

The Journal

News of the Churches of God

Issue No. 132 (Vol. XII, No. 9)

Founded 1997

September-December 2008

Sam Bacchiocchi, advocate for Sabbath observance, dies

By Dixon Cartwright
dedicated, educated and articulate advocate for observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, Samuele Bacchiocchi, died Dec. 20, 2008, of cancer at his home in Berrien Springs, Mich., at the age of 70.

Dr. Bacchiocchi, a Seventh-day Adventist and retired theology professor at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, was known by Church of God members and other Sabbatarians for his teachings and scholarship, including several books, on the shift from Sabbath observance toward Sunday worship in most of Christianity.

A statement from the Bacchiocchi family noted that "during the early Sabbath hours of Dec. 20, Sam passed away" while "surrounded by his faithful wife of nearly 47 years" and their three children.

The next day was the Bacchiocchi's wedding anniversary.

In the shadow of the Vatican

Samuele Bacchiocchi was born Jan. 29, 1938, in Rome, Italy, only a few yards from the Vatican.

The oldest of five siblings, Sam grew up in a religious household headed by his father, Gino, and mother, Evelina.

A year before Sam was born, his father, who worked as a mason and had only a third-grade education, acquired a Bible from a Waldensian acquaintance.

The elder Mr. Bacchiocchi studied that Bible and thereby became convinced of the appropriateness of worshipping on the Sabbath.

The family began, on its own, keeping the Sabbath, leading to Sam's young friends and even his teachers ridiculing him as *il judeo*, or the Jew.

Sam grew into a hardworking adolescent. To pay for his schooling he took up colportage, the selling of religious books. Often Catholic priests would chase him out of town.

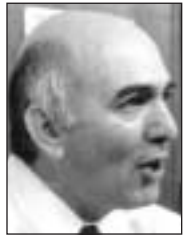
He earned enough money for his sister and him to attend the Seventh-day Adventist academy in Florence, Italy.

In 1960, at the age of 22, Sam earned his bachelor's degree from Newbold College in Binfield, England, and then traveled to Andrews University in Michigan to work on two master's degrees, one in church history and another in divinity.

Mission to Ethiopia

On Dec. 21, 1961, he and Anna Gandin, also from Italy, married on campus.

See FROM 'IN TRANSITION,' page 8



Samuele Bacchiocchi



CHURCH OF GOD (SEVENTH DAY) HISTORY—Robert Coulter of Denver, Colo., a former president of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day), based in Denver and formerly based in Stanberry, Mo., gestures during a meal during his visit with the Church of God Big Sandy Nov. 22, 2008. See the lead article on this page. See more photos on pages 24, 25 and 26. [JOURNAL photo]

The Journal invites readers' Feast reports

THE JOURNAL invites readers to send in reports of their 2008 Feast of Tabernacles observances.

Members of the Churches of God and other Sabbatarian fellowships met at several hundred Feast sites in 2008, with most observances beginning the evening of Oct. 13.

You still have time to get your report into the next issue of THE JOURNAL. Mail your information to Festival Reports, P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A. Or E-mail it to info@thejournal.org. Or you can fax it to (903) 636-9097.

Photographs as prints or medium- to high-resolution E-mail attachments are also welcomed.

Please mention the dates of your observance and the name of the church fellowship or affiliation, if any, or other sponsors of the site.

The reports begin on page 4 of this issue of THE JOURNAL.

Former CG7 president gives his understanding of history of Church of God and Mr. Armstrong

By Dixon Cartwright
BIG SANDY, Texas—A longtime member of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day), the parent organization of Herbert W. Armstrong's Radio Church of God and Worldwide Church of God, traced the Churches of God's history from the Great Disappointment of 1843.

In two sermons and a Q&A session Nov. 22, 2008, at Sabbath services of the Church of God Big Sandy (CGBS), Robert Coulter, 78-year-old past president of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) and former district coordinator, author and pastor, talked about the Church of God movement as he sees it.

He said the Churches of God began

with William Miller's failed prophecies in the 1840s in upstate New York when Jesus didn't return when Mr. Miller said He would.

Exchange of speakers

Mr. Coulter was here as part of the CGBS's speaker-exchange program, which has featured preachers from the Church of God International, Tyler Church of God and other groups, with CGBS speakers reciprocating by traveling to other congregations in several states.

Mr. Coulter is a semiretired executive of the CG7 whose headquarters is in Denver, Colo., the same organization that Mr. Armstrong associated with in the 1930s when it was based in Stanberry, Mo.

"While you might not have been a member of my church, the Church of God (Seventh Day), we all have common roots," Mr. Coulter told the churchgoers Nov. 22, "and I think it's important for us to know something about the origin of our church."

It's important, he said, because "there has been over the years a lot of distorted concepts and ideas about the origin of our particular movement. I hope to share some facts with you today that will help you to get a better focus on exactly who we have been for the last 150 years."

CG7's sesquicentennial

Although Mr. Armstrong began the Radio Church of God in Oregon in

See CHURCHES OF GOD, page 24

Armstrong College busy making a splash in Oklahoma and Israel

EDMOND, Okla.—Under the auspices of his church's Armstrong International Cultural Foundation (AICF), Gerald Flurry, pastor general of the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG), broke ground back in January 2008, on the AICF's performing-arts center in Oklahoma.

The \$15 million 800-seat concert hall, Armstrong Auditorium, modeled after the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, Calif., will eventually, perhaps by late 2009, serve as the location for Sabbath services for the PCG's headquarters congregation and provide a venue for the church's performing-arts series.

The AICF's series so far, currently based in the John Amos Field House at 2501 W. Simmons Rd. on the campus of Herbert W. Armstrong College (HWAC) in Edmond, Okla., has spotlighted some widely known performers.

They include The 5 Browns (young members of the same family playing classical music, sometimes simultaneously, on five pianos); classical-guitar duo Angel Romero and Eliot Fisk; and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

HWAC and the PCG made international news recently when six students from the four-year college helped out for a few months on an

archaeological dig in Jerusalem that located a tunnel that dates from the time of King David.

The students—Jeremy Cocomise, from Illinois; Brent Nagtegaal, Australia; Brandon Nice, Indiana; John Rambo, Oklahoma; Edwin Trebels, the Netherlands; and Victor Vejil, Texas—dug alongside archaeologist Eilat Mazar of the Hebrew University.

As reported on the Web site of *The Daily Oklahoman* (newsok.com), President Stephen Flurry of HWAC said he hopes the find at the dig leads to the discovery of King David's palace.

That would "verify the accuracy of the Scriptures," he was quoted as saying. "Certainly the



BREAKING NEW GROUND—Gerald Flurry breaks ground using a golden shovel to kick off the construction of Armstrong Auditorium Jan. 26, 2008. [Philadelphia Church of God photo]

historical significance is what we are most interested in."

For news of the arts series, the dig and Herbert W. Armstrong College, see the PCG's Web sites, which include armstrongconcerts.org, hwacollege.org and pcog.org.

Reviewer loves new book but doesn't entirely agree

The writer is pastor of the Virtual Church and director of the Association for Christian Development (www.godward.org and 2303 W. Commodore Way, Suite 206, Seattle, Wash. 98199, U.S.A.).

By Kenneth Westby

SEATTLE, Wash.—James D. Tabor's latest book, *Restoring Abrahamic Faith* (180 pages, Genesis 2000 Press) is the story of God's great plan, His divine project for the salvation of mankind.



See JAMES TABOR CALLS FOR A RETURN, page 9

The story begins in earnest with the calling of Abraham. Yahweh began by choosing a man to pioneer the path toward eternal fellowship with Him.

Abraham's journey Godward was to become the example for all seeking to know God. Through Abraham's progeny, Yahweh would bring forth a nation.

FLDS member tells how she and her kids escaped

Mr. Barrett is author of *The New Believers: Sects, 'Cults' and Alternative Religions*, published in 2001 by Cassell & Co. Lately he is researching for his Ph.D. on the schisms in the Churches of God since the death of Herbert W. Armstrong.

By David V. Barrett

LONDON, England—One night 18-year-old Carolyn was awakened by her father and told she was to marry 50-year-old Merrill Jessop, a man she had never met. Two days later she became his fourth wife. Over the next 15 years she bore him eight children, and he took several more wives.

Carolyn tells her story in *Escape*, a 400-page hardback from Broadway Books, widely available in bookstores and for \$17 at Amazon.com.

Although she was unhappy about it, for Carolyn this arrangement seemed normal. She was born and raised in Colorado City, Ariz., just south of the Utah state line, in the Fundamental Church of

See FOR DECADES, page 10



David Barrett

Cornerstone group gets new building

By Wesley White

ATLANTA, Texas—Cornerstone Fellowship recently announced relocation of its Sabbath services from Linden, Texas, to Atlanta. The fellowship took possession of a vacant church building at 2814 W. Main St. on Dec. 15, 2008.

The fellowship began as an outreach ministry of Cornerstone Publications of Texarkana, Texas, founded by the late Jim Rector and his wife, Rita, several years ago.

Mrs. Rector, of Mineral Springs, Ark., reported that in 1989 she and her husband began holding Sabbath services every week, rotating among the residences of a few families in north-eastern Texas.

Later, in 1998, they decided to meet in a more central location. They settled on Linden.

Several young families

Their growth determined that the group needed more room, not only for worship services but for children's activities. The congregation still has several young families with small children. On one Sabbath a few weeks ago 40 adults and 16 children were in attendance.

In 2008 the brethren decided to begin to pray about their situation while they searched for a new facility. They found several nice but too-expensive places.

Answered prayer

In late November a coworker approached local member Nancy Davis of Texarkana about a vacant facility that boasted a 1,900-square-foot building and two acres of land in Atlanta, south of Texarkana.

The owner offered it to Cornerstone for free if the members would pay the monthly utility bills.

"This was definitely answered prayer," said Nancy's husband, Richard. "We have several young couples with kids. Some of these couples were

formity," Mr. Davis told *THE JOURNAL*. "We are a family here. Each Sabbath is like a family meeting with a family atmosphere."

The group's format is not rigid. It



CORNERSTONE—Above: Kids in the kitchen enjoying seconds during the potluck meal the Sabbath of Jan. 3, 2009, are (from left) Cole and Zane Stotts, sons of Travis and Stephanie Stotts of Gilmer, Texas; Jazmyn Alexis Webb, daughter of Josh and Brandy Webb and granddaughter of Dianne Webb, all of Avinger, Texas; Jennifer Waddell of White Oak, Texas, also the granddaughter of Mrs. Webb; and Wyatt Stotts, brother of Zane and Cole. Below left: Stephanie Stotts of Gilmer, Texas, stands with Rita Rector of Mineral Springs, Ark., wife of the late Jim Rector, who founded Cornerstone Fellowship in 1989. Below right: Richard and Nancy Davis of Texarkana, Ark., participate in an interactive discussion during worship services at Cornerstone Fellowship in Atlanta, Texas. [Photos by West White]



might change on any given Sabbath, but a typical worship church service features a family potluck meal at noon, congregational singing, prayer requests, intercessory prayer, a discussion of current events and an interactive Bible study.

Group members say they believe

group's primary goal is to provide an atmosphere for open fellowship that encourages individual participation and growth. The church's leadership is not like the shepherds of Zechariah 11, who were concerned only about money.

"Further," she said, "we don't try to force our beliefs on anyone who attends with us."

Mr. Davis agreed. He noted that in his role as moderator within the group (it has no pastor and doesn't intend to have one) he encourages each



person to avoid offense when he hears something that could cause division and strife.

Doctrinally based

"Yes," he said, "we are doctrinally based. We believe in Messiah Jesus, the Sabbath, the annual high days and keeping God's laws. But people have different beliefs on subjects that relate to the calendar, new moons and sacred names."

Mrs. Rector said Cornerstone Fellowship welcomes visitors, especially those with children.

Attendee Kathy McCommon of Longview, Texas, commented: "We don't believe in making the children sit on pallets for two or three hours and stare at our feet. As long as the kids are quiet and respectful, they are welcome to play and go outside with supervision."

Added Mrs. Davis: "We're praying we can stay here a long time and make improvements such as a chain-link fence."

As a rule, the group meets every Sabbath. However, visitors are advised to call ahead to make sure the time or location of services has not changed for a special weekend.

Mrs. Rector, administrator, receives phone calls at (870) 287-4573, or write her at rita4573@whi.net. Contact Mr. Davis at (903) 293-2224 or hunster13@aol.com.

Notes and quotes

COG messenger

BISMARCK, N.D.—To subscribe to Darwin and Laura Lee's *The Church of God Messenger*, visit <http://darwinlauralee.com>.

Subscriptions via their impressive Web site are free; subscriptions through the mail start at \$13.02 for a year (six issues).

Among recent articles are "Was Jesus Married?" by Samuel Martin, "The Jezebel Spirit Unmasked" by Gay Anderson, "Race and Grace" by David Ben-Ariel, "Forcing Democracy" by Clyde Ferrell Jr. and "What Is the Destiny of the Devil?" by Nathaniel Burson.

Is your desk so cluttered you can't find your computer? Write Mr. and Mrs. Lee at P.O. Box 2333, Bismarck, N.D. 58502, U.S.A.

For the serious student

NIXA, Mo.—Timothy Youngblood has written a book, *The Great Apostasy*, "to help the serious Bible student with research information concerning the great falling away prophesied to come about in the end time."

2 Timothy 2:3 and other scriptures, he said, warn of the apostasy, "but sincere Christians fail to understand that it is of the Christian faith from which many will fall while believing they are still worshipping the true Messiah."

The apostasy grows unimpeded, he said, "because many churches today seem to want to preach about God alone and forget about Satan's goals."

For a free copy of *The Great Apostasy* write masterstable777@sbcglobal.net or Timothy M. Youngblood, 1548 S. Kennedy St., Nixa, Mo. 65714, U.S.A.

Spring-dance invitation

AUTRYVILLE, N.C.—The Intercontinental Church of God of Fayetteville, N.C., will sponsor its Spring Festival April 25, 2009, and everybody is invited.

"It's our spring dance," reported Robert Nunnery. "We're changing it to the spring instead of winter. Please let all church groups know. Everyone is certainly welcomed."

Mark Armstrong, president of the ICG, headquartered near



Robert Nunnery

Tyler, Texas, will be guest speaker, "and possibly Shirley, his mother, will be with him also," Mr. Nunnery said.

If you can't be there for the Sabbath service, be

there for the dance and fellowship, he said.

"Our deejay, Curtis Carpenter, from Aberdeen [N.C.], plays music from the '50s and '60s and other music by request."

The event will be Saturday afternoon, April 25, beginning at 2 o'clock, at Doubletree Inn, 1965 Cedar Creek Rd., in

Fayetteville. Take Exit 49 off I-95.

Dancing will be from 8 p.m. till around midnight.

"No collections taken up," Mr. Nunnery promised.

Two witnesses

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.—Jonathan Erik Sjordal announces the availability of his book *Two Witnesses*.

Mr. Sjordal says the volume is "an in-depth study and comparison of Old Testament messianic prophecies and their corresponding New Testament claims of fulfillment."



Jonathan Sjordal

Two Witnesses: Hebrew Texts Changed by the Greek New Testament is available on Amazon.com. Write Mr. Sjordal at sjordalfamily@gmail.com.

Australian seminar

SYDNEY, Australia—Craig White, a member of the United Church of God, is organizing an "educational seminar" for Sabbath observers for mid-2009. The purpose, he said, is to provide information, insights and resources for Christians on certain biblical topics.

The speakers' list so far includes a Ph.D. who is a coordinator of a theology project; a specialist on the history of Sabbath-keepers in Albania over the centuries; and a scholar whose specialty is research and writing on the typologies in many Old Testament laws.

If you're interested in speaking at the seminars or have suggestions for other speakers, "do let me know ASAP," Mr. White said. "I may have two or three additional openings."

Mr. White expects the seminar to take place in two major cities in Australia in June or August 2009.

His Web sites include www.originofnations.org, friendsofsabbath.org and hwalibrary.org. Write him at surfer11@iprimus.com.au.

Ho ho ho

ROME, Ga.—Pam Dewey of the youall.com Web site announces she has compiled material about Christmas into a booklet, *Reason for the Season*, available at youall.com/oasis/reason01.htm. A PDF version of the same booklet, suitable for printing and distribution, is at youall.com/reasonbooklet.pdf.

Anyone has "permission to print out as many copies of this booklet for free distribution as you would like," she said, "as long as you don't alter the content or remove the contact information."

Bereft of a computer or your cable connection is down? Write George and Pam Dewey at Oasis Ministries, P.O. Box 2134, Rome, Ga. 30164, U.S.A.

Mrs. Rector said Cornerstone Fellowship welcomes visitors, especially those with children.

raised in the church and had been turned off to church in the past. Now they are actively involved in church. We are glad we can provide a new place for Sabbath services."

Conformity not forced

Before moving in, the brethren organized several work parties. Each family donated a folding table. Several members donated folding chairs and kitchen supplies.

"There is no forced doctrinal con-

everyone who has an Ephesians 4 talent should be encouraged to use it.

"We don't look at sharing these things as something we have to endure," Mr. Davis said. "Instead, every Sabbath we look forward to hearing these things from each other.

"Again, we are a family. Now, we're not saying we are perfect in our fellowship. These things we talk about are the ideal, the goal we have set as we continue to grow and overcome."

Mrs. Rector pointed out that the

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