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JOHN 8:32

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Church members deliver open letter to British PM

By Dixon Cartwright

Five members of the North West Church of God, Chester, England, hand-delivered a letter to the official residence of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair July 14 to urge Mr. Blair to change public policies that promote "rebellion and perversion," to work for laws that allow proper discipline of schoolchildren and to inspire and implement justice in the land.

Gerald Kirby of Wirral, England, pastor of the North West COG, was among the members who requested and received admittance to Mr. Blair's residence at 10 Downing St.

"Downing Street is not open to the public, being secured by large, very strong ornate railings and gates across the entrance," Mr. Kirby told *THE JOURNAL*.

But guards admitted the five members and a member's son after they had requested to personally deliver the letter, which was signed by Mr. Kirby.

The policeman outside the door to the residence was "very welcoming," Mr. Kirby said.

"Take all the time you need," said the officer, and "by all means take photographs. After all, it is your money that pays for all of this."

"Several strokes of the very heavy knocker brought a swift response," Mr. Kirby said, "and we delivered the letter into the hands of another official to take to Mr. Tony Blair, our prime minister."

On leaving, the Church of God contingent stopped at a nearby mailbox to post a copy of the same letter to Queen Elizabeth, along with a personal note to the queen also signed by Mr. Kirby.

The letter to the prime minister noted that historically Britain has been instrumental "in carrying knowledge of [God's] Word around the world," but "now we are leading the way in rebellion and perversion."

The gravity of the rebelliousness and corruption will lead to Britain's destruction, the pastor warned.

Examples Mr. Kirby cited to make his points included:

■ The reluctance and inability on the part of Church of England officials "to proclaim God's Word" because doing so "has become politically incorrect."

■ The injustice of the imprisonment of a British farmer named Tony Martin. Mr. Martin, whose house had been burgled several times, caught two housebreakers in the act of ransacking his residence one night and shot them both. One died, one lived.

The surviving burglar served 18 months for the crime and was released. The farmer is still in prison for killing the other burglar.

"Clearly, common sense tells us that Tony Martin did not gain justice," Mr. Kirby wrote to Mr. Blair, "but, when this occurred, did you act when many protested and are still protesting?"

Mr. Kirby answered his own question: "No. You remained silent. Tony Martin was even denied the parole which almost every prisoner gains because he is a man of principle."

■ The Church of God pastor chastised Mr. Blair because of his apparent unconcern with British children's lack of discipline.

"Over recent years the govern-

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ROYAL POSTING—Members of the North West Church of God, Chester, England, mail to Queen Elizabeth a copy of a letter they had just hand-delivered to 10 Downing St., the residence of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair. **From left:** Lorna and Rex Newnham and Lynne and Gerald Kirby (church pastor). For more about the presentation and the contents of the letter, see the article beginning on this page. [Photo by Lachlan Storey]

Pastor general says 'Jewish' trappings harmful to Christianity, WCG must drop Sabbath, feasts

By Bill Stough

LONEDELL, Mo.—The leader of the Worldwide Church of God, based in Pasadena, Calif., has called for members of WCG congregations worldwide to finally eliminate what he calls "Jewish" and "Old Covenant" practices that include observance of the Sabbath, Old Testament dietary laws, annual (as opposed to more-often) observance of the Passover and traditional dates for the yearly autumn festival.

The July issue of the WCG's member newspaper, *The Worldwide News*, includes an article by Pastor General Joseph Tkach Jr. titled "Something Worth Thinking About: Peace At Any

Price?" in which he admonishes pastors to cease "seek[ing] peace at any price" with lay members who wish to hold onto certain distinctive doctrines and practices of the church while it was led by its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong.

The WCG currently has congregations that meet on Saturdays, others that meet on Sundays and still others that meet on both days.

Ramping up

The church's official policy to this point has been one of promoting peaceful coexistence between those who prefer the Sabbath and those who would rather meet on Sunday, but Mr.

Tkach seems to be signaling a change in official WCG policy.

Mr. Tkach, who is in charge of the corporation called the Worldwide Church of God (as were his two predecessors, Joseph Tkach Sr. and Mr. Armstrong), can introduce and enforce any change of policy he wants to, although he has rarely done that.

He normally makes his opinions known with the apparent hope his pastors will make the changes he desires.

In some cases a pastor tailors his sermons to educate his congregation on the desired direction and hopes those in the congregation will come to the viewpoint he is trying to get

See **JOSEPH TKACH**, page 9

Chicago conference designed to help the brethren

OKBROOK, Ill.—For the 10th consecutive year, congregations played host to the Christian Renewal Conference in the Chicago area to inspire, encourage and edify its participants.

The event, sponsored by the Active Bible Church of God (in Chicago), the Church of God Downers Grove (a Chicago suburb) and the United Church of God Bloomington (an Illinois congregation not affiliated with the UCG of Milford, Ohio), occurred the weekend of July 19-20.

Ken Svehla, pastor of the Downers Grove congregation, spoke of benefits of this annual event.

"Our congregation helps with this annual event because we understand the need for people to be encouraged, inspired and edified," he said.

The speakers this year were Ronald Dart of Tyler, Texas, Dave Havir of Big Sandy, Texas, and Jeff and Sharon Ledy of Lansing, Mich.

Mr. Dart, founder of Christian Educational Ministries, spoke at the event this year for the ninth time in its 10-year history.

Mr. Havir, pastor of the Church of God Big Sandy, spoke at the conference this year for the sixth year in a row. The Ledys, who conduct marriage seminars and are associated

with United Christian Ministries, Birmingham, Ala., attended this conference for the first time.

Sure foundation

Mr. Havir gave the first presentation at 11:15 Saturday morning. His message, "The Church That Will Not Die," emphasized the founding of the church on Jesus Christ.

He said people sometimes become disillusioned when they see the physical forms and shapes of church administrations change.

He added that, when people focus on the role of Jesus as the Lamb of God, High Priest and coming King of Kings, their foundation is as sure as it has always been.

At 12:30 the group took a lunch break to enjoy sandwiches and other food prepared by families of the host congregations.

Speaking the language

At 1:15 the Ledys gave a presentation titled "Love Languages." The couple summarized the five "love languages" made popular in Gary Chapman's best-selling book *The Five Languages of Love*.

Although Mr. and Mrs. Ledy stressed that this subject applies to

See **RON DART**, page 8

Big Sandy congregation elects new trustee

By John Warren

BIG SANDY, Texas—The Church of God Big Sandy in June reelected an incumbent and elected a new member from the congregation for three-year terms. Don Walls of Gladewater was the returning trustee; Tat Tomes of Big Sandy was the new trustee.

Bernie Monsalvo of Gladewater was the incumbent not elected to the board, but he returned to the board a few weeks later when, for personal reasons, Wayne Weese of Big Sandy resigned at the July 7 meeting.

Each year the congregation chooses nominees in May and votes for trustees in June. The congregation was scheduled to nominate four people (double the number of terms expiring) this May. Since a tie occurred during the nomination process, six people advanced to the balloting stage.

Besides Mr. Monsalvo, Mrs. Tomes and Mr. Walls, the other three nominees were Ron Feaker, Charles McLendon and Melodee Overton, all of Hawkins.

Other board members are Don Mischnick of Hawkins, Wynn Skelton of White Oak and John Warren of Big Sandy.

Mrs. Tomes is the third woman to serve on the board. Previously, Angie Kelley served on the board (back when the elders picked the board members) and Loynell Hooper of Tyler served on the board in 1999 after the congregation switched to binding elections.

Friends attend CG7 biennial conference

The writer, a longtime Church of God member, is a former member of the Church of God 7th Day and Worldwide Church of God who lives with his wife, Doris, in Tyler, Texas.

By Wayne Cole

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—The Denver, Colo.-based General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) met for its biennial convention here June 30 through July 5 with the theme "His Promises, Our Hope!"

My wife, Doris, and I had been invited by conference president Whaid G. Rose of Denver, who extended an invitation to me to attend the meetings as a "fraternal delegate" and "a dear friend of the organization."

The conference, which met last in 2001, convened in a Hyatt Regency hotel and the San Antonio. See **CHURCH OF GOD**, page 10

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