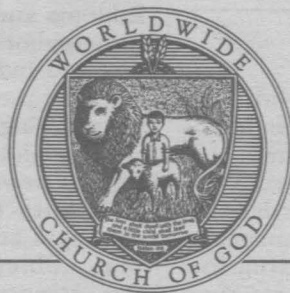


2 Help for Ethiopian orphans

4 Festivals show what Christ has done

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The Worldwide News



VOL. XXIII, NO. 5
MARCH 7, 1995



Personal from...

JOSEPH W. TKACH

Headquarters' role: help members and congregations rise to potential

Where are we going as a Church? That is an important question for all of us to focus on at this critical time. By the grace of God, we have been led out of Egypt and stand before the parted sea. Those whose faith rests firmly in Jesus Christ are walking forward in joy on the dry sea bed. As God leads his people forward, we must consider what lies ahead. Let's rehearse the key elements of our future course.

One of our primary goals for the future of the Church is to equip our local congregations to be healthy examples of the Body of Christ—a Body at work ministering to the needs of one another and to the community, growing in faith and the Christian life and spreading the gospel.

In the past, as you know, evangelism, the work of the gospel, was something reserved almost exclusively for headquarters. The local congregations, ministers and members had no direct role in evangelism, other than prayer and donations. Today, however, we are embarking on the path of learning how to follow the biblical model for our congregations.

Finding out what our gifts are

The biblical model is that the whole Body—every member in the congregation who is willing—needs to be equipped and prepared, according to each one's spiritual gifts, to take an active part in the work of the gospel of Christ. We are told in Ephesians 4:16, "From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." God wants *everyone* involved, each one according to the gifts God provides.

God gives spiritual gifts to his people (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11), and it is the Church's job to help members find what those gifts are and to provide ways for members to put those gifts to work in the service of Christ, both inside the Church and outside the Church.

That means that headquarters' role is to provide the leadership, the support, the encouragement, the coordination and the doctrinal integrity to help every congregation and every member rise to their full potential in taking part in the work of the Body of Christ. The Church must instruct and train members for active service in God's army.

Until very recently, our members have not been called on to enter into the work of the gospel. Therefore, they need preparation and training. They need education and instruction. They need to learn how to talk with others, without shame or fear, about the gospel and what Christ has meant to them.

They need to learn how to effectively support and encourage each other in spiritual fellowship and prayer. And they need well-planned, meaningful opportunities to put their training into use. Our pastors need to learn how to promote the gospel message in word and deed in their communities and how to effectively equip and mobilize the members in that effort.

Pasadena to back local programs

Jesus said the fields are ready for harvest, and all our members need to have opportunities available to learn how to take part in that work in the ways God prepares and enables them. The greatest work is not done by headquarters. The greatest work is done by the Holy Spirit in individual members as they go about their daily lives with their feet planted in the gospel and the zeal of Christ in their hearts. Our job at headquarters is to facilitate that work by providing qualified ministers, meaningful educational and training materials and sound doctrine.

Our job as a Church is to minister to our members, helping them
See Personal, page 10

International regions to nurture and train

By Randal Dick

I covered a lot of territory in February attending regional ministerial conferences in the Philippines and Australia.

When I spoke to members there about the current retrenchments in the Church's operations, many appreciated an insight I gave them into some not-yet-visible aspects of the process. Many brethren encouraged me to share the same perspective with you in *The Worldwide News*.

Some international regions have had to make the difficult decision to no longer produce *The Plain Truth* in their language. Obviously, this decision carries emotional impact, because *The Plain Truth* is our flagship publication.

It has served an important function in establishing church congregations around the world, but now we must refocus our efforts and use the Church base to launch new growth.

In the case of the Spanish, French

and Italian editions, as well as in South Africa, circulation had already been trimmed so that the magazine was of limited value in developing new growth. In Latin America *The Plain Truth* was only available to members and co-workers.

Even though the growth value of such a subscription level was limited, it required as many full-time salaries to translate and prepare each issue as if the circulation was in the millions. There were hidden costs as well at headquarters, because Publishing, Editorial, Computer Information Services and Mail Processing produced, mailed, tracked responses and managed the work necessary to produce and distribute the magazine.

The current situation forces us away from scattering the seed of the gospel widely, and instead enables us to use a highly strategic, almost surgical approach.

Our mission objective for the international areas is twofold: First, establish a presence of the Body of Christ in every area possible, nurturing areas where a presence is already established. Second, train and equip brethren to work alongside the min-

See Regions, page 10

Randal Dick is assistant director of Church Administration International.

Becoming prepared to effectively share the gospel message

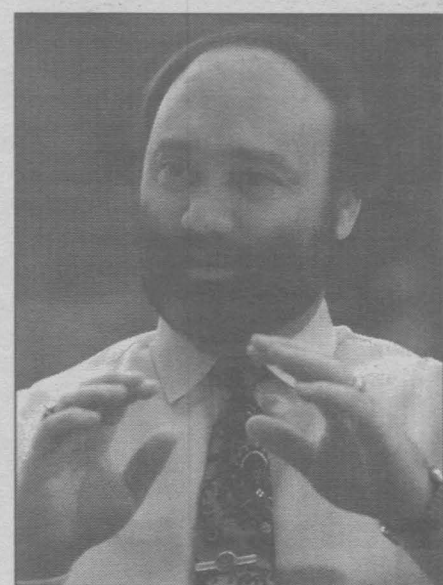
This interview with Joseph Tkach Jr., director of Church Administration, first appeared in *Among Friends*, the Church employee newsletter. Editor Phil Sena conducted the interview.

Among Friends: What do you see as the major challenges in the Church today and what is Church Administration (CAD) doing to meet them?

Joseph Tkach Jr.: This is a broad question that can't be completely answered in one brief reply. There are factors that are external to our fellowship and some that are specific to our organization. However, we can address a few key issues to sharpen our focus.

Preaching the gospel to the world on the verge of the 21st century presents challenges. The audience that we address in America is different than in other locations. On the international scene we see that Islam is a growing influence that competes with the preaching of the gospel. In some areas, people are killed if they convert from Islam to Christianity.

In the past we have sent Americans to an international location and have



Joseph Tkach Jr.

not always given sufficient training to indigenous members to provide the leadership when the American ministers reach an age where health precludes them from continuing to work. And it is not always American ministers that have transferred to
See Message, page 3

How Dimetros Woldu aids Ethiopian orphans

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27).

By Julie Wilson

BOREHAMWOOD, England—I first met Dimetros Woldu at an interfaith conference in Jerusalem at the beginning of 1994. I was struck by his gentle, kind nature. He runs the Ethiopian Orthodox Orphanage in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, caring for several thousand children ranging from age 6 to 24.

Rev. Woldu was orphaned himself at 6 and was brought up in a monastery, where a deep faith and love for God was instilled in him. Talking to him, I realized that it was there he imbibed his deep compassion for others and learned that it is better to give than to receive.

When Rev. Woldu visited England in December we talked about his experiences working with orphans. Daily contact with some of the most needy children in the world have simplified his view of life.

"We don't need much in this life," he told me, "just love and peace. When people get material things, they only want more and become inward-looking. We need to give to others. We were born with nothing and whatever we have is by the grace of God."

Rev. Woldu lives by this motto. He has dedicated his life, putting aside

his own personal comfort and wishes, to supporting and caring for these needy children.

What he can do is desperately needed. There are many problems in Ethiopia and, perhaps even more so, in neighboring Eritrea. Eritrea has received independence from Ethiopia after the 30-year war there. But the suffering continues.

Although the pictures rarely hit the foreign news anymore, the drought continues to rage, causing food shortages and difficulties for many. The problems just don't go away. Our attention has been diverted with the situations in Bosnia and Rwanda, but people are still suffering in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

There is a desperate need for funding for school textbooks, clothing and food for these orphans. They need to be given a start in life so that they can be able to find work when they are adults.

There is also a need for a vocational training college in Eritrea. The building construction has begun, but there are insufficient funds to complete it. Unemployment is a big prob-

lem. Many of the young people are unable to find work, and are being attracted to countries where employment prospects look brighter. Therefore, they need vocational training so that they are better equipped for work when they are adults.

Since we met in Jerusalem, Rev. Woldu and the children have been receiving *The Plain Truth* and *Youth* magazines, which he says they find helpful. Rev. Woldu translates them into the local language so that the children can understand the articles.

He uses them in his Sunday school classes. The orphans wrote me: "We are glad to inform you that we have learned and gained a lot from it [*The Plain Truth* and *Youth*], and we still need your help and advice." It is humbling to think how much the articles are appreciated, and moving to remember how different the circumstances of the readers in that orphanage are to the average young person reading the magazine in North America or Western Europe.

The orphanage is doing its best to improve its situation. Rev. Woldu

encourages his people to produce items that can be sold and to earn money instead of only receiving aid. They have made embroidered shirts, which they sell. These can be ordered and sent overseas, although so far this project is just beginning and making contacts is difficult.

It is also possible to sponsor an orphan who has been placed with a family in Ethiopia. Two hundred dollars pays for a year's schooling, books and clothing for a child. Without sponsorship many of these children go without an education.

Perhaps individual families or groups would be interested in sponsoring a child or sending pictures of the donors and a card or letter to the children with the sponsorship. Donors will receive a photo and information about the child they have sponsored.

If you are interested in supporting the orphanage, either individually or as a group, please write for further details to Julie Wilson, Worldwide Church of God, Box 111, Borehamwood, Herts., WD6 1LU, United Kingdom.

Letters to the Editor

Letters for this section should be addressed to "Letters to the Editor." The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity or space. We welcome your comments.

Enlightenment prompts examination

Thank you for your explanation of what identifies true Christians ("Personal," Dec. 13). These are comforting words. It is most encouraging to know that God's Spirit resides in those who love one another, even though they are not in this particular organization.

It has been evident to me for some time that I have come across many individuals that I felt were true Christians in every sense of the word. In fact, at times their dedication and obedience, tremendous patience and love for their fellowman put me to shame.

Some individuals in other organizations have understood more about loving one another than some of us in the Worldwide Church of God, sad to say. The same can be said for true conversion.

Enlightenment on this subject has made me more closely examine my own Christianity. Just being a member of the Worldwide Church of God doesn't make me a Christian. I now ask myself these questions: Am I loving others? Are my actions Christlike? Am I being led by the Spirit of God? Do I seek to do the will of God and obey all his commands?

This new teaching has given me a greater love and care for others outside this organization and especially toward my own family members who aren't in the Church.

Gloria Elam
Springtown, Texas

Anchor in the rough seas

These are not easy times for any of us, but if we keep our faith anchored to Jesus Christ, he will take us through all this.

I really think that after all the dust settles, this will be a church of true godly love and real concern for our fellowman.

The way I see it now, we're no longer restricted to a set of regulations of dos and don'ts. But on the other hand it puts a heavier responsibility on each and every one of us about how we respond to Christ and how we live our lives.

Rough seas can set anyone off balance for a while, but it also helps us to look more intently to our Captain and get our priorities right. I for one am not going anywhere. This is where God called me and here is where I am staying. There are bigger and more wonderful times yet ahead for us. I really think this is what we're being prepared for.

Ruben Cerda
Pico Rivera, California

Not sidetracked any more

Thank you for the explanation on the real significance of the Sabbath and the Holy

Days, concerning the fact that they are not holy in themselves but are holy when we as God's people devote our time in worshipping God. Also that they hold no preeminence over Jesus Christ.

I came into the Church because God called me. I wanted to know more about Jesus Christ and the way he wants all of us to live.

But I became sidetracked by so many other obligations. Was I living up to God's commandments, etc.?

Although I never actually left, it got to the point that I had one foot out the door. But at the Feast last year, God told me everything was under control: that it is Jesus Christ whom I should focus on; that it is Jesus Christ who is the center of the Church.

It was Jesus Christ whom I had forgotten about, and whom I hardly ever heard other members speak about.

Thanks for reminding me why I was called, and why I came. I will continue to observe the weekly Sabbaths and the annual Holy Days, but this time I am focusing more on Jesus Christ.

Ernest L. Morrell
Brooklyn, New York

Limitless opportunities to serve

What a joy it is to see that Jesus Christ is leading and guiding the Church into new understanding.

We are released from the shackles of legalism to serve Christ in the freedom and grace he offers. The growth is exciting and the opportunities to serve him by serving others are limitless. But with freedom comes responsibilities. We must rely even more on him, prayerfully and humbly, allowing his will to be done through us.

It's a glorious time to be in the Church! Let us all grow in love for Christ and one another. He has thought us worthy of this growth, "therefore ... let us go on to perfection."

Jeff Kolsch
Brentwood, New York

"Into All the World.."

Your involvement in the Work produces fruit. In this column subscribers to the Work's publications express their views and opinions.

God gives us what we need

I have been reading your magazine with interest, and often receive some spiritual help. In the November issue I was especially interested in the article by Paul Kroll, "Why Be Christian?", and the book review, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*.

All of us, of course, have prayed earnestly at times without having received the blessings we have asked for. But, with faith? Faith is more than believing absolutely that God will grant the fulfillment of our desires. In times of trouble we often pray, as Jesus did, "Father, let this cup pass from me," but we forget to add as did our Lord, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Surely this is a necessary part of faith and of trusting God: not believing absolutely that he will answer yes to our prayer, but that we can safely leave our problems to him, knowing that he is all-wise, all-powerful and all-loving; and also that pain is often necessary if we would be conformed to the image of his Son.

He gives us, always, what we need; and how blessed we are that he knows so much better than we what we really need. If he had always given me what I thought I needed, how much I would have missed! How hopelessly I would have been lost! I have met grief, pain, even tragedy; but in the worst one of them all, when I felt that my world had crumbled under my feet, I was aware of something deep within—some place, some

treasure—that nothing could touch or mar.

I cannot always find that treasure, but I can remember that it is there since, in his mercy, he gave me that awareness when I needed it so much. My question is not so much if there is a God, and if he is as wise and powerful and loving as the Bible teaches, why does he allow such tragedies? But rather, How can people bear these tragedies without his hand to cling to? That is my answer (so far as this life on earth is concerned) to "Why Be Christian?"

Apache, Arizona

Other Christians

I picked up a copy of *The Plain Truth* and was heartened to see that you're finally admitting that there are those other than in your organization who are Christians who are doing the work of the Christ.

York, Pennsylvania

Attracting with honey

I am a Church member and have noticed the changes in *The Plain Truth*. It is a positive change, too, that the magazine is now having articles on what others are doing as Christians.

I am referring to such articles as the one by John Halford on Africa in the November issue. It would seem that the magazine is now showing a "Here is what God says to do, and here are some examples of people who are trying to do just that" approach.

I recall a different *Plain Truth* only a few years ago that seldom had such articles. Imagine trying to attract people with honey instead of vinegar. Wow! What a great idea!

Newton, Massachusetts

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Message: correcting errors, sharing the gospel

Continued from page 1

international locations. I simply use this example to illustrate the point.

In the United States we live in a pluralistic society and we have other challenges. This country has traditionally been viewed as a fairly Christian nation; however, multiple influences are bombarding this tradition. Increasingly, paganism and selfism are becoming acceptable trends in the form of the new age movement, psychobabble, rights of special interest groups, and the eroding of the stability of the traditional family.

Television is, more than ever, an entertainment medium, and the preaching of the gospel is easily devalued and diluted by its frequent use. Some prominent television evangelists are reducing their use of the medium, while some have determined to no longer use television at all.

In other words, people don't repent to a television program. Of course, they don't repent to a magazine article either. People seek the warmth of caring and constructive relationships, and that is not accomplished through the television culture of sound bites and animation.

Our fellowship faces additional challenges in that there have been several doctrinal errors that were forcefully taught and had become dearly held as esoteric truth. Some people have become so comfortable in believing these errors that they are unwilling to face the truth even when the Church itself has repented and is teaching them the truth.

It is exceedingly difficult for some because they remain locked in their emotional feelings. Moreover, there are some dissident ministers who feed a steady diet of disinformation to help people maintain their comfort in the errors the Church used to teach.

Helping people through this crisis of faith is no easy task. I have referred to it as a doctrinal cognitive dissonance [conflict resulting from holding incongruous beliefs] that must be resolved. Let me give a few illustrations of this doctrinal cognitive dissonance.

We have always taught and believed that Mr. Armstrong was fulfilling the role of Elijah. We were to hold up his hands in fulfilling that prophetic role. We believed that just as John the Baptist was a type of Elijah and prophesied the coming of the Messiah, Mr. Armstrong was fulfilling that role before Christ's second coming.

It is hard for some to see that this is not an accurate picture. One of the greatest difficulties is that when we begin to show the error of this concept, some people will automatically hear it as a disrespect of Mr. Armstrong. So, as we try to solve the problem we find ourselves in a double bind. As soon as you try to show the problem, you face the accusation of disparaging Mr. Armstrong.

It is hard for people to hear that Mr. Armstrong's own writings contain contradictions. For example, how could Mr. Armstrong be in the prophetic role of Elijah, when he disclaimed being a prophet.

In the February 1972 issue of *Tomorrow's World*, Mr. Armstrong forcefully disclaimed the role of a prophet. Notice what he wrote:

"Thousands know that I, personally, have been called and chosen for a very definite commission in God's service. But I have definitely NOT been called to be a PROPHET—except as that word, biblically used,

does refer to a minister or speaker—one who proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Emphatically, I am NOT a prophet, in the sense of one to whom God speaks specially and directly, revealing personally a future event to happen or new truth, or new and special instruction direct from God—separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible. And I have never claimed to be.

"There is no such human prophet living today!

"The Bible is the written Word of God—and, for our time now, it is COMPLETE! Never have I believed or claimed that God reveals to me new truths not contained in the Bible—in addition to, or apart from the Bible."

It can't be both ways. Either Mr. Armstrong was in the role of a prophet or he was not. If he disclaims ever being a prophet, then he disclaims being in the role of the prophet, Elijah.

Further, some people want to believe that Mr. Armstrong did, indeed, receive new and special instruction or new truth directly from God, even though he said he did not. Because of that belief, they are afraid to recognize his doctrinal mistakes and change as Christ changes the Church.

This does not disparage Mr. Armstrong. We believe that he was a minister of Jesus Christ. And just like the scriptural examples of the patriarchs, all men make mistakes. Mr. Armstrong was devoted to Christ in spite of his errors, and placed the Bible above his own ideas. But some people become uncomfortable in dealing with the fact that Mr. Armstrong sometimes made a major mistake in his interpretation of Scripture.

When we consider the failure of more than 100 prophetic statements that Mr. Armstrong was responsible for publishing, it becomes even clearer that he was not in a prophetic role.

Mr. Armstrong disclaimed special revelation, as well. He never claimed infallibility when it came to preaching and teaching. He only claimed to understand what the revelation of Scripture teaches us. And in some cases, Mr. Armstrong taught us his interpretations, which Christ has, through the Scriptures, led us to see were in error. This is no disrespect to him. He was always willing to make a change when he could see the error. Of course, while he was still alive, neither he nor any of us saw these errors.

To deal with these situations, we continue our ongoing regional conferences to better train the ministry in the honest and consistent principles of biblical study and interpretation. We point out and explain errors of the past. The ministry is not so different from the membership in their emotions and understanding of these issues. But the Holy Spirit leads all of God's people to repent from error and follow the truth.

Of crucial importance is that all our membership come to clearly understand the gospel message and believe it. Only then will we be prepared to effectively share that message. The Church has repented of limiting the gospel to primarily the announcement of Jesus' second coming, and now proclaims the same, complete gospel Jesus and the apostles taught.

Paul described that message, the one he received and passed on, in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Jesus taught that eternal life comes only through faith in him—who he is, what he has done and what he offers. He told the Pharisees: "You diligently study the Scrip-

tures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40).

I hope this gives you an idea of the challenges facing CAD.

Among Friends: What has happened to Evangelism Support Services?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: In June 1994 we saw a need to integrate Evangelism Support Services directly with CAD (U.S.) and CAD (International). Expanding the opportunities for local congregations to participate in local evangelism requires a field ministry with a strong sense of ownership of the program. This develops the vital involvement at the congregational level as they implement the Open House program and other specific programs.

What better way to find open doors into communities than through those who live and work there? And what better delivery system to use than our field ministry management? The structure provided by regional pastors and regional

It is not true that we plan to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. It is not true that we plan to change the name of the Church.

directors has been a natural link to coordinate field ideas and headquarters direction for local evangelism. Our desired result is a practical, workable, local evangelism effort.

Evangelism support for the U.S. churches is managed by Victor Kubik, assistant director of U.S. Church Administration, and is divided among three people in the CAD office. Steve Sidars is responsible for evangelism support and oversees the logistics, including the Open House program. Dave Evans is coordinating those pilot programs involving media. Guy Swenson helps with strategic planning for evangelism and integrates evangelism projects into our management plan.

Randal Dick, assistant director of CAD International, coordinates with the regional directors' ongoing evangelism efforts, as well as pilot programs. Randal, Victor, Steve and Guy are working together to build a comprehensive evangelism plan that reflects the best efforts developed by headquarters and by the field ministry.

Through interactive discussions with regional leadership and at regional conferences we are working together so we can all have confidence in, and can give our support to, new opportunities for local churches to participate more directly in the Work of God.

Among Friends: The format of services has been varied in some church areas. Have any decisions been made to incorporate any of these ideas?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: We had asked a few pastors to implement Sabbath school programs even before we had reviewed the materials now available for distribution. Sabbath schools are important in teaching our youths about God's love for his children, his plan for humanity and to have a Christian worldview. Such programs, when handled correctly, instill a love

for participating in Sabbath services.

A few parents have expressed that they feel it is important for the family to sit together during services. This feeling is understandable, since the Church has taught this perspective over the years. However, many are realizing the shortsightedness of this approach.

Typically, the sermons, and often the sermonettes, are above the children's level of interest, and actually boring to them. Often, our children are coloring or reading a book during the sermon.

The most sensible approach for the Church to take is to provide the children with biblical instruction at their own level. We feel it is best to have such a program operating concurrently with Sabbath services, so that children are not having to sit through twice as much as the parents do on the Sabbath.

With regard to other variations of the Sabbath service, Christ said that his house would be a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13), and it is appropriate that we add more prayer to the service. We encourage, for example, adding an intercessory prayer for those who are not able to attend with us because of illness or disability. Mr. Tkach has set the example in the Pasadena P.M. congregation by praying for the sick right after announcing the prayer requests. This is something that we have asked all our pastors to do.

We also encourage prayer during the service for other special occasions, such as the birth of children or recent weddings, and also during times of congregational stress or tragedy. In the Pastor General's Report we reiterated what many pastors have long practiced—using the first part of Sabbath services (the time normally allotted for sermonettes) to acknowledge the weddings, anniversaries and births in the congregation. Whenever an infant is born, a blessing on the child can be performed as well as special music prepared for the occasion.

We also made some new recommendations, such as having the youth groups give a musical or dramatic presentation in place of the sermonette. And we announced that a pastor does not have to wait until he conducts an open house before moving from a two-hour service to a 90-minute service. In this format, sermons will be about 40 to 50 minutes in length, which is more in line with our natural attention spans.

This flexibility will make our Sabbath service more worshipful for [all] ages.

Among Friends: What kind of feedback did you receive from the open house Festival sites in Spokane, Washington, and Penticton, British Columbia?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: A few of the Festival coordinators asked us to consider using the Festival site as an opportunity for open house. Actually, this is not an entirely new concept. Mr. Armstrong planted a church congregation in Eugene, Oregon, by conducting weeklong evening tent meetings. From these tent meetings came the 40 people who were the charter members of the Radio Church of God in Eugene.

In conducting these meetings, Mr. Armstrong advertised the location and dates of the meetings. Of course, in the 1930s there were not as many community activities and events competing for people's attention.

Over the years, our Festival of Tabernacles has been somewhat open to the public. That is, it was not

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Message: restructuring to effectively share gospel

Continued from page 3

uncommon for a few visitors, such as family of Church members and occasional news reporters, to come to one or two of the services.

For the 1994 Feast, David Treybig in Spokane and Donald Mears in Penticton volunteered to coordinate the Feast with the open house format in mind. It is difficult to say how many visitors attended either Festival site, because we did not call attention to the visitors or establish a special method to count them. We felt that would be too intrusive and work against our desire to allow people to visit in a low-key manner. Taking a cue from the Open House program, Mr. Mears formulated the following objectives:

1. To make it clear to the community of Penticton as a whole that our services were open to the public.
2. To invite any interested people to attend freely.
3. To continue to keep our own members and ministers focused on the Church's commission to evangelize.
4. To help visitors feel welcome.
5. To give messages that would be meaningful to newcomers as well as to members.

I'll report on what occurred in Penticton. We relied on newspaper coverage and advertising. An article in the Penticton *Herald*, which appeared a couple of weeks ahead of the Feast, quoted Mr. Mears as saying that anyone who wanted to come to services would be welcome.

During the Feast itself, we ran newspaper ads almost daily. These drew attention to the Worldwide Church of God and the Feast of Tabernacles, gave details of service times, speakers and sermon topics, and invited interested people to attend.

We had the benefit of lots of free publicity for the Feast this year. The Penticton business community organized and funded an appreciation day picnic to mark our 25th Feast in Penticton. Their efforts in raising support and funds for this were featured on radio and in the local paper.

We had announced in advance in all the assigned church areas that the Feast would be an open Feast, so members were already prepared for the possibility that they might meet new visitors. Assigned speakers had been informed of the plan, and asked to give messages that would be understood by newcomers.

During most services Mr. Mears and others made a point of mentioning that we had visitors, and publicly welcomed them. This was done either by the songleader at the beginning of services, or during announcements, or both.

I think we only achieved moderate success in this area. Force of habit tends to lead us to preach to the converted rather than preaching to convert. However, as more and more pastors have the experience of conducting Open House in their own area, they will become more skilled at making their messages meaningful to newcomers and members alike.

As mentioned earlier, we did not attempt to count visitors. It would have been impossible to identify them among the 2,800 people attending in Penticton. However, we know

they were there! In casual conversation with a few members and ministers, I have heard of at least eight visitors. I'm sure the actual total is higher than this.

We also had a display table for visitors, with a selection of four or five booklets published by the Church. There were about 20 of each title. Almost all of them were taken. Since these were booklets that have already been distributed in church to Canadian members, and by mail to U.S. members, we feel it is likely they were taken mostly by visitors.

Among Friends: How is the local church building program going?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: Following the February 1994 announcement concerning plans to construct local church buildings, there has been intense interest on the part of ministers and members in most local areas to acquire a building.

As most of you are aware, finances at this time are tight and we will only be able to fund a limited church building program for the foreseeable future. With that in mind, we sur-

We are working to develop the evangelistic capabilities of our local congregations, with headquarters providing leadership and support.

veyed all the pastors to find which church areas had severe hall problems. From that survey we drew up a list of areas currently having the most difficulty in providing adequate halls. This list was further refined to come up with eight areas we want to concentrate on in the next year or two. The pastors in these areas have been contacted and are aware of our intent to try to secure a facility for their congregations.

We are currently in the process of negotiating the purchase of a fine facility in Memphis, Tennessee—one of those eight areas.

This facility will serve a congregation with an attendance of 330 people. This congregation has had great difficulty in securing a regular meeting place. In the 12 months before our survey, they met in about eight different halls and were away from their regular hall 26 out of 52 Sabbaths.

We have already purchased facilities in a few locations such as Hammond, Louisiana (the church actually meets in Tickfaw, Louisiana), and Grand Island, Nebraska. There are seven other areas where we are investigating the possibilities.

We know we have a lot to learn about constructing and owning church buildings. In order to avoid creating future problems for ourselves, we need to go slowly, see what works and what doesn't, and gain some experience before trying to implement the goals of this program on a churchwide scale.

We should all view this program as a long-term goal that will be accomplished as the funds are available and circumstances permit. We are also setting up the accounting system for donations to be collected for acquiring facilities in local areas.

Among Friends: Can you share with us, in general terms, what you think we will look like organizationally five or 10 years down the road?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: In general terms, we are working to develop the evangelistic capabilities of our local congregations, with headquarters providing leadership and support in the form of pastoral training and administration as well as published materials, along with *The Plain Truth*, booklets and other overall evangelistic and Christian development material.

Among Friends: Do you foresee any changes in the structure of the field ministry, especially considering present economic conditions?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: This question points to both the economic trends and the ongoing training, development and assignment of the field ministry. I'll comment on both issues.

We are not the only church that is realizing the necessity of better stewardship with finances. A Champaign, Illinois-based research organization operating under the name of Empty Tomb, Inc., completed a study on the financial donations made by evangelicals.

They noted that giving (donations in general) dropped 9 percent from 1985 to 1991 (dropping from 5.25 percent to 4.79 percent), while in the same period of time, the giving in mainline churches increased slightly, from 2.81 percent to 2.84 percent. This minuscule increase is not sufficient to offset the decline in attendance in mainline churches.

They also noted that as evangelical churches continue to grow numerically, continued decline in per-member giving may not affect their programs the way it has in mainline churches, which have cut staff. The study warned that church giving patterns point in the direction of decline and the possibility of extinction of national and regional structures of churches. Other surveys have revealed that most major denominations are in or close to bankruptcy.

In other words, some experts are saying that a breakdown of denominational barriers is in the process of occurring. Western society's emphasis on individualism over community is affecting the American version of Christianity. And one of the major factors is finances.

The same is true on the international scene, although there are notable exceptions. While this is somewhat of a negative picture, it does highlight the need to advance the gospel not only among pagans, but also among the unchurched and nominal Christians—those who may consider themselves Christian, but who have made no real commitment and have not yet come to Christ.

God is also calling people into our fellowship who are already Christian and view us as their spiritual mentors. The open house conducted in Angola is an illustration of this. Nearly 1,000 people, some of whom were baptized before we met them, desire to attend Sabbath services with us and be part of our fellowship.

And we must remember that God also prunes the vine. Sadly, there are those who are led away to follow false teachers who have desired to have preeminence. These false teachers deceive some members in order to attract them, and do violence to the Scriptures by refusing to repent from heresy and misinterpretation. Along with this loss of membership is a corresponding decline in income.

We can eliminate superstition and certain rumor-producing speculation about the reasons for decline in income by looking at the facts.

There are eight different groups who have departed in recent years to form their own organizations—each one claiming to carry the mantle of Herbert W. Armstrong. They all claim that they have done the same thing that Mr. Armstrong did when he left the Church of God (Seventh Day).

Of course, there is a tremendous difference. Mr. Armstrong did not make an effort to divide the Church of God (Seventh Day), and he did not try to get their members to follow him. He was not disfellowshipped by that church, nor did they consider him to be unconverted.

In all cases, those who have left us were disfellowshipped, and have violated clear scriptural injunctions by deliberately causing division in our fellowship in their efforts to get our members to leave and follow them.

When people leave our fellowship, they give their tithes to their new organization, which obviously causes a decline in our income. It is sad that those who leave, superstitiously claim that our decline in income is a sign from God, when in fact it is the direct result of their unrepentant and rebellious actions.

The economy to some extent has also been a factor in declining income. During the regional recessions, we have members who become unemployed and underemployed, which, of course, limits their tithes and offerings.

These are the reasons the income has declined over the last few years. It is not the first time this has occurred in the history of the Church, but it is happening at a time when we are trying to acquire our own church buildings and establish a retirement program for Church employees.

As anyone can appreciate, it is extremely difficult to play catch-up under these circumstances, but my dad is committed to getting the job done on what God provides.

Steve Andrews, Church treasurer, has done a good job of disciplining the budget process and managing cash flow so that, in spite of it all, we are still close to implementing a retirement program. I wish that such a program could have been implemented years ago as was done in some international areas.

Several international regions have set up retirement or superannuation programs for the employees and ministers. There are only a few regions, including the United States, that do not yet have these programs. We are hopeful to have something in place in the next few years.

There were a larger number of ministers than in previous years who moved into retirement status last year. And in the next few years, there will be more retirements since we have a large number of ministers who are above 65 years of age.

Sometimes a minister discovers, for any number of reasons, that he is not comfortable with and does not feel equipped to fulfill the role of a career minister. Some do not grow in doctrinal understanding. For this and other reasons, some of our men in the field leave our employed ministry. Some continue to serve as local church elders.

One thing that is changing, although maturing might be a better word, is the pastor's role. Rather than the pastor being the one who is expected to perform virtually every function of the church himself, we are seeing that the pastoral role is to

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Festivals

As part of his covenant with the Israelites, God commanded them to observe various annual festivals. They symbolized facets of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Now that Christ has redeemed us, are these festivals still required observances under the new covenant? Let us examine the Old and New Testament evidence.

Let us preface our study with the practical matter of what the Church plans to do. We plan to continue to observe the Lord's Supper once each year, in remembrance of the Passover of Jesus Christ, and our service will include footwashing, unleavened bread and wine. All members are expected to attend this service.

We plan to conduct worship services, celebrating the salvation we have in Christ, on the days we have traditionally observed: the first and seventh days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, each day of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. Attendance on these days is not mandatory, but we hope that most members will want to worship with us, celebrate the salvation God gives us through his Son, and encourage one another in edifying fellowship.

Members are free to deleaven their homes for Unleavened Bread, fast on Atonement and live in temporary shelters during Tabernacles, but these old covenant details are not required in the Church today, since they are not in the new covenant.

Now let us examine the Old Testament descriptions of these festivals.

The Passover

Just before the Israelites left Egypt, God revised the Israelites' calendar and commanded a festival. On the 10th day of the month Abib, the Israelites were to select lambs. On the 14th day, they were to kill the lambs and put some of the blood on their doorframes. They were to roast them and eat them with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, with their cloaks and sandals on, with their staffs in their hands, ready to depart Egypt, and all leftovers were to be burned (Exodus 12:1-10).

If gentiles wished to participate, the men had to be circumcised (verses 43-49). The day was commanded as a lasting ordinance for future generations; it was to be a commemorative celebration, a festival (verses 14, 24-25).

Three festival seasons are mentioned within the Sinaitic covenant (Exodus 23:14-17), but Passover is not mentioned by name. However, it is mentioned in the summary of the Sinaitic covenant given to Moses later (Exodus 34:25b).

In Leviticus 23:4-5, the Passover is called a sacred assembly. Although work was forbidden on other festivals; there was no such requirement for the 14th. In Numbers 9:2-5, the Passover was again commanded, but no details were given, other than referring to previously given "rules and regulations."

The Passover was so important that provision was made for an observance in the second month for people who were unable to participate in Abib (verses 6-14). Requirements were that it must be done at evening, that it must be eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, that no meat be left until morning and that no bones should be broken.

As part of the sacrificial system, various offerings were prescribed for every morning and evening, Sabbath, new moons and annual festivals (Numbers 28-29). The Passover is

mentioned in Numbers 28:16, but no additional sacrifice was required for the 14th of Abib.

Deuteronomy 16:1-7 established the tabernacle as the site for Passover observances, rather than at the homes of the people. In the morning after the Passover, they were to return to their tents (verse 7b). Otherwise the regulations were the same as before.

Soon after this, the Israelites celebrated the Passover on the plains of Jericho (Joshua 5:10). The people had recently been circumcised (verses 2-8), so they could participate. This implies that most of these Israelites had never before participated in a Passover.

The Passover was often neglected, at least by most Israelites. Hezekiah led a restoration, inviting Israelites and Jews to celebrate the Passover in the second month (2 Chronicles 30:1-3). The Passover "had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written" (verse 5). Although most Israelites refused to go to Jerusalem, some came (verse 11). Many were ceremonially unclean, but they were allowed to participate anyway (verses 17-20). It was the greatest reunion of Jews and Israelites since the time of Solomon (verse 26).

But the Passover was neglected again, and it was restored again after Josiah's workmen discovered the book of the covenant (2 Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19). "The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem."

Ezra also restored the Passover observance (Ezra 6:19-21).

Unleavened Bread

The weeklong Festival of Unleavened Bread was closely associated with the Passover, since it started on the 15th, right after the Passover lambs were killed. It was instituted in Egypt (Exodus 12:15-20). Leaven was to be removed on the first day (verse 15), and no leaven was to be in the homes for seven days (verse 19).

Sacred assemblies took place on the first and seventh days, and ordinary work was forbidden on those days, except for food preparation. It was "a lasting ordinance for the generations to come." Even aliens had to abide by the rules (verse 19).

The night of the 15th became a commemoration of the escape from Egypt (verses 17, 42; 13:3). "This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand" (Exodus 13:9). The Israelites were to observe the festival after they entered the Promised Land (verse 5). In the wilderness, the Israelites had no grains and no bread, so they did not need to change their diets during this festival.

The festival was commanded within the Sinaitic covenant as a remembrance of the Exodus (Exodus 23:15), and the festival was repeated in the covenant made with Moses and Israel (Exodus 34:18). It was described again in Leviticus 23:6-8, but no new regulations were added. Numbers 28:17-25 prescribed extra sacrifices for the entire week.

Deuteronomy 16:3-8 repeated the regulations and indicated that the Passover lamb was sacrificed on the evening of the first day of unleavened

bread (verse 4b). The unleavened bread was a reminder that the Israelites left Egypt in haste (verse 3); they did not have time to put yeast in their dough and let it rise (Exodus 12:34, 39).

When the Israelites entered the land of Canaan after the Passover, they ate unleavened bread (Joshua 5:11). Solomon offered sacrifices as required in the book of Moses (2 Chronicles 8:12-13).

In Hezekiah's day, the people celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month (2 Chronicles 30:13, 21), even though that wasn't the official date for it. Then they celebrated it another seven days (verse 23). The festival was restored again by Josiah and Ezra (2 Chronicles 35:17; Ezra 6:22).

In Ezekiel's vision of the restored

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temple and sacrificial system, the Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread was included (Ezekiel 45:21-24).

Grain harvest festivals

Associated with the Festival of Unleavened Bread was the ceremony of waving the firstfruits, the first sheaf of the spring grain harvest. Before any new grain could be eaten, a sheaf had to be waved before God, with lamb, grain, oil and wine offerings (Leviticus 23:10-14). This ceremony involved the priests, and there was little for the people to do. It was not a Sabbath or a sacred assembly. The ceremony did not apply in the wilderness, of course; it was to be in force only after the Israelites entered the land (verse 10), and then it was to be a lasting ordinance wherever they lived (verse 14b).

Fifty days after the wavesheaf offering, at the end of the grain harvest, was the festival now known as Pentecost, which was a sacred assembly, a day on which regular work was forbidden (verses 15-21). Leavened loaves were to be offered with animals, grain and drink offerings—"a lasting ordinance for generations to come, wherever you live."

This festival was included in the Sinaitic covenant (Exodus 23:16) and in the restatement of that covenant (Exodus 34:22). Additional offerings were commanded in Numbers 28:26-31. The festival was commanded again in Deuteronomy 16:9-11, with the theme of rejoicing at the central tabernacle site.

The only Old Testament passage that mentions an observance is 2 Chronicles 8:12-13, which says that Solomon offered the commanded offerings for this festival.

Autumn Festival season

Trumpets: On the first day of Tishri, the seventh month, was a fes-

tival of blowing trumpets. It was a day of rest and a sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1). Ezra read from the law on this day; he told the people that "this day is sacred to our Lord," but nothing is said about trumpets or sacrifices (Nehemiah 8:1-10).¹

Atonement: On the 10th of Tishri was the Day of Atonement. No work at all was to be done on this "sabbath of rest," and there was a sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7). Fasting was required; anyone who worked or did not fast was cut off from the people.

Sacrificial rituals for this day are in Leviticus 16. That chapter also repeated the requirements for the people—even gentiles—to fast and avoid work (verse 29).

Tabernacles: The autumn harvest festival was the third main festival season (Exodus 23:17; 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:16; 2 Chronicles 8:12-13). The first day of the seven-day festival was a sacred assembly on which regular work was forbidden (Leviticus 23:33-36a; Numbers 29:12).

The people were to collect fruit, palm fronds and leafy branches and live in crude shelters for seven days. It was a lasting ordinance for all "native-born Israelites," reminding them of the Exodus from Egypt (Leviticus 23:39-43).

The festival was to be kept at a central site, and it was a time for joy and celebration that included aliens (Deuteronomy 16:13-15). Every seventh year, in the sabbatical year in which slaves were released, the law was to be read publicly during this festival (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). In those years, it would have been a festival of liberation, not of ingathering.

Solomon's temple was dedicated at the Festival of Tabernacles (2 Chronicles 5:2-3; 7:8). Ezra and Nehemiah kept this festival (Ezra 3:4; Nehemiah 8:14-18). "From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this" (verse 17).

Ezekiel predicted a restoration of this festival (Ezekiel 45:25); Hosea also mentioned it in a prophecy (Hosea 12:9). The most specific prophecy about this festival is in Zechariah 14:16-19—even gentile nations would be required to go to Jerusalem to keep the festival, or else they would suffer drought.

The eighth day: The Festival of Tabernacles lasted seven days, but the eighth day was also a sacred assembly and a day of rest (Leviticus 23:36b, 39b; Numbers 29:35). This day was called "the closing assembly" (*atsarah*) (Leviticus 23:36b). Solomon held an assembly on the eighth day and dismissed the people on the ninth (2 Chronicles 7:9-10). Ezra also held an assembly on the eighth day (Nehemiah 8:18).

Other Festivals

The sabbatical year: The old covenant stipulated that the land was not to be cultivated every seventh year (Exodus 23:10-11). The land was to lie fallow, and vineyards and olive trees were to be left untended so poor people and wild animals could eat the fruit. The land was to observe a sabbath year (Leviticus 25:1-7).

God warned the people that if they were persistently rebellious, he would ensure that the land had its sabbaths (Leviticus 26:34). And it came to pass—the land was given its sabbath rests (2 Chronicles 36:21).

Nehemiah, in pledging allegiance to God's laws, restored the land sabbath (Nehemiah 10:31). He also indi-

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Is Festival-keeping required in New Covenant?

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cated that the seventh year was a time for canceling debts, in keeping with Deuteronomy 15:1-11. It was also the time for freeing Hebrew slaves (Exodus 21:2; Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Jeremiah 34:14).

The jubilee year: Similarly, every 50th year was to be a festive year. Liberty was to be proclaimed throughout the land, and farmlands were to be returned to the families originally having them (Leviticus 25:8-10).

It was also a sabbatical year for the land, since the people were not to sow or reap or harvest (verses 11-12). When Jesus proclaimed freedom for prisoners (Luke 4:18), he may have been alluding to the jubilee year.

Purim: Another biblical festival was begun by Mordecai—he told all the Jews in the Persian Empire to celebrate the 14th and 15th days of the month Adar (Esther 9:21).

Jesus and the Festivals

The ancient Israelites did not keep the festivals very well. Some aspects of the festivals were not required during the wilderness wanderings. Many festivals were ignored for decades and restored briefly by a zealous leader, only to be abandoned by the next generation.

It was impractical for most Israelites to attend every sacred assembly, since the Sabbath, for example, occurred weekly and there was only one authorized meeting place for the entire nation. Most Israelites would have simply stayed home for most of those assemblies.

The agricultural festivals would have less meaning in sabbatical years, when there was no cultivation. And if the law was read only on sabbatical years at Tabernacles, it would be easy for people to forget what it said.

But by the time of Jesus, the festivals were being observed regularly at Herod's temple. Although some Jews may have been lax about festival observance, others were faithful to the terms of the covenant. Scribes and Pharisees helped keep people aware of the festivals. Synagogues had been built, and the law was taught weekly.

Jesus went to the festivals, although there is no evidence that he journeyed to Jerusalem for every festival in every year. When he was an infant in Egypt, for example, he probably did not—nor was it expected of Jews who lived there.

After he moved back to Nazareth, his family went to Jerusalem every Passover season (Luke 2:41), so Jesus would have been familiar with the sacrificial rituals. Assuming that Joseph died and Jesus became head of the family, he would have brought Passover lambs to be sacrificed in Jerusalem.

Jesus taught during Passover seasons (John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55). His most famous Passover was his last; he instituted a new commemoration (Matthew 26:26-29) and then he himself was sacrificed as our Passover lamb (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Jesus taught during Tabernacles (John 7:2-14), including its last day (verse 37). Although he taught during the festivals, he did not specifically comment on their meaning. He taught about living waters, for example, but he did not say that his message had anything to do with the festivals. Rather, it was about the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus (verses 38-39).

Jesus also kept Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication (John 10:22).

There is only one festival that the Lord himself commanded Christians

to observe. "Do this in remembrance of me," he said at his last meal (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). He told his disciples to commemorate his suffering and death by sharing bread and wine. This is a clear command, and we will return to this commanded observance at the end of this paper. First, we will examine some scriptures relevant to other festivals.

Festivals in the early church

The new covenant was made and ratified on a festival day (Passover); the guarantee of the covenant was also given on a festival (Pentecost).

There is little question that the early Church, composed entirely of Jewish Christians, continued to keep the festivals. They were assembled in one place on Pentecost (Acts 2:1)—but that is not unusual, since they often met together for prayer (Luke 24:53; Acts 1:14). On Pentecost, they were sitting in a "house," not necessarily in the temple (Acts 2:2).

The next mention of a festival is in Acts 12:3-4. Herod arrested Peter during the Festival of Unleavened Bread, intending to prosecute him

There is only one festival that the Lord himself commanded Christians to observe. 'Do this in remembrance of me,' he said at his last meal. He told his disciples to commemorate his suffering and death by sharing bread and wine.

after the Passover season. Although the Church probably kept these festivals, these verses do not tell us that; the festivals are mentioned simply to tell us what time of year this happened.

This passage is neither a command nor an example. The mere mention of a festival does not imply a command for its observance (cf. John 10:22). The Festival still existed in Peter's day, and it still exists today, just like Hanukkah does, but its existence does not imply that we are required to observe it.

The next mention is Acts 18:21 (in the Majority or Byzantine texts; other Greek texts do not have this passage). Paul was debating with Jews in the synagogue at Ephesus (verse 19). They wanted him to stay longer, but he refused, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem" (New King James).

Paul probably kept the festivals, just as he kept Jewish customs such as cutting his hair after a vow (Acts 18:18) and participating in purification rituals at the temple (Acts 21:26). Just because he did something does not mean that we have to follow his specific example.²

Paul could have kept the festival in Ephesus if he wanted to (1 Corinthians 16:8; Acts 16:13). Although Deuteronomy required festivals to be kept in Jerusalem, Paul didn't have to go there; the Deuteronomic requirement was not deemed applicable to Jews who lived outside of the Promised Land. However, he may have wanted to be in Jerusalem because there would be a large

crowd of people to preach to. The text doesn't tell us his motive.

Paul sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6). This verse, like 12:3-4, simply tells us when this happened; it does not say that Christians kept the festival, nor does it command us to.

Similarly, Acts 20:16 tells us that Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. Although Paul probably planned to keep the festival in Jerusalem, the text does not tell us that he did; it simply tells us when he wanted to arrive. He could just as easily have kept the festival with the Ephesian church if he wanted to.

Acts 27:9 tells us that sailing was dangerous after "the Fast," referring to the Day of Atonement. This text does not say anything about Christians observing this day (although they may have); it is simply a chronological marker in the story.

However, would Luke's gentile readers have understood this terminology? Does it imply that the readers were themselves observing the Fast? Not necessarily. Since gentile churches were often associated with synagogues, the readers could have known when the Fast was because they knew when the Jewish festivals were.³

Paul commended the Thessalonians for becoming imitators of the churches in Judea (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Did this involve festival-keeping? Not necessarily. The churches in Judea observed various Jewish customs, and we see in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 that they had many traditions that weren't binding on gentiles.

If the Thessalonians were imitating everything the Judean churches did, their example isn't authoritative for us today. Actually, the context of 1 Thessalonians 2:14 tells us the way in which the Thessalonians were imitating the Judeans: They accepted the gospel as the word of God (verse 13) and were willing to accept persecution from their countrymen (verse 14b).

1 Corinthians 5:7-8

"Let us keep the Festival," Paul told the Corinthian Christians (1 Corinthians 5:8). We have traditionally taken this as a command to observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread, but this is not what the passage teaches.

First, let us note the context: In verses 1-5, Paul tells the Corinthians to put a sinful brother out of their fellowship. Then in verse 6, he writes, "Don't you know that a little leaven works through the whole batch of dough?" This proverb is similar to a modern one: "One rotten apple can ruin the whole bunch."

If Paul had written that, he would have been comparing rot to sin, indicating that rot must be removed before it spreads. In a similar metaphor in verse 6, Paul is comparing yeast to sin—and sin, if it's not corrected, can spread through the whole community. "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

When Paul says, "Get rid of the old yeast" (1 Corinthians 5:7), we have traditionally and correctly recognized that he is still speaking metaphorically about disfellowshipping the sinful brother, not telling them to get rid of physical leaven. "Yeast" is still being used as a figure of speech for the sinful person.

When Paul says that the Corinthians are already unleavened—that they are a "new batch without yeast"—he is comparing the people to a lump of dough. He is not saying that their homes are de-leavened, or that yeast has been removed from their diets. It is the Christian com-

munity itself that is, figuratively, the new batch of dough.⁴ This evidence in the text tells us that Paul is speaking metaphorically.

Further evidence that Paul is speaking spiritually is the last part of verse 7: The Corinthians are to put out spiritual leaven, and they are already unleavened, *because Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed.*

They are spiritually cleansed by the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and they therefore ought to eliminate sin from their community. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is not a logical reason to put leaven out of our homes, but it is a logical reason to put sin out.

Paul was not addressing the topic of physical leaven. If he had wanted to forbid physical leaven, he would have said, "Put the leaven out, for the law has commanded us to." Christ's crucifixion did not have anything to do with physical leaven, but it does remove spiritual leaven.

It is the Corinthian Christian community, not their homes or their diets, that is said to be unleavened. Christ has declared them to be holy (1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:10), so they ought to act like it. Sanctification is a process as well as an initial event (Hebrews 10:14).

Paul is telling them to put flagrant sin out of their fellowship so they can be a group of people who live in holiness, since they have been sanctified or declared holy by the sacrifice of Christ. They had leaven (i.e., the sinful member) in their midst, but Christ had made them unleavened (forgiven), so they had the logical duty to resolve this anomaly by putting the sinful member out of their fellowship.⁵

Paul says that Christ is our Passover. However, Jesus' sacrifice has dramatically changed the way the Passover is to be observed; it has also changed the way we strive to be unleavened, as Paul brings out in verse 8.

"Therefore"—because Christ has been sacrificed for us—"let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast..." Does this imply that we can keep the festival with *new* leaven? Of course not. Paul isn't talking about physical leaven, or else he wouldn't need the word "old."

Paul is contrasting the old lifestyle of sin with the new Christian lifestyle of holiness. Paul is telling the Corinthians to keep the festival in a new way, concerned about sincerity and truth. The old leaven he's talking about is clearly identified as "malice and wickedness"—that's the sort of thing we must put out. That's what the festival had pictured all along.

Now, Christians are to keep⁶ the festival with unleaveness (the word "bread" is not in the Greek). Again, Paul is not talking about being physically de-leavened—he clearly says that the unleaveness he is talking about is "sincerity and truth." We are to keep the festival in the new spiritual way, by eliminating sin. Christianity is a continuous festival, a celebration of the salvation we have in Christ.

The festival symbolism, eliminating leaven, is fulfilled by the elimination of guilt and sin through the atoning work of Christ and his sanctifying work in our lives. For Christians, sincerity and truth characterize our complete devotion to and worship of our Lord and Savior.

If we are circumcised in heart, we are not required to submit to the physical rite of circumcision, since we have fulfilled the spiritual principle that the physical rite pictured. Likewise, when we live in sincerity, See Festivals, page 7

Festivals emphasize what Christ has done for us

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truth and holiness, we are not required to physically delevain our homes, since we have already fulfilled the spiritual meaning that the physical rite pictured.

Could the Corinthian church understand Paul's symbolism if they were not actually observing the festivals? Yes. They could understand Jesus' role as a Lamb of God without killing Passover lambs and the spiritual fulfillment of sacrifices without killing any animals.

Since the church in Corinth began in a synagogue, and there were Jews in Corinth, even the gentile Christians could have understood the allusions without actually keeping the festival in the old covenant way. Some of the Christians in Corinth may have even kept the festivals in an old covenant way, but that in itself does not indicate that the festivals are required for all Christians.

Colossians 2:16-17

Colossians 2:16 says, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day."

First, we should note the connecting word "therefore." It links verse 16 with the previous verses. Because Christ has circumcised us spiritually, forgiven us and given us new life, for that reason we should not allow anyone to judge us regarding various rituals.

Apparently the Colossian heretics taught that certain customs were required for salvation, and Paul is telling the Christians that they should ignore the heretics' criticisms because of what Christ had done for them. The heretics' teachings were apparently a combination of Jewish customs and ascetic customs.

The Christians were eating and drinking things that the heretics disapproved of (perhaps meat and wine), and the Christians' behavior on festivals wasn't what the heretics said was necessary. Perhaps the Christians were observing these days with less rigor than the heretics demanded, or perhaps they were not observing these days at all.⁷

Does Paul imply that the Christians were doing everything mentioned in verse 16 (eating, drinking and observing days)? No. By including the words "or with regard to" in the midst of his list, Paul grammatically separates food and drink from the observance of days; he may be indicating a difference in the way the Christians were being criticized for food and drink as opposed to the way they were criticized for something in respect to new moons, festivals and Sabbaths.

They may have been doing the former, but not the latter.

The Greek words translated "with regard to" literally mean "in part," but there is no evidence that the Christians were observing only part of the festivals (e.g., all but the sacrifices). The words are a Greek idiom meaning with regard to, with respect to, in connection with, concerning, etc. The Christians were not to allow others to judge them in connection with or regarding what they did on a Jewish festival.

But how could they stop other people's attitudes? They could not; all they could do is not to let the criticisms cause them to change their behavior as if necessary for salvation, and that is probably what Paul meant. Christian behavior should not be determined by external pressures.

The clearest point in the whole pas-

sage is that we shouldn't let people judge us regarding these things—not other Christians, not even people in our own fellowship. Salvation doesn't depend on our observance of dietary rules or specific festivals. Christ is the judge, and we are to obey him rather than human traditions.

Does this verse imply that we can be saved whether we keep these days or not? Yes. That harmonizes well with the principle Paul gave in another situation (Romans 14:4-6). Some people regard the day as special to the Lord, and others regard it as optional, also basing their belief on their desire to obey the Lord.

Each should be fully convinced, bringing every thought into submission to the Lord, but we are not to judge each other, since Christ is our Lord and our Judge. We are not to let others judge us (i.e., change our behavior because of their opinions), and we are not to judge others (teaching that they must change their behavior in order to be saved) regarding food and drink and festivals.

Festivals, new moons and Sabbaths are shadows pointing to the reality, which is Christ (Colossians 2:17).⁸ The tabernacle and laws of sacrifices were also shadows (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). All these things had typological significance, but Christ fulfilled the symbolism of the old covenant rites.⁹ The old covenant specified holy places and holy times, but the New Testament does not label any time as "holy." Just as in the case of circumcision, when we have been given the spiritual reality, we are not bound by physical worship rules.

Although Christians may observe the festivals as celebrations of various aspects of salvation, that in itself does not make them binding on Christians today. As a Church, we choose to celebrate salvation through Christ on festivals that have biblical precedent. But if some people do not keep these festivals, we will not condemn them for it. Nothing in the New Testament says that they are required.

In Colossians 2:16, the old covenant festivals are placed in the same category as new moon observances. Christ does not require us to observe them, nor does he forbid us to observe them. The festivals can be helpful if they emphasize what Christ has done for us, but they are not a required part of our new covenant relationship with God.

Summary

The festivals were instituted by God himself, but so were the sacrifices and the tabernacle. The festivals are "feasts of the Lord," but the tabernacle and sacrifices were also "of the Lord."

The festivals were commanded forever, but so were some of the sacrifices and so was circumcision. None of these are requirements for Christians today. The new covenant is significantly different from the old; worship requirements have been greatly transformed. The festivals are not signs or proofs of true Christianity and are not a basis for judging whether someone is in the faith.

Two festivals were instituted before Sinai, but circumcision was also instituted before Sinai, and it is not a requirement. Christians are inheritors of the covenant of promise that God made with Abraham because of his faith, and laws that were added afterwards cannot change the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Even the festivals commanded

before Sinai were given through Moses and are part of "the law of Moses."¹⁰ They were historically conditioned, linked to the agricultural seasons of a specific nation in a specific land, linked to physical salvation and physical promises.

The festivals were commanded within the old covenant, and the terms of that covenant are not binding on Christians today. Observances instituted in the old covenant are obsolete unless we have evidence that they are also part of the new covenant. If we are to teach something as a requirement for people in

Although the festivals are not requirements, they can be valuable, biblically based traditions. They have typological significance, and we as a Church have an unusual opportunity to explore that significance as we assemble on these days to celebrate various aspects of salvation.

a new covenant relationship with God, it must be based on the new covenant, not the old.

The prophets predicted a restoration of the festivals, but they also predicted sacrifices (e.g., Zechariah 14:20-21) and circumcision (Ezekiel 44:9). Their prophecies cannot be used to make requirements for the Church in this age.

Jesus observed the Holy Days because he was born under the law, while the old covenant was still in force (Galatians 4:4). He observed old covenant customs such as participating in the sacrifice of Passover lambs, tithing to the Levites, telling cleansed people to make offerings as prescribed by Moses, etc.

He also observed Hanukkah. Such examples help Christians focus on Jesus' teaching and the meaning of what he did for us. By comparison, Christians should be careful about using his example in cultural, time-bound circumstances.

The early Church also observed the festivals, since the first Christians were Jewish. They also observed circumcision and other customs that were not binding on gentile believers. It was certainly permissible for the Jewish believers to continue observing their traditions, but their example cannot be authoritative unless there is evidence that gentiles were required to observe these festivals.

God gave the Holy Spirit on one festival, but he never told us to commemorate that event with a required assembly (although many Christian churches observe Pentecost, it is by tradition rather than command); he gave the Spirit on other days, too. Later history shows some Christians keeping the festivals, but some kept circumcision, too. Their example isn't authoritative. Our standard must be the Bible, particularly the new covenant.

Paul kept some festivals in Jerusalem, but he was away for most of them. He also kept other Jewish customs, so his example isn't automatically authoritative. If we imitate

all the ways in which he lived like Jesus, we would have to be celibate traveling preachers. We need to discern which details of their lives were based on the culture they lived in, and which were based on the new life in Christ.

Paul considered himself under the law of Christ, not under the law of the old covenant (1 Corinthians 9:19-21). Today, we are to obey the commands of Jesus (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus commanded a commemoration of his death, but he otherwise did not command Christians to observe any festivals. Likewise, Paul did not command gentiles to keep the festivals. In alluding to the Festival of Unleavened Bread, he spiritualized it, saying that Christians were to rejoice in sincerity and truth. And he told the Colossians to ignore what others might say regarding Jewish festivals.

They were symbolic shadows, so they did not matter. The reality to which they had pointed had come. They had symbolic significance, but so did circumcision and the sacrifices. They are meaningful, but that in itself does not mean that observance is required.

Moreover, if the festivals were required, we would have to ask how many of the customs are required. Can we say that one physical custom (unleavened bread) is still required but another physical custom (bitter herbs) is not? Or we might consider that the old covenant required not only temporary dwellings, but also homemade, substandard dwellings.

Can we say that one aspect of the booths is important, but the others are not? If we say that tree-branch booths are not practical in our climate, are we using human reasoning to limit our obedience?

The simple truth is that all these are not requirements under the new covenant. They are part of "the law of Moses" that is not a requirement for membership in the Christian community (Acts 15). We may not understand precisely how Jesus fulfilled the symbolism of leavened loaves and other festival rituals, but we do know that in the New Testament our relationship with God is based on faith in Christ.

Since we have been given salvation in him, we are already abiding by the purpose of the festivals; we have begun to experience the reality that the festivals only pointed to. The New Testament does not command them.

Although the festivals are not requirements, they *can be* valuable, biblically based traditions. They have typological significance, and we as a Church have an unusual opportunity to explore that significance as we assemble on these days to celebrate the salvation we have in Christ. (We have already done much to expound the spiritual meaning of these days and rituals, and we plan to do more, but we will not explore that topic in this paper.)

These festivals give us social experiences that help unite us; they give us times to worship and focus on specific aspects of the salvation God gives us in his Son. But we cannot make them requirements and say that people ought to risk their jobs in order to keep them.

Members may decide whether to keep the festivals without their decision having any bearing on their membership status. Our Church culture embraces traditions and practices such as Sabbath-keeping and festival-keeping, but not in the sense of a demand of the law or a requirement for membership. We encourage

See Festivals, page 8

Festivals symbolize participation in Jesus Christ

Continued from page 7

people to meet together with us on these days, but we cannot call it sin if people have to work instead of assembling with us.

Although those who wish to abstain from leavened bread during that festival are free to do so, there is no requirement to do so. We are spiritually unleavened through faith in the sacrificed Lamb of God, and there is therefore no need to physically perform that which was only a shadow of the reality.

We assemble on the first and last day of Unleavened Bread for the purpose of worshipping our Savior and celebrating salvation through faith in him, and we do so by tradition, not by commandment.

Similarly, those who desire to fast on the Day of Atonement are free to do so, but the Church does not require members to do so.¹¹ It is not more righteous or holy to do so. Through his sacrificial death, Jesus Christ has already made us "at one" with God. For us, the Day of Atonement is a celebration both of Christ's atoning work and of the reconciliation with God that we are given because of his work.

Although fasting can be a spiritually valuable discipline, there is no new covenant requirement to continue the old covenant practice of fasting on this particular day to acknowledge one's spiritual separation from God. Our fast days and worship days are not determined by the Hebrew calendar, which was given to Israel alone as part of the old covenant.

Paul did not require Jewish Christians to stop practicing their customs, but he did require them not to impose those customs on gentile converts (Galatians 2:14-15). The law was a guardian that could lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), and if the festivals lead us to Christ, they are good. That's what we want them to do for us. But they are not a substitute for Christ; they cannot save us. Nor are they a required addition to faith in Christ.

People who keep the festivals are not automatically better Christians than those who do not. The important thing is whether people have faith in Christ and obey him. If we have faith, we are already fulfilling the purpose of Israel's worship rules. We are saved by grace through faith, not by performance of specific old covenant customs.

The Lord's Supper

As a Church, we will continue to observe the Lord's Supper, the New Testament Passover, one day earlier than the Jewish Passover, reminding us that Jesus instituted this new covenant ceremony on the evening before he was betrayed, the evening before he was killed as our Passover fulfillment. The Lord's Supper is commanded as part of the new covenant.

We observe the Lord's Supper on the anniversary of its institution, but we have no biblical reason to criticize people who observe it more frequently. While Jesus did not specify how often we should do it, we will continue to observe it annually. To explore the topic of frequency, we need to take a closer look at what he told his disciples to do.

Shortly before his death, he shared a meal with his disciples. He shared a cup of wine with them, and then some bread. "He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me'" (Luke 22:19).

When Jesus told his disciples to do "this" in remembrance of him, what were they to "do"? They were to take bread, give thanks, break bread and share it. Jesus' command also included sharing the cup (verse 17; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Although the Last Supper may have been special due to the festival season, the elements of commemoration were more ordinary.

The disciples were to "do" what they had probably done many times before: share bread and wine. Now, however, they were to do it in remembrance of Jesus giving his body and blood on behalf of others

so that we could have a new relationship with God. By sharing in bread and wine, they symbolized their participation in Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life himself and their communion with one another (cf. 1 John 1:3, 7).

When two disciples were on the road to Emmaus, they did not recognize the resurrected Jesus until "he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them" (Luke 24:30). Then they remembered. When the disciples came together to break bread and pray (Acts 2:42), they would likely remember their last meal with their Savior. Whenever they shared an evening meal with other disciples, they would probably remember their experience with their Master.

Commemorating the body and blood of our Savior by sharing bread and wine does not have to be limited to once a year. Jesus indicated some flexibility in the timing when he said, "Do this, *whenever you drink it*, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). "When" could indicate a set time, but "whenever" (reflecting the Greek conditional particle *ean*) indicates flexibility.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians also gives evidence that the Lord's Supper was being observed frequently. He corrected them for their behavior at meetings in which they commemorated the Lord's death, and it sounds like this was a frequent occurrence (verses 17, 20, 33). It was done when they came together "as a church" (verse 18).

Some events are commemorated annually, but others are commemorated more often, such as weekly. There is no command about how often we should commemorate the Lord's death, just as there is no command about how often we should fast.

We have traditionally partaken of the Lord's Supper on its anniversary. Because this is the Passover day, we called our observance the New Testament Passover. But the commemoration has little in common with the Old Testament Passover. Bread, wine and footwashing have only a little overlap with lamb, bread and bitter

herbs. Jesus told his disciples to prepare for the Passover, but he did not call the bread and wine a Passover.

In New Testament symbolism, the Passover is Jesus Christ himself, and the symbolism of the old covenant Passover was fulfilled and does not need to be repeated. Jesus never said that the bread and wine replaced the old covenant Passover practices.

Rather, he instituted a *new* observance and then fulfilled the old and made its physical details obsolete. The body and blood of Jesus fulfilled not only the Passover sacrifice, but also the sin offerings, fellowship offerings, grain offerings, etc. Just as those offerings were not limited to once a year, the bread and wine commemoration need not be limited.

That does not mean that we have to change our practice, but it does mean that we have no reason to criticize the frequency observed by other Christians. We do not need to be limited by old covenant rules about the Passover regarding when we observe a different ritual under a different covenant. The observance of the Lord's Supper is not mandated by the old covenant or the Hebrew calendar. It is mandated by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

For those who are under the new covenant blood of Christ, frequency and the date of commemoration are policy decisions, not biblical commands. The Church may make policy decisions about when we partake of the bread and wine and when we assemble on other festivals as celebrations of our new life in Christ.

Conclusion

The old covenant festivals are not commanded in the new covenant. The old covenant Passover has been fulfilled, and Jesus instituted a different observance. Our Christian lives should be continual fulfillments of the spiritual meaning of the festivals. We should always be walking in righteousness, filled with the Spirit, looking forward to the return of our Savior, rejoicing that he has atoned for our sins, celebrating his kingdom and the salvation it brings. Through faith in Christ and Christ living in us, we are abiding by the spiritual purpose of the festivals.

When we say we are a Sabbath-keeping fellowship and a festival-keeping fellowship, we mean only that our worship services occur on these days. The old covenant restrictions placed on these days are not binding on Christian consciences; they are not meritorious in terms of righteousness. Some members observe these days in an old covenant way, and others do not. Whatever they do, they should do it "unto the Lord ... fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5-6).

The new covenant gives us two clear commands regarding festivals: 1) Observe the Lord's Supper in commemoration of the new covenant in Jesus' blood. 2) Do not let others judge us in connection with the festivals, with the implication that we should not judge others regarding these days, either. Those who observe traditional customs should not judge those who do not, and vice versa.

The festivals are typologically meaningful, but we must recognize that they are voluntary observances—valuable as traditions, valuable in worship, but not as requirements for salvation or membership. They must never distract us from the true focus of the festivals: the person and work of Jesus Christ. Their meaning focuses us on Christ as pivotal and of supreme importance in the plan of God.

Endnotes

1 On the second day, Ezra again read from the law, and the people then learned about the Festival of Tabernacles (verses 13-14); the implication is that they had little or no knowledge about the Festival of Trumpets the day before. Ezra may have considered the first day sacred because it was a new moon.

Although new moons were not commanded assemblies or Sabbaths, they were often mentioned in association with other religious days (e.g., Numbers 28:11; Ezekiel 45:17; 46:3). Trumpets were blown on every new moon (Numbers 10:10). Psalm 81:3-5 may refer to the Festival of Trumpets.

2 Some, believing that we must literally follow all specific biblical examples set by both Jesus and Paul, believe that it is necessary to observe the festivals in Jerusalem.

3 If we consider what readers knew and didn't know, we would also have to consider why Mark had to explain to his readers that the Preparation Day was the day before a Sabbath (Mark 15:42). Does this mean that his readers didn't observe a preparation day? Why does John 7:2 say that Tabernacles (not just the ceremonies, but the festival itself) was a Jewish festival, as if Christians didn't keep it? These verses are not proof, but they are substantiating evidence that some Christians were not familiar with these festivals.

4 Paul is also making a contrast between "old" and "new," just as he does in Ephesians 4:22-25 and Colossians 3:8-14. Paul can say that the Christians have already put off the old man and put on the new man, and he can also exhort them to continue to put off old behavior and put on new. They have been declared to be new, so they should act accordingly. Because they are created anew in Christ, they are to put off lying and anger, malice and wrath, and they are to put on truth, kindness and love. Likewise in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul can say that the Chris-

tians are already spiritually unleavened, and yet should put out spiritual leaven. They should act in accordance with what they have been declared to be.

5 Paul is teaching the Corinthians to live up to what they already were. They were already cleansed; now they needed to continue to remain free from sin and corruption.

6 The verb "keep" is in the present tense, which in Greek generally denotes a progressive action. Keeping the festival, in the manner Paul described, is an ongoing responsibility.

7 It isn't likely that the heretics would advocate animal sacrifices, because Diaspora Jews did not require them, and vegetarian ascetics wouldn't, either. Perhaps the Christians were being criticized for observing days the heretics thought were unnecessary, but it isn't likely that the heretics would criticize the addition of requirements.

This suggests that the Colossian Christians were *not* observing festivals, and the heretics were claiming that they ought to, and Paul was telling the Christians to ignore the criticisms. It is a spurious argument to ask, as we used to, How could they be criticized with regard to days they were not keeping?—especially when we ourselves criticized others for not keeping these days.

8 Not just part of the festival, but the entire festival is a shadow pointing to Christ. From this sentence, it is not clear whether the foods and drinks are also considered shadows.

9 Some of Christ's work is still future, and the festivals foreshadow some future events, too, but Paul's conclusion is still that we should not let anyone judge us with respect to these days. Nor should we judge others regarding these days.

10 Scripture does not compartmentalize Moses' writings into temporary and permanent, or core and periphery, or ethical and

ritual; they are all equally part of the law of Moses, and Christians are not under obligation to that law.

Although the rituals continue to be in inspired Scripture, their spiritual symbolism has been fulfilled, and they do not need to be physically reenacted by God's people today. Their validity has been confirmed at the same time as it has become unnecessary to perform them.

Many of the ethical rules continue to be valid, but their validity rests on the new covenant rather than the old. When a French citizen emigrates to England, he finds that many of the laws are the same, but he obeys them because he is under a new jurisdiction, not because they were enforced in the old.

11 Many old covenant practices, such as sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood, were commanded "forever." We have taught for decades that "forever" means "as long as the factors involved exist" or "as long as the conditions apply."

The biblical reason given for fasting and doing no work on Atonement is "because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins" (Leviticus 16:30; 23:28). This reason, however, is no longer valid. Christ's atonement on the cross is fully sufficient for all time (Hebrews 10:14; Romans 3:25). We are cleansed from all our sins by his sacrifice.

The biblical reason for fasting and avoiding work on the Day of Atonement is no longer valid. The relevant factor no longer exists; the conditions do not apply. Christians are therefore not required to fast or to avoid work on this day. Some people may wish to associate other biblical truths with this day, and they may be valid associations, but they are not biblical reasons to fast on this particular day, and they cannot be the basis for Church teachings.

Festival Updates

Space available for Greece and Jordan

Space is still available for brethren who want to keep the Feast in Greece or Jordan this year. If you are interested in keeping the Feast in either of these exciting group sites please submit an international Feast application immediately.

Spanish translations to be offered on 1996 cruise

If members show sufficient interest, Festival Administration, together with WCG Travel, will offer a 13-night cruise aboard one of Holland America's new ships sailing from Los Angeles Sept. 26, 1996, the day before the Feast begins.

As already announced, the itinerary will include the Panama Canal and ports of call along the Mexican Riviera as well as in the Caribbean. The ship will arrive in Florida Oct. 9, four days after the Feast ends.

Spanish translation will be offered for any of our Spanish-speaking brethren who wish to attend.

U.S. Receipts

April 17 is the deadline for filing U.S. tax returns. Annual receipts for 1994 contributions were sent to members in January. Some, however, may need duplicate receipts to complete tax returns.

Any U.S. brethren who need a second annual receipt should call Mail Processing's donation file personnel by using the toll-free number (1-800-924-4644).

MPC will then mail you a duplicate copy. Please allow at least 10 days for the replacement receipt to reach you.

You may wonder why this is being announced so soon. The cruise line is already finalizing its ships' itineraries for 1996 and beginning to lay out brochures. To accommodate the 1996 Feast of Tabernacles, Holland America has offered to pull one of its new ships from its regular schedule to fit our dates and itinerary. In order to lock in these changes to their normal operations, the cruise line requires a contractual agreement with the Church, along with a deposit.

"As with the '94 Alaska Feast cruise, Church operating funds cannot be committed for such a project," explained Mark McCulley, Festival Administration manager. "But we feel confident that, as with our previous cruises, members will be pleased with the overall value offered on this cruise, especially in a Festival setting. Therefore, we are confident that those who want to go on this cruise will be willing to send a deposit to help us secure the ship contractually."

We are not asking for a deposit at this time—just an indication of interest. If you are interested in participating and have not already contacted us, we need to hear from you as soon as possible. If enough interest is shown, we will send you full details and an application packet. A deposit would be required with your application.

How to reach WCG Travel: mail: 169 S. St. John, Pasadena, California, 91129; phone: 1-818-304-8123; fax 1-818-304-8125; Internet: Sharon_Roybal@WCG.ccmil.com; Compuserve: CCMail:SharonRoybal at WCG.

Virgin Islands site canceled

The Feast site in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, has been canceled. Members who have turned in a Festival planning card with a first choice of St. Thomas will need to choose a different site and inform their Festival adviser.

Legazpi, Philippines

The Feast will take place in Legazpi, Philippines, instead of Naga. Legazpi is about 150 kilometers (93 miles south of Naga) or 550 kilometers (341 miles) south of Manila. Transfers are welcome.

Flic en Flac, Mauritius

Mauritius, with its tropical beaches, coral reefs and smiling people, lives up to its reputation of being the Jewel of the Indian Ocean.

Services will take place in an air-conditioned hall in the PLM Azur Mont Choisy Hotel, on the beachfront. This and comparable hotels cost RS1,800 Mauritian rupees (about US\$100) per night for two people sharing. A single room costs RS1,400 or US\$78. Prices include breakfast, maid service and use of sports facilities.

Apartments and bungalows are also available ranging in price from RS900 (US\$50) to RS3,500 (US\$195) per night, with all prices in between. The bungalows, which sleep four people, usually have a kitchen, lounge and two bedrooms. Sermons in English will be translated into French.

Punta del Este, Uruguay

The South American Atlantic

Ocean resort area of Punta del Este will be the site for the 1995 Festival in Uruguay. It is only a little more than an hour's bus ride from Montevideo, capital of Uruguay.

The Uruguayan brethren will be hosts to Festival transfers from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the United States and from around the world. Services will be conducted in Spanish with translations into English.

Deluxe accommodations will be available in fully equipped luxury apartments. The package price for 11 days lodging including roundtrip airfare from the United States, ground transportation, city tours and luxury furnished apartments will be: Miami, Florida: US\$1,595; Atlanta, Georgia; New York; Washington, D.C.: US\$1,755; Los Angeles, US\$1,955; San Francisco, US\$1,995. Prices are per person based on double occupancy.

Prices with connections from other cities are available upon request. Post-Feast guided tours will be offered to Buenos Aires, Argentina, Iguazu Falls, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Full information will be sent upon application.

Please send an international transfer application no later than April 15 to Spanish Department—Uruguay Feast Site, Ambassador University Campus, Box 111, Big Sandy, Texas, 75755.

U.S. Holy Day envelopes mailed

Offering envelopes for the spring Holy Day season have been mailed to U.S. members. If you have not received your supply by March 31, please call the toll-free number (1-800-924-4644) no later than April 5.

April 5 is the last date that Mail Processing can receive requests for your personalized offering envelopes and have them reach you by the first Holy Day, April 15.

Also, please remember that these envelopes are for Holy Day offerings only. Other items, such as regular donations and requests for literature, should be sent separately.

Message is about increasing understanding of right doctrine, building unity

Continued from page 4

oversee the growth, nurturing and development of the congregation, preparing and equipping each member to contribute, according to his or her spiritual gifts, to the overall work of the congregation.

The pastor's job is to train and develop the membership to be "fitly framed together" so that they can take part in serving the needs of the whole congregation. A pastor who is doing everything himself places a ceiling on the growth of the congregation. Our goal is to train and encourage our ministry to better understand and follow this biblical pattern for evangelism and church development and organization.

Among Friends: Various rumors are circulating about changes the Church plans to make. Could you comment on some of the ones you have had to deal with?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: Endless rumors are not a hallmark of Christ working in us. To attempt to answer these is an exercise in shadow-boxing.

For example, it is not true that we plan to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. It is not true that we plan to change the name of the Church. It is not true that we

promote the celebration of Christmas or Easter. However, we don't police people's lives on this issue, nor would we disparage people who get together with their families during these seasons. These rumors continue like the waves in the ocean.

The best thing for you to do when someone says, "Have you heard ...?" is to reply, "I'd rather not hear." This is indeed difficult to do for some more than others. We all fall prey to wanting to hear the latest, but rarely does it ever help our attitude.

Among Friends: Is there a plan for further educating the ministry in areas such as counseling programs and theology related degrees?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: In conjunction with Ambassador University, we hope to eventually offer the ministry a master's degree program to enhance their pastoral skills. Of course, this is dependent upon the university's development of approved programs. In the meantime, we encourage our pastors to read, attend classes or pursue degree programs as their circumstances and schedules permit.

Among Friends: Do you feel the regional conferences serve the ministry better than the Ministerial Refreshing Program? Was the change merely a matter of cost?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: Certainly good stewardship and cost effectiveness are important issues that should always be part of our thinking. And it is true that the regional conferences are more cost effective. However, it was another perspective that brought us to conducting the regional conferences.

The Ministerial Refreshing Program was our ongoing training program for the field ministry. It was conducted on a monthly basis, but it took as long as 42 months for all the ministry to rotate through a particular session.

With the regional conference program, it is possible for us to rotate all the full-time ministry through a session within a 12-month period of time. In the United States we conduct six regional conferences for full-time ministers and six for local church elders within eight months. We also meet with the international ministry in their regional conferences, and the whole cycle together is fulfilled in a 12-month period of time. The regional program costs less because we spend much less in airfares.

Among Friends: Is there anything you would like to tell Church members that will help them to support CAD in its efforts?

Mr. Tkach Jr.: Since these interview questions have covered a number of things I think are helpful for

Church members to know, I'll just add these thoughts.

Generally speaking, people will be healthier if they do not allow themselves to be merchandised by rumors. Rumors generate strife and emotional discontention. Some ministers and members misunderstand the doctrinal corrections as taking away from their devotion to honoring God on the Sabbath. Such is not the case. The truth is that we should not judge others, nor argue with others, in how we worship God on the Sabbath.

In all our efforts let us never forget to give God the glory for the work he does through us—as a church and as individuals. Let us give him thanks for his grace toward us and for the righteousness of Jesus Christ that he credits to us. Without that, we could not be justified before God, and we could not have the solid assurance of God's love and of our future inheritance.

Let us ask God to help us realize the extent of our mistakes of the past, to increase our understanding of right doctrine, and to comfort and strengthen us in unity as we go through the process of churchwide repentance. The closer we draw to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the stronger we will be in doing the work of the gospel.

Personal: greatest work done in individuals

Continued from page 1

learn how to worship and glorify God and Jesus Christ, how to love, serve, uphold, strengthen, encourage and serve one another in the faith and how to spread the gospel. We need to provide them with the tools, facilities and opportunities that will help them do that.

Therefore, another one of our primary goals is to set up a system by which members can raise funds locally to buy or build local church buildings. By establishing a sound accounting system for local church building fund donations, we hope to make it easier for congregations to acquire buildings as a base of operations for local worship and evangelism.

As we prepare to set up such a program, I must stress that it is important that building fund donations not replace the much-needed contributions for the general work of the Church. Our financial priorities include ministers' salaries, general church administration, youth programs, member-assistance programs (formerly called third tithe assistance), *The Plain Truth*, *The Worldwide News* and other publications and support for Ambassador University. These must be paid for by mem-

bers' faithful contributions to Church headquarters. I want to encourage you not to diminish your regular donations in order to contribute to the local building fund.

Another goal for the immediate future is to market the headquarters facility in Pasadena, and relocate headquarters to a smaller, more cost-efficient facility. This will significantly reduce the overhead needed to maintain the large Pasadena site.

Reductions

God has seen fit to give a financial crisis, and that crisis is going to affect many of our faithful employees in a very personal way. And we grieve with them and pray for them. The Human Resources Department is doing everything it can to help them transition into other jobs.

Many of those who are leaving the Church's employment have expressed their deepest loyalties, and I know they are praying for the Church in earnest, even while they are suffering their own crises. I urge all our members to pray for them and their families and to inform our Human Resources Department if they are aware of meaningful job opportunities our terminating employees may be able to fill.

I wish with all my heart that we didn't have to reduce our staff. It cuts me to the quick to have to go through this. I ache for those who are having to lose their jobs. But like several of them have told me, God works things together for good, and I deeply appreciate that faith.

We will be reducing *Plain Truth* circulation from 1.4 million to 1 million and eliminating most foreign-language editions. International regions will continue to produce translated booklets, but will, like the U.S. churches, focus their efforts on local evangelism instead of mass-media evangelism.

At the Red Sea

Through all of this, the Church will emerge stronger than ever, because it will be a healthier Body of Christ.

When all the parts of the Body are doing the work of Christ, the whole Body is stronger and healthier. And that is precisely what the Holy Spirit is leading us to do—to *get involved* in the work of the gospel. All who are willing and able will learn that God has given them spiritual gifts, and in concert with their local congregations, they will learn how to put those gifts to work in the service of our Lord and Savior.

Even though we are in a crisis now, God will see us through, and we will be more effective servants of our Master. We are at the Red Sea. Ahead of us lies the joy of salvation and the sure promises of God in Christ. The solution is not going backwards into slavery, but forward—trusting in the salvation and power of Jesus Christ.

Regions to find less expensive doors

Continued from page 1

istry and expand that presence outward from where they are.

This is suitable to the budget situation. Our previous approach was to widely broadcast the seed of the gospel and pray that God would bless it. The present cuts encourage us to discern where God wants us to harvest people. We then commit our resources in faith in that particular location.

A hypothetical example: Let's choose one of any number of places in the Spanish region that seem to be spiritually receptive at this time.

First, we isolate our efforts down to the city level, or to an ethnic group within a given city.

Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach has approved the production, with headquarters approval, of literature that originates in the local language. This tends to more accurately reflect the worldview and spiritual sensitivities of a particular culture.

Such literature is also far less expensive to produce than a monthly publication. Nor are a lot of different booklets needed. For instance, one region translated a piece of literature, invested \$600 in advertising, and received more than 5,000 responses. They now have 5,000 new potential attendees to invite to open house Sabbath services, public lectures or small group Bible studies.

Advertising can be focused inexpensively on a city, and the responses can be directed to an address within the city. Brethren can participate, much like in Pasadena in the old days, when the brethren, includ-

ing children, had work parties to help fulfill requests for booklets.

The pastor in a given area can include a note or his business card with the literature, which introduces him and lets the reader know that there is a group of members in that city. This opens a direct path to the door of the church for the person whom God is drawing, and those who are seeking him. This can be managed mostly from within the local area at a fraction of the cost of producing and mailing a monthly magazine.

So far, we have only applied this strategic approach in specific, limited test sites. In each case we started by assuming that God did have a harvest he wanted us to reap. We prayerfully tried to determine where the Holy Spirit was activating interest.

In each of the areas we have entered we are experiencing positive results. In fact, the most recent one, Angola, has nearly overwhelmed us, because we received much more response than we expected. Now we are playing catch-up in Angola, trying to bring organization to the sizeable group, and discern who God is calling to walk with us.

Our next major site is already targeted, and we anticipate considerable interest. We are developing the support systems, and awaiting funds to make doing the Work possible.

I hope this report shows that while the cutbacks are painful, especially in terms of employment for some longtime fellow servants, there are some tremendous opportunities in store for the Work of God. We must keep moving forward to reap them.

Member wins literature award

READING, England—Rose Cam, a member here, won first prize in the National Fenner Brockway Peace Prize for Literature Feb. 4 in Slough Town Hall. Mr. Brockway was not only a campaigner for peace but also a distinguished writer and politician.

Rose's nonfiction winning entry, titled *Ugogo* (which means grandmother), was one of 160 entrants. The article contained some of her child-

hood experiences in South Africa under her grandmother's care.

The story relates how her grandmother "taught her social and practical skills, encouraging harmony in all Rose's dealings with others by dowsing the sparks of hatred and sowing seeds of peace," in her young mind.

Rose was invited to read her story live on the local BBC radio station Jan. 31.

The Portfolio subscription form

The Communication Department at Ambassador University is offering subscriptions to the Ambassador University campus newspaper, *The Portfolio*. If you would like to subscribe, please complete the form below.

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*Attention Ambassador alumni: Many members of the Ambassador University Alumni Association are eligible for a subscription discount. If you are not already a member of the alumni association, join now and receive a full year's subscription to *The Portfolio* for only \$10 if you live in the United States or Canada. If you live elsewhere, the cost of a *Portfolio* subscription to alumni association members is \$20 (for higher mailing fees). Annual dues in the alumni association are \$15 for individual membership and \$25 for joint membership. For more information, call 1-903-636-2023, or write to Alumni Affairs, Ambassador University, Big Sandy, Texas, 75755.

Job Opening at Ambassador University

Ambassador University invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for an immediate opening for an electrician.

Job summary: Under the supervision of the Facilities Services manager. Applicant must be experienced in high voltage (12,470v) overhead and underground distribution, as well as a full range of secondary power, lighting and control circuitry. Minimum of five years experience required.

Working conditions: Some work (emergencies) may be required on weekends or other than 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Applicants must include the following: letter of application, current resume and salary history and names of three references with telephone numbers.

Applications will be accepted until March 30. Applications and inquiries should be sent to Personnel Services, Ambassador University, Box 111, Big Sandy, Texas, 75755, fax 1-903-636-4479.

Announcements

BIRTHS, ENGAGEMENTS, WEDDINGS, ANNIVERSARIES AND OBITUARIES

KEYTER, Pieter and Angela (Antonides) of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, boy, Michael, Dec. 12, 7:20 p.m., 3.66 kilograms.

KROEKER, Willy and Gertie (Fehr) of Abbotsford, British Columbia, boy, Ryan Daniel Isaac, Jan. 25, 1:49 p.m., 10 pounds 1/2 ounce, now 2 boys, 1 girl.

KRUGER, Steven and Julie (Rand) of Big Sandy, Texas, girl, Savannah Colleen, Feb. 1, 1:23 p.m., 9 pounds 10 ounces, first child.

LEWIS, Greg and Vicki (White) of Melbourne, Australia, girl, Stephanie Margaret, Oct. 21, 2:42 a.m., 8 pounds 3 ounces, now 3 girls.

MANEY, Gary and Katrina (Taylor) of Cherokee, North Carolina, boy, Zachaeus Zadok, Sept. 6, 8 pounds 5 ounces, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

MITCHELL, Jackie and Sharon (Smith) of Kiowa, Oklahoma, girl, Margaret Irene, Sept. 21, 11:17 a.m., 7 pounds 11 ounces, now 1 boy, 3 girls.

REED, Michael and Regina (Deel) of Canton, Ohio, boy, Elliott Michael, Nov. 17, 7:28 p.m., 8 pounds 4 ounces, first child.

WALSH, St. John and Pierann (Greive) of Monrovia, California, boy, Patrick Neil, Nov. 11, 6:08 p.m., 10 pounds 3 ounces, now 2 boys, 1 girl.

WELSH, Rick and Tonya (McCoy) of Knoxville, Tennessee, boy, Austin Sterling, Nov. 6, 7 pounds 4 ounces, first child.

Engagements

Norm and Norma Womersley of Warrnambool, Australia, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Catherine to Stephen Pope, son of Howard and Jan Pope of Melton, Australia. A May wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Mike Curb of Round Rock, Texas, announce the engagement of their daughter Lisa Ann to Jim Gustafson of Phoenix, Arizona. A June 11 wedding is planned in Austin, Texas.

Henry and Joyce Gutterman of Bloomfield, Connecticut, are delighted to announce the engagement of their daughter Jodi Michele to Harri Antero Koivu, son of Timo and Eila Koivu of Pietarsaari, Finland. A June 25 wedding is planned in Connecticut.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph W. Rex of Bonaparte, Iowa, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Barbara JaneAnne to Matthew Williams of Big Sandy. A May 21 wedding is planned in Keosauqua, Iowa.

Julie Day of Des Moines, Iowa, and John Mogler of Watertown, South Dakota, are pleased to announce their engagement. A June wedding is planned.

Weddings



ANTHONY & MICHELLE SCOTT

Michelle Denise Bettes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ron Bettes of Granby, Missouri, and Anthony Ray Scott, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Scott of Cartherville, Missouri, were united in marriage Nov. 6. The ceremony was performed by Karl Beyersdorfer, a minister in the Joplin, Missouri, church. Melissa Bowles, sister of the bride, and Stacey Yost attended the bride, and Rudy McAffrey and Neil Boystien attended the groom.



ROBERT & PATRICIA STAPLETON

Robert Eugene Stapleton and Patricia Ruth Jones were united in marriage Dec. 24. The ceremony was performed by Gary Smith, pastor of the Portsmouth, Ohio, church.

Anniversaries



DAVID & VIVIAN MALCOMSON

David and Vivian Malcomson of Rochester, Minnesota, celebrated their 40th anniversary July 31. They have three children, David and Diane Malcomson, Jan and John Miller, and Robert and Virginia Robin; and three grandchildren, Alyssa Marie, Zane David and Tyler Scott. Mrs. Malcomson is deaconess in the Rochester church.



CORNELIS & MARIE GREIVE

Cornelis and Marie Greive of Napa, California, celebrated their 40th anniversary Dec. 1. They have four children, Pierann, Mirjam, James and Sarah; a son-in-law, John Walsh; and four grandchildren, Adam, Annmarie, Emma and Patrick.



LOW MONG CHAI & SUSAN

Low Mong Chai, a local church elder, and his wife, Susan, of Kuala Selangor, Malaysia, celebrated their 25th anniversary Dec. 10. They have two sons, David and Richard.



ROBERT & BARBARA WRIGHT

Robert and Barbara Wright of Denver, Colorado, celebrated their 30th

anniversary Feb. 1. They have two children, Stephen and Bonnie.



JACK & HELEN FLACK

Jack and Helen Flack of Adelaide, Australia, celebrated their 25th anniversary Dec. 27. They have a daughter, Michele; two sons, Simon and Ramon; and a son-in-law, Gordon McLaughlin.



DENNIS & PHYLLIS HAGQUIST

Dennis and Phyllis Hagquist of Aitkin, Minnesota, celebrated their 25th anniversary Oct. 16. Mr. Hagquist is a local church elder in the Brainerd, Minnesota, church.

Anniversaries Made of Gold



ROBERT & IRENE TUCKER

Robert and Irene Tucker of Mineral Wells, West Virginia, celebrated their 50th anniversary Jan. 22. They have a daughter, Louana and son-in-law, Tom Tullis; a son, Roger and daughter-in-law, Mary Tucker; and four grandchildren, Amy and Scott Tullis and Eric and Janie Tucker. Mr. Tucker is a deacon in the Parkersburg, West Virginia, church.



JOHN & JANE WALTER

John and Jane Walter of Mill City, Pennsylvania, celebrated their 50th anniversary Dec. 2. They have three children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



HARRY & BESS POHLMANN

Harry and Bess Pohlmann of Round

Rock, Texas, celebrated their 50th anniversary April 28. They have a daughter, Cheryl; a son, Harry; a daughter-in-law, Virginia; four grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Obituaries

EILBECK, Harold Meredith, 84, of Penrith, Australia, died of a stroke Feb. 4. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy.

POINTON, Gertrude "Gertie," 79, of Meriden, England, died of a stroke Jan. 14. She is survived by a son, Peter; two daughters, Jean and Ann; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

PLAYFAIR, Gwendoline Strathmore Murray, 79, of Ashford, England, died Feb. 5 after a lengthy battle with cancer and Alzheimer's disease. She is survived by one sister.



VIRGINIA GOLDEN

GOLDEN, Virginia, 75, of Cleveland, Ohio, died of multiple health problems Dec. 28. She is survived by four children and their spouses, Rose and Harold Milam, Wayne and Louise Newberry, Danny and Lillian Newberry, and Debby and Gene Thacker; 18 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and two sisters. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ralph.

McCLELLAN, James, 67, of Beeville, Texas, died after a prolonged illness Feb. 4. He is survived by two sisters.

CHANDLER, Frances Louise of Coldwater, Alabama, died Jan. 11. She is survived by two sons, three daughters, two brothers, one sister, 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



JOHN WISE

WISE, John E., 61, of Rock Hill, South Carolina, died of a brain tumor Feb. 17. He is survived by his wife, Eleonore; two brothers, George Arthur and Bernard; a sister, Virginia Mattinger; five sons, John, Danny, David, Paul and Peter; two daughters, Cheryl and Helen; and five grandchildren.



KATHLEEN MILLER

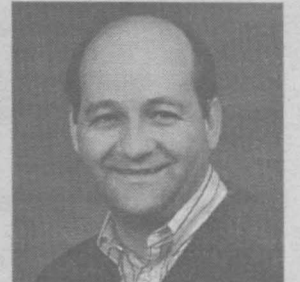
MILLER, Kathleen Mary, 59, of

Narooma, Australia, died of cancer Dec. 22. She is survived by five children and 15 grandchildren.



PARERIMA TEAPAKU

TEAPAKU, Parerima, 52, of Rarotonga, Cook Islands, died Dec. 13 of diabetes and a heart attack. He is survived by his wife, 11 children, grandchildren, two brothers, two sisters, two uncles, one aunt and many nephews and nieces.



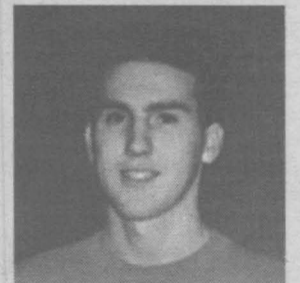
DAVID FENTRESS

FENTRESS, Wesley David, 40, a local church elder in Lexington, Kentucky, died in a car accident Dec. 27. He is survived by his wife, Sandra; a daughter, Heather; his parents, Roger and Esther Fentress; two brothers and sisters-in-law, Kent and Alana Fentress, and John and Linda Fentress; and four nieces and nephews.



PAULINE EDWARDS

EDWARDS, Pauline, 36, of Francis, Oklahoma, died Nov. 15. She is survived by her mother, Dorothy Edwards; a sister, Rosie Motes; a brother, Matthew; a nephew, David Motes; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.



EMIL GRADE

GRADE, Emil Benson, 19, of Rushville, Missouri, died Dec. 26. He is survived by his parents, Terry and Connie Grade; his grandmother, Gladys Grade; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

CAMERON, Jensen-Fielding, 2 days, of London, England, died Nov. 25 from a congenital heart defect. He is survived by his parents, Martin and Christa; two sisters, Hannah and Marie-Louise; his grandparents; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

International PT editor prepares Canadian writers

Canada's largest writer's workshop conveys editorial direction of *The Plain Truth* and Canadian editorial efforts

By Jon Pearkins

TORONTO, Ontario—Neil Earle, *Plain Truth* international editor, returned here Dec. 17 and 18 for the sixth and largest Canadian writers workshop.

On the Sabbath Mr. Earle spoke to

the combined Toronto churches that he had pastored from 1984 until 1992.

The next day, 69 people participated in the workshop at the Toronto Airport South Holiday Inn, coming from as far away as Ottawa, Windsor and Edmonton, Alberta. A few had already written or researched Canadian material for Church publications.

Guest speaker Andrew Grenville provided a detailed look at Canadian society and its belief in God. Mr. Grenville is an analyst for the Canadian market research firm Angus Reid and a member in the

Toronto West congregation.

"Everyone that I have talked to was enthusiastic about the workshop," reported Perc Burrows, associate pastor of the Toronto West and Central churches.

"Several commented that it gave them an appreciation of how much is going on behind the scenes and that a great amount of work is involved in selecting a topic and putting an article together," he said.

Karl Moore, a Toronto Central local church elder and business professor at the University of Toronto, echoed those sentiments.

"It helped me understand more clearly the editorial direction of *The Plain Truth* magazine and the Canadian editorial efforts," Mr. Moore commented.

"Whatever direction Canada decides to go in the future, as far as producing a more regionalized magazine, writers will still be essential," Mr. Earle said. "Hence the value of these workshops."

Jon Pearkins is a member who attends the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation.

Update

NEWS OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS

Church anniversaries

HAGERSTOWN, Maryland—The church here will celebrate its 25th anniversary June 24.

Services will begin at 2:30, followed by a dinner and dance. If you would like to attend please RSVP by April 15 to **Ralph Gehr**, 11354 Big Pool Rd., Big Pool, Maryland, 21711, or telephone him at 1-301-842-2719. Additional information will be sent after receipt of RSVP.

Singles activities

JACKSON, Tennessee—Jackson singles invite other singles to The Biggest Barn Dance This Side of Texas Part 6 March 25 and 26. Once again, we will be featuring Mary Yale and "The Boys."

The weekend will include fellowship and snacks before services, the dance, two meals, a hayride, photographs

and a visit to "the jail." For more information call 1-901-668-0020 during the day or 1-901-422-3436 in the evening. *Gary Pendergraft.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Singles here invite other singles to their Capital City Classic over Labor Day weekend Sept. 1 to 4. Services will feature **John Halford** of Church Administration International as guest speaker. An elegant dinner dance will follow with music provided by a professional disc jockey.

A free tour Sunday will feature historical sites and museums.

All indoor activities will take place at the Arlington Renaissance Hotel, located above the Metro subway system in Arlington, Virginia.

The cost of the weekend is \$57 if paid by Aug. 1. After that date the cost will be \$60. All payments must be made by Aug. 22. Please make checks payable to **Mike Castro**, 5055 Seminary Rd. No. 924, Alexandria, Virginia, 22311.

The lodging rate at the Renaissance is \$69 a night for one to four people per room. Call 1-800-228-9898 for reservations and mention that you are with the Worldwide Church of God.

For more information write to **Brett Mourer** at 6354 Lakewood Dr., Falls Church, Virginia, or call him at 1-703-750-3654. *John Comino.*

MONTREAL, Quebec—Montreal singles invite other singles to a buffet dinner and dance with music provided by a disc jockey April 8 at Le Parcours Du Cerf Country Club.

Cost for the evening is 23 Canadian dollars.

Housing is available with brethren. Please send checks before March 24, indicating those who will attend, to **Melanie Poudrette**, 285, boul. De Mortagne, Boucherville, J4B 1B4, Quebec, Canada, or for more information call her at 1-514-449-6909, fax 1-514-652-0813.

Plain Truth staff attend seminar

AZUSA, California—Several *Plain Truth* staff members attended a "Women Creating Community" seminar sponsored by Azusa Pacific University's C.P. Haggard School of Theology Feb. 23.

According to **Sheila Graham**, *Plain Truth* managing editor, in the keynote session and workshops, seminar speakers encouraged Christian women from the various denominations represented to put their Christianity into action. "They showed us ways to develop Christian leadership in our community, wherever that community might be—in our families, in our jobs, at church and in our local communities," Mrs. Graham said.

Other staff members attending the seminar were *Plain Truth* editorial assistants **Valerie Brown**, **Jennifer McGraw** and **Susan Stewart**. While there, they met and talked with **Les Blank**, dean of the School of Theology, and **Vickie Becker**, director of women's concerns at the school.

"We hope to use information gathered at the seminar in articles on personal evangelism, forgiveness and urban ministry in next year's *Plain Truth*," said **Greg Albrecht**, *Plain Truth* editor.

Evangelist defending dissertation in U.K.

K.J. Stavrinides is in Britain defending his doctoral dissertation. While there, he is able to spend time with the Church members in Greece. They receive visits four or five times a year.

Pastor's article appears in Biblical Archaeology Review

GREENVILLE, South Carolina—An article by pastor **Dennis Diehl** appeared in the January-February issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

Mr. Diehl wrote about the scholarship he won from the magazine to participate last summer in an archaeological dig in Israel.

Mr. Diehl dug at Megiddo just below the city gates on the terrace. His best find was a small stone calf head. He toured Tiberias, Galilee and Jerusalem.

SEP in Ghana

KUTUNSE, Ghana—The dry harmattan season saw the start of the ninth Summer Educational Program in Ghana, West Africa. Sixty-eight campers and 43 staff assembled at the church farm here Dec. 18 for more than two weeks of education, experience, fellowship and fun.

The campers consisted of two girls and two boys dorms. Partly as a result of suggestions from last years campers some new classes were introduced: creativity, etiquette, hiking and tae kwon do.

On the first Sunday youngsters from Accra, Ghana, came to the camp to be

entertained by the SEP participants. They enjoyed sports, games and a specially prepared meal.

One day the inhabitants of a nearby village were surprised to see the SEP campers clearing the area for them.

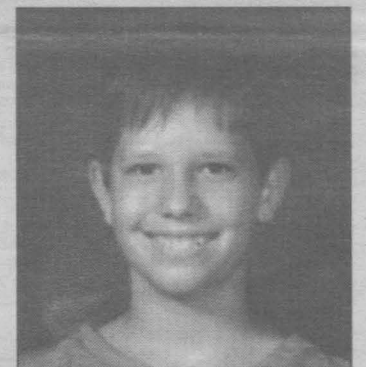
Rubbish was collected, grass was removed from some areas and a thorough cleanup job was completed. This was the main Outreach program this year.

After giving Christian living lectures on "Understanding Yourself and the Opposite Sex," camp director **David Bedford** encouraged dating during the remainder of the time. The plan was to have dates for camp functions such as meal times, outings and evening events.

On the last evening, at the banquet and dance, certificates were presented to all campers as participants. Certificates were also presented to the best boy and best girl in each discipline. **K. Mackey Anim-Appiah** was named the best boy camper, and **Vera Akomea** was named the best girl camper.

Youth gets computer design award

SAN ANGELO, Texas—**Tyrel Berrie** was awarded first place in the Substance Abuse Prevention Media Fair state competition Nov. 5.



Tyrel Berrie

Tyrel received a plaque for his computer graphics design in the fourth to sixth grade category.

100% recycled paper

Church in Guatemala faithful and growing

By Saúl Langarica

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala—God's Church continues to grow in this Central American country despite financial, social and political crisis.

God called the first people into the Church here in the 1970s. The Church began to grow rapidly, to the point where Herbert Cisneros, the first pastor of the Church in Guatemala, had to minister to practically all of the brethren in Central America.

Early in 1991, regional director Leon Walker sent my wife, Carmen, and me to serve the brethren here. The brethren felt happy to have, for the first time, a resident minister in their country.

The Church here is faithful to the directives coming from the pastor general and from headquarters in general, as demonstrated by the fact that by February 1991 there were about 300 people regularly attending services throughout

Saúl Langarica pastors the churches in Guatemala.

the country, despite not having had a resident minister.

Being a resident of El Salvador, Mr. Cisneros only occasionally traveled to Guatemala. Sometimes he sent leading men in the Church to preach on the Sabbath. He also used leading men in Guatemala to preach occasionally.

Since my family and I arrived in Guatemala, 65 people have been baptized.

Today total Church attendance throughout the country averages 420 people and comprises two congregations and one outlying Bible study.

Most of the people attending Church have limited financial resources. But God has given them a generous heart. Most contribute to the Church assistance fund to help out "those who are more needy than they are," as they express it.

The truth is that it breaks everyone's heart to see them in such poverty, yet at the same time, so desirous to help out in every way to do the great Work of our God.

Some of them even have houses with dirt floors; but

the houses are clean and neat. Others are farmers who eat what they produce. Cash, which they need for buying other basic items, is scant and is earned by doing ordinary occasional jobs.

Most work for the government or do office work for private companies. Practically all of them are growth oriented, and are a source of inspiration to all who know them.

One learns firsthand that God is not a respecter of persons when he calls them into his family; rather, he has called "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble ... but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world ... to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:26-29, King James Version).

The brethren of Guatemala need your prayers that our loving Father always grant them what is necessary for

subsistence. They need the security necessary to be able to live in peace. We need for the 35-year-old armed conflict to end.

Last year the government was doing everything necessary to be able to sign a peace agreement with the guerrilla fighters. If this agreement comes into being, it will be beneficial for the country and, of course, for our brethren in this part of the world.

Guatemala at a glance

Population: about 10.5 million—about 60 percent of whom are of Mayan origin, with the remainder being primarily mestizos or ladinos (as they are called locally).

Language: of Spanish (official) and 25 dialects that probably sprang from the original Mayan language.

Education: Although elementary education is free, most parents keep children out of school and put them to work. However, parents in the Church send their children to school at any cost. There is practically no illiteracy in the Church, and most young people are well-educated.

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