

Elder's Conference—2016 Reports/Discussion #2

May 17, 2016

ROGER KENDALL (Vermont): My wife and I reside in Burlington, Vermont area and attend services in Concord, New Hampshire, which is about 160 miles away. We meet about every three weeks formerly. Other than that the members get together in their homes.

We have a very close knit and loving fellowship group. No major issues that we're facing as far as the inroads of various heresies; we're not seeing any of that. We're striving to apply the principles of the Love series, which we've been going through, and the brethren have enjoyed that in terms of the opportunity to interact. That was one of things that really came out, that the brethren really appreciate the idea and the opportunity to interact with one another, sharing experiences, having questions, discussions—with faith—and looking to the Truth. That has drawn the group closer together.

We certainly appreciate the work that Fred has done with all the materials that are available to us. We're taking advantage of that, so things are going well. We have not had any new attendees or interest in baptism in the area for some time, so we are hoping that we will be able to add more individuals as they come to know God and looking to seek Him out. Everything is going well in New England.

STEVE DURHAM (Indiana): We had about 20 people; we had a family move out and another individual leave, but we can run anywhere from 15 to 25 depending on who passes through the area. We meet every week. We do have a lot of people who will come; they'll give me a call and come through and meet with us, which is a good thing. We keep that open, and Fred has brought several people to us.

One lady want to come for the Passover and she's in Illinois, and we've had about five baptisms, two in Illinois, two in Michigan and we'll have one here Friday at the conference.

We are continuing with the Bible studies; they're very excited about those and they're growing. One thing I've introduced, too, is the need for us to internalize God's Word and how we do that. What we've started doing is memorizing Scripture. We're an older group and the ladies did not want do that. They had all kinds of objections: I'm too, old, I can't remember, I don't this, that and

the other. So, I stayed on it in a gentle way, and you would not believe how well they have done. We started out with Galatians 2:20, which is not an easy Scripture to remember, but it's critical; a foundational Scripture.

Once they got that, one of the shy ladies and when I first called on her, and I knew that she knew it. She gave it and what a great job, I said. 'You said you couldn't memorize it, and you had it down verbatim.' Now, she is the first one to raise her hand the next week.

So, we're into four Scriptures; we've been doing this four weeks. I've been telling them that they need to write that on their heart, internalize, so that God can call that back to memory. That's what He does with His Holy Spirit. If it's not in there they can get it called back. Writing it on their heart, that's one of the things we're learning as well as going on with different Bible studies. We're on Psalm 37 this week, and we're going to take that apart.

I think Fred's last sermon highlighted that Scripture, so they wanted to go into that. They're very active, proactive; we're feeble and weak, but they're growing stronger and stronger. It's really encouraging to see that, to watch them grow.

I thank you for the series that are available, the binders, all of them: The Love Series, Grace series, Daniel/Revelation; just name them, those are there for us to use, and I think if we can implement those, you'll see a lot of growth with the core group that we have.

Everything is going well. They're excited. They throw in and we work as a unit. I'm really blessed in that there is very little 'division' or rumblings within the group; we work well together.

Fred sent an individual to us and I called him. I worked with him, talked with him and found out what he had done. He knew nothing about any of the other organizations, Churches of God. He found out about the Church of God through Church at Home. He had, for about a year, been going over the material there.

He's gotten a lot of the different things, and he's reading. He's old school and likes to have the book in his hand and he highlights it works from that. So, I met him and he showed up at 7 o'clock in the morning and he had to leave around 3:30 or 4 that morning, he was so anxious to get there.

FRED: Why so long?

STEVE: He's from Green Bay, WI. We've got two more up in Green Bay, WI. I thought it would be just himself, but his wife came with him. We sat and talked, went to breakfast, and then back to the room and talked for about 2-21/2 hours. Come to find out his wife wanted to be baptized, as well. So, we talked about the different things. And question after question, but he had a pretty good understanding from what he had gathered within a year.

Then we went down and baptized Daniel and Laura, and they're just fired up and real excited. That is the beauty of it, the encouragement you get as an elder. You see somebody that's just dying to get the next bit of information. When I first talked to him on the phone, I started off in talking as if I were talking to my group and I stopped, and said, 'I've got to back up and get basic and on the foundation.'

He'd have this silence on the phone and I would say, 'Do you know about this?' *No, I don't.* So, I had to gear it back a little bit, but he'll take off; he'll do real well.

Then the husband and wife in Michigan, the wife was baptized last year and the husband called and wanted to be baptized. So, there's two in Michigan.

NORBERT BOHNERT (Western Canada): As you know, I'm the only elder serving in Canada; it's a big place and I come from the burning Province of Alberta; we've experienced a major fire in the north part of the province where they had to evacuate 80,000 people in a three or four hour period. They succeeded in, but it was quite harrowing for those people experienced that.

Things are going reasonably well in Western Canada. I could say that we've got a very strong knit group there with an average attendance of about 18-20 people on a weekly basis. That's in my home city. We have quite a few people in Western Canada that we draw from, and I've made an effort to cover as much of the country as I can physically in a year with the restrictions I still have with working on a steady basis.

We have a very solid core in Western Canada, on the west coast, in our area that we draw quite a few people. We're seeing a fairly good trend of the younger people starting to attend with us, which is very promising. We're seeing people that are withdrawing themselves from UCG and a little bit of a trend starting to occur with the Living Church in Western Canada. We're getting questions

and people starting to attend with us on a regular basis, especially on Holy Days.

As we move east, we've got a little bit different situation; we've got some—not doctrinal issues—people issues that we've been dealing with on a personal basis, things that have arisen that has caused some division and disunity and just disgruntlement within groups that I'm working with. I have called upon some help from some of the elders in the area so that we can collectively come up with some type of program that we can work with these people and try to get them back together.

Doctrinally we're all very solid, but we have some personal issues that get in the way, and we're trying to develop this love of God that seems to be lacking to some respect in some of the areas, especially in Eastern Canada, that Steve Durham and Roger Kendall has worked with me, and I have also conferred with my 'buddy' Roy Assanti out of Australia. So, I think it's been very valuable that we've had that avenue of going and getting some counsel within the group of elders; it has really helped and encouraged me.

Canada is a very big country and it's very difficult to keep a handle on things when you've got such a wide distance to cover, trying to be on top of the situation.

One thing we are continually praying about, and we ask that you would keep this in mind, also, that somebody would come forward that could sort of help us to encourage the brethren there and take some more of a leadership role in the Eastern Canada area, just to take some of the burden off of me as far as covering some of the things that should be covered on a regular basis.

It's one of those things that the sheep are out there, they seem to be lost, and they need to get the presence of some type of strong shepherd to get them back to where they should be spiritually and help guide them back God-driven and let the Spirit work within. A lot of these people just seem to be lacking that motivation and drive, and focusing on what's important.

The carnal nature seems to come out stronger than the Spirit of God working within them. We're working constantly trying to encourage them, but at the same time it's difficult when you can't spend the time with them on a personal basis and work with them continually.

With that, basically everything is running well. We've got a few changes that have occurred in the office. The Canadian office is holding it's own; it's doing very well and the people have been very

supportive. Of course, other than the many anointings—there are many people with health issues all over the country—which I've dealt with. I had to travel in many areas, and I try to cover the areas usually on Holy Days to give me that extra time and opportunity to spend time with the brethren. They really enjoy that, but there are many brethren who have some severe afflictions and it's something that we constantly have to deal with.

Overall everything is going well, and I would encourage that we take time at this elder's conference to really discuss some of the issues at hand with the brethren out there. I don't know, maybe Canada is the only troubled area, but there are people out there that are...

It's not a doctrinal issue, but there are people out there have a hard time with the concept of this Godly love principle. They can talk about it, but they cannot practice it. It's really come to light and I think it's something that we have to continually work on to drive it into their heads and encourage them at the same time.

It's been a challenge and I can certainly say that without the help of the elders that I've called on to give me some assistance here, as far as counsel, it was something overbearing at times, that I thought: How am I going to handle this? Of course the distance of being there. I think the cooperation and the wise counsel amongst the elders on basis of regularly keeping communication lines open certainly helps. And I would encourage that we do more of that, because it is certainly gratifying to have somebody to go to and say, 'I've got this situation, what do I do?' The collective minds together to solve the problems.

But everything is good in Canada other than the weather patterns that have done some real things. We're drying up in the West. We're experiencing what California has in abnormally dry conditions and, hopefully we get some moisture, which has occurred in the last week.

The brethren's attitude toward seeking God is really rejuvenated and it is encouraging to see that we're getting some younger people into the group.

LAWRENCE BURCHFIELD (Oklahoma):

I take care of the Tulsa, OK, area. I try to cover all of Oklahoma. I work with the brethren in Conway, Arkansas, Little Rock and that area. We have an average of 19 people, we meet every week at the Zorro Library in Tulsa.

Everybody seems to be on the 'same page.' As I've said before, I feel kind of let down that I don't have all the problems that a lot of you guys are

having. But I think sometimes that God gives us all we can handle and no more. I guess He figures that I can't handle it so He's not going to give it to me.

We did have 28 people take the Passover with the visitors. I got permission from Fred for one lady that I'm working with to be baptized. I thought that would help her to see what actually goes on, so she really enjoyed that and she was able to keep the first day of Unleavened Bread with us. She came every day at the Feast of Tabernacles last year; drove up from Texas to stay with her sister. She was really enthused. In fact, she served more than most of the brethren.

All the brethren in the group that I serve there, they all serve. This year we took a page from Steve and I called out and got the Love Series, and I gave it to them and said, 'You do this on your own, study this, and if you have any questions you can call me and ask me, and then after I give them two or three months working on that. Then the Daniel/Revelation series I sent out and overloaded Kimberly again, and she said, 'I think you're going to have to wait a few weeks on this.' Just send it in one big box and I'll give it.

So, that's gone over really well. I think that my biggest problem is that I don't have any help. Everybody in the congregation... I'm not saying that the ones there don't help, but I don't have a young person that I can just say, 'Here, why don't you do this, this week, and give me a break.'

So, this year at the Passover, we have one man who has been in the Church a long time and he's well-grounded and I asked him to read half the Passover. Once we did the bread and the wine he took the rest of the service.

That worked out real well. Then one of the ladies said later on, 'That worked out well; gave you a break.' She said that in Arizona they use three guys out there. So, the service is quite long so by the time you get to most everything in John your voice is about to go anyway, and your eyes are starting to water...

We have one lady that we meet in her home. She's very conscientious and I baptized her a couple of years ago; she's born and raised in the Church. She's really taken a role, and if we need a place to meet in an emergency, we can use her home. That's a big thing, because when you have 15, 20, 30 brethren show up at your house and the bathroom is flushing and the towels are getting dirty... But she always helps out and serves, and of course, her mother has been in [the Church] forever. It works out real well, and like I say, we have an average of about 19 that attend there.

One thing I would like to bring out, we have a lot of health problems because we're all old. I've got a bad shoulder that's developed this year, and I've also got allergies real bad.

Ronny Burnett—whom we've been praying for, for quite some time—by the time the doctors got around to telling him what was wrong with him, the cancer had advanced so far that it started eating into his ribcage and his shoulder. But they gave him chemotherapy, which he went through that with no problems. But now they've come out with this new medication, I can't remember the name, but you've probably seen it advertised on television. They always show this name up on a building or bulletin board and it says that this will extend your life. It won't cure it.

So, they put him on that, and after the fourth treatment—he goes every two weeks—the cancer shrunk down to almost nothing. I think it's the same medication that Pres. Carter was on, because they say that Carter is now totally free of cancer, and he had it in his brain and all over his body. Of course, he's still teaching Sunday school and everything else. It uses the genes in your body, and the cells and everything in your body, to fight this cancer, a naturally type thing.

So, it's something that really helped Ronny; he's able to fish and go hunting. He loves to hunt and fish like I do, so he's able to go out and do some fishing and do things. He still has to wear the neck brace, which it has to hold his head up, and that's a big hazard for him, because the only time he can take it off is at night when he sleeps.

All in all we have just the one lady that I'm working with to be baptized, and she has a couple of issues that she needs to take care of and I think she'll come right along.

But everything is going real well. The brethren love each other; we pray for each other; we're in constant contact with each other, and I serve each one of them as a servant, not ruling over them. I think that's really helped them. They love me and I love them. I think it's really helping out.

FRED: Good!

LAWRENCE: But we really do need, and I know that everyone will probably say the same thing, we do need some young people. We do have a young man down in Conway, Arkansas, who moved in from Las Vegas and has been in the Church quite some time. He's really taken an interest. He came to the Feast last year; first time I met him. Some of the brethren there recommended that he might come.

I've talked to him about coming to the conference. I didn't mention inviting him, but just what their feelings were. I interviewed all the brethren down there in that area.

He's a young man, probably 40, and he gives a sermonette, leads song, and he's the only man there, so it's opening and closing prayer, leading songs and doing all the work.

FRED: Okay, Tell us about your --- and if you can add a section on the New Testament fulfilled prophecies of Jesus concerning Jerusalem and things like that.

DUNCAN MACLEOD (New Hampshire): Okay, I haven't gotten that far, yet. What I've done so far is this project is tentatively titled: How Credible is the Bible. I probably will end up using a different title eventually, but the idea is that it has four divisions. This should convince anyone who is uncertain about whether they can believe the Bible or not.

The first one is *fulfilled prophecy*. So far, it's mainly about ancient countries that God gave prophecies against—Egypt, the Phoenicians, Assyria and Babylon—and how those prophecies were fulfilled down through centuries. You can corroborate the fulfillment of those prophecies. You don't have to depend on what the Bible itself says.

The problem with things about Jesus Christ—and I'm more than willing to put the sin—people will say is 'all we know about what happened to Christ is what we read in the Bible, and we're not sure the Bible is reliable, yet.' Keep that in mind.

The second division of the thing is *The Bible's History as Supported by Written History, by Archeology* and other sources like that. Secular sources that people can read up for themselves, and realize that it agrees with...

There's an archaeologist named Bryant Wood—you may have heard of him or even seen him on TV—who has examined a lot of different places, but especially the site of Jericho. You can see him walking around the ruins until this day, and you can see the place where the wall was breached. The bricks of the wall fell *outward!* No city that has been conquered that has a wall, by normal means, fall outward. *The walls always get smashed in!*

He's also kind of an expert on the pottery. One of the other archaeologists in early times—Kathleen Kenyon—had said that this had to have happened in 1550_{B.C.}, and the exodus didn't happen until the 1200_{S.B.C.} *Wrong on both counts!* Sorry!

We have independently corroborated proof that Bryant Wood has shown that the pottery or those bug-shaped—I can't remember what you call them by they look like beetles.

FRED: scarabs

DUNCAN: Scarabs, that's right. I don't know why I couldn't think of that word.

Some of them have the names of Pharaohs who were later than 1550_{B.C.}; way later! Like centuries later! So, that proves Kenyon was wrong as far as the timing of this. Other than that she corroborates everything about the fact that the thing was destroyed by fire and all of that sort of thing. There are all kinds of things like that. There are all kinds of other archaeological sites where they have found that the findings corroborate what the Bible says. That's the bottom line really.

That's what I've been concentrating on. I've got a third section and a fourth division yet to come. The third one is going to BE *Where the Bible Agrees with Science*. Not the stupid theories of scientists, but the proven facts of science. Then the fourth one, of course, is *It's Internal Consistency*.

So, that's what I'm mainly doing right now. I also help out a little bit with Roger; he lets me speak once in a great while. I just wanted to give some encouragement as far as the young people coming along. There's a fellow who is relatively young, 42 now, I think he is.

For us, I remember way back for those of you who remember the YES classes we had in Worldwide in ancient times. He was a group of 12-year-olds that I had, and I can remember that out of all those kids in that group, he was the only one who really showed any interest.

Then he went off and went into the army, and for a while we wondered what was going to happen to him. He came out and got himself a very good job, and the last ten years or so he was baptized down in Myrtle Beach, So. Carolina, and he has now been given an occasional sermonette, leading songs and I think he's going to be somebody who comes along and will be helping to carry on the work.

So, we've got reason to be encouraged about young people coming along, even in New England.

FRED: Good!

RUSSELL KEMP (Tennessee): I live in a place most of you would have never heard of, it's called Wartrace, Tennessee. It's pretty strange. It's about halfway between Nashville and Chattanooga,

TN. It's one of these towns that has about 25 people and 50 dogs, a very nice place.

My wife and I, for a while, had a small group meeting in Chattanooga, about a 70-mile drive for us. We were going down every week. I've heard people talk about age, and of course, I'm the 'new kid on the block,' so it's very nice to be among all the 'young' kids here; it's a very pleasant experience.

We were meeting in Chattanooga for a while, and unfortunately age and distance became a problem. There are about ten. There are two couples, and two of them are fighting stage-four cancer right now. We still visit with them and talk to them, but not at the meeting. Then we had a couple move. So, we got down to where there were only two other couples and us, and we were paying for a hotel room for the small group and it just wasn't worth doing that.

After that, my wife and I were meeting with Bob Hunnicutt at his house from time to time (not every week). I still keep in touch with some of the people who were meeting at Bob's house. Being the 'new kid on the block,' I've got a long way to go on this.

I did work for a commodore in the military one time that told me I 'always hit the deck plates running.' So, I certainly hope that I will be able to do that.

Additionally, I travel back and forth to Florida a lot, I own a duplex and condo on the beach in Panama City Beach. We have a small group down there, that whenever I'm down there I meet with them. It goes anywhere from just one other couple and myself, and sometimes it's as many as seven or eight people. We meet on pretty regular basis when I'm down there.

That's encouraging, as well. There's really not much else, like I said being 'the new kid on the block' but I'll certainly entertain any questions that anybody has, and I'm always up for advise, believe me. It is good being here and being among such a wonderful group of people, I can tell you that.

Unnamed speaker: Russ, how is Elaine doing.

RUSSELL: Don't know about Elaine, yet. I was talking to Marlin about that just a little while ago. At the funeral, which I'm sure Marlin will talk about more than me, Elaine was in a nursing home facility. She had been injured; she had a stroke. Anyway, I talked to Bob's son Bill, and he gave us the name of the place she was in. Laura and I called

recently, we were going to go up and see Elaine, and unfortunately, she had moved. She wasn't in the same place.

I called Bill and he hasn't gotten back to me, yet, as to exactly where she's at. I think Marlin told me he has an address. So, when we get back, my wife and I intend to try to find out where she's at, and we're going to try and look up Elaine and see how she's doing.

GILEBALDO ELIZANDO (Texas; Latin America): Hi, everyone! It's great to see you all again. We've had a good year. Last year a young lady in Mexico got baptized in December. She contacted me via e-mail; I had never met her before, but she had knowledge of the Church previously from her grandfather who used to attend with Living. I went down Mexico to baptize her in December after many conversations over the phone and making sure that she was ready for that. She was very happy about that and kept the Passover for the first time this year.

I think that the issue I struggle with the most is the distance, because I have people from all over Latin America contact me via e-mail or phone call, or we use WebZap to stay in touch with each other, too.

There's a lady from Peru that would like to get baptized also, and I just recently was contacted by a gentleman in Venezuela. He's a pastor of a congregation of about 80 people, and just about a year ago they started keeping the Sabbath, and not just the Sabbath but the Holy Days. I questioned him a lot and he's very knowledgeable. The things that he told that have been happening in his congregation are just amazing because they used to keep Sunday.

He learned about the Sabbath and he told the people in his congregation, 'Folks, we've been doing it wrong this whole time. We're going to change because the Sabbath is the day that God made for us to keep it; it's the Lord's day.' So, I think of out that whole congregation that he had he only lost about 5% of the people.

There are many challenges in Venezuela, especially right now. I don't know if you've seen in the news, there are shortages of basic goods and services, so I think that we may have to provide some assistance of some sort, because the situation there really is bad. It's almost a failed state now.

That's what's happened because of the policies of the previous government under Chavez and now with the price of oil so low, Venezuela doesn't even have its own press to print money.

They don't have enough dollars to pay to print more money, so it's really a tough situation down there.

I would ask for your prayers for the people over there in Venezuela.

FRED: We need to get together and talk about Spanish language Church at Home and Spanish language Sabbath video. It could be up on line.

GILEBALDO: Right now we're putting one new sermon every week on the website, so people have a new sermon every week. I have a brother in Mexico who is going to be here tonight and he's helping with translation and some of the recordings.

Also, I have a sister who lives in Argentina, and she's also helping with translation. So, we're very blessed with having them with their help, and also, of course, I've told you before Miguel Marcia who lives in Canada is our webmaster and he also supports us with translations. He contributes a lot, he and his wife.

FRED: the man in Spain?

GILEBALDO: We still have people in Spain and Colombia and other countries that regularly get the sermons and the information from us, and are long-time members of the Church.

The thing is, we don't who we're going to reach, we just have to put the material out there and God is going to call whom He wants to call; it's not up to us. So, we just have to be ready and put the material out there and we have to prepare ourselves so that we can help those people when they're ready to be part of the Church.

FRED: Sure!

GILEBALDO: So, it's very exciting! Locally it's just my family, my parents meet with us sometimes when they're in town. My dad lives in Mexico, but he's more of the time he's in the States than in Mexico. Then we also visit and go up to speak in Central Texas about once every two months in the Central Texas Church of God. We're blessed to have a lot of brethren around us.

FRED: That's good!

GILEBALDO: Near Waco

FRED: We'll hear from Stan and then we'll take a break.

STAN TIMEK (Pennsylvania): Thank you! We have a small congregation that meets in the Poconos. I'm about 45 minutes away from the Poconos. We started out there with CBCG around 1998. We had ten brethren. One passed away, but we still have ten of the original members, because another member married the widow from up in Canada who has been in CBCG a lot longer than I have.

We've had some other people come in. We've had some problems. We did the Love series, and I try to get them to interact, but the interaction was very sparse, and one lady made a comment, that I heard about, that she never had that kind of experience where you could ask a minister something when they were preaching. This is the way it has to be. We have to get to know each other and we can't get to know each other unless we do. They've been talking about the Grace series, but we haven't really gotten into that, yet.

We did have about 18 people meeting; we're down to about 7 because some come and some don't because of distance. We have four people who live in the Allentown area come occasionally. We've got three or four in New Jersey. I go over to New Jersey and try to keep in contact with them; a daughter and mother.

Other than that we're just trying the best we can. We have some issues. At Passover we had 18 people, and we had a couple of glitches. We had a glitch with some people, and I felt really sad about it because I kind of felt they took the Passover very casually. But when I talked to them they said, 'No.' They gave me some other excuse, something about one wasn't feeling good and one had a problem. It seems that the rest of us kept the Passover with a lot of sincerity. I saw the sincerity, but it was just a few that kind of didn't have that sincerity.

I find a lot of people that bounce around from one group to another just seem to lose it somehow. They don't have that determination to do what's right.

This is the first time for me at the conference as an elder, so I don't really have much more to say than that.

FRED: Okay, let's take a break!