

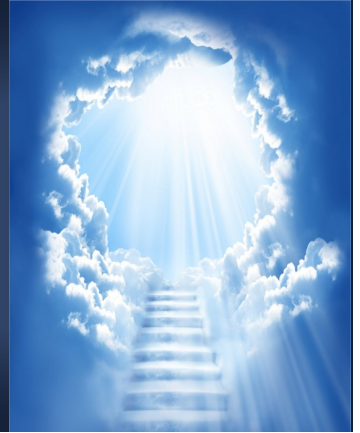


The Vision

“Where there is no vision, the people perish ...” Proverbs 29:18a (KJV)



Year In Review



Christianity Today

COVID-19 and the Elderly: Hidden Contributors

Author: Sally Chivers

Adapted by: Dianne Witzell

We miss too much when we treat all seniors as helpless.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic resemble the difficulties revealed during an ice storm, when the need for adequate long-term care spaces similarly revealed the problems that arise when we treat people like products, and care like a business.

Media portrayal of older adults hasn't kept up with reality. Calls to check on our "elderly neighbours" fail to acknowledge that the people receiving those instructions might themselves be old. This ageism assumes people between 70 and 100 are all from the same generation, with the same needs and desires.

Hidden Contributions

This approach ignores how older adults collectively and individually possess considerable expertise. It misses their potential to offer at least mutual support for younger people who are no longer able to do whatever they want. Studies are showing that older adults are better equipped

to manage the stress brought on by continued isolation.

My hand-sewn mask was made by someone over 70, I got my bread recipe from a senior, I sang in a choir led by a guy in his 60s who learned how to Zoom in a heartbeat and who follows streamed exercise classes led by a woman in her 70s. I am not alone in benefitting this way.

Belittling older Canadians and ignoring their contributions vies with the fact that some are coming out of retirement to help combat COVID-19. How sad to view them as only in need of help, rather than as part of a reciprocal system with the need and ability to use their skills to help others.

Worse, the residents of long-term care are somehow, oddly, not considered our "elderly neighbours." We're barely even allowed to check on them.

So, pick up groceries for your neighbour. Drop them off safely. But also check in by phone or from a distance to see what you might learn! 🐼



An older woman sews a face mask.

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Adapted from: <https://theconversation.com/how-we-rely-on-older-adults-especially-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-143346>

Message from the Board

Pastor Howard Green



The year 2020 will doubtless go down in infamy as one of the most challenging years of the century. The impact of the Global Pandemic on what we have defined as a normal way of life, coupled with the international uprising for social justice and human equality has proven to be the perfect storm that has set us on a trajectory of disproportionate uncertainty, unlike anything we have encountered in our human life-cycle. At the current time, the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported 1.5 million deaths that are a direct result of COVID-19 with International modelling projecting another 1.5 million before the pandemic is fully under control. According to strategic intelligence, due to research coming out of some of the top data gathering forums, the cost to the global economy will top 28 trillion dollars, with spending of 15.1 trillion dollars to actually fight the disease itself.

In spite of the doom and gloom, the pandemic has provided key life lessons and, in some cases, opportunities for personal, professional and spiritual growth. We have learned that we can survive without most of the amenities that we thought were indispensable. We have taken a second look at the of importance of human life and the things we value. We have learned how quickly our lives can change for the worse and that we should take the time and privileges afforded to us to value what matters most; our relationships and our humanity. We have learned to cherish our human freedoms; examine how important they are and what it is like for others in our world who do not have the same liberties. It is incredible to see the improvement in air quality and the balance brought back to wildlife as humans have limited their impact on the environment due to the reduction in

waste, pollution and encroachment on natural habitats. This signals an opportunity to continue to encourage a balance in the ecosystems of the planet.

One of the greatest opportunities that has presented itself to the Church, is the privilege to present the gospel message. It is evident that during times of severe uncertainty, people seek for answers that are beyond human capabilities. Most people stop to reflect on life beyond the mere essentials or excess and begin to truly face the tough question of mortality and eternity.

We call upon every believer to become a doctor for the soul. The immaterial part of man that can only be satisfied by "Elohim" the creator himself. It was Horatio Spafford's monumental hymn *"It Is Well With My Soul"* that comes to mind. In his resounding appeal, *"Though Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come, let this blest assurance control. That Christ has regarded my helpless estate and hath shed his own blood for my soul."* The epic tone will linger deeply within us as we proclaim the advent of Christ's coming Kingdom.

I trust that every article within this edition will bring you blessings and comfort. Thanks to our Vice-President Pastor Maurice Blagrove and our fellow labourers within the Executive body for the tremendous support over the years and especially during these trying months. Thanks to all the contributors and editors for their support and dedication to the publication and the work of the Kingdom as we await Christ's return. 🙏

Scarborough Scoop

Hope Edwards



Scarborough's
Baptism
Instructional Class



Scarborough's Baptismal
Class



Scarborough's
Broadcasting Team at
Work



As we approached the final month of the year, many of us couldn't wait to see 2020 pass, so we could press the reset button. Well, here we are, who could have seen this coming?

Looking back on how 2019 ended, we began 2020 with such promise. I think I can say with some certainty that you know someone, perhaps personally, who have been adversely affected by this pandemic.

Sure, we felt this was just a bump in the road; give it a couple of weeks, perhaps months, and we will be back to business as usual. Not so! We now know better. The subsequent shut down has affected us in so many ways! Socially, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally and for sure financially. We didn't plan for this!

So, thanks to our ministers, leaders and members, for their state of mind throughout this pandemic and the hope of "Tomorrow," that things will get better by God's grace. The stress is real, the frustration is understandable. However I applaud you for keeping a positive outlook, not giving in, not giving up!

As a minister of the Gospel of Christ, I'm inclined to dole out scriptures to conceal the obvious in an attempt to shelter you/us from the reality of what's happening. But consider this; when was the last time you hugged someone or shake a hand? We are social creatures and human connection is pivotal to our existence. Many are now exhibiting cabin fever, resulting from long confinement or isolation indoors, many of our brethren still have not seen the light of day, in terms of congregating with their family or brethren. In a few months, it will be one year since it all began.

So, let me congratulate you on staying the course, doing your part to remain safe and healthy.

We've been going through a difficult time, for sure, but we are going through it the only way we will make it, that's together. You are not alone, we're here, you are here, and together we will make it.

Tomorrow is waiting for us, it always has, it always will, and we need to get there, by God's grace and mercy, we will. Overall, our members have been spared from the infection and death caused by Covid-19 and we give our Heavenly Father all the glory for His keeping care. Praise God!

Here is an outline of how Rexdale COGSK has been doing our part to support flattening the curve in hopes of eliminating this terrible virus, while supporting the need to maintain the work of the ministry, the edifying of the members of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel.

Obviously, from the onset our plans were decisively kiboshed and it became enormously clear that we

needed to change our method of operation. In harmony with our President, Pastor Howard Green, an emergency meeting was assembled on March 30th, 2020 with the Executive Council to evaluate and address the current crisis. During this meeting the decision by the government was discussed and we all consented and agreed to be compliant with the shutdown. We understood the need to participate in keeping each other safe from harm.

The decision to keep our services going was unanimous and coordinated effort was executed with the health and welfare of our parishioners, as our number one priority. The Local Board was then engaged in analyzing the needed steps to ensure the Gospel message remain uninterrupted by any means necessary.

- ◆ Our YouTube broadcast immediately became the vehicle of choice, in addition to Facebook and our prayer line for those who may not have internet access. Pastor Howard Green and yours truly became the primary catalyst to keep the services going with regularity.
- ◆ Our usher team took to task and successfully created an aggressively secure process for entering and exiting the building and sanctuary, these activities went above and beyond anything the governing bodies required and allowed members to safely congregate once the government gave the temporary allowance for greater capacity.
- ◆ An online registration tool was created allowing for members and guest to pre-register, this allow our team to track and trace individuals and maintain head count.
- ◆ Our dining hall was converted to an overflow space for additional capacity and was retro fit with projectors and screens, resulting in our ability to maintaining social distancing.

Special shout out to our Audio Video team members; Minister Matt-Trill Chambers, Bro. Artiyo James (working remotely), Bro. Omari Sargaent, Bro. Leon Francis, Bro. Marlon Lorrain, in addition to our administrator, Sis. Jacques-Ann Grant.

Yes, there has been challenges! Some of our services have been cancelled, while others have gone through a required transition. We desperately miss the interaction of the corporate Sabbath Studies, but we press on.

Accomplishments:

- ◆ Held several members meeting virtually, providing updated to our members and allowing for some interaction with the greater team.
- ◆ In addition, our audio/video team have been taxed even more in order to maintain or heighten the level of professionalism we have been consistently endeavored to achieve.

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When the Unexpected Comes

Through the unexpected things
That happens in our lives,
We draw from God the strength we need
To carry on with Christ.

For He will always hold us up
Whenever it gets too tough
And carry us through the hardest times
When we can't feel His love.

I know that at these times we feel
Abandoned by our Lord,
We wonder what is going on,
We can't feel His presence at all.

But He has not abandoned us,
Nor forsaken us in our need,
He allows the unexpected things
Be life lessons we should heed.

So we will grow with deeper faith
And be strengthened in the Lord
Then when we face the storms of life,
We'll be stronger than before.

So when the unexpected comes,
Remember, God's in control
And nothing in life is ever wasted,
But are memories that we hold.

So when others come across our path
That are facing what we've faced,
We're more than able to share God's love
And touch them with His grace.

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Until COVID restrictions are lifted, all events will be online and notices will be sent out via email or social media.

Ways to Relieve Stress

1. **Pray**
2. **Praise**
3. **Read the Bible and meditate on the Word**
4. **Go for a walk or bike ride**
5. **Listen to quiet music**
6. **Hug a loved one**
7. **Take a soothing bath**
8. **Work on a hobby (knitting, gardening, etc.)**
9. **Read a good book**
10. **Laugh with a friend or watch a funny movie**
11. **Get enough sleep**
12. **Eat a healthy and magnesium-rich diet**

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.
~ Isaiah 26:3

Natural Ways to Protect Against COVID-19

Dianne Witzell

To help your body combat COVID-19 and the more dangerous of its symptoms, supplement with or eat foods containing:

- ◆ **Vitamin D** (*critical for proper immune system function*); 2,000-5,000 IU/day
- ◆ **Vitamin C** (*boosts and protects white blood cells*)
- ◆ **Omega 3 Fatty Acids** (*helps prevent blood clots, aids endothelial function*)
- ◆ **Quercetin** (*may inhibit the virus from binding to and entering cells*)
- ◆ **Zinc** (*may inhibit the virus from binding to and entering cells*)
- ◆ Get sufficient sleep or take **Melatonin** (*critical for proper immune system functioning*)

- ◆ Oil of Oregano (*antiviral*)

Recommended foods:

Apples, red grapes, cherries, raspberries, citrus fruits, beans, spinach, onions, broccoli, nuts, chia seeds, flax seeds, whole grains, fish (*salmon, trout, herring, sardines*)

Brampton Buzz

Christene Cousins

Due to the pandemic we have moved many of our programs online, they include bible studies, sermons, women's monthly meetings, children's ministry, lesson studies, men's group and children's classes. In addition to these regular programs, the young people held a virtual Summit in May which was very informative, inspiring and well supported. Also, to help bridge the gap among brethren through our lockdown, a members' phone list was published to help brethren keep in touch with each other.

Many thanks to all the members of the AV team who helped to move us completely online, and the ministry leaders who quickly adapted. To our church secretary for managing and booking all the Zoom sessions;

members and volunteers of the Umbrella of Hope who never

stopped working, but continued to pick up, sort and distribute food to those in need. To all the church members and visitors who continue to support the church and each other. To all our ministers and pastors for their continued support, prayers and their resilience as they help us to navigate through this difficult time. Though this has been a challenging time, God has been faithful and has been keeping us strong despite unemployment, illness, and bereavement. He is still in control and worthy of all our praise!



Umbrella of Hope in Action



Oshawa Overview

Pastor George

Order During Chaos!

This 2020 has been a year of chaos. It started like any other year, but quickly transitioned into what would become a time of continual turmoil.

In March, my family and I took our journey to Ottawa on the second Sabbath, not realizing that this would be our last trip in 2020. Things were looking good; we were also planning to do Outreach in Ottawa. In Oshawa, we had planned our annual Youth Day in March; water baptism; Lord's Supper in April; and our annual Gospel Fest in August. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, and there were lockdowns across the entire province, and all events were cancelled.

It was obvious that we needed a platform for our services, so we started using UBER Dialpad

for a few weeks. Shortly after a friend mentioned Zoom. I did some research with Sis. Stefanny from the Oshawa congregation, who was using Zoom, and immediately took our services to this platform.

We spent seven months on Zoom, during which time we had **three combined services with the Oshawa and Ottawa congregations**. What beautiful fellowship we had! After the provincial stage three reopening, we reopened the sanctuary, and now conduct our Sabbath services both in the sanctuary and on Zoom, at the same time. **Lesson learned: you can still have order during chaos!**

Young Adults/This year has certainly unfolded in a way no one truly expected! Many began this year with the expectation that THIS would be their year. Many in the body of Christ began quoting catchy phrases like: "2020 will be my year of 20/20 vision!" What we encountered, however, was quite different than any of us

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Rexdale News Magazine

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- ◆ The Men's & Women's, Children's, and Youth ministries remain through on-line services.
- ◆ Our prayer line became a powerful segment in November, with 9 individuals receiving their water baptism, publicly surrendering to Christ in the midst of the shutdown. Hallelujah!
- ◆ Bishop W.B. Treleven completed the 4th generation baptism. He baptized John Hibbert in 1974, followed by John's mother, Iris Hibbert, then John's son, Mark Hibbert, and finally in November, Mark's two daughters, Amielia & Lianna. We gratefully thank Bishop



W.B. Treleven for his continued contribution to the work of the ministry.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to God for Pastor Howard Green, with whom I have the pleasure of laboring with throughout this ordeal. He has been relentless and unwaveringly in pushing ahead with a "Growth Mindset."

In addition, I can't speak well enough about our usher team, they have been enormously attentive to the process, and deserve our uppermost gratitude.

Finally; yesterday is gone, there is nothing we can do about it, today is the gift, that's why it's called "the present", I encourage us to take advantage of today, the present, and use it to prepare for the future, for tomorrow.

With the discovery of several vaccines, we are now seeing an end in sight, therefore, tap even more into your renewed mindset, consider how you will remain vigilant and take care of yourselves, be there for your loved ones and yes, each other.

As members of the Body of Christ, we are resilient, we do not possess a spirit of fear, but of love, power and sound mind, and with Christ, there is nothing we cannot accomplish together. We will bounce back.

Tomorrow speaks of promise; tomorrow speaks of possibilities, of hope, of opportunities.

There is a saying that "if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together".

Together, we are stronger.....Together, we stand.

So, as we approach 2021, remember there is nothing we can do about the past, it's behind us, today is the gift, and tomorrow is before us. We are coming back "together", and we will grow together, together we will rise, we will succeed, together we remain the relevant choice for millions who are looking for "the answer". And together, we will be stronger than ever before. So, get ready! All being well, see you tomorrow. God bless you. 🙏

Rexdale Rundown

Karen White

Prior to the first pandemic lockdown, the Lighthouse Children's Ministry put on Kidz Nites, when they enjoyed creating popcorn flavors and a dance party. In March, they began hosting Virtual Wee Day Wednesdays, where they enjoyed doing activities "together" virtually, on Zoom. They also held a virtual graduation.



Aug 2020: Baking cookies.



Baptism:
Amielia Hibbert & Lianna Hibbert.

Montreal Moments

Pastor Sylvester Balfour

Greetings to the members of The Church of God Sabbath Keeping. I have been asked to say a few words about the Church of God Sabbath Keeping Montreal with respect to our experience as it relates to the covid-19 pandemic that has turned the world upside down. The first thought that comes to mind echoes the words of Joseph to his brethren "what you meant for evil has turned out to be for good" There are all kinds of theories as to the origin of this virus. Some say that it was man-made in a laboratory in Wuhan China. Some say it came from bats. Whatever the source, my perspective has shifted from despair to being amazed at the truth of the statement that "everything works for good to them that love the Lord", or something like that. And indeed, this virus has made us remember that WE are the Church; not the bricks and mortar that we have been accustomed to think of as the Church.

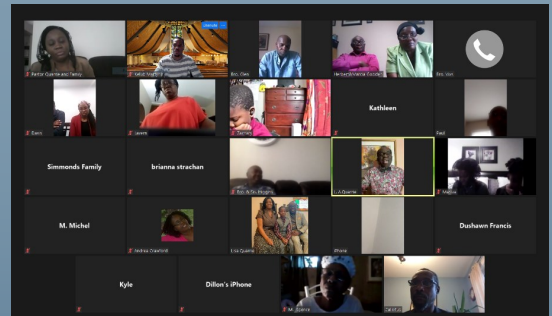
We praise the Lord for the technology that allows us to remain in our homes and communicate with each other as if we were physically together. We can study the Word, listen to a sermon, testify and exhort each other. The Sabbath has reclaimed its original purpose as a day of rest. What I mean by that is for me personally. I know for the Montreal brethren, the stress of getting out of the house in time to arrive at church, using public

transport for most members, and fighting with traffic for a few others, in all kinds of weather, spending on average 4 hours travelling to go and come, takes away from the benefits of coming to church. Now that we are using Zoom, we spend quality time studying the Word and listening to each other talk about our experiences during the week. There's no longer the need to rush out to make sure we catch the bus on time to return home, because we are home. We have been spending hours after the regular service is over, discussing biblical topics. We have mid-week Bible study and prayer meetings regardless of the weather.

Another huge benefit of Zoom is that we can reach more people. We have visitors that would normally not come to the physical building, but, visit us online. Furthermore, we haven't even begun to use the technology to its fullest. I believe that when the time comes that we are allowed to meet safely in the flesh, we would have grown spiritually. In closing, I will quote the words of the chorus, "*Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light, like a little candle burning in the night, in this world of darkness, so we must shine, you in your small corner and I in mine.*" Our work as ambassadors is not done in the church building, but in our daily walk. 🙏

Ottawa Outlook

Kelub Martyr



Through these unprecedented times, the Ottawa Church of God Sabbath Keeping branch has embraced the benefits of technology, specifically Zoom, utilizing it to continue and in some areas, improve our services. A good example of an improvement would be displaying the teaching lesson as a background during lesson study period. Additionally, Zoom has enabled us to host new types of services such as: weekly and after-church bible studies, youth days, and previously, joint services with the Oshawa branch. We are also able to reach visitors who would

otherwise be unable to attend our services under normal circumstances. We have regulars coming from Jamaica, England and America. Finally, we have also found Zoom to encourage communication and fellowship after church services through jokes, discussions about food and music, inquiring about each other's well-being and providing encouragement.

We have also maintained our evangelical commitment through technology despite our current circumstances through flyer advertisements and a website. 🙏

Marriage Matters

Author: Sally Chivers
Submitted by: Dianne Witzell



Question: My spouse and I are not getting along. How can our marriage survive the COVID lockdown?

- ♦ **Be honest about your fear of being quarantined together.** Talk to your spouse about your concerns and arrange a “truce.” Look for ways to support each other during this time.
- ♦ **Talk about inner-life issues.** Avoid “family business meetings.” Call it your “daily check-in,” instead. Ask your spouse about the highs and lows of their day. Listen to their worries, fears, hopes and emotions. And care. Care about their emotions. Care about them as a person.
- ♦ **Take breaks from each other.** No marriage does well when spouses are together 24/7. Discuss the type of break that works for you. about your expectations – break time in another room, 20 minutes online or an uninterrupted TV show – helps keep those goals realistic and keeps you and your spouse on the same page.
- ♦ **Practice good self-care.** You are fully responsible for your well-being: spiritually, physically and emotionally. Your goal should be to recharge and care for yourself in these three areas so you have something to give to your spouse and family.

Excerpted and adapted from <https://www.focusonthefamily.ca/content/10-ways-your-marriage-can-survive-the-coronavirus-quarantine>

- ♦ **Pray and study the Bible together.** As you grow closer to God, you will grow closer to each other.
- ♦ **Make your home a safe environment.** When people feel safe, hearts open and connections happen. When they feel unsafe, hearts close and individuals disconnect. Talk to your spouse about how to create a home that feels safe for both of you. Start by asking your spouse to complete this sentence: “I feel safe when you . . .”
- ♦ **Participate in virtual therapy or phone calls with a Christian counsellor.** Seek out marriage counselling. A counsellor may be able to help you and your spouse make wise decisions about your time together during the coronavirus quarantine.
- ♦ **Reach out for support.** Make it a point to schedule regular online chats with a friend. This connection provides support and encouragement.

The next several days or weeks may not be easy, but this season will pass. In the meantime, you and your spouse can work to make your home a safe place and maybe even rediscover the connections and activities that once brought joy to your relationship. 🙏

Singles' Corner

Christene Cousins

Question: How am I supposed to meet someone during COVID?

It is no surprise that being single in a pandemic is the WORST. During a regular year, one could always hope that the “right” person may just pass by, but during a pandemic! How is this supposed to happen? There is no church, no concerts, no restaurants, movies – NOTHING. So, what now LORD??? How do I meet someone?

I know there are online dating sites, but maybe you are not comfortable with that, or nothing has happened for you. First, “Nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37), second, the Word declares, “He will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the dessert” (Isa. 43:19). Therefore, God can bring a COVID-free mate into your life when he is ready; He is not restricted by the pandemic. So, continue to devote your time to connecting with family, friends, becoming versed in the scriptures, reading a book, taking a course, starting a hobby or part time business, and the list goes on. There is a time for everything, and God is giving us the time to prepare ourselves to be a better person and to be ready to meet him when he comes. 🙏



Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

~ Ephesians 5:33

Oshawa Overview

Pastor George

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truly anticipated. The effects of COVID-19 have impacted essentially every area of our lives as a worldwide community. Here at Ambassadors of the Kingdom, this need to re-adjust, change, re-think and re-establish our priorities were steps we also needed to take.

As of March 2020, our meetings all shifted online, to the platform of Zoom. Throughout the quarantine period, we held bi-weekly AOK Reflect and Connect Meetings to give the Youth and Young adults the opportunity to connect, play ice-breaker activities and be challenged by a time of Bible Study. Members of the AOK Family shared testimonies of what God was doing in their lives, some accepted the challenge to host topical Bible Studies and others gave their input or prayed for others on the call. One thing that was highlighted during this time of

self-isolation was that, yes, we need God, but we also need each other.

Men's Ministry: We have been working on a plan to connect with the elderly men in our congregation. The focus is to develop and implement a strategy whereby the younger men can be a resource for the elder men, a reverse mentor so to speak. Our goal is to eventually expand it to include the elder women and eventually our church community at large.

The ladies ministry started the year, as usual, with a prayer meeting: "**Focus-to give God thanks for His blessings; Magnify the Lord With Me.**" The ladies then hosted a Family Day musical play entitled, "**It's only a test: Just hold on.**" The young adult ladies and members of the Ladies Department

sang their hearts out and delivered their monologues well. Thanks to Sis Andrea Ellis-Campbell for creating a wonderful script.

Transitioning to virtual meetings, we hosted 2 events, again joined by the young adults: "**Dressed to Kill: The Armour of God**" and a presentation and discussion: "**Be Anxious for Nothing.**" The latter session taught us how to stay calm (Max Lucado).

C- celebrate

A-ask -make specific requests of God

L-leave your problem/request at God's repair shop

M- mediate-on the word of God. (The promise that fits your problem) and wrap it in prayer)

Moving forward, we will continue to build up the women of God so that we can walk in purpose; and be a blessing to our church family, our community and to a world in dire need. 🙏

The Vision

We hope you have enjoyed the current edition of The Vision. Thank you to all of our contributors. We are truly grateful for your ongoing participation in making our newsletter a continued success. Please also consider getting involved in our future publications by making submissions to the Public Relations Officer (PRO) at your local church. Although we may not always be able to immediately accommodate every submission, your support is truly appreciated. Thank you.

~ The Vision Team: *Christene, Alicia, Tanisha, Nikki, & Dianne*

Article Submissions:
Due to space constraints, we request your article be kept under 500 words in length, with no more than 600, maximum.

Church of God Sabbath-Keeping Locations

Website: www.cogsabbath.com

Canada

Brampton
Mississauga
Montreal
Oshawa
Ottawa
Rexdale, *Headquarters*
Scarborough

United Kingdom

Mitcham
Wembley

United States

Syracuse



Local Public Relations Officers (PRO)

Brampton: Christene Cousins - pr@cogsabbath.org
Mississauga: Joanna Nichol - prmississauga@gmail.com
Montreal: Julia St. Marthe - quebecpr@gmail.com
Oshawa: Victoria George - oshawapr@gmail.com
Ottawa: Pastor Barker - alfie_barker@hotmail.com
Rexdale: K. White & S. Brown - pr@cogsabbath.com
Scarborough: Hope Edwards - prcogsabbath.scarb@gmail.com
UK: Sean Harvey - pruk@gmail.com

Now, therefore, you are ... fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. ~ Ephesians 2:19-22 (NKJV)