

NORTHERN LIGHT

Digest
DEC. 2014

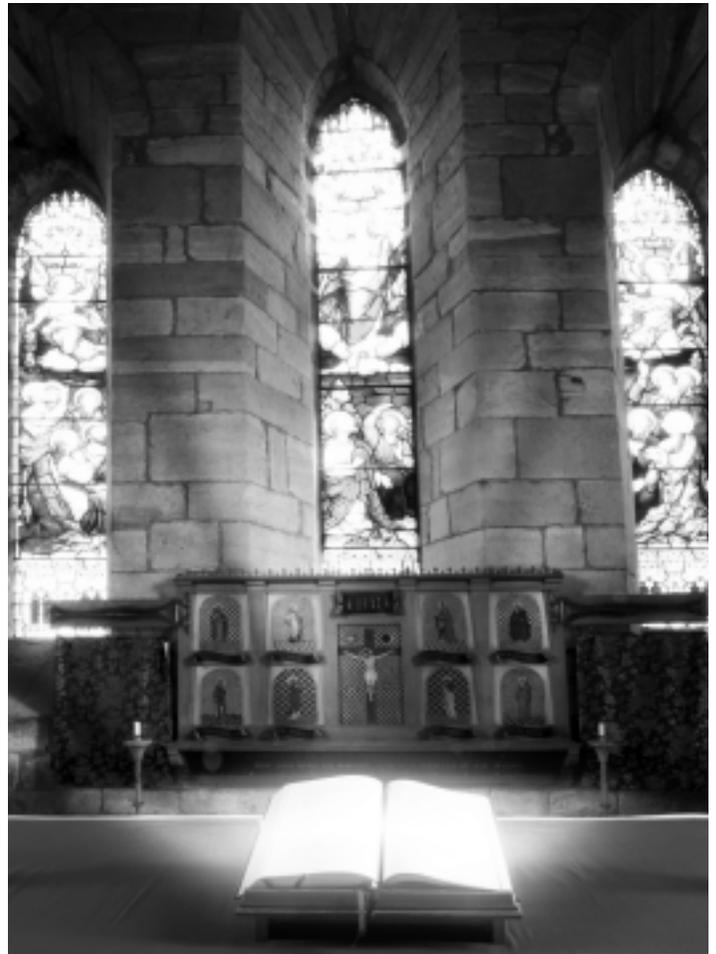
Grace Communion International Canada / Communion Internationale dans la Grâce, Canada

Union And Participation

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Our union with Christ is what restores the relationship with God humanity lost at the beginning of our story (Genesis 1-3). Jesus is called the second Adam in the New Testament, because it was through his life and sacrifice that the human race was so graciously given a new start. In Jesus, the guilt for sin is removed, and we are enabled to draw near to the Father as his own adopted children.



Living in union with our triune God gives us tremendous freedom—freedom from the guilt, fears and anxiety that plagues so many. We have the security of knowing who we are in Christ, and that his love for us is unconditional. We can rest in this marvellous relationship and enjoy the peace that Jesus promised his followers, regardless of the storms of life we may experience. This wonderful union is a gift of God, given to us through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

This union has implications for how we live our lives. Our lives before conversion may have involved many different priorities and agendas, but were primarily focused on ourselves. However, for those who have accepted Jesus as lord and saviour, life is now centred on Christ. As the great theologian John Calvin put it, we should never think of ourselves apart from Christ. Jesus is our life—he is our centre (Philippians 1:21). Living in this ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ is meant to have major implications for us as his children.

Life is now intended to be lived in participation with Jesus. Only as we live both in union with him, and in active participation with his work in our lives and in the world around us, can we be spiritually fruitful (John 15:1-8). It is only as we “abide” in him—remain attached to him—that we are able to bear the spiritual fruit that reflects glory back to God. To try to replicate the Christian life, bearing the fruit of the Spirit apart from being in union with Father, Son and Spirit is impossible. If we cut ourselves off from him we are like a branch that has been chopped off a tree—destined to wither and die.

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Our goal is to encourage all of us to appreciate and enter this union with Christ, and to then to open our lives to fully participate in the life of our Triune God. Our greatest desire is that our congregations across Canada, our two summer youth camp programs, our mission efforts abroad, our outreach to our communities and most of all our own lives bear witness to this divine life. It starts with him, and ends in him, and finds itself only in him.

May all we do, and may the fruit of the Spirit evident in us bring glory to the great God to whom we owe all things (John 15:8). Let 2015 be a year of great fruitfulness in our lives as we yield ourselves to more deeply participate in the divine nature, and share in his life (2 Peter 1:4).

Gary Moore

The Question Of Authority

A good friend, and fellow pastor of mine recently talked to me about having to deal with the illness and unfortunate death of another close personal friend of ours. He expressed his angst of seeing someone you love, after such a meaningful life, succumb to the ravages of cancer. I commented it is a privilege to be welcomed into a person’s life in the good times and especially the bad.

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This got me thinking about my last 17 years of being a pastor in Saskatchewan.

I still remember my first day as a pastor. I happened to be at our Battleford congregation when after the service Floyd came up to me with an important question, “Bill, now that you are our pastor, can you tell me where you want us to put up the garden shed?”

Confused I quizzed, “Garden shed? What garden shed?” Floyd informed me the congregation had purchased an unassembled garden shed for the church lawn mower. They had been waiting for my arrival so that I could determine where it should be located. It was at that moment I became very aware that my life had changed. A group of people were looking at me as a source of authority.

I’m constantly reminded of this fact when I walk with a family through the last few moments of a loved one’s life. I have also seen it in the eyes of a young RCMP officer who called you in the middle of the night and beckoned you to help a family in distress. He seems to relax now that the “professional” has arrived to comfort the family.

Yes, it is a real privilege to be allowed this authority.

This past summer my wife Averil, and daughter Emily went on trip to Europe where we visited Scotland, France and England.

Our time in Paris included a visit to the Palace of Versailles the home of the “Sun” King (le Roi-Soleil), Louis the 14th. I had heard of Versailles and had seen photos of this grand palace that set the standard for palaces throughout Europe, but mere photos do not do it justice.

One cannot but be impressed with the grand halls lined with floor to ceiling windows and mirrors (built at time when glass was very



© Emily Hall

The "Queens Hamlet"

expensive) and the paintings on the gold leaf ceilings. Not to mention the vast grounds that included large lakes where historic naval battles were reenacted for the entertainment of the king and his friends.

Maintaining such a large expanse of gardens and land was not without its challenges. Apparently, the palace was built in an area where there were limited water resources. The groundskeepers had to proceed and follow the king when he toured the grounds in order to turn on and shut off the water to the numerous fountains. This was done so that he would never see a dry fountain.

While the palace and grounds were incredible it was the area known as the "Queen's Hamlet" that made me shake my head. Marie-Antoinette, (the wife of Louis 16th), seeking to flee the Court of Versailles, had a model Norman village built, complete with farmers and peasants! She would go there to play French farm maid with her family and friends. The village had a working dairy farm, mill, peasant houses complete with vegetable gardens, and a stream and lake. It was like having her own "Adventure Land" for those of us who have been to Disneyland.

After a day of touring this magnificent home of the French royalty, I turned to Emily and mentioned that I couldn't help but think of Samuel's words to the leaders of Israel when they asked that God give them a king:

"When Samuel got to be an old man, he set his sons up as judges in Israel....But his sons didn't take after him; they were out for what they could get for themselves, taking bribes, corrupting justice.

Fed up, all the elders of Israel got together and confronted Samuel at Ramah. They presented their case: "Look, you're an old man, and your sons aren't following in your footsteps. Here's what we want you to do: Appoint a king to rule us, just like everybody else. When Samuel heard their demand—"Give us a king to rule us!"—he was crushed. How awful! Samuel prayed to GOD.

GOD answered Samuel, "Go ahead and do what they're asking. They are not rejecting you. They've rejected me as their King.... So let them have their own way. But warn them of what they're in for. Tell them the way kings operate, just what they're likely to get from a king."

So Samuel told them, delivered GOD's warning to the people who were asking him to give them a king. He said, "This is the way the kind of king you're talking about operates. He'll take your sons and make soldiers of them—chariotry, cavalry, infantry, regimented in battalions and squadrons. He'll put some to forced labor on his farms, plowing and harvesting, and others to making either weapons of war or chariots in which he can ride in luxury. He'll put your daughters to work as beauticians and waitresses and cooks. He'll conscript your best fields, vineyards, and orchards and hand them over to his special friends. He'll tax your harvests and vintage to support his extensive bureaucracy. Your prize workers and best animals he'll take for his own use. He'll lay a tax on your flocks and you'll end up no better than slaves. The day will come when you will cry in desperation because of this king you so much want for yourselves. But don't expect GOD to answer" (1 Samuel 8:1-20 *The Message*).

While this was a warning to the leadership of ancient Israel, this could have also been an apt description of the authority **demand**ed by kings and other leaders throughout the ages. In fact, many European rulers felt that they had a "divine right" to have authority over those under them.

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Gary Moore

Editorial Advisor

Bill Hall

Managing Editor

Layout and Design

Colin Wallace

Online Edition Editor

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**The Editor,
Northern Light Digest
101 - 5668 192 Street,
Surrey, BC V3S 2V7**

or email us at:
northernlight@gcicanada.ca

The new online edition of Northern Light Digest is available at www.gcicanada.ca

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Send all address changes to:
Northern Light Digest
101 - 5668 192 St.
Surrey, BC V3S 2V7
email:
northernlight@gcicanada.ca



I couldn't help but contrast demanded authority, with the authority that is earned or freely given.

I am quite aware that the authority granted to me by the members of the Battleford congregation, even in making a decision regarding the placement of a garden shed, is based on the respect they have for me as their pastor. However, that respect and authority is quickly eroded if I use my position for personal gain or to abuse my authority. (While touring Versailles I was also aware that there is no longer a French royal family.)

Whether we realize it or not, Christmas is a time when Christians everywhere take time to reflect on authority. With the Incarnation all humanity was given a choice—either continue to live under the authority of human leaders (including ourselves), or to grant authority to Christ over our lives.

In fact, one of the major battles our first Century Christian ancestors had was the decision of who was "Lord" in their lives, Caesar or Jesus. This is the same test faced by our brothers and sisters who live in places such as Syria or Iraq today. It is the same challenge by those of us blessed to live in Canada. We still have to decide who has Lordship in our daily lives, even if we don't have to decide under the point of a sword or barrel of a gun.

Yet the Incarnation makes this decision easier, given that we have a leader who although is Lord, doesn't "lord" it over us. He became our Lord setting us an example of true authority:

"If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-

spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father" (Philippians 2:1-11 *The Message*).

May Jesus continue to be Lord in your life.

Bill Hall

Leaving a Legacy Gift

Over the years our church has benefited from the regular donations of our membership. Weekly offerings collected at church services have enabled us to support the various ministries in local congregations along with national and international initiatives.

Another way individuals have supported our denomination is through leaving a Legacy Gift. Such Legacy Gifts are an important way in ensuring a lasting gift to Grace Communion International Canada through estate planning.

There are several ways to leave such a gift:

Bequest through a will

There are several forms of planned gifts, but they are usually gifts that are pledged through an individual's will.

A gift of stocks

This can also be made through ones will.

A gift of life insurance

This allows one to make a significant contribution to the church for a relatively small payment.

If you should choose to make a legacy gift, your financial advisor, along with discussions with your family, can help you determine the best options available to you.

Legacy donations that are directed to Grace Communion International Canada will benefit the work of the Canadian denomination, while donations directed to local congregation (Grace Communion International Canada with the name of the local congregation, or city location) will be credited for the use of the local congregation.

(Grace Communion International Canada still holds the registration, Worldwide Church of God Canada and any previous Legacy gifts using that name will still be credited to our church)
