

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

04-83

Dear Reader

Well After nine years this is the concluding issue of the *Assembly Messenger*. Except for the first two years while orders were building up, copies mailed have remained amazingly uniform at approximately 600. That's nearly 50,000 issues mailed and over 200,000 pages! We only sent it to those who asked for it, and some of those dropped out, others came on board, some have made copies for further distribution, and a number have read or downloaded issues from Randy Stephenson's website, www.inthebeloved.org. So we don't know our overall readership.

Many Thank You's!

There are so many people to thank for their help that it is difficult to know where to start. We thank **Mike Doyle** for supplying over 30,000 mailing labels and for obtaining and yearly updating post-office-approved software for label production. This was a cheerfully-done service for the Lord even through times of personal illness and family crisis. Then **Art and Dorothy Kocharoff** faithfully helped fold issues and stuff envelopes, also through times of crisis. We thank my daughter **Cindy Kalandek** for obtaining and maintaining our website and **Randy Stephenson** for including each issue on his site. I thank **my wife Mary** for her support and help with envelopes, etc. I thank **Bob Costen** for his careful review of each issue, as well as writing one issue and adding thoughts to many other issues. I thank **Leslie Grant** for his authorship of a number of issues, and even through many of the infirmities of age, he was always ready to provide a manuscript when asked. Also, I thank other authors—**Bill Hochstetler**, **Jake Redekop**—or their contribution. And I thank the authors, now with the Lord, whose writings I used in several issues.

Then there is the financial end of things. We made it a point to *never* even hint at any need for funds; that the *Assembly Messenger* was absolutely free to all who asked for it. It was our intent to totally take care of the cost as unto the Lord and do as many issues as the Lord allowed. But assemblies and individuals sent in gifts towards the postage; others for the printing; others just for the "expenses," and much to my amazement expenses were met in most cases, essentially nothing needed, nothing left over. We humbly thank each one and thank the Lord! For some reason *Kinkos* gave me a nearly 50% discount in printing many of the issues and making the initial fold (in half). And I thank Dearborn Heights Christian Assembly for supporting the work with their bulk mailing

account. But many envelopes still required stamps. I thank the Lord for self-adhesive ones!

I also want to thank the many people who wrote, called or spoke in person of their appreciation for the *Assembly Messenger* and the help it had been personally and in local assembly situations. It was our policy never to publish *that* kind of a letter, for we did not want to "pat ourselves on the back" as the expression goes. But we often stated our willingness to publish and answer signed letters on doctrinal points, and one of the surprises has been that there were so few of those letters! All that came in were published. Even the issues on baptism brought in several letters of the first kind, but none on doctrinal objections.

Finally I thank Believers Bookshelf for publishing my book *Christian Fellowship: What? When? Where? Why? With Whom?* which is a compilation of issues 01-47 to 02-54, which attempts to explain as simply as possible the truth of God's Church and our responsibility to walk an assembly path according to scriptural requirements. We recommend that assemblies and individuals give this inexpensive pocket-size book to their young people and to others who have little background in assembly truth.

Comments on Past Issues

We started out with the key issue of what is the Church? Almost universally, people have the wrong thought—even the dictionary.

Leslie Grant's *God's True Ground* (97-5) is a classic issue which I believe every Christian should read and reread. [NOTE: it will be in book form in 2007] We looked at several of his "wrong ground" examples in issues 97-6 to 8. If we really understood how we have been "conditioned" to the wrong system of clergy/denominationalism/independency all around us, and how God *really* feels about this wrong system, we wouldn't be so accepting of it, or would we easily drift into it. Many of our assembly problems come about because we somehow think what *God* says is wrong, because the "churches" of men seem so right or at least not really so bad. Our thoughts become more important than God's mind! In many things it is good to be tolerant, but not where tolerance is directly opposed to what God says. For example, homosexuality has become "main stream" in the past few years. We are told by much of the media, many of the "clergy" and some governments to be

tolerant of this “alternate” lifestyle. But Scripture is *very* intolerant of it! While we are not to hate homosexuals or harm them in any way, but rather seek to bring them to Christ, we are to stand up against and proclaim the deep sin of homosexuality and maintain *God’s* word and standards!

Bob Costen’s *Assembly Distinctives* (97-11) is another classic issue. We need to realize God has distinct things that should characterize local churches (assemblies) and those distinctives are not found in most gatherings of Christians today. Who is right: God or man?

Most people don’t realize that God has definite directions for the meetings of the local assembly and that some gatherings of the local believers have a different character than do others. Much of the issues of 1998 into the first part of 1999, covered the meetings and their distinct character. Music divides many Christians. Although only a short article, the portion on music in issue 98-16 should be studied by all, for much that is classified as Christian music today has more effect on the body than on building up spiritually the soul and spirit, and the new nature. Because of the lack of realization of the sinfulness of the religious systems all around us and of the requirements in God’s Word, many expect almost any professed Christian to break bread, not realizing that breaking of bread is (among other more obvious things) the outward expression of our fellowship together. We break bread with those who are in agreement with the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42). Some would push the unscriptural doctrine of “occasional fellowship,” so we covered it in issue 99-24 and 01-46.

The latter part of 1999 was spent looking at the seven “churches” of Revelation 2-3 from both a prophetic point of view and the practical side of God giving each assembly a performance review we all can profit from. Note the book on this mentioned at the end of this issue.

The year 2000 covered a number of practical items such as “giving” as well as a study of leprosy by Leslie Grant and a study over several *Assembly Messengers* of 1 Corinthians—one of the key books on Church function and order found in the Bible.

Much of 2001 took up the truth of the Church presented to those young in the faith, which culminated in the book mentioned earlier.

Year 2002 looked at what “Outside the Camp” means, at the Law of Moses, why things happen to Christians, and the Occult. Also a warning was given as to dangerous movements among Christians today, including ecumenicalism, and how many Christian leaders are compromising the truth for the sake of outward unity.

Year 2003 looked at *worship*, a most misunderstood term! Also we looked at worldliness, then at the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ. There are those who make the *denial* of this great truth essentially a test *for* fellowship with them, and it seems to be a doctrine Satan especially attacks. We need to understand the doctrine and be prepared to defend it! Head coverings for sisters—a practice seemingly hated and easily given up despite God’s clear word—was studied and explained. Then our “attitudes” which have caused so much harm and been used so successfully by the enemy, were looked at over three issues. [This too will be in book form in 2007] Finally the pre-wrath “Rapture” doctrine, gaining much acceptance, was explained and refuted.

Year 2004 looked at the 5 world empires found in Scripture, sought to explain and study the controversial doctrine of *election* and so-called “free will,” looked at the Christian and his responsibility towards government, and finally looked at assembly and personal problem-resolution. This was also looked at in connection with Matthew 18 back in issue 98-14. As with “attitudes” above, Satan is having a field day in interrupting happy fellowship with unresolved problems in local assemblies. We all need to ask ourselves honestly before God, “Am I part of the problem or part of the solution?”

Finally, in this our last year we have looked at several controversial items such as the dangers of elitism, the King James Bible, and Baptism. We trust with this brief review that you might go back and read or reread some of the back issues. The following index will help you do that!

Complete Index

Many people have told us they bought a three-ring binder and have kept all the issues in that binder for future reference. We have never included an index, so we feel it is appropriate to do so with this final issue.

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- It is impossible in a 4-page "newsletter" format to go into the detail that can be gone into in a book. If you have liked my (RPD) style of writing and found it easy to understand, then you may find reading some of my books helpful to yourself, to your young people, and to friends and others in your family. They all have been written in

modern English, without unexplained difficult words, with especially younger believers in mind. Please get into the habit of reading doctrinally-sound books! That's why I can recommend the books from *Believers Bookshelf*, from many authors past and present.

I am free to mention my books here because I make nothing from the sale of these books: all profits go to *Believers Bookshelf*. The list follows in small print.

The Road to Marriage — Biblical teaching as to what God expects from young (and older) people in their relationships with the opposite sex. Section on homosexuality. Plain English! 92 pages.

The Church Is ... the Family of God — Looks at the Church from the viewpoint of a family where the golden rule, problem-solving, forgiveness, communication, etc. should be practiced. 80 pages.

Outlines for Christian Youth — A Believers Bookshelf classic! 23 chapters on various topics, divided into three sections: General Bible Truth and Instruction; Truth for Our Personal Walk with God; and Truth for Our Collective Walk with God. 243 pages. To be reprinted in two volumes in 2006, the Lord willing.

The Church -- Its Beginning, Doctrine and Order — About 45 short chapters covering many aspects of the Church. Includes sections on elders and church discipline (in chart form). 84 pages.

Man + Woman: God's Design — Thought-provoking study which examines the distinct but complementary roles which God expects men and women to follow in the home and church spheres of life. Reasons for the differences are explained from Scripture. 76 pages.

The Gospel and a Path of Separation: A Study of Election — This controversial subject is reviewed and related to our gospel (evangelizing) efforts and our personal-church relationships in separation from evil as demanded in the Word of God. 43 pages.

Let's Play Bible Detective — A Bible teaching game to play alone or with others. Over 100 wrong statements (but believed by some) are made for you to correct, if you can. The correct answers are given upside down. Good for young peoples' groups. 35 pages.

The Tabernacle Talks Today — Easy to understand spiral-bound book which shows that the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was a picture of future heavenly things. Illustrated. Explains each part of the Tabernacle and then gives its meaning in relation to us today. 106 pages. To be reprinted in 2006, the Lord willing.

An Outline of Prophecy — Pocket-size book explains the terms used in the Bible for prophetic events and, beginning at the "Rapture," takes you through to the new heavens, new earth and the Lake of Fire, the eternal state of the saved and the lost. Strong gospel appeal. 54 pages.

From Rapture to Reigning — Takes up the "rapture controversy" in considerable detail and shows the differences between the "Rapture of the Church" and the "Appearing of Christ at the Mount of Olives in power and great glory." It covers the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation, and Rewards. 77 pages.

God's Performance Review — Discusses the Lord's letters to the seven local churches of Revelation 2-3 as performance reviews as to what He approves of and disapproves of in their functioning as local assemblies. Each local church today should carefully consider its own practices in the light of these performance reviews. Includes a chapter on eternal security. 139 pages.

Christian Fellowship — What, Where, Why, With Whom? — Aimed at those with little to no background in "church" truth. Leads through the subject in a logical manner in easy to understand language. 144 pocket-sized pages.

An Outline of a Chart of the Ages — An extensive expansion of a book written in the late 1970's, now out of print. Using a new mini-chart in the book, the past, present and future history of the world is shown "from eternity to eternity."

THE CHRISTIAN UPDATE SERIES

The following older books have been edited by myself to bring up to 21st century readability. These books were chosen because of the important truth presented. Some are being reprinted, so the page numbers may be slightly off.

A Divine Movement (F.W. Grant) — Volume 1: a defense of the vital truths as to church practice recovered around 1830 which many have sought to practice in their church relationships. Even if you don't agree, you will find it interesting and thought-provoking. About 90 pages.

Nicolaitanism: The Rise and Growth of the Clergy (F.W. Grant) — Volume 2: an expose of the current clergy-laity system based on verses in Revelation 2. About 27 pages.

The Step I Have Taken (E. Dennett) — Volume 3: the autobiographical sketch of the deep exercises of a godly "dissenting" clergyman of the 19th century who finally gave up his clergy position. The scriptural explanations he gives are worth the reading of all Christians. Goes well with Volume 2 above. About 53 pages.

Assembly Principles (F.B. Hole) — Volume 4: a study of the scriptural principles of the true Church and the local assembly, and our responsibilities towards both. About 38 pages.

The Great Salvation (F.B. Hole) — Volume 5: an instructive study of the scriptural words used in connection with our salvation, such as forgiveness, justification, redemption, reconciliation, sanctification, new birth, quickening, the gift of the Holy Spirit, new creation. About 68 pages. To be reprinted in 2006, the Lord willing.

Outlines of Truth (F.B. Hole) — Volume 6: covers 12 scriptural "contrasts" that are basic to our understanding of the deep things of God, such as Peace and Deliverance, Sin and Sins, Safety and Sanctification, Faith and Works, Law and Grace, Israel and the Church, Worship and Service, Grace and Discipleship. 121 pocket-size pages.

The Atonement (F.W. Grant) — Volume 7. A through-the-Scriptures study of the atonement in type and reality. Somewhat condensed. Vital truth not studied much today. **Expected in 2007**

We also recommend R.K. Campbell's ***Church of the Living God***, 290 page paperback.. Watch the website below for other new books, some by myself. Several others are expected in 2007.

These and other books are available through **Believers Bookshelf**, POB 261, Sunbury, PA 17801. Phone: 570-672-2134. For Canadians, 5205 Regional Road 81 — #3, Beamsville ON L0R 1B3. Phone 905-563-4929. Visit websites bbusa.org or bbcan.org.

With many thanks to so many, and goodbye. Signed: Bob Costen and Roger Daniel