

2007 Events Overview—Mark Your Calendar!

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
3/9-11	East Texas Women's Conference	Big Sandy COG
4/7-9	Feast of Unleavened Bread Weekend	Regional Event
4/20-21	Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph.D.	Knoxville SDCA and BSM
TBA	Marriage Retreat	Cincinnati/Lexington COG
5/25-28	Pentecost/Memorial Day Family Weekend	CEM
6/24-7/1	CEM Summer Camp	CEM
7/3-8	Camp Outreach, IN	Common Ground C.M.

See ads in this issue of Faith Networks and future issues for more details.



Faith Networks
P.O. Box 1811
West Chester, OH 45071

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit# 4513
Cincinnati, OH



A Newsletter for Cooperation in the Churches of God

March, 2007

The Bar Mitzvah

We were privileged one Sabbath morning to attend a bar mitzvah, and the word I must use to describe it is "impressive." A thirteen-year-old young man conducted half the service, which included leading the song service and scripture readings, and several explanations of various passages of the Torah from the viewpoint of a thirteen year-old.

One passage he felt compelled to explain speaks of sacrifices for sins, and he was bold enough to say that he disagreed with God about animal sacrifices. "The animal didn't do anything wrong. Why should the animal have to suffer for a sin that a person commits?"

Which, of course, is precisely the point. Sin hurts innocent parties.

None of us lives in a vacuum. My lies or my thefts or my adulteries coarsen the culture, weaken relationships, increase taxes, destroy trust, break homes, and ruin children's lives. The innocent suffer when sin is involved.

Yet there is much more to the death of an innocent animal than that simple lesson. The Passover lamb was brought into the home on the tenth day of the first month. It became a part of the family. The children grew attached to it as they would any pet. And on the fourteenth this little lamb, this

innocent creature that became a part of the family, was slaughtered and eaten. (Exo 12)

We Christians, of course, see in this the sacrifice of our Redeemer. Ultimately, He that was totally innocent and totally lovable had to suffer and die for the sins that others committed. God was teaching Israel that lesson through the blood of bulls and goats, and through the blood of an innocent lamb. All of mankind needs a Redeemer, and it was to Jesus Christ Himself that these sacrifices pointed.

It is good that this young Jewish boy understands God well enough to know that he could disagree with Him and not be condemned. Moses disagreed with God, and Israel was spared because of it. (Exo 32) The boy said he was glad that God no longer requires animal sacrifices. I'm glad too. [FN](#)



Lenny Cacchio
Missouri
cacchio01@aol.com



Confucius and a Football Team

Long, long ago in elementary school we had a running joke about "Confucius Bowl. Their season started out positively with nine wins. Then four losses came in a row. You can be certain the coach and players some new phrase of the moment. We were kids, and what we were sharing wasn't the real wisdom of Confucius, a Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 BC—479 BC. But something Confucius really had to say was very wise, and pertains to the Passover season that is quickly approaching. It goes like this:

"When we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves."

The world isn't too big on self-examination these days, and there seem to be lots of folks of contrary character. But part of Christian responsibility is to continually examine our own character. This is especially true at the Passover time when we are renewing the commitment made to Jesus Christ.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (1 Cor 11:28-29 NKJV)

This examination is a type of spiritual score card of wins and losses. As I am writing this article the Indianapolis Colts are



Joan Osborn
Indiana
jaosborn@tds.net

were looking at mistakes made and making course corrections. Discussing different game plans. Looking for better plays. In the AFC championship game (the game to determine if the team would go to the Superbowl) the Colts were down 21-6 at half time. The team they had beaten them on the Indianapolis field before. It looked as if they would be beaten again. I don't know what was said in the locker room at half time, but a different team took the field afterward. It was a team determined to run a better game plan. And they did. They battled from behind to not only tie the game, but then matched New England score for score until they pulled ahead.



SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI Feast of Unleavened Bread WEEKEND EXTRA VAGANZA

You are invited to be part of three days of fellowship, worship, education, inspiration, and fun in Springfield on the last weekend of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 2007. All activities will be held at the Springfield Lamplighter Inn & Suites. See details on location and special lodging rates below.

The weekend will officially begin at 10:30 AM on Sabbath, April 7 with a seminar by *Oasis Ministries* speaker Pam Dewey (Associate Editor and writer for *Faith Networks*). A worship service will follow, with the featured message by George Dewey, and then a potluck luncheon. Fun, fellowship, games, and music will continue with a Saturday evening mixer from 7-10 PM.

Sunday morning will feature another seminar by Pam at 10:30 AM, followed by a worship service, with the featured message by event coordinator Dennis DeJarnette.

Sunday afternoon and evening are being left free for individuals, families, and groups to explore the attractions in the Springfield area, from museums, zoos, historical sites, caverns, and unique gift shops to much more—including the fabulous Bass Pro Outdoor World gigantic super-store that features salt water and freshwater aquariums, indoor waterfalls, museum-quality wildlife dioramas, live exhibits, archery and pistol ranges, arcades, and restaurants. Right next door to Outdoor World is the Wonders of Wildlife Zooquarium. See the Event website link below for more information on Springfield attractions.

Monday morning's observance of the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread will begin with a seminar by Brian and Stephanie Smith, sharing stories of their "Asian Adventures for Christ"—the Smiths have spent the past year working with Legacy Institute in Thailand. The seminar will be followed by a worship service, with the featured message by Brian. The weekend of activities will conclude with a "dutch treat" lunch at a nearby restaurant.

Springfield Lamplighter Inn & Suites, <http://www.lamplighter-sgf.com/> 1772 S Glenstone, Springfield, Missouri. Phone: 1-800-749-7275
Please note that there are TWO Lamplighter Inn and Suites locations in Springfield, and BOTH are on Glenstone Rd. The OTHER Lamplighter is on the north side of the city just off I-44. The Lamplighter hosting this event is 4.5 miles south of there, on the corner of Glenstone and Sunshine.

Mention the "Church of God" to obtain the reduced group rate of \$59.95. For more detailed information including maps, speaker biographies and suggested Springfield attractions, see www.youall.com/SpringfieldDUB. Contact: Dennis DeJarnette positivedennis@centurytel.net (417)-239-1402 home (417)-827-5012 cell

CAMP OUTREACH

Save the Date!

If you're a young adult or teen and would enjoy spending time with others who share your beliefs while serving people in need, you'd be a perfect candidate for Camp Outreach 2007.

Plainfield, Indiana: July 3-8, 2007

The Plainfield Camp has been scheduled over the July 4th holiday, to minimize time away from work. You'll gather Tuesday evening, July 3 for three days of hard work and real satisfaction of a job well done. Stay for a stimulating Sabbath Service and Potluck with the widows you've helped. Daily discussions and Bible Studies will focus on what God expects of us as Christians. In free time, there will be fireworks, fellowship and food!

Lincoln, California: July 22-29, 2007

The Lincoln Camp offers a similar schedule in a week-long format, for those with more time available.

For Applications and Information

Contact Guy or Jennifer Swenson at 317-707-5029 or

by email: jswenson@7words.com.

Faith Networks is a voluntary effort by a group of individuals interested in promoting cooperation among the Churches of God and encouraging healthy relationships both within congregations and between them. Resources have been made available for the initial stages of Faith Networks by members of the Church of God Cincinnati.

Editor:

Jim O'Brien

Associate Editors:

Pam Dewey

Joan Osborn

Page Layout:

Dan Farnsworth

Jenee Zaydon

Peer Review Team:

Guy Swenson

Bill Jacobs

Ron Dart

Wendy Pack

Pam Dewey

Contributors:

Brian Drawbaugh

Jeff Osborn

David Antion

Bill Stough

Scarlett Stough

Lenny Cacchio

Kerby Burton

Ellen Burton

Charlie Graby

Ramona Leiter

Contact Information:

P.O. Box 1811

West Chester, OH 45071

jobrien@fuse.net

(513) 755-0040

Donations are greatly appreciated; checks can be made out to Church of God, Cincinnati and mailed to the address above.

To request the print version, or the electronic version of Faith Networks, call 513-755-0040 or send your name and address to jobrien@fuse.net.

In the final seconds of the game the score was Indianapolis 38 and New England 34. New England had the ball and was beginning a drive down the field. Another score would win the Patriots the game. Indianapolis would not go to the Superbowl. On the next pass play Indianapolis intercepted the ball and assured their trip into football history. For the first time in 36 years the Colts were going to the Superbowl.


The Colts found a way to examine what was going on and make course corrections. They began to plug some holes in the defense. They moved forward offensively.

What does football have to do with being a Christian? Paul said it best: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." (1 Cor 11:31)

Our life plan, like the Indianapolis game plan, needs to include self-examination. Are we making the right plays, the right choices? We need to check for weak areas of our lives, places where temptation might lead to sin. We need to pray for God to help us be strong in those areas. Our plan needs to include course correction. We must repent of any sin that we have committed, moving to make peace in our lives with God, ourselves, and our fellow man.

We should always be asking ourselves questions: How can I do that better? What do I need to change? We should be asking God to help us make those changes.

The purpose of self-examination is not to beat ourselves up. We are all human and subject to the flesh. (Rom 7:14-25) The purpose is to make sure we are following the path Jesus set for us and that our lives are a reflection of his glory.

Confucius had good advice. Make sure you aren't mirroring a bad example. Also, check yourself for holes in your defense or any sloppy plays in your offense. Satan is likened to a roaring lion who would like nothing better than our defeat. Reflect, go forward, and win! 

The Leiter Side of Movies Connecting the Dots



Ramona Leiter
Michigan
leiter@chartermi.net

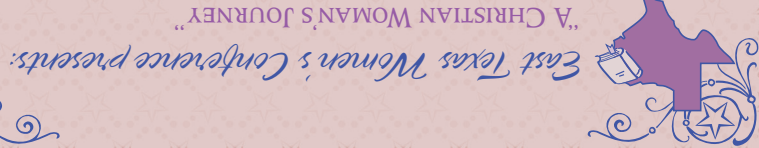
A couple of summers ago, my family stayed for three nights in a cabin near Lake Michigan. It was a vacation home of a lady my husband worked with, and he had won our little vacation through a raffle at work. We were pleased to be able to spend a few days relaxing together...going to the beach, playing



problems (*Remember the Titans*), and history (*Schindler's List*). When people have a hard time speaking directly about themselves and their immediate issues, discussing movies can "give them permission" to indirectly refer to those issues in a less threatening way, to work through them. Movies are not always a life-changing experience. But they are the most powerful, immersive, epic, and intimate form of storytelling and art that has ever existed. They are modern parables. Can you imagine what kind of movies Jesus would make? Instead of talking about the Prodigal Son, we would see every tense, heartbreakaking, and touching moment come to life on the screen. We would identify with the Prodigal, and/or maybe the father, or maybe the older brother. More books on the topic than even most libraries carry.

So my stay at the cabin was split between spending time with my family, and just snuggling up on the porch with these books about every one from Laurel & Hardy to Errol Flynn. Later on I found out that the books were owned by the wheelchair-bound

I have been writing this column on movies for about a year now. In that short time I have featured a small but varied sampling of films that I thought others may benefit from watching. For me it is only the tip of the iceberg. My passion is my faith in God. But much of that passion finds its release in movies. Films are a way of opening up dialogue not just about God, but about relationships (*On Golden Pond*), social problems (*Remember the*



East Texas Women's Conference presents: "A CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S JOURNEY"

MARCH 9-11, 2007

The East Texas Women's Conference extends a warm invitation to all ladies – whatever your religious affiliation – to attend their 2007 conference. Enjoy a spiritually rejuvenating, motivating time, while meeting fellow travelers on this journey.



DESTINATION: Hosted by the Church of God, Big Sandy, Texas.

DATES: March 9-11, 2007

Begins Friday evening; concludes Sunday at noon.

TICKET COST: \$25, including several meals.

TRAVELER BONUS: Register by February 1, 2007 and you will be entered in a drawing for a very special door prize!

HOUSING: For information on local hotels and other housing arrangements contact Shelly Howell at 903-636-4600 or 800-946-5545.

CONTACTS: Melodee Overton: 903-769-9219 or

Brenda Ross: 903-533-1230

WEB SITE: <http://www.bigsandychurch.org>

THE FINE PRINT: Due the nature of the conference, we ask that you please

leave your children (and husband) at home.

Nursing babies are welcome to attend with Mom.

We hope you will pause from the busyness of life and join us

in enriching our Christian journey—together!

CEM Memorial Day/Pentecost Family Retreat

Christian Educational Ministries (CEM) started this annual event three years ago with its first ever Memorial Day Family Retreat. The purpose of the retreat is to allow likeminded Christians the opportunity to have a “Mini-Feast of Tabernacles” each spring, with spiritual growth, fun, and fellowship for the whole family as the focus. This year’s retreat will have a slightly different format since it will be Pentecost Weekend. However, it will be a great weekend with seminars, YEA classes, two church services, a cookout, a pie and ice cream social, a scavenger hunt, a “Bible Times Bazaar,” and other fun activities, with an emphasis on activities and education for the youth. We will again be at beautiful Paris Landing State Park, located on the banks of Kentucky Lake in Tennessee (about 30 miles from Clarksville, TN). The Paris Landing Inn has a fine restaurant on the first floor. They will serve a beef or turkey substitute on their buffet each morning. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served every day. Paris Landing State Park is very popular, so make your reservations as soon as possible. Affordable rooms are only \$75 per night. But it gets better. If we use at least 50 rooms, the price goes down to about \$68. Each room has two double beds, a small balcony, and a great view. **For Reservations, Call: 1-800-250-8614, and mention the CEM Group Number 3078.**

Park Website: <http://tennessee.gov/environment/parks/ParisLanding/>

Below is the current tentative schedule, which is subject to change.

Friday Eve, May 25	Welcome gathering, sandwiches and finger food at the Hospitality Room	
Saturday, May 26	Seminars: YEA Classes: Sabbath Service: Pie & Ice Cream Social	9:00-10:00 AM, 10:00-11:00 10:00-11:00 AM 2:00 PM 7:30 PM
Sunday, May 27	Seminars: YEA Classes: Worship Service: Bible Times Fair Cookout Family Dance	9:00-10:00 AM, 10:00-11:00 10:00-11:00 11:30 2:00 PM 5:00 PM 8:00 PM
Monday, May 28	Seminars: Brainstorming Session Farewell by Ron Dart	9:00-10:00 AM 10:00-11:00 AM 11:30 AM

For more information, contact Linda Benton at the CEM office 1-888-BIBLE-44 or lsbtexas@cemnetwork.com, or Skip Martin smartin400@sbcglobal.net. Updated information will be added periodically to CEM’s *Born to Win* website at <http://www.borntowin.net/newsite/Events/MemorialDay.aspx>.

brother of the owner of the cabin. This past summer we had the opportunity to stay at the cabin again. And again I marveled at the incredible book collection, and relished the opportunity to read through more of it. After our stay, I wrote to the gentleman to thank him for sharing the books with cottage visitors, and to mention that I had a passion for movies like he did. A couple of weeks later, he called me and we talked for about a half hour about how much we enjoyed movies and reading about them. For me it is a major hobby. For him, it has been an escape for many years—to escape the loss of a parent in his youth and to escape the pain of his disability. I have never met this man in person, and there is a difference of several decades in age between us. But that did not matter, because we had something in common.

For you, your primary interest may be something else—sports, hunting, scrap-booking, sailing, computers, gardening, *Star Wars*, music, your job. God does sometimes calls us to step out of our comfort zones and reach out in



areas we are unfamiliar with. But even more-so, I believe God wants us to use



our interests as a way of connecting and ministering to others with whom we already have something in common. In other words be a light, a living testimony to your hunting buddies, the ladies at the scrapbook gathering, the other *Star Wars* or computer “geeks.”

I will continue to share movies with you because that is what I know. I have tried to learn about and watch films from the silent era until the present—because I enjoy them, and because it gives me the widest variety of people I can connect with.

I hope I have made some small connection with you in this column. And I hope maybe I have introduced a film to you that you had not seen before and decided to watch; or that I helped you to see a familiar favorite in a new light. And most of all I hope that the films I have written about will help you connect with others and with God. EN

Reflection is the beginning of reform.

—Mark Twain

A Wider Covenant

Not long ago, a post appeared on the

CEM and Friends Forum that outlined the many ways in which Christians could divide over issues related to the "Biblical calendar" used to determine when to observe the annual Feasts and Holy Days.

Acknowledging that people may agree on one issue and disagree on another, Dennis, who wrote the post, concluded that there were a possible 240 variants, which could lead to that many different churches, all observing the holy days, and all using different calendars. Someone on the forum complained that Dennis should not ridicule the conclusions of others

about calendar topics. After evaluating the original post, I concluded that it was too profoundly sad to be ridicule—there was nothing amusing about it. And the analysis was essentially correct. A number of years ago on the same forum, I counted up the ways congregations could split over the calendar and came up with similar numbers. And I have seen that they not only could divide along those lines, they have done so.

As Dennis said somewhere else in the thread on the forum, when it comes to the issue of how to determine when to meet together for worship, the *community* must decide. And once the community has decided, we should submit to one another. Many of us come from a dysfunctional background where we had an unbalanced relationship with the church community. The old community was authoritarian, regulated every aspect of church life, and imposed sanctions for disobedience. Those who have broken away from that authoritarian structure are having a very hard time sorting out the most basic aspects of healthy church life.



Ron Datt
Texas
ron@cemnetwork.com

Paul spoke of an idea that seems strange to people who have come from an authoritarian background. He said: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph 5:21 NIV)

In a community that is all dominance and submission, this type of mutual submission does not work. But in communities free to develop proper relationships, it can. How do we go about experiencing it?

Paul's answer in this marvelous passage is developed in an analogy, that of marriage—which, as everyone should know, is a covenant. After developing the analogy, Paul concludes: "This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (Eph 5:32-33)

Each partner in a marriage submits to the covenant, and thus to one another.

The same is true in the church. Each of us needs to learn "not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Rom 12:3 KJV) We stand near the end of a 73-year history of festival observance in Sabbatarian Church of God circles.

Tens of thousands of our brothers in the faith have kept these festivals in fellowship for 10, these many years. Are we now, individually or in small groups, going to break faith with one another over issues we cannot hope to resolve with any authoritative assurance? Yes, the calendar used by most has been established as a tradition of the church.

Knoxville Congregation hosts Dr. Bacchiocchi

Plans are underway for the Seventh Day Christian Assembly and Bible Sabbath Ministries to host Sabbatarian author and scholar,

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.

April 20-21, 2007

in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Dr. Bacchiocchi will be presenting seminars on:

The Sabbath, and The Second Advent of Messiah

For further information the following web sites:

www.seventhdaychristian.net

or

www.biblesabbathministries.net

Pastor Ken Swiger may be reached at:

sdcagov@aol.com

Dr. Bruce Horne may be reached at:

info@biblesabbathministries.com



SAMUELE BACCHIOCCI, Ph. D.,
*Retired Professor of
Theology and Church History,
Andrews University*



Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi is the first non-Catholic to graduate from the prestigious Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. He received a gold medal from Pope Paul VI for earning academic distinction of *summa cum laude* on his dissertation "From Sabbath to Sunday". He has earned degrees also in the USA and has served as a missionary in Ethiopia. Dr. Bacchiocchi has authored 17 volumes which have been favorably reviewed by many scholars. He travels extensively in many parts of the world conducting seminars designed to help people understand and experience more fully biblical truths.

For 26 years Dr. Bacchiocchi served as Professor of Church History and Theology at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is married to Anna Gadin Bacchiocchi and they have three children: Loreta, Daniel and Gianluca and four grandchildren.

Despair or Life—It's Your Choice

His body language said more than his words. He turned from the television camera; his shoulders slumped; and his eyes turned down. Every nuance spoke of defeat and despair. He had lived in fear all of his life. Terror continued to be an everyday fact of life. He didn't dare dream of freedom, peace, and safety.

"Nothing's going to help us anyway," said the Middle Eastern man to the interviewer.

Let's put politics aside as we consider his misery multiplied many times over throughout the world. Some people blame God. Others think this is proof that no God exists. Some argue that religion is the biggest cause of war and conflict. Some believe reasonable men can legislate or democratize an end to the bloodshed. Others wait for Jesus to return with a heavenly army to force nations into peaceful co-existence.

In the meantime, the hatred and warfare go on and on and on. Do we hang our heads in despair and echo the words: "Nothing's going to help us, anyway?"

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (Joh 10:10 NIV) How can a man who lived over 2000 years ago give you life to the full today? A mere man who lived and died cannot give anyone life. Is Jesus able to carry out this amazing promise? People down through the ages have staked their lives on it. They made a choice to believe the eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.


One of his disciples, the Apostle John, said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." (Joh 1:1-4)

John continued, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him." He identifies the Word as Jesus Christ in verse 17.

After Jesus' resurrection, "a week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas [one of the twelve apostles] was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'" (Joh 20:26-29)

God inspired John to write, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (Joh 20:30-31)

The life Jesus offers is not without troubles. (Joh 16:33) But life in Christ includes strength to meet trouble with love, hope, faith, and joy. (Joh 17:3; 16:22-24)

Listen to the words of Jesus, of his disciples, John and Thomas, and others who testify to the reality of the authority of Jesus the Christ to give you life and hope. "Stop doubting and believe." Believe that Jesus is the Christ so that you may have life through his authority to give it to you. Don't settle for despair. 



Scarlett Stough
Missouri
skstough@yhti.net


We can break with tradition when we must, but why do it when it is uncalled for, and without any firm ground to stand on?

Can we discuss calendar matters? Shouldn't "Iron sharpen Iron" on this topic as well as any other? Sure. And a venue like the CEM & Friends Forum is a good place to do it, because there are knowledgeable people there who can knock off a few sparks on their own. But while we are making sparks we need to leave the churches alone. Nothing should be changed until the *community* has had a chance to speak. And the broader community should be heard from as well as your own little flock.

This is what Paul is driving at when he contrasts the covenant of Mount Sinai with the Christian covenant. We have not stood at the foot of that mountain where the presence of God set the mountain on fire. Rather, in Paul's words:

*But ye are come unto mount Sion,
and unto the city of the living God,*

the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:22-28)

I take this to mean that we are in covenant, not only with our local church, but with the "universal companionship" of the entire church, living and dead. It seems to me that we should work harder at maintaining the covenant we all have with one another in Christ, and not unnecessarily isolate ourselves in smaller and smaller conclaves. Sometimes, standing up for "what is right" in serious matters of faith may leave you standing alone for a time. But that is not a position anyone should desire, and we should strive to avoid it at all times. 



CEM Memorial Day Family Weekend

Date: May 25-28, 2007 (Pentecost Weekend)

Location: Paris Landing State Park; Buchanan, TN

For Reservations, call: 1-800-250-8614; CEM Group Number 3078

For more information, call: Skip Martin at 870-926-3624

Activities include seminars, youth classes and Church Services
in addition to food and fellowship.
Enjoy a concert on beautiful Kentucky Lake.

A Child Shall Teach Them

The phone rang at 1:00 AM on Tuesday, January 16, 2007. It was my son, and he said, "Hi, Dad. It's show time!" It was time for him to take his wife Lisa to the hospital where she would give birth to their second child. My wife Scarlett and I would go to their house and take care of two year old Sophia while Lisa was in labor. As it turned out Lisa delivered her son Ethan Andrew at 3:30 AM—a fast delivery indeed!

Is there something we should learn from infants and little children? Christ thought so. He said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." (Mar 10:14-16 NIV)



Bill Stough
Missouri
bstough@vhtl.net

Little children are so trusting, so innocent, so open and undisguised. When we took Sophia to the hospital later that day to see her parents and new brother, she was so glad to see them. She wanted to hug and be hugged by her mommy and daddy. There was no sophistication there—just pure openness. She was not ashamed that she needed to be loved. Sophia was also very kind and loving to her new brother. She wanted to stroke his hair, touch his face, kiss him, and even asked to hold him. A pillow was set up on one side, Sophia was in the middle, and Grandma Scarlett on the other side. Then newborn Ethan was placed on their laps so Sophia could "hold" her new brother. It was a very touching sight, and one I'll never forget.



But if fundamental principles of righteousness are simple, so are the principles of repentance.

The prophet Micah counseled the people of Israel to repent of disobedience. What evidence of repentance did God want to see? "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?" Life had become so complicated for Israel that some believed it would take a mountain of sacrifices to make things right. Micah even asked, "Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic 6:7)

God's laws were reasonable and

repentance was possible. He simply required that they change the way they lived.

At the core of this is, just as Churchill asked Jesus which is the most important commandment, Jesus told him to love God and love his neighbor. The man replied, "To Love (God).....and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." (Mar 12:33) Even a lawyer could understand that.

One day a nation will exist that will have only one law. And the law will be no one word. No man will need a lawyer and no one will need a registry with 75,000 pages of laws. What will the lawyers do with all that time on their hands? **E**

Marriage Retreat

Plans for a marriage retreat at Clifty Falls State Park in beautiful Madison, Indiana are in the process. Tentative date is late April. Sponsored by Churches of God, Cincinnati & Lexington.

Check the web site at www.cogcincinnati.org or call Jim O'Brien at 513-755-0040 to indicate if you are interested.

Waterfall photos courtesy of andrewscrapbook.com

The Simple Law

Life can get complicated. I stopped in a coffee shop a few days ago to find a table in the corner to write an article. The young woman serving coffee saw my Bible and started a conversation about her fear of world conditions.

Her father had been a minister in a major denomination. She had grown up with strong religious values. Then the church went through a chaotic time, her parents divorced, and her faith wavered. She joined the army looking for a way to pay for college. She took a desirable assignment in Europe but became homesick wearing a uniform that was less than appreciated in a foreign country.

Then 9-11 happened. She finished her tour of duty, came home, and began dating a young man with a child from a previous relationship. She moved in without benefit of marriage. Now she is living with a man that is not her husband, embroiled in a bitter custody dispute over a child that is not her own. Her life is upside down and shows no signs of improving. She has lost her faith, her church, her country, her father, and herself. The foundation stones have crumbled.

Just a few years ago she was an intelligent teenager with faith and hope. Less than a decade later she can't find her way back to a sane world. How could someone who started with such promise reach such a stage of confusion? We talked for some time about the basic values of life.

Winston Churchill once said, "All things are simple, and many can be expressed in single words: freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope."

He is correct. The Apostle Paul distilled it to three words—faith, hope, and love. Some scholars contend that the tablets of stone given to Moses contained only 10 words. They were icons expressing fundamental principles of life.

How different from our country which has over 300 million laws on the books at various levels.

The federal tax code alone covers over 17,000 pages. Federal business codes take up more than 75,000 pages. And that doesn't include the 75,000 pages of laws in the

Federal Registry delegated to agencies such as the EPA. Martha Stewart was convicted of lying to federal investigators about a crime for which she was never charged. Prosecutors did not charge her with insider trading because they realized the law was so complicated most jurors would never understand it.

And those are just federal laws. State and local laws, some dating back to the 18th century, make it impossible for you to go one day without breaking some laws somewhere. In Ohio it's still against the law for women to wear patent leather shoes in public. The Ohio Drivers Manual states that you must honk your horn when passing another motorist.



Jim O'Brien
Ohio
jobrien@fuse.net

“...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Mic 6:7)

How much pretentiousness and covering up of “the real Sophia” is demonstrated by such an act? How much of a mask was Sophia wearing because “she had an image to protect”? Is there something we can learn from this?

A young child is what she is—not something else. She wants to play, wants to eat, wants to go on the swing and the slide. A young child is aboveboard, guileless, undisguised, and candid. There is no phony face or faking it to appear to be something else.


Just as Ryan and Lisa deeply know their children, so also does God know us. We should not try to fake it with God. He loves openness with him. Why not tell your Heavenly Father, “I feel like I need a hug today.” And when we pray, never try to be phony before God to be “acceptable” to him. We don't have to be. He knows us for what we truly are.

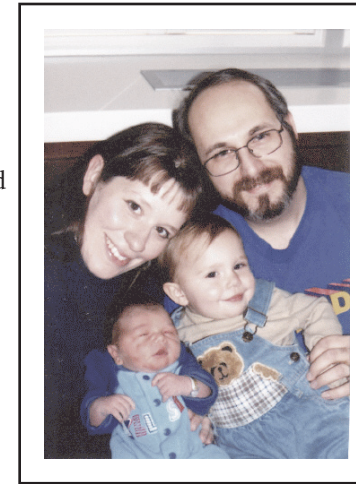
Ryan and Lisa also know Sophia's flaws. Do they despise her for that? No—they care, they love, they cherish, they protect her. If we are to learn from children, remember that those parental desires to love and care are given to

humans by God. It is just a small part of what he is like. We, too, need to become childlike before our Father in heaven for he loves us, cares, and cherishes us too. It is not valid to feel beaten down and needing to prove to God that we are trying to “qualify for the kingdom” and become worthy. It's not a matter of being worthy. It was He who gave us life. It is He who will give us eternal life. “Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luk 12:32 KJV)

So be open with our Heavenly Father just as a little child is with its human parents. We are all flawed, but he is on our side. He cares for us as a parent does. “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.” (Psa 103:10-14 NIV) 



Observe how all things
are continually being born of change...
Whatever is, is in some sense the seed
of what is to emerge from it.

—Marcus Aurelius

“Oasis Ministries” Launched

Ram Dewey, Faith Networks Associate Editor and writer, along with her husband George, a former Church of God pastor, recently announced the official launching of their Oasis Ministries. Pam described the background, purpose, and plans for the ministry in a seminar presented at the Terre Haute, Indiana, Church of God on January 20. Below is a summary of that description.

As many *Faith Networks* readers may know, my husband George had a long series of diabetes-related health crises

last year, lasting from May until October. This included leg artery bypass surgery, a serious staph infection, and eventually

amputation of a joint and a toe of his right foot. At various points he could have lost the foot, a leg, or even his life.

But once it became obvious that God had intervened and basically given him a “second chance” (minus just a piece

of foot) he decided that it was foolish to wait until he’s old enough to retire

(another 4 years or so) to throw our energies into doing everything we can

in ministry before we are too old and decrepit to do so. And early last year

his job got shifted so that he can do it anywhere in the world, over the Internet. We already have an in-the-car Internet

hookup, and use it every time we go on the road ... I drive, he does his insurance

audit reviewing that keeps us able to pay our bills.

In addition, we’ve started getting more and more invitations in the past couple of years for me to do seminars

around the country. And last fall, Ron Dart started gently nagging me that we

ought to seriously consider just getting on with it and declaring ourselves an

actual ministry, similar to his *Christian Educational Ministries*, Guy Swenson’s

So George came up with the unusual plan I first announced in Terre Haute, Indiana, on January 20. We are going to

get a used RV ... perhaps a 28-30 foot mini-motor home pulling a compact

car ... and hit the road. Full time. When we visit church groups on the Sabbath,

George usually delivers the sermon, and I present inspirational and educational

seminars some time during the visit. Of course we won’t be speaking somewhere

every week. But instead of going out and coming back here to Michigan each time,

as we have been doing for the past few years, we’ll go out ... and go on, returning

to home base here at least three or four times a year to visit family, take care of

doctor’s appointments, etc. In between speaking engagements,

we plan to sight-see, and perhaps park at a campground for a month or so in

a central spot, so that we can go out to engagements in several directions before

moving on. We would plan to spend

spring and summer north of the Mason Dixon line, fall and winter south.

In addition to visiting groups, we plan

to just let individuals and families know

when we’ll be passing through their area,

and if they’d like us to stop and visit a

spell, we’ll do so. We’ve realized for a

long time that there are many lonely,

isolated people around the country who could use some fellowship, refreshing, and cheering up. We’re calling ourselves *Oasis Ministries*, and our tag-line is “We bring an Oasis to YOU!”

In addition to speaking to Sabbatarian Church of God groups, I’ve begun

having some unusual opportunities to reach out to audiences in both Protestant

circles and the “non-religious” public. It appears that this aspect of our ministry

will also be growing. George videotapes all of my seminar presentations, and

turns them into DVD collections, which we make available to any who request

them. We also plan to make available, on computer disk, collections of the



material that I write for the various websites that I maintain, including the *Field Guide to the Wild World of Religion*

at www.isistso.org/guide and *The Oasis* at www.youall.com/oasis.

We don’t know how long we’ll be on the road year around. Perhaps it will

be just a year or two until God opens another door. Or perhaps it will indeed last until we’re too old and decrepit to do it, if this seems to be the door He wants

us to stick with. As George joked the other day, maybe we’ll “not have gone

over the cities of Israel before the Lord comes.”

We don’t yet have an RV, but are

actively looking. Our plan is to get geared

up in spring and summer, and make the total shift to on the road around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles next fall. Meanwhile, we will continue traveling to speaking engagements in our regular van. In the coming weeks we’re

already lined up to be in Gatlinburg in February at a Young Adult Retreat, Terre Haute in mid-March and again in early

April for the beginning of Unleavened Bread, Springfield, Missouri for the

last weekend of Unleavened Bread (see details elsewhere in this issue of *Faith Networks*), Kansas City the week after

that, and Paris Landing, Tennessee for the CEM Memorial Day weekend in May.

The primary reason we chose to make the original announcement in Terre Haute is that we have considered

the group there our “home church” for several years even though it’s

six hours away from our home group anywhere near us where we

would have an opportunity to fully use our spiritual gifts, and so we’ve

visited there as often as we can. Pastor Jeff Osborn and the group

have been very supportive of our efforts for a long time, so we decided to “ask their blessing” on our new ministry. We consider ourselves to be a Missionary Outreach of the Terre Haute COG.

More information on our plans will be available in the near future. I’m already

working on a newsletter, a website, a

blog of our adventures, and more. The

website should be up and running by

the time this issue of *Faith Networks* is

in mailboxes. The web address will be

www.youall.com/oasisministries. If you

would like to be on the Oasis Newsletter

mailing list, either by mail or by email,

write to either oasis@chartermi.net or to

George and Pam Dewey, 3508 Babylon

Rd., Allegan, MI 49010. EN

Faith Networks March, 2007 11