

In Touch...

...with the Worldwide Church of God

September 2008 Edition



SEP at Loch Lomond in Scotland, which finished a week or so ago, is a bit like Brigadoon, the mysterious village in the musical of the same name that appears every 100 years for one day and then disappears. SEP, however, *our* youth village, appears for two weeks before once again disappearing for another year.

A large field is transformed into a bustling hive of activity and fun during that time. This year 110 campers enjoyed the opportunity to experience a surplus of physical, mental and spiritual activity. Sports activities such as fitness and football, volleyball and netball vied with the water sports of sailing and canoeing. Hill walking and mountain biking provided more strenuous outlets while art and crafts, worship preparation and Christian living classes gave the opportunity to express creativity, spiritual development and individuality. Evening activities, which involved the whole of camp, ranged from the sports competitions to sing-alongs to dances and quiz and movie nights.



Behind the scenes are the staff, including qualified instructors in their various fields, as well as a small army of volunteers who donate their holiday time or who even take unpaid leave to make SEP a very special experience for the young people who attend. During the camp a camaraderie develops between the campers and the staff which helps to make all the sacrifices being made worth while. Even when the weather doesn't always cooperate there is a cheerfulness that prevails, and the good food provided from the cooks in the barn kitchen keeps the spirits up.

One of the highlights of camp comes with the Final Banquet for which the main marquee is transformed from an everyday field workplace to whichever exotic hotspot has been chosen. This year it became a Night at the Loch Lomond Oscars which included a red carpet for the entrance of the evening's celebrities as well as two ten foot Oscar statues. Campers outdid themselves dressing up for the occasion which featured a lovely meal, special Oscar awards and was followed by a disco.

The final day included a worship service which was followed by three baptisms in the loch witnessed by all the campers. The rain which had plummeted down all day stopped and the sun shone for the baptisms. It was a wonderful way to conclude a very successful camp. We look forward to the reappearance of the SEP village again next year!



14:27

“On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith...” (Acts)

BAPTISMS...outward expressions of inward commitment

Since the middle of July there have been seven baptisms within the WCG UK. Three took place during SEP with some of the older campers who wanted to make a commitment to Christ (Glen Thompson, Mark and Anise Francis). Two more baptisms took place in Loch Lomond - Darren Glennie's occurred during SEP set-up and Steve Dickson's took place at the end of SEP take-down. They are both from the Glasgow congregation. Another one took place on Saturday 26th July, as members from WCG Nottingham gathered to celebrate the baptism of Paul Bescoby in Lincoln. A Bible Study is held there once a month, which Paul

started attending after being invited by his friend, Daniel Gray. The baptism was performed by the WCG Nottingham Pastor, Ian Woodley. Sebastian Woolford's baptism took place during the first part of August in London. To all of the people involved, a warm welcome to the body of Christ and we rejoice with them.



Nottingham Church “Chill-out” Tent



On Saturday 12th July, members from WCG Nottingham helped out at the HOPE 08 “Chill-Out” tent during the Beeston (in Nottingham) carnival. The Chill-Out tent was placed next door to a children's activity tent, also run by HOPE 08. The idea was to give members of the public an opportunity to rest, have a drink, read the day's newspaper (supplied by the tent) or read other literature placed on display.

The day started slowly, but by mid afternoon, there was a point where all room was taken! Under the banner of HOPE 08, a number of churches have combined resources to run a series of activities in Nottingham. The aim of these events is to give the general public opportunities to hear, or read more, about Jesus Christ. The day went very well and proved that simple ideas can often give the foundation for outreach.



70th Wedding Anniversary by Christine Chamberlin



“Alf and Emily Rawlings of Barnsley, South Yorks, photographed on the occasion of their 70th Wedding Anniversary.

Alf, now 96, and Emily, 94, married in London on 24th July 1938 and moved to Barnsley three months later. Alf

had been recruited to manage a specialist bulb-making factory, which changed to production of lamps for military use during WW II. He later went on to be co-founder of a miniature bulb factory. Emily became a housewife and stayed at home to look after their children, Philip and Joan.

Alf became a member of the Worldwide Church of God in 1975 and attended the Leeds Church. He was at the first service of the newly formed Sheffield congregation a year later. Alf attended services there until 2 years ago when, unfortunately, he was unable to continue for health reasons.

Emily and Alf enjoyed a special anniversary lunch with family members at the home of son Philip and daughter-in-law Joy. A card from the Queen arrived by special delivery during the morning, together with cards and flowers from friends. Everyone enjoyed a very happy day.”

Parachute Jump by Sarah Tucker

A year ago if God told me I was going to parachute jump I would probably have said, ‘Are you kidding me?’ Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be jumping out of a plane.



It all started when I received a phone call from my cousin who said “would you like to parachute jump?” I said “sure, why not” without giving it much thought as to what I would be getting myself into. I was then told it was for a charity called St Clare Hospice in Harlow and that they are a self funded organisation who helps cancer sufferers and their families; I was also told I had to raise at least £395. Raising the money was a real challenge for me because it involves being proactive and I am a laid back, laying on the couch and watching TV kind of person. I managed to raise £500, which was the hardest thing I ever had to do and I can honestly say that jumping out of the plane was so much easier. The weirdest thing for me was, coming up towards the jump, everyone expected me to be psyching myself up to go and jump, to be scared or nervous, but I felt none of those things. It was just another day for me, so maybe I have the natural instincts of a dare devil.

From entering the plane and feeling it slowly climbing higher and higher I felt no fear, it was as if God himself was holding my hand. The plane doors opened and all the single jumpers left the plane leaving me

strapped to the instructor, hanging outside of the plane facing down. I could not even see the ground. Then I had this funny sensation as the instructor let go of the edge of the plane. I felt a sense of weightlessness but at the same time I felt a bit of fear as I was aware of falling fast, which made me to feel heavy at the same time. I did not scream nor did I close my eyes and it was as if I had left my heart on the plane. All I did was inhale deeply and then exhale and the fear passed. The fall felt really long but in reality it only lasted for a few seconds. The first parachute was released which slowed down the freefall to a more comfortable speed and I was able to feel all my organs. As the main parachute was released I felt a tug and I was lifted up very quickly stretching my body upright, I then looked down and said “Wow!” It was a spectacular view, the ground was so far away and I was moving towards it in unbelievably slow motion. It was as if time had stopped for a while seeing the glorious creation from afar without being in a plane. I remember reaching out because it almost felt like I could touch the ground. The landing was smooth as I slid on my bottom on the soft grass.

Mum asked me whether I would do it again. I said “No, once is enough for me!” It was a great experience but I find the whole out of body experience weird for me - I would rather my body feel whole. I would like to say a big thank you to the Worldwide Church of God in Camberwell for their support and to those who donated towards the St Clare Hospice.



Life Club Final Evening



The final Life Club for the summer took place on the 12th of July at the Abbey School in St Albans. The Director was James Henderson, the Chairperson was Rajko Radovic, the Topic-leader was Jordan

Guthrie and the Toastmaster was Heather Townson. The speakers were Ricky Fowler, Conrad Townson, Amie Nichols and Chiemeka Ozumba. The meeting opened with a reading from Romans 12:2. During the Life Club Rajko conducted a Last Speaker Standing competition which was a lot of fun and was won by Rebecca Woolford. The Message Bible was awarded to the following people: Seb Woolford and Jaap Mantel for graduating from Life Club, Annabelle Plumley and John Woolford for their recent baptisms, Ricky Fowl-

er for an outstanding Bible Study on the authenticity of the Bible, Zara Nichols for completing the London Marathon and raising about £1,500 for SENSE, Tim Sole and Chiemeka Ozumba for completing a 50-mile charity walk and raising over £3,000 for Amaudo, a Nigerian Charity for homeless people with psychiatric problems, and Amy Townson for giving the best speech of the year about ginger-haired people. The runner up was Ayelet Melman who gave a speech about the hymn How Great Thou Art. Also a copy of Pilgrims Progress was given to Marcus Fox for the best Junior speech of the year. Geoff Sole mentioned that about 131 Life Clubs have now taken place over the last five years during which just over 500 speeches have been given. He also mentioned in closing 2 John 1:6 ‘Live a life of love’ Youth Bible.



Fluffing the Faith

By Fraser Henderson

Once I had the perfect feather pillow. It had been beautifully shaped by years of use, and with it I slept like a student should. But then I moved to a different country, ending up in Canada. My pillow didn't come with me, so I had to buy a new one.

The thing about feather pillows is that new ones are nearly always incredibly uncomfortable. They're too big, they give you a crick in your neck and are generally unsympathetic to your midnight attempts to fluff them into a more comfortable shape.

And then there are the needles, the dozens of little feathers that poke through the surface, pricking your ear just as you're about to doze off into a contented slumber. These you pluck out only to find yourself breathing them in and choking on them around 3 a.m. After a glass of water you get back into bed and just as the warm embrace of sleep starts to take you, the process repeats itself again.

You can fluff a pillow, but you can't fluff a sword, especially not this one.



Why do we featherians, we feather-pillow lovers, do it, you ask? Why not just grab yourself some lumpy cotton thing that doesn't include the inherent dangers of living a feather-filled life?

The trick is in persistence, because after a year or so of plucking, you end up with an ideal pillow like my original one. You remove a sufficient number of feathers and the pillow will ultimately become the perfect sleeping companion. You can get it to take any shape necessary to accommodate your sleep preferences. Feather by feather, my new pillow is conforming to my will, and soon it will barely resemble its original prickly condition.

Photo - www.istockphoto.com

You may be wondering at this juncture about my point. What's all this about a pillow story and what has this got to do with our Christian faith and the Bible, which is what I really want to tell you about.

Occasionally when I'm reading through the Bible, approaching a state of spiritual satisfaction or even bliss, I'll get needled—not by my pillow, but by the words of the Bible. It's a very uncomfortable process, usually involving God telling Israel to kill people in the Old Testament or some other passage in the New Testament that doesn't conform to my 21st century sensibilities. It's around this time that I get the urge to start pruning my understanding of the Bible, plucking out the feathers of discontent, as it were, to give myself a more comfortable Word of God; one that doesn't upset me just when I'm getting comfortable with it.

In our present society there is an undeniable danger of deflating the Word. So much of what occurs in the Bible seems so foreign to us, at times too harsh and at other times far too lenient. So we are tempted to pick out the prickly feathers, to remove the offending sections that poke through the otherwise acceptable Book of Life.

Hebrews tells us that "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spir-

it, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Often, this is exactly the opposite of what I want the Bible to do; I want it to relax me like a comfortable pillow, to reassure me that I'm not doing so bad, that I don't need to act on anything I read.

You can fluff a pillow, but you can't fluff a sword, especially not this one. Nor should we try to dull its edges. If we come to the Bible seeking the word of God, we must be prepared to be convicted as well as reassured. It will spur us to action even as it gives us rest. It's one of those mysteries God so loves.

The Natural Cycle

By Malcolm Bourne



I was listening to a recent sermon about forgiveness in which an analogy was drawn that, as the heirs of salvation, we are breathing in the air of forgiveness and should also be breathing out that forgiveness on everyone we are in contact with.

This powerful analogy reminded me of the frequently seen human trait of seeking to acquire something and then fighting to hold on to it, rather than passing it on. When I look to nature I see a different pattern. There is a cycle to everything. For example, the sea gives water to the clouds, the clouds give water to the mountains which give it to the streams. The streams then give water to the rivers and the rivers give water to the sea. There is a cycle of giving and receiving.

I believe that Christ was highlighting this natural process when he said give and you shall receive (Luke 6v38). He also goes on to say that if you give you shall receive one hundred times that which you gave (Mark 10v29-30), a multiplying principle he put into practice when he gave out the loaves and fish. It could be said that God also used this principle by giving the world His only Son. God not only received His Son back but He got all of us as well!

This analogy of breathing out what we receive is exercising what Christ told us and allowing the cycle to continue rather than providing a blockage to God's Love. If we breathed in the oxygen in the air and didn't release the carbon dioxide two things would

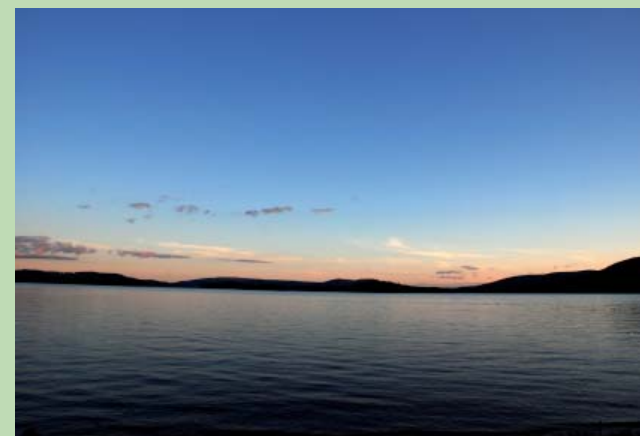
happen. First we would very quickly die and the second is that the plants and trees that gave us that oxygen would not receive a return on their part of the cycle.

Giving, whether it is for-giving, giving time, giving money or giving thanks, is as much for our benefit as it is for the ones receiving. Giving releases something, and, in doing so, it opens you up to receive something. If we believe Christ's words, then we shall receive more than we give. This is great news! Although we should not give because all we want is to receive, we should give and have faith in God.

There is often the thought that "I don't have anything to give but if I was that person with all that money/time/expertise then I'd give all the time." Maybe that person has what they have because they are givers? But most importantly, our giving is a personal matter. A small cloud is not expected to deposit more rain than it holds onto the mountain top. The moving biblical account during a famine (1 Kings 17v10), of the widow gathering wood for her final meal for herself and her son before they die, illustrates this. Along comes God's prophet Elijah and tells her to bake him a cake instead of feeding her son and herself. Can you imagine being asked that?! The request was within her means but it also meant dying quicker. She obeyed God and gave, opening herself up to receive and receive she did! Rather than having that one last meal for her son and herself, she gave and received a limitless supply of oil and flour and lived!

The important thing to remember as we give grace to others is that God will always have more grace to give to us. Like the oil and flour, we have access to a limitless supply of His brilliant love, there for us to receive.

Malcolm, along with his wife Lucy became the proud parents of daughter Sophia Mari Bourne on the 4th of June, 2008 who was born weighing in at 6 lbs 14 ounces. Malcolm is a member of the Bristol congregation of the Worldwide Church of God.



Jesus Loves *Them*, This I know

by Jeb Egbert

People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:15-16).

In Luke’s story of Jesus blessing the little children, what always catches my eye is that Jesus actively called little children to come to him. Interestingly, his own disciples are opposed to the idea. They “hindered them.” Perhaps they believed that following Jesus was not kids’ stuff.

But Jesus loves children. In fact, perhaps one of the most comforting things that parents and grandparents can ever know is that Jesus loves our children and grandchildren more than we ever could. Jesus himself said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). And Jesus laid down his life for the whole world...including children.

No parent I have met has ever conveyed to me that they felt they did “the perfect job” as a parent. My wife and I certainly didn’t. We have three children and we are often amazed how the three can be so different and require such different skills in terms of parenting. It would be easier if they could respond to a one-size-fits-all approach to child rearing. But we have learned that an approach that seems to work well with one of our children may not work at all with the next.

Thankfully, Jesus knows our children, and he knows yours. And he loves them completely and unconditionally. He wants them to come to him. In Mark’s Gospel, we read that Jesus took little children into his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16).

No matter how much we fall short in our efforts to be perfect parents, it is a relief to know that Jesus’ love and grace constantly overflows and washes over our children. But both Luke and Mark mention something else—people were bringing their children to him. That’s an important role, one that we can play in the lives of our children. It’s a question worth asking: Do we bring our children to Jesus? Or might we, like Jesus’ disciples did, “hinder them”?

When I read through the Gospel accounts of parents bringing their children to Jesus, I am struck of Jesus. They want their children in his presence. Perhaps they recognize their own lack of parental competence and are seeking the blessing and help of one

who loves their children more than they ever could. How might we hinder our children from entering the presence of Jesus?

One way might be to avoid opportunities to engage them in activities or functions where the worship of Jesus is likely to occur. This may include church-related activities such as worship services or Christian camps or retreats. Another way we might hinder our children is by not showing them our own love of Jesus. Is it clear to them that building an abiding relationship with him is paramount to us? Do we spend time in prayer with and for our children?

A final way that we might hinder our children from coming into Jesus’ presence is by living a double standard. As children grow, they easily spot hypocrisy. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:5 about having “a form of godliness but denying its power.” If we compartmentalize our lives, being “Christian” only while at church, our children will pick up on it.

Jesus loves our children, this I know. And he loves them more than we ever could. Ephesians 3:20 summarizes it well: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” That’s the work of Jesus, and he can do more, immeasurably more, in the lives of our children than we could ever imagine. So let’s bring them into his presence!

Jeb Egbert has focused on youth ministry and education for 30 years. He has spent considerable time working in camp ministry and has taught at the secondary and post-secondary levels. He earned his Masters in Business Administration from the University of Texas in Tyler and his Doctorate in Education from Texas A & M. He is currently the Vice President of Academic Affairs for Argosy University in Southern California.



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“Church? Who needs it?”

By James Henderson

“I want to be a Christian but I don’t need church”.

If we are honest, maybe some of us feel that way from time to time. Church is a place of hypocrisy, outdated fashions (ouch!), boring sermons, power posturing, an environment of strife and debate over styles and preferences and this, that and the other. Does this sound like your congregation? If it does, the answer is not to opt out, but to jump in. Your church needs you.

The other week I was talking to a youngish Christian woman who, echoing the words of the famous actress Greta Garbo, explained “I want to be alone with Jesus”. This is common today – people see isolation as a Christian virtue and feel they can be Christians by themselves, without the need for church and its sometimes negative associations. “Church? Who needs it? I’d rather sit at home and read the Bible, tune into the God channel, and listen to the spiritual songs I like in comfort, with a nice cup of tea and a chocolate digestive”.

The New Testament seems to portray an opposite view as the Christian norm. (Reader beware—reading on may affect your spiritual health.) Church, warts and all, is actually good for you.

Paul reminded the troublesome church in Ephesus to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”, pointing out that, in Jesus, Christians “are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3, 2:22). Note he did not write “being built individually for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”. He wrote together. Even though we are different, he argues, we are like the various parts of a whole body “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies” (Ephesians 4:16). These and other scriptures stress the need to be together to encourage collective and personal growth.



As we read the stories behind the letters of Paul, we can see that none of the congregations he cared for was without problems and moments of chaos – where humanity is, there are always personality clashes and disagreements, even lack of desired order. How we react to these is where our Christianity is expressed. Running away is a coward’s way out. We must seek constantly to turn the tide of our togetherness towards tolerance and peace.

We need church. We need the word of faith through preaching (Romans 10:14-17), “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16), the diversity that church facilitates (1 Corinthians 12), being “hospitable to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9), sharing the sufferings of the brethren (1 Peter 5:9, 1 Corinthians 12:26), exchanging good news (Acts 14:27), speaking often to one another as iron sharpens iron in friendship (Malachi 3:16, Proverbs 27:17), especially as society moves more and more away from God and His values, as the world gets worse, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

And, importantly, when your congregation appears dysfunctional, your congregation needs you. Christians are in the business of repairing and restoration, not of giving up and walking out, not of scurrying away to the safety of our own isolation. The relationship you have with church is symbiotic – you need church, and church needs you. Each is less without the other. Church is about your contribution, your giving as well as receiving. That’s what Paul was referring to when he said that “there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another” and that every “part does its share”, thus causing “growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (1 Corinthians 12:25, Ephesians 4:16). Are you doing your share?

Church? Who needs it? We do. You too. You need church.

Speaking of Life

By Joseph Tkach



“Elijah was a man just like us,” we’re told in James 5:17-18. “He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”

Most of us find it a little hard to believe that Elijah was really just a man like us or that God would hear our prayers just as readily as he did Elijah’s. After all, Elijah was one of the most renowned prophets of antiquity and instrumental in some of the greatest and most well-known miracles in the entire Bible! Elijah called down fire from heaven, was fed by ravens, multiplied oil and flour, and even raised the dead.

How could our prayers possibly match up to those of a powerful man of God like Elijah?

The truth is that in between some of those astounding miracles Elijah could also be frustrated, lonely, depressed, angry, plagued with self-doubt and wishing he were dead.

Notice how this great prophet felt the very day after the great miracle of fire from heaven.

He had just received a death threat from the wicked Queen Jezebel, and we’re told in 1 Kings 19:3-4: “Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it

and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

Indeed, Elijah was a man just like us.

This episode in Elijah’s life ended on Mount Horeb, where God presented Elijah with a powerful wind, a mighty earthquake and a roaring fire. But God didn’t meet Elijah in any of those. God met him instead in a still, small, voice.

We often think that God is not with us unless we’re doing so-called “great” things for God. But here’s what we need to remember—we are closer to God when we’re listening to his gentle whisper than when we’re caught up in doing what we think are great things in his name.

Windstorms, earthquakes and fires are easy to hear, but gentle whispers require devoted attention. On the strength of that gentle whisper, Elijah carried on with the work God had for him to do.

Yes, Elijah was a man like us, having the same kinds of fears, worries, concerns and challenges as we have, and if God heard his prayers, he’ll hear ours too.

This article is derived from Speaking of Life, a weekly video program presented by Joseph Tkach on the Worldwide Church of God website, go to www.wcg.org/av/spol.htm



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