

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 9, No. 3 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be May/June 2003

Gifts and Governance

by Toli Bohonik

Both gifts and governance are supposed to reside in the Churches of God. God intended there to be both in every congregation; gifts of the Holy Spirit and also elders who are appointed to lead a congregation. They are supposed to work together to teach, to edify, to protect, for miracles, and also to preserve the truth of God.

You will find both of them in vary-

ing degrees in most congregations. But too often, they are not allowed to work together as God wants them to work. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are generally the hardest to find, while governance is usually there in spades.

What often happens in a congregation is that someone, or a small group of people, gain control of the congregation; they hire a pastor, they select elders, they appoint deacons, they

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Church of God Fellowship: One Solution to Governance

by Norman Edwards

For over four years I have attended a local congregation, *the Church of God Fellowship*, meeting in East Lansing, Michigan. It has not had that name all of that time, but the congregation consisted primarily of the same people. The congregation began on April 7, 1999, on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. Most of the brethren in the United Church of God, Lansing, decided to meet separately on that day, due to difficulties with the local ministry and UCG-IA headquarters' policies. It was not their purpose to start a new congregation, but when the small independent group of about 15 that I met with found out about their meeting, we decided to join them. We have been together ever since.

During the next few weeks, a congregational meeting was held, and the brethren agreed to a time schedule for

services and a plan whereby a different family would sign up to host each Sabbath and Feast Day. The designated family was responsible for set up and clean up of the room, choosing songs for congregational singing, arranging for special music, making announcements, taking prayer requests, overseeing the potluck meal and arranging for speakers. Some families did nearly all of these things themselves, other families solicited much help, and most did a combination of the two.

This simple method of governance worked fairly well for over two years. No family tried to monopolize the services, and most people did their share of the work. This is an excellent testimony about how little formal structure is actually needed to operate a local congregation. But as the years went by, we realized that there were some things that were not being done that should be

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No SN Final Decision Yet, Much Interest

by Norman Edwards

The exact future of *Servants' News* is still uncertain but I am confident that God is working in the events of the last several months and I have learned much from them. I would not be the same person if I had not stopped to take the time to consider alternatives.

In a nutshell, we placed our two high school-age sons in Spring Vale Academy, the Sabbatarian boarding school less than 10 miles from our home. I began teaching two classes there in order to defray the cost. The experience has been more positive than expected. The value of such a school in the lives of both my sons and the many other young people there is hard to appreciate until one actually sees it happen.

This has convinced me to make it
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Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#120



The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series.

April 27, 2003

We had good questions and comments from our five truck drivers. My original plans were to have a discussion on the Ten Commandments and then go to Genesis to show how most of them are referred to in the early chapters of Genesis.

Instead, most of the two hours we talked were dedicated to the Holy Days, specifically Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Atonement. One of the men had quite an understanding of the Christological implications of Passover and the picture of leaven vs. unleavened. Most of the people today had never considered the import of Jesus being called the Lamb without blemish and that He was the Passover who was sacrificed for us.

One of the women wondered why, if Passover points to the sacrifice of Jesus, then why would another Holy Day be needed (i.e. Atonement) that apparently pictured the same thing. We read through a section in Hebrews 8, where it is stated that the sacrifices on the day of Atonement were for "sins committed in ignorance" (NKJV). When we accept the blood of Christ, it implies repentance on our part and a recognition that we have been wrong. On the other hand, billions of people have no idea that they are deceived. Atonement recognizes that the Deceiver is about and the day will come when those sins will be put on the head of the Deceiver.

This led to a discussion from Revelation 20 and the second resurrection.

Those of us who understand God's plan can come to take for granted the hope that we have. Yet these concepts falling upon new ears is gratifying.

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Servants' NEWS

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The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of preaching, teaching, writing and music as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

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Who Will Build God's House? Ministers or Construction Workers?

A Church of God member who was adding a garage onto his house asked me to come to his house and help one Sunday morning. He had hired a crane to come and lift the prefabricated trusses (big, heavy wooden frames that hold up the roof) and wanted enough people to handle the job efficiently. He also indicated that there was some other work that should be finished before the crane arrived. The last time I was involved with the framing of a house, I think I was about nine years old. I do not remember much, and methods have changed a lot since then.

I arrived before the crane, but after most of the other ten men who were all hard at work at various tasks. I said hello to the owner and some of the others that I knew, but generally tried to stay out of the way as they were all so busy working at the task at hand. They all seemed to know far more about construction than I did. I figured that as soon as one group finished what they were doing that somebody would start giving orders regarding the next task, and that I would be included. It never happened.

I was able to clean up some trash, take pictures for the lady of the house and a few other miscellaneous things that suited my skill level. I watched and listened and tried to figure out where I could be of help.

Amazing Unity

But the main thing I did was stand back and marvel at how well so many men from different backgrounds, some of whom were working together for the first time, could get so much done with so little direction. If I did not know who the owner of the house was, I doubt I would have figured it out from the conversations. When one group finished one task, they briefly surveyed the situation, figured out what was the next most important task, and went to work. When an especially difficult part required extra people, a word or two was exchanged, some

would drop what they were doing, help on the tough part, and go right back to what they had been doing.

There were **no** disagreements or complaints that someone was doing their job wrong, doing too little, doing too much, etc. There were no arguments about who "gets to" do what or who is in charge. When minor mistakes were made, they were spoken of matter-of-factly, without putting down the person who made them. Yet they worked for hours without a break.

To my knowledge, everyone was there as a volunteer. Many had helped work on others' houses in the past. Some of them helped me put on a new roof. Yet, I never once heard words like: "I'm helping you more than you helped me," or, "after all this, you really owe me one."

I was further amazed to find out that the men attended a variety of Church of God groups. Some were in very hierarchical, centrally-controlled groups. Others were independent groups. They did not let these issues get in the way of doing their job. Everyone spoke politely to each other and worked with amazing unity.

How Well Do Ministers Work Together?

In watching all of these men from different church groups work together, I could not help but think about the way that ministers and leaders in the various Church of God groups work with each other. Would not it be wonderful if ministers and other church leaders from different groups could work together toward an important goal as well as these men. Now in some cases, that actually happens. I know some men who have to quietly tiptoe around their headquarters regulations in order to work with other groups. But that seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

Many church leaders speak disrespectfully about those in other groups, sometimes without having all of the facts. I must confess that I have been guilty of this at times and I am sorry.

Some organizations, by policy, refuse to work with other groups.

Some are so concerned about "authority", that they let it stop them from accomplishing a goal. I have often heard something like: "We would be willing to have a joint service/activity/outreach with that group, but the question is, 'Who would be in charge?' We believe God has commissioned us to do His work so we do not want to come 'under them'." So the joint service/activity/outreach never occurs.

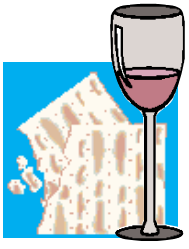
Church leaders would do well to consider the example of these construction men. Nobody was "under" anybody else. They did not fight or "structure". But they used their common knowledge to work together to accomplish a worthwhile goal. They were not concerned that their efforts were primarily benefitting one member of the group. They realized that they would receive a benefit somewhere down the road.

It would be wonderful if the many church groups could similarly work together on Feast sties, evangelism and schools in order to produce things that they cannot on their own. They should have the faith to know that it will benefit them someday.

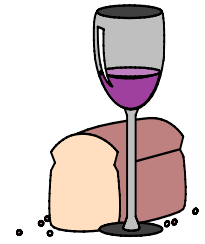
Building God's House

It is very interesting that God placed the young Jesus in a carpenter's house rather than a religious leader's house. Construction is a very much a **reality** job; if you do not do it right, the house does not last and everybody knows it was done wrong. Whereas with religion, people sometimes go on believing error for generations and many never notice their way is not working.

Who will Christ raise from the dead to rule with Him when He returns? Will He find it best to use those who can get along with each other and teach them true doctrine? Or will He use those who know the Scriptures well but have not yet learned to get along with each other? — NSE



What Kind of Bread did Christ Give His Disciples?



by John Leitch

The law requires all Bible-believing people to eat unleavened bread for seven days once a year (Lev 23:6). Christ did not come to abolish the law (Matt 5:17–18) so this is still required of us today. This bread is called the bread of sincerity and truth (1Cor 5:8), but is also called the bread of affliction (Deut 16:3). This can be seen in Acts 2:37–38. The people, once they were sincere and understood truth, were greatly afflicted. The people were cut to the heart. They realized that the way they were living was not the way of peace and happiness, but the way of death. Christ referred to the ordinary person as already dead (Luke 9:60). This affliction comes from our conscience but can also come from other people if we voice or act on this truth.

In the Bible the Greek word for unleavened (bread) is *azumos* (Strong's Concordance number 106) used 9 times in the New Testament, and the Greek word for ordinary leavened bread is *artos* (Strong's 740) used at least 72 times. In the "last supper" accounts in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19, Jesus took bread (*artos*), blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples. Christ also compared Himself to leavened bread (*artos*) in John 6:35 where He called Himself the "bread of life". Why did Christ repeatedly compare Himself to *artos* (leavened bread)?

As humans, we all have been deceived into accepting a leavening that allows Satan to influence us but few people realize the Bible also speaks of a good type of leavening (Lev 7:13; 23:17; Matt. 13:33). This article's purpose is to show that the bread which Christ offered to His disciples was a different kind of bread, opposite to the unleavened type. This bread that represented Himself was a bread that brought comfort, not affliction, and hope of eternal life, not fear

that death was a certainty because of sin. In eating unleavened bread each year, we gain a knowledge and appreciation for the new type offered by the Father (John 6:32–33). I shall show how the Bible uses the bread-making process to demonstrate how fulfillment of God's plan will be achieved.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul draws a parallel between the spiritual growth of a Christian and the bread making process. Paul points out that the death of Christ has cleansed us of the old leaven (1Cor 5:7) and given us the opportunity of a new beginning. The idea is to get back to the basic pure ingredients (sincerity and truth) and to start again. The point most people miss is in the bread-making procedure; the first thing you do to a new batch of dough is to mix in the leaven starter.

Bread, throughout most of history, was made by a process that is known as "sour dough". A small amount of leavened dough from the previous batch is mixed into the new batch. The pioneers used this method to make their bread. Sometimes the starter could live on (it contains a living organism) for many years. If people thought their neighbour had better tasting bread, they would request a piece of that neighbour's starter. The starter contains life and under its influence would reproduce (with the proper conditions and time) a product identical to the original loaf the starter came from (if the ingredients were the same).

Another problem people had in the old days was the care that had to be taken to ensure that the starter would remain alive and active. The bread maker realized if the starter was not kept in a good environment, the life in the living bread (the starter), was in danger of dying. If the all-important

starter died, due to the baker's negligence in the care that was taken of the starter, big trouble would be the result! The bread would be lifeless and flat. The process would never

complete itself, and the bread would remain in an **unfinished state**. The bread would not rise with that delightful texture and

taste that we have all grown to love.

The Corinthian congregation had many problems. One man was living with his father's wife, and many others had become arrogant and puffed up. Many congregations today have problems also. But what is the source of these problems, and why do they seem to spread if left alone? The Bible does give answers to these questions.

"For our struggle is **not against flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12, NIV).

"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1Pet 5:8, NIV)

"He threw him into the abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended" (Rev 20:3).

The Bible compares the influence of Satan to that of leaven. The Corinthian man's immoral lifestyle and the people's arrogant puffed-up attitude would spread if not resisted and purged out. "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1Cor 5:6).

The problem was not the people in the Corinthian congregation, it was their behavior and this behavior was simply a symptom of Satan's leaven-

Some sincere believers think any representation of Christ should use unleavened bread. I have not made an exhaustive study of the issue, but I felt this was a good presentation of this view.
— NSE

ing. To separate this leavening effect from their person, the offending parties must first ask God to help to remove it and (this is their part) create such a hostile environment that the unwanted leavening will die out (James 4:7). To accomplish this a person must fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl 12:13) We have to ferociously attack every evil thought and make it obedient to Christ (2Cor 10:5). If this hostile-toward-evil atmosphere is maintained, Satan will not be able to start his leaven working again. The mind of a commandment-keeping person is a hostile environment to Satan's leavening but very fertile ground indeed to the "living bread", which is Christ (John 6:51).

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Matt 11:12, NASB). Paul compares God's people to soldiers who have to fight until the time of their death but not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:10-18, Rev 2:26). To make the Kingdom of God your goal is not for the pacifist. Sometimes people knowingly or unknowingly create ideal conditions for the offensive leaven to grow and refuse to create the hostile environment that will cause it to die out. These are the people who must be put outside the camp (to use Old Testament terminology). These people, once their behavior has changed for the better, should be welcomed back (2Cor 2:6-7). This is very similar to leprosy. The problem is not with the people. It is the disease that is in them that caused them to be segregated.

As the reader has most likely noticed by now, the leaven in the starter closely resembles the effect on a human from a spiritual source. The difference being, as humans, we all have had the wrong leaven (or starter) added to our person, which produces the kind of mind seen in Romans 8:7. This leaven, if not purged out, will take over our entire being (1Cor 5:6-7).

Spiritual leavening cannot exist in a hostile environment. It is possible by deliberate action or by neglect, to drive out spiritual leaven (good or bad).

"Resist the devil and he will flee..."

(James 4:7)

"Do not quench the (Holy) Spirit..."
(1Thes 5:19)

A person, when they understand how bread was made throughout much of history, can see the similarity between de-leavening and baptism.

Baptism represents the death of the old person who was full of malice and wickedness (1Cor 5:8). The average person, with their focus mainly on the concerns of how they can make it in this competitive world, views the laws of God as foolishness. This is the very person whom we put to death through baptism. Although baptism symbolizes death, we must not remain dead, flat and lifeless. The Christian must rise in the newness of life (Rom 6:4-5; Col 3:9-10).

De-leavening also represents death because leaven is a living organism that will multiply and by removing it, you take the life out of the host substance. (In this case, the influence that caused the old person to be full of wickedness and malice). When this old leaven is removed, all that is left is the basic pure ingredients—sincerity and truth. Although these are good, they are of little use without a force to spring them into action.

Being sincere and knowing all truth is not enough. A person needs a life-giving force (like the leaven starter in the sour-dough bread), to give them the power to obey God's laws (Rom 2:13): feed the hungry, visit the sick, watch over the fatherless, etc., etc. Nature hates a vacuum. If a person remains in an unleavened state for an extended period of time, the old leaven will return seven times stronger (Matt 12:43-45).

The lesson of Christ being the new leaven starter is shown when a statement which Christ made is put together with one of His parables. Luke 17:21 demonstrates that because Christ is the King of the Kingdom of God, the term "Kingdom of God" and "Messiah" are interchangeable. Christ stated that the Kingdom of God (Himself) was in their midst. Once this is understood, the parable of the Kingdom being like leaven that was mixed into the three measures of meal (Matt 13:33) comes to light. One measure for Jew and Greek, one for male and female, and one for slave

and free ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus", Gal 3:28). It can be seen now that Christ will be mixed throughout **all** mankind ("In Adam **all** die, so in Christ **all** will be made alive", 1Cor 15:22). Christ will leaven all those who do not create an atmosphere to repel Him. The property of leaven is to change or assimilate to its own nature the meal or dough with which it is mixed.

I realize this is opposite to what many have believed over the years. I suspect many critics will say; "There is no such thing as new leaven." To respond to this statement, I ask a simple question; "Why is the old covenant called 'the old covenant'?" The answer is obvious. In calling the covenant "old", it implies that there is, or will be, a *new* covenant. If there was no new leaven, 1 Corinthians 5:7 would simply say "throw out all leaven..."; Paul, by calling the leaven "old", implies there will be new leaven to replace it. Critics also point to Christ giving bread (*artos*, Strong's 740), to the two men in Luke 24:30, and say that it would be against the law to have leavened bread because it was the Days of Unleavened Bread. Although feeding on Christ's body is continuous (1Cor 11:26), there are periods of time when the physical symbols are not partaken of (during Unleavened Bread and Atonement) for obvious reasons. If one examines this account closely, it nowhere states that the men ate it. This is a one-time supernatural event. Christ also presented many things that were unlawful to eat to Peter and told him to eat them (Acts 10:12-14), but he refused. Things are not always as they first appear. Was Christ teaching a lesson here?

When unleavened bread is meant, a different Greek word is used: *azumos* (Strong's 106). If Luke wanted the reader to understand the bread to be unleavened, why did he not use the word for unleavened? The word *azumos* is used in nine other places in the New Testament where the writer wanted to stress that fact. If the bread was truly unleavened, what possible motive would Luke and all the other writers recording "the last supper"

have, in using a word with its primary meaning opposite to that which they witnessed? Leavened is opposite to unleavened. Keeping this in mind, was Christ offering the men the *old* leaven that must be purged out, or the *new* leaven that must be stirred up and provided with a good environment so it can grow? Individually (speaking about reality not symbolism) there is no restricted time on the calendar when a person is forbidden to partake of Christ, the "living bread". We are to do that continually. The two men had been in a position for approximately four days to be cleansed of the old leaven because of the death of Yeshua, the Passover lamb (1Cor 5:7).

Without the new leaven, a person would be like a sincere carpenter who knows all the truth about the building codes by memory, and has the know-how to use them, but as of yet has done nothing. All his knowledge is of little value if he does not come to life, pick up a hammer, and do something. James explains this principle of a lifeless state of no action as dead faith (James 2:26).

The Feast Days are just a general outline showing the nation of Israel (today the church) the steps each individual must go through for salvation. Each individual, after going through the Holy Days a number of times, should know what it takes to be accepted into God's Kingdom. People are warned to count the cost (Luke 14:27-32) before embarking on their own personal spiritual journey. The bread and the wine did not replace the Passover Lamb because killing the lamb is the law and Christ did not come to abolish even the smallest letter of the law (Matt 5:18). When the priesthood and temple return, the Passover Lamb will again be sacrificed. The sacrifices will be returning (Ezk 46:1-24; Ps 51:17-19; Zech 14:20-21). The bread and wine was also very much a part of the Old Testament as can be seen in Genesis 14:18. Melchizedek (who many believe to be Jesus Christ) offered bread and wine to Abraham the father of the faithful just as Christ many years later offered bread and wine to the faithful disciples, only this time the meaning is explained and record-

ed in the Bible. The Passover Lamb represents Christ but more importantly, so do the bread and wine (Matt 26:26-28). When the two are examined it can be seen that the lamb fits into the yearly lesson (everyone young and old alike eats it) but the wine and bread is more serious and personal. The wine and bread marks the start of the more important *individual's* spiritual journey. This is similar to the national practice of throwing out breadcrumbs once a year, as compared to the **individual's** ongoing parallel practice of repentance and turning from evil. Both throwing out crumbs and repentance are putting out leaven, as is eating the lamb and taking the wine and bread are both feeding on the Passover sacrifice. The only difference between them is that one is a national observance that takes place once a year on a given date and the other is an **individual observance** (or as a group of believers) that can start at anytime. A person does not have to wait for any calendar date to repent or start feeding on the Passover sacrifice. Once this personal process is started it is continuous, not once a year. The law still requires us to keep the annual Holy Days as a symbolic example to all people, so they will learn that someday God expects them (when they are ready) to start on their own *individual* journey towards the Kingdom of God. Paul goes to great lengths to warn the people of the seriousness of the wine and bread (1Cor 11:27-30). Once a person puts their hand to the plow (starts their personal journey towards the Kingdom) they must not look back (Luke 9:62).

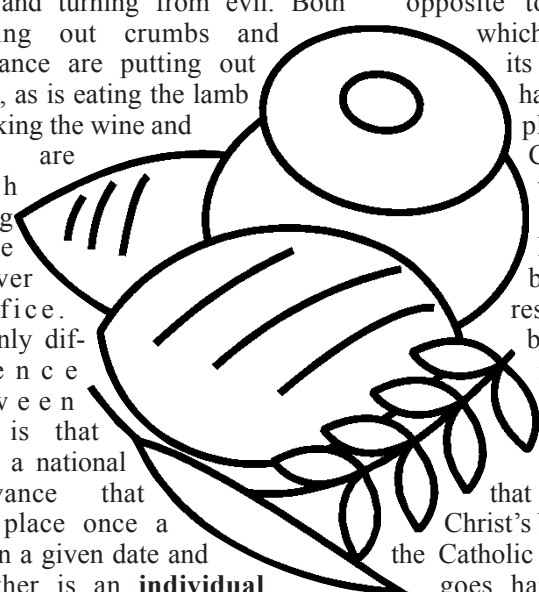
The unleavened state ("the empty house", Matt 12:43-45; or our symbolic dead bodies under the baptismal waters) is a very short period of a Christian's development (only about

seven days in the general plan revealed by the biblical Feast Days), so they can be renewed with the leavening (starter), which is Christ, that has come directly from God the Father. **Christ is the living bread** (with life in it), which came down from the Father (John 6:32-35). With this in mind, the question must be asked: how did Christianity get so far off track as to think Christ is represented by the unleavened bread? Unleavened bread has no life (leavening) in it. **It is dead, flat and unable to reproduce itself.** This is entirely opposite to the leavened type,

which has no limitations on its increase. The deception has come from the same place as other false Christian doctrines, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church. This church has been deceived into believing Christ is represented by unleavened bread, and passed this idea on through all of its spin-off churches throughout the world. The unleavened wafer that they believe represents Christ's body, is a major tenet of the Catholic Church. This doctrine goes hand in hand with the image of the **dead** Christ on a cross that is hung around their necks. Could Satan's message be any clearer about the One he tried to wipe out as a child?

Many people see the seriousness of purging out the old leaven so it will not grow and engulf their whole person, but are totally blind to the effect which the new leaven will have on them. We as Christians must ask for this earnest of God's spirit (2Cor 5:5, KJV), so it will cause a leavening effect that will bring life to our being in the same way the small amount of sour dough brings life to the unleavened batch of new dough. After all, that was one of the main reasons Christ came to mankind (John 10:10). **Christ is the "bread of life"** (John 6:48).

This writer finds much comfort in knowing that the new leaven will act



SINGING THE PSALMS

by Susan Owen, Staefa, Switzerland

Psalms are most expressive and poetic in Hebrew, and there is great value in singing them in their original language. This could have been what Paul, Peter, etc., in some New Testament scriptures, were referring to.

Scriptures from the New Testament

I have only taken quotes from the New Testament and made comments on these scriptures. Of course, there are many more scriptures about singing the Psalms in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms themselves. In the first two scriptures quoted below, "Psalms", "Hymns" and "Spiritual Songs" all refer to the titles that were used in the Psalms, originally in Hebrew, then translated to Greek. The Psalm titles in Hebrew are meant to be sung, and they are part of the overall structure of the poem. To add to or take away from them is detrimental to the musical/poetical structure of the Psalm.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in **Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, singing and making melody** in your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:18-19).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in **Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, singing with grace** in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16).

"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him **sing Psalms**" (James 5:13).

"And when they had **sung a Hymn**, they went out to the mount of Olives" (John 26:30).

The original Greek says they "psalmodized", or something to that effect in English. Many have concluded that they sang the Great Hallel (Psalms 113-118), that being part of the Jewish Passover service, and Psalm 118 is often thought to be that part if only one were sung. Psalms 113

and 114 are usually sung earlier in the evening.

"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding, **I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding**" (1Cor 14:15).

Singing with understanding is essential. Each word is so special that leaving out even one word changes/distorts the meaning. I think singing the original Psalms in Hebrew helps me to sing with understanding (please see more about this topic in the section "About Translations").

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You'" (Heb 2:11-12).

This scripture refers back to Psalm 22. The Book of Psalms, in Hebrew, is called *Tehilim*, meaning "Praises". Had David wanted to specifically underline "psalm-singing", he could have used the Hebrew word *zamar* (to sing Psalms). However, he did use the word *halal* (to praise), as his verb root. The verb *halal* is found at the beginning of many Psalms, and David's praises were almost certainly musical, of the sort found in the Book of Psalms. So this is most likely a reference to psalmody.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

What could they have possibly been singing? We know that they knew the Psalms well because 23 different Psalms are quoted throughout the book of Acts, and there seems to be considerable evidence that the Hebrew Psalm melodies were still being sung in the Temple at the time; however, not in the cantillation-type style in the synagogues today. So if the Christians vis-

ited the Temple and if they participated in the liturgy there, they may have even known the melodies indicated by the *te amim* (Hebrew musical notation in the Bible), by heart.

They did not have a church hymnbook other than the Psalms at the time, and I speculate that possibly even the Christians who were previously gentiles learned to sing the Psalms in Hebrew from the Christians who were previously Jews.

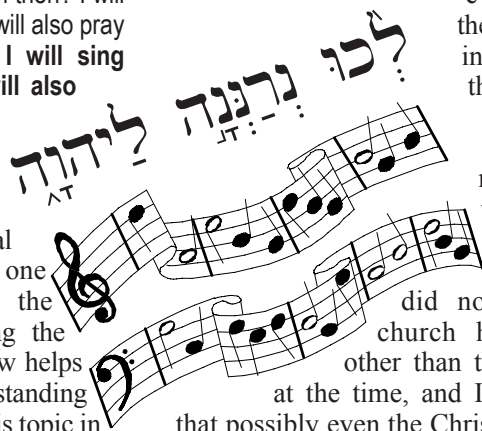
In Search of Psalm Singers

Are there any Christians on earth even singing the Psalms? We know that the Jews still chant them, but I cannot find any group of Christians really singing entire Psalms out of the Bible, even out of translated versions.

Mainstream Christianity these days has no melodic system that would enable it to sing all of the Psalms in a passable way, at least not in the vernacular. Otherwise, unless one belongs to a really "liturgical" church, or one that uses one of the old metrical Psalters (some of which cover most, if not all, the Psalms), one has no hope of singing all the Psalms in services, in or out of the vernacular.

When verses from the Psalms are quoted in songs, they are often extremely edited: things are added in that were never in the Psalms, and essential things are often taken out. Metrically rewritten psalms have also sometimes been so altered, that they are very poor renditions of the Psalms, even when compared to Psalms in translation form.

I don't think that we Christians are singing what we should be singing, that is, the Psalms. And in most countries other than the USA, almost everyone sings songs in other languages, for



example, in German speaking countries, songs are often sung in English, French sometimes, Italian once in a while, and even in Hebrew occasionally, but alas, not Psalms. But why not? Why not Psalms in Hebrew?

About the Language of the Psalms

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:19, "yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." If everything were in Hebrew, people would not be able to understand it (the service would sound beautiful but people would not learn much from it). I'm not advocating switching religious services to Hebrew!

And to make sure that there is understanding, is the reason why I sing the Psalms privately and also perform them publicly using a transliteration/translation with an overhead projector (a computer projector would be nice too!), in order that the words can be followed in Hebrew and their meaning can be understood in the current language, whatever that may be. (Some of these in German are posted at my website.) I have done a 1:1 correspondence to the best of my limited ability, in order to make it as clear as possible for the non-Hebrew speaker. So it is sort of like both speaking in tongues and providing the interpretation at the same time.

I do not want to take the attitude of "if you were as spiritual as I am you would take the time to learn to understand Hebrew, too". That is simply not the case. However, I can much more appreciate references to the original Hebrew when I read them in articles, commentaries, etc., and I feel that this learning is important. It would be wonderful to have many more believers who understand Hebrew. This is why, the longer I do this project, the more excited I get about it. Learning Hebrew by singing the Psalms is a side benefit, which comes practically unexpectedly.

At first, before I tried it, I thought that singing in Hebrew would not be meaningful to me, and as I mentioned, I do have to use a transliteration as well as a translation in order to understand the meanings of the words that I am singing. and I also have learned a

few word roots and word meanings as an enjoyable hobby. However, extra study aside, by using a translation along with a transliteration, even I, as a non-Hebrew speaker can appreciate and understand the Hebrew.

We are dealing with 2,000+ different Hebrew words used throughout the entire book of Psalms, and many of these are closely related to each other, belonging together in "word families". So this means that there are considerably fewer than 2,000 "families" of word meanings, and learning words in groups reduces the number of new meanings to learn. There are also many similarities between Hebrew and English, and other languages, as the paths of migration of the Hebrew roots through other languages show.

Putting these numbers of words into perspective, all beginning foreign language students must acquire a working vocabulary of at least 1,000 words, before they can speak a language on the most basic level. Fluent speakers in their own mother tongue may be familiar with as many as 50,000 words! So perhaps learning the meanings of 2,000 words is not such a difficult task, especially when one is singing and enjoying the Psalms in Hebrew!

I was recently discussing singing Psalms in Hebrew with another (German-speaking) believer, and he quoted me Psalm 133 in Hebrew, in fact, even translating into German what it meant! I was amazed. "Ah, we learned that in boy scout camp," he told me. If Psalm 133, then why not all the Psalms? I see it as entirely feasible.

About Translations

It is inevitable, no matter how diligent the translation, that something will be lost—and gained!—in translation. That is simply the nature of human language. Even in trying to convey the emotions felt in one musical language in the terms of another, this consideration comes into play.

Singing the Psalms in their original language enables us to be closer to the original text, even though we, if we are non-Hebrew speakers as I am, may still need to experience it additionally through a translation/transliteration version.

The musical expression of the

Psalms cannot be moved from one language to another, as the rhythm and word placement is different, therefore, the musical sense would be lost. (Referring to the *te amim*, musical markings in the Hebrew text itself.)

Metrical rewrites of the Psalms are even more altered than translations. Modern metrical hymnody therefore, is a compromise. Its chief fault is the loss of melodic, verbal and rhythmic flexibility, to the detriment of the meaning of the words.

We must face the reality that whenever we try to put the original texts of the Bible into modern terms, verbal and/or musical, we are really creating a new work. Writers put the stamp of their own personality on the musical work thus created.

Many of the (original Hebrew) Psalms, by their mere structure, don't lend themselves to metrical hymnody as they stand. Psalms 24, 29 and 96 are among the most magnificent in the Bible; yet their structure lacks the kind of repetition that would enable them to fit into a metrical, repeated-verse formula (at least without the most severe editing). Many Psalms can be crammed into a metrical format, but only if edited structurally first. (Psalm 98 is more repetitive in some ways than Psalm 96. At the other extreme is Psalm 136, which is repetitive indeed.)

Personal Background

After many years of prayerful searching and questioning about my responsibility as a Christian musician, I have come to believe that I need learn to sing the Psalms in Hebrew, and to make this music available to others.

When I was a teenager, I had heard that the Psalms were originally created to be sung. I tried to sing them, along with playing the guitar. This effort was not successful. I just bored myself. After I came into contact with WCG (the Worldwide Church of God) I thought that WCG was great, because the hymns were Psalm rewrites. That was a lot closer to singing the Psalms than anything else I had ever seen before.

However, within the last 5 years, I started comparing these rewrites with translations, and found much lacking. So about a year ago, I started "through-texting" translations of the Book of

Psalms, to music. I completed the whole book of Psalms in German (Elberfelder version) but again, unsatisfactory—first of all, I do not totally understand the Psalms (there is much depth and layered meanings in them, and it would take more than a human lifetime to really totally understand all the aspects of the Psalms!). Second of all, the format of modern music 3/4 or 4/4 does not lend itself to singing prose, unless you hold certain syllables longer than others. Also, in order to fit uneven-length lines to a melody that will be reused for multiple verses, it is necessary to sustain some syllables across multiple notes. Even when an extremely skilled writer sets the Psalms to music, the question is, can anybody else except an extremely skilled musician sing them?

It was totally unexpected to me that I would end up singing the Psalms in Hebrew. I originally wanted to sing the Psalms, in whatever language using whatever translation (this was always unclear, so I would go from one language to another and one translation to another; I speak English and German, a little Spanish, and understand also some French). My Psalm-Team member suggested that I do it in Hebrew. I thought it was a crazy idea. I had learned the letters 20 years ago, so had a slight idea of how much work that would be. I quickly dismissed the idea for the most part, especially once I tried to find a transliteration (and found a dozen different transliteration versions for the same Hebrew word! Not to mention a dozen sets of rules as to how the Hebrew letters should be transliterated into English!), and was satisfied with thinking that perhaps I would get to singing the Psalms in Hebrew... someday.

Within the past few months, I have come to the point where I believe that the only way that it is even possible to really sing the Psalms is in Hebrew, because I learned of the *te amim*, the musical indications in the Hebrew text, which were added by the Masorites, based on the way that the Psalms were sung from the time of David or perhaps earlier. This is a way to sing the Psalms that I find musically pleasing.

As a result of singing the Psalms, I feel a lot closer to the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. I never

tire of singing the Psalms. I've started posting files of the music on my website (midi audio format, alas, only instrumental, and PDF files of the music notation), as well as transliterations and translations (text files of the librettos) for different languages. I am somewhat consumed with this project, and have already had a chance to perform Psalms four times. One of these times, if men had been able to control it, I wouldn't have been allowed to sing. But it was under extraordinary conditions that I was able to sing.

So there you have it, these are my reasons for singing the Psalms in Hebrew.

Disclaimer

I am not a Hebrew or Greek scholar, and I am understanding these scriptures to the best of my ability at this time. (Some of my comments are based on the work of others, who are specialists.) I do not judge people who do not agree with my viewpoint.

About the Music

I want to make it perfectly clear that the way I am singing the Psalms is thoroughly described in the book: *Music of the Bible Revealed*, by **Susanne Haik-Vantoura**, and that I neither invented nor discovered this method of music indication, this way of singing the Psalms.

In fact, I believe that this is the way King David sung the Psalms, and I also believe that it is genuinely of God and therefore should not be commercialized, and that the music, as I believe that it is from God, should be in the public domain, and available to all, without private profit-making and commercialization.

Examples of music can be found on the Internet. Psalms 67 and 82:

www.geocities.com/atl04/MP3S

I also want thank our Philippine brethren for their encouragement, and to mention that they are also very interested in singing the Psalms in Hebrew, here is a link to their special

Hebrew Melody Source

by John Wheeler

The source of the Hebrew Melodies referred to in Susan Owen's article is the musical notation found in the Hebrew Bible, *te`amim*.

Since 1982, I've been involved with the work of Suzanne Haik-Vantoura (now deceased), who has deciphered the original musical meaning of the *te`amim*. Her work is entitled (in English) *The Music of the Bible Revealed*. In 1991 I became the editor and co-publisher of the English translation of her original French book (2nd ed., 1978). I have written numerous articles and done many lectures and performances concerning her music over the years—even performing certain Psalms and “prosodic” texts in Hebrew to harp accompaniment for Special Music, weddings and talent shows.

Continued on page 10

page on their music:

www.skyinet.net/~maxzen/music.htm

They have also written some very interesting articles about music and the Psalms, which I hope that they will be posting on their website soon.

Special thanks to Norman Edwards for encouraging me to write this article, I have incorporated some of his comments. And many thanks to my Psalm team member, David Ison, for all his encouragement. He has been composing his own beautiful music to the Psalms for quite some time, and encouraged me to learn Hebrew. His website is:

www.hebrewpsalms.org

Psalms set to music:

audios.dtison.net/dtison/hebrew/psalms

Psalm narrations in Hebrew:


audios.dtison.net/dtison/hebrew/narrations

It may not be essential that everyone sing Psalms in Hebrew, but God has great variety and I think that He wants some people to expand and relearn to sing the Psalms the way they used to be done.

My website link:

www.geocities.com/atl04

My plans for the Near Future:

I am tentatively planning a tour in the US for the summer of 2004 (July-August), as well as making CDs available at production costs (or free if my personal funds will allow.) 

**"Hebrew Melody Source" from
box on previous page**

Since the entire Hebrew Masoretic Text is annotated with two systems of *te'amim* (one for Psalms, Proverbs and the body of Job, another for the prologue and epilogue of Job and the rest of the biblical books), Mme. Haik-Vantoura's work encompasses much more than the Psalms. Before her death, she and her assistants had published some 5,000 verses—about one fourth of Hebrew Scripture—in score form. Mrs. Owen works from the melodies published in the out-of-print two-volume set *Les 150 Psaumes*, and to some extent from the accompanied scores that accompany several albums that Mme. Haik-Vantoura made.

It would take many paragraphs (such as you will find on my website) to spell out the full significance of Mme. Haik-Vantoura's discovery. In brief, the notation comes down to us via a specific family of Second Temple priests: the Elders of Bathyra, whom many Jewish scholars identify with the Herodians of the NT. The Masoretes who received it (via the Karaites) understood its significance but not its actual meaning, and reinterpreted it according to the norms of their time. Others have sought to decipher the notation independently over the centuries, but they have failed in that they too have tried to read their own ideas into the notation. Only Haik-Vantoura has used the right starting premise (the *te'amim* are musical) and the right standard of comparison (the Hebrew verbal syntax) necessary to reconstruct the musical theory behind the notation.

Structurally, music and words form an integrated whole; they had to be created and transmitted together. That means the entire Hebrew Bible "from Moses to Malachi" is an immense vocal score, and that we can hear today something very close to the melodies that the biblical authors themselves wrote for their own words. In the context of ancient history, that is not as staggering a proposition as it may first seem; in antiquity, virtually every sacred author was a "poet-composer". Moreover, originally even the Torah could be sung to plucked string accompaniment (cf. the Hebrew of Psalm 119:54).

I started in my research of Mme.

Haik-Vantoura's work so many years ago because I wanted to know: 1) what did the original music of the Psalms sound like? 2) is there such a thing as a biblical, universal standard of what is "good" in music? I got answers to these questions beyond my wildest dreams. But the music itself has another, overriding purpose: 3) it clarifies the syntax and expounds the meaning of the words it supports, thus giving the sense of the often-ambiguous Hebrew text. In so doing, it convey's God's heart toward man and man's heart toward God in a way the words alone could never do.

Like Susan, I would not say that the Church of God is required to conduct its services in biblical Hebrew and Aramaic to the ancient tunes. The New Testament was originally meant to be read aloud, and in Greek. Many languages were spoken by those called to the early Church. In modern times it is necessary to have musical forms adaptable (more or less) to different languages, and we know that the early Church had to take similar measures in its own day. (The Church was much more familiar with the folk music of the synagogue—which is so adaptable—than with the classical music of the Temple—which is not.) But it is worth the effort (for those who can exert it) to learn the original melodic system and enough of the original language to be able to recite the texts with understanding. I have gained many a priceless insight over the years by this means, not least of which being insights into the personalities of the biblical authors (and indeed of God Himself, especially as portrayed by the Torah).

Much more information is available on my website:

www.kingdavidsharp.org

The site includes recordings, musical scores and articles entitled:

A History of the Musical Accents
Attempts to Decipher the Accents
Haik-Vantoura's Deciphering Key
"The Hands of David"

The Biblical Chironomy

"Thy Statutes Have Been My Songs"

The Biblical Musical Instruments

Sacred Music in Antiquity


Implications for Modern Worship

—John Wheeler

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So What's Your Excuse?

(author unknown)

The next time you think you have an excuse why God can't use you, remember the people whom God did use:

Noah was drunk.
Abraham was too old.
Isaac was a daydreamer.
Jacob was a liar.
Leah was ugly.
Joseph was abused.
Moses was a murderer.
Deborah was a woman.
Gideon was afraid.
Samson had long hair.
Rahab was a prostitute.
Jeremiah and Timothy were too young.
Elijah was suicidal.
Isaiah preached naked.
Jonah ran away from God.
Naomi was a widow.
Job was bankrupt.
John the Baptist ate locusts.
Peter was impulsive and hot tempered.
Martha worried about everything.
Mary Magdalene was demon-possessed.
The Samaritan Woman was divorced (more than once).
Zacchaeus was too small.
Paul was too religious.
Timothy had a stomach ulcer.
David pretended madness, had an affair and ran away from his own son.
Lazarus was dead.

Some of these are natural conditions. Others are sins. But the sinners repented and went on. **And they all served the Eternal in spite of their difficulties.**

So how are you serving Him?
Or do you have a better excuse?



Friendship – A Lost Art in the Church of God?

by Roger Waite

The writer is a United Church of God member in Brisbane, Australia

Has friendship become a lost art in the Church of God today? I have heard many stories of people who have left the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) to stand up for what they believe to be the truth of God, who have lamented how they lost so many friends, or none of their friends kept in contact with them at all after they left that church. Has this happened to you?

This happened to myself. Only one good friend made any effort to keep in touch with me after I had left the WCG. Even when I was in the WCG, when they kept the doctrines which I still believe, very few people would ever make the effort to ask me over for dinner, give me a social call on the phone or be the one to come over to start a conversation with me at church. I found myself initiating contact with my friends, who I had great many of, the vast majority of time. I'm sure this experience is the same for many of you out there. How many people have thought of not attending for a while just to see if anybody would care if they were missed? Why do people feel this way?

The situation I mentioned before about no one keeping in contact with you after you left your former church works both ways. My good friend back in Worldwide who still keeps in touch with me, along with others in WCG, have lamented much the same thing—how few of those who have left Global, United, and other places have kept in touch with them. I have been guilty of this myself. There are a number of friends whom I have not seen or spoken to in 4 or 5 years since I left the WCG that I am in the process of reaching out to again. Does this apply to you?

What Priority Are Friends?

Jesus Christ made this profound state-

ment in the Sermon on the Mount: "For where your treasure is (what you prioritize with your money, time, and resources), there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:21). Could this be why friendship—real, outgoing friendship—is such a lost art in the church of God today—because we just don't devote our time, money and resources to it?

Alan Loy McGuinnis in his excellent book "The Friendship Factor" makes the following comments about how we prioritize friendship:

"As I've watched those who are deeply loved, I've noticed they all believe that people are the basic source of happiness. Their companions are very important to them, and no matter how busy their schedule, they have developed a lifestyle and a way of dispensing their time that allows them to have several profound relationships with people.

On the other hand, in talking with lonely people, I often discover that, though they lament their lack of close companions, they actually place little emphasis on the cultivation of friends... Deep friendship requires cultivation over the years—evenings before the fire, long walks together, and lots of time for talk. It requires keeping the television off so that the two of you can log in with each other...

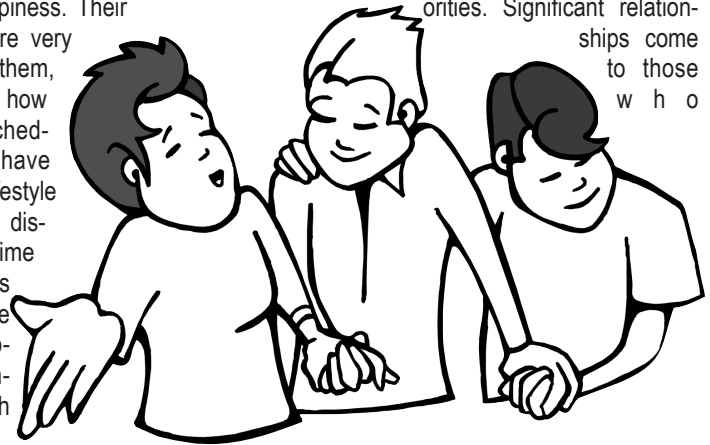
Why do we seldom relate at such a deep level? Why is there such a shortage of friendship? One simple reason: we do not devote ourselves sufficiently to it. If our relationships are the most valuable commodity we can own in this

world, one would expect that everyone everywhere would assign friendship highest priority. But for many, it does not even figure in their list of goals. They apparently assume that love will 'just happen'.

But of course, few of the valuable things in life 'just happen'. When they happen, it is because we recognize their importance and devote ourselves to them. You can have almost anything you want if you want it badly enough. If you want to run the Boston Marathon badly enough you probably can do it.

And if you want love you can have that too. It is simply a matter of pri-

orities. Significant relationships come to those w h o



assign them enough importance to cultivate them. So... assign top priority to your relationships" (*The Friendship Factor*, p 21–22, 24–25).

How important is this subject to God? Let's look at something else that Jesus Christ said during His ministry here on earth. When confronted with the question of which is the greatest commandment, Christ answered the lawyer by not just giving him one commandment. He actually gave him two commands emphasizing just how closely related these two commandments are. He told us to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and then to love one another as ourselves (Matt 22:35–40). How much time and

resources do we devote to looking after ourselves and reaching our own goals in life? How much time on the other hand do we devote to cultivate our relationships with others? How do they compare in our lives? The degree to which we devote ourselves to the latter compared to the former is a good measure of how much the fruit of God's Holy Spirit we know as love is a part of our life. How do you rate?

A History to Overcome

I was recently impressed by an excellent historical paper by Alan Ruth on the Trials and Triumphs of the many groups who have sprung from the WCG. In his paper, he makes these fascinating comments.

"Going to a Bible bookstore was (and still is) a memorable experience for me. Like a kid in a candy store, I would browse through the many Bible reference aids, Bible helps, commentaries and other Bible study tools in the bookstore. Inevitably I would find my way to the 'cult' section of the bookstore where books were kept on Satanists, new-agers, and groups which the 'Christian world' considered cults. This is where books about 'cults' such as the Worldwide Church of God were. I would thumb through these books and shake my head in disagreement over their view of 'Armstrongism'... There was one topic in these books I particularly disagreed with. I did not like the fact that some authors labeled the WCG as a cult because it supposedly taught salvation by works, a salvation based on law rather than grace... I wondered how writers could say such things about us...

Before I studied the splits, I would have said that the above view of the old WCG (and by extension the splits of today) was unjustified and totally false. In my studies, however, I have found a few grains of truth in these statements. We in the splits do place a strong emphasis on certain doctrines. We can

give the impression that we believe we are saved by works of the law (legalistic) although we do not believe this. As some say we seem to 'major in the minors' by focusing a great deal of our attention on certain subjects or behaviors more than others.

Some splits place a heavy (or sole) emphasis on selected topics. There are church libraries which lack study materials or tapes on the grace of God, daily Christian living principles or service to the church and the community. Instead, the library may have information on prophecy or the special revelations of

the group's leader. I have read newsletters or magazines where the primary aim is to discuss some special topic such as the Sacred Calendar, prophecy and world events, the latest gossip about the WCG, or other selected themes. In some publications, there is little if anything taught on grace, faith, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance. The topics that are focused on are viewed as so

important that it seems our salvation depends on our studying and understanding them. This may be true. However, have we in the church of God forgotten that unforgiveness (Matt 6:14-15), hatred, wrath, envy (Gal 5:19-21) covetousness (1Cor 6:9-10), and other such attitudes, if not repented of, will also keep us out of the Kingdom?

It is one thing to be labeled a cult for doctrine. It is another thing to act cultic. We sometimes give the impression that we are cultic or not Christian by our attitude and demeanor toward others. On a personal level, we in the splits may treat others (especially our brethren) coolly or distantly, lacking in warmth of love and concern that is to be our hallmark as Christians. There are members in the splits who have a great deal of understanding and knowledge about many Bible subjects. They are able to show others why they believe what they believe and are strong in explaining doctrines. Yet some of them can be the

most distant, aloof, impersonal brethren in the church. They have a mind for doctrines, but they lack very important relationship skills...

One of the biggest problems in the splits is our struggles with relationships between brethren and especially between lay members and church leaders. Our actions speak louder than our words. What we need is some balance, an adjusting of our mental scales to place more weight on relationship skills and the mercy and love of God. In a confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus chided them for meticulously tithing while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, such as justice, mercy and faith (Matt 23:23). They were straining out a doctrinal gnat, but swallowing a camel (v 24).

Could this be what our critics see, that we weigh heavily on some laws and not on other doctrines such as love, forgiveness, and compassion?" (*The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles*, p. 29-31)

Better Relationships Still Needed Today

I couldn't agree more with Alan that we need to focus on relationship skills in the church of God today. One thing that I still find in the church today, is the lack of good, detailed material in sermons, in particular, and church literature on relationship skills. Christian living is the particular area that I am most interested when it comes to God's truth, though I also have a great love for doctrine, prophecy and Bible history. There is so much Christian living material out there which is fantastic that could be used in helping brethren relate to others better and develop stronger marriages and families that the church hardly touches on that I have purchased from Christian bookstores.

To illustrate what I mean, out of the average 60 odd sermons you would hear in your church organization in a year, how many of those were devoted to marriage, how many to childrearing, how many to relationship skills? Now compare that to the number of sermons on doctrinal subjects and those on prophecy and those which are more head-knowledge sermons rather than those which have material on relationship skills which you can practically apply in your life. I find that there are

Salvation by Works, A 3-step Process?

The WCG never taught "salvation by works" directly, but putting three of its teachings together certainly leads to that conclusion:

1. A member must be in the Church—the WCG—to be saved.
 2. A minister could put a member out of the church for not tithing, not keeping the Sabbath, not keeping the Feasts, etc.
 3. If the minister put a member out for not doing the above works, he lost his salvation.
- NSE

lots of general, overview sermons that encourage us to keep the standards but few that go into genuine detail on what those standards are.

When you look through the material on Christian living in any good Christian bookstore discussing subjects like how to build and maintain friendships, communications skills, marriage and how to raise children in great detail, counseling skills and helping those who need help in life, you begin to comprehend some of the superficiality that is there in what the church provides on Christian living that I hope can be reversed in time. There's only so much that can be covered at a time in sermons and church literature coupled with other subjects that the church has to address, but I hope in time the church can provide more material in this vital area of life. I would like to challenge the ministry in all branches of God's church to devote more of their sermons to detailed material on relationship skills. The gospels and the epistles of Paul, in particular, and the many books written on relationship skills that one can pick up in Christian bookstores have so much to offer us on God's way of life that we can and should learn from.

To Love and Be Loved

The secret to happiness is best summed up in the old saying, "To love and to be loved". When we have a cause in our life, when we are devoted to something that is bigger than ourselves that is good, such as God's calling of supporting His work and giving and making people happy, we shall not lack happiness in our lives. Christ said it is more blessed to give than to receive and its only through living the "way of give" that we will be truly happy.

Also, we need to be loved, to have good close friends who aren't just fair-weather friends. We also yearn for a sense of belonging, to have friends who make us feel like we belong. We all want a wide variety of casual friends and acquaintances of both sexes our own age and different age groups as well as a number of friends who we can spend regular time with and who also seek our company even when the chips are down. Being loved more often than not is a direct by prod-

uct of loving others.

Whenever we lack in any of these areas, of loving others or being loved through friendship, there will be a certain emptiness there. There is a lot of loneliness out there, even in the church, and we have a responsibility as Christians to extend our hands in friendship to those we can help and do our little bit in adding to their sense of belonging. We really can be like a strong family in the church, but its up to all of us to individually, as a committee of one, to do our part in helping add to that sense of community in the church, not to mention helping people we meet in all walks of life. We read in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith".

From a kind word, an encouraging note, a thoughtful gesture, an ear to listen, or an expression of appreciation, to a sacrifice of time, energy or convenience, love is a way of life. And it is a way of life that is not out for recognition. It does what it does because it feels it. And it feels it because it believes in it, and is led by God's Spirit that comes from the God who is love.

Some people seem oblivious to the needs of others. They bypass signals that reveal if a friend is depressed, fatigued, troubled, fearful, or irritated. On the other hand, they may be nonchalant when a friend experiences joy, achievements, or success. Insensitivity is behaving towards friends with indifference, unconcern, a lack of feeling in our response and calloused attitudes. The Bible prophecy in Matt 24:12 about the love of many growing cold has certainly come true in our day and sadly in the church also. Perhaps it was to people like this whom the Apostle Paul offered the advice, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Rom 12:15). God wants us to be alert and caring about our friends and tuned in to their feelings, their needs and those things that they are particularly interested in.

A good friend strives to make friends feel special, to be alert during their time together and to be thinking about them during their time apart. A friend needs to feel they are one chosen among many and that your friendship with them really means

something to you.

Overcoming the Obstacles

There are many obstacles to building meaningful friendships in the church today. Being caught up in the cares of the world (Matt 13:22) is one of the most typical. This world presents us so many choices of things to do to occupy our time compared to yesteryear that we can easily take on too much and more than we really need to that we don't spend the time we should with our families and reaching out to those who would appreciate our friendship.

These past few years have been somewhat traumatic for most of us in the church with what has happened in the church. As well as the doctrinal crisis, we have also seen a moral crisis in the church today. Many of our friends who seemed more spiritual when the former association which many of us belonged to upheld the standards and law of God, have since changed dramatically. There used to be a positive peer pressure back then where those who were only superficially converted appeared more spiritual than they really were.

Once that church no longer upheld the standards and kept on emphasizing that we are fully saved now by grace only, there was no longer any external pressure to keep those standards. As a result, the morality that members showed was purely dependent upon the internal discipline that they had or lack thereof. Because of that, we have seen the lives of so many people go off the rails. This has led to a great many broken relationships, divorces, and broken families. A great many of us, who have internalized and held onto those standards, have been affected and hurt by their actions and lost many good friendships as a result. Many of us are still healing.

There are many stages in that healing process but the final stage and one of the most important ones is to once again become outwardly focused on reaching out to others and take a personal interest in the lives and concern of others in the right way. When we are in recovery mode, we can be overwhelmed by our own concerns and problems that we no longer feel very sociable. It's hard to reach out and help

out others when we need help ourselves. In time, as we work through those stages, we must reach out for that stage where we can reach out to others and be a generous and caring friend to those who could really be helped by our friendship.

Replace Focus on Self with Focus on Others

Despite all of what has happened in these past few years, we need to move beyond focusing mostly on our own lives and concerns and focus on reaching out and helping our brethren in the church. The preaching of God's truth and way of life in the church by the ministry is the visible part of the feeding the flock commission that the church has. Do you realize that all of us have a part in that commission? Our encouragement, kindly advice, the good times that we give to others and our friendship play a vital role in that commission. Our positive, friendly influence and giving others the spiritual and emotional needs that they have are all a part what others need to reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Sometimes our friendship may be all that keeps someone in the church. The way we make it into God's kingdom is to help others make it too!

Our giving should not just be limited to our own in the church. We all should be zealous and enthusiastic about reaching out to the world with God's truth. We are making a difference in people's lives with the way of life and the truths of God we are collectively teaching through preaching the Gospel to the world. We do this out of love for them and because we care for them individually that they would be spared the misery of life without God by mending their ways, turning back to God and living the wonderful way of life that we sometimes take for granted.

Friendship Is All About Giving

In closing this article, I'd like to quote from a sermon given over 10 years ago by Mr. Carn Catherwood called *The Way of Giving* that still to this day is my all-time favorite sermon. This

quote emphasizes the main point that I have been driving at that will help us become more of a family in the church of God today and solve the problem of the lack of deep, meaningful friendships that we have in the church. That point is, that following, developing a strong relationship with our Creator, whose Spirit gives us the ability to love others, that



we must assign top priority in our life to building our relationships and friendships with others and that we have to plan our giving in order to be the givers that God wants us to be in our lives.

Mr. Catherwood makes these excellent comments:

"God gives us so many things and He has a measuring stick that He employs in many of those decisions He has to make from time to time when things are to be given to us.

In Luke 6:38, it simply says 'give', you the subject, give the verb. You give, and what happens if you do, 'and it shall be given unto you'... You always remember the givers, don't you? The interesting thing is God also remembers the givers. Are you a giver? Does God remember you? Do you have His attention? Another point is that the example of the givers is in what creates in many ways the greatest impression on those who are new and they remember the givers. You offer food, you offer conversation, you offer the warmth of your home to somebody and it builds a bond. It binds us together and us to God because God is the giver of every good and perfect gift and wants us to become givers. God is very sensitive to giving and He responds in dramatic ways...

The two broad ways in the Bible [can

be simply summarized] as the way of 'give' and the way of 'get'. How do we move from the way of 'get' to the way of 'give'?


Point one is to ask God to place in you 'goodness' or generosity, the specific fruit of God's Spirit (Gal 5:22) that will eliminate the get motive and desire to be open-hearted, giving and serving.

Point two is to plan your giving. That is, sit down and make an active plan for giving, opportunities, occasions, and situations where you intend to live the way of give. Put some pressure on yourself! Plan it! Don't sort of stumble haphazardly into giving. You can't and you won't! Plan it, organize it, think about it and set it in motion consciously. Isa 32:8 says, 'The generous devise generous things and by generous things do they stand.' Yeah, you have to have a plan!

Plan regular opportunities to give hospitality. They're giving experiences that we need. Maybe once a month, maybe more often. Plan things in your prayer time, especially plenty of intercessory prayer for others.

When you ask God to bless someone who is sick, who is weak, who is depressed, you have given them time. It's a reflection of the way of give.

Plan to see those who are sick or elderly. Plan to talk to new members, visitors or those who need someone to talk to or someone whom you haven't talked to for a while. If you're a single man, have an active plan for giving in dating. Plan to use your resources, your money or whatever to give to others. Finally, plan your offerings which you add to your tithes in advance. Plan to increase your Holy Day offerings as time goes by.

In Psalm 37:21, David wrote, 'The righteous shows mercy and gives.' Is that a description of you? '(Your name) shows mercy and gives.' Let's determine to give as we've never given before. To give our lives to God in submission to His will first and foremost so that He can place in us those spiritual gifts and fruits that will enable us to give and to give even more than we ever have before and God's blessings will be upon us and the work of God as a result." 

Assemblies of Yahweh Threatens to Sue Norman Edwards Over 3-letter Discrepancy

The ways of our Father are truly wonderful. He has put us here on earth where we are physical—where we cannot mess up the universe for all eternity. But at the same time He has allowed mankind to get into terrible trouble, given us some knowledge of His truth, and given us opportunity to see what we will do.

We can disregard His truth, or we can study it.

If we decide study it, we can sit around and feel good about how much we know, or we can use it to serve others who are in desperate need.

If we decide to serve others, we can choose to serve a little bit, or we can serve others with our whole lives.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15 and many other “eternal judgment” scriptures show that what we do now is important.

Nevertheless, our purpose here can easily become clouded when we begin to equate the work of the Creator with a human organization rather than a spiritual Entity that He manages.

For whatever reason, Jacob Meyer, head of the Assemblies of Yahweh, a non-profit corporation, feels it is important to search the Internet and correct anyone who misuses the name of the corporation—whether purposefully or accidentally. This writer was further mystified that after a lengthy exchange of letters, Nathan Meyer (son of Elder Jacob Meyer) **never communicated the fact that the only legal problem with my article was it should have said “Assembly of Yahweh”** (singular) rather than “Assemblies of Yahweh” (plural). He may have hoped that I would simply delete the article rather than find the precise problem. By calling the Assembly of Yahweh, a Michigan corporation I found the whole issue was three letters: “ies” instead of “y”.

Nevertheless, many interesting and valuable topics are covered in the correspondence that followed. It contains a threatening letter from the Assemblies of Yahweh’s intellectual property lawyer and my response.

Opening E-mail Letter

LETTER: February 26, 2001
I would like to draw your attention to an error that you have on your website: <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn9607/s960709.htm>. The Assemblies of Yahweh is the registered name of True Worship located in Bethel, Pennsylvania. We are not affiliated with the people in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. Please repair of your error.

—Nathaniel Meyers
Assemblies of Yahweh

RESPONSE: Thank you for pointing out this problem. We accurately reported that this group refers to itself as the Assemblies of Yahweh. If you believe that your group is the only one that has preserved the True Worship and that all others are false, please realize that I have read about or worked with hundreds of groups that make the same claim. Some people at that Assemblies of Yahweh conference we attended claimed that they were the faithful few with whom Yahweh is working.

When I write about various bodies of believers, I do not feel it is my place to declare whether specific groups or individuals are “true” or “false”. The Scriptures plainly teach: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you” (Matt 7:1–2). If I declare people to be “false worshippers” because I understand a truth of the Scriptures that they do not, will then Yahweh, in the Judgment, declare me to be a “false worshipper” because I did not understand a truth of the Scriptures that others did understand?

However, this principle of “not judging” is **not** a principle of “not teaching”. If I know of groups or individuals who are doing things that I believe to be in error, I do not condemn them as “false worshippers”, but teach the truth, if they will listen. Notice what Yahshua taught: “John said to him, Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in your name; and we forbid him, because he followed not us. But Yahshua said, Forbid him not: for

there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able to quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us” (Mark 9:38–40). From this scripture, you clearly do not need to be concerned about others who do works using the name of “Assemblies of Yahweh”, but who do not follow your group.

I realize that your group has registered “Assemblies of Yahweh” as a “service mark” and “trademark” with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and has sued other groups who attempt to use “Assemblies of Yahweh”. I would guess that you believe you need to do this “in order to protect your members from false worship”. But this is not what was done in the New Testament/Covenant Scriptures. There are numerous examples of false teachers there, but the Apostles’ efforts were focused on teaching the truth and teaching believers to distinguish between the true teachers and the false. Never once did the true Apostles go to the “state” to enlist their aid in stopping false teachers—or in getting those false teachers to use a different name.

I do not personally know the character of the leaders of the various groups calling themselves “Assemblies of Yahweh”. I make no judgment. However, I am familiar with numerous other groups that have split because of unrighteous treatment of some of the brethren by the group’s leaders. Those that left essentially held to the same doctrines and practices as the original group, and sometimes attempted to call themselves by the same or similar name. Those leaders in the original group then attempted to limit their membership loss by discrediting the split-off group, threatening members who had any contact with it, and sometimes, by various legal maneuvers to get the split-off group to use another name. One would think that if the Holy Spirit were present and obvious in the first group, and lacking in the second, that long-time true believers would be able to tell the difference. One would think that any believer would be happy that there are many

groups where "Messiah is proclaimed" (Phil 1:18)—especially if nearly all of their doctrines are the same as yours. The only ones who seem to be sad are leaders who may lose members and the offerings that they give.

It is very important that all of us, who regard ourselves as teachers of some kind, be very careful to be sure that our actions are on behalf of Yahweh, not simply on behalf of ourselves. Now, I realize that you may regard me as an "unbeliever"—even though I have received your publication "The Sacred Name Broadcaster" for seven years, I have never become a member of your organization or baptized by your ministry. Consequently, my words may be of little value to you, but I still regard you as a believer because I know that you do want to hear and head the words of Yahshua the Messiah:

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his Master has set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Master when he comes shall find so doing. Truly I say to you, that he will set him over all that he has. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Master tarries; and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken: the Master of that servant shall come in a day when he expects not, and in an hour when he knows not, and shall severely scourge him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matt 24:45–51).

May all who read this heed these words. We need to be doing the work of Yahweh, not using the power of the "state" to punish other teachers whom we believe to be in error.

All of the Scripture quotations herein are taken from the Bible you publish, "The Sacred Scriptures, Bethel Edition" © Copyright 1981, Assemblies of Yahweh, Bethel, PA 19507. At first, I thought that this book was simply a King James Version with "Lord", "God", "Jesus", etc. replaced by "Yahweh", "Elohim", "Yashuah", etc. However, as the above quote shows, someone has done considerable research into the Greek in this difficult passage and has translated it better than most. It does not sound as though these believers are

being punished forever, but that they are going to be corrected—which I believe is consistent with other scriptures and also correctly translates the Greek here. I had trouble explaining this verse in some of my previous writings, but will use your correct understanding in future writings on the subject.

Thank you very much—there is much that we can learn from each other.

May Yahweh be praised.

—NSE

Second Letter with Responses

LETTER: February 26, 2001

I again would like to point out that the group in Eaton Rapids does not call itself the Assemblies of Yahweh.

RESPONSE: Thank you for responding to my questions. If I have indeed made a mistake and misrepresented the True Assemblies of Yahweh in any way, I do want to correct it.

I sat in their conference for a day, and they continually referred to themselves as the "Assemblies of Yahweh". There were other people at that conference with whom I had previously attended their local assembly, who also referred to their local meetings as the "Assemblies of Yahweh". But I suppose that they could have another name that they do not mention much. If the Eaton Rapids group has some other "official" name, do you what it is?

LETTER: I am a member of the Assemblies of Yahweh because I strive to work on my salvation and I long for eternal life. Philippians 2:12–18. Why am I not a part of another group? 1 John 4:1–3 and Matthew 7:20–21. There is no other group that is upholding the Word of the Messiah Yahshua when He was here on earth. Matthew 5:17–20. There has been only one body down through the ages that uphold the scriptures. We can then choose if we want to be part of Yahweh's true Assembly or not. Deuteronomy 30:15–20, Ephesians 4:4, Romans 12:4, John 15:4 etc. Scripture shows that if Yahweh sees potential in an individual, He will bring them into one fold. John 10:14–18. What that individual does when they hear the Word decides their relationship with Yahweh. Isaiah 59:1–8 with additional close attention paid to verses 4–8.

RESPONSE: I read the scriptures you have cited here and I believe that you have a clear grasp of the Spirit of Yahweh and what He wants for His peo-

ple. Have you ever considered the timing of how He is doing this? Not everyone learns everything at once. In Romans 14, some believers did not believe in eating meat. The Apostle Saul did not remove them from the assemblies for causing division, but he suggested that others might want to not eat meat at times in order not to offend them. Certainly, Elder Jacob O. Meyer knows that Yahweh does not forbid the eating of meat. But I would think that Elder Jacob O. Meyer would also be as merciful and patient as the Apostle Saul in accepting those who are weak in the faith and lacking in understanding of some doctrine.

LETTER: One is the judge and lawgiver and we are all compared to Him, how could we assimilate false doctrine when He didn't? Isaiah 33:22–24. Elder Jacob O. Meyer has sought to keep this Assembly pure and to help people who are sincere seekers of Truth. Matthew 5:48. He takes his position seriously. Jacob 3:1–2 This is the major reason individuals resent him and his ministry. Amos 5:10–17.

RESPONSE: I do not resent Elder Jacob O. Meyer's ministry. I have learned from him and I would guess that many thousands of others have, also. I admire his diligence to learn and teach the Truth of Yahweh, and to keep believers pure and unspotted from the world. But have you considered the letters that Messiah commanded to be written to 7 assemblies? (Rev 1:11; 2; 3) Most of these assemblies had serious error. Yet Messiah does not command them all to join the "true assembly" in Philadelphia—He commanded everyone in each assembly to repent! So today when there are other assemblies, not associated with the Work at Bethel, that teach error, cannot the Messiah speak to them and command them to repent? Can they still be His assemblies?

Also, please consider the state of Messiah's assemblies since the time of the apostles. Did Elder Jacob O. Meyer learn all of the Truth of the Scriptures at once? Or did Messiah show him truths a few at a time over the years. Do we know where Yahweh's Assemblies were before Elder Jacob O. Meyer began his ministry? Has the assembly that Yahshua promised to build always existed (Matt 16:18)? Did those who came before Elder Jacob O. Meyer have all of the Truth that he has now—or did Yahweh allow some of them to lose some of it?

There are millions of Sabbath-Keepers in China and other remote places. Some understand the Feasts of Yahweh, His Name, and many other Truths. They may know nothing of Elder Jacob O. Meyer, but they may have as much truth as some of the other true Assemblies that went before Mr. Meyer. Who is to say that Yahweh is not teaching them now, planning to bring them into His fold at a later date?

LETTER: As per the lawsuit, check the public records and discover the reason the Assemblies of Yahweh had to stand up against people that rejected not only Yahweh's laws, but also man's laws. Hebrews 10:26-31.

RESPONSE: Can you give me more information about where I might find these public records? I did not find them on the Internet, only references to them.

LETTER: I have applied this [statement-support] manner of writing on purpose. What the Assemblies of Yahweh teaches, broadcasts and applies, is backed-up with Scripture, no exceptions. This is one more thing that separates us from others who claim to profess the Truth but can't bring themselves into subjection to Yahweh's Word. The infallible Scriptures must be used as the assessment of our human lives, not our own personal interpretation. 2 Peter 19:1-21.

In Yahshua's Name,

— Nathaniel Meyer

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for your diligent desire to explain everything from the Scriptures. However, I do

not think that any of the scriptures you cited say that Yahweh's true assemblies will always be united under a single human leader in every generation. But you certainly have proven that every true believer must be united under Yahshua the Messiah. If you can show me how I misunderstand Romans 14 and Revelation 1-3, I would be glad to learn from you.

It is a wonderful thing that you are following Yahweh in your father's footsteps. I have a son, (age 9), who also bears the name Nathaniel, whom I hope will follow his Creator all of his days also.

Thank you, and may Yahweh bless your ministry.

— NSE

Lawyer's Letter Representing Assemblies of Yahweh

LETTER: April 2, 2003
SYNNESTVEDT & LECHNER LLP
2600 Aramark Tower, 1100 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-2950 USA

Mr. Norman Edwards
P.O. Box 107
Perry, MI 48872

Re: Infringing Use of ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH Mark; Our File No. G-26,793

Dear Mr. Edwards,

We represent Assemblies of Yahweh, a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation, of Bethel, Pennsylvania. This correspondence is responsive to your reply by email dated

February 27, 2003 to our client's initial contact with you by email.

Our client had advised you that the Eaton Rapids, Michigan group has no affiliation with our client. In fact, the Eaton Rapids group is using the ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH moniker without the authorization of our client, the owner of U.S. Registration No. 1508075 (copy enclosed), and in violation of our client's rights as the federal trademark registrant.

The ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH mark was first used by our client in 1966 and has been in continuous use since that date for "printed matter, namely, magazine and booklets dealing with religion; providing religious instruction services; and evangelistic and ministerial services". By virtue of this longstanding use of the ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH mark, our client has established that their ministry have become well and favorably known as the legitimate registration for ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH, our client is legally entitled to claim exclusive rights in ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH for the goods and services set forth in Registration No. 1508075.

It is plainly apparent that the unauthorized use by the Eaton Rapids group, and any other unaffiliated groups, of our client's registered mark evidences an intent to trade on the goodwill and renown that our client has achieved as the rightful owner of the mark. We believe that any such unauthorized use of said mark constitutes infringement of our client's federal registration of, and common law trademark rights in, its mark, thus subjecting unauthorized users to liability for monetary damages, attorneys' fees and an injunction.

We request that you acknowledge in writing our client's legal position as the trademark owner and cease and desist from using the ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH moniker and trademark on your website www.servantsnews.com (and other website) except when referring to our client and the activities of our client. We would appreciate receipt of your confirmation in writing of such agreement no later than April 28, 2003. Our firm's address is set forth on our letterhead; my email address is bsilver@synnlech.com.

We believe that it is in your best interest for you to communicate with us in compliance with our request in order to avoid unnecessary conflict in the future.

Very truly yours,

Bryna S. Silver

cInt. Cls.: 16, 41 and 42
Prior U.S. Cls.: 28, 100 and 107
Reg. No. 1,508,075

United States Patent and Trademark Office Registered Oct. 11, 1988

TRADEMARK SERVICE MARK PRINCIPAL REGISTER

ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH

ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH (PENNSYLVANIA
NON-PROFIT CORPORATION)
BETHEL, PA 19507

FOR: PRINTED MATTER—NAMELY, MAGAZINE AND BOOKLETS DEALING WITH RELIGION, IN CLASS 16 (U.S. CL. 38).

FIRST USE 3-0-1966; IN COMMERCE 3-0-1966.

FOR: PROVIDING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION SERVICES, IN CLASS 41 (U.S. CL. 107).

FIRST USE 3-0-1966; IN COMMERCE 3-0-1996.

FOR: EVANGELISTIC AND MINISTERIAL SERVICES, IN CLASS 42 (U.S. CL. 100).

FIRST USE 3-0-1966; IN COMMERCE 3-0-1966.

NO CLAIM IS MADE TO THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO USE "YAHWEH", APART FROM THE MARK AS SHOWN.

THE WORD "YAHWEH" IS THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE ALMIGHTY.

SER. NO. 196,975, FILED 12-15-1978.

ROBERT M. ANDERSON, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

Edwards' Reply to Lawyer

April 29, 2003

Bryna S. Silver,
Synnestvedt & Lechner LLP
2600 Aramark Tower
1101 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-2950

Dear Bryna S. Silver,

This letter is in response to your letter of April 2, 2003, Your File G-26,793

Thank you for sending a copy of U.S. Registration No. 1508075. I acknowledge that your client, Assemblies of Yahweh, a Pennsylvania non-profit Corporation, has exclusive rights to the commercial use of the name "ASSEMBLIES OF YAHWEH" in the United States. However, it is my religious belief and historical understanding that the first century Assembly started by Yashuah, the son of Yahweh, was not a commercial enterprise and did not form as a corporation under the Roman government at that time.

You or your client could have been more helpful by more clearly explaining the nature of the problem. The references in my writing to which you took exception were actually about the Assembly of Yahweh, a Michigan Corporation, headquartered in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The only errors in my writings were incorrect plural forms, "Assemblies" instead of "Assembly". Your client mentioned officers of this corporation in his email to me, and has corresponded with them in the past.

I believe I have made a good faith effort to correct every file on the www.servantsnews.com website to correctly say "Assembly of Yahweh" when

the reference was not to your client. This involved the changing of the following files: litlst10a.pdf, litndx10.pdf, s96092.htm, s960709.htm, s961233.htm, s961235.htm, sn9607.pdf, sn9608.pdf, sn9609.pdf, sn9612.pdf. I have also deleted files litlst09.pdf, litndx09.pdf and snlist.pdf which were obsolete. Please be advised that there are some references on said site to "Assemblies of Yahweh" which do accurately refer to your client.

If you are able to find any other incorrect references on the www.servantsnews.com web site, please let me know and I will correct them. If I do not hear from you by May 30, 2003, I will consider this matter closed.

Sincerely,

Norman S. Edwards

Email Confirming Receipt of Edwards' Letter

April 30, 2003

Dear Mr. Edwards:

We received your telefax of April 29, 2003 today regarding our client Assemblies of Yahweh of Bethel, Pennsylvania. We will forward a copy to our client for their review and comment and will correspond again with you when we believe necessary.

Yours very truly,

Bryna Silver

Concluding Remarks

There was virtually nothing religious about the Lawyer's letter. They were not representing the Eternal or His

Assembly, they were representing a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation—a creation of the state—and threatening to collect damages due to infringement of its commercial interests.

The above e-mail was the last communication in the series, and I do not expect any more. I made the minor corrections to the numerous files—changing "Assemblies" to "Assembly" where appropriate, then propagating the change to local computers.

Had the dispute gone further, I might have raised a very intriguing question. The Assemblies of Yahweh literature teaches: 1) "Assemblies of Yahweh" is the proper translation of the Greek words rendered "Churches of God" in most translations, 2) true believers must meet under this name, 3) this name is reserved by the U.S. for them only. Essentially, they are saying that they have state enforcement for making themselves the only true church (assembly). This violates the First Amendment. Indeed, if some other group wanted to use the name "Assemblies of Yahweh", courts might decide that guaranteeing freedom of religion takes priority over trademark issues. Furthermore, if the name is the only correct translation of a thousand-year-old phrase that is "public domain", courts may void the trademark.

There is some value in getting practice in defending oneself in a legal setting. The Apostles represented themselves defending many charges. But there are many other things that believers need to be doing right now. Let us do them!

— NSE 

"What Kind of Bread did Christ Give His Disciples?" from page 6

in a similar way as the old. It will be a process that will never stop until it is complete. The end result (if a hostile environment is not created to repulse it), will be a person in the very image of God. We are in the process of being transformed (2Cor 3:18). This has been God's will from the beginning (Gen 1:26). This, of course, can only come about with the fulfillment of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:8-13).


In summary, just as there are two ways to mark the death of the

Messiah (the first way is the Jewish Passover and the second the Catholic Good Friday) there also seems to be two ways to partake of the bread and wine. The Jews, through history, have used leavened bread and the Catholics have used unleavened bread. The Jews have, by the most part, never understood the significance of the Passover Lamb or the bread and wine.

The Catholic method always has unleavened bread and must be supervised by an official representing that organization. The organization, as everyone knows, traces its roots back to Rome.

The Jewish method always has

leavened bread, and is often partaken of at the start of each weekly Sabbath. This serious observance can be partaken of as a group, or privately as a family in their own home and requires no "official" from a religious party to oversee the observance. Jewish people's roots, if traced back over the centuries, go back to Jerusalem and the temple.

The reader must determine what best typifies Christ, unleavened bread that cannot reproduce, or the leavened bread that has no limitations on its increase. If you answered leavened, the Bible does seem to agree. The bread is called *artos*. 



We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object.

To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print.

What Is the USA Doing?

LETTER: December 2002

Dear friends,

The time has come to remember all of you who have been instrumental in sending me their magazines or newsletters. They keep me busy on YHVH's Holy Sabbath day and for your kindness it is my great pleasure to let you have a freewill donation which may help to cover printing and postage.

Last year we were still suffering from the calamity which struck America when the twin towers collapsed under the impact of two killer planes and through it has been relatively quiet on the Western front. The next assault may not come from the terrorist but from America itself. Bush is ready to strike and will take it upon himself to defy the United Nations and YHVH Elohim by attacking a country which appears to be a sitting duck but which will show its fangs. If it should be destroyed it will not be because it is part of the axis of evil but because its oil is coveted by the Bush dynasty and those surrounding him like Rice and Rumsfeld and many others who all have a stake in the oil business. **The final commandment reads not to covet anything that is your neighbor's but this commandment must have been overlooked by them.**

America will not get out unscathed and thousands of American boys will die in the process but America goes on singing *God bless America*. I wish someone could tell me why He should. Bush underestimates Saddam who will inflict heavy losses on his attackers. America may have gained that which it coveted but the world and the Arabs will turn against her en masse and there will be no blessing from above. YHVH will show His wrath and will direct America's eyes to Proverbs 1:16–33.

Why is there no concerted effort instigated be the CSOG, all 4 or 500 of them, together with all of the many Christian denominations to warn the Christian Community to be on guard against a phenomenal injustice to be inflicted upon the innocent, the poor and miserable, the women and children and gray

hairy man Iraq who want nothing else but peace and prosperity as America has had for so many years. A full page in *USA Today* may make Christian America aware of what is in store for them. When the body bags come home it is too late to repent so repentance is required now before it is too late and calamity will strike you like a storm. May YHVH have mercy on you all.

Be an Ezekiel Watchman lest the people's blood will be required at the Watchman's hand (Ezk 33:6).

Yours Sincerely,

— Jurjen KUIPERS POSTEMA
Aptdo. Correos 75
03530 La Nucia/Prov. Alicante
SPAIN

RESPONSE: It is always interesting to read these kinds of letters a while after the events occurred. American casualties were not as high as many expected, but on the other hand, there is no end in sight for them. Iraqi war casualties were substantial, and nobody has a firm grasp on how many Iraqis are being killed right now by Ba'ath party loyalists, by Shi'a muslims or by Iraqis who just have a score to settle. While Saddam was indeed brutal, it is very difficult to say that Iraq is a better place to live after the war. There is no doubt that Christians and women are being oppressed much more now than they were in the Saddam-era.

With Saddam still unaccounted for and with a popularly-elected Iraqi government unacceptable to the United States, the situation is likely to continue for a long time. (The United States does not want free elections because they would bring Shi'a muslims to power who would be very anti-US and possibly ally with Iraq.) The cost of the war is being borne by the American taxpayer, while the oil, military and "reconstruction" companies will reap billions. (They may not show large profits, but such international corporations, have long-ago learned the accounting tricks neces-

sary to absorb lots of wealth without showing a big profit.) There is no doubt that American leaders have long been connected with the companies involved.

Although it may not happen in the way you have said, it does appear that this war is greatly weakening the USA.

Unfortunately, most Church of God groups are too preoccupied by their long-held prophetic concepts to look at the facts and view them in light of a biblical standard of righteousness.

As you have said, "May YHVH have mercy on us". Many in the USA are truly blind to what their leaders are doing, and Christ said that the blind "have not sin" (John 9:41). Many Americans are basically honest people who just cannot believe that their leaders would lie to get them to go to war—and then advance their own interests with the blood of their own countrymen. But all one needs to do is read the Bible or history to see that many leaders have acted that way. People want to trust their human leaders when they should be trusting God.

— NSE

Beware of Scholars

LETTER: December 25, 2001

Dear Norman and all,

Finally getting a chance to read your Mar/April 2001 issue of *Servants' News*.

I'd like to warn you of getting too many scholarly people on your editorial staff and in the writing of the Holy Scriptures. The project will be greatly frowned upon by Satan and he will greatly put an educated "mole" in your organization to 1) stop it, 2) subvert it, or 3) detain it by wasting your time.

Remember God used men like Amos, Jeremiah, Peter and John (Acts 4:13) to write and do great things. It takes humility not education to work for God. He can even speak through an ass if He needs to!

We appreciate your work and would like a copy of the Holy Scriptures if it would be available, yet.

God will use you if you don't reject any of the things He has taught you. I really question the validity of rejecting or not keeping "God's calendar", as you taught it, for the sake of unity...?

— LS, Nevada

RESPONSE: Thank you for your comments. I am well aware that education has nothing to do with spirituality, righteousness or true knowledge. It also seems to be generally true that the more education one has, the less fear of God they have. However, this general trend is not always the case. There are some highly educated people who do obey and serve God.

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).

Samuel was educated by Eli from the time he was three years old.

Daniel and his three friends were educated in Babylonian language and literature for three years (Dan 1:4-6), but turned out to be some of the most diligent, righteous men in the Bible

"I [Paul] am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel [a Jewish teacher still recognized today], taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today" (Acts 22:3).

There are other examples in the Bible of educated men who followed God. **The important issue is to never confuse human education and wisdom for godliness and righteousness.** When I work with somebody, I want to get to know them and know what they are like—whether they have the most advanced degree or had no formal education at all.

I agree with your point that Satan does sometimes seem to send people just to discourage work or to stop it if possible. That is why any work of God must run on prayer and study, not on human organization. Even so, "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (1Cor 11:19). I pray for God to protect me from deceptive people and I try to watch for those who seem too eager to help me for no clear reason.

Regarding the calendar, I am "rejecting God's calendar" in that I am not sure

what it is. I have studied for hundreds of hours, helped to organize a calendar conferences, and still do not believe I can determine the calendar that was in use by the priests in ancient Israel. The one thing I can be sure of is that there was only one calendar in use by the priests—the high priest could go into the Holiest Place only once per year on the day of Atonement. To me, unity around the Jewish calendar, even though it is probably incorrect is better than disunity around a lot of different calendars, all but one of which are incorrect.

— NSE

Learn Sabbath Independently

LETTER: June 14, 2003
I hold small Sabbath meetings groups at my home with approx 4-6 people. God led me to the Sabbath on the 28th of September 1998, having been with a Pentacostal group since 1980.

— Robert Beasley, Australia

RESPONSE: Thank you for sharing your background. It helps other Church of God members realize that God teaches his truth in many ways. May you and those who meet with you grow in their service to God.

— NSE

Working with People with Error

LETTER: May 12, 2003
Dear Friends @ *Servants' News*,

I just received a copy of the Dec 2002 *Servants' News* in the mail—that's Dec 2002! Was there a mistake?

RESPONSE: It is a series of mistakes and difficulties, mostly mine, that has caused me to get behind in issue production. Our periodical mailing permit requires that we mail certain issues, but I know of no requirements regarding the timing of the mailing. Your issue was mailed at the same time as the others.

LETTER: While I got you (so to speak)—I wrote to *The Sabbath Sentinel* about 4 months ago in response to an article a person wrote which essentially criticized those who misinterpret Scripture for their own means. I wrote to this person and told him that, while I pretty much agreed with what he said; I found it ironic that his statements came from a person who wrote for a magazine that includes writers who come from a variety of different faiths. Faiths (C.G.7, W.C.G. and its

off-shoots, "messianic", and SDAs) that were all started by individuals who had their particular "slant" on the Bible. I also raised the question as to whether or not he should contribute to a magazine that included people whose view of Scripture was not based in truth. Naturally, this person tried to justify himself by saying that they (the staff) were united under a common bond—the Sabbath. Frankly, I don't buy it. I forgot to mention, my friend occasionally sends me the *Sentinel*, personally, I'd never subscribe to it.

RESPONSE: This reminds me of a discussion at a Nazarene Church Bible study that I visited. The Nazarenes don't believe in drinking alcohol. Someone asked, "Would you go into a bar to get a fellow-believer out who has made a mistake and was getting drunk?" One person responded that he would not dare "go into a den of iniquity", while another said that he thought it was his job to do it if he could help. I mentioned that Jesus was frequently among people known as sinners, but they never caused Him to sin. Also, Paul taught that we should help other believers as long as it does not cause us to sin (Gal 6:1). I do not see any difficulty with writing for any magazine or teaching anywhere that it might do some good. Does one become tainted by appearing with "the wrong people"? Jesus was frequently put down for being a "friend of tax collectors and sinners" as well as a "glutton and a drunkard" (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34). Yet, he did not let that change His ministry. I would speak to almost any group or write for any publication if I was permitted to say what I believe God would want me to say to them.

When it comes to deciding which publications to read, one has to weigh the relative benefits of them—every believer's decisions may not be the same.

LETTER: As a sidenote, one of the editors of the *Sentinel*, Daniel Botkin, is a self-described messianic believer. Years ago I briefly received his newsletter, I believe it was called *The Gates of Eden* (or something like that). In one article he mentioned the fact that when he prayed to God he prayed in "tongues". I wrote him a letter and inquired as to whether or not he was actually biblical—I added that basically he sounded like a pentecostalism to me. Boy, did he let me have it! In the next issue of his magazine he printed my letter and stated I was coming dangerously close to blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Can you believe the arrogance? In that same issue he carried a lengthy article on glossio-

la. I guess I touched a nerve there! All this came from a guy who believes that beards, prayer shawls, tzit-tzits and the rest are required "attire" for the true believer. Now what was Jesus reprimanding those Pharisees about?

I just love people who think because they spend several hours a day in the Bible that it makes them a Bible scholar.

Anyway, as for you, keep up the great selfless work you are doing.

— Dave Cavall, Surf City, N.C.

RESPONSE: I would like to admonish both you and Mr. Botkin with a few clear scriptures. Paul does mention speaking in "tongues of angels" (1Cor 13:1), and "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries" (1Cor 14:2). These verses show that at least some "tongue speaking" is **not** understandable to us. The typical "Church of God" teaching is that all "tongue speaking" was in other languages as in Acts 2, but that is not correct. On the other hand, there is also error in modern day pentecostal practice where people speak in tongues in a service without interpretation (1Cor 14:27). Mr. Botkin should also realize that not every believer speaks in tongues: "Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (1Cor 12:30). In services where tongue speaking is common, I think some people "fake it" just to appear "spiritual", but that there are some who do have a spiritual gift. On the other hand, in groups where tongue speaking is not expected, God apparently almost never grants the gift. If he did, the believers would probably not be permitted to use it.

I am sure that Mr. Botkin would also show you both Old and New Testament scriptures where he believes beards, prayer shawls and tzit-tzits are important. He would be quick to point out that these things are much different from many man-made rules that the Pharisees bound upon the people. Are these things necessary for a believer? It is my understanding that circumcision, once physically required by God, is now of the heart (Rom 2:29) and that believers do not need to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15). Similarly, the tzit-tzit or fringe was a reminder of the law (Num 15:39), but now that law is to be written on our hearts (Rom 2:15; Heb 8:10; 10:16). There is nothing wrong with continuing the practice of circumcision or wearing tzit-tzits. In the

Continued on page 27

Question about *Love that Lasts*

Many people wrote in appreciation of the paper *Love that Lasts* included with the November/December 2002 issue. However, there was one part of that paper to which several people took exception. It was the part that said that the Bible does not specifically condemn oral sex between a husband and wife.

Before we go any further, I want to reiterate that I am not saying that the Bible specifically supports this practice. I also believe that if one partner does not want to, indeed the other should not force it upon them.

My purpose in writing *Love that Lasts* was to try to find God's perspective on sexuality. In doing so, I wanted to encourage what God encourages, and forbid what God forbids, and be neutral on things that God does not talk about. I did not want to add in customs of the day or my own personal opinions or practices.

The arguments made against oral sex in the letters were these:

1. It can cause damage or disease to the human body. While it is possible that this is true, I could not find any conclusive medical information on it and none of the letter writers gave a source of any such information. (Whereas there is a lot of medical information on the problems with anal sex, which the Bible condemns—Lev 18:22; 20:13.)

2. It is something that prostitutes do. While this is true, prostitutes are involved in every imaginable sexual practice, good or bad. If Christian couples refrained from all practices of prostitutes, they would not have sex.

3. It does not produce babies and that was God's purpose for sex. Most Christian couples realize that they are responsible to God to take care of any child that they produce. There are times when they realize that they are not economically capable of supporting another child. Nearly all birth control methods have some percentage of failure. Some have found to be dangerous to mother, baby or both. Oral sex is 100% effective in preventing conception and as noted before, has few problems associated with it. God mentions joy as a purpose for sex as well as procreation (Prov 5:18, Eccl 9:9)

4. It is included in most dictionary definitions of "sodomy" and is therefore condemned by the Bible. We must realize that the English Word "sodomy" is less than a 1000 years old whereas the Hebrew word *cedom* (Strong's #5467) is well over 3000 years old. That word means "to scorch" or "to burn"—an appropriate name for a city God destroyed by fire. The Hebrew *cedom* does not define any sexual practices. What we do know is that those who lived in Sodom practiced homosexuality (Gen 18 & 19) and God destroyed them for it. The KJV and other similar Bibles use the expression "Sodomite" (Deut 23:17; 1Kngs 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2Kngs 23:7), but it is from a completely unrelated Hebrew word, *qadesh*, which means a "male temple prostitute". Most modern translations use an expression like that. Even so, it has no definition or biblical example relating it to oral sex. The definition of the modern-day word "sodomy" comes from hundreds of years ago when sex was rarely discussed openly, when churches taught that there was only one proper position for sexual intercourse and when nearly every other sexual practice was labeled perversion or "sodomy".

At least one person decided to stop reading our publications because of that statement. It is unfortunate when that happens. I thought about avoiding the subject, but I have heard many Christians ask about it, so I included it in the paper. Anyone who believes that oral sex is a sin should not practice it (Rom 14:23). But to married couples who engage in the practice, I cannot honestly say that the Bible classifies it as sin.

—Norman Edwards

“No SN Final Decision Yet, Much Interest” from page 1

a life-goal to do what I can to start something like the Sabbatarian Educational Environment described in our previous issue. I was very happy to see how much interest there was in an independent Sabbatarian college/tech-school. Many wanted to help. There are even three possible methods under discussion whereby a campus and funding could be made available. I am anxious to begin some kind of organization so we can get to work. I realize that it may take several years, but I think it is a worthwhile goal.

Response Pages Received

The response pages indicated definite trends, but also a great diversity on the part of our readers. A full summary will be provided in a later issue. Out of 515 Response Pages tabulated thus far, here are a few highlights of questions and answers:

2) Do you think production of Servants' News should continue?

- 51 Yes, produce more issues each year.
- 95 Yes, make same number of issues, but on time.
- 279 Yes, produce less often, only as funds allow.
- 38 No, discontinue.
- 25 (Other answers)

4) If we continue to produce these publications, would you like to continue to receive them?

- 379 Yes, please keep sending publications.
- 79 No, just send an e-mail link.
- 38 No, I do not read them.

5) Please check the statement at right that best describes your ability to financially support this ministry in the future:

- 142 I will continue to support as I have in the past.
- 107 I can support your ministry more than in the past.
- 154 I do not have the money to support your ministry.
- 31 I choose not to support your ministry.
- 9 I will continue to support but will be less.

6) 36 people volunteered to help

Church Bible Teaching ministry in a major way.

7) **215** people recommended forming SEE.

8) **185** people want to be on the mailing list for SEE.

9) **Would you be willing to serve on a council to further plan and implement a project like SEE?**

- 29 Yes, I want to get involved.
- 64 Possibly, keep me informed.

10. **60** people would consider teaching, working as a staff member, giving property or assisting in some other non-financial way.

Quick Conclusions

There are more people interested in helping with SEE than there are with *Servants' News*. There are more people who think that SEE should be started than there are who think *Servants' News* should produce more or the same number of issues.

Nearly everyone wants to keep receiving *Servants' News*, even though a much smaller group is interested in supporting it. Many readers wrote a paragraph or more explaining how they were on fixed incomes and simply could not support any ministry. We are happy to serve those people by continuing to send it.

The 107 people who plan to support the ministry more in the future and the 142 who plan to continue at current levels indicate that we should be able to continue at least some number of issues per year. After the last issue, offerings have been better than they were before, but still not up to the previous year's levels. (We have not been able to “pay back” any of the money we used from our savings as some of our readers suggested.)

Even though 38 people asked to stop receiving the publications, we have received about 23 new requests to be added to the mailing list during the same time—the overall interest is not shrinking much. Some of these new readers are people who have just left a hierarchical church group and really need help realizing that they can meet with other brethren outside of that environment.

However, we would still like to hear from the 1800 readers who have not contacted us via Response Page, email or phone. If we do not

hear from you, we will eventually drop you from the list.

The Plot Thickens

Another factor adding to the uncertainty of our future. The house in which we live and produce *Servants' News* is undergoing a foreclosure proceeding. The situation is more complicated than we can explain here—it involves several other parties beside ourselves. It is **not for lack of payments**—we have always been timely in our payments. What is needed is refinancing and the working together of all the parties involved. We believe a solution is possible, but in the rare event that it is not, we have already made some secondary plans.

If there is a spiritual lesson in it, it is that we should be like Abraham—not too comfortable where we are, but ready to move when and if God shows us.

Between teaching at Spring Vale Academy, coaching soccer there, exploring options for SEE, processing all the Response Pages, reading and answering *SN* mail, planning the Feast and dealing with the foreclosure; I have had little time to work on *Servants' News* issues. I have had almost no time to organize all of the people who volunteered to help. Nevertheless, I expect the future to be better as the Feast work will soon be over and the soccer season ends a week after that.

Success at Spring Vale

One might reasonably ask why I would take time to coach soccer when there are so many other urgent priorities in my life. I have asked myself that several times, but reaffirmed my decision each time. First, I am able to concentrate much better on my writing when I spend a couple hours a day on my feet—the exercise is good. Also, I have gotten to know the students much better. But the most important reason is that I was removing my sons from the public school sports programs and I believe it is important that they have good sports opportunities at Spring Vale Academy instead. As it turns out, this is very important to many of the other young men there.

Spring Vale Academy is **not** a place where **all** Church of God Seventh Day

children are desperately seeking to go. While some students have looked forward to it for years, a reasonable number would much rather stay home with their local friends than come to Spring Vale Academy. Some arrive "turned off" to God, Spring Vale or both. Before school began, my own sons were very skeptical and wanted to let me know that they were going to "try it", but wanted to leave if they did not "like it".

However, it is amazing to see the change in young people when they are set down among caring teachers in an environment where biblical values are honored. Just as young people tend to pick up pop culture values "by osmosis" through public schools and electronic media, they tend to pick up godly values at Spring Vale.

Sometimes, the students are asked to give their testimony—talk about their life and how God has changed it. Some were opposed to the school or even religion for their first months at Spring Vale. Nearly all turned around from their positive school experience and the working of God in their lives. From listening to such stories, and from taking the Bible classes, my own sons have asked me why I have not taught them even more about a relationship with God and about the Bible. While there is no doubt that I should have done more teaching in the past, it is also true that they were simply not as interested when their peers and school routine had little to do with God.

This positive influence extends to music as well. My sons and other students are now excited about playing stirring praise and worship music, rather than imitating the latest pop music of the day. The drama program will certainly be similar.

I have personally become acquainted with most of the students, and have given seven Bible studies. The students and other staff appreciate my knowledge and talents and appreciate their love, diligence, faith and many other gifts. Even though most in the Church of God Seventh Day do not observe the Feast days, they are generally supportive of those who do.

Actually, I have been amazed to learn many things about **the Church**

of God Seventh Day:

1. They have an "open creed"—their headquarters does not try to define every doctrine for them.

2. Hundreds of former WCG members attend there and some former-WCG ministers serve there. At least a dozen *SN* readers, former WCG members, regularly worship with them.

3. There have been a few WCG member's children at Spring Vale Academy on and off for over 30 years.

Some young people seem to naturally cling to their parents, a few church friends or a few school friends. They largely accept their parents' example and teaching and do not have a lot of difficulty with outside influences. Other children are contentedly home-schooled. These students probably do not need a place like Spring Vale Academy. But for young people who want to excel at large group activities such as music, drama or sports; or for those who need a big social environment, Spring Vale Academy can be a wonderful place (call 989-725-2391 for info). It also shines when parents find themselves in a difficult or broken-home environment that they are not able to correct. An orderly place with godly values can be much better than a difficult situation that does not represent God well.

Sabbatarian Educational Environment—More to Come

Even my brief experience at Spring Vale Academy has given me much more insight as to what needs to be done for SEE, the Sabbatarian Educational Environment. I have also gleaned some ideas as to how to implement it. Recent phone conversations with some leaders in various Church groups have found much support for the concept of SEE. Potential students have said "build it and I'll come". people volunteer to teach, etc., etc. **I am talking to three different groups of people who have the ability to provide a campus or major financial support. None has said "yes", yet, but there is interest.**

A visiting mother of a Spring Vale student came up to me, not knowing about SEE at all, and talked about how the Worldwide Church of God had their Ambassador Colleges and how

good it was for the young people and how the WCG grew more in this country than the Church of God Seventh Day did. She hoped that the Church of God Seventh Day would be able to have access to something like that in the future—and wanted to receive *Servants' News* when she found I was proposing such a thing.

What I hope to be able to do with SEE is to enlist the support of all those who volunteer to help. The plan is to divide up the responsibilities, and write a detailed plan for how SEE will work. This would include costs, living arrangements, courses offered, work opportunities, etc. We would also produce a nice color brochure for those wanting a simple explanation. This literature would be sent it to a variety of Sabbatarian groups, asking them to endorse the concept and agree to encourage their young people to attend when it is built. We would similarly ask for potential students to "sign up" stating that they would be interested in attending if it were begun.

Hopefully, with this information in hand, it should be possible to estimate the size of a potential student body and staff, and the costs of running the program. The current or yet to be discovered groups that are interested in providing facilities for see can hopefully make a decision based upon this. More detailed information about the plans for SEE will follow in a later issue. With as much interest as there is, and with God's blessing, it has a good chance of happening.


Prayers and Pages

So as usual, we have more than ever to do, and less resources to do it with. Nevertheless, I know that God does not worry about these things, but provides when we need it (not always when we want it).

We will certainly appreciate everyone's prayers on the matter.

We can only continue if we receive offerings from you.

We would still like the Response pages from those 1800 or so who have not turned them in. If you need another one, please write, call or e-mail.

May God bless all of us in the tough decisions that we face. 

**“Gifts and Governance”
from page 1**

may establish a board, and before you know it there is human control and human management. Men and women have selected their new leaders; or the new leaders are simply appointed by the resident hierarchy. How leaders are selected depends on the traditions of the congregation. Folks generally pray about their selections, they even ask God to make the selections for them, but the reality is that these are **still very human choices** because they are made by mere men and women.

The congregations of the Churches of God have plenty of government, but too often the gifts of the Holy Spirit are scarce and so much harder to find.

Healings tend to be infrequent, sermons and messages often seem uninspired, and there are relatively few miracles. The Holy Spirit just isn't working in many of our congregations as we want it to work.

Why is that?

Why do the gifts of the Holy Spirit seem noticeably absent in most of the congregations of the Churches of God?

Two Areas of Responsibility

First, it is important to remember that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. He is the one who leads and administers the affairs of the Church. He usually does it at a high level and He generally leads gently. He doesn't force Himself on our congregations. He allows us to make choices and He allows us to make mistakes. The recent history of the Churches of God is filled with mistakes, yet Jesus is still the one who actively leads the Church, even if there are mistakes, Colossians 1:17–19,

“And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.”

Jesus, who is the head of the church, has placed two distinct areas of responsibility in the church to lead and protect the church. There is one group of people to whom He personally gives

gifts and there is a second group of people who are chosen by men to lead and administer the affairs of a congregation.

He gave gifts and He gave governance. The two are supposed to work together in the Churches of God, notice Eph 4:7–8 and Hebrews 13:17

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men’” (Ephesians 4:7–8).

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

It is important to stress that these two areas of responsibility are different, and they are filled very differently. The Holy Spirit gives gifts. These are divine gifts and the folks who have them are led by the Holy Spirit to use their gifts to benefit their congregation. Each one of us is given a different gift by the Holy Spirit and we are expected to use it in our congregation.

On the other hand, governance is distinctly different. Men and women appoint elders and deacons; those who govern and administer the affairs of a congregation are appointed by humans. **The Holy Spirit may or may not be involved. The bottom line is that these are human choices; and too often they are based on traditions, on hierarchy, and pure human politics.**

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to whomever Jesus chooses. They are given to both men and women and young and old. Jesus directs the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit then gifts to each person in a congregation. Each and every person is given some gift to benefit the congregation.

It is important to realize that men and women don't make any of these choices; in fact they have no input at all into the process of giving gifts. “God has appointed” and given gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:27–31,

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God

has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

These are some of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit. Apostle is mentioned first. Prophet is mentioned second. The third gift listed is that of teacher and after that we read of miracles, healings, helps, administrations, and finally tongues.

These are all gifts. They come through the Holy Spirit and God gives them to whom He chooses.

An Apostle is not an office; it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. A Prophet is not an office; it too is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Gifts come directly from Jesus through the Holy Spirit, and we humans have no input in the selections made by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus doesn't ask anyone for advice. He just gives gifts to whomever He chooses. He doesn't ask the elders, the pastor, or the deacons. He does not ask anyone for his or her input! He doesn't poll the resident hierarchy. Nor does He ask for the congregation to vote on His choices.

He doesn't consult with anyone, He does what He pleases, read Isaiah 40:13–14,

“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?”

Many in the Churches of God have looked at those who are apostles, or prophets, or teachers, or those who the gift of healings, or miracles, or tongues as having a high office in the Church of God.

They are not offices.

These are all gifts of the Holy Spirit they are not offices. We are all brethren, equal in every way in the church. We simply have different gifts, Romans 12:3–9,

“For I say, through the grace given

to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."

Those who have gifts are to serve their brethren in the congregation and their gifts are given to them so that they can edify, teach, encourage, heal, prophecy, and in every way help the Church of God.

Gifts do make each one of us special, but they don't put any one of us on a higher level than our brethren. We are all equal in the body of Christ. Notice what Paul said about his gift of apostle, Ephesians 3:8-10,

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."

We are all given gifts of the Holy Spirit for "the work of ministry", "for the edifying of the body of Christ", so that we can all come "to the unity of the faith". Let's read Ephesians 4:7-13 one more time

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.' (Now this, 'He ascended'; what

does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The members of each congregation have an extremely important responsibility, **they are to recognize those who have gifts** and they are to allow the gifts to be used in the church, 1 Corinthians 14:29-32,

"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

Too often those who govern a congregation do not allow the individuals with gifts to use them in the congregation and the direct result is that the Holy Spirit is not allowed to work in our congregations. That is one of the major reasons we have few miracles and the messages seem uninspired.

Governance

Governance is very different than gifts of the Holy Spirit. Men and women select their own elders and deacons; they can even put themselves into the ministry. These are human choices. We normally seek God's guidance in selecting them, but they are still human choices.

People can and should take on leadership roles in the church. Elders and deacons are servants of a congregation. They are to serve the Church of God by leading the congregation and administering the affairs of the congregation. They are a necessary part of the Church.

In Paul's day the house of Stephanas put themselves into the ministry, the Greek word for "devoted" used here means "appointed" and

is most often translated that way, 1 Corinthians 16:15-17,

"I urge you, brethren; you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints; that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied."

Those who have responsibility to administer the affairs of the Church are a very necessary part of the Church. For example the Greek word for "bishop" is *episkope*, and it is similar in meaning to "elder", which in the Greek is *presbuteros*. The elders are to be chosen by the congregation and they are to have the following qualifications, 1 Timothy 3:1-5,

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

We are given a list of qualifications for an elder. We humans are to look at the men and women in a congregation and see who fits these qualifications. That is why there are qualifications, we are to choose our elders. These are human choices. The elders are appointed by humans to administer the day-to-day affairs of a congregation.

Again, we have been given very definite instructions on how we are to choose elders.

Elders are generally older and they should have the gift of "administration". They may or may not have other gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are older,

moral individuals, who can administer the affairs of the Church, and they can work to preserve the truth of God. The church of God is the "pillar and ground of the truth", 1 Tim 3:15,

"But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Those who lead the Churches of God have an important responsibility, but their gifts are often few and limited. Generally they don't have the gift of healing. Elders should have faith, because they are to anoint the sick and they are to pray a prayer of faith. They are to pray for the sick as a group, James 5:14-15,

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

Again, it is important that elders have faith. The Lord honors their faith and He promises to heal the person who is ill and asks to be anointed by the "elders", notice that more than one is to anoint the sick.

Elders are to help maintain order in the Church, that is one of the major roles. The affairs of the Church should be handled "decently and in order", 1 Corinthians 14:39-40,

"Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order."

The entire congregation is to follow the leadership provided by the elders, 1 Timothy 5:17,

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine."
and Hebrews 13:7,

"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."

Those who administer the affairs of a congregation have the very important responsibility to lead the congregation and they must allow those who

have gifts of the Holy Spirit to use those gifts in the church. If they do not, then the church is not being lead by Jesus Christ, it is being lead by mere men and women.

Working Together

Gifts and governance are supposed to work together in the churches of God. But governance usually dominates gifts. People get caught up in wanting to rule and govern the church, rather than desiring Jesus to lead the church through the Holy Spirit. They want to do the job of the Holy Spirit and they seek to legislate who in the congregation is to have the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

They seek to control God's people and tell the Holy Spirit what it is to do.

That simply doesn't work. When they try and do the work of the Holy Spirit, they quench the Spirit and the Spirit leaves, as explained in 1 Thessalonians 5:18-20,

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies."

The elders in the Churches of God tend to "despise prophesyings" (KJV). They usually don't have the gift of prophecy and they don't allow others to use the gift of prophecy in "their" congregation.

The Holy Spirit then simply goes away.

The Holy Spirit is "quenchable". If the leadership of a congregation does not allow it to work, it will simply go away. That is one of the major reasons that the congregations of the Churches of God lack the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has been literally driven away by the leadership of the church.

Christ doesn't ask the "pastor", the "deacons", the "elders" or the local church board who should receive gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nor does He ask the men and women in a congregation who should be given gifts. The Holy Spirit does Jesus' will and gives gifts to those whom Jesus chooses.

Case closed.

Because elders often don't allow those with gifts to use them, the folks who have gifts tend to hide them. Then gifts of the Holy Spirit can remain hidden and unused for a lifetime, and the

Holy Spirit simply goes away.


In other situations, leaders may accept someone who appears to have a spiritual gift, but then the first time he or she makes even a small mistake, they use it as a reason to put an end to the spiritual service. This is not being fair in judgment—elders do not disqualify themselves from their service when they make a mistake in administration.

Elders are sometimes afraid that they will lose their position if the brethren see spiritual gifts at work in other people. They may think that if someone in the congregation is recognized as having a gift of prophecy, knowledge or teaching, that the congregation will want to make that person an elder instead of them. The elders need to recognize that they need not fear what God is doing, and that people who have spiritual gifts often do not desire eldership.

For a healthy Spirit-filled congregation, gifts and governance must both work. That means that those who govern must allow those who have gifts to use them for everyone's benefit. It is the job of the congregation to recognize those who have gifts and insist that they be allowed to use them, it is not just the job of the elders, 1 Corinthians 14:29-33 (NIV),

"Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace."

We in the Churches of God need to encourage those with gifts to come forward and use them in our congregations. We must not allow the elders, leaders, or administrators to quench the Holy Spirit by insisting that they alone have the greater gifts of the Holy Spirit. The reality is that elders have one of the lesser gifts, that of administration.

Until we have the courage to allow those with gifts to use their gifts, the Holy Spirit will play a very minor role in most of our services. 

"Letters & Responses"
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process of "becoming all things to all men" to teach them about Christ, those preaching the Gospel to Jews may be more effective by wearing the tzit-tzit and adopting other biblical customs that Jews will see as evidence of obeying God.

Bottom line: Daniel Botkin's practices appear biblical and are probably very important to his ministry. We should encourage him to do his work. But at the same time, he should also realize that God has not extended the ordinances given to Moses to all believers.

— NSE

Sequel to Previous Letter

LETTER: May 12, 2003
Norm,

No offense, but, you may have a point on the first part of your response regarding the *Sentinel* but you are dead wrong on Botkin—in fact you are being an apologist for his preaching of errant views—he teaches that beards, tzits-tzits, shawls, sacred names, etc are NECESSARY things for a "true" believer. This is a FALSE teaching!!! Botkin should not be encouraged in his "ministry". His ministry is putting people in bondage because of errant beliefs.

RESPONSE: Does his ministry primarily consist of teaching Jewish traditions to people who are already Christians, or does he reach out to Jews and unbelievers and give them some knowledge of Christ? The former is not particularly useful, the latter has some value. God

may then work with some where he has sowed seed, and bring them to more truth.

LETTER: As far as tongues—he's an admitted former charismatic—I spent years in the pentecostal church during my youth. In dozens of different churches and assemblies I was a part of, all I saw and heard was gibberish and confusion.

RESPONSE: I realize that some groups are that way. On the other hand, there are groups which have learned about the Sabbath and Feast Days through speaking in tongues and interpretation. A very few times, I have prayed in a language that I did not understand—it was extremely peaceful. I have heard of other Sabbatarian believers doing the same thing.

LETTER: Encourage his ministry, come on Norm, who's next? Gerald Flurry? Yisrael Hawkins? Please!

RESPONSE: Dave, I agree that these men have great errors. They teach that they are the main work that God is doing, yet they seem dictatorial and do not have the Biblical signs of an apostle. But I also remember that Herbert Armstrong was the same way for decades, yet did some good for people like me who learned from his teaching and from the brethren in the groups that he was ultimately responsible for organizing. I did not mean to say that we should encourage anyone's errors, but people who are preaching the Bible and Christ to those who are listening to anyone else are doing a work that may be used of God in some way. I am sometimes amazed that independent groups who seem to have the most understanding to true biblical doctrine are continu-

ing to study, but are doing almost nothing to try to teach it to others. I am not sure that they can claim to be bearing more "fruit" than the groups which are diligently teaching others, even though they have much error.

Christ will judge these things perfectly, and I certainly do not claim to have all the understanding that he does on these things. The Bible does say: "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).

— NSE

Request to Copy Granted

LETTER: May 11, 2003
Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the *Servants' News* received yesterday. I was intrigued by the brief item at the bottom of page 25 [Nov/Dec 2002].

Consequently I created the one page (attached) that I'd like to send to about 25 friends. But I thought to check with you first to be sure: (#1) it's o.k., and (#2) if o.k., that it is in the format that would suit you best.

I gave you credits at the bottom. Are these credits in the format that you would like?

— Gary Arvidson, North Carolina

RESPONSE: I certainly encourage this kind of copying. The whole purpose is to convey information to as many people as will hear it.

— NSE

**"Church of God Fellowship:
One Solution to Governance"**
from page 1

done. We saw a need for children's classes. We saw a need to make sure that certain basic subjects were covered in the speaking. People were volunteering for special music less often. So we appointed people to be in charge of children's classes, to coordinate speaking and to coordinate special music.

Like any human effort, there were times where this structure worked very well, and there were times when it slacked. After spending many years in

a hierarchical church being told what to do, it is somewhat difficult to being in an environment when the individual believer is responsible for making things happen.

Some of the members of the congregation begin to feel that we had a lack of direction. There was no congregation-wide effort to serve or evangelize. When visitors came and had questions or problems with our services, there was nobody with which they could officially talk. (Some felt it was not their place as visitors to bring the subject up in services, so they just stopped attending.) Similarly, when quick decisions are needed—such as a

sudden change in meeting location, unexpected expenses or an invitation to work with other groups—the issue had to be brought to the whole congregation. There was a clear need for some decision making that could be done on behalf of the congregation by a smaller group.

During the spring and summer months of 2003, several Bible studies and congregational meetings were held where we studied elders, ministers/deacons, overseers (bishops) and other Scriptures on congregational government. The Bible says a lot about

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Sabbatarian Educational Environment (SEE) Presentation at Tulsa BSA Meeting Nov 1st

The Bible Sabbath Association (BSA) will hold their Board of Directors meeting at the Tulsa Church of God, Friday evening, **October 31** to Sunday morning **November 2**. The BSA publishes the Sabbath Sentinel and for many decades has promoted the Sabbath independently without taking a stand on other disputed Christian doctrines.

In addition to other BSA topic, this year's meeting will include a presentation by **Norman Edwards** and **Terry Williams** on the **Sabbatarian Educational Environment** or **SEE** (Mar-Apr 2003 *Servants' News*). A preliminary plan will be distributed in the session and input will be sought from those attending.

The location of the meeting is **The Tulsa Church of God, 14509 E Marshall, Tulsa Oklahoma 74146**. There are 12 hotels within a few miles, including most of the

common chains. Less expensive rooms may be found at Motel 6, 918-234-6200; Garnett Inn, 918-438-4500; and Star Inn, 918-438-5050. Contact Lawrence Gregory, 918-622-3448, lgregory@gbronline.com, for local information.

The tentative meeting schedule is as follows. All meetings are open to everyone.

Fri 6:00 PM	Welcome and refreshments
7:00 PM	BSA board meeting
Sat 9:00 AM	Breakfast provided by Tulsa CoG.
11:00 AM	Service
12:00 Noon	Lunch provided by Tulsa CoG
1:00 PM	Service till 3:00 PM
5:00 PM (approx.)	Dinner at Old Country Buffet
6:30 PM	Open meeting with SEE presentation
Sun morning	Breakfast meeting

"Church of God Fellowship: One Solution to Governance" from page 27

the qualifications of elders, and shows that both congregations and well-recognized servants of God (such as Paul and Timothy) were involved in choosing them. However, it says very little about the exact process used by congregations to choose them.

Since God leaves this process largely up to the congregation, the congregation developed their own as follows:

1. Anyone who attends the congregation on half the Sabbaths or more could ask for a list to submit. (There is no attendance taken, but if someone were "on the borderline", the congregation would decide as a whole as to whether or not they should participate. As it was, none of the occasional attendees asked to participate.)
2. Each person submitting a list must be at least 13 years of age. (This may sound low, but the effort was to find people who were serving the entire congregation, not just the older people.)


3. Each person must write the names of all the men whom they think should be elders in the congregation. (The thought here was that if the people could not even remember the name of someone, then they probably should not be serving in the congregation.)
4. Those who were recommended by 70% or more of those submitting lists would become elders.

As it was, only 27 people submitted a list. Many people—some younger, some older—who could have participated chose not to. Therefore, 19 (i.e. 27×0.7) recommendations were required for a man to be come an elder. Three men arbitrarily picked from the congregation tabulated the lists. Three elders who received at least the required 19 recommendations were Jeff Ledy, Alan Boyer and John Bensinger. One other man received 15 recommendations and the others 10 or less.

After several weeks (many were away on summer trips of various natures), all those who wanted from the congregation laid hands on each of these men and all who wanted prayed for them during the laying on

of hands. Obviously, these men will be expected to fulfill all of the Biblical duties given for elders. They have no specific written mandate from the congregation. Whether or not they can start a congregation-wide outreach project, spend significant amounts of congregation money, change the time of services, implement significant rules or perform other tasks without the congregation's approval is something that will be determined in the future. The saying "he who is governed best is governed least" is undoubtedly true, and if the elders naturally consult the congregation about things that are important to them, no such written rules may ever be needed.

As in all church governments, the righteousness and diligence of the people is far more important than the system. In this case, three good men were chosen whom I know fear God and deal fairly and kindly. May God bless their service!

While other congregations will probably not use this exact method, this actual account ought to demonstrate that local, non-aligned congregations of whatever size can and should "appoint elders in every city as I commanded you" (Titus 1:5). 

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