**The Messenger** exists to inform, promote, encourage and strengthen the cooperative ministries of the Church of God in Eastern Canada, to share the light of Christ with the world, build the Kingdom of God, and stay linked with the ministries of the Church of God around the world.

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**The Messenger** celebrates the message and ministry of the Church of God - in Eastern Canada, in North America and around the world. We identify with the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. On this basis **The Messenger** desires to proclaim the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, spread biblical teaching and provide resources for the Christian life. A special passion is to stand up for the New Testament understanding of the church.

(adapted from One Voice & German CHoG Perspektiven)
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

- Attributed to Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist

What life does to us depends a great deal on what life finds in us.

(Warren Wiersbe in *Why Us? When Bad Things Happen to God's People*)
Miracles... they happen all the time in the macro world and micro world, all around us... unseen, sometimes before our very eyes but unrecognized, suddenly discovered, seen often only by eyes of faith, through careful investigation and scientific research...

Is not every new day dawning and every sundown a miracle? Is not every birth of a child and animal, born healthy or even with complications – a miracle? Is not every moment of well-functioning body – the awe-inspiring brain, heart, the blood flow, the muscles, the various amazing complicated bodily systems and organs each cooperating in harmony – all of it really a living miracle? Is not every season – spring, summer, autumn, winter – a Creator's miracle? Is not every divine provision and protection of God a beautiful miracle? Is not every spiritual birth, when a person surrenders their life to the Saviour – a life-giving miracle? Is not every blossom of a flower, the growth processes and fruitfulness of a tree or shrub an artistic miracle? Is not every storm and hurricane and tornado a miracle? Is not every health recovery and healed wound a miracle? Is not a wholesome marriage and family life a wonderful miracle? Is not an active caring neighbourhood living in healthy community a beautiful miracle to behold? Is not receiving the grace of overcoming power of obstacles, temptations, difficult and often what is considered as impossible life and relational challenges really a miracle? Could we not go on and on and on...? We humans often don't recognize miracles for what they actually are. Our living and eternal God is so good and wise, is the Lord not?

What really is a "miracle"...? How do we define what miracles are? Or clarify if some of the so-called religious "miracles" that are announced, "performed," or declared since the first century church generation all the way into our contemporary time are really from God? There are many interesting and even strange concepts people have about "miracles," especially from religious people. What is the purpose of genuine miracles...?

The Scriptures (O.T. and N.T.) are filled with stories of miraculous things happening among people and in nature through our Creator's interventions and work.

As the living Word, Jesus' life and journey during his three ministry years was filled with many beautiful works of God. It is interesting what Jesus teaches his followers and disciples about signs, wonders and miracles and what God's people need to pay attention to (see Matth. 16: 1-4; Mark 8:11-12; John 4:48; at the end of time –Matth. 24:24). Paul also writes about many demanding miraculous signs, but he explains what we are to focus on (see 1 Corinthians 1:22-25).

In this issue we investigate miracles experienced, ask questions about and have conversations about what their purpose(s) might be in our 21st century. There is no doubt for followers of Christ, that the Great I AM is truly a God of miracles who uses supernatural interventions to glorify Himself among humanity in beautiful, unique, mysterious, surprising and unexpected ways.

Thank you for various contributions and stories and interviews which enrich our research, wondering, observations and deeper thinking. May the sceptics among God's people as well as those who, for whatever reasons, live disconnected from the faith community/church family re-think and re-align their worldview as the Holy Spirit ministers to them and they would be deeply impacted in whatever way by the love of the living God.

Fall greetings and blessings,

Sieg Pudel
Remember all the miracles God does!

Trust the LORD and his mighty power. Worship him always. Remember his miracles and all his wonders and his fair decisions.

- 1 Chronicles 16:11-12

Announcing day by day... reaching all the earth, traveling the globe

The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the skies declare what he has done. Each day informs the following day; each night announces to the next. They don’t speak a word, and there is never the sound of a voice. Yet their message reaches all the earth, and it travels around the world.

- Psalm 19:1-4

Recognizing His astounding displays

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

- Psalm 77:14

Every human - filled with wonder and awe!

For You shaped me, inside and out. You knitted me together in my mother’s womb long before I took my first breath. I will offer You my grateful heart, for I am Your unique creation, filled with wonder and awe. You have approached even the smallest details with excellence; Your works are wonderful; I carry this knowledge deep within my soul.

- Psalm 139:13-14

Amazed at the young rabbi of Nazareth

The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, “Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?” Then they scoffed, “He’s just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

- Mark 6:2-3

Many more miracles not recorded

In his disciples’ presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book.

- John 20:30

Requesting miracles... searching for wisdom?

For God in his wisdom made it impossible for people to know him by means of their own wisdom. Instead, by means of the so-called “foolish” message we preach, God decided to save those who believe. Jews want miracles for proof, and Greeks look for wisdom. As for us, we proclaim the crucified Christ, a message that is offensive to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles.

- 1 Corinthians 1:21-23

A new masterpiece – in Christ... active and useful

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

- Ephesians 2:10

God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God’s glory.

- Colossians 1:27

The trinitarian life of God adds divine signs, wonders and many miracles

How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

- Hebrews 2:3-4

Check out www.biblegateway.com, a searchable online Bible in over 100 versions and 50 languages.

When we turn the pages of Scripture, we find God's people in times of orientation and disorientation too. On some pages, we see mountaintop experiences, times of exodus out of slavery. On other pages, we read of valleys and desperate captivity. In both, in exodus and in exile, God leads his people to live faithfully in their circumstances.

(Tim Keener in Finding Home in Post-Christian Canada, The Art of Living in Exile, PK Seven, Mar/Apr 2017)
**Word on the Street**

**Topic: Biblical Faith & Miracles**

This question was asked of people on the street in the Kitchener area by Elissa Den Hoed and by Sieg Pudel in the greater Brampton area:

**Questions (either one or a combination):**

*Miracles happen all around us - every day - all the time. Which miracles have you seen & experienced in your personal or family story? OR Miracles.... have you been disillusioned when you or someone you know has not experienced what they expected to happen?*

From the Kitchener area

Does super lucky count? I’m an everyday-is-a-miracle kind of guy. But my mother is super Christian. She screwed up her back in a car accident and when she recovered, she was sure it was a miracle!  

**male, 22, Calendar Club sales associate**

I don’t know. Kids are a miracle. [Have you ever been disillusioned…?] No. That’s a good thing, right? My expectations in life are pretty realistic.  

**female, 40s, assistant branch manager at credit union**

I guess I’m lucky to be alive. I’ve been through a lot. My lawyer down in California [where she used to live] told me I’ve been through more than most people. It’s been a weird kind of life. My kids are American. They’ve never come here.  

**female, 60s, Wal-Mart greeter**

**From the Brampton area:**

I don’t see any miracles – I do believe in them, in guardian angels, but have never seen one. I want to. In my family… my uncle back in India. He had a saint [which is a little less than a guru], who he provided with a big bucket of milk regularly. One day, in a shelter, he saw his guru’s body and body parts (around 4 a.m.). Someone had killed him. He ran away from the Ashram. When back home he told everyone what he saw. The saint showed up – why are you scared? I am alive. He was shocked – the saint came back alive. Everyone shared the story since.  

**female, 38, bus driver**

What happened yesterday… when on my first day of driving school bus, at the end of the day, the bus broke down – [...] it was smoking from under the panel (after I finished dropping off all the kids). Two drivers off duty showed up for assistance, also a mechanic (who was on his way home after hours but was called back to the emergency situation), came to check out the situation. We managed to wait around and were able to drive back an exchanged bus. It was raining. No one got hurt. For me … this was all a miracle.  

**female, 23, new bus driver**

Which one do you want me to talk about…? I have a few. Most people don’t recognize them for what they are. I think of “footsteps in the sand”…. It was shortly after losing my job, then homelessness… my dad died [at 72]. A cat came to me. My mother said that my dad must have sent it to you. Scruff has been a faithful companion. He got lost a few times over the 15 years, but we found each other again. He was the king of all the cats: 47 fights – undefeated, knockouts! [3 were dogs]. But he was also a gentle giant. He helped me through all the hardships of slum landlords, and run down rooming houses, and dead beat tenants… I have acute PTS (post-traumatic stress syndrome), severe anxiety and depression and at times so difficult to cope with that Scruff helped me get through it. “We face the fire together, brothers unto the end”: [Brothers, by Lord Huron]. Short months before I received an apartment through S.H.I.P. [Housing], he was poisoned by rooming house neighbours. He was put into my path as the hardships started and was taken away when I finally got housing. It’s been a year now. The more I think about it… Scruff was sent by God. He was placed there because I needed help.  

**male, 61, community friend at Regeneration**

Always having the necessities of life provided for me – food, clothes, shelter, etc. The overall protection of people.  

**male, 18, employee at soccer centre food place**

I am not a religious person. I’m a spiritual believer. All religion is a crutch, and illusion, which makes people do crazy things they’re not supposed to be doing… I wouldn’t say I don’t believe in miracles…I do believe in them – that they can happen.  

**male, 34, in lobby of soccer centre**

I don’t have anything. [Really…nothing?] I have never seen or experienced a miracle. I do believe in miracles – they do happen every day. [Can you give an example?] Being in the right place at the right time when not good things happen.  

**female, 18, employee at soccer centre food place**

I’ll answer the first one. I experienced a miracle when my father passed away from Leukemia. I took a week off work and had spent one week with dad. Saturday night I went home… went to bed. I woke up at 3 a.m., walked around the bed and took the telephone out of the receiver. The ringer was shut off. I told my wife my mom needs me. The phone started ringing while it was in my hand! Mom was on the phone. Dad had a stroke and was slipping off the chair… Only God could do this!  

**male, 43, bus mechanic**
The horizon isn't real - it's only the limit of our vision...

There are those today who are not unlike Thomas before that encounter with the risen Christ. They cheat themselves by reacting negatively in unbelief to emotional doubts that cloud the horizon. They insist on facts regarding this thing called faith and belief, when in many other matters they believe what they can't see, feel, or touch. Such insistence corrodes thinking... We can't see electricity, energy, gravity, or the invisible link between cause and effect. How many things we accept and believe with confidence that we can't see at all... J. Wallace Hamilton provided the illustration of a ship sailing out to sea, and there, on what we call the horizon, it disappears. The horizon isn't real; it's only the limit of our vision, the place beyond which our sight cannot go. If we could see a little farther, we would know the truth – that the ship is just as big and just as real as when it left the harbor. Well, that is our faith. We believe what we cannot see. We trust in Christ beyond the horizon. We believe His goodness, beyond our sight. We trust His Word against the optic nerve.

(J. Wallace Hamilton in What About Tomorrow?, Revell, 1972)

The majority of conservative Christians ... still believe that God continues to intervene in His world through miracles, providence, and answers to prayer.
- Ronald Dunn in Will God Heal Me?

Google updates maps for Indigenous territories

According to the CBC more than 3,000 Indigenous communities in Canada have been added to Google Maps and Google Earth. Steve DeRoy, from the Ebb and Flow First Nation in Manitoba has been involved in this mapping for the past seven years. “It’s important to me because there are so many Indigenous groups across the country and to not see them as an important fabric of a base map, just to not be recognized, it’s insulting,” DeRoy told the CBC. “We are in our 150th year [of] Canada being a country; it’s just one step closer to reconciliation.

(From Indian Life – news from across Native North America, July-August 2017, Vol.38, Number 1 [www.indianlife.org])

Editor’s note: I just discovered the [faith-based] Indian Life newspaper [and www.indianlife.org] while on our travels out West this summer.

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So that we can be comforted, helped, and encouraged to keep on keeping on

Martin De Haan, writing in Times of Discovery, talks about Jesus voluntarily laying aside the boundless understanding He shared with His Father and walking through the dark corridors of human experience... Jesus showed that He trusted the unseen hand of God, and He has left us with the record of that brief sojourn here so that we can be comforted, helped, and encouraged to keep on keeping on.

(Helen K. Hosier in An Eclipse of the Soul, Revell, 2005)

Sound familiar...?

Polytheism was still the dominant religious force in their day [days of the early church – book of Acts] as it is in ours. The names of the gods had changed from those of Canaanite ones (Baal, Ashteroth, etc.) to Greco-Roman ones (Venus, Diana, Apollo, etc.) and from there to romantic love, consumerism, and self-help religion in our day, but in essence the confession has the same claim and impact. In fact, this is precisely why they got into trouble with Rome. In Roman theology, Caesar was a physical manifestation of a god that claimed total allegiance... A people group could keep their tribal gods only as long as they were willing to acknowledge that Caesar was lord over them. The fact that they were a conquered people indicated that the Roman god was supreme, and so the people generally submitted (except for Jews and Christians). The effect was to unify the religions of the empire and bind it to the state. Sound familiar?

(Alan Hirsch in The Forgotten Ways, Brazos Press, 2006)

How Christians struggle with depression...

Dr. Archibald Hart points out how Christians struggle with acceptance of depression because they have been taught that God's servants are immune to depression, that if they have real faith they will never get depressed. So that means that if you are depressed, it is because you are spiritually inferior. “What a pack of downright lies!” Hart explains. “Yet many have come to believe it. I shudder when I read or hear some prominent Christian leader or preacher claiming that depression is a sign ‘that you lack faith.’...The truth is that all of us suffer from the effects of sin in this imperfect world. Pain, suffering, despondency, and depression happen... Bad things happen to good people, to God’s people as well. While we do not always understand pain and suffering, they are realities allowed by God, and they can and should draw us closer to Him. The alternative is to blame God and suffer other consequences – loss of peace and unresolved anger.

Continued on the next page
Dr. Archibald Hart, executive director of the American Association of Christian Counselors [www.aacc.net], has written a number of fine books on the subject of depression and mental health concerns.

**Effective treatments for depression - really miracle drugs**

Dr. Archibald Hart writes about effective treatments for depression. His insights from a Christian psychologist’s perspective are very enlightening. The biggest struggle, he says, is to find the right medication that relieves depression but has the fewest unpleasant side effects. What works for one may not work for another, but the important point he makes is that, male or female, one needs to work with one’s doctor and be patient and cooperative. He explains that the discovery of the drug Prozac revolutionized treatment of depression, especially in women because of their unique type of depression, and opened up a whole new battery of medications called SSRIs (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors), which work mainly on serotonin. (Serotonin is one of the three major neurotransmitters in the brain that affect mood. The other two are norepinephrine and dopamine.)

There were many early attacks on medications by those opposed to all medications, but Hart calls them “really miracle drugs,” and “a gift from God,” which they certainly are to those for whom they are prescribed “who have once again found a life.”

(Helen K. Hosier in *An Eclipse of the Soul*, Revell, 2005)

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**Perhaps there is no more powerful “religion” today than materialism.** (Walter Brueggeman)

To counter the effects of consumerism on our lives, one of the more effective, counter-cultural ways in which followers of Jesus are working out disciples is in the new interest and practice of missional and monastic orders. One such group, called the Ruba House, have developed 12 practices, or marks, for a new monasticism to challenge the worldliness of the church.

(by Ruba House, *Schools for Conversion*, Eugene, Oregon, Cascade, 2005 )

1. Relocation to abandoned places of the city
2. Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and with the needy
3. Hospitality to the stranger
4. Lament for racial divisions in church and society, combined with an active pursuit of a just reconciliation
5. Humble submission to Christ’s Body, the Church
6. Intentional formation in the Way of Christ and the Rule of Community
7. Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children
8. Geographical proximity to community members who share a common rule of life
9. Care for God's earth and supporting local economies
10. Peacemaking in the midst of violence

There are many such orders like these flourishing in Western contexts – Inner-Change (U.S. and Southeast Asia), Urban Neighbors of Hope (Australia and Thailand), YFC – New Zealand, being just a few of them.


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**Technology that promises to bring us closer together instead...**

increases our isolation, and the pace of our lives only seems to be escalating. We are all busy and distracted... Separated from the anchor of God's Word, our culture finds itself adrift and tossed about by every whim of teaching. The technology may be new, but the ideas are not. The heart of the problem is a much older one. We long to be more than we are. The yearning to grow and lead lives of significance is a good desire. God created us to lead meaningful lives. It is when we listen to other voices and ignore our Heavenly Father – trying to place ourselves at the centre of everything – that we stumble and things begin to crumble.

(from: *The Pulse*, PK Seven – Men/God/Life, May/June 2017 issue 54)

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**Advertisers and marketers are now learning from religion**

The astute cultural commentator Douglas Rushkoff in his PBS documentary on consumerism, *The Persuaders*, has noted that advertisers and marketers are now learning from religion in order to sell products. Marketers have now co-opted the language and symbolism of all the major religions in order to sell their products because they know that religion offers the ultimate object of desire and that people will do just about anything to get it. If through advertising marketers can just link their products to this great unfilled void, they will sell.

(Alan Hirsch in *The Forgotten Ways*)

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**Living with your parents now evidence of maturity**

According to a survey called Gen Y at Home commissioned by the University of Waterloo and released last week, “In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), almost half of young adults live with parents (47.4 per cent), much higher than the Canadian average of just over a third (34.7 per cent).... “In the face of precarious work and widespread economic insecurity,” the survey reads, “familial interdependence provides young adults with a way to plan for their futures while coping with economic challenges. Economic constraints such as low income, a high cost of living and soaring house prices are reasons why young adults live at home in the GTA.

(Emma Teitel in *Want to be an adult? Live with your parents*, Toronto Star, 10.4.17)

**Life with God invites us into silence and solitude, where our simmering anxieties and sorrows can be brought into God's healing presence.**

(Mike Cosper in *Recapturing the Wonder – Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World*)
The four Gospels are full of miracles that Jesus performed. They go from healing back on the ear that Peter cut off of the soldier that was arresting Jesus, to raising Lazarus from the dead.

We love the account of Him feeding the five thousand with a boy's lunch and having baskets full left over.

We also enjoy the big catches of fish and the stilling of the storm.

However, as we listen to prayer requests at church and read and listen on the computer, the large majority are requests for physical healing.

That's great, Jesus healed lots of people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Question: did Jesus come primarily to heal people?

I think not! He came that we might be born again and have Eternal Life!

Sooooo-
The greatest of all miracles is when a person is born again, converted, saved, becomes a Christian, gives his life to Christ. Whether it's an innocent child in a Bible class, or a wicked person behind bars, when it's genuine, it's MIRACULOUS.

Let's take a look objectively at prayer time requests!

He is dying from cancer, please pray for a miracle for his healing - yes, by all means!

Our 16-year-old nephew is rebelling and is in trouble with the law and he was always faithful to church and volunteered for his age group. How do we rally around this young man and help God answer our prayer? Or is this kind of request seldom heard? PRAY FOR THE MIRACLE! PRAY FOR A POSITIVE CHANGE IN HIS LIFE!!

CHURCH STATISTICS SCREAM - WE NEED MIRACLES!

Our church had fewer baptisms this year than last year! IS A MIRACLE NEEDED?

Our church had less Sunday morning attendance than last year. IS A MIRACLE NEEDED?

Does our church have better stewards than we did last year and five years ago? Has our church income grown over last year and by what percent over five years ago? IS A MIRACLE NEEDED?

Question: can you think of any good reasons why God would not want to grant miracles in these areas?

Question: considering the millions who live in Canada, why are conversions so rare?

The answer is - WE NEED MIRACLES!! SO LET'S COVENANT TO PRAY FOR MIRACLE AFTER MIRACLE WHEREIN PEOPLE AND FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS BECOME CHRISTIAN!!

One more question: do we need miracles in order to believe in God or is our faith so solid that we believe in miracles because of Christ?

Rev. Hazen is a regular writer of this Senior's Searching section. A retired pastor, preacher and president emeritus of Gardner College, he resides in Camrose, Alberta. Although he is struggling with some physical challenges, he is committed to sharing the Good News of Christ, and also distributes The Messenger among friends in his network of relationships in the community. [Note by Editor: I had the privilege to meet Bob for some good moments this July at Deer Valley Meadows Camp Meeting near Red Deer, Alberta.]

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Even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead.

(Friedrich Buechner in Telling Secrets [San Francisco: Harper, 1991])
The real tragedy is that Nancy was so bound by her fears, so enslaved to her emotions, and so intent on slashing her way through the jungle that was her life that she failed to see what was missing in her life before she tried to take it. Unable to see or create alternatives to what was happening, she felt trapped in hopelessness and helplessness… Did she admit to herself that she needed help? No. God was adequate to help her but she failed to reach out. Instead, she thought only of escape…

Nancy's story is doubly tragic in that on her third suicide try, she succeeded only in blinding herself… her sight was permanently gone… She failed not once, nor twice, but three times in trying to kill herself… She was attempting to run away from a tragic life—a terrible-tempered, abusive husband who mistreated not only her but their children [physical abuse, beatings, verbal lashings] each time she tried to kill herself. She could not bear to see her kids suffer anymore… Her anger was misdirected. But—God spared her life, and finally she began to see in a way she never saw before she became blind…

The Lord blessed her with good doctors—men of integrity and thoughtfulness. She asked God's forgiveness and had the assurance in her heart that He understood and forgave her. She testifies: “My healing was complete even though I would remain blind.” The counsel Nancy received from competent professionals put her back on her feet physically and emotionally. Asking for God's forgiveness was part of the healing of her depression, and God restored her to usefulness so that she could think well of herself, contribute to her living expenses, and not feel she was a burden to her parents and married children…

Nancy came to understand the enemy's devious tactics and how much God loved her in sparing her life again. With that realization came a determination to allow Him to use her to help others… Her parents testify: “Our daughter was blinded so she could see, and not only her but us—after that we began to see things differently too.” Nancy's parents, as well as Nancy, became voices of love to ease the pain of others.

Nancy determined that if she was going to be blind the rest of her life, she would be as independent as possible. She overcame terrific obstacles—she went to the school for the blind, lived alone, and was self-sufficient. She had grown in the Scriptures and spent hours listening to tapes of the Bible in various translations and paraphrases. As the years have gone by, she has become a blessing to many people through her letter writing, her telephone counseling, her transcribing of [author Helen K. Hosier's] interview tapes, and her outreach to others…

Many years later she died of cancer.

(adapted from An Eclipse of the Soul – a Christian Resource on Dealing with Suicide, by Helen Kooiman Hosier, Revell, 2005)
On a personal note, I would like to share with you a few stories that stand out in my life journey where I know God was at work experientially. On a trip to Haiti some years ago I was called to pray for a young girl who had drifted into the orphanage that was run by missionary Phyllis Newby. The girl was about 12 years old and sat on a bench. I noticed a puddle of water on the ground and was informed that it was from her hand previously burned in a house fire. She wanted to accept Jesus as her Saviour, Sister Phyllis provided some information about the fire and added that the girl could not attend school because her books would be drenched from the water pouring from her hands. In fact, she had become isolated because the condition was attributed to voodoo. I must confess that after hearing that voodoo was a factor I was somewhat afraid to touch the girl, however, in an instant, I heard the Holy Spirit say to me do not be afraid take her by the hand and pray for her salvation and healing.

I prayed in English and Sister Phyllis prayed in French Creole. At the end of the prayer we noticed that the dripping had ceased. We gave God thanks and praise for not only saving this happy girl but for the gift of healing. I returned to Canada and tried without success to identify her condition medically.

On the fifth of May 2015, while enrolling in the Clinical Pastoral Education at my local hospital I was called to minister to a couple who were being discharged and were anxious. As I was leaving the room, I noticed the man’s roommate staring at me. I was mindful of the fact that I did not have the time to stop since I was running late for another appointment that evening. I must admit God made me stop and go over to this man. After the usual how are you, greetings, the man shared how he was very afraid because he was recently diagnosed with stomach cancer and was scheduled to have his entire stomach removed the Wednesday of the following week. As a registered nurse I was aware of the difficulties that lie ahead for this patient. I pulled the chair closer to his bed and clasped his hands in mine, asked him what he would like me to pray for? He requested prayer for his surgery and that God would take away his fear. I prayed as requested, however, I felt moved to say; “I do not believe that this is your greatest need, I believe that there is something else you need me to pray for.” In response to my comment, he started to weep and asked me to pray with him to receive Jesus as his Saviour. I did, and as we held hands this man stated; “Today is the happiest day of my life; the fifth day of the fifth month, twenty fifteen, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour!”

I learned something about miracles that day; God will intervene and send you to places to pray for people who you had never met before. I also learned that in the worse events of our lives, we could be the happiest persons alive. Imagine my joy and delight when I visited this gentleman a couple of weeks later and discovered that the doctor found a way not to remove his stomach!

On another occasion, I was driving home one morning from working the night shift; I had passed my home to drop off a colleague in another neighbourhood. I recall hearing two voices just before I fell asleep at the wheel, one voice was saying to me rather convincingly; “You are going to lose your baby.” The other voice was mine responding, “God is not going to bring me this far along in this pregnancy to lose this baby.” (I was about seven months’ gestation.) I was suddenly jolted awake as my car which had crossed the opposing lane was now up on the sidewalk and headed straight for a utility pole! I managed to swerve away just in time but had to cross the intersection just ahead of the median. As I crossed, all the cars who had the green light stopped, and I made it through.

Still confused, I passed my home and had to reorient myself to the neighbourhood, as I pulled up in the driveway I smelled bacon, and it was at that moment I knew I was truly alive. The mystery of my encounter with death was eye-opening when my spouse gave the account that as he was preparing my breakfast, a voice said to him, “Why are you making her breakfast when she will not be coming home to eat it!” He, in turn, denounced the voice by affirming and praying for my safe return.

Finally, the most important miracle and intervention that we as a family have experienced, and that will forever fill our hearts with joy and praise, is the healing of our first-born son, Joel James. At 13 months Joel was diagnosed with a severe form of Sickle Cell Anemia. Through our research, we knew that severe sufferers of this disease could be cured with a bone marrow transplant. Over the years most of the doctors did not wish to discuss the possibility with us. At age 18 one doctor who felt so moved by his suffering approached us with the topic of a transplant. At her suggestion we visited the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto and were screened for a donor match and our youngest son Earl James was that one in twenty thousand match.

Continued on the next page
Continued from page 11

The Lord’s timing is everything, at that time in Joel’s life, he felt tired and could not perceive how he could mentally or physically endure such a procedure, and the idea was dismissed. Ten years later Joel was living in the city of London, Ontario even against our wishes. Now, he was at the end stage of his disease and had a very poor prognosis. The miraculous events that followed could only be orchestrated by God Almighty. Joel fell into the care of a doctor who had met him previously at the Hospital for Sick Children, after expressing his amazement at meeting him again and his being alive they established a very positive connection.

On one of Joel’s admissions, the doctor said to him; “Except for a miracle you will not survive another admission to the hospital.” The question about a bone marrow transplant resurfaced and through a series of events for which we are grateful, Joel consented to have the procedure. He lived for most of his life with a death sentence hanging over him before and after bone marrow transplant, but, glory to God, to this point, almost ten years has been added to his life! The son that I almost lost in the preceding story became the only match to save his brother’s life! Now when I am asked, pastor does the Church of God believe in divine healing, I can agree with the heritage song of J.W. Byers:

“Have you ever heard of Jesus, how he came from heav’n to earth with a name of mighty virtue, tho’ by very humble birth? When the world was held in bondage under Satan’s dismal sway, Jesus healed their dread diseases; He is just the same today. Refrain: He is just the same today; He is just the same today: Yes, He healed in Galilee, set the suffering captives free, And He’s just the same today (the same today).”

Medical Ethics

A practical approach to the family that expects a miracle

- excerpt -

by Horace M. DeLisser, M.D. (www.chestjournal.org)

When a patient is extremely ill and/or dying, and the family expects a miraculous recovery, this situation can be very challenging to physicians, particularly when there is certainty that the miracle will occur through divine intervention. A practical approach is therefore provided to clinicians for engaging families that anticipate the miraculous healing of a sick patient. This strategy involves exploring the meaning and significance of a miracle, providing a balanced, non-argumentative response and negotiation of patient-centered compromises, while conveying respect for patient spirituality and practicing good medicine. Such an approach, tailored to the specifics of each family, can be effective in helping a family come to a place of acceptance about the impending death of their loved one. ...

The expectation of miracle may reflect a belief in a divine, supernatural intervention superseding the laws of nature....

Although the language of miracles is often about divine healing, it may be an expression of at least two other things. First, the family may in fact be expressing hope or optimism about the possibility of recovery, trying to maintain a positive attitude. In its most extreme form, this sense of hope may be a manifestation of denial or avoidance of the seriousness of the patient's grave situation.

... Second, talk of a miracle may reflect the way in which the family expresses its anger, frustration, disappointment, and/or hurt over some aspect of care. ...

“A miracle can mean different things to different people,” Dr. Carr [says].

(excerpts from CHEST/135/6/June, 2009 pg.1643-1647)

CHEST – the official publication of American College of Chest Physicians

Christianity is essentially a “Jesus movement” and not a religion as such...

It all began with Jesus, it will all end with him, and to Jesus we must constantly return if we are to re-find ourselves again. (At the very least, this is what it means to confess that he is the Alpha and Omega.)... Discipleship, becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder, lies at the epicentre of the church's task.

(Alan Hirsch, in The Forgotten Ways)
The intersection of miracle and mission

By Dr. Barry L. Callen

When suffering comes, there is the constant question of why. A big part of why’s answer is found in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. In these few lines Paul uses the word “comfort” five times. His meaning goes well beyond mere sentimentalism. The Greek word paraklesis is used repeatedly to mean “call in the reinforcements.” We get the English word from the Latin con-fortis, the elevation of strength, becoming surrounded by a protecting presence.

The “God of all comfort” is what Paul calls the arrival of life’s greatest support system. Somehow we can become strong with the overwhelming strength of God. We can manage when comforted by the divine presence. Such presence and comfort is the “miracle” promised to all who follow Jesus seriously. This miracle is not given by God merely for the relief of our suffering; it comes from God’s love for the primary purpose of such love being passed on to others.

Strength to survive suffering is available and makes managing it possible. But why would we want to become strong so that more suffering can be endured? It’s a question of weakness and misery so that we can comfort others, “so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Cor. 1:4). We are saved to serve, healed to heal, strengthened to strengthen, comforted to comfort.

Suffering is transformed only when the suffering of others is faced with compassion. We become wise only when we are willing to become what the world judges a “fool.” That’s how the story of the crisis on the Sea of Galilee goes in Matthew 14. The early church preserved and cherished this amazing story of Jesus and Peter because it was about to be swept itself into the deep at any minute by the ugly social waves all around.

The issue then and now is bigger that whether or not Jesus controls nature and is a miracle man beyond the belief of modern people. It’s the very heart of Christian faith. If Jesus says, “Come,” dare I be a fool and come, walk right into the seeming impossible hoping somehow to survive (1 Cor. 4:10)? Maybe the typical way that God works is not so dramatic and shocking as the story of the stormy sea. But what if it should be in your case? Can the Lord be trusted to provide whatever resources are necessary?

If you ever do hear, “Come,” can you be sure that it’s the Lord doing the inviting? Peter was sure it was Jesus, so he stepped out of the boat and right into the churning abyss. The others in that sinking boat likely thought they were seeing and hearing some evil spirit lurking in the fury and beckoning them to their doom. and that Peter had lost his mind. So, of course we must test the spirits. Especially when in pain, there are many voices echoing in our poor heads. Even so, might the true not be standing among the false? Might it really be the Lord?

Did Peter sink into that churning sea? Amazingly, not at first. He was concentrating so hard on Jesus that even the natural world relaxed a moment and forgot to swallow him up! Then his attention shifted to the ugly black waters swirling at his feet. What got his attention started to get his body. When we are the “fools” that we should be, divine resources come to our aid. Managing the chaos is successful only when Jesus is our preoccupation and all our steps are “for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 4:10). Jesus calls us to do the impossible in this world. We can’t, of course, unless it’s Christ who is doing it through us.

Our tears can be telescopes and our path to Jesus more than being swallowed by the deep. It comes down to our answers to these core questions. Do we think we can escape suffering? Should our focus be on escaping or believing? Are we willing to be fools for Christ? Is Jesus our sole preoccupation? Are we willing to enter into the sufferings of Jesus for the sake of others?

Dr. Barry L. Callen is the biographer of Daniel S. Warner, It’s God’s Church!, and author of 53 other books. He is former Dean of Anderson University School of Theology and was the University’s Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Currently he is Editor of Aldersgate Press, serves as the Corporate Secretary of Horizon International, is the formal representative of the General Director of Church of God Ministries to the Wesleyan Holiness Connection, and is the Editor of the ministerial Credentials Manual of the Church of God.
From my journey...  

a different way to live

What was God's plan... how did the Lord want to glorify Himself more or better in this season of my faith life and leadership journey? I was about to find out with my family and many friends. Something drastically changed. It came as a surprise in the middle of life, ministry and work stuff. I was relatively healthy and full of energy, enjoying the weekly adventures of marriage, family, relationships, work, serving the Lord and others. I didn't know what the shadow was in my right eye for a few months. In a personal conversation and confessional moment with Margit at the beginning of August 2016, we knew we needed to take action and started finding out that I would have a different way to live now. After an eye doctor test, emergency eye clinic tests, and finally Princess Margaret Hospital (Toronto) diagnosis on August 23 – wow!: uveal (choroidal) melanoma - a large tumour, 12 x 18 mm, in the back of my right eye. I am one of 6 in 1 million in North America with this diagnosis. What did this all mean...? We had been researching cancer for about two years, not knowing it might strike any of our family. But we took one day at a time, and moved forward in this different way to operate. We chose not to do radiation, one of our two options given from the professional medical perspective/opinion. Lots of prayer, fasting, searching out how we journey through this all. We had peace in the love of Christ from the day of diagnosis up until now. After a month or so of very good natural non-toxic metabolic therapy... we continued to search out the mysteries of this journey together with professionals, good resources, the Holy Spirit’s help and leading. It seemed to be wise to enter into the realm of the disabled, after the tumour did not stop growing – so I had the enucleation surgery December 12, 2016.

It is now over one year later after the diagnosis. I am still healthy, living now with one prosthetic eye - full of life and energy, on no medication. Was there struggle? Yes. Were we sometimes overwhelmed? Yes. Was there asking many questions, wondering what is and what would be... sometimes turmoil and various temptations in all these changes of life? Yes. It seems clear now that God truly could and was able to glorify Himself more and better by me living different in a new season, given the grace to join many other friends in our generation living with one or no limbs, who are healthy, and who God is using in amazing and fresh ways with the capacities and “limitations” and abilities they have. In all these processes I joined the Melanoma Network of Canada and have been in touch with others who had similar diagnoses. We have learned much about the pharmaceutical industry and the professional medical world, about “alternative ways” of dealing with cancer. We now have more access than ever before to people dealing with and struggling with cancer and chronic diseases. At least three of them already passed away. A new way to see the world and deeper horizons have opened up to us. We have different and fresh conversations all over the community, in the network of our relationships, connections with professional medical people, with friends or strangers who have found out about my journey, etc. etc. Our heavenly Father has answered many, many prayers, and is so blessing us and keeping us, using us as Christ’s ambassadors and fruitful witnesses. Many people have been encouraged and strengthened in their life stuff through our story.

We have no reason to doubt God's goodness, God's nature and character of lovingkindness. Therefore we can continue our journey of life and leadership in peace and anticipation.

Cancer is NOT a death sentence! It is critical to do our research and check out good resources ... to listen, observe and ask many questions... to learn from others on their journey and from those who God has given wisdom and insight into health care and wellness of mind, spirit and body... to re-align ourselves with living life different... to keeping our stress level at a minimum... to take very serious what we put into our bodies and what we do with our bodies as a temple of the Holy Spirit... to protect ourselves with wisdom and discretion from the many harmful things threatening our well-being.

Our attitude and focus of life is very critical in all seasons of the journey: Who and what do we trust? How do we take life when it “throws us a curve ball”? Who is in control? Do we sincerely and faithfully practice our convictions; do we continue to trust our resurrected and living Saviour? Do we understand that believers have a good future, since we already know the end of the Greater Story, which we are part of? Are we prepared to face and go through the veil of eternity any moment of our so fleeting life here on earth...?

Did I experience a miracle with my family and friends? I would say so! So be it. Amen.

With a singular view, living with anticipation and joy, signed,

Sieg Pudel :)

The Messenger | Fall 2017
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The greatest miracle is not that He healed me...

Eddie & Michele Rasnake [were] staff members at a [Christian] Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Shortly after giving birth to her fourth child, Michele began to experience a searing, gripping pain in her back that became unbearable. In October 1992, this beautiful thirty-three-year-old wife and mother learned that she had non-Hodgkins T-cell lymphoma. It was present in her breasts, chest, shoulder, chin, liver, arm, three places on her spine, and in the pelvis — an aggressive stage four cancer. The doctors gave her 20 to 40 per cent chance of survival. In reality, a death sentence.

Tests and treatments left her in greater pain. She had a violent reaction to a transfusion. The valley grew deeper each day. On a day when those close to her prayed and fasted for her healing, Michele got worse...

“At the lowest points,” Eddie recalled, “all we knew to do was read the Psalms... a lawyer was called in to set their legal affairs in order... Throughout all this, God kept calling Eddie and Michele back to the Word... Another biopsy in March 1993 showed cancer present on the spine.... The night before the second biopsy, Michele sought the Lord and He was faithful. “I felt,” said Michele, “as if I had gone as far as I could go, that I had taken as much as I could take... After a while, in my spirit, I sensed God speaking to me. He said, ‘Enough is enough’ and ‘I am going to do a great thing.’ What a sense of excitement. I didn't know if God was going to heal me or take me home to be with him or what. It didn't matter. The joy and peace of being in the presence of God was wonderful.”

On March 17, 1993, the doctors did a second biopsy. No cancer. Not a cell. Anywhere. A miracle of God places Michele into remission. To date no cancer has reappeared and the doctors have declared Michele medically cured.

“The greatest miracle is not that he healed me, but that his grace was sufficient for us every step of the way,” said Michele. “Eddie always says, ‘It is not a story of our great faith; it is the story of God's faithfulness.’”

(excerpt from Ronald Dunn in Will God Heal Me?, Kingsway, 1997)

UPDATE NOTE from Eddie Rasnake, October 2, 2017:

... Ron Dunn was a dear friend to my wife and I and we were honored that he included her story in his book. She also appeared on Mid-Day Connection (Moody Radio) several times and her story has been in several magazines both in the US as well as in some other countries. A bit of clarification: she was 30 years old when diagnosed, presenting with over 20 tumors in the areas you described. The initial prognosis was a 40% chance of survival by our local oncologist, lowered to 20% by Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville, TN. Both of those were conditional based on if chemotherapy gave remission which it did not. When we finished treatment without getting remission, they advised that barring a successful bone marrow transplant, the cancer would kill her in less than a year. We were preparing for the bone marrow transplant when the 1993 biopsies were performed and Lord chose to heal her.

We are grateful for how God has used her healing for His glory, but also for the grace and peace we experienced going through the whole journey. Our message is that with or without healing, His grace is sufficient. My wife is still cancer free nearly 25 years later. I’d love to get a copy of the final magazine if you wouldn’t mind....

Yours and His,
Eddie Rasnake

God invariably takes longer than we expect, as he did with Abraham and Sarah, as he did with Moses, as he almost always does. He takes a long look, for with Him a thousand years is as a day and a day as a thousand years. This present life makes sense only in the light of eternity. With God, timing is more important than time.

(Ronald Dunn in Will God Heal Me? [Kingsway Publications, 1997])
Jesus humbles himself and embraces the frailty of humanity. What's more, he embraces the abject defenselessness of the life of a poor Galilean carpenter. His public ministry, though clearly demonstrating the supernatural might of the kingdom of God, eschews any recourse to earthly symbols of power... The kind of power demonstrated by Jesus is the more radical force of humility, peace, love, and mercy. Military forces are needed today only because humankind will not live as God intended in the first place.


Can you imagine a peace so powerful that you experience it even when the circumstances of life are the opposite of peaceful? Even when everything in life is falling apart, God is still able to provide peace. When life seems unbearable, God can provide peace that will guard our hearts and minds from the fear and anxiety that threaten to overwhelm us.

Mike Guzzardo in All In – Finding True Life on the Path to Total Surrender, Moody, 2011

Be a peacemaker

Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar told of a little guy who was confronted by three big bullies, any one of whom could have flattened him. And clearly, that's what they had in mind. But the little guy was very bright. He backed away, drew a line in the dirt, backed up a few more steps, looked into the eyes of the biggest bully and said, “I dare you to step across that line!” The guy did. Then the little boy grinned and said, “Good, now we're both on the same side!”

When you find yourself in the midst of conflict, you can decide to do one of two things: become a troublemaker or a peacemaker. You can add to the stress or try to bring a solution. Peacemakers look for common ground and try to get everyone onto it... Peacemakers are “big picture” thinkers who are governed by grace, not petty opinions and temporary conditions. So...be a peacemaker.

(John Ortberg in God Is Closer than You Think, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005; reprinted 2014)

Church of God leadership repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery at the June 2017 North American Convention G.A. in Wichita, Kansas

Proposed by the Native American Concerns of the Association of the CHoG, Southern California and Nevada, the Church of God movement via its national and local church/ministry leadership passed the resolution at this year's National Assembly, joining other Christian churches, taking a public stand, to have nothing to do with/casting off “officially” this injustice and evil practice affecting the quality of life of indigenous people around the world, including Native Americans and Canadians since 1452 and 1455.

The papal bulls Dum Diversas (1452) and Romanus Pontifex (1455), written by Pope Nicolas V, used the following words when referring to indigenous people living in the newly discovered lands: “invade, capture, vanquish, and subdue” and “reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.” These for us unbelievable words became part of the belief system of the general populace of Europe and thereby the worldview of the majority of immigrants to the lands known as the Americas. These beliefs were passed from Church law into common law and became commonly known as the Doctrine of Discovery, even to the present day. This Doctrine of Discovery was the basis for the treatment of Native North Americans. It was the legal principle for U.S. Land law regarding Native Americans and was applied in Supreme Court decisions from 1823 through 2005. The Doctrine of Discovery was based on the belief that the discoverers (Christopher Columbus, as well as many others) had the right to dominate the indigenous people of a land, which implied that one group of people was superior or more valuable than another. This paradigm was based on ethnocentric, racial, and religious attitudes that Europeans and their culture were superior to other peoples and their cultures. The nature of these beliefs is ungodly and result in unjust treatment of fellow human beings. Injustice toward Native American tribes in the U.S. and various indigenous people groups around the world continues to the present based on the Doctrine of Discovery. Whereas our Church of God movement stands for justice for all people, it was high time that we [finally] resolved to repudiate this Doctrine of Discovery.

In Canada we still have much reconciliation work to do. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) follows the lineage of commissions by the same name in Chile in 1990 and South Africa in 1995.

Continued on the next page
Continued from page 16

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was officially established on June 2, 2008 to inform all Canadians about what happened in our history with Indian Residential Schools [which operated from the 1870s to 1996 and enrolled some 150,000 aboriginal children over the decades]. The Commission documented the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience. This included First Nations, Inuit and Métis former Indian Residential School students, their families, communities, the churches, former school employees, government and other Canadians. The TRC hoped to guide and inspire aboriginal peoples and Canadians in a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships that are based on mutual understanding and respect. On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized for the role of past governments in administration of the residential schools.

The first stage of the journey of the TRC was completed in June 2015, releasing the Executive Summary – its findings and 94 calls to action [www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-94-calls-to-action-1.3362258] to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.” During the TRC’s final event on December 15, 2015, the Prime Minister reiterated the Government of Canada’s commitment to work in partnership with indigenous communities, the provinces, territories and other vital partners, to fully implement recommendations of the TRC, starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The TRC offices are in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The report can be accessed at www.trc.ca.

"Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts."
- Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the TRC

Justice will always speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Justice is spokesperson for the suffering, advocate for the poor, and father of the orphan. Justice is horizontal righteousness. Justice is righteousness applied.


Church of God Peace Fellowship

The Peace Fellowship is an international network of followers of Jesus who take seriously his call to be peacemakers, and who work and pray for peace in hearts, homes, communities, nations and the world. We believe that God's vision for all of creation is SHALOM – justice, wholeness, integrity, harmony, joy, well-being, and peace. We believe God calls us to radical acts of reconciliation and peacemaking. If you believe that God calls us to “seek peace and pursue it,” we invite you to join us on the journey.

Major decisions are made by a steering committee of 15-20 members. Steering committee members in the Anderson, Indiana area connect for conversations, brainstorming, processing peace issues/concerns in our communities as well as in our movement. However... since opportunities for spreading the message of peace at our North American Conventions have changed in recent years, and not workable at this time, the PF leadership team is facing challenges to find our way of existing, how to gain new momentum in this season of the life of our movement by finding new ways to have & re-organize peace fellowship forums... and to establish fresh leadership. How do we get out the message of peacemaking to our own CHoG tribe and other friends?

The Peace Fellowship Steering Committee can be reached at peaceCHOG@gmail.com / fhshively@anderson.edu or in Ontario at smphope@interlog.com

Good resources for the ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking: www.Peacemaker.net

"Seek wisdom. Nurture faith. Pursue peace."

Be curious... and creation will never stop entertaining and fascinating you.
- Harold Best, encouraging a group of artists
QUICK NOTES

Church name change – now The Planting Community Church, Toronto

Friends that had at some point in time been on the journey with Metro church family under the banner of "The Metropolitan Church of God" were invited to a New Name Launch Celebration Banquet on Sunday, October 22 at the Jamaican Canadian Centre in Toronto. Proceeds from this event went to support the hurricane victims in Antigua, Barbuda and Dominica.

Baptisms in various congregations / ministries

We celebrate with the local ministries who had believer baptisms this year:

Pioneer Park Church, Kitchener – April 16 Resurrection Sunday – 7 believers, 6 adults, 1 child - in the P.P. sanctuary baptistry

Planting Community Church (former Metro CHoG) Toronto – August 27 – 1 adult believer - in the Credit River at Eldorado Park in Brampton during the GTA CHoG Church in the Park

Announcement and Celebration – New Executive Director!

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. Chris Bonis as our first Executive Director, effective October 2, 2017. This appointment follows a six month contract position, which was extended by a month. This announcement comes after a period of several years of work and prayer and launches us into a new era of ministry. We are thankful for God's provision for our leadership needs.

Chris brings to us experience, skills, gifts and an educational background in leadership, church planting, governance, pastoral ministry and in several other areas that we believe God has granted to uniquely serve the needs of the General Assembly of the Church of God in Eastern Canada at this time in our history. Above this, he brings a faith and trust in the Lord and His Word, and desires to see God glorified and His work accomplished as we labour and strive for the sake of the Gospel in our churches and our region. Chris and his wife Philomena have two adult children (and one daughter-in-law) and will celebrate 30 years of marriage in 2018.

Please join us in welcoming Chris and praying for him and for our region during this exciting time of change and transition as he serves in leadership among us.

Blessings,

Kathryn Desjardine, secretary, Church of God in Eastern Canada

Images from Celebration of Abilities Outreach Grand Opening

Church of God, London Sunday, September 24, 2017

Various representatives from the CHoG in E. Canada regional leadership came to celebrate this special occasion with the London congregation. We are excited about and extend our blessings for this needed ministry in the city, community and in our E. Canada region.

The Abilities Outreach London is endorsed by The Abilities Ministries, a disability rights Christian group & accessibility network
www.abilitiesministries.org

Respecting the choices & rights of people with disabilities to equally participate within the whole church by promoting a fully inclusive and integrated worship experience for people of all abilities, the Abilities Ministries serves as one of the largest accessibility networks in North America that has been endorsed by all levels of government as a leader in promoting the highest accessibility standards of full integration for people with disabilities within the whole community and church.

The Messenger | Fall 2017
Greetings in the powerful Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It has been an exciting month since I began my role as Executive Director for the General Assembly of the Church of God in Eastern Canada after my probationary contract period. My wife, Philomena and I have attended and participated at several churches and events and have been blessed by the warm welcome we have received.

Through October I have been going over the binders of history, policy documents and bylaws to be better familiar with all of the legal, organizational and structural frameworks that exist. And, I have been pondering, praying and observing the various elements and culture of our group. All of this in light of the reality that Jesus Christ is indeed our Lord and Saviour, who has set before us a path of His choosing with the desire that we run the race before us well – for His glory and the expansion of His kingdom. The Gospel – the Good News, and His Word are the blessed instruments that He has given us, and that He enables and empowers by His Holy Spirit. The outcome of the race is assured – Praise God!

We celebrate the faithfulness of those who have gone before and we stand on the shoulders of those who began the work, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word. As I began this journey, there was a theme: “A New Day Dawning.” It reminds me of the passage in Isaiah 43:18-21 (NASB): “Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people. The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise.”

Please pray – for me and Philomena, for our region, our board, for each church and their people. Pray that we would be aware of the new things God wants to do and “spring forth,” and that we would courageously participate in them so that He might accomplish great things through the Church of God in Eastern Canada. And we might be quick to declare His praise.

The regional Worship ArtsFest (former SongFest) changed from spring venue in Kitchener to a Saturday afternoon venue @Family Camp August 2017.
Recognition & blessing of the regional MEC (Ministry Executive Committee) @ Family Camp August 2017

CHoG in E.Canada church news and updates: the most current church/ministry news can be found online at www.chogec.ca
Evangelicals around the world celebrate 500-year anniversary of the Reformation

500 years after reformer Martin Luther* asserted the vital importance of Scripture in his famous 95 Theses, which became a watershed moment in the lead up to the Protestant Reformation, evangelical Christians across the world have been re-affirming the Bible's role in Christian discipleship - Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia & Sola Fide – Christ alone, Scripture alone, by grace alone and by faith alone.

The leaders of the WEA (World Evangelical Alliance) Mission Commission have further affirmed this year that, “as we learn from the Reformation movement of the 16th century, the fact is that there is a need to again call the Church to return to Scripture; searching for answers to the key questions of the world today.”

* “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves). I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.” - Martin Luther, at the Diet of Worms in 1521

Adapted from Evangelicals around the world celebrate the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation, The Christian Herald, November 2017

**A 21st Century Reformation:**
Re-shaping the First World church around the poor

Greg Paul, urban mission director of The Sanctuary, Toronto, asserts in an Urban Forum: Cleveland, Ohio, January 27-30, 2008:

The core challenge for the First World evangelical church in the 21st century will be to radically reform itself, such that people who are poor and otherwise excluded are found right at the centre of the church. This constitutes a reclaiming of the gospel: just as the Reformation of the 16th century reclaimed personal faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as the means of salvation, a reformation in our century must reclaim justice for the poor as an intended consequence of that same “work of the cross” – it is both part of and intrinsic to the announcing of the good news that springs from it.

The First World evangelical church is only just beginning to realize that “caring for people who are poor or excluded” is an important aspect of proclaiming the Gospel.

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**Premiere of Job, the Musical Drama**

June 18 & 25, 2017

Written & directed by Hillary James
Featuring the actors, musicians & choir of The Planting Community Church (former Metro Church of God), Toronto

Job, the Musical Drama addresses the theme of God's justice in the face of human suffering.

In January 2016, Pastor Marcelle James preached a message on the life of Job. It was an unusual message at the beginning of a New Year indeed! However, by the next month, their congregation was faced with a real Job-like experience. This message on the struggle of human suffering so inspired their music director that the very next day he started to write a musical straight out of the book of Job, and set it to music by various artists. The choir and others prepared for over a year to bring this drama to life! The proceeds from this premiere event were designated to The Planting Community's church building fund.

**Faith** demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things that cannot be discerned by the eye of the body. Faith is believing where we cannot see, trusting in Christ beyond the horizon, believing His goodness beyond our sight, trusting His Word against the optic nerve.

- J. Wallace Hamilton

Hamilton used to say, “if you want to believe, you have to stand where the light is shining.”
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We must move beyond that basic understanding to realize that seeking justice for the poor is, in fact, the primary means by which we proclaim the Gospel, as well as a part of the Gospel itself.

And we, the Church, must grow still further until “the poor” are embraced, not as “others” to whom we reach out, but as the ones who are at the core of the very definition of “us”...

It is evident that a reformation of this sort will involve the willing sacrifice of wealth, power and security by those who are presently so blessed – “willing,” that is, unless God should tire of waiting for us to respond to his clear call, and, as he did to the early Christians who sequestered themselves in Jerusalem, raze our temples and walls, our worldly sources of comfort and security, to the ground. Perhaps this time he will not disperse his people, but bring poverty to them. Given the meltdown of international money markets in recent times, the poor may be “us” sooner than we think.

What might happen if...

we understand the core Christian ethos as creative, constructive and forward-leaning – as an “organizing religion” that challenges institutions (including its own) to learn, grow and mature towards a deepening, enduring vision of reconciliation with God, self, neighbour, enemy and creation?

Today, millions of us – Catholics, Evangelicals, mainline Protestants and Orthodox Christians – share something that we seldom verbalize: we're worried that the “brand” of Christianity has been so compromised that many of us are barely able to use the label any more. Whether we lean conservative, progressive or moderate, whether we're clergy or laypeople, old or young, more and more of us feel that there must be a better way to be Christian.....

We all love Jesus. To us, he is the best thing about Christianity. We all think he was right, and we all want to follow the way of life he modeled and taught. We all believe there are many wonderful and unique treasures in our Christian faith. But we are coming to realise that many sectors of our faith need something more radical than renewal, revival or even re-form. We need migration...

For a lot of people Christianity is malfunctioning, seriously so, and it's not pretty... Stories of frustration, turmoil and discouragement can break your heart. We’ve all seen the statistics. Nearly all sectors of Christian faith in the West are experiencing numerical decline, especially among their younger generations... more of us, however, are beginning to realise that a sea of change is underway, and the causes of decline go deeper than supposed spiritual flaws in those who’ve left...

The spiritual conversion we need won't change the true essence, heart or treasure of Christian faith. Christianity will still be rooted deeply in Jesus and his Good News. It will still draw sustenance, as Jesus did, from the Bible as a rich library full of wisdom, warning, challenge, travail and inspiration. It will still be informed by the Christian tradition with all its inspiration and ambiguity, its tragedy and comedy, its irony, paradox and restless hope. It will still engage in the core spiritual practices that have sustained Christians for centuries – prayer, contemplation, fellowship, worship, service, lifelong learning from our texts and traditions. Yes, it will differ in significant ways from conventional Christianity, especially in its modern Anglo-American form. But it will still be Christian in the best sense of the word: a better, more responsible, wiser and more sustainable way to be human... in the way of Jesus...

Christian faith is not dying. Rather, it is embarking on a once-in-an-era spiritual shift. For millions, the journey has already begun... The Christian story, from Genesis until now, is fundamentally about people on the move – outgrowing old, broken religious systems and embracing new, more redemptive ways of life. It's time to move again....

(from The Great Spiritual Migration – how the world's largest religion is seeking a better way to be Christian & back cover, by Brian D. McLaren, Hodder, 2016. --> www.hodder.co.uk/hodderfaith)

Don't be afraid of life. Jesus' presence always banished fear, and it still does. Our greatest asset during times of suffering is the presence of Jesus... The one constant in the believer's life is the presence of Jesus.

(Ronald Dunn in Will God Heal Me?)
Copy for back cover [of upcoming The Jagged Journey]

It’s the most important subject in Christianity, revealing who God is, how God works in this world, how we come to be and mature as followers of Jesus, and how we are to conduct ourselves in the midst of a suffering and sinful world.

The subject is SUFFERING. To explore it carefully, biblically, even inspirationally is to identify the basic elements of any responsible Christian theology, one that cannot be merely a set of pious abstractions. This subject forces us to stay close to where we really live, hurt, doubt, believe, and relate to our neighbours and societies.

God suffers, Jesus cries. The tears of God are the deepest meaning of our history. God’s “problem” is not that God is not able to do certain things but that God loves. The cross of Jesus was in God’s heart before it appeared on Golgatha. On that cross eternity intersected time. The pain of God is the healing of humanity.

When looking at the Cross of Jesus, we can be paralyzed with sorrow or propelled with joy. That Cross is the worst of human doing and also the best of divine revelation.

We also are called to a cross. We must die in order to really live. Suffering—it’s who God is, how God works, and who we are supposed to be as God’s agents of reconciliation, healing, and hope in a very broken and hurting world. The lives of followers of Jesus will be wonder-full if not pain free. We are to share in the sufferings of Jesus. If that’s too much for you, stay away from Christianity!

Dr. Barry L. Callen is the biographer of Daniel S. Warner, It’s God’s Church!, and author of 53 other books. He is former Dean of Anderson University School of Theology and was the University’s Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Currently he is Editor of Aldersgate Press, serves as the Corporate Secretary of Horizon International, is the formal representative of the General Director of Church of God Ministries to the Wesleyan Holiness Connection, and is the Editor of the ministerial Credentials Manual of the Church of God.

Every family has a story. In most cases, the deeper you dig into the roots of your family the more tangled that story gets. Perhaps you’ve been given a faithful legacy; a string of godly parents and grandparents and great-grandparents that goes back generations. Or maybe the roots of your family tree are so messed up you’d rather start over...

The Bible tells the story of a family tree with poisoned roots. It’s our story. But the story doesn’t stop there. As Isaiah foretold, out of the stump of a family tree composed of liars and murderers and thieves and prostitutes and sinners there grew a fruitful branch (Isaiah 11:1). Jesus came from a long line of sinners, but through his death and resurrection, he adopted us into a new family tree that will bear fruit into eternity.

( Jonathan Sprowl, editor of PK Men of Integrity, July-August 2017)
I Believe in Miracles

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Creation shows the power of God, There's glory all around,
And those who see must stand in awe, For miracles abound.

I believe in miracles, I've seen a soul set free,
Miraculous the change in one redeemed through Calvary;
I've seen the lily push its way up through the stubborn sod;
I believe in miracles, for I believe in God!

I cannot doubt the work of God, it's plain for all to see,
The miracles that He has wrought should lead to Calvary.

The love of God! O power divine! 'Tis wonderful to see
The miracle of grace performed within the heart of me.

by Carlton C. Buck & John W. Peterson
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