



# The Vision



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

**CONVENTION 2022—  
VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE**

## 21 CHALLENGES FACING THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

October 27, 2016

Brett McCracken

The following 21 challenges are in no particular order and are by no means exhaustive, and they are largely (but not exclusively) reflective of an American evangelical context. I also should note that each of them represents not only a challenge but also an opportunity. The church has historically thrived when she is tested rather than comfortable.

**1) Biblical Illiteracy.** Biblical literacy is a huge problem in the American church, and it makes many of the challenges on this list all the more challenging. Quite simply, people in churches (and even moreso those not in churches) may pay lip service to the importance of the Bible, but by and large they do not read it or know it. Surveys have found that 82 percent of Americans think “God helps those who help themselves,” is a Bible verse. 12 percent think Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife. 50 percent of graduating high school students think Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. It’s embarrassing, and there is much work to do.

**2) Presence.** Christians ought to be people of presence, connected to God and to one another through the inhabiting, unifying power of the Holy Spirit. But the 21st century world busies our lives and distracts us so that every moment pulls us away from His presence. The church must reprioritize its vocation as presenters of God’s presence in the world, and to do so we must cultivate habits and liturgies that create the space and contours for that presence to be felt and known.

**3) Disembodied Tendencies.** The trajectory of technology is away from incarnational presence and toward disembodied experience. We increasingly live our lives via screens, streams, apps, phones. Our relationships are digital. This exacerbates existing Gnostic tendencies (a cerebral rather than embodied faith) and subtly deemphasizes the crucial physicality of the church, the “body of Christ” in the material and not just theoretical sense. Churches should find ways to encourage physical gatherings, the practice of the Lord’s Supper, meals together in neighborhoods, bodily movement in worship, shaking hands and hugging each other, whatever it takes! Anything to re-sensitize people to the fleshly reality of the church in the world.

**4) Compartmentalization.** We live our mediated lives via windows and boxes. We chat with multiple people at a time, post one fragment of our lives here and another there, consume visual media in one window and read the Bible in another. All of this makes it easier to fracture our lived experience into disconnected compartments, a process that wreaks havoc on our spiritual formation. Integrity is wholeness (integer = whole number), all parts of our lives integrated and reflective of the Lordship of Christ. Churches today must work extra hard to cultivate this.

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### Should the Church Change the Dress Code?

*Survey answers on page 6 .*

## Convention 2022 Virtual Experience July 1 –3rd

**Theme: Relevance of the Church Today**

**Friday — Men’s Night  
Saturday — Pastor Whaid Rose  
Sunday — Pastor Loren Stacy**

**Don’t Miss Out!**

## Make a Joyful Noise

Intentional time spent in the presence of the Lord—both individually or collectively—is essential to every Christian. Moreover, time spent praising and worshiping God is a fantastic way one can be ushered into and refreshed by the Lord's presence.

Psalm 95:1-2 (ESV) declares: *"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"*

We do this every time we come together at the Church of God Sabbath-Keeping—no matter the occasion. We always find time to lift the name of our King!

Most notably, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Worship Experience Team at Rexdale sought to bring praise and worship to the highest possible level. Initially, we pre-recorded our praise and worship sessions to provide regular worship content for the church's weekly services, which moved exclusively online. But, due to the length and strict nature of the lockdowns, other significant occasions were moved online, including Lord's Supper, Convention, and the "Praise Raise" Worship Experience Fund Concert. We were not deterred and responded by pre-recording material for all these events, even with guest artists such as Jennifer Lewin, Jonathan Laws, Pastor Dom, etc.

Finally, we continue to grow spiritually and mature with new-found skills birthed out of a desire to operate with a spirit of excellence in everything we do for the glory of God. We can now provide:

- Audio and video editing services.
- Musical collaboration.
- General song leadership and support.

But, the worship of the Lord will always be the center of all we do—now and forever.



# UK Congregation

~Jodie Dore

Bless the Lord Saints, what a wonderful God that we serve! We give thanks to God for our church family near and far, for God sparing our lives, for His steadfast love and mercy which endureth forever and for life beginning to resume to a new normal as we slowly maneuver our way out of the pandemic. In spite of the continued pandemic, God has remained faithful and we have been able to continue with our church services online every week via the Zoom platform as a worthy offering to God. The pandemic has not stopped or interfered with the spreading of the good news of the Gospel to believers and non-believers! Hallelujah!

We have a continued increase and growth of brethren and visitors fellowshipping with us worldwide, including from the following countries: The UK, The Caribbean, Canada, Greece, USA and Pakistan. Our divine Sabbath service commences from 11am-2pm (UK time) and includes; Praise and Worship, Corporate Prayer/Personal Prayers/Opening & Closing Prayers, Testimonies, Teaching (bible study), Announcements, Preaching/Sermon (word of encouragement). We also have the church established in Thessaloniki, Greece headed by Brother Steve.

In October 2021 we launched a new monthly Question and Answer session via the Zoom platform every third Sunday of the month from 7pm-10pm (UK time) with a biblical theme where brethren have the opportunity (with their questions submitted in advance via email) to have their questions discussed with a panel of ministers who then have the pleasure of responding to the questions posed. This has proved to be very successful.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Evangelist John Pinnock together with his wife Sister Merisha Pinnock will head the church in Gloucester. Evangelist John Pinnock will also administer The Lord's Supper in the church in Gloucester; please do keep them in your prayers blessed beloved. There are plans for the forming of a new church in Milton Keynes (UK) in the near future, so watch this space! On the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2021, Bishop W.B Treleven was officially installed as the UK and International Overseer for The Church of God- Sabbath Keeping, Praise the Lord! It is a joy to inform you that the ministries within The East Dulwich church, Nottingham church and Mitcham church all continue to thrive and flourish fruitfully.

I would like to conclude by offering a vote of thanks to all our beloved brethren, our leader and teacher Brother Nito Harvey for his dedication and commitment week after week and our dear amazing Bishop and International Overseer; Bishop Treleven who we owe everything to for his continued faithfulness, hard work and support!

We thank God for our community and for the church which is the House of God and a collection of like-minded people who have made the decision to follow Christ. We come together in one accord to both give and receive support and encouragement, offer our praises and deepen our faith and personal relationship with God. As we know God, we celebrate Him with our whole person. We pray for continued growth, favour, and fellowship one with another and most importantly more souls being saved as we work towards being worthy of entering the Kingdom of God. On behalf of The Church of God Sabbath-Keeping here in the UK, much love and blessings to the ministers and the beloved brethren here in Canada, and in the USA.

## Laugh



"We'll sing the first verse, hum the second, and lip-sync the third."

## In Memorial



- ⇒ Elder Lionel Weir
- ⇒ Sis Maureen Eloise Jackson (June) Jan 4, 2022
- ⇒ Bishop Alroy Charles O'Reggio 1927-2022
- ⇒ Sister Urma Reid Jan 17, 2022
- ⇒ Sister Dorrett Viera Mar 23, 2022
- ⇒ Sister Vioris Matteson Mar 28, 2022
- ⇒ Pastor Hugh Parr May 5, 2022
- ⇒ Vivene Lillian Britton May 7, 2022
- ⇒ Sister Hyacinth (Jenny) Donald May 10, 2022



Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.  
Ps. 119:133

On February 19<sup>th</sup> our congregation had a Family Day sabbath themed “**Focus on the Family**” Here are some key Points presented from the various departments:

**From the Young Adults Dept (for family members)**

**By: Bro Philip G.**

Don't take council from the bitter-  
their statements are factual but evaluate their conclusions  
To effectively communicate:

- 1-Listen without speaking!
- 2- Speak with understanding if step 2 fails go back to step 1

Since ‘*more things are caught than taught*’ be **gracious** with family members

**From the Ladies Dept (for singles)**

**By: Sis Andrea D.**

Use your singleness to give God Center stage in your life. God's grace is so sufficient; he provides for us in ways that are needed and best.

**From the Men's Dept (for all family members)**

**By: Bro Eriq & Bro David**

There are different types of people in the family constellation i.e. Cheerleader, Thinker, Clown, Nurturer, Rescuer, Scapegoat. As families we need to stay stable and learn from our mistakes. “Mistakes are part of the learning process.”

**From the Children's Dept (for parents)**

**By: Nicholas H. & Justine W.**

Give your child the space they need because they want learn and grow at their own pace.

Give your child a voice and the opportunity to express themselves.

## Newsletter Survey—W.I.N.N.E.R

Congratulations to Sis. Melonie Ricketts, she has won a \$25.00 Tim Horton's Gift Card for responding to our survey about the newsletter. Thank you Sis. Melonie!

**Stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to win!**

Answer to Riddle: Isaiah

## CONGRATULATIONS



Ryan & Yakira Anastacio  
December 2021



Kelub & Victoria Martyr  
October 2021

## Birth Announcements



Paris Amara Duff  
Born March 4, 2022  
Weight 9.48 lbs  
Chris and Anna Duff



Jeremiah—born to Pastor Zeeshan and wife.



Lindsey Paris Maureen Ricketts  
Born June 1, 2022  
Weight 6lbs, 12oz  
Chase and Melonie Ricketts



**Baptism**  
Heaven rejoices when one soul surrenders to the Lord. On February

27th seven candidates were immersed in water baptism as they surrendered themselves unto God. The excitement was even more so because four of these new converts belonged to the same family. We thank God for the work He has started in their lives. We are assured that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise towards them as some count slackness, but is longsuffering... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Hallelujah!



## Brampton Buzz

~Alicia Smith

### Women of Essence Day

The Women of Essence celebrated their annual Women's Day on February 25-26, 2022 under the Theme: Falling in Love with Jesus. The two-night event began on Friday, February 25th where our speaker for the night Sis Aretta Hines from the Oshawa church delivered a candid self-reflection. She candidly shared her own experiences as she encouraged us to stay in love with Jesus. She ended by reminding us that the power is in the word of God.

On Sabbath, our day began with a devotion led by Yvette Pitters, after which Christene Cousins and Brenda Rose embarked on a candid conversation about their path to conversion. The children later displayed the attributes of God through worship.

Sis Abigail Edwards ended the morning session by ministering to us in song in a powerful way. Our day continued as we appreciated four ladies for their commitment, dedication and determination in their personal academic and spiritual life in spite of obstacles faced. Our speaker for the day Caleen Howard reminded us that we must be intentional in our pursuit of God.

### Riddle:



I am the book from the Bible from which many people derived the phrase 'Lamb for slaughter' from. What book is this? (Answer on Page 8)

## From the Convention Committee



The Church of God Sabbath-Keeping Annual Convention sends greetings in the matchless name of Jesus Christ; the One to whom we owe allegiance and love as He graciously bestowed to us grace, mercy, and adoption!

We are writing to inform your congregation of our Annual Convention commencing from July 1- 3, 2022. This year's theme is entitled, "The Relevance of the Church Today" and what's more, guest speakers Pastor Rose and Pastor Stacy will be ministering to us again!

While we are excited for the upcoming convention, it is important to note that this year's conference will be a virtual experience. We definitely understand that many will wonder why our Annual Convention is a Virtual Experience when a lot of the COVID-19 restrictions in Ontario have been lifted. This is a legitimate question and we offer this response: guest speakers, theme, budget, and so on were all planned well before the restrictions in Ontario were lifted in February 2022. As a result, because a lot of the major planning had already been done before February 2022, it would not be wise to change course in light of the government's recent changes. However, if restrictions are not threatened to return, please expect Convention 2023 to be an in-person experience. Nevertheless, it remains that this year's convention will be virtual.

However, let us be reminded that a virtual experience does not mean the Holy Spirit is any less effective in ministering and transforming lives! We serve a God in which time, disease, restrictions, or geography will not stop His presence from being felt and His message from being spread. We serve a God that is relevant yesterday, today and forevermore!

With that said, please mark your calendars to virtually attend our Annual Convention. It will be a blessed and a thought-provoking conference!

For more information, please feel free to routinely visit [www.cogsabbath.com](http://www.cogsabbath.com), our Instagram page: @convention.cog22; and our Facebook page: @cogsabbath.

## 21 CHALLENGES FACING THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

Continued from page 1

**4) contd...**on our spiritual formation. Integrity is wholeness (integer = whole number), all parts of our lives integrated and reflective of the Lordship of Christ. Churches today must work extra hard to cultivate this.

**5) Boredom.** We are an antsy culture. Everything is fast-paced and harried; we can hardly remember which Netflix show we loved last month or which restaurant was the rage last year. We have short attention spans and get bored easily, and this poses a huge challenge to the church. The values of routine, tradition and stability that define the church are distasteful in our fidgety age. Churches are naturally tempted to use gimmicks and trendiness to solve this problem, but this is ill-advised. The tricky task of the church in the 21st century is to lead people to awe, wonder and worship without watering things down or constantly reinventing the wheel.

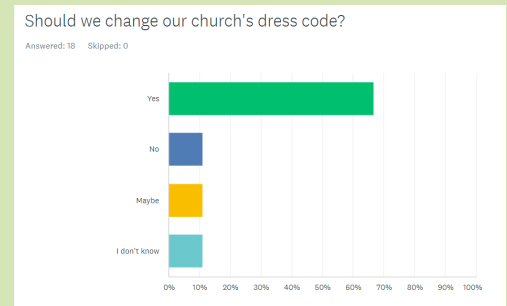
See our Fall edition for the next 16 items, or visit the link below: <https://www.brettmccracken.com/blog/blog/2016/10/27/21-challenges-facing-the-21st-century-church>

### Question?

**Who was the greatest financier in the bible? Noah—He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.**

Answer on page 4.

### Results from the Church Dress Code Survey



#### Comments from Survey:

*I have heard both members and visitors commented that our dress codes should cater to the weather.*

*I believe the dress code should change. It puts a lot of pressure and time on the members to find the right thing to wear.*

*On Sabbath it's as if a bride is going to meet the groom. No one dresses casual for a wedding.*

66.7% of respondents said they believe that the church's dress code should change; 11.11% said it should stay the same; 11.11% said maybe it should change and 11.11% did not know.

\* Note: Opinions expressed and survey do not represent the views of the board, and is for information only.

## Scarborough Scoop

~Nioko Somerville

Here is my testimony  
Greetings to pastor Edward's  
Edward's, Pastor Grant and  
to the entire congregation,  
it is my pleasure to be a  
part of a family that is  
supportive, loving and that  
would be there for you no  
matter what. Since 2020 I  
believe, I felt like an outcast in the church but  
thanks be to God that my grandmother introduced  
me to a church filled with opportunities that would  
allow my faith to grow stronger, I met so many nice  
people, got to know them and was comfortable be-  
ing around them I would say that being around my  
brethren has made me feel more confident in my-  
self to be more open and not bottle things up. For  
me it has been a roller coaster with everything go-  
ing on in my life I am thankful for my Grandmoth-  
er, for my Pastor and Sister Edward's. If it wasn't  
for them to push me and be more engaged I wor-  
shipping the lord I wouldn't be here today saying  
these words. They are like a mother and father to  
me and for Pastor Edward's who has counseled me  
and prepared me to be a child of God I give God  
thanks for him that I was baptized and even though  
I made mistakes and fallen off, himself and the con-  
gregation will be there for me no matter what.  
Thanks be to God Amen



## NEWTON 'S PROVERBS ~ Newton Watson

Life is made up of Thoughts  
So a man thinketh so is he

The wise mouth is in his heart  
The fool heart is in his mouth

Today is the most important day of your life, let  
Christ take center stage.

If you want to go forward in life, go on your knees.  
God exalt the humble  
Doing good for others is doing better for ourselves

When going up a ladder, say hi to those going down  
because they will be your friend when you return.

I was taught not to put all my eggs into one basket; It  
is good to have a second or third option but after get-  
ting to know God, He has become all the options I  
need.

The tool the enemy use to try and put us down; God  
use the same tool to elevate us. Fret not thyself be-  
cause of evil doers.

You have what it takes but it takes all that you have  
Tough times do not last but tough people last.

Do not be a slave to loyalty; If what you bring to the  
table is not welcome let others eat by themselves.

It's not what you do for your children but what you  
teach them to do for themselves.

If mankind acknowledge that the power of Love is  
greater than the love of power; then this world will  
be a better place.

A wise man does not go after the most beautiful  
things but for the things that makes his life beautiful.

When I look at someone I don't see their colour, I  
see their character

I gain a lot from winning but I learn a lot from los-  
ing  
The Cross represents a symbol of pains & sufferings  
but in all His affliction Christ asked forgiveness for  
His abusers.

Serving Christ is not something I do or don't do,

Serving Christ is my nature  
Serving Christ is my life.

# Pakistan Congregation

~Pastor Zeeshan

*continued from page 1*

Hello Beloved Brethren,

I trust you are all doing well. 2022 has already been a wonderful, blessed year. The Lord is working here in Pakistan! I have a great testimony to share with you all. There is a Muslim family I have been in touch with for a while. They decided to come to COGSK Pakistan and after Sabbath service they completely surrendered themselves to Jesus Christ. Their conversion is totally prophetic. The parents gave their Muslim children the names "Ruth" and "Emanuel" at birth not realizing that God would have plans for them in the future. He has changed and converted a family from Islam to Christianity. The whole family has since been dedicated to the Lord! Praise to God, He blessed my wife and I with the greatest blessing this year; a healthy new baby boy Jeremiah. He is our second child and we are overjoyed.

By God's grace this year, we won seven new souls for the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ's Almighty name. I am delighted to report that on March 15 four sisters and three brothers were baptized and became members of the congregation here in Pakistan, to God be the Glory!

Construction continues on our new church building; we expect the building works to be completed by the end of 2023. Once complete, our beloved Bishop Treleven will travel here to Pakistan for the very first time for the dedication of the church building.

Thank you all for your prayers and support. May the Lord bless you all abundantly.



## 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 news-letter 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 accommodate every submission, your support is truly appreciated. Thank you.

~ The Vision Team: *Christene*; Editors: *Alicia, Tanesha, Issac, Zuri*

### Article Submissions:

Due to space constraints, we request your article be kept **under 250 words** in length, with no more than 350 maximum.

### Church Directory

#### Canada

Brampton  
Mississauga  
Montreal  
Oshawa  
Ottawa  
Rexdale (Headquarters)  
Scarborough

#### United States

Syracuse

#### United Kingdom

Gloucester  
London  
Mitcham  
Nottingham  
Wembley

#### Jamaica

Lucea

#### Pakistan



### Local Public Relations Officers (PRO)

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**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**