The gospel: message of first importance

Christ holds me responsible for leading the Church to do his work—and that job has required a certain amount of re-educating ourselves about what Jesus Christ says that work is.

We have often called ourselves "the Church." What is "the Church"? Let's read Jesus Christ's definition: "The work of God is this: to believe on the name of his Son and be saved." This is the reason we are in this world. We are to spread the gospel, which is the good news about Jesus Christ. We must act on what we know to do, for the purpose of inspiring and encouraging others. We must spread the good news of the kingdom of God. We must not be afraid to share our faith with others.

By Paul Monteith

Mr. Tkach outlines vision for Church at conference

By Reginald Killingley

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By Paul Monteith
South Africa charts new course after elections

By Peter Hawkins

CAPE TOWN, South Africa—The election has passed, a new government is installed and legislation is already reshaping the new South Africa.

A tenuous atmosphere preceded the polling days. There were days of prayer by many church organizations. We had the reassurance of our brethren overseas who sent messages of encouragement.

Several times Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach phoned about the well-being of members during the violent bombings leading up to the election.

Sehusu Phoshoko, a member who attends the Johannesburg East church, explained that the wild emotional swings before the election, and thousands and thousands of people—mostly blacks—were killed.

"Negotiations and political reframing in 1990 generated hitherto unknown expectations. Hope, anticipation and great expectations for the future prevailed. When elections campaigns started, political intolerance also became manifest. This translated to violent conflict as many expressed their frustrations.

"The townships were traumatized beyond description. The excitement and hope waned and almost disappeared. Violence spread, becoming endemic in certain areas. This set a pessimistic mood about the election and the future."

Johann Grobler of the Johannesburg West church said: "I grew up in an Afrikaans home where apartheid was viewed as the only answer to the country's political problems. In my home, apartheid was synonymous to separate development—not racial discrimination. I later concluded that if the idea of separate development was correct, it was not correctly implemented."

Some members were close to the bomb blast that ripped apart sections of the Jan Smuts international airport in Johannesburg, but somehow fear evaporated, and people shrugged off worry of intimidation.

Cor Beck, a Hollander who has lived in South Africa many years, reported: "The people fervently prayed for peace in our country. No longer has God heard these prayers as it can only be called a miracle to see the most violent community of the world from one day to the other, turning into a peaceful world where black and white, Indian and coloured, rich and poor, could stroll happily in the same line for hours, eager to vote, eager to bring about a change."

"If the result is a government of unity, let us stay together for the next five years and work out a final constitution, while uplifting the peoples of this beautiful country, we can thank only God."

Bringing chills

I read with excitement your March 1 "Personal" about French-speaking Africa. Rendal Dick's article and the plea, "Please don't forget us," helped me realize again how wonderful that first love is when left out to watch the creation of this great work. It seems wonderful things are being wrought through prayers and the service of so many. The woman was so inspired.

As you described the way the churches would be built, it brought chills and a warm feeling. Again, it's exciting! Even the letters to the editor were particularly inspiring in this issue.

I'm sorry when I hear of a crumbling of changes or God's leadership. We need to pull together in unity. I look forward to seeing your letters and "Personal.""}

Gloria Elam

"Before we came into being...

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

Strength comes after world cruelties

I am a husband and father of a typical family—but, not so typical. You see, I suffer from myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome. Also I have a secondary condition called fibromyalgia, which affects my muscles.

I was once a strong healthy person. I was involved in sports, and I could continue my hobbies. This is what I miss most. I can only remember the pieces of the times I once took for granted. I was on the cusp of adulthood and was looking at all the possibilities of what the future held for me.

I had turned my attention and focus away from God and Christ our Savior to the world around me. I left me unemployable, wondering how I would make a living. I didn't think I could serve God anymore. In the early stages of the disease, I was once a strong healthy person. I was involved in sports, and I could continue my hobbies. This is what I miss most. I can only remember the pieces of the times I once took for granted. I was on the cusp of adulthood and was looking at all the possibilities of what the future held for me.

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Personal: The most exciting message on earth

Continued from page 1

It's the gospel of the grace of God (Romans 5:15).

The true gospel is the good news of the kingdom, and entering it involves something we need to do right now! We enter it only through Christ. Paul describes the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." Paul calls this message of first importance. It should be of first importance to us, too. That's why we have shifted from a more secular Plain Truth to a magazine that is more religious, focused on what the Bible is focused on—Jesus Christ.

Some people think this message is boring, but it's actually the most thrilling news that could be announced. Some people might prefer predictions of imminent tribulation, but I am convinced that Christ wants us to preach the New Testament message about salvation through Jesus Christ.

Paul was widely criticized for preaching the true gospel to both Jews and gentiles. He faced much opposition and he fought many battles. So I empathize with his plea for prayers in Ephesians 6:19: "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel."

Paul needed prayers, not accusations. His opponents would have been much more useful to God if they had been praying for Paul instead of spreading slander about him. I need prayers, too, just like Paul did. I need support, and Christ strengthens me, answering the prayers of our members and coworkers. Thanks be to God that many members—most members—have seen our need to become more Christlike in our evangelism and in our lives.

The true gospel of Jesus Christ is the most exciting message on earth, and the work of spreading it is the most important job on earth—the job every Christian has been called to participate in! Please pray for The Plain Truth, the booklets, the television program, spot ads and other methods the Church is using to help people become aware of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And please remember—members of the Church, so pray for one another, that your example might properly reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ, and pray for your local congregations, open houses and other activities.

The critics are vocal, but I know that most of you are praying for me and for the work of the Church. You are committed and devoted, and I receive constant encouragement and support from God's people all over the world, and I will continue to push ahead as Christ leads me.

Thank you all for your prayers, your offerings and your many labors of love in Jesus Christ in support of the Church and of each other.
The word church is misunderstood. To many, it means a building. To others, it's a place to go to worship and socialize.

By Earl Williams

"We are God's true church" Scores of denominations and sects boldly make this claim, proclaiming that God is working only through them and that salvation can be attained only by joining them.

Which church is God's? Is that the right question? Or should we be asking, What is the church? The apostle Paul gives us the answer in Ephesians 1:22-23: "God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over every dominion and authority.

The word church is ekklesia. The Greek New Testament word is ekklesia, from the root word ekklo, meaning "called-out ones," the congregation or body of people gathered to discuss the affairs of state, Acts 19:39" (page 76). It simply means an assembly or gathering.

The derivation of the word indicates calling or summoning to a place of meeting. Some, therefore, use the concept of "called-out ones" to support their belief that they are the called-out ones, the only members of the true church of God.

Transcendent body

In Christ's time, a Samaritan woman thought God was working only through them and that salvation can be attained only by joining them.

Jesus, however, began of excluding from the true church all who are not part of one's immediate fellowship. Perhaps it is a carryover from the Old Testament. God made a covenant with only one nation. He worked through that one nation: He gave redemption to others through that one nation—and that nation was Israel.

In Christ's time, a Samaritan woman thought God was still working within one group. She wanted to know where the true church was.

She asked, "Jesus, our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus replied, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when worshiping the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know, but we worship what we do know, for salvation is from God." (John 4:20-24).

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The one who worships the Father seeks God. Is it spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:20).

Jesus announced a radically different concept. God transcends groups, organizations and places because he is spirit. He had begun seeking people to worship him in spirit and truth, not in one nation or denomination. What is this spirit and truth? The Samaritan woman began to perceive the answer. She pondered: "I know that Messiah is coming, when he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus said, "I am the true bread that comes down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:40).

The Christian identity is not found in any organizational or denominational affiliation, but it is in Jesus Christ. Think about this for a moment: Where does your hand get its identity? Does it come from itself, or from your head? Here is a way to illustrate it. Let's say you went into a bank and the teller worked as you stepped up to the window to make a deposit. Then the teller says, "Sorry, but I can't cash that." When you ask why, she says, "Because you didn't write 4—your hand did."

That would be ridiculous! Your hand is identified by your head. All your parts receive their identity from your head. So also is the Body of Christ. It is Christ dwelling in us through faith that makes us Christians (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 2:8). And it is by that same faith that all Christians dwell in Christ—the true church.

A common truth

Some people seek for a "true church" because they think there are hidden truths. They reason that whatever particular group has these truths must be the true Church of God. Is that the right question? Or should we be asking, What is the church? The apostle Peter said, "Now in part, I know in full, even if I knew nothing personally." (1 Corinthians 13:12).

When the apostles preached the gospel, they did not make only religious converts, not themselves (1 Corinthians 1:11-23). All Christians should allow the Father to use them to draw all people to Christ. For once you come to Christ through the Holy Spirit, you are in the one and only true Church of God.

Conference: tools for the people

Continued from page 1

result of programs being developed for nurturing the Church.

Expenses have been kept within budget, said Mr. Andrews, and he thanked the regional directors for their diligence and stewardship.

Joseph W. Tkach

Victor Kubik, assistant director of Church Administration for the United States, gave an update on the Ukrainian Sabbatarians, their worship, growth, and how to get them to talk to people in different cultures. He also discussed the U.S. regional pastorate structure.

Bill Jacobs, YOU national coordinator, discussed youths, parents and the ministry. "Our purpose is to help children develop a personal relationship with God," he said. Regional directors saw a video preview of the new youth Bible lessons.

PT's international focus, booklets

Ronald Kelly, Editorial Services manager, explained the shift in emphasis of Church literature to a more religious format and how Editorial strives to keep an international focus even though the largest audience is in North America.

Greg Albrecht, Plain Truth editor, discussed circulation in international areas and how window articles give each region an opportunity to feature material that is local.

Also, once a year each international edition of The Plain Truth includes a window article that introduces the Church to its readers.

Norman Shoaf, editor of the Church's booklets and Bible guides, gave an update on nonserial literature, including Exploring the Word of God. "More than 30,800 readers re­elected copies within 13 days after Mr. Tkach offered it," Mr. Shoaf said. "This eclipsed a response record that had stood since the 1960s. Additional lessons in this series will be released as budget permits.

Concluding the conference, Mr. Tkach Jr. spoke about the evangelistic tools God has given to the Church. The gospel; family ministry and Sabbath school curriculum; an update of Church literature; and Church literature groups are not biblically viable alternatives to the Body of Christ.

The Plain Truth is not a call to predict the dates of the tribulation or of Christ's return," he said.

"It is to preach the good news—the gospel. Unfortunately, an error was made in equating predictions of events and dates with the gospel. The only way to grow in grace and knowledge of God is to listen to the gospel."

See Conference, page 7
College building named after pioneer minister

By Jonathan Stepp
Ambassador Portfolio

BIG SANDY—Twenty-nine years after his death, a pioneer minister and Ambassador College faculty member has been accorded a permanent honor on the Ambassador College campus.

A building housing the Church's foreign language offices was named the Benjamin L. Rea Hall in a ceremony conducted by college chairman Joseph W. Tkach before graduation May 20.

The late Dr. Rea, who was ordained a minister in 1958, helped begin the Church's Spanish Department and the former Ambassador College campus in Bricket Wood, England.

Dr. Rea began attending services in 1951. From 1953 until his death in 1965 he served on the Ambassador College faculty, first as an instructor in Spanish and international relations, later as dean of faculty at the college's campus in England.

In March 1956 Dr. Rea began to serve as, in effect, the first regional director of the Spanish-speaking areas. During the subsequent nine years Dr. Rea translated literature from English, acted as the president for the Spanish El Mundo de Manana (The World Tomorrow radio program in Spanish) and traveled on baptizing tours in the Spanish-speaking world.

In 1960 Dr. Rea moved to England to help begin Ambassador's second campus. From there he carried on the administration of the Church's work in Spanish-speaking countries while continuing to teach. He also acted as the first dean of faculty for the Bricket Wood campus.

At the conclusion of his campaign, he turned to the administration of the Church's work in Spanish-speaking countries while continuing to teach. He also acted as the first dean of faculty for the Bricket Wood campus.

The theater but suffered a severe head wound during the battle for Iwo Jima. Dr. Rea married Hazel Armstrong in 1957. Mrs. Rea, who now lives in Bremen, Georgia, said that Dr. Rea was so seriously injured that the military sent a telegram to his family telling them that he had been killed.

In fact, he was recovering on a hospital ship bound for the States.

For his service in the war, Dr. Rea received the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

On March 9, 1965, Dr. Rea was interviewed by a reporter from a London newspaper. According to Mrs. Rea, the reporter had printed some "very unfavorable things" about the Church. No one is sure what was said during the interview, but the reporter left angry and several minutes later Dr. Rea collapsed from a stroke. He died early the next morning.

Dr. Rea was buried next to the tomb of David Yule, the man who built the estate on which the campus was located. Dr. Rea had suffered from acute high blood pressure for several years, as well as occasional severe headaches that were the result of his war wounds.

Dr. and Mrs. Rea had one son, Raphael, who was 5 years old at the time of his father's death.

"Dr. Rea was very outgoing, congenial, jovial, well-liked and respected," said Leon Walker, regional director of the Spanish-speaking areas since 1979. Mr. Walker first worked with and studied under Dr. Rea while he was a sophomore at Ambassador College in 1956.

Dr. Rea "was very dedicated to his work and had an enthusiasm for the Spanish language and culture, as well as the Work in general, that was contagious," Mr. Walker said.

Rick van Pelt, director of facilities for the Church, said that, in dedicating a building that houses French, Italian and Spanish offices of the Church, "Mr. Tkach wanted to honor someone who has contributed heavily toward the international work. Dr. Benjamin Rea stood out as a strong pioneer minister who dedicated his life to bringing the message of salvation to the Spanish-speaking people."

"I'm really touched," said Mrs. Rea. "Mr. Tkach phoned me Tuesday [May 17] and told me about it. He said a picture of it will be in The Worldwide News, but he wanted to let me know ahead of time. I thought that was very nice of him. My husband would have been very honored and pleased. The Work was his life."

Commencement: grads lauded

Continued from page 1

believe the college is going to be one of the top educational institutions in the U.S. in the next 10 years," he said.

At the conclusion of his commencement address, Mr. Tkach presented awards to outstanding students in several categories. He and Dr. Ward then presented the graduates with their diplomas.

After the recessional concluding the indoor program, the audience gathered at the festively decorated plaza in front of the Hall of Administration to congratulate and photograph the Class of 1994.

A clear sky and spring weather provided a fitting backdrop for photographic and video recording. Many graduates, displaying their diplomas, lined up to have their pictures taken with Mr. Tkach and Dr. Ward.

"YES!"—Jubilant after commencement are (from left) Sheileen Daly, Stacey Priman, Jeremy Bushlack, Loretta Deraas, Karin Hegna and Brian McBride. [Photo by Hal Finch]
Births

Beckers, rear and Chris (Robert) of Fargo, North Dakota, girl, Toga Kyodoi, May 10, 12:17 a.m., 6 pounds, 5 ounces, born 1, boy, 1.

Churchill, Jason and Stefanie (William) of Sacramento, California, boy, Ben King, April 24, 8:39 p.m., 7 pounds, 13 ounces, born 2, boy, 2.

Creech, Glenn and Ronda (Pheeps) of Cincinnati, Ohio, boy, Nathan Ayres, April 11, 9:56 p.m., 8 pounds, 15 ounces, born 4, boy, 1.

Demars, Kevin and Jennifer (Weaver) of Kent, Washington, girl, Maryann, April 10, 1:20 p.m., 9 pounds, born 3, girl, 1.

Dennison, Jim and Karen (Bannon) of Saranac Lake, New York, boy, 7 pounds, 15 ounces, first child.

Travis, Stuart and Joy (Kuebler) of Klamath, Oregon, girl, Sydney Rose, April 4, 5:14 p.m., 7 pounds, 13 ounces, born 3, girl, 2.

Wakerley, Tim and Linda (McDonald) of Pleasant Valley, California, boy, John Mark, April 12, 8:57 a.m., 8 pounds 13 ounces, born 3, boy, 3.

Zerby, Danij and Jode (Bartell) of Prince George, British Columbia, boy, Maxwell Quinn, May 8, 7 pounds, born 2, boy, 2.

Zuckowski, Bruce and Kathy (Jasnich) of Waynesboro, Virginia, girl, Kimberly Nicole, May 5, 2:59 a.m., 8 pounds, born 3, girl, 1.

Engagements

Mr. and Mrs. Quinton Marbles of Searcy, Arkansas are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Amanda Sue of Arkansas. An Aug. 7 wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Jean K. Leal of Edmonton, Alberta, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Lisa to Derek Sonka of Edmonton. An Aug. 23 wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Cathy Depardon are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Mary H., to Philip Clements, son of Iran and Patricia Clements of Wellington, South Africa. A Sept. 17 wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Calihan of Tempe, Arizona, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Stephanie Marie to Matthew Carter, son of Mr. and Mrs. Graley Carter of Tempe, Arizona. An Aug. 7 wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Greg, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Mary Patricia to Kenneth Matthew, a resident of San Antonio, Texas. A June 2 wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles of Melbourne, Australia, are happy to announce the engagement of their daughter Sharon Anne to Paul Scott. The couple were married in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. A February 1 wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wager of Wichita, Kansas, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Carole Kay to Robert L. TUCKER Jr. of Son and Mrs. Ruth Ann TUCKER of New Braunfels, Texas. A March wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wager of Wichita, Kansas, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Carole Kay to Robert L. TUCKER Jr. of Son and Mrs. Ruth Ann TUCKER of New Braunfels, Texas. A March wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter and Kathy (Lovelace) of Wayne, Michigan, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Karen to William M. Pritchett of Waynesboro, Virginia. The wedding is planned for August 7 in Waynesboro. A September 22 wedding is planned.

Births

Wright, Evelyn and Robert (Kosloski) of Largo, Florida, girl, Jessica Nicole, Feb. 24, 4:05 p.m., 7 pounds, 15 ounces, first child.

Kosloski, Joey and Cindy Fay (Williams) of Largo, Minnesota, boy, Evan Neebe, Feb. 5, 7:06 p.m., 7 pounds, 6 ounces, born 2, boy, 1.

Leal, George and Tina (Dial) of Hopkins, Minnesota, girl, Paule Rima, April 12, 2:49 a.m., 7 pounds, 7 ounces, born 3, girl, 1.

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Continued from page 4

acknowledge the error and move on.

Sad, some have been unwilling to acknowledge it and have stopped growing, they continued. They are unwittingly frozen in time and mistakenly think they are holding onto faith.

"Herbert W. Armstrong used the metaphor of being a voice crying out in the wilderness," Mr. Tkach Jr. said. "We still live in the wilderness of this society.

"In the wilderness you find three kinds of people: 1) hermits-people who move in from the outside, settle in caves and stay in one place until they die; 2) nomads-people who are always moving but never going anywhere, because they move in circles and wind up where they began; 3) pilgrims-people who are not desert dwellers. They do not belong to the desert but are simply passing through from one place to another.

"God does not call us to be hermits or nomads, but rather to be pilgrims and pioneers who progress toward the kingdom of God," he continued.

Conference: pioneers who seek the kingdom of God

This summer Paul and Monica Kieffer will move from the Philippines to Germany, where Mr. Kieffer will serve as regional director.

Bill and Daphne Sidney will remain in the Philippines, and Mr. Sidner will replace Mr. Kieffer as Philippine regional director.

John and Kristina Karlson will return to the United States from Germany, where Mr. Karlson will pastor the Columbus, Ohio, West congregation.

Monica and Paul Kieffer
Bill and Daphne Sidney
John and Kristina Karlson

DIRECTED Regional directors and wives with headquarters administrators and Joseph W. Tkach (center). [Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.]
Root, and son-in-law, Mar- vin Root. Now, her three grandchildren, Marie Stahl, Aaron Root and Laura Coole- ley are Church members as well as two great-grand- children, Britt and Kieffer Stahl, are being brought to services with their parents, Barry and Maria Stahl. Thus, four generations begin to gather. Mrs. Burger's response to God's calling.

After Mrs. Burger graduated from nursing school in Kansas City, Missouri, she was a nurse until she moved into a rural area, where she had no place to go for getting to work. Mrs. Burger lives in a nursing home in Roseville, Minnesota. A series of strokes left her increasingly debilitated. However, she continues to show concern for the comfort of others and to lead others, as well as for family and friends. Maryanna Burger Root.

100-year-old member honored at services CINCINNATI, Ohio—E thel Andrews celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. Mrs. Andrews attended services March 5, where she was given a cake from the Cincin- nati East church. Mrs. Andrews has four grandchildren, 11 great grand- children and two great-great-grand- children. Sue Purin.

Ministers participate in National Day of Prayer A number of ministers par- ticipated in the community observances of the National Day of Prayer U.S. President Bill Clinton.

These opportunities are one way to fulfill the instruc- tions that Paul gave in 1 Timothy: 18. This is first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and giving thanks be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleasing to our Savior, according to evangelist Joseph Tkach Jr., director of Church Administration.

In Pasadena, 10 ministers attended the mayor's prayer breakfast along with more than 500 community leaders. Among the speakers were the new mayor of Pasadena, and the new president of Fuller Seminary, Richard Mous. Others who addressed the services March 5, where she was given a cake from the Cincin- nati East church. Mrs. Andrews has four grandchildren, 11 great grand- children and two great-great-grand- children. Sue Purin.

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