September after which the Home Office will evaluate whether or not to continue the seminars. In the meantime, we give thanks to brethren who so happily hosted these occasions.



“Listening” from page 16

blessings are much more enjoyable as well, as we draw closer to each other.

The Feast is a wonderful opportunity to rehearse the Kingdom of God, and since God communes with us spiritually, it is a great occasion for us to commune with fellow brethren. The word commune merely means fellowship, and fellowship gives us the marvelous opportunity to apply some of Solomon’s wisdom. “A man has joy by the answer of his mouth:

and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (Proverbs 15:23). “Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24).

We will meet many personalities at the Feast: people who are quiet and shy and people who have a hard time communicating. If we put warm friendly encouraging conversation on our to-do list for the Feast this year, we can contribute to someone’s festival just by striking up a friendly conversation.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

This year at the Feast, tune in your listening/hearing heart and then tune into someone else’s. After all, you and that new person with whom you commune may well be in the Kingdom of God forever. So why not take the opportunity while at the Feast of Tabernacles to become acquainted?

David Palmer

My First GCE

This was my first time to attend the GCE (General Conference of Elders). Friends we met last year at the Feast of Tabernacles encouraged me to go. I finally agreed when my husband, Larry, asked, “Are we going?”

We arrived Thursday evening so we could attend the International Meetings scheduled for Friday. The international work in many countries has many varied challenges.

From all the people we talked to from international areas, the theme was consistent “The workers are few and the distances are great”. It really is amazing how much God has done with so few. The parable of the fishes and the loaves aptly applies to the international work.

On Friday and Saturday nights, there were “meet and greet” receptions. It was wonderful seeing people I had not seen nor talked to in a great many years. The place was a roar. Everywhere you looked there were excited faces and people hugging. It was a joy to see such camaraderie and openness. Each morning and during lunch,

when we ate together, we met many different people, had many wonderful discussions, told and heard many stories and had some good laughs.

Around 20 of us went to the Home Office for a tour before Sabbath services. When we arrived, our tour guide was giving a tour to a brand new lady who had shown up for the service. She had read all our literature and now wanted to attend church. It gave me a warm feeling inside. God’s work is being done and He is calling new children one by one. Sometimes we lose sight of that.

Upon entering the reception area of the Home Office, there is a very large and beautiful painting of Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea. The artist is a church member in New York. He is working on a series of paintings depicting each of the Holy Days, which he is donating to the church. He has completed three of them so far and I saw all three. They were all absolutely breathtaking. Seeing these paintings was one of the highlights of this trip.

Sunday was an interesting day – listening to all the reports, addresses and comments. The sincerity and dedication of the men serving the church, confirmed my opinion that the United Church of God is in good hands.

On Monday, we had workshops. Larry and I split up so we could take in four different topics. Each gave valuable information to help us to serve the brethren and each other better.

Going to the GCE was a great experience and one I would encourage the elders’ wives to be part of. Being there lets you feel the pulse of the church. It was rewarding to experience the sense of peace and anticipation of moving forward. It allows a person to put faces to names and to look around at those who were there and know that we are all unified with one goal, which is to love and serve God’s people. Would I go again? You betcha!

Maureen DeLong

Update on the Work in the Philippines

On May 17, 2012, the Toronto congregation had an opportunity to listen to Edmond Macaraeg give a firsthand report about God's work in the Philippines. He was accompanied by his wife, Lorna, as well as 15 friends and family members.

Mr. Macaraeg enthusiastically greeted his audience and mentioned the need to learn about the brethren who live on the other side of the world who are also members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13-14) and about God's work there (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

The church there is able to preach the gospel and prepare a people with the guidance and support of the elders, the acting Senior Pastor for the area, Earl Roemer, and the dedicated office staff. The use of special equipment such as a video camera and a DVD duplicator has been an asset to the work there.

Mr. Macaraeg shared different strategies that the Philippine area uses to preach the Gospel such as: mall exhibits, public lectures, radio programs, the Kingdom of God seminars and the promotion of the *Good News* magazine on the Internet and by including a message on the *Good News* wrapper for the subscriber to refer the magazine to three of their friends.

The radio program, providentially, was able to obtain a great time slot when one of its listeners, a former subscriber of the German *Plain Truth*, asked to run the broadcast on his radio program from 9:00 to 9:30 p.m.

The office handles the distribution of 18,101 magazines, including ap-

proximately 6,000 magazines for other Asian countries. Hence, when the cost of mailing was to be tripled due to an increase in pages and weight, a letter was sent to the Postmaster General for consideration. The reply received was favourable but had two conditions: that they should receive a copy of every issue of the magazine and that the Philippine post office seal should be printed on the wrapper of the magazine with the inscription "Philippine Post: a partner of the *Good News* in its mission to spread the gospel worldwide!"



Mr. Macaraeg in Toronto
(photo by Anthony Wasilkoff)

Weekly Sabbath services are provided to 19 church congregations as well as an additional nine video groups. The Philippine Church also provides DVD sermon distribution, *United News Philippines*, Sabbath school programs for the children, annual United Youth Camp, Leadership programs, Ambassador Club for men, flower arrangement for women and, during the Feast of Tabernacles, Bible studies and forums that give opportunities for scattered members to have their questions answered. There are two Feast of Tabernacles sites – in Davao City and Baguio City – with around 450 and 125 in attendance respectively.

The church also helps the brethren and students be excused from

their work or school on the Sabbath since these exemptions are provided for in the Philippines Constitution. In addition, the Labour Code also mandates the following: "However the employer should respect the preference of employees as to their weekly rest day when such preference is based on religious ground".

This Labour Code provision was promulgated in the 1970's when Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong requested his good friend and late secretary of labour, Mr. Blas Ople, incorporate it in the Labour Code to help the brethren in the Philippines.

The Legislation was also adopted by the Department of Education exempting "personnel and students belonging to religious groups where Saturday is their rest or church day," that they should not be required to attend seminars, examinations, special classes, trainings and other school activities on Saturday.

Two difficulties that the Church has encountered are translation of messages into different dialects during the Feast and transportation due to distance and road conditions. Even visiting some brethren becomes impossible due to road conditions. A vehicle with limited slip differential makes traveling difficult road conditions possible.

In conclusion, Mr. Macaraeg referred to Romans 12:2 to illustrate that we need to pray for one another knowing the trials and challenges each member has in this world.

National Council/Conference Chairman Report

On June 28, I sent a letter to the National Conference, giving a report of our council meetings. The following is a portion of that report:

We had face-to-face National Council meetings in Toronto on June 22 and June 24 at our National Office. On the Sabbath, Council members and their wives had the opportunity to attend services in Toronto and an outlying area. A few stayed behind an extra day after the meetings to see Niagara Falls. Anthony and Linda Wasilkoff hosted a wonderful barbeque at their home on Friday evening.

Our meetings went well. It is wonderful to work together as a team in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.

I started the meetings by reading portions of a newspaper column from the *Calgary Herald*. The piece was written by Adam Legge, president and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. In his column, entitled, "Always stay focused on what you do well," he gave good examples (Post Media News, Apple Corporation, Southwest Airlines) of how successful companies build their brands and stay focused. Their balance sheets show that the path to their success is a sharp focus and sticking to what they do best. Other companies like Research in Motion and Nortel lost their focus and paid the price. During our brainstorming session, we discussed what the United Church of God does best and how we need to continue to focus and improve on these.

We conducted the annual review of the Director of Operations. We also realigned some of our committees,

discussed the Strategic Plan and concluded it was wise to stay aligned with the plan from UCGIA.

The main reason for this letter is to bring you up to speed with a new development that has arisen from the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act (CNCA) which became law on October 17, 2011. Some of our National Office staff attended a CNCA law seminar on Thursday, December 1, 2011, hosted by Carters Professional Corporation – a law firm with expertise in the area of church, charity and not-for-profit law.

Basically, the upshot of the new legislation is that each charity in Canada has to file Articles of Continuance to continue as a registered charity. The deadline for this is October 17, 2014. Failure to do so will result in the dissolution of the corporation. The two-page application form for continuance is simple. The fly in the ointment is that portions of our bylaws will have to be changed to comply with the new legislation. We will need to review our governing documents, amend some of our bylaws, get approval from the National Conference by a 2/3 vote and file the required documents with Industry Canada. As you no doubt can ascertain, this is no small task. The new act is 150 pages long (French and English). Even lawyers have a hard time wrapping their heads around it.

During our Council meetings, the National Office presented a Power-Point on what we are facing. We received a "To Do" list, a list of questions about how to handle certain regulations, mandatory and default CNCA rules from the Carter's CNCA seminar. We have to go through our by-

laws on each of these to make sure that we are in compliance.

After discussion, the Council decided the job was too cumbersome for our regular meetings. For that reason, we appointed a CNCA Continuance Task Force, chaired by Michael Erickson. Working with him will be Linda and Anthony Wasilkoff. Michael Erickson has spent about 18 years dealing with legal documents in the financial field. He also chaired the Amendment Committee in the past. The task force will work closely with the Amendment Committee. The task force will also seek legal counsel. We ask for your prayers that we find a lawyer that will best help us in this matter.



National Council meeting in Toronto
(photo by Anthony Wasilkoff)

After the needed changes are made, the Council will go through the revisions in our bylaws with a fine tooth comb. Once we have reached consensus, we will put forward the entire package to the National Conference for ratification. We are hoping we can do that about a year from now at a special meeting in Toronto.

This is where we stand right now. There will be updates along the way as the task force does its work. Please pray for wisdom for all of us involved in this process.

Rainer Salomaa

National Council Meeting

The summer meeting of the UCG-Canada National Council took place at the National Office on June 22 and 24. The meeting began with the chairman, Rainer Salomaa, reading an article about staying focused on what you do well. This set the tone for the meetings.

As usual, the first agenda item was to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. It has become a custom for the Code of Ethics and the Council Job Description to be read during the June meeting as a reminder of the Council's responsibilities.

This was followed by an update from office staff, which included reading some recent letters received from subscribers and some current statistics. Of interest is that over the past few months, subscriptions to *Bonnes Nouvelles* has increased dramatically.

Dennis Horlick reported that the Media Team had met and reviewed potential new programs. He stated that there will be an increase in the rate for airing the Beyond Today program on the Vision network. He and the Director of Operations were given permission to negotiate a new rate.

Anthony Wasilkoff reported that the Ministerial Services Team had discussed some matters related to our various congregations. They also discussed the effectiveness of the Kingdom of God seminars and plans for the Feast of Tabernacles.

In December, several office staff and Council members attended a seminar explaining a new government Act (Canadian Not-for-profit Corporations Act or CNCA) which will require all charities to reapply for

charity status. A PowerPoint presentation covering the key points of the new legislation was given and afterward Anthony and Linda Wasilkoff fielded questions. Three handouts were provided. The Council then discussed how to proceed with incorporating the necessary changes into the Bylaws along with the process of filing the Articles of Continuance and the revised Bylaws.



National Council
(photo by Angie Erickson)

During the afternoon, the Council continued discussing the CNCA and determined that the work would be too involved to be completed by the Council committees. A CNCA Compliance Task Force was formally created consisting of Michael Erickson (chair), Anthony Wasilkoff and Linda Wasilkoff. The Task Force's assignment is to incorporate needed changes into the current Bylaws to comply with the CNCA. The Task Force may utilize other advisors as needed. The target date for completion of the project is June 2013 when a special meeting of the National Conference, which includes all ministers in Canada, may be called.

Each year when there is a new member on Council, the Council must assign the individual to a Council committee. This year, in addition to assigning the new member to a committee, some members requested to switch committees. The committee members are now:

Governance/Ethics/Pastoral Committee

John Erickson
Michael Erickson
Garry Lucas
Patrick Read (chairman)

Strategic Planning/Finance Committee

Larry DeLong (chairman)
Dennis Horlick
Ellsworth Stanley
Anthony Wasilkoff

On Sunday morning, Larry DeLong gave the report for the Strategic Planning/Finance Committee. In order to more closely parallel UCGIA, they made recommendations for slight changes to the 2013-2014 Strategic Plan, which the Council approved. The Committee also made some recommendations for handling of some of the items necessitated by the CNCA.

Patrick Read followed with the Governance/Ethics/Pastoral Committee report. The Committee is working on some policies, which need further research before they are presented to the Council for approval.

The last agenda item was time for discussion. During that time, the Council explored elements that the church does well. Among the things discussed was our Internet presence and resources, our welcoming of new people, carefulness with doctrine, governance – a working board, and ministers (who conduct church services, weddings, funerals and visit people).

The afternoon was spent in an executive session and an informal session during which the evaluation of the Director of Operations occurred.



News From Across Canada

Ottawa Spring Holy Days

On April 5 in Kemptville, Ontario, 19 people gathered together as a full moon slowly rose through a scattering of clouds. As the golden shafts lit the sky above, people bowed their heads in acknowledgment and prayer as they thanked God for the wonder of His Son's last Passover and its meaning - the symbolism wrapped up in the partaking of wine and unleavened bread. The beauty and wonder of this great gift had been preceded by the foot-washing ceremony - a tremendous lesson in humility through Christ's example. Carried down through millennia we symbolically, once again, repeated this great event. For some this would be their 45th time coming together in giving thanks for the wonder of God's great love bestowed upon us.



Ottawa brethren enjoying a meal together.
(photo by Isabelle Nicol)

The following evening, commemorating Israel's gathering together to begin preparations for their journey out of Egypt, under God's guiding hand, we observed the Night To Be Much Remembered. Some gathered in restaurants, some in homes, and some in the warmth of a cozy, rustic cabin. For all it was a delightful time to get together once again, an acknowledgement

of God's continuing journey with His people - guiding them through time and history - down to our day.

The Holy Day season continued the next day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Again, 30 people gathered to celebrate its great meaning - acknowledging our devotion and determination to strive to continue putting sin out of our lives. And seven days later the last Day of Unleavened Bread arrived and was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm as people gathered together to hear the last sermon of this Spring Holy Day Season on "Humility" - a state that we will continue to strive for throughout the coming year.

The day ended with a wonderful meal of various colourful salads, tasty main dishes, and especially delightful unleavened desserts created for the occasion. We broke once again to go our separate ways, looking forward to the following day when we would come together once more for the weekly Sabbath.

Isabelle Nicol

Mother's Day Tribute

On Saturday, May 12, the Social Committee of the Toronto congregation sponsored a Mother's Day Tribute hosted by Trish Romeo and Donna Checca.

The celebration started with a potluck meal. The row of tables at which the most mothers were seated was allowed to be first in line at the buffet table. Mothers were

treated to beautifully wrapped gift of toiletries and an assortment of delicious Lindt chocolates. Inspiring scripture verses were strategically placed at the opening of each package.



Toronto honours Mothers
(photo by Gary Haynes)

There were Bible and congregational quizzes of "guess whose mother this is," which brought lots of excitement as members racked their brains to guess the name of the child instead of responding with the name of the mother! Clues and hints were given to jog our memories, and excitement followed when the correct answers were given for mothers such as Ruth, Naomi, Elizabeth, Jochebed, Hannah, to name a few. For the congregation, there were questions such as naming the youngest mother and the mother who has the most children attending church. Those who gave the correct answers were allowed to go to the dessert table before the general call for dessert was made.

Volunteers were solicited to give a brief talk about what their mother meant to them. Others had been assigned to give a "bird's eye" view of their mother's influence on their lives. The celebration ended with a duet, written and sung by two teenage sisters, Renee and Gwen

Ringor, who were too shy to give a speech but were bold enough to sing such a well-written and inspiring song, dedicated to their mother, Rowena Yabut. This was truly one of the most memorable Mother's Day celebrations we have had for a long time!

Pat Ellis

Calgary Stampede BBQ

The UCG-Calgary congregation enjoyed a lovely Sabbath on July 7, 2012, as they held their annual Stampede BBQ & Bible Study. The Bible Study on the book of James was conducted by Rainer Salomaa and Mike Erickson as an interactive study.



Calgary brethren at the Krulc's property
(photo by Kali Krulc)

The occasion was hosted by Peter and Kali Krulc whose picturesque property was the perfect backdrop for the BBQ, which followed the Bible Study. There was food, fun and, of course, fellowship! A great Sabbath was had by all!

Lexi Willis

Service Project

Cancer: a word that nobody wants to hear. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life for many people. After a diagnosis, many people choose to undergo treatment that requires courage and patience. There are many side effects to chemotherapy and hair loss is just one of them.



Handmade caps ready to be donated
(photo by Linda Wasilkoff)

Hair loss occurs because chemotherapy targets all rapidly dividing cells - healthy cells as well as cancer cells. Hair follicles, the structures in the skin filled with tiny blood vessels that make hair, are some of the fastest growing cells in the body. If you're not in cancer treatment, your hair follicles divide every 23 to 72 hours. But as the chemo does its work against cancer cells, it also destroys healthy hair cells. Within a few weeks of starting chemo, a person may lose some or all of their hair.

If you are having chemotherapy, your hair loss may be gradual or dramatic: clumps in your hairbrush, handfuls in the bathtub drain or on your pillow. Whichever way it happens, it is startling and depressing and you will need a lot of support during this time. It is difficult to

conceal hair loss because it is so obvious and apparent.

The Canadian Cancer Society provides what are commonly known as "chemo caps" to various hospitals and treatment centres. Knitted or crocheted caps help keep the head warm. The fabric hats are used by patients in the summer. The CCS depends on volunteers to make these little caps and they are provided at no cost to the patient.

The ladies of the United Church of God - Canada (Toronto, Ottawa and Kitchener congregations) have spent this past year making these little hats in various colours, styles and patterns. To date, we have over 130 hats to donate.

If your congregation is interested in this project, free patterns may be obtained online for knitted and crocheted chemo caps. Just search for "chemo caps" at www.bernat.com.

Susan Wells

Ontario Camping Weekend

On Friday, July 6, 2012, twenty-two members from the Toronto and Kitchener congregations took to the open road to enjoy a weekend of camping at Arrowhead Provincial Park in Ontario. Arrowhead, located just north of Huntsville, is a short distance from what many consider to be one of Ontario's "crown jewels," Algonquin Provincial Park.

Friday was a hot, hazy and humid day that was more akin to what

Ontarians would normally experience in August. A gentle rain that night eventually brought the temperature and humidity down to more comfortable levels.



A group picture on the rocks
(photo by Edwin van Pelt)

The Sabbath began with some overcast skies, but they soon cleared. An interactive Bible Study was conducted after everyone had a good breakfast under their belts. After the Bible Study concluded, the group was treated to special music. Eight children, under the direction of Pat Ellis, sang a selection that they fastidiously learned while the rest of the group attended the Bible Study.

After a hearty lunch, most of the group went on a short hike in the park along the Stubb's Falls trail. The trail culminates at Stubb's Falls, a rock chute on the Little East River. A popular place for campers, many sat in the refreshing water as it roared and splashed over the rocks.

Saturday evening once again found the group sitting around a campfire roasting hot dogs and marshmallows and enjoying one another's company until dark.

Most of the group left Sunday after a morning of swimming, fishing and catching frogs. Some stayed over until Monday before heading home.

It was an enjoyable weekend getaway during the first part of the

summer. Many wondered about the plans for next year.

Edwin van Pelt

Winnipeg Ordination

Following the regular announcements during the June 2, 2012 Sabbath service in Winnipeg, Dr. Ian Simons of Killarney was ordained by Herb Teitgen to the office of Deacon. Ian has served the congregation in Winnipeg, as well as congregations in South Africa, in a variety of ways including giving sermonettes, sermons and songleading. Dr. Simons' wife, Mariana, has played piano for the song service and special music.



Ian and Mariana Simons
(photo by Herb Teitgen)

Since 2004, Ian and Marina have hosted the video group that meets several times each month at their home on the Sabbath. Ian has been selected and has served as a lay member on the UCG-Canada National Council. Ian's wife, Mariana, was told that Ian was going to be ordained on that Sabbath, and we decided to make it a surprise for Ian and the rest of the congregation. I had given him previous notice of my intention to do the ordination and I had sought input from several in the congregation as well as approval from the Canadian Ministerial Ser-

vices team and the Director of Operations.

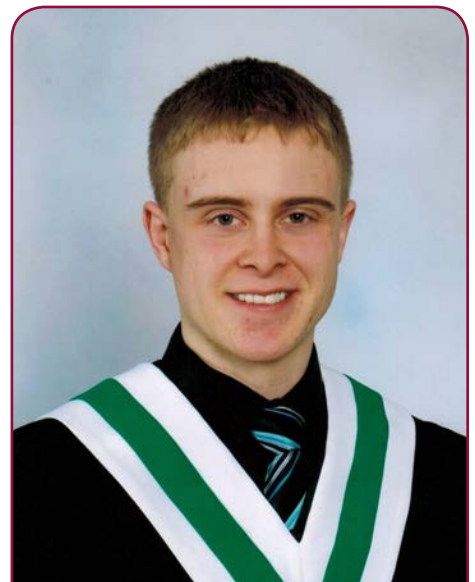
The congregation enjoyed beverages and fellowship following the service and members gave Ian their well wishes. The pastor joined Ian and Marina at their home later for a wonderful meal and celebration.

Herb Teitgen

Matthew Erickson Graduation

Matthew E. Erickson, son of Michael (pastor of Prince George, Okanagan and Grande Prairie) and Angie Erickson, graduated from Prince George Senior Secondary School this year.

Matthew serves actively in his local congregation by song leading and helping with set-up and take-down for services. Matthew has maintained a high academic standing throughout high school and plans to attend a four-year science program at the University of Northern British Columbia, there-



Matthew Erickson
(photo provided by Michael Erickson)

after pursuing a career in medicine. Matthew received the UNBC Raven Scholarship based on high academic achievement.

His hobbies include staying physically fit at the local YMCA and playing basketball. He also enjoys outdoor recreation such as fishing, hunting, and kayaking.

Matt has a wonderful sense of humour and contributes an exemplary positive attitude towards life, his future goals, friends and family.

Angie Erickson

Moulton Birth Announcement

In a faraway land (Johnstown, ON), Princess Addison of the Moulton residence is pleased to announce the arrival of her first minion (aka little brother)! Alexander James burst on the scene May 18, 2012, at 2:01 p.m. weighing in at 7 lbs. 11oz. The King and Queen (William and Rosanna Moulton) were also excited about his coming.

There was great rejoicing by the Moulton grandparents in the North



Alexander and Addison Moulton
(photo by William Moulton)

(Ottawa congregation) and the Salva grandparents in the South (Worcester, MA congregation). Xander brings smiles and cuddles to the knights and fair-maidens (aka Uncles and Aunts) in both kingdoms. Now to all live happily ever after.

Rosanna Moulton

Vautour Birth Announcement

Gabriel and Michelle joyfully announce the birth of their son, Joshua Pierre Vautour, born on July 23, 2012, at 6:04 p.m. at Montfort Hospital in Ottawa. Adorable little Joshua weighed in at 7 lbs. 10 oz. (3.485 kg) and was 21.26 inches (54 cm) long.



Joshua Pierre Vautour
(photo by Clarissa Hooser)

Both mommy and baby are doing very well and resting. The Vautours are so thankful to God for blessing them with this precious little miracle and give thanks for all your prayers and support throughout their journey.

Clarissa Hooser

George Lebiadowski

Obituary

On April 13, 2012, the small congregation in Strathroy, On-

tario, lost one of their beloved members, Mr. George Lebiadowski.

George will be remembered for many things by those who knew him, including his wonderful smile, his love of a steak dinner and his reference to the "God Creator" as he would call Him.

George emigrated from Poland and lived in Toronto for many years. Shortly after coming to Canada, he trained to be a dental technician and worked hard to support his family of four children. George eventually moved to the Waterford area where he enjoyed living and taking care of a small apple orchard.

George attended in Toronto in the early years of United and later in Hamilton when that congregation first formed. He later moved to London, where he attended faithfully with the group that meets in Strathroy – a small town 20 minutes from London.

George had a love for life and for God's word. He also very much enjoyed singing hymns at church every Sabbath that he was able to attend.

He will be sadly missed by all those who were touched by knowing him, and we certainly look forward to the day of Christ's return when he will be resurrected and healed from the struggles that he went through in this physical life.

Patrick Read

Take a Listening Heart to the Feast

When you see or hear the word feast what comes to mind? To members of the Church of God, the word relates to a wonderful festival, the biblical observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. But, let us consider for a moment the word feast.

Most modern dictionaries will describe feast as a “joyful religious anniversary,” “an annual village festival,” “a sumptuous meal, especially in public.” The biblical expression in Leviticus 23 “feasts of the Lord” emphasizes the importance of the feast as a festival observed as a fixed time or season, an assembly convened for a definite purpose.

The *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (1897 edition) describes the word feast as “a mark of hospitality (Genesis 19:3, 2 Samuel 3:20, 2 Kings 6:23); occasions of domestic joy (Luke 15:23; Genesis 21:8); and the occasion of a marriage (Judges 14:10, Genesis 29:22). Feasting was a part of the observances connected with the offering up of sacrifices (Deuteronomy 12:6, 7, 1 Samuel 9:19, 16:3, 5), and with the annual festivals (Deuteronomy 16:11) it was one of the designs of the greater solemnities, which re-

and cemented together, by statedly congregating in one place, and with one accord taking part in the same observance.”

The dictionary then states “To keep the people’s consciousness alive to God’s way, to revive, strengthen, and perpetuate it, nothing could be so well adapted as these annual feasts.”

The phrase “keep the feast” also encourages us to commune spiritually. In other words, as we travel each year to various festival sites, to keep this “anniversary,” we recognize that we are invited guests, not only to a banquet of good food, fine drink and wonderful fellowship with other brethren who have made the same trek, but we also recognize that the invitation is from God. Not only does He want us to rejoice with the physical blessings that have been bestowed on us over the past year (Deuteronomy 14:22-26), but He also wants us to commune spiritually with Him and with each other. What exactly does that mean? How do we commune spiritually?

Let us look at a biblical example. When Solomon replaced his father David on the throne, God ap-

peared to Solomon in a dream and said, “Ask what I shall give you” (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon asked for an understanding heart – better translated as a hearing or listening heart – that he might better judge God’s people, that he might be a better king, “And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing” (1 Kings 3:10). As a result,



Solomon was blessed not only with the wisdom of a listening heart, but great physical blessings as well.

The lesson we learn is this: not only do we participate in the Feast of Tabernacles for the physical meat, but also for meat which will not perish, but leads to everlasting life (John 6:27).

When you and I travel to the Feast this year, let us ask God for a listening heart and a heart that is willing to hear His instructions. Remember what the apostle Paul wrote, “That it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

If we develop a determination to attend the Feast with a listening heart, we will not only be in spiritual communication drawing closer to God and Jesus Christ, but like Solomon we will find the physical

See “Listening” on page 8

Not only does He want us to rejoice with the physical blessings that have been bestowed on us over the past year, but He also wants us to commune spiritually with Him, and with each other.

quired the attendance of the people at the sacred tent, that the oneness of the nation might be maintained

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