



Church of the Open Bible

(Church of God General Conference, Atlanta GA)

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Pastor Rex F. Cain / 440.232.3970 / February 1, 2009

How Does Your Garden Grow?

I'll bet most people who use computers don't have the slightest idea how they really work. But that lack of understanding is no deterrent to use. Similarly, I don't really understand how the kingdom of God works but I'm delighted to be a citizen and participant.

"The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows--how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." (Mark 4:26-29)

I heard on a Christian radio station this morning that a recent survey indicates that, for the first time in its history, the majority of Americans no longer look to the Bible as the source of guidance and direction. That's certainly an unfortunate trend but not terribly surprising. Christianity seems to be diminished in its impact in our era and this trend, as well as the decline in church attendance and growth in many churches, is cause for alarm by many. But this is no reflection on the growth and impact of the kingdom of God.

The fact is, according to the parable of Jesus, the kingdom grows silently and mysteriously among us. Regardless of the tide of popularity of Christianity, the vehicle designed to serve the kingdom, the growth of the kingdom is steady and sure.

On a personal level, the kingdom grows silently and mysteriously within us. We feed, water and cultivate it through essential disciplines such as prayer, worship, Bible study and Christian fellowship, but we no more understand its real growth than we do a garden that we've planted.

This much I'm sure of: the smallest of seeds was planted over 2,000 years ago and there has been steady, silent and impressive growth ever since. A day of harvest for the crop is rapidly approaching. With that in mind, I want to do all that I can to cultivate the "kingdom garden" in my life so that it is healthy and productive. And I urge you to do the same. It would be an unspeakable tragedy to come to the day of harvest with little or no crop to

reap.

How does your garden grow? We can't answer that question but we can assess its health. If the crop looks less than healthy, today is an excellent day to provide the needed nutrients - while there is time. The Vine is waiting to supply His branches with health and vitality if we'll just reach out to make the connection.

- Pastor Steve Taylor (AZ), online devotions / 1-26-09

PASTOR DALE SWARTZ had gotten a good report from his doctor and will be returning to work tomorrow! We give God praise for answered prayer.

Footnote: You know how the Swartz's are jokesters. He told his brother, David, that since he was returning to his secular job on Groundhog's Day – that if he saw his shadow, he was going to go back in for another 6 weeks of medical leave! ☺

Your 1-25-09 Sunday School Staff Meeting

- ❖ Minutes & reports read. Twelve in attendance.
- ❖ Treasurer report: \$292.36 checking / \$912.80 in savings.
- ❖ Reviewed recent events: SS picnic, Missions project for Haiti, Christmas program & banquet (great attendance!), hanging of the greens & refreshments, Revelation party.
- ❖ Voted to have Coins For Missions in March.
- ❖ Voted to have All Church Outing March 8th at Golden Corral.
- ❖ Discussed Palm & Easter Sunday / Men in charge of breakfast.
- ❖ SS officers will be voted on at May annual church meeting.
- ❖ Voted to have annual SS Picnic on Aug. 23rd / 30th alternative date.
- ❖ Discussed the church's 50th Anniversary Celebration for Sept. 13th.
- ❖ Next SS meeting to be Sept. 20th.
- ❖ Steve Weaver closed meeting with prayer.

BILL MARSH seriously injured his thumb and first finger on his right hand. It developed an infection and required some hospital time. He's still not able to work but is improving. He sent his greeting to the congregation.

ALVA HUFFER had surgery last Wednesday for colon cancer. A visual check indicated the tumor was contained but we're waiting for final test results. He wrote Systematic Theology in 1960.

Guests: Margaret Goldman, Susan May's sister, is visiting us today

from Chicago with her 4-month old son, Daniel. Welcome!

For Haiti with Love Faces Food Delivery Problems

Mission News Network reports that providing Haitians with basic life necessities is becoming more and more difficult, as the poorest nation in the western hemisphere continues to face massive food shortages. "If we're to continue the food program, it's vital that we be able to get the food from the wharf to the headquarters. We have to be able to get the rice from the point of purchase up to our headquarters for distribution," said Eva DeHart, co-founder of For Haiti with Love. With roads in disrepair and an old pickup truck for deliveries, getting supplies up the mountains has become a major obstacle. "Many other people are having the same problems, so it's virtually impossible to find a truck to rent now," she said.

Groundhog Day Tomorrow

Perhaps the earliest known American reference to Groundhog Day can be found at the Historical Society of Berks County in Reading, Pennsylvania. The reference was made February 4, 1841 in Morgantown, Berks County, Pennsylvania storekeeper James Morris' diary: "Last Tuesday, the 2nd, was Candlemas day, the day on which, according to the Germans, the Groundhog peeps out of his winter quarters and if he sees his shadow he pops back for another six weeks nap, but if the day be cloudy he remains out, as the weather is to be moderate." (Legend has it that the groundhog is a timid creature, and the sight of his own shadow will scare him.



PRAY FOR: Alva Huffer, Josh Eberly (by SMay), Bill Marsh, David Krogh, Pastors Don Ward & Leon Driskill, Ken Cramer, Joyce Macy Nodstrom (M.Ellen's niece), Jenna Bryan (15 by SMay), Don Kostyo, Tammy (Koston) Lisiecki, Gene & Gloria Faehrich, W.C. Blankenship, Steve Henderson (14, by SMay), Leslie & Stanley Hervert (by Grace), Carol Reed, Ruth Schuld, Juanita (by SMay), Ryan (8 yrs by SMay), Susan (Stine) Bradley, Anita Cain, Edith Speer, Jack Hearp, Jacob Hinton*, Kathy Reed*, (*by Skip), Craig Blankenship, **College students:** Laura Schuld, Halee Fertig, Andrew Weaver, **Shut-ins:** Evelyn Pennington, Amy Dunbar Puehler **Military:** Rodger Schuld, Brandon Metzner, **Missionaries in other countries:** Gaston Ucanay-Peru, Mauro Apolos Gonzalez-Uruguay, Lupe Badillo-Mexico, Tracy Zhykhovich-Russia, Pastors in Malawi & Mozambique, Lesly

Bertrand and the Pastors in Haiti. / **Churches:**, Knightstown Family Fellowship IN, Korean Extension Steve & Sam An, RRCC, ABC, Golden Rule, Grace Brethren and for the peace of Jerusalem, Ps. 122:6; Isa. 62:6, 7

FEBRUARY 2009

01 Monthly observance of the Lord's Supper, Pastor Rex

SEPT. 13, 2009 / 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

SUNDAY SCHOOL: 9:45A.M. WORSHIP 10:45A.M.

Musicians: Frank Roper and Mark Cain

Welcome / Announcements / Prayer

Worship Hymns: Mark Cain

244 Jesus, I Come

245 Softly and Tenderly

Prayer / Offering

Susan May: Medical report on relative

Message: "I Keep My Body Under Subjection..."

Key Verses: 1 Cor 9:26,27; 1 Jn 1:9; Rom 7:14-25; Eze 37:23; Ps 51:1-11; Eze 18:20-25; 2 Tim 4:9-11; 1 tim 1:18-20; 2 Pet 2:17-22; Phil 2:12

Communion: Pastor Cain

219 Blest Be The Tie



Minute Meditation

"Fact: There is no scientific evidence that a stalled car can be started by the blowing horn of the driver behind you."

"If you're wise, then you'll practice patience. It's to your credit to calmly overlook something that irritates you." (See Proverbs 19:11)

"Life Questions: Is there someone I feeling like blaring my horn at right now? Do I really think that some sort of undisciplined outburst is going to improve the situation? How might I use my time more productively? By praying for the person who is aggravating me? By praying for myself to be more self-controlled? By looking in a mirror to see how my frustrated, pouty face looks to others? By doing all three? Lord, give me patience - NOW! Just kidding."

- Pastor Ken Howe (IN), email devotional, 1-26-09

