

Home Office Weekly Update

from the UNITED CHURCH of GOD

March 23, 2023

On this First Day of the First Month . . .

Greetings brethren around the world,

As I write this it is Thursday, March 23, according to man's calendar. But on God's calendar, today is the first day of the first month of His sacred year. It's the first of Abib (or the first of Nisan), a notable day. Just two weeks from today, on the fifteenth day of this month, all of us will be gathered together, in person, before God on the first Day of Unleavened Bread.

In Exodus 12:2, God proclaimed that "this month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." From there, He instructed the Israelites to choose a lamb "without blemish, a male of the first year" on the tenth of this month, then keep it until the fourteenth when it would be killed at twilight (Exodus 12:5-6).

The original Passover

Death passed over the Israelites who obeyed God and smeared the blood of that Passover lamb over their doorposts on that fourteenth of Abib. By the blood of the lamb, God would deliver His people from death and then bondage. After centuries of slavery in Egypt, God would bring Israel out of Egypt on the fifteenth day of that month, as the day began after sunset. That evening was known as a "night to be much observed" (Exodus 12:42, Authorized Version).

The story of God’s deliverance is a tremendous inspiration and testament to God’s love for His people and a reminder that no force in heaven or earth can stand against Him. Only God could deliver them. But without Him, their lives were futile and hopeless.

The story of Israel is well-known and chronicled around the world.

Jesus the Passover Lamb

It was the precursor to the sacrifice of the ultimate Passover lamb, Jesus Christ, some 1,500 years or so later. In the first month, as the fourteenth day of 31 A.D. began at sunset, Jesus Christ observed His last Passover on earth with His disciples. After introducing the ordinances of foot-washing and taking of unleavened bread and wine—symbolic of humility, His body that was broken for us and the blood He shed for us—He went out into the Garden and spoke many things to His disciples. Then He was arrested, scourged, crucified and died—all before the sun set at the end of that fourteenth day of that first month of the year.

He is our Savior, and in less than two weeks baptized members of the Church of God will be gathering in a solemn manner to remember His death and to partake of the ordinances that Christ introduced and instructed us to observe “in remembrance of Him” (Luke 22:19). We will observe that solemn ceremony on the same evening that Jesus Christ sat down with His disciples—the evening that begins the fourteenth of the first month (Abib or Nisan—see Matthew 26:19-31 and Leviticus 23:5). This year, the date of the Passover is after sunset on Tuesday, April 4.

The elements of Passover observance have been well defined and discussed in the series of [six Passover Bible studies](#) that have been highlighted on the home page of [ucg.org](#) for the last several weeks. If you haven’t taken the time to listen to those studies, let me encourage you to do so.

Praise, honor and glory to Jesus Christ

As we continue in this time of self-examination and preparation for the Passover (1 Corinthians 11:23-28), may we all keep Jesus Christ at the forefront of our minds and hearts. He paid the price for our transgressions and sins; He suffered for our iniquity; He died for all mankind that we might be forgiven and turn to God with all our hearts, minds and souls.

He made all things possible for all humanity. Without Him and without the Holy Spirit we would continue to be slaves to our own desires, to the sin that so easily ensnares us and to the world around us. Satan is a powerful enemy. Only through the power of God's Holy Spirit in us can we overcome sin and Satan (Revelation 12:11). We literally owe Christ our lives and it is, as the apostle Paul says, our reasonable service to offer our lives in complete submission to His and the Father's will.

All praise, all honor, all glory goes to Jesus Christ our Savior in every sense of the word.

So, let us be preparing our hearts and minds, let us commit to Him, and let us come together in remembrance of Him in humility, in one accord, dedicated to live the life that He has called us to, *diligently, carefully and earnestly*.

May God be with you all. Have a wonderful rest of the week and Sabbath.

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Shabi', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Shabi

Six Steps to Passover: Part 5



We encourage everyone to continue this opportunity to deepen our understanding of God, and gain insight as we approach the Passover season together. This week’s study is titled: “**Six Steps to Passover – Part 5: The Suffering Servant—Footwashing**” by Steve Myers.

ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-bible-study/six-steps-to-passover-part-5-the-suffering-servant-footwashing

—Peter Eddington, Operation Manager, Media and Communications Services

GCE 2023 Registration Now Open

All elders and widows should have received an email today, March 23, regarding registering for the annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders, May 6–8 at the Holiday Inn Eastgate, Cincinnati, Ohio. Information on the schedule, how to make hotel reservations, and signing up for meals are included. If you didn’t receive an email, please let us know.

—Charles Melear

Registration Now Open for Feast in New Zealand

This year, the Feast of Tabernacles will be held once again in picturesque Taupo, in the center of the North Island of New Zealand. The Taupo region is a place of extraordinary natural beauty with its rivers, ancient forests and snow-blanketed mountains. Taupo is a scenic and popular tourist resort town, nestled on the banks of Lake Taupo, New Zealand's (and the Southern Hemisphere's) largest freshwater lake. The lake is at the heart of New Zealand's central volcanic plateau and the shining expanse of blue and jade green water is crystal clear to a depth of 13 meters. It is home to one of the best wild trout fisheries in the world.

This year, our guest speaker will be Darris McNeely. Darris and his wife will be coming to New Zealand for the first time to enjoy the Feast. While they are here, we plan to invite *Beyond Today* subscribers to hear from one of the presenters and writers of the publications. Feast registration for New Zealand is now open at feast.ucg.org.

—Michael Fike, senior pastor, New Zealand

Charity Auction Raises Funds for Zimbabwe

On Sunday, March 19, the students of Ambassador Bible College held their annual Charity Auction to raise funds for a worthy cause. This year it was for our brethren in Zimbabwe. The church has recently been able to purchase some land, but funds are needed for building facilities that will enable keeping the Feast of Tabernacles there—as well as educational retreats and other programs.

During the event, ABC students served refreshments and presented an entertainment program on stage. Several people commented that this was one of the best shows yet. During intermissions in the program, attendees bid on desserts donated by Church members. Those sessions are often as entertaining as the show! The event also

featured a silent auction of household items, art pieces, or other things donated by local Church members.

The charity auction raised \$8,818 this year to help the brethren in Zimbabwe. The show was webcast, and a link was available for making donations. Some people had difficulty using that link during the webcast, but technical difficulties have been addressed. Thus, if you would still like to make a donation, you can do so from the Good Works page: ucg.org/members/service-projects/land-purchase-and-development-in-zimbabwe.

Upcoming Events

April 4	Passover Evening	
April 5	Night to be Much Observed	
April 6	First Day of Unleavened Bread	
April 7-9	Milwaukee Prom & Family Weekend	Milwaukee, WI
April 8-9	Southeast Regional Formal Weekend	Atlanta, GA
April 12	Last Day of Unleavened Bread	
April 13	Festival Planning Brochure Posted Online	
April 21-23	Women's Enrichment Weekend	Indianapolis, IN
April 30	Festival Housing Reservations Begin	
May 4	Second Passover Evening	
May 6-8	GCE Annual Meeting	Cincinnati, OH
May 22-26	ABC Continuing Education	Milford, OH
May 26-28	Brown County Pentecost Weekend	Nashville, IN
May 28	Pentecost	
May 29-June 2	Camp Florida	Umatilla, FL
June 4-7	Camp Gilmer	Gilmer, TX
June 18-21	Camp Colorado	Allenspark, CO
June 18-25	Camp Cotubic	Bellefontaine, OH

Upcoming activities may be sent to weekly_update@ucg.org. Additional calendar information is available on the [members website](#).