

# A New Beginning ...



In October, 1997 a “*firestorm*” broke out across Canada because Canada’s **largest** protestant church “The United Church of Canada” selected a new Moderator (head of the Church). The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 by combining the Methodist, Congregational, & Presbyterian churches together.

**Rev. Bill Phipps** was interviewed by the Ottawa Citizen newspaper, and *his beliefs* revealed what was being taught in Seminaries for decades ... but normally “kept secret” from the public:

- "I don't believe Jesus was God, but I'm no theologian," Phipps says.
- "I have no idea if there is a hell," he says.
- "Is heaven a place? I have no idea.
- "I don't believe Jesus is the only way to God," he said. "I don't believe he rose from the dead as a scientific fact. I don't know whether those things happened. It's an irrelevant question."
- “God is huge, mysterious, wholly beyond our comprehension and beyond our total understanding”

## Social Justice ideas...

- What really matters, says Rev. Bill Phipps, is mending a broken world.
- "We've got enough problems trying to live ethically and well here, to have any knowledge or understanding of what happens after we die."
- "Your soul is lost unless you care about people starving in the streets.
- The way of Jesus has everything to do with the Kyoto summit on global warming, on dealing with child hunger, on helping the homeless.

## Beyond ...

- Mr. Phipps admitted the United Church continues to lose members, and its 1988 decision to ordain homosexuals drove many away.
- Although about 3,000,000 Canadians claim affiliation with the United Church, there are only about 320,000 people in the denomination's pews on a typical Sunday morning
- (Now ... 20 years later ... the numbers are down another million members)
- A longtime member ... “Everybody loves Bill... He’s stimulated our spiritual lives” ... and as for heaven & hell ... “The answers are unknowable, so why waste our energy?”

I remembered this story of the United church because of a Critical Thinking Skills course I am enrolled in ... and *they* were speaking of these ideas (*of God being unknown and unknowable*) dating back to “so called great thinkers & philosophers” David Hume (died **1776**) and Immanuel Kant (died **1804**). Their message is “don’t use your **brain & logic & reason** to hope to understand God! (more than 200 years ago!)

Why is this important? And relevant to us today in the Church of God?

1 Reason ... We are NOT like That Church! (See Contrast!)

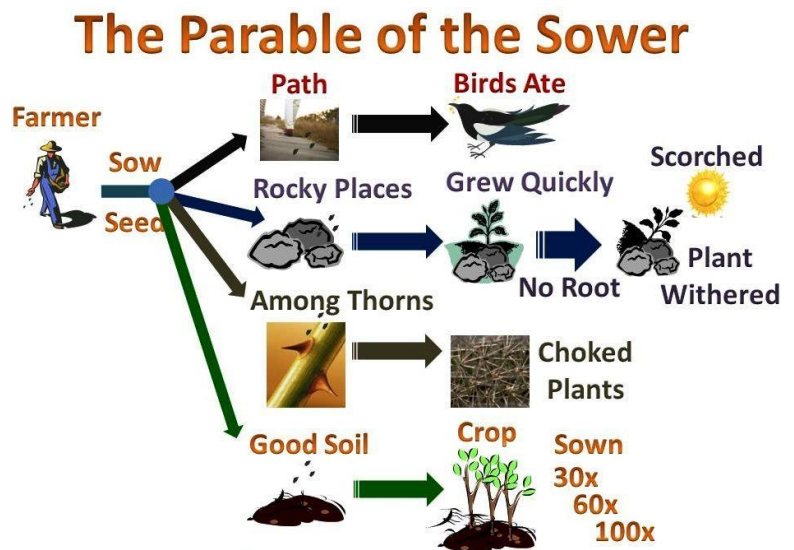
2 Reason ... As someone newly ordained ... this is my first message to my “local congregation” where we can share & re-acknowledge some foundational ideas and understanding about

- **Our Christian walk**
- **Our calling and purpose in “this age” this time in history**
- **The purpose of the Church of God that Jesus built & our goals & purpose**
- **Review the resources we have in the church to help our Christian walk**

## Our Christian Walk

- Jesus is our model **1Co 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**
- Is to be “great” neighbors, and friends, and coworkers
- We are to pour out in our lives all of the virtues we see and learn of in Scripture (**Gal 5, Phil 4:8, 2 Pet 1:5**)
- Yet, we are to be separate “from the world” (1 Jhn 2:15-16)

- Jesus shows us that being different can lead to challenges & persecution **Mat 13:20-21 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.**



- We seek to be a “light” to the world ... I hope for the *transition* when someone who says ... They would be a perfect friend, companion if they didn’t have that crazy religion ... *to when they realize* ...the reason they are such a good person is BECAUSE OF that crazy religion ... I need to ask about & look into **that** transforming faith myself!

## Our calling and purpose in “this age” this time in history

**Joh 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.**

**Joh\_12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."**

Not all people respond in this age to God's call. Those that do are "firstfruits" (see Holy Days)

A saying that oldtimers in the church may remember ... God doesn't call people in this age just to be "saved" ... but to be "spent"!

Jesus explained ...

Joh 4:35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

Joh 4:36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

Joh 4:37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'

Joh 4:38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

And ...

Luk 10:2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

## The purpose of the Church of God that Jesus built & our goals & purpose

In Canada, we have the benefit of the Canadian ministry working together to develop 5 year plans. Scripture provides "direction" and our plans make this more specific.

### Our Mission, Vision and Values

#### Mission

*To preach the good news of the Kingdom to all peoples, primarily within Canada, as a witness and a warning; and to nurture and prepare disciples to reign with Jesus Christ.*

#### Vision

*By 2025, we will have a reputation for being a healthy Church of God organization - with a ministry that is respected and easy to approach due to our servant leadership culture and our ability to effectively proclaim and teach the Word of God.*

#### Core Values

##### **"I foresee" (I4C)**

- Integrity** – Rom 12:9; Jos 24:14
- Courage** – Prov 28:1
- Care** – Eph 4:32
- Courtesy** – Gal 5:13-14
- Consideration** – Heb 10:24

# Our First 5-Year Objective

1. To help God's people:
  - a. Walk worthy of our vocation;
  - b. Maintain humility while forbearing one another in charity;
  - c. Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;
  - d. Discover, develop and use their gifts towards being active members of the body of Christ

**“Eph. 4.1-3** I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

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# Our Second 5-Year Objective

2. To have an evangelism program
  - a. That is robust and uncompromising in its Biblical content and ability to address current affairs; and
  - b. That leverages technology and word of mouth.

**Matt 24.14** “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

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The planning includes “much more” including ...

- External forces acting against the Church
- Internal Challenges that may obstruct us
- 6 or 7 Critical success factors (to accomplishing the objectives) ... and concrete steps to improving on these factors.



As a new minister I want to be clear of my responsibilities and be sure the members in Ottawa understand too!

### Duties of Ministers

1) To properly take care of their own families (1 Timothy 5:8). Most ministers in the CGI are not salaried and must pursue their own jobs or careers. The brethren should therefore exercise discretion in making demands on their minister's time which may interfere with his job or his family.

2) To oversee the church. Jesus Christ invested the ministry with the responsibility to provide servant-leadership to His church. As a servant to the people he does not exercise authority as a "lord over God's heritage." In the event that a CGI minister abuses the privilege of service, he is first of all responsible to those he serves and then to the Ministerial Council. With the cooperation of the minister, the Ministerial Council will do what it can (oversight, counseling, etc.) to help him work through his problems. This may involve—but is not limited to, a suspension, a sabbatical, or a revocation of his credentials.

3) To feed the flock—not necessarily to do it all himself, but to see to it that it is done. In the Church of God International, the Sabbath service program is the responsibility of the ministry. With support from the congregation, the pastor is encouraged to work with and train men in public speaking. They should be gifted with biblical understanding, a grasp of speaking fundamentals, and a desire to go before the church. Once they have acquired certain speaking skills and have gained the confidence of the congregation and the support of the pastor, they can (and should) be recognized as a credentialed speaker. This designation opens the door for them to speak without the pastor being present and to speak in other CGI congregations. A pastor may invite someone to speak who isn't credentialed but should do so only if he (the pastor), another CGI minister, or credentialed speaker is present. Weekly sermons can also be provided through audio or visual means including live webcasts available through the CGI website, [www.cgi.org](http://www.cgi.org).

4) As time permits, to make himself available to members for ministerial duties such as counseling, baptism, weddings, funerals, and prayer.

5) To arrange cooperative services on holy days, pulling area churches together whenever practical. To whatever degree is acceptable to the congregation, he should seek to "build bridges" and extend the hand of fellowship to brethren outside the CGI.

6) To encourage attendance of all members at the Feast of Tabernacles. *Note:* It is the responsibility of the home office to establish and/or recommend sites for CGI festival worship. Members are invited to recommend locations that fit a variety of requirements, including but not limited to: number of CGI people the location will serve, convenience, leasing costs for the facilities, number of break-out rooms, contractual obligation, cost to members, long-term availability, cleanliness, equipment quality, parking arrangement, community restrictions, local activities, etc.

7) To live and maintain a lifestyle according to the highest ethical standards of the ministry.

8) To provide servant-leadership training to members of the congregation. Help members to identify and use their natural and spiritual gifts.

9) To recommend qualified men to the Ministerial Council for involvement in the MAP (Ministerial Apprentice Program).

10) In the spirit of the admonition to "be subject one to another," to hold himself accountable to the ministry at large and the Ministerial Council in particular, but at all times maintaining his ultimate accountability to Jesus Christ.

11) To supervise the nomination and election of members to a local church council. For the sake of consistency and organization, it's recommended that this be done within the first month after the Feast of Tabernacles.

To understand at a higher level the essential activities of a church

the essential activities of

a local church. Basically, there are four:

1) **Worship:** This involves prayer, songs of praise, and, in general, honoring God with our presence.

2) **Edification:** In the simplest terms, preaching and teaching, either live or through media resources (CDs, DVDS, web cast, pod casting) or it can also involve the advice and encouragement received from conversations with brethren.

3) **Fellowship:** Simply being together. Fellowship involves mutual exhortation, encouragement, consolation, and sometimes admonition.

4) **Service:** This includes assisting the needy, visiting, encouraging, and helping the sick as well as all other forms of Christian service. These can, of course, be done individually, but can be effectively coordinated by the local church. As for the form of church services or worship, we do not find this outlined in the Bible in such a way as to give us a permanent or specific method of worship. In fact, Paul made significant modifications in routine assemblies (1 Corinthians 14).

## Review some resources we have in the Church .... to help our Christian walk

Eph 4:11-14 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 for the **equipping of the saints** for the **work** of ministry (*Christian teaching*), for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Eph 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Eph 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

- The Father, Jesus, & the Bible
- Statement of Beliefs
  - <https://cgicanada.org/the-christian-adventure/>
  - **AND ...** Procedure for Presenting Study Papers
- Booklets, Articles, sermons
- Websites ... social media
- Ministry, brethren, fellowship, examples, mentors



In closing, a newly ordained pastor ("like me" in our Ottawa Church) is an opportunity for a new beginning

- Building upon the good of the past ... local members & leaders & spiritual gifts in the congregation
- Looking forward to new learning ... and opportunities ... and outreach ...
  - If there are "topics to cover" send me a note

At the beginning of this message we saw some shocking statements from the Largest protestant Church in Canada. In the Church of God, we are not paralyzed into believing God is "unknown & unknowable"!?! We have Truth to share beyond what most churches know of!

And a mission from Jesus to **Mat 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."