

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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The Ceremony You Don't Want to Miss!

Dear Brethren,

Baptism is an exciting and important ceremony, a time of rejoicing. Sadly, however, it is too often viewed as an end when it is, instead, a beginning—*a first step in a long journey*. Traditional “Christianity” fails to understand this important distinction. Millions are deceived by satanically inspired doctrines preached by ministers who are often themselves deceived.

Satan led some early Church theologians to compromise with heathen practices, and Scripture is not kind toward such leaders. Jesus called them greedy wolves in sheep's clothing: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15). Paul called them deceivers and frauds: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13). We all know this.

Having forsaken the Holy Days and Festivals God instituted, these deceivers taught the observance of days that they knew very well came from pagan origins, and naïve people accepted them with little thought. That was me at one time, and that was many of you. But ignorance does not equal innocence, and there is nothing innocent about rejecting or neglecting the word of God to follow man-made traditions.

Many nominal Christians believe in and accept the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant denominations practice infant christening or “baptism.” Others teach baptism by immersion, and their adherents are baptized in their early teen years or as adults. These often accept the “once saved, always saved” doctrine. Hypocritical religious leaders teach them, “It has all been done for you. There is nothing required of you. You don't have to keep the law. You are under grace.” It is true that we are

under grace, but this truth is twisted in a way Scripture does not support (Romans 6:14–15; Jude 3–4). The New Testament is full of passages that tell a different story—such as Matthew 7:21; 19:17; John 14:21; 15:10.

Then there is the book of Hebrews: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (6:4–6). Traditional “Christianity” rarely teaches the truth of this plain passage.

In addition to the abundantly clear scriptures showing that it has *not* all been done for us, we have the message of God's Festivals and Holy Days. We are reminded in the first of the seven Festivals, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Yes, Christ is our Passover Lamb, who predicted His own sacrifice nearly 1,500 years in advance when He instituted this Festival.

On the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter convicted those in his audience that they were guilty of killing the true Passover Lamb. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). His listeners were personally and profoundly affected by this statement, and knew they had to respond in some way to this grievous sin. “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (v. 37). Peter then told them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38).

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We find within these three verses an outline of the first three Festivals of God: Passover (Christ's sacrifice), the Days of Unleavened Bread (repentance and baptism), and Pentecost (receiving the Holy Spirit). Too many in nominal Christianity stop with Passover. They have a limited understanding that Jesus Christ's death pays the penalty for sin. Some understand the need to "repent," but of what? Some sins are obvious, but apart from Scripture, the concept of sin can be fuzzy and differ from person to person.

I still remember discussions in my Bible classes while growing up in mainstream Protestantism. We would debate what sin is, and ideas such as "that which hurts others" were thrown about. While that is true to some extent, never did I hear, "that which disrespects God" nor the biblical definition of sin: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, *King James Version*).

The right response to Christ's sacrifice is to recognize our need for His saving grace, identify sin, repent of it, and turn to a new way of life. It is not enough to repent of past sins—we *must come to understand our sinful nature*. When counseling individuals for baptism, I ask what Romans 8:7 means to them personally: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Often, people see this as a generic statement that refers to humanity in general, not to themselves. However, is this not the whole point of baptism—coming to see our own sinful nature and turning from it?

The Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that sin is bondage and that we must put forth effort to come out of spiritual Egypt. The last Day of Unleavened Bread is when Israel walked through the Red Sea, a type of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Yet, although the people of Israel kept these Days of Unleavened Bread and were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, they did not enter the promised land. A whole generation died in the wilderness, having failed to reach their goal. *Why?* And what is the lesson for us?

Too many in nominal Christianity stop with Passover. **They have a limited understanding that Jesus Christ's death pays the penalty for sin.**

Pentecost follows Unleavened Bread, and it provides the answer to this question. It was the day on which the Old Covenant was made with Israel, and Deuteronomy 5:29 tells us that the Israelites *did not have the heart to obey*. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost that *solves the problem* of a rebellious heart. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the LORD, "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10).

After convicting the people of their responsibility for the death of the true Passover Lamb, Peter answered their question of what to do. He told them to repent and be baptized, "and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). It is through this Power that Christ lives within us, working on our conscience to shape and mold us to think as He thinks and act as He acts (Galatians 2:20).

Following baptism and repentance, God's Spirit unites with the spirit in man—the spirit that sets us apart from the animals—and a new man is formed (Romans 8:16).

The events pictured by the Feast of Trumpets ultimately culminate in the resurrection of those who are overcomers in this life and are Christ's at His coming. Can we grasp what a wonderful day that will be? Baptism is a time of rejoicing, and even the angels in heaven rejoice (Luke 15:7, 10). But the completion of the journey is infinitely greater. Can you imagine the transformation of our lowly bodies into powerful spirit bodies that will never feel pain? Can you imagine the emotions we will feel? Consider standing on the sea of glass before the very throne of God, and the emotions He and Christ will have when They see Their newly born family. Now that is a truth you should want to deeply understand—and a ceremony you don't want to miss!



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How Do We View Others?

Following the mid-1990s breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, hundreds of Sabbath-keeping groups formed. A handful are significant in terms of numbers and the work they do, but most of these “hundreds” are family or local groups, virtually unknown outside their areas. Groups formed around ordained and un-ordained leaders, usually involving some doctrinal difference. Some have declared themselves prophets or apostles and have convinced people to follow them. The Internet has made it possible for a few of these groups to attract scattered individuals to their doctrines.

Many are confused by this scattering of former members, and wonder what we should think about these many groups. On this subject, there are generally two camps. One looks to Ephesians 4:4, which tells us, “There is one body and one Spirit...,” and says that people in multiple organizations can’t be a part of one spiritual body. The other looks to passages showing that the first-century Church of God was not always as unified as it ought to have been—but was still the Church of God. “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:12–13). Which view is right? Is either view correct? Perhaps each is partially, but not wholly, correct.

It is all too easy to draw conclusions based on our limited understanding of how God carries out the details of His plan. When Mr. Herbert Armstrong came along, the Seventh Day Church of God was split into several different camps, as is clearly shown in his autobiography. We believe that the Church was then at the end of the Sardis era, and transitioning to the Philadelphia era. This is much more easily understood in retrospect.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). This passage comes from what we call the “Love Chapter,” and Paul was comparing what is important with what is not so important. He then showed what really matters: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (v. 13).

What Is the Lesson?

Dr. Meredith often reminded us that the Bible is the mind of Christ. It expresses how He thinks, and we need

to feed on Christ by studying the word He inspired (John 6:53–58). Here is a passage of Scripture that puzzles many, who then draw wrong conclusions: “Now John answered and said, ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side’” (Luke 9:49–50). What are we to make of this?

Notice that Jesus said this man was not against them. He also said the man “is on our side.” Was Jesus endorsing this man, or putting His stamp of approval on everyone who claims the name of Christ, as long as he keeps the Sabbath and Holy Days? Not if we compare all scriptures on the subject!

There is a familiar passage that must be considered if we are to understand Jesus’ statement to John. If you’ve never considered it before, you’ll find that it sheds light on our question. Jesus declared, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, **cast out demons in Your name**, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21–23). So one may “cast out demons in [Christ’s] name” and be rejected by Him at His coming. Why, then, did Jesus, in Luke 9, instruct John to leave the man alone?

Mark’s account of John’s question about the man “who does not follow with us” gives more details about Jesus’ response: “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9:39–40). John must have been puzzled by this response. We know nothing more about the man. Was he a “righteous” man or an opportunist? Was he a priest, with an office of ecclesiastical responsibility? Or was he a self-proclaimed exorcist who latched onto Jesus’ name?

Consider Jesus’ acknowledgment that there were individuals at that time who apparently did cast out demons. When He was accused falsely of using the power of Beelzebub, He responded, “And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges” (Luke 11:19).

Sectarianism Defined

Many Bible publishers insert an uninspired subheading above this passage, such as “Jesus Forbids Sectarianism.” The word “sectarianism” means to have an “excessive devotion to a particular sect, especially in religion” (*Dictionary.com*). Based on their misunderstanding of this passage, there are those in mainstream religion who look at nearly all forms of Christianity as being part of Christ’s Church. Of course, even they put limits on who “qualifies,” usually by a “Trinity” test.

We must not make their mistake and take this passage out of the context of all Scripture. We recognize that false Christianity is *real*. Jesus warned us about this in the Olivet Prophecy (Matthew 24:4–5) and when the first seal in Revelation 6 was opened. Revelation 17 uses unflattering terms to describe a great false mother church and her daughters. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus against wolves in sheep’s clothing and self-centered leaders who divide the flock (Acts 20:29–31).

Paul also tells us that “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel” (Philippians 1:15–17). Paul was writing from prison, and this preaching of others generated local publicity for him and his message about Christ.

The Value of Publicity

Jesus tells us that “the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8). Celebrities understand what we often fail to comprehend: “No publicity is bad publicity.” Even negative reports about people and ideas keep them in the public eye. Of course, publicity has limits. While the principle “No publicity is bad publicity” may be true in many respects, there are specific cases where it is not.

This passage in the first chapter of Philippians begins with Paul’s observation that “the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ” (Philippians 1:12–13). The spreading of the message was furthered. This fact encouraged the “brethren in the Lord” to become confident and bold, less reticent to speak up about Christ (v. 14). It is in this vein that Paul says that some were preaching Christ “from envy and strife” (rivalry and competition). Others had a right motive—“from goodwill.” But, whether it was from right and sincere motives or from selfish ambition, Christ was preached.

So What Is the Point?

Jesus in no way indicated whether or not the man casting out demons would be in the Kingdom. As we read in Matthew

7:21–23, there are those who cast out demons in Christ’s name who will be shut out of the Kingdom. Jesus was simply telling John that the man using Christ’s name was none of their concern, to leave him alone and do the work he (John) was called to do.

This example is only one of several demonstrating that we are, essentially, to mind our own business—to focus, instead, on what we are charged to do. Peter was instructed three times by the resurrected Christ to “feed My sheep [or lambs]” (John 21:15–17). Afterward, Jesus told Peter that “when you are old... [they will] carry you where you do not wish” (v. 18). At this, Peter wanted to know what would happen to John, and Jesus replied, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me” (v. 22).

We also see this desire of human nature to compare in the parable about the workers in the vineyard. When the end of the day came, those who had worked throughout the whole day complained that those who had worked for only an hour received the same pay, but the landowner replied, “Take what is yours and go your way” (Matthew 20:14).

There are some things we must judge, such as right and wrong, according to the word of God. We must also make personal decisions as to where we believe God is working. I hope all of us know why we are in the Living Church of God, or if you are reading this and are in some other group, that you know why you are there. All of us should make this decision carefully and prayerfully. Such decisions should not be based on family or friends, but on where we see the fruits that show where God is truly working.

But there are other matters in which we ought not involve ourselves. It is for God to judge the many groups, whether they be large or small. We need not judge or compare ourselves. In fact, we ought not! “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Does this mean that all groups keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days are the same and equally pleasing to God? Some claim that we all believe the same thing. *Is this true?* Apparently not. If we did, we would all be together. It behooves each person to know why he is where he is, and do as Jesus said to John regarding those who are elsewhere: Leave them alone and let God be the judge. “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” (James 4:11–12).

VIEW OTHERS? continues on page 27



A Pig's Tale

By **Dexter B. Wakefield**

In many nations, owners of small farms raise hogs for family use. The pigs eat the farmer's garbage and the farmer eats the pigs. This is an ancient method of recycling, although an unhealthy one that the Bible definitely forbids!

On these small farms, hogs are typically kept in a pen, sometimes referred to as a pigsty, and spend most of their lives there. Modern commercial hog farms operate differently. But the problem with having the pigs live in a confined area is that their spilled food and droppings turn the dirt of the pigsty into a foul mire that creates quite a stench. You can be 100 meters away and still have a strong conviction that you are downwind of a pigsty! But while the mire is abominable to us, the pigs seem to love it and will wallow around in it all day.

The Apostle Peter mentioned this long ago when he described people who, having been baptized into God's Church, decide to go back to the ways of the world.

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog **returns** to his own vomit," and, "**a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire**" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Peter makes this uncomplimentary analogy to show us that just as the filth of a pigsty's mire is abominable to us, the uncleanness of our sins is abominable to God. God wants us to see our sins as He does. But just as the sow in Peter's vivid example loves the mire, the carnal mind loves the sinful world in which it lives. And even if the farmer takes the sow out and washes her, she will go right back and soil herself again. Sadly, people can be that way spiritually.

A Profitable Meditation

But let us consider Peter's teaching a bit more closely. Peter said that the sow *returns* to the mire after she has been washed. That means that the farmer did not wash her *in the mire*.

Now, extend this analogy a bit. Let's say that the farmer sees the sow covered in filth, and being disgusted by it, decides to wash her. He wisely takes her out of the mire, because he knows that if he washes her while she's still wallowing in it, washing will be a futile exercise. But the problem is that after she is washed, as soon as he lets her go, she will head straight back into the mire, because that is what she likes.

The Apostle Peter also gave instructions for *people* to be washed. When his sermon on Pentecost convicted his audience of their sins, they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" His answer was plain: "**Repent**, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:37-39).

We are told throughout the New Testament to come to Christ in true repentance. Instances of this are many and

easy to find (for example, Mark 1:14–15; 2:17; 6:12; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:37–38; 3:19; 5:31–32; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:25; Hebrews 6:1–2; 2 Peter 3:9). If even our human righteousness is like filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6), how much more like the sow's mire are our sins! In Peter's brief analogy of the sow, the farmer took the sow out of the mire first—which is like our repentance. But when the sow was taken out of the mire, she was still covered with mire because of what she had already done.

So it is with repentance. We cannot repent of sin and continue breaking God's commandments at the same time. Those who think they *can* do so are deceived. But while repentance changes what we are going to do in the *future*, it cannot change what we did in the *past*. All the repentance and commandment-keeping in the world can't do that. You can't un-ring a bell. Having repented, the guilt of our *past* sins still profanes us, and we are still cut off from God. Only one thing can remove that guilt: the washing that comes through the blood of Christ. Why are we baptized? As Peter said, "for the remission of sins." We have to be cleansed of the guilt that profanes us.

Changing a Pig's Mind

Back to our extended story. Let us imagine that this farmer has a *most unusual ability*. Once he has washed her, *this* farmer can change the sow's mind and cause her to see the mire as he does. The nice clean sow now looks back at the mire and says, "*Eeewww!* I used to wallow in **that** all day? I **never** want to go back to it!" She avoids the mire in the future and only has to occasionally have her feet washed to be "clean every whit" (John 13:10, *King James Version*).

God's Holy Spirit gives us a changed mind! Some people say, "Well, you can't keep the commandments." They're wrong. You won't if you don't want to, but you will if you do want to. For instance, if you've been taking God's name in vain all your life and you repent of it, it changes what you're going to say in the future. If you don't change what you say going forward, you haven't repented. But repenting can't change what you said in the past, so upon baptism, God forgives you of that sin. Then He gives you His Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of one of His true ministers, so that you continue to grow in the sort of nature that very much *wants* to have clean speech and to avoid profaning God's holy name.

We all make mistakes, and God has made provision for that. But having the great blessing of ongoing forgiveness does not mean we are "free" to break God's commandments.

But what if you slip up and say the wrong thing? We all make mistakes, and God has made provision for that. Addressing members of the Church, the Apostle John wrote, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins** [in repentance], **He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** [ongoing]. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:7–10).

Christ is our advocate on an *ongoing* basis. "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1–2).

But having the great blessing of ongoing forgiveness does not mean we are "free" to break God's commandments. John continues, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (vv. 3–6). And Jesus kept all of the Ten Commandments!

The Spring Feasts

We are reminded of these great doctrines every year as we keep the spring Feasts, and in the analogy of the sow, Peter has given us one way to understand them. The farmer takes the sow out of the mire, and similarly, when we are called, God grants us the opportunity to repent (Acts 11:18). Removing the leaven from our homes prior to Passover pictures self-examination and repentance.

The Apostle Paul instructed the Gentile Church in Corinth about deleavening: "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old [spiritual] leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened [physically]. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

But just as taking the sow out of the mire does not make her clean, our repentance does not justify us before God. We may repent of breaking God's commandments and begin keeping them, but just like the sow, we are soiled by what we did before—the sow by the clinging muck, and us by the guilt of our past sins. We are then washed clean of that profaning guilt by Christ's sacrifice, as an unclean creature can be washed of the mire that covers it. We go down into the water of baptism “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37–38) and emerge sinless and justified in God's sight. As Paul wrote, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). We meet in remembrance of our washing every Passover.

The Passover takes place on the evening that begins Nisan 14, just as it did the night Jesus instituted the symbols of the bread and the wine (Luke 22:15–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26). It is a somber night, on which the mood is different from that of other Church gatherings. There is a strong sense of the profound meaning of the event that took place that Passover almost two millennia ago.

The Days of Unleavened Bread comprise a seven-day Feast, and during this Festival period we remember that, as Paul said, we are to ensure we are spiritually unleavened. During this Feast, having been unleavened by Christ, we remember the importance of keeping the leavening of sin out of our lives.

God has us act out these important doctrines every year, so that we do not forget!

Returning to the Mire?

But what if someone rejects the leadership of God's Spirit, forgets that he was washed, and like the sow, chooses to go back to the mire? Can someone fall away? There are those who say, “Once saved, always saved,” but the Bible contradicts that mistake in many places. *The Days of Unleavened Bread remind God's Church that we must remain unleavened.* Again, we do make our mistakes and “soil” ourselves now and again. Yet we must remain dedicated to leaving the mire behind, never to return.

The New Testament contains many scriptures that tell us that resurrection to eternal life is ours *if* we overcome to the end. Consider these strong admonitions from the book of Hebrews:

... Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are *if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end (Hebrews 3:6)... Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in *departing* from the living God (v. 12)... For we have become partakers of Christ *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end (v. 14)... Let us therefore be diligent to en-

ter that rest, lest anyone *fall* according to the same example of disobedience (4:11)... For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they *fall away*, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is *rejected* and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned (6:4–8)... that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (v. 12)... Therefore do not *cast away* your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone *draws back*, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who *draw back* to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul (10:35–39)... Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone *fall short* of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many *become defiled*” (12:14–15).

The New Testament includes many passages that instruct us in this regard. You may wish to review these scriptures this Passover season: Matthew 10:22; John 15:1–6; Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; 2 Corinthians 6:1; 13:5; Galatians 5:4; 6:7–10; Colossians 1:20–23; 1 Timothy 3:6–7; 2 Peter 1:8–10; 2:20–22; 3:17; Jude 24; Revelation 2:5, 10, 16, 25–26; 3:5, 10–12, 16, 21; 17:14; 21:7.

Peter Points the Way

Peter encourages us, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for *if* ye do these things, *ye shall never fall*: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:10–12, *King James Version*).

And even though we are “established in the present truth,” we have Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread to put us “always in remembrance of these things.” ^(L)

A Living Education

By **Jonathan McNair**

The new, member-focused educational effort of the Living Church of God has adopted a name that has meaning both for our program in general and for each of us individually. The name “Living Education” emphasizes that our efforts are intended to work within the Living Church of God, supporting the leadership of the Church—from the local pastors and elders, all the way up to the Presiding Evangelist—in edifying our members and reinforcing the knowledge of God’s Truth and way of life.

But a “Living Education” is more than just a name for an initiative.

A Living Education

When God began to work with Adam and Eve, He offered them access to a garden full of the bounty of His creation. They were allowed to eat freely from a variety of trees, including the “Tree of Life,” as it is named in Genesis 3:22. However, one tree was off-limits. That tree was called the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” Some might take this to mean that God was against Adam and Eve having knowledge, but this is not the case. God loves knowledge and wisdom. In fact, we read in Proverbs 2:6, “For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” The problem was that this tree symbolized knowledge *apart* from God’s revelation and authority. In a sense, this tree placed all knowledge, whether good or evil, on the same plane, as if they are just different options, based upon conclusions drawn from our own experiences and human logic. The only fruit of this approach to life and learning is death.

But there is *knowledge* that produces life. There is *learning* that helps us to live better. There is *education* that is focused on living well. This is “living education.” And it should be exciting to know that God has given us some guidelines to follow in framing a “living education.”

Relevant

One of the most impressive characteristics of God’s word is that it is relevant to all people and for all time. God’s Sabbath day is as beneficial to us today as it was for the Apostles, for the Israelites, and for Adam and Eve. Discontinuing our daily labors to focus our attention on honoring God every seven days binds us to our Creator, just as He intended from the

time that He established the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1–3). When we observe God’s commanded Holy Days, we learn the extent of God’s incredible plan for humanity. That means us! When we obey God’s command not to eat unclean animals, we are very actively applying His laws to our daily lives. God’s laws are not hypothetical and philosophical. They have real relevance to life.

One goal of Living Education–Charlotte is to teach godly “life-skills” through instruction and practice. So, in addition to teaching about the geography and culture of the land of ancient Israel, we teach what it means to be godly men and women. We do this within a society that has blurred the line between masculinity and femininity. And we give our students opportunities to practice these roles. Our Friday-evening Sabbath dinners are prepared by the Living Education ladies, as they take turns practicing the craft and skill of creating a delicious meal for all the students and additional guests. The men practice the role of host, participating in welcoming our guests, assisting with setup, and leading the group in the cleanup afterward. At the end of an enjoyable Sabbath evening, there is no doubt in the students’ minds that their training is relevant!

Scalable

Another fascinating characteristic of God’s word is that it is “scalable.” In other words, not only is it relevant, but it can be adapted in terms of size and scope. A person can read the whole Bible and benefit greatly from the experience. But we also learn and benefit from each page, each paragraph, and even each sentence, if we are willing to put in the time and effort to study. For example, just read Galatians 5:22–23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” You or I could spend an hour thinking about what this short passage means and how it impacts us individually.

We may be in a congregation of a dozen people, or we may meet with 250 other members each Sabbath. Either way, when we gather together as commanded on God’s Sabbath day, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25), we reap God’s promised benefits. We stir up each other in love and good works. We listen and talk about our challenges and blessings. We learn about God’s way. The number of members in the room is immaterial.

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Lessons of Service from Washing Feet

By **Lenny Bower**

Among the wonderful things about this time of year, and the Passover service, are the foot-washing ceremony and the lessons we can learn from it. There are several important lessons of service from both sides of the activity—about serving others, allowing others the opportunity to serve, and *being served*!

When we look at Jesus Christ's direction to the disciples, we can see that He clearly intended for us today to follow His example: "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). He commanded them—and us—in several places to "follow Me." We are to walk as He walked and follow His example. So why the foot-washing ceremony? What can it teach us about serving and about being served?

What It Means to Be "First"

One of the first lessons we can learn from Jesus' example is that an office of responsibility should not go to our heads or cause us to lose humility. Peter's statement, "You shall never wash my feet!" (John 13:8), appears to have stemmed from his idea that washing feet was beneath the position of his Teacher. The disciples repeatedly equated position with greatness and being important, even though Jesus instructed them otherwise in Mark 9:35: "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." On another occasion, he told them that they were not to "lord it over" others, but rather to be servant leaders (Mark 10:42–45).

Jesus Christ was there from the beginning with the Father. He was the Logos who came in the flesh—Immanuel, "God with us"—to die for our sins. He spent years helping, teaching, healing, and serving. He has the second-highest office that could possibly exist, and yet He never once lorded His status over others. Rather, He used His position to foster humility in those around Him: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). Jesus was the ultimate example of humility and servant leadership, showing that we should be clothed with humility whether we have a title or not. In fact, Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:34–46 that if we do not work to serve others, and to put others first, we will not make it into the Kingdom at all! We cannot let position, title, or attention go to our heads, or we already have our reward (Matthew 6:1–2).

Serving by Letting Others Serve

Another lesson from this ceremony comes when we sit back and let someone wash our feet. By "taking a back seat" in this way, we allow others to have the opportunity to help, serve, and be involved. We see this example in several places, including in Luke 10:1: "After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go." Jesus was about to go into these towns Himself. If He had wanted to, He could have simply healed people and cast out demons when He arrived. After all, He was already planning to go there Himself! However, by sending out these 70, He accomplished several things. First, by sending them out so they could heal people (v. 9), Jesus' ministry reached more people, more effectively, and His workload was reduced. Second, these 70 were able to learn not only to work together in smaller teams, but also to work as a part of something bigger than themselves. Third, they had the opportunity to lay hands on people to heal them (through God's Spirit) and to experience, firsthand, having a direct part in the Work Jesus Christ was doing!

Jesus "empowered" these individuals by allowing them to experience the blessings of being involved. This, too, was an example that He set for us. Sometimes we may push so much to help and serve that we actually deprive others of the opportunity to be involved. Alternatively, we may not feel that we can trust others, and therefore may not delegate as much as we should. In so doing, we deprive others of the opportunity to be involved as well. The effect of allowing others to take part in serving can be seen in verse 17: "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.'" When these 70 returned to Him, having had an opportunity to participate in His Work, they returned *with joy*! Jesus Christ teaches this in the foot-washing ceremony, commanding us, once a year, to sit back and let someone else experience the joy of serving and being involved.

We All Need Help

We learn another humbling lesson by having our own feet washed. We learn that we all need to be helped and served at some point in our lives, no matter how strong or capable we think we are. Saul (like many of us), learned this lesson the hard way. Saul was young, strong, and sure of himself as he headed to Damascus to "take matters into his own hands," so to speak. However, after being miraculously blinded by the

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Taste and See That the Lord Is Good!

By **Wallace G. Smith**

During the Days of Unleavened Bread, we often focus our messages and personal study on the Bible’s use of leavening as a metaphor for sin. Sin “puffs us up” like leavening puffs up bread, and leavening spreads through dough, just like sin spreads through our lives and within a community—it is, truly, an effective and instructive picture. Before the seven-day Festival begins, as we rid our homes of leavened bread and the agents used to leaven our food, we recognize the picture of repentance and putting sin out of our lives. And in refusing to eat leavened bread for seven days (Exodus 12:19), we symbolize our commitment to *keeping* that sin out.

But we must remember that the Almighty did not name the Festival “the Days of Don’t Eat Leavened Bread.” They are called “the Days of *Unleavened Bread*”! Ridding our homes of leaven and then avoiding it for a week makes only part of the picture. We must also eat some unleavened bread during every one of those seven days: “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread” (Leviticus 23:6). The command concerning this day is a *positive* one concerning something you *should* eat, not just a negative one concerning what you should not.

Just as leaven pictures sin during these days, unleavened bread pictures the righteousness of Christ, which we seek to actively absorb into our lives *every day*. Paul, for example, uses both sides of the picture in his own instruction: “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8). The Feast is kept with the unleavened bread, not just with the removal of the leaven. As Dr. Roderick Meredith so frequently said, we must *feed on Christ*.

To focus almost exclusively on the need to remove leaven (sin), downplaying the need to take in unleavened bread (righteousness) each day, is to miss one of the great lessons God intends us to learn during the Days of Unleavened Bread! And what an appetizing lesson it is.

Treats Unique to These Days

While unleavened bread is often characterized as “the bread of affliction” (Deuteronomy 16:3), let’s be honest: The creativity of our bakers and cooks truly shines during the Days of Unleavened Bread. My family and I thoroughly enjoy the remarkable variety of treats that my wife and mother-in-law create during these beautiful days, as well as those created by other culinary engineers in our congregation. Some of these treats only see the light of day (and the heat of the oven) during this brief seven-day period, wherein it is not uncommon to hear someone say, “*Mmmm... We should make these year-round!*”

My wife creates savory, cheesy, unleavened biscuits that I could happily eat with every meal, every day, all year long. And when our local congregations have covered-dish meals during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the dessert tables often overflow with sweet, imaginative treats that show up during no other time of year. Even basic matzo—fondly characterized by some as “edible cardboard”—is transformed into chocolate-and-toffee-covered “bark” with sprinkles of chopped pecans and sea salt. These seven days really do create a season of delights for our taste buds.

And while there is something to be learned during these days from the simplicity of unadorned, very flat bread (and I’m not knocking you matzo fans out there!), there is something, too, to be learned from the more savory and sweet treats that adorn our platters during this week. King David captured the sentiment I have in mind when he wrote in Psalm 34:8, “*Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*”

Indeed! It is easy to focus too exclusively on the dangers and harms that come from living a life of sin. Such concerns certainly should add to our motivation to make real that half of this Festival's picture—examining ourselves for evidence of sin and Satan's influences, removing them from our lives, and seeking to keep them out. But the Days of Unleavened Bread also invite us to examine the other half of the picture: the delights and joys that come from pursuing righteousness. These days beckon to us, asking us to meditate not only on the need to avoid sin, but also on the joys of a life lived in the light of God's word and under the blessings of His favor.

Truly, these days invite us to taste and see that the Lord is good! Let's consider only a few of the treats the Father and His Son spread before us with the way of life they offer.

Families the Way Families Should Be

Consider the joys of marriage. Boat-rocking psychologist Jordan Peterson has noted that even from a purely secular point of view, there is no real, fundamental satisfaction when couples merely "live together" (now sanitized as "cohabitation") rather than marrying under the binding power of a lifelong vow.

That conclusion is supported by too many studies to list here—studies bearing witness to the fact that long marriages, built and maintained in the manner that God prescribes in His word, increase one's odds of happiness and satisfaction.

But how wonderful it is to know that we don't have to wait for academics and researchers to figure out information that God shares with us freely!

All the joys of marriage—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—are unlocked, activated, and empowered by God's way of life. The unending studies of academics in the halls of Ivy League schools can be bewildering and untrustworthy. Yet no one needs a college education to open up the Bible and study to find what he or she needs for building and cultivating a marriage filled with joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction.

We should reflect on the pleasures of married life, the safe harbor it provides during life's storms, and the various facets of happiness only accessible within the confines of its borders. And as we do, we should add our voice to David's, declaring that "the LORD is good"!

That goodness is also reflected in the children those marriages often produce. What way of life creates an environment that gives children the opportunity to grow and flourish like the way of God does? The stability of a loving father and mother, the instruction of God's word, the connection to a family that is behind you and ready to support you in your endeavors... In the rich, life-enhancing soil God provides, our children can plant their roots deeply and securely, and then grow to spread their branches broadly, open to the sun and sky.

Those of us who grew up without those blessings—separated from the "unleavened life"—can surely appreciate

that. We rejoice when we see our children and grandchildren sitting at God's table as invited guests!

Relationships Done Right

The delicacies of that table include even more than satisfying marriages and sanctified children (1 Corinthians 7:14). *All* of our relationships are richer and deeper because of the privilege we enjoy at the Eternal's unleavened feast.

While the world so often focuses on the differences between younger and older generations, those who are choosing, day by day, to take in the bread of life are learning to see things differently. Though it is true that the young certainly grow up in a world and culture that differs from the one that surrounded the elderly during their youth, with God's guidance we learn not to let those differences *define* the relationships between the young and the old. God frees us from our natural prejudices and each generation's all-consuming belief that the other one "doesn't get it," and it focuses us on what we have in common—the things that really *matter*.

Our children learn to respect the years of experience that have accumulated in the lives of the aged, to honor those older than they are (e.g., Leviticus 19:32), and to seek to learn from them—and in doing so, they develop a state of mind that will benefit them for the rest of their days. Meanwhile, our elderly are taught by God not to despise the youth of our youngest members (cf. 1 Timothy 4:12), but instead to see them as He does: as children He loves, claims as His own, and longs to bring into His very own family. What a blessing!

Consider the friendships we build within the Body of Christ. When we reflect on those whom God has given to us as brothers and sisters—tied to us by the bonds of the Spirit, which far outweigh the bonds of flesh and blood—do we see the marvelous gifts and blessings of our Eternal Father at work in our lives? How satisfying are the friendships that exist within the Church! They provide a testimony to both the goodness of God and the blessings available when the love of Christ dwells in us.

Take the time during these Spring Holy Days to reflect upon the relationships you have in God's Church. They are the blessings of unleavened living! Whether you believe that they are few or many, truly consider them. Are you grateful? Have you thanked God for His goodness, expressed to you through the spiritual family He has provided for you—a family that pictures, in however small a way, the eternal family we will inherit when our Elder Brother arrives?

Jesus said to us that "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29). Through the friendships we enjoy in God's Church—including friendships many of us have enjoyed for decades—we experience a foretaste

of the ultimate fulfillment of His promise. How good those relationships should taste to us! The bonds we share, which provide so much joy and satisfaction, are only possible because they are nourished by our daily intake of the *living bread* (John 6:51).

Perspective, Purpose, and Peace

Meditating on the goodness of God is a life's work, and we know that we can only scratch the surface in a discussion this brief. Jesus said that He came so that we may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10), and while this certainly refers ultimately to eternal life as spirit beings, our lives in the here and now are also made more abundant as we follow Him. God's way of life is a source of *delight*, and not just delight in the world to come, but delight in the lives we live *now*. You will no doubt be able to think of manifold joys over the course of the Festival that won't appear here in this article.

At the same time, we also understand that physical blessings, in their fullness, cannot always be guaranteed in this world, which is still the devil's (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4). There are true and faithful Christians who have not yet been blessed with spouses, or children, or health, however much they may long for them.

Yet no matter our circumstances, we can taste and see that the Lord is good.

Many times, my wife and I have looked at the circumstances in the world—our own personal circumstances and those of others—and we have noted how terrible and hopeless life would seem without the perspective only God provides. But our Father does provide that perspective, not only helping the world to make sense, but filling us with a hope that transcends the world.

Anchored in the iron-clad fact that Jesus Himself has been raised from the dead, and noting both the joy of the future to come and the grace we experience now that should make us glorify God in gratitude, Paul makes this observation:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

The empty philosophies of atheists and humanists can do *nothing* to assure us that our afflictions are light or momentary, nothing to help us see that the weight of those afflictions

is exceeded by a glory that is now at work, and nothing to direct us to a yet-unseen world where eternity truly lies.

But within the realm of God's truth, and wielding an understanding that is only possible through a relationship with our Creator, we are provided a perspective on the world that we would otherwise never possess. We are blessed to know the purpose of our lives—a purpose that gives meaning to our afflictions and points us to a future glory, against which no trial or suffering can compare (Romans 8:18).

As David said to His Master, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (Psalm 23:5). Those who do not have the privilege of dining at the Lord's table have but scraps to feed upon when faced with difficulty. But God provides real sustenance and true refreshment. Who, sitting far from the table of God, can express the assurance of the Apostle Paul, who remarked that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28)? Who, unable to dine upon the delicacies only the Eternal can make available, can access "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding"—a peace with the power to "guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7)?

How good, how wonderful this should be to our taste! When the world is upside down—filled with fury, fear, and chaos—we can find rest in a sense of *true peace* that is available to few in this world. How precious is this to us?

Blessings Without End

Reviewing the entire multitude of blessings we enjoy as followers of Jesus Christ would be a monumental task—certainly one too large for an article such as this. Do we ponder the joyous truth that our sins are completely forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ, who continues even now to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25)? Do we pause to consider what it means to be partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)? Do we tremble in the knowledge that it is God who works in us, achieving His own pleasure in our lives (Philippians 2:13)—that He is committed to finishing that work in us until we are ready for glorification at His Son's return (Philippians 1:6)?

Truly, the joys of the ways of God are never-ending!

During these Days of Unleavened Bread, let us not forget the *positive* command to eat some unleavened bread each day. Whether that means a bite of simple matzo or enjoying one of the delectable treats in this issue's recipe collection, let us take the time as we eat to reflect upon the need to take in the *spiritual* unleavened bread of righteousness. Then, let us also meditate upon the manifold blessings that we receive from this remarkable spiritual diet, so that we can sincerely declare alongside King David, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (LN)



Let's Bake Bread Together!

One of the joys of the Days of Unleavened Bread is preparing treats that we rarely make during other times of the year. As an aid to *your* joy, we are publishing a collection of recipes in this year's *Living Church News*—hopefully you will find something new to try!

Of course, there is no requirement to bake your own bread, and you can also find appropriate unleavened bread items at many grocery stores. After a few minutes of reading labels, you take your choices to the cashier, and you have unleavened bread to remind you of lessons of these special days. However, when feasible, preparing recipes ourselves also highlights and enhances the pleasure and delight of God's ways in a way that commercial products cannot, and usually adds the extra benefits of sharing with and serving others.

This year in Charlotte, taking the admonitions of Titus 2 as their inspiration, older women and the young women participating in the Living Education–Charlotte program paired up to prepare an assortment of unleavened bread recipes. Enticing aromas emanated from the kitchens in their homes, in the Living Ed dorm, and in the Headquarters building, and for days, volunteer tasters “just happened” to come by! All the women personally enjoyed and benefited

from the time spent working together, and a couple dozen unleavened recipes were tested. Some of them are included in this collection.

We are physical creatures, and God sometimes commands us to do physical things to help us learn spiritual lessons. Mindful and purposeful actions enrich our thoughts and lives as we prepare for and observe these spring Festivals. And, in this season, we also experience the benefit of eating the results!

May you find pleasure in preparing, sharing, and eating these breads, just as we did! Of course, all of us should keep principles of healthful foods in mind, both to honor the temple of the Holy Spirit and to do our part in maintaining health in a world that often sickens us. However, these are personal decisions that need to accommodate individual needs, options, and budgets. We presume everyone will adapt these recipes to fit their personal needs. Some of the ladies and Living Education students experimented with different ingredients, and some of those experiments are reflected in these recipes.

We hope that this will be a most inspiring, encouraging, and joyous Festival season for all of you! And may the food we enjoy during these days remind us to take in the true unleavened bread of sincerity and truth as we observe the Festivals God has designed for our blessing.

Breads

Fruit N' Nut Bread

1/3 cup melted butter
 1 1/2 cup whole wheat flour (spooned and leveled)
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1 cup mashed ripe bananas (2 or 3)
 2/3 cup honey
 1/3 cup orange juice
 1 egg, beaten
 2 cups rolled oats
 1/4 cup chopped nuts
 1/4 cup chopped dates
 1/4 cup chopped apricots or cranberries
 1/4 cup raisins

Preheat oven to 350° F. Melt butter and set aside to cool. Mix flour and salt in mixing bowl. In separate bowl, mix bananas, honey, orange juice, egg, and melted butter. Add to dry ingredients and blend just until flour is dampened. Stir in oats and rest of ingredients. Pour into a well-greased and floured shiny loaf pan. Bake for about 50 minutes, or until tester inserted into center comes out clean. (Lower the temperature if using a dark or glass pan.)

Cool in pan for about 10 minutes, then remove to rack. For easier slicing, wrap in foil and store overnight. Delicious toasted.

Almond Bread

1 cup sugar
 4 eggs
 1 teaspoon almond extract
 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 3 cups flour
 3/4 cup oil or butter
 1 small bag slivered almonds

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Combine sugar, eggs, and 1 cup flour. Mix well and add oil or butter. Add remaining ingredients. Pour into two bread pans. Bake for 30 minutes. Remove from pans. Slice as needed.

Cheese, Onion, and Garlic Unleavened Bread

1/2 cup softened butter
 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
 1 cup white whole wheat flour (or unbleached all-purpose flour)
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon onion powder

Mix cheese and butter. Stir in flour and seasonings until blended. Shape into 1-inch balls and place on ungreased baking sheet. (Can be covered and frozen for up to 48 hours.) Bake at 400° F until set and golden brown, 15–20 minutes. Makes about 3 dozen.



Southern Cornbread

1 cup cornmeal
 1 cup flour
 1/4 cup sugar
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 egg
 1/4 cup shortening
 1 cup milk

Combine dry ingredients. Mix wet ingredients together then stir into dry ingredients. Pour into muffin tins and bake at 425° F for 20–25 minutes.

Cottage Cheese Rolls

2 cups flour
 2 cups cottage cheese
 1 cup soft butter
 1/2 teaspoon salt

Mix all ingredients well. Refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight to firm. Divide dough into four pieces. Roll each into a circle and cut each circle into eight wedges. Beginning at wide end, roll each wedge into a crescent. Bake at 350° F for 30 minutes. If desired, glaze with drizzled honey or powdered sugar thinned with milk. Makes 4 dozen.

Crackers and Flatbreads

Cheese Napoleons

2 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup oil
4 tablespoons milk
2 cups grated cheddar cheese

Mix flour and salt. Slowly add oil, tossing mixture with fork. Add milk and cheese and stir until dough clings together. If too dry, add a little more milk. With hands, press into a large cookie sheet with edges. Using a pizza cutter, cut into squares. Bake for 15 minutes at 425° F or until lightly browned.

Unleavened Bread with Oats

1 cup butter
1 cup boiling water
3 cups flour
3 1/2 cups rolled oats
1/4 cup sugar
2 teaspoons salt

Melt butter in water. Add flour, rolled oats, sugar, and salt. Mix well and pat into greased baking sheet. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes.



Cinnamon Raisin Flatbread

Gluten-free, dairy-free, egg-free

1 1/4 cups water
3/4 cup chickpea flour
1/2 cup buckwheat flour
1/4 cup raisins
1/4 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
1 tablespoon sugar (optional)
1 tablespoon coconut oil, melted
1 tablespoon cinnamon, plus more for sprinkling

Preheat oven to 375° F and line a 9" x 9" pan with parchment paper. Combine all ingredients in a bowl. The consistency should be a bit thicker than pancake batter. Pour mixture into prepared pan and sprinkle with extra cinnamon.

Bake for 30–35 minutes or until sides begin to brown and the top is all cracked. Remove from oven and let cool for ten minutes before lifting out of the pan. Cut into serving pieces.

Unleavened Bread with Cornmeal

2 cups whole wheat flour
1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons butter
2/3 cup warm water (or more)

Mix dry ingredients together and cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add the warm water. If dough is very stiff, add a little more water. Chill dough. Roll as thinly as you like and cut into 2" squares. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet at 375° F. If dough is rolled paper-thin, the crackers bake in about five minutes. They will be lightly brown. If dough is rolled to be thicker, the baked product will not brown much and will be softer, which makes better sandwiches, especially when pieces are cut larger.

Nelda's Unleavened Bread

2 1/2 cups flour (and more as needed)
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/2 cup butter
1 cup milk

Mix dry ingredients together. Melt butter and mix with milk. Stir into dry ingredients. Work in more flour as needed to be able to roll the dough out to approximately 1/4" to 1/2". Cut with biscuit cutter or a knife. Bake at 350° F on greased cookie sheet until brown, about 15 to 18 minutes. These are very good for making sandwiches.

Cheese Crackers

2 cups flour
6 tablespoons butter
2 cups grated cheese
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon brown sugar
10 tablespoons milk

Mix and roll very thin. Cut into squares and bake on greased pan for 10 minutes at 350° F. These burn easily, so watch closely.

Cheesy Things

2 cups flour
 2 cups crisp rice cereal
 2 cups aged cheddar
 1 cup soft butter
 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
 1/2 teaspoon Tabasco sauce
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon pepper (optional)

Combine all ingredients and shape into balls. Place on cookie sheet and press lightly. Bake at 350° F for 15–20 minutes. Cool on rack. Makes about five dozen.

Cheddar Crisps

1 3/4 cups flour
 1/2 cup cornmeal
 1 teaspoon sugar
 Pinch of salt
 1/2 cup butter
 1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
 2 tablespoons white vinegar
 1/2 cup cold water

Sift dry ingredients and cut in butter. Use a fork to stir in cheese. Add vinegar and water and mix until mixture forms a soft ball. Refrigerate for one hour.

Preheat oven to 375° F and grease large cookie sheet. Divide dough into 6 pieces and roll each into a circle. Cut each circle into 8 wedges. Bake until brown, about 10 minutes.

Corn Crackers

2 cups water
 2 tablespoons oil
 1 tablespoon honey
 1 1/2 cups cornmeal
 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
 2 tablespoons coconut
 1 teaspoon salt

Blend wet ingredients in bowl until smooth. Add dry ingredients and blend well. Pour into greased pan (batter will be 1/4" deep). Bake at 375° F for 45 minutes or until done. Cut while hot.

Cookies and Bars**Whole Food Cakes**

1 cup raisins
 1 cup dried cranberries

1 cup chopped dates
 3/4 cup orange juice
 1/4 cup honey
 1/4 cup oil or melted butter
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/2 cup sunflower seeds
 2 cups rolled oats
 2 cups whole wheat flour
 1 cup coconut

Soak fruit in orange juice and honey for 20 minutes. Combine remaining ingredients and stir into soaked fruit mixture. Tightly pack into firm balls 2–2 1/2 inches in diameter. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and flatten to 3" in diameter. Bake at 300° F for around 20 minutes. Do not brown.

**Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies**

1 cup quick rolled oats
 3/4 cup whole wheat flour, spooned and leveled
 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 2 tablespoons oil or melted butter
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 large egg, beaten
 1/2 cup honey
 3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 325° F. In one bowl, mix rolled oats, flour, cinnamon, and salt. In another bowl, whisk oil and vanilla together, then egg, and then honey. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and stir until it has just come together (don't overmix). Drop by tablespoonfuls onto oiled baking sheet. The cookies won't spread much. Bake in preheated oven for about 12–13 minutes, or until edges have just started to brown.

Unbaked Chocolate Cookies

2 cups coconut sugar
 1/4 cup cocoa

1/2 cup milk
 1/2 cup butter
 3 cups rolled oats
 1/2 cup nuts
 1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine first four ingredients and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and add vanilla, rolled oats, and nuts. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto waxed paper. Let cool.

Coconut-Date Balls (Unbaked)

2 eggs, beaten
 1/2 cup butter
 8 oz. dates, finely chopped
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 1/2 cups crisp rice cereal
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 Flaked coconut

Mix dates, butter, and eggs and boil for 2 minutes, stirring. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla, cereal, and nuts. Cool slightly. Form into balls and roll in coconut.

No-Bake Chocolate Peanut Butter Balls

1 cup peanut butter
 1/3 cup maple syrup
 1/3 cup coconut flour
 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or waxed paper. Set baking sheet aside for now, but clear space in the freezer so that you can put the mixture portions there later to freeze.

Whisk together peanut butter, maple syrup, coconut flour, and cocoa in a bowl, then use a rubber spatula to fold together until completely mixed and thickened. Scoop and drop peanut butter portions onto prepared baking sheet. Set pan in freezer to chill for 20–30 minutes, until somewhat firm. Remove from freezer and roll portions into balls.

No-Bake Gluten-Free Peanut Butter Balls

Dry ingredients:

3/4 cup unsweetened coconut shreds or flakes
 3/4 cup gluten-free rolled oats
 1/4 cup ground flaxseed
 1/4 cup chocolate chips or raisins

Optional:

2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Wet ingredients:

3/4 cup organic peanut butter (crunchy or smooth)
 1/4 cup maple syrup or honey
 1 1/2 tablespoons coconut oil

In a medium-sized bowl, mix all ingredients until well blended. (For a smoother consistency, use a food processor to make the dough.) Using a tablespoon or cookie scoop to scoop portions, wet your hands and roll portions between your palms to form balls. Store in the refrigerator for up to a week, or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

Unleavened Oatmeal Bar Cookies

Cookies:

1 1/3 cups butter
 2 cups coconut sugar
 3 large eggs
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 2 cups rolled oats
 2 cups white whole wheat flour
 1 cup nuts, raisins, or dates

Chocolate Icing:

1 tablespoon melted butter
 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
 1/2 cup maple syrup

Cookies: Cream sugar and butter. Add eggs and vanilla. Beat in rolled oats. Add flour gradually, then add nuts or dried fruit. Press evenly into a 12" x 24" rimmed cookie sheet. Bake 20–25 minutes at 350° F. While baking, prepare icing.

Icing: Melt butter in a cup or small mixing bowl and use a fork to mix in the cocoa. Then add maple syrup. Drizzle over hot cookie bars, as soon as they come out of the oven. Cut into individual bars.



Unleavened Oatmeal Bar Cookies



Gluten-free Chocolate Icebox Cookies

1 cup butter
 1 cup coconut or date sugar
 1 egg
 6 tablespoons milk
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 4 ounces unsweetened baking chocolate, melted
 3 cups any combination of gluten-free flours
 1 teaspoon xanthan gum
 1/2 teaspoon salt

Combine flours, xanthan gum, and salt. Beat egg, add milk and vanilla. Cream butter and sugar and add melted chocolate. Add the wet and dry ingredients alternately, working until a smooth dough is formed. Divide dough into halves and mold into two logs about two inches in diameter. Roll cookie logs in waxed paper and chill in refrigerator until firm. (Or freeze them for later use.) When ready to bake, slice logs about 1/8" thick and bake at 350° F for about 12 minutes.

Scotch Shortbread

4 cups white whole wheat flour
 1 cup coconut sugar
 2 cups soft butter

(For a gluten-free version, substitute 2 cups of brown rice flour, 2 cups of any other gluten-free flour, and 1 teaspoon of xanthan gum in place of the 4 cups of white whole wheat flour. These items replace "flour" in the instructions below.)

Mix flour and sugar together and cut in butter. Work and knead dough lightly with floured hands. Shape into a roll and cut into two or three parts. Using the palms of your hands, flatten into rounds and bake in round pans at 325° F for one hour. It burns easily, so watch closely.



Unleavened Brownies

1/2 cup butter
 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
 2 eggs
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 cup sugar
 3/4 cup flour
 1/2 cup chopped nuts

Melt chocolate and butter together and let cool. Add vanilla and sugar and mix well, then add the eggs, one at a time, blending well after each. Add flour. Fold in nuts. Bake in greased 8" x 8" pan at 350° F for 30 minutes. Be careful not to overbake.

Lemon Bars

Crust:

1/4 cup melted and cooled coconut oil
 1/4 cup coconut sugar
 1 egg (at room temperature)
 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
 1 cup packed fine almond flour
 3 tablespoons coconut flour
 1/4 teaspoon salt

Filling:

Zest from 1 lemon
 1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice (from 2-4 lemons)
 1/2 cup honey

4 large eggs
 1 egg yolk
 1 tablespoon coconut flour, sifted (or substitute tapioca flour or arrowroot flour)

Preheat oven to 325° F. Grease an 8" x 8" baking dish with butter or oil. (A glass pan is not recommended, as it may cause the bottom of the crust to burn.)

To make crust: In a medium bowl, add coconut oil, coconut sugar, egg, and almond extract. Mix together until smooth. Add in almond flour, coconut flour, and salt. Mix again until dough forms. Press dough evenly into prepared pan. Bake for 10 minutes, then remove from oven and allow to cool for two minutes.

While crust bakes, prepare filling: In a medium bowl, whisk together the lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, eggs, egg yolk and coconut flour. Pour over warm crust. Bake for 18–25 minutes or until filling is set and no longer jiggles. Cool completely and then refrigerate for at least 4 hours to firm up bars. To serve, use a sharp knife to cut into 12 bars.



Chinese Chews

Flour mixture:

2 cups organic unbleached pastry flour
 2 tablespoons palm sugar
 ½ cup soft butter

Egg mixture:

1 ½ cups palm sugar
 2 eggs

Toppings:

1 cup chopped nuts
 1 cup coconut, sweetened or unsweetened
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Work flour mixture ingredients like pie crust. Press into the bottom of a greased 9" x 13" pan. Bake at 375° F for 10–15 minutes. While this is baking, prepare the egg mixture by mixing the 1 ½ cups of palm sugar and the two eggs, adding one egg at a time. Once the flour mixture is out of the oven, pour the egg mixture over the hot, baked crust. Over this, spread the chopped nuts, coconut, and vanilla extract. Bake for 25–30 more minutes. Cool before cutting into squares

Desserts

Flourless Chocolate Cake

8 large eggs
 1 pound bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped, or chocolate chips
 1 cup butter, cut into ½" pieces
 ¼ cup strong coffee

Adjust oven rack to the lower middle position and preheat oven to 325° F. Grease an 8" springform pan, then line the bottom with parchment paper. Wrap the outside of the pan with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Bring a kettle of water to a boil.

Beat the eggs at medium speed until doubled in volume, about five minutes.

Melt the chocolate and butter in a double boiler until smooth and completely melted. Add the coffee to the melted chocolate and butter.

Fold the egg mixture, one-third at a time, into the chocolate mixture, until completely blended.

Pour the batter into prepared springform pan and smooth the surface. Set it into a roasting pan on the oven rack and pour enough boiling water into the roasting pan to come about halfway up the sides of the springform pan. Bake until the edges of the cake are just beginning to set, a thin glazed crust (like a brownie) has formed on the surface, and an instant-read thermometer inserted halfway into the center of the cake registers 140° F, about 22–25 minutes. Remove the pan from the water bath and set on a wire rack to cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate overnight for flavors to mellow.

Berry Crisp*Filling:*

4 cups mixed fresh berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries) or enough to fill your baking dish three-quarters full

½ to 1 teaspoon lemon zest

½ to 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Crisp:

1 cup coconut sugar

1 cup almond meal

½ cup butter, softened

Rinse berries, dry on paper towels. Toss berries with lemon juice and fill baking dish ¾ full. Zest lemon over berries. In separate bowl, mix butter, almond meal, and sugar with your hands. Crumble loosely over berries. (Should be enough dough for two small-to-medium-sized baking dishes.) Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes. It will be juicy and is best eaten warm. (Apples can be substituted for berries to make an apple crisp, which will not be as juicy.) Serve with cream or with Lemon Crème Fresh.



Berry Crisp

Lemon Crème Fresh

4 oz. crème fresh

1 tablespoon maple syrup

½ teaspoon lemon zest

1 ½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Mix all until well blended. Serve over fruit crisp.

Apple Surprise

4–5 large tart apples, diced

2 tablespoons palm sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon

¾ cup butter, melted

1 cup palm sugar

2 eggs, beaten

2 cups organic unbleached pastry flour

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 ½ cups chopped nuts

Mix apples, sugar, and cinnamon and place in a 9"x13" baking dish. Beat together remaining ingredients until smooth. Spread over apples. Can add water if it is too thick to spread easily. (Option: can use brandy or other liquid to thin the flour mixture.) Do not mix with the apples. Bake 35–40 minutes at 350° F. Serve with ice cream.



Apple Surprise

Apple Crisp

8 cups sliced apples

¾ cup flour

½ teaspoon cinnamon

1 cup coconut sugar

1 cup butter

2 cups rolled oats

¾ cup chopped nuts

Place fruit in greased 9" x 13" baking dish. Mix flour, cinnamon, and sugar in a bowl and cut in butter. Stir in rolled oats and nuts. Spread mixture over fruit. Bake at 350° F for 60 minutes.



Woman to Woman

Making a Life After His Death

By **Janth B. English**

After your best friend and confidant is laid to rest—the man with whom you have built a life, your true love—what do you do? Once the fog clears, you are left with the question, “Now what?” There is no one to cook for, no one to thoughtlessly chide about life’s little annoyances, no one with whom to share a sunset or your traditional Sabbath meal. The plans to grow old together on your way to being born into the Kingdom are now disrupted, and you have to continue alone. You look forward to the resurrection, but what about now? What can a woman do to pick up the pieces and move ahead?

An Issue for All

If you are younger, single, or happily married, you may be wondering why an article about widowhood would be of interest to you. The unfortunate truth is that widowhood is more likely than one might think. According to the resource *Statista.com*, in 2017 there were almost 12 million widows in the United States, representing about 7 percent of the population. In fact, one-third of the population over the age of 65 is widowed, and 70 percent of them live alone (“Widowhood,” Encyclopedia of Aging, *Encyclopedia.com*). Two major factors contributing to women facing widowhood are that women tend to live longer than men, and that women usually marry men who are older than they are. You probably know someone who is widowed, and there are things you can do to ease her situation.

You can remember the widows who are in your family, your congregation, and your community. God tells us that true religion involves visiting widows (James 1:27). A big part of the burden of being a widow is loneliness. You don’t need to make special plans; most widows would enjoy being included in your family’s plans. Invite a widow to share a meal with your family—perhaps a Sabbath dinner. Knowing that widows are often ill-equipped for simple repairs, and may not have the resources to hire someone to make them, ask if there is anything around the house that you can help with. If so, make it a family service project; take lunch, and bring your children—of course, with the widow’s agreement.

You can engage widows in conversation and listen to their stories. Each one has stories to tell about her life—where she has lived, how she met her husband, the family and home they built, how she came to understand God’s truth. You may be surprised by how interesting “everyday lives” can be. A widow may miss having someone with whom to discuss current events, so those can provide appropriate topics of conversation. She will always enjoy talking about her deceased husband, especially if you have particular knowledge or a kind story about him. Tears may be shed, but don’t be afraid of them. Emotional tears are good for her. The medical community agrees that tears release toxins, relieve stress, and increase endorphins. Crying actually does make one feel better.

Comfort and Opportunity

If you are a widow, you know that—try as they may—your family, friends, and brethren cannot be there most of the time. Do not fear feeling lonely, but know that you are not alone. God has promised never to leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). You can take comfort in knowing that God has a special affection for widows, and that He established statutes and laws to protect and provide for them (Deuteronomy 10:17-18; 24:17-22; 26:12-13). God has promised to be your defender (Psalm 68:5), and you can rely on Him to keep His word because He is all-powerful and does not lie (Titus 1:2)! Though circumstances may be difficult, never forget that God is with you, making a way for you, providing for you, leading and guiding you. As time passes, you will no doubt see that more and more clearly. When the burden feels too heavy, let our Lord, Jesus Christ, carry it; it is not too big for Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

As a widow, you may find that you have considerable time on your hands, which can contribute to the feeling of loneliness. You may wish to find a new, enjoyable hobby that enriches your life. Traveling to visit distant family and friends can also be fulfilling. There may be activities in your community that are worthy of your time, such as volunteer opportunities to tutor young children or work in a food pantry. If you feel like you need company, invite guests to your home.

Showing yourself friendly is a great way to make friends (Proverbs 18:24). The Apostle Paul recognized that widows, along with others who are unmarried, have more opportunities to serve in the Church (1 Corinthians 7:32). There are always things that need to be done in any local congregation. You may like spending time with other widows, babysitting for younger couples, or sending notes of encouragement to members who are going through trials. Ask your minister for ideas about how you can serve your congregation.

Family and brethren often want to help, but don't know how. Sometimes they may use the wrong words to convey a sentiment. It is during these times that you must look at the heart of their intentions and express your gratitude. If help is offered, and you need it, don't be too proud to accept it. If you don't need help at that time, graciously decline, perhaps requesting a rain check, because there may well come times when you do need help. As difficult as it may be, if you find yourself in need of assistance, ask for help (Luke 11:9-10).

On God's Team

Remember that you are not "just a widow," but an important member of God's team. God used a widow in Zarephath to keep Elijah alive during a famine (1 Kings 17). He listened to the prayers of Anna the prophetess, a widow of many years, and allowed her to see the Christ, the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:25-38). God has called you to be a part of His family,

and you share in the responsibility to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world. In God's family, everyone works. Your prayers for the Work, the ministry, and God's people are not in vain; they propel the Work forward. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong often said that the Church of God moves forward on its knees. God can multiply your widow's mite and use it to call others into the Church. When those new people come to services, God can use your example and hospitality to help them make the decision to come again.

Widowhood is a state in which many women will find themselves at some point in their lives. The life of a widow can be lonely and filled with challenges, but those around her can make it more bearable by taking time to fellowship with her and include her. If you are widowed, you may find rewarding activities to engage in, such as new hobbies or travel. You may also have more time to serve others, especially those in your own congregation. Be comforted in knowing that widows are special to God. God has been with you through every stage of your life, and He is with you now. You are a part of the most important mission on Earth; you are on "Team Jesus Christ," and can look forward to the time when all of the saints will be united with Christ in the Kingdom of God. In the meantime, life after the death of your husband will not be the same; nothing can change that. However, life after his death can be fulfilling, purposeful, and yes, even happy. (L)

TOMORROW'S WORLD Upcoming Telecasts

March 14-20	Who Is the Great Harlot of Revelation?
March 21-27	Will You Escape the Day of the Lord?
March 28-April 3	2019 in Bible Prophecy
April 4-10	What Happened to Right and Wrong?
April 11-17	The Devil's Deadly Deceptions
April 18-24	Three Days, Three Nights, One Messiah
April 25-May 1	Why Extreme Weather?
May 2-8	Is Europe Preparing for War?
May 9-15	The Real Armageddon

Schedule subject to change. | For stations and times, check the Television Log on page 34 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

Weddings & Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Ron (Gale) Cassle of the Traverse City, Michigan congregation celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on November 9. After services on the Sabbath, the brethren celebrated their milestone with a cake, and presented a card and gift to the couple. Mr. and Mrs. Cassle have one son and three grandsons.

Adelaide, Australia Pastor **Michael Gill and his wife Heather** celebrated their golden 50th wedding anniversary on September 13. After services on the Sabbath, Mr. and Mrs. Gill were honoured by the congregation with a special cake presented by Mr. Brian McKenzie. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Gill for their encouraging example of a strong and godly marriage.

The Temple, Texas congregation honored **Mr. and Mrs. Bernie (Ann) Henderson** after Sabbath services on December 15, in celebration of their 65th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Henderson were married on December 19, 1953. They were baptized together in 2008 and are very much loved by all who know them.

On September 23, **William Mitchell** of the Kingston, Jamaica congregation and **Nadine Stewart** of the Fort Lauderdale, Florida congregation were married at a sunny outdoor garden venue in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Love grown across the sea! The couple plan to reside in Florida.

Congratulations to Area Pastor **Rajan Moses and his wife Rachel**, of Malaysia, who celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on November 17. They were surprised by the congregation after Sabbath services with a cake and evening snacks. Mr. and Mrs. Moses have three children and four grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael (Jan) Paxon, of the Adelaide, Australia congregation, celebrated their golden 50th wedding anniversary on October 12. They have been faithful members of God's Church for many years, and Mrs. Paxon serves as a deaconess. We congratulate the Paxons on their strong and inspiring marriage.

Mr. and Mrs. Lionel (Mary Ann) Robas, from the Christchurch, New Zealand congregation, celebrated their diamond 60th wedding anniversary on November 1. They have

been faithful members of the Church of God for decades. We congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Robas on this special milestone!

The Dallas, Texas congregation surprised **Mr. and Mrs. Gary (Patty) Stein** on their 50th wedding anniversary on July 7. Mr. Stein pastored the Dallas, Big Sandy, Temple, Abilene, Midland, and Amarillo congregations in Texas. Mr. and Mrs. Stein are blessed with sons Kurt and Kevin, two grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony (Gayle) Stroud celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on December 30. Their anniversary remembrances include the day in 1984 they heard God's Truth, taught by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. They had been questioning various things about religion, and soon stopped going to the church they had previously attended. After studying the literature of the Church, they began to attend services in February 1985 and were baptized together in July of that year. They celebrated their anniversary with an extended trip, visiting family and friends along the way to and from a vacation in warm south Florida. The brethren in the Fort Lauderdale congregation surprised them at services with a cake in honor of their anniversary. They returned home to winter cold in Alabama. Mr. Stroud wrote, "Thanks will always be to our Loving Father, who despite trials along the way, has kept us in His Love... these 40 years [of marriage are] indeed very special!"

Rikus Botha and Rebecca Teixeira were united in marriage on September 11 at Tres Jolie, near Johannesburg, South Africa. The ceremony, conducted by Area Pastor Christo Botha, was followed by a reception for family and friends, and all who attended the lovely occasion shared in the excitement of the day and rejoiced with the happy couple.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill (Sheila) Whitaker celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on October 4 in Cape Town, South Africa, after an inspiring Feast of Tabernacles. They were joined by brethren and friends on an interesting tour around the Cape, as well as a helicopter ride over the area. Soon after they returned to their home in South Carolina, the Walterboro congregation surprised them after services with a wonderful meal, gifts, and a beautiful anniversary cake. Mr. Whitaker has pastored the Walterboro congregation since 2006.

We want to hear more about the happy milestones in the lives of our brethren. If your family has had a birth, marriage, or major anniversary, please ask your local pastor to send word to the *Living Church News*, PO Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010 (or to send an e-mail to lcg@lcn.org).

In Loving Memory

Mr. Florentino Cabrera, 94, of the Davao congregation in the Philippines, died on July 6, surrounded by his family. He was baptized in 1967 by Mr. Arthur Docken, and since then remained faithful in his commitment to God. He will be remembered for his deep respect for the Church leadership, his kindness, and his acts of giving as his means allowed. He is survived by his wife Clarita, thirteen children, and dozens of grandchildren. The funeral service was conducted by Area Pastor Felipe Casing.

Mr. Peter Chan, 69, a longtime member of the Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia congregation, died on October 26. He was a very generous and faithful member of the Church of God. Though he suffered health trials, he always shared with and encouraged others, and he will be greatly missed by all who loved him. Mr. Rajan Moses conducted his funeral service.

Mrs. Gloria Finney, 75, of the Lake City, Florida congregation, died on December 20. She and her husband, with their family, had celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on October 22. Baptized in 1968, Mrs. Finney was a loving, faithful member, and her warm, outgoing personality drew friends to her from far and wide. She is remembered for her generous heart, distinctive laugh, love of music and singing, artistic quilting, and the encouraging notes she wrote to others. Mrs. Finney is survived by husband John E. Finney; children Rita Haynes, Pamela (Steve) Tracy, and Mark (Cheryl) Finney; ten grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. She is greatly missed.

Mr. Steve Gibson, 62, a longtime member of the Brisbane, Australia congregation, died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage on October 7. He is remembered for his fine example and quietly generous spirit, and is survived by

his wife Madonna and their family. Mr. Dayrell Tanner conducted his funeral.

Mr. Halvor Halvorsen, 88, of the Tilton, New Hampshire congregation, died on November 7, surrounded by his family. Mr. Halvorsen was a member of God's Church for more than 50 years, and will be remembered for his fine sermonettes, his sense of humor, and his interesting stories of his childhood. He lived in Norway from age five until age ten, when the nation was occupied during World War II, and he was on the very last ship allowed to leave for America. Mr. Halvorsen was preceded in death by his son Erik, and is survived by three daughters. He will be greatly missed.

Mrs. Adele Hart, 96, of the Pawtucket, Rhode Island congregation, died peacefully on October 17. She was preceded in death by her husband Alverda and two sons. She is survived by one son, five grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren. Mrs. Hart was a longtime, much-loved member of the Pawtucket congregation. Unable to attend services in recent years because of poor health, she loved having the brethren visit at her home. Many brethren enjoyed their visits because of her inspiration to them, and her wit and humor. She always showed deep concern for the brethren. Associate Pastor John Hunter conducted her funeral service.

Mrs. Dorothy "Dot" J. Hendrick, 80, of the Springfield, Illinois congregation, died on January 1. Mrs. Hendrick was always a source of encouragement and a fountain of warm smiles. She was a faithful member of the Church of God since her baptism in 1971. She enjoyed playing games on the computer, sewing, crocheting, coloring, and listening to audiobooks. Mrs. Hendrick leaves behind a son, two daughters,

13 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren, as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was an inspiration to all who knew her, and she will be greatly missed, certainly by those in the Springfield congregation. Area Pastor Richard Franz conducted the funeral.

Mrs. Shirley Hulme, 81, died peacefully in Staffordshire, UK on October 3 with her husband Ron by her side. She and her husband came into the Church as fruit of the campaigns held by Dr. Roderick Meredith in England in the 1960s, and she was baptized in 1966. Mr. and Mrs. Hulme moved to Bricket Wood and worked for the Church in several different capacities. They were featured in the 2016 "Behind the Work" film. Mrs. Hulme loved to sing and participated in many Church choirs. Though her health problems precluded their attendance at the Manchester congregation, she was faithful until the end, and the brethren look forward to seeing her again.

Mr. William A. Lemmon, 90, of the Akron, Ohio congregation, died on December 15. He was baptized in 1980. He was preceded in death by his wife Janet and son David, and is survived by sons Gary and Bill C., daughter Laura, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. He appreciated the love, cards, and visits of the brethren. His generosity, cheerfulness, and love of God's way of life set a good example for his family and all the brethren.

Trudy Marie Power, 68, of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana congregation, died on December 31. Mrs. Power was baptized in 2016. She is survived by her husband of 48 years, John F. Power, three children, and seven grandchildren. Mrs. Power lived the Proverbs 31 example of "making fine linen garments," as she had a wonderful gift for sewing. She was also a beautiful example of someone who loved unconditionally. Area Pastor Glen Harrison conducted the graveside service.

Mrs. Rosalia “Rose” Pringle, 77, of the Corpus Christi, Texas congregation died in the faith on February 17, 2018. She was baptized in March of 2010, and was a faithful member of God’s Church. All who knew her will miss her beautiful smile, heartwarming hugs, and unconditional love for others. Among the things she enjoyed were her plants. She is survived by her husband James F. Pringle, four children, nine grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Shirley Louise Smith, 81, died in the faith on November 19, surrounded by her very loving family. Baptized more than 50 years ago, she was a devoted member of God’s Church. Mrs. Smith served the brethren in Rolla, Missouri with her warm smile and much appreciated piano accompaniment during song services each Sabbath.

She also enjoyed playing pinochle, sewing, cooking, and sharing time with family and friends. Those left to treasure her memory and to continue her legacy are her three children, four grandchildren, and one sister, as well as other relatives and many friends. Area Pastor Richard Franz conducted the funeral. Mrs. Smith will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Catherine Sonnier, 73, of the Lafayette, Louisiana congregation, died on December 12 after a hard-fought battle with bone cancer. She was a longtime faithful member of her congregation. She is survived by her son Mark Broussard, also a member in Lafayette. Mrs. Sonnier was a self-reliant and independent woman. Services were conducted by Mr. Glen Harrison, Area Pastor for South Louisiana.

Births

Josh and Ashley Crockett of the Big Sandy, Texas congregation are happy to announce the arrival of their daughter, **Dani Kaye Crockett**, born Thursday, December 20. She weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 19.5 inches long. Mother and daughter are doing well. The family is elated: they have three boys and now a girl!

Anthony and Melanie Mew of the Brisbane, Australia congregation are

now the happy parents of a wonderful gift from God: a beautiful baby daughter, **Elizabeth Rose**, born on July 16. She weighed 3.4 kilograms and was 50 centimeters long. Mother and baby are doing well. Congratulations to the Mews!

Marshall and Nadia Moluf of the Dallas, Texas congregation are excited to announce that they are now a “six family,” and have upgraded their hand to “Four of a Kind”—all princesses! **Verity Kathleen Moluf** entered the

world on December 14., weighing 8 pounds, 14 ounces, and measuring 21 inches. Mom and baby are doing great, and big sisters Evelyn, Abigail, and Melody are loving the new addition.

Mr. and Mrs. Dwayne (Sarah) Wilks rejoice in announcing the birth of their daughter **Ariana Tiffany Wilks** on Wednesday, October 10. She weighed 8 pounds, 11 ounces, and measured 23 inches in length. The Calgary, Alberta brethren also warmly welcome this new addition to the congregation.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. Alvin Cumberbatch was ordained a deacon on October 31 by Area Pastor Paul Shumway. Mr. Cumberbatch serves in Barbados.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward (Joanne) Gontar were ordained deacon and deaconess on September 27, during the Feast of Tabernacles, by Elder Laurie Nyhus. Mr. and Mrs. Gontar serve in the Grande Prairie, Alberta congregation.

Mrs. Jeanne Harp was ordained a deaconess on November 10 by Area Pastor Gary Ehman. Mrs. Harp and her husband Dan, a deacon, serve in the Kannapolis, North Carolina congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Uriah (Mary) Maney were ordained deacon and deaconess on the Feast of Trumpets, September 10. Mr. and Mrs. Maney serve in the Sylva, North Carolina congregation. They were ordained by Area Pastor Ron Poole and Elder Gary Maney.

Mr. Eugene Same was ordained a deacon by Area Pastor Graeme Hemphill on September 24, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. He and his wife Barbara have been faithful servants of God and His people for many years.

LIVING EDUCATION cont. from page 8

This same principle applies to our Living Education—Online program. If a person completes every part of every lesson, he or she will benefit. Likewise, if time constraints only permit someone to listen, say, to the teaching videos by Dr. Meredith, that person will still benefit. The Living Education program available online is scalable,

and in that sense, one size really can fit all.

An Educational Focus

In Proverbs 22:6, we read, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” This proverb simply makes clear what should be obvious. Training, systematic education, habitual instruction—such efforts establish patterns of behavior

and patterns of life. We recognize that this applies to children. But do we apply the same principle to ourselves?

God provides us with the guidebook for a “living education,” but we must take the initiative to begin the journey. If we seek a “living education,” based on good and godly principles, we’ll learn to live better today, and receive eternal life in the future. (LN)

WASHING FEET continued from page 9

glorified Christ while on the road, Saul suddenly had to rely on others. As Acts 9:7–8 shows, he even had to be led by the hand by those “who journeyed with him.” Saul, who had been leading them, now needed *them* for help! Shortly after that, Saul needed Ananias to pray for his healing and to baptize him. However strong Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, thought he was, Jesus humbled him and helped him to see that he could not make it alone.

At some point in our lives, we are going to need to humble ourselves and allow others to help and serve us. If not in our youth, or in our injuries and illnesses (James 5:14), then certainly as we age. In sitting back and allowing others to wash

our feet, we allow them to serve us. We must humbly accept help—even if we do not really feel comfortable with it. We are forced to *be* served.

The foot-washing ceremony contains so many more lessons than these. For instance, we notice that Judas was among the disciples as Jesus washed their feet, and that Christ already knew that Judas would betray Him—and He washed his feet anyway (John 13:10–12, 17–18)! It should be clear that when Jesus established this ceremony, He had multiple lessons in mind—lessons that would help to make us all better servants and better servant leaders, for Him and for each other.

Have a profitable Passover! (LN)

VIEW OTHERS? continued from page 4

Ah, but there is that word, “brother.” Can we consider someone in another group a brother? In reality, how can we not? Are we to be as the lawyer who asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29).

Jesus did not say that John should reach out to the man to bring their two works together through compromise. Neither should we. The man could have chosen to follow them, but he did not. Why? We do not know. He would have been wise to do so, and maybe he later did. What we do know is that Jesus told John to leave him alone.

When we see others doing a work similar to what we are doing, we need not be concerned. We must know why we, as individuals, choose to be where

we are, but it is unwise for us to compare ourselves with others. God is the judge. All of us, leaders and members, must one day answer to Him for the decisions we make in this life.

Some today no doubt “preach Christ even from envy and strife” and from “selfish ambition.” Others do so sincerely “from goodwill.” Yes, we need to base our decisions on biblical facts, comparing such things as doctrines, governance, and focus. That we must do. We cannot compromise truth for the sake of a false unity. But neither should we be in the business of judging the motives of others. It is true that the motives of some are so transparent that only a fool would be so blind as not to notice, and Jesus, after all, did call some of the religious leaders hypocrites (Matthew 23). However, our responsibility is to leave alone those who are not

with us and to focus on the Work He set before us. As Paul advised the disunited Corinthians, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

We are coming up on the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. This is a time for introspection. The breakup of the Worldwide Church of God was something few, if any, of us foresaw, and it created a lot of distrust and confusion. We will someday look back and understand a greater picture than we currently can see, but here is one thing we should all be able to agree upon: There has been far too much judging of others and other groups, in all the groups. That is not the mind of Christ! (LN)

COMMENTARY

It's Gardening Time!

Many people develop “gardening fever” in the spring, and the opportunity to work in their gardens again makes springtime many people’s favorite season. Ever since God planted the Garden of Eden, mankind has been planting seeds and enjoying the fruits and beauty of the many varieties of plants He created. Delicious vegetables created for nutrition, herbs for health and nuances of flavor, flowers for beauty and rich perfumes, nut and fruit trees—all to delight our senses. All were created for man upon this planet-sized garden we call Earth.

Contrary to a common saying, *gardening* is “the oldest profession.” It was Adam’s God-given task to “tend and keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15). Over the centuries, however, mankind has not done such a great job of this, as we see when we look at the world under our care. As in every other aspect of life, human beings have ignored God’s laws, only to reap the natural penalties. Man almost always seems to learn lessons the hard way, instead of obeying his Creator’s plain instructions. Even our agricultural practices, seeking to maximize short-term yield rather than preserve the health of the soil, have again and again destroyed the delicate balance and perfect harmony of the chemistry and interaction of the soil, flora, and fauna that God designed.

God gave us vital instructions for maintaining our gardens. For instance, God said to let the land rest every seventh year—called a “land Sabbath.” Most farmers, however, ignore the land Sabbath and suffer the consequences of deteriorated production. God also told mankind not to mingle the seeds—so, modern agriculture does exactly that, “playing God” by genetically modifying

the very plants on which we depend for sustenance. People think they are improving upon nature, but severe consequences will inevitably come, just as they did when Adam and Eve disobeyed the Creator’s instructions and were essentially “fired” from the Garden of Eden—losing their job and home (Genesis 3:23–24).

This made necessary a pivotal event that occurred thousands of years later in and around another garden—this one called Gethsemane. Jesus often visited this garden, as He did on the night when He was betrayed and arrested (Matthew 26; John 18). He was also crucified with a garden nearby (John 19:41), and in that garden was a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus. After His death, Jesus remained in that tomb for three days and three nights before He was resurrected, and then was first seen in that garden early in the morning by Mary Magdalene.

When Christ returns, He will make the earth like the Garden of Eden again, bringing the “times of restoration” the Apostle Peter spoke of (Acts 3:21). He will make the wilderness like Eden and the desert like the Garden of the Lord (Isaiah 51:3). He will restore the earth and comfort mankind after the end-time devastation. He will restore righteousness to the earth. “For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” (Isaiah 61:11).

Then, like a small seed planted in a garden, the Kingdom of God will grow to nourish the whole world (Luke 13:18–19).

May our spring gardens move us to meditate this year on such wonderful promises!

—Roger Meyer