

CGI Canada Newsletter

**The birth that
was not...**

That Day!

It's The Sabbath, Now What?

5 Fast Facts - Law vs Grace

Sabbath Service info for January



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the January edition.

Brethren it's heartbreaking to hear in the news about individuals randomly shooting and killing people, simply because they do not agree with their culture, religious beliefs, or even their ideologies. Evil is rampant in this world, but thankfully we have been blessed with the knowledge to navigate through the troubling times. Our Saviour **Yeshua** came to this earth not only to redeem us, but to show us how we ought to live. It's high time we pay attention to the Word as His return draws nigh!

It's time to read this month's featured articles- **The Birth that was not...** and **That Day!** both written by Elder Horane Smith. Then check out our Infuse article **It's The Sabbath, Now What?** by Noni McVey. Enjoy **5 Fast Facts - Law vs Grace**, followed by our regular feature, **Brunner Hill Blessings** from Herb & Janet Jacobs. Be sure to view our **Member Spotlight**, and then read an update on the Jamaican hurricane relief efforts. Finally enjoy some pics from CGI Toronto's Family & Friend's event which included a play about The Prodigal Son.

If you have an interest in providing Content for the monthly newsletter please contact me at the email below. I'd love to hear from you.

Micah 6:8 NKJV - "He had shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"



Maria McLaughlin

Editor
CgiC Newsletter
mariamclaughlin@cgitoronto.org





The birth that was not...

Elder Horane Smith

The birth of Christ or the incarnation is significant to Christianity. The birth of the Christ or Messiah, the Anointed One, is a fact. It happened. However, to say December 25, is the day celebrated for the birth of the Messiah is deceiving, unscriptural, and falls nowhere near the day the Christ became human.

How can you assign a birthday or birth date to the Saviour of Humanity when He didn't ask you to do it, not to mention it being on the wrong day? The vast majority of Christians choose to ignore God's own Holy days of **Lev. 23** and embrace the man-made one. What does God say about that? ***"They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men,"*** Matt. 15:19.

The Bible has done a marvelous job of hiding the date for Christ's birth from us. YAHWEH is a detailed God, the scriptures bear testimony, yet He gave us no date for the Saviour's birth. Is there a message in that? Do Christians have any idea or care to know where Christmas came from? They should, if they choose to worship the Holy One of Israel, in spirit and in truth!

We're going in history to the very roots of what is now known as Christmas. It was in the Indian kingdom of **Mitanni**, which at the time occupied Assyria, where the Sun God Mithra began to attract widespread worship. This information came from the Hittite-Mitanni tablets found some years ago at **Bogaz-Köy** in what is now, **Turkey**.

As kingdoms conquered kingdoms, soon Mitra's influence began to spread and took roots in Persia where it started to mix with **Zoroastrianism**; **Mitra** would later appear as the god Mithra and soon enough it was all over the Babylonian and Chaldean empires. Accompanying worship were winter solstice festivals that began to take shape around Mithra. Remember, he was the sun god and when the days got shorter during winter, there were festivals to look forward to the return of more sun, or their god.

By around the second century A.D., Mithra worship had reached the domineering and world-ruling Roman Empire. Soon enough, Mithraism was entrenched in Roman worship, and by the time of Emperor Constantine, (4th century) it was a state religion, the emperor the chief adherent.

"December 25 was really the date, not of the birth of Jesus, but of the sun god **Mithra**. **Horus**, son of **Isis**, however, was in very early times identified with **Ra**, the Egyptian sun-god, and hence with **Mithra...**" **Sir Arthur Weigall, author.**

In Rome, there was another popular (agriculture) festival. This popular festival, **Saturnalia**, became the most popular of the Roman festivals. It was a winter festival or solstice celebrated between December 17-24, a time of wild merrymaking and domestic celebrations; businesses, schools, and law courts were closed so that the public could feast, dance, gamble, get drunk, exchanged gifts, engaged in all kinds of sexual immorality, and generally, enjoyed life to the fullest.

There was yet another popular festival in Rome at that time of the year. The **festival of natalis Invicti** held on December 25th. But long before Christmas and **natalis invicti**, it happened that on December 25, it was also the birthday of **Mithra**. All these December 25 celebrations came together on that special day. There was this grand celebration of gift-giving, tree decoration, drunkenness, and festivities. Furthermore, December 25 was also the birthday of several deities. That was how pagan deities were worshipped. Can we say truly the God of the Bible should also be worshipped in that way? **Deut. 12** speaks otherwise.

(continued on the next page)



The birth that was not...

cont'd

With Christianity becoming a major religious movement, and albeit threatening politically, a Roman Emperor in the form of Constantine trying to consolidate his power, made a smart political move. Having issued **the Edict of Milan** around 313 AD to protect Christians from persecution, the Emperor, a follower of **Mithra**, saw an opportunity to get Christians on his side. With the help of the church, these three festivals merged into what became known as Christ-mas or Christmas.

In **336 A.D.**, Emperor Constantine declared December 25, to be the birthday of Jesus Christ, “an immovable feast.” The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25 was in AD 336. **A few years later, Pope Julius 1 officially declared that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on the 25th of December.**

We read in Werner Keller’s book **The Bible as History** the following admission. “December 25 is referred to in the documents as Christmas Day in AD 324 for the first time. Under the Roman Emperor Justinian (527-565), it was recognized as an official holiday. An old Roman festival played a major part in the choice of this particular day December 25, in ancient Rome was the “**Dies Natali Invictus**,” the birthday of the unconquered sun, the day of the winter solstice and at the same time, which had long since degenerated into a week of unbridled carnival...”

The noted British anthropologist and scholar **Sir James Frazer** wrote a classic work on ancient myths and religious practices titled **The Golden Bough**. His findings on the ancient origins of Christmas are revealing: “. . .There can be no doubt the **Mithraic** religion [**Mithra** was the pagan sun god] proved a formidable rival to Christianity. Indeed, the issue of the conflict between the two faiths appears for a time to have hung in the balance. An instructive relic of the long struggle is preserved in our festival of Christmas, which the [Catholic] Church seems to have borrowed directly from its heathen rival. ...The heathen origin of Christmas is plainly hinted at, if not tacitly admitted, by Augustine when he exhorts his Christian brethren not to celebrate that solemn day like the heathen on account of the sun, but on account of him who made the sun.”

What then were being celebrated before the first Christmas? They were all deeply rooted pagan festivals. What the political authority did with the help of the church was to white-wash these festivals and call them “Christian.” The reality is Christ was never in them, and you cannot put the Son of God, who came to tabernacle among us, in a festival where He doesn’t belong. God is found only in His festivals or Holy Days of **Lev. 23.**, which he describes as “my feasts,” and “the feasts of the LORD,” not Jewish feasts, as many would have you believe.

God gave His “appointed times” for festivals (**Heb. Moedins; Gen. 14; Lev. 23**) to Israel because He was only dealing with one nation, Israel, at the time, but these sacred or holy appointments of God will eventually be observed by “all nations,” during God’s millennial kingdom on earth. If these festivals were instituted during creation week, were kept by Jesus while on earth, his disciples, and His apostles, and we are told in **Isa. 66** and **Zech. 14**, that all nations will be required to keep them under divine rule, then why isn’t the Christian church keeping them today. Instead, they have thrown them away, and try to just not to keep them and instead celebrate pagan-rooted days such as Christmas and Easter. What do Christmas trees (tree worship is a symbol of idolatry and condemned in the Bible) and bunny rabbits have to do with the birth of Christ and the death of Christ?

’Those who have eyes to read, let them read and understand. Christmas is NOT a biblical festival. For more on this subject click to read [FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS](#) and [GOD’S SEASONAL PLAN.](#)



That Day!

Elder Horane Smith



What is a day? 24 hours; 86,400 seconds; 1440 minutes... the time period of a full rotation of the Earth regarding the sun. On average, this is 24 hours (86,400 seconds).

Then there are the days..., Day of Atonement, Day of Pentecost, Days of Unleavened Bread, the Last Great Day, which are God's appointed times found in Lev. 23. Christendom has Christmas Day, Good Friday, and then we have other international celebrations such as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Victoria Day, Emancipation Day, President's Day, Labour Day, Independence Day, and too many days to list.

The Holy Bible speaks of a special day that is coming; it will be like no other day; a day that will change human history, a day that will change many things even what you and I look like today. Imagine a day that will change everything. Yes. It will be a day of hope, a day when true hope is realized or achieved.

From the day Jesus walked this Earth, he has been warning about this day. The earliest warning was from **Gen 49:10**... The scepter [of royalty] shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes, And to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples. So, a day is coming when all nations will have to obey or else...

All nations and tongues are being warned about this day to come. What day? ***"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."*** Matt 24:14. The end of human history will come on that day. It's called the Day of the LORD, the LORD's Day, Day of Judgment, the Second Coming, and in various other phrases.

The Day of the LORD will bring in a new civilization...NEWNESS. The day of the LORD is the Day Jesus Christ returns to establish his everlasting kingdom. The pain before the gain. A series of harsh, disastrous, destructive, and unbelievable events will culminate on this day. It's certainly not the 24-hour day that we are used to; prophesied events will come to a close on that day. It's referred to in the bible by different names.

Here is the warning to the nations about that day.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on My holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord is coming," Joel 2:1.

"The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the LORD," Joel 2:31.

"The Day of the Lord is near," Zephaniah 1:7.

"The great Day of the LORD is near – near and coming quickly. The cry on the Day of the LORD is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry," Zephaniah 1:14.

"See, the Day of the LORD is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it," Isaiah 13:9.

(continued on the next page)



That Day! cont'd



The phrase, the Day of the Lord is found 18 times in the OT and appears five times in the New Testament. There are also other ways in which the Bible describes this special, yet tumultuous day.

- “that day” **Isaiah 4:2; Micah 2:4; Zechariah 9:16**
- “those days” **Joel 3:1; also in Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20**
- “that time” **Jeremiah 31:1; Zephaniah 3:19–20.**

In fact, the time of Jacob’s trouble is referred to using one of these equivalents:

“How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it,” Jeremiah 30:7.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–2, “Concerning the coming of our Lord and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us – whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter – asserting that the Day of the Lord has already come.”

The Bible also describes that day in other ways. Amos speaks of it as a day of darkness (**Amos 5:18**); ***“Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.”***

Joel as a day of clouds and thick darkness (**Joel 2:2**); ***“A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.”***

Zephaniah as a day of distress and anguish, of trouble and ruin, of darkness and gloom, of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry (**Zephaniah 1:15–16**). ***“That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.”***

Isaiah says the judgment will come suddenly. Billions scoff about this idea of a Jesus Christ coming in the clouds to establish divine rule and rid the earth of its corrupted and failed leaders. For us, it is utopia, for them, it’s science fiction or fantasy. Three-quarters of the world’s population don’t believe in this day of Jesus’ return. They don’t believe in Jesus much less, the day of His return.

When we read the graphic descriptions of what will certainly happen in the near future, if you are not a follower of the Christ you are going to dismiss it and have a hard time believing this will actually occur. Believe me, it takes faith to believe this. It’s no wonder that ***“without faith it’s impossible to please God.”***

He wants you to believe that whatever He promises to do, He will do it! We wait eagerly, but with patience, for that glorious day to come so our joy will be fulfilled.

For more on this subject, click [The SECOND COMING...and Beyond](#) and read our FREE booklet. Ω

It's The Sabbath, Now What?

By Noni McVey

In my youth, I thought it would be great to have an appendix in the back of the Bible with two columns. One column would give what is permissible on the Sabbath and the other would give the non-permissible. Today, I realize how silly it was to think that. The Bible provides a principle for everything encountered in life. It is our responsibility to take the time to read, study, pray and meditate on God's Word. Taking this approach will equip us with the proper knowledge to decide for ourselves what is or is not permissible on the Sabbath.

What is the Sabbath?

God gave the Sabbath as a gift to man. It was instituted at creation when God rested from His work (**Genesis 2:1-3**). The purpose of the Sabbath is to give much needed rest to the mind and body and at the same time enrich the soul. The Sabbath by definition is a weekly Holy Day, a day of solemn rest, an appointed feast and a holy convocation (**Leviticus 23:3**). In addition to rest, it is a time set aside to spend with God in worship.

The Sabbath allows time to focus on the Creator God and look forward to a new creation when God's Kingdom is established on earth. Through God's gracious gift of the Sabbath, He, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed for yet another character building opportunity for each of us. Making personal decisions about what one will or will not do on the Sabbath is one way each individual may develop godly character and the mind of Christ.

The importance of the Sabbath is revealed in many places in the Old Testament. God set the example for the Sabbath. It is the day God "rested" and ceased from His labours of creation..."and was refreshed" (**Exodus 31:17**). God gave a clear example here, He rested from His weekly labour therefore man should rest from his weekly labours too. What should one do on the Sabbath? Rest from his/her weekly work.

Jesus and the Sabbath

In the New Testament the principles of how to keep the Sabbath were given by Christ. As Christ's ministry approached, the Sabbath had become a burden, not a joy due to man's rigid legalistic and exaggerated interpretation about how the Sabbath ought to be observed. Fortunately, for all of mankind, Jesus came and clarified the "spirit" of keeping the Sabbath.

During Jesus' time, there were religious leaders who on many occasions claimed Jesus had violated the Sabbath. In **Mark 2:23-28**, Jesus and His disciples plucked grain and ate it on the Sabbath. This was allowed in the Old Testament (**Deuteronomy 23:25**). So why is it Jesus was considered a Sabbath-breaker? The religious leaders deemed what one could do on the Sabbath. Picking grain was in the non-permissible column of their ledger. Reaping and rubbing loose grain was considered a violation of the Sabbath.

How did Jesus respond to His accusers? He showed how ridiculous their laws were. Jesus told the story of David eating the forbidden showbread in the temple. Afterward, Jesus made the point that God created the Sabbath for man's benefit, not for His. God does not get tired. Therefore, he does not need to rest (**Isaiah 40:28**). Jesus' point to the Pharisees was they were making their laws about how to keep the Sabbath more important than the purpose of the Sabbath.

Another forbidden Sabbath law was not to treat a person's sickness if that individual was in no immediate danger. In **Matthew 12:9-14**, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, He used the analogy of pulling a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath day to show there is nothing wrong with relieving suffering on the Sabbath. One would surely help an animal so why wouldn't a person's life be just as important? (continued on the next page)

It's The Sabbath, Now What?

cont'd

The Pharisee's were so concerned about their rules, they forgot about loving their fellow man. Jesus' examples of what He did on the Sabbath certainly indicate that physical activity is not prohibited. Doing good and serving others in need is not wrong on the Sabbath. What is wrong is pursuing one's own business interests.

What can I do on the Sabbath?

The Sabbath is not a day about what is or is not permissible. It is a day when we don't have to perform certain daily requirements. In other words, the Sabbath has set us free. We are not in bondage to the responsibilities of the work week. For one day out of every week God has given us the liberty not to worry about all the things we worry about for the other six days. Every Sabbath is a blessing and should be approached from a positive point of view. In my youth I focused on what I couldn't do, today I think about all the things I get to do. It is not the job of the church, the ministry or other individuals to create a handbook for Sabbath observance. The church and our ministry teach the broad principles and it is up to each of us to apply those principles as we meet each situation.

When deciding what my activity for the Sabbath day will be, I have found asking the following questions helps make the decision easier:

- 1) Will the activity be a joy and a blessing to those around me?
- 2) Is the Sabbath activity a delight or a burden?
- 3) Is the activity drawing me closer to God?
- 4) Will this activity violate the spirit of the Sabbath?
- 5) Does it bother my conscience?

With these questions in mind, I evaluate each activity and situation I run into on the Sabbath. Many turn to **Isaiah 58:13** to prove one should not take personal pleasure in the Sabbath. Over the years, I have heard the list of activities one is not to participate in. Activities such as watching television, swimming, going on a bike ride, listening to music, reading the newspaper, taking a walk, visiting with friends who are not in the church, playing a game with one's children or having marital relations. Using this list as an example, I ask myself my five questions.

My conclusion, none of these activities violate the spirit of the Sabbath as long as I don't abuse or overdue anyone of them. There is no simple solution or formula to apply to what one can or cannot do on the Sabbath. God gave us His law, principles to apply and a mind to decide with. Facing difficult decisions throughout your Christians walk is inevitable. How each situation is handled is what will determine the quality of the character you are building.

Whatever you decide to do on the Sabbath, be sure your activity shows respect and love toward God and make it a day of delight.

Ω

Shabbat Shalom

5 Fast Facts – Law vs Grace

Subject: Roles of Law & Grace in the life of a Christian

Context: Some Christians believe “Law keeping” provides salvation while others hold Law keeping is unimportant because only grace is needed for salvation.

1. Psalms 119:172 - ... *all Your commandments are righteousness.*

God’s Law is wonderful and good and part of God’s **covenants** with mankind (including the New Covenant where His law is written in our hearts - **Jer 31:33**)

2. There are **two roles of the Law** – the “**educative**” role shows us how God wants us to live. The “**judicial**” role of the law convicts us as being lawbreakers, worthy of death, & **NEEDING** Grace – God’s pardon that is provided by Christ’s sacrifice to cover our sins. **Grace** provides Salvation – Law keeping does not provide (earn) salvation – “Granting Salvation” is not a purpose of the law. Negative statements of the Law in scripture, are **NOT** saying the law is bad or evil, but instead saying that the Law is not effective for salvation. We **NEED** both Law & Grace. The Law shows us how to live & identifies our sins ... and Grace provides us forgiveness of our sins and the gift of Eternal life

3. Gal 3:2 ... *Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

As described in point 2, the **law** does not provide salvation. (It shows we are sinners – needing forgiveness) Faith in Christ’s sacrifice provides the favour & forgiveness of God (**Grace**)

4. Proper scriptural understanding is not “Law vs Grace” ... but “Law & Grace”

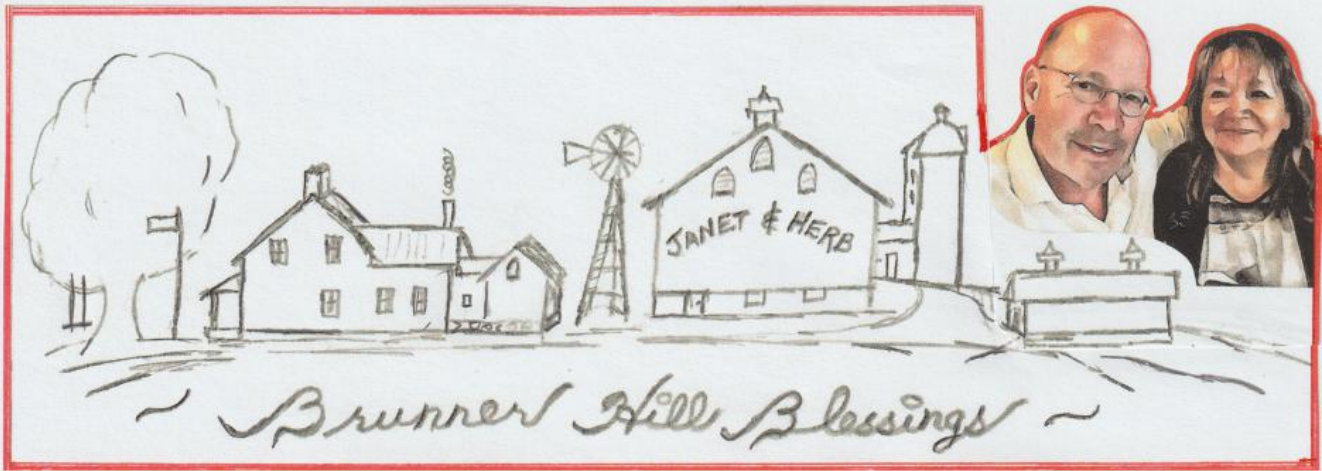
An old saying: “The Law **tells** what Grace **covers**”

5. Most Christians agree on the role of **Grace**

Eph 2:8 For by **grace** you have been **saved** through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” The “point of difference” is **the law**. Some (condemning “legalism”) teach that since the law is not the mechanism for salvation, it is unimportant and keeping God’s law is not required of Christians. Iniquity (lawlessness) is the opposite of God and is foolish since there are so many scriptures that praise the wisdom of God’s law – as it teaches us both How to Love God and How to love our fellowman. **1Jn 5:2-3** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

Source of some ideas:

1. Bronson James – Armor of God – “Law vs Grace”
2. Vance Stinson concurring with the Westminster Confession Chapter XIX – Law of God
3. Ed Szalankiewicz - Book of Galatians A Commentary
4. Bronson James – Armor of God – “Law vs Grace”
5. Summary



By Janet & Herb Jacobs

Back in Egypt

When I, (Herb writing this to the Church of God International Canada), was growing up, we would look out the southernly front house window, across the road, across the fields, and then about 1 1/4 miles away, we could see Egypt.

Egypt, or as we always called it, "Back in Egypt", was a windmill with a small adjacent building located near the back of my grandparent's "back" one-hundred-acre farm (Lot 10 Con 15th Ellice). As the land in our area was somewhat flat, one could see the "towering" windmill across the fields. "Towering" at the time was really an averaged sized windmill - a 28-foot tower with an 8-foot wheel, but the flats of Ellice Township and the adjacent Ellice swamp made it easy to see.



This Canadian Egypt always made me think of old Biblical times and what it was like, but also what it meant. Being far away, out in the open, in the middle of nowhere, with the windmill overseeing the farmland, it was fitting from the **Old Testament** to be named "Back in Egypt". I never did find out who came up with the name; my grandparents were Reformed Mennonite, attended church each week - possibly they came up with the name and reflected upon the Biblical reference as I did.

From the New Testament we see young Jesus fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod and death from **Matthew 2:13** "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

These windmills helped grow the Canadian countryside by pumping water from hand dug wells to keep the water troughs full, and often used as in our case, to pasture cattle. I became somewhat fascinated by the majestic look and power of the windmills - standing there alone and providing everything needed. God's power is amazing and the wind provides power to the windmill. God provides and we see the Holy Spirit working as the wind blows in **John 3:8** "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and

whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit."

Our Father's east wind can also bring bad weather - heavy rain in the summer, and a cold east wind in the winter can cause cold houses, cold barns and sometimes frozen water pipes. We do what we can in defence of nature. Fun fact - did you know with many windmills, as the wind speed increases, the tail vane rotates closer to the wheel, otherwise it would turn too fast in high winds and fly apart. This is nothing in comparison to what God can do - from the **Holy Bible**, the east wind parted the sea and allowed the exile from Egypt as found in **Exodus 14:21** **"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."**

I never did pay a lot of attention to the windmill make, until it was too late, everything abandoned and eventually the windmill and building long gone. We assumed it was a Beatty Brothers Limited, from Fergus, Ontario - a very popular local manufacturer of windmills and other farm equipment. In fact, the 1930's picture confirms this windmill as a Chicago Aermotor. The Aermotor was the more common windmill



at the time and likely had a larger short line distribution network than the Canadian built Beatty Pumper. In later years, after there was

no more pasture and the windmill no longer used and neglected, the building was still able to store our lime green Owatonna swather.

As this one hundred acre parcel of land was surrounded by fields of either hay, mixed grain, wheat or corn (sorry no soybeans were grown at that time), this area showed some prosperity and hope versus the tough times and famine we see from the **Holy Bible** in **Genesis 12:10** **"And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land."**

This 100-acre field had lots to offer; the Black Creek ran through it (which was really a drainage ditch),

the train track was near and cut off a 1 acre strip on the south-west corner. WoW - what a blessing; water, drainage, train tracks, windmill, pasture, crops and cattle.



Steam Engine circa 1935 heading south from Brunner to Egypt.

We now have a windmill right in our Brunner Hill yard and in similar fashion, 28-foot tower, same 8-foot size wheel, but with 32 vanes instead of the typical 16 from most manufacturers.

The old windmill and building "Back in Egypt" are now long gone; the train tracks have been removed and looking back across the fields it is not the same - we no longer think of "Back in Egypt" as a place to escape and reflect. Now, we look at each other and look up in our own yard as the new Egypt, we think about our wonderful God, the new windmill (sometimes with the Northern Lights), and with the new times to come in the "New Egypt".

Blessings until next time,
Janet & Herb.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



We are John and Yanya Reiner and attend services at the CGI Kitchener congregation. We have been married for 40 years and have been blessed during that time with four children and five grandchildren, with one on the way this coming April.

John has been farming his entire life, with Yanya joining him with that endeavor upon marriage. We both came from Catholic roots, Yanya attending a Catholic High school.

Over the years of studying scripture we felt God's call for something more, resulting in us coming to CGI 3 years ago. Since then, our lives have changed dramatically with the many brothers and sisters we have met.

God's blessings are immense, and the church a true blessing!

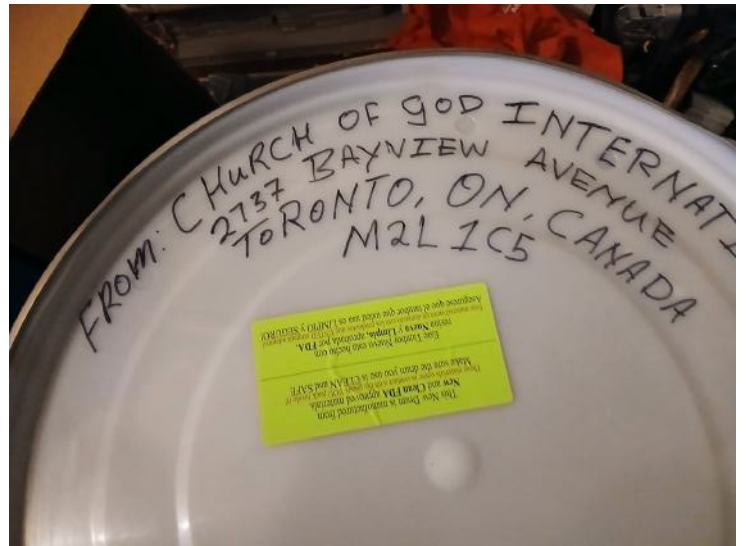
***"Is anyone among you suffering?
Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful?
Let him sing psalms."***

James 5:13 NKJV

A TIME OF NEED FINDS HELP INDEED!

"The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself." Proverbs 11:25 NKJV

CGI Toronto has sent a total of seven barrels with food, clothing, toiletries, tools, and building materials to Jamaica, to assist our CGI brethren who were drastically affected by Hurricane Melissa. The category 5 hurricane caused catastrophic damage to the mid and western parts of the Caribbean island in late October. The hurricane destroyed the church building in Maroon Town, and also left many homeless across the island. We extend a special thank you to Wolson Stowe, who organized a drive at his place of work, which helped to fill and send the last three barrels. Thanks again to all those who donated items in cash and kind to help our brothers and sisters in Jamaica during their time of need. Your generosity and kindness will be blessed and rewarded.



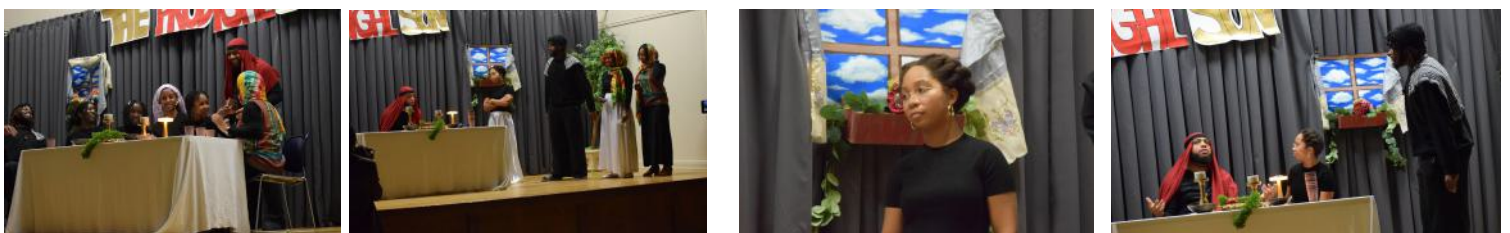
Pics from CGI Toronto's Family & Friends Event

On Saturday December 27th, CGI Toronto hosted their **Family & Friend's Sabbath Service**, an evangelistic event which was attended by 85 persons (23 were visitors) and 13 online. Elder Horane Smith presented on the topic - **Is There Something Truly RIGHT About Christmas?** The presentation was well received, and many questions were asked and comments made after the presentation. Following service a delicious potluck meal was enjoyed by all which was followed by a play about 'The Prodigal Son'. After the play everyone enjoyed the delightful fellowship which included karaoke, board games, dominoes and other fun activities. It truly was a blessed Sabbath!



Enjoy some pictures from 'The Prodigal Son' play

After the Friend's & Family Sabbath Service on Dec. 27th, we were treated to an amazing production of 'The Prodigal Son' put on by members of the CGI Toronto congregation. The production and cast were as follows: Playwright - Elder Horane Smith; Play Director - Courtney Scarlett; Stage Manager - Kerine James; Costume & Stage Props - Samar Smith; Sound Tech - Godfrey London; Light Tech - Beverley Smith; Poem Readers - Danique Lindo, Denisha Smith, Emberlee Stowe, Azariah Stowe, Nana Anane, Torah-Ann Keane and Justice Edwards; The Pigs - Jeremiah Scarlett and Malachi Smith. The Main Cast: Rebecca & also a Poem Reader - Karissa-Rose Tomas; Nathaniel - Johvonne Keane; Rachel - Rachael Keane; Barnabas - Micah Stowe; Timothy - Codi Smith; Benjamin - Nathan Lindo; Michael the Prodigal Son - Jordi Smith. The audience all agreed that the play was a big hit and was enjoyed by everyone. There was laughter and there was cheers!!!



More pics from 'The Prodigal Son' play



JANUARY SABBATH SERVICES

Toronto

Jan. 3 - Kenroy Allen
Jan. 10 - Courtney Edwards
Jan. 17 - Victor Paron
Jan. 24 - Courtney Scarlett
Jan. 31 - Bernard Wilson

Kitchener

Jan. 3 - Jim Lucas (UCG)
Jan. 10 - Bernard Wilson
Jan. 17 - Kenroy Allen
Jan. 24 - Adam Dubler
Jan. 31 - Carlos De la Cruz &
John Reiner

Burlington

Jan. 3 - Adrian Davis
Jan. 10 - Adrian Davis
Jan. 17 - Jan Kowalczyk
Jan. 24 - Adrian Davis
Jan. 31 - Jan Kowalczyk

London

Jan. 3 - Bernard Wilson
Jan. 10 - Rick Dubler
Jan. 17 - Mel Rahel
Jan. 24 - Bernard Wilson
Jan. 31 - Adam Dubler

Kawartha Lakes

Jan. 3 - Taped Sermon
Jan. 10 - Stephan Willshaw
Jan. 17 - Taped Sermon
Jan. 24 - Taped Sermon
Jan. 31 - Jim French

Ottawa

Jan. 3 - Jim French
Jan. 10 - Taped Sermon
Jan. 17 - David Townson
Jan. 24 - Jim French
Jan. 31 - Taped Sermon

Oshawa

Jan. 3 - Taped Sermon
Jan. 10 - Jim French
Jan. 17 - Taped Sermon
Jan. 24 - Larry Arnburg
Jan. 31 - Taped Sermon

For more info - see the Congregation websites
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