

Prayer of Thanksgiving: that we can hear the voice of Jesus. **"27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."** (Joh 10:27-28 ESV)

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF May 2019

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday

In Saint John – May 12 and 26 at 2:30 p.m.

Communion- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

Address: Moncton—70 King St. —Sage building;

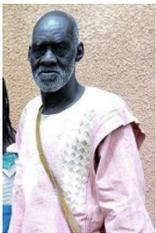
Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

Discipleship Group at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vautour this coming Thursday, May 23 at 7:30 PM. **Topic: 1 Peter 5**

Please pray for our brethren and all the people who are affected by floods here in Canada notably in Ontario (Ottawa region),

BURKINA FASO: Six Slain for Refusing to Convert

Sources: World Watch Monitor, Barnabas Fund (from the Voice of Martyrs, Canada)



Pastor Pierre Ouédraogo
Photo: World Watch
Monitor

After attending a meeting on April 28th, Pastor Pierre Ouédraogo, 80, and other church members were talking together in the church courtyard when gunmen on motorcycles suddenly stormed in. The armed assailants demanded that the believers deny their Christian faith. Bibles and mobile phones were seized and the Christians were then taken one at a time behind the building where they were each shot. In total, six Christians died that day for refusing to convert to Islam. One other, Adama Sawadogo, was injured but thankfully his condition is not considered life-threatening.

Following the attack, the church building and two motorcycles were set on fire. Some sheep and a bag of rice were stolen from the pastor's house before the assailants left the area. The six slain church members were buried the same day during a ceremony attended by both Christians and Muslims from the community.

According to sources in the town of Sirgadji, the attackers returned the next day "searching for Christians." They returned with impunity due to there being insufficient law enforcement in the area. Some were known to locals as "young men who've been radicalized." Since the incident, over 100 Christians have left the town to seek more secure locations.

Please uphold all those who are now grieving the loss of their loved ones. Also pray for Adama who was injured, as well as the many community members who have fled for safety. May the Christians in Burkina Faso find their strength and encouragement in the Lord, as well as each other. Pray that those responsible for this horrific attack will experience God's conviction for their crimes and, as a result, come to repentance and full surrender of their lives to Him.

Please pray for people in our own New Brunswick communities that more will come to saving faith in Christ as the response to God's calling on their life.

Monthly GCI prayer guide is now posted in **Featured Articles** on our www.worshipim.ca website. There is also a very inspiring article "**WOMEN AND MINISTRY**", available under the same heading.

Up Coming Events: the next Canadian GCI ministerial conference will be from August 5 to 7 with arrival on Wednesday, August 4, 2021. The conference will be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. All members who want to attend will be encouraged to do so.

GCI International Conference will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina from July 29 to August 2, 2020. In the past, church members were also invited. You will be kept updated as to the details.

Up coming events – Moncton - June 9 - place to be determined. Various churches will get together to pray and ask God to reveal himself to more and more people.

Have a wonderful and honouring Mother's Day. Thank you for being such a blessing to the next generations sharing the grace that God has given you!

Mother's Love



Greg and
Susan
Williams

Dear GCI Family and Friends,

Can a parent ever forget their child? In the time of Isaiah, Israel's literal complaint was that God had forgotten and forsaken them in their Babylonian captivity. "**But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me'" (Isa. 49:14).** I love God's response: "**Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isa. 49:15).**

This most tender and affectionate picture that God gave, describing his love for his people, is one most of us can relate to—the picture of a mother's love for her newborn child. After carrying a child in her womb for nine months, this new living creature, who is nourished and protected by her own body, is nursing at her breast. You can imagine the longing gaze shared between mother and baby. I can recall



this very picture as I remember Susan with each of our three sons (doubly with twins Glenn and Garrett). The wonder and sense of awe of mother to child are best expressed in the thoughts and response of Mary to her precious baby Jesus. The events of Luke chapter two are grander and greater than words can describe, but I shall give it a try.

At the birth of Jesus, in the humble setting of a stable, a visitation was made by shepherds who had been in the surrounding fields. They brought the tidings of good news—the Messiah had come. This was followed by a heavenly host of angels praising God and saying, "**Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom**

his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).

Can you imagine the conversation between the shepherds and Joseph and Mary as each of them recounted their encounters with angels? They confirmed that each of these angelic meetings and announcements was connected and pointed to the one truth—the incarnation of Jesus is real, and God truly is with us. Glory to God in the highest!

Then [Luke 2:19](#) tells us: "*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*" This became Mary's private meditation and her treasured storehouse of memories for her son Jesus. Isn't this what mothers do? Mothers relish the quiet moments with their dear babies; they remember all the details and intricacies, and they have an overflow of positive hope and promise for their dear child. This is the mother's heart.

Mother's Day is a special day that pays tribute to our mothers. Appropriately, it is celebrated in many countries around the world at different points during the year. In the United States and Canada, Mother's Day is held on the second Sunday in May (May 12th for 2019). In some other countries, such as Argentina and Ethiopia, mothering is celebrated in the autumn. No matter what specific day or season, let me echo GCI's deep love and appreciation for all mothers. We celebrate you for who you are and what you do to care for our precious children.

As beautiful a picture as a mother's love paints, please know that the love that Father, Son, and Spirit have for every human being far surpasses even that. You are beloved by the majestic God of the universe, so on this Mother's Day and every other day – "Be loved!"

Old Testament Laws: The Prophets and the Sabbath
(<https://archive.gci.org/articles/the-prophets-and-the-sabbath/>)

Let's now consider two facts about the Sabbath in the Old Testament:

The Israelites were punished severely for breaking the Sabbath. Doesn't this indicate its importance? Both Israelites and Gentiles were praised for keeping the Sabbath, and the prophets predicted a time when Gentiles would keep the Sabbath. Doesn't this indicate that it is God's ideal for us today?

Punishments for Sabbath-breaking

In ancient Israel, Sabbath-breakers were stoned to death (**Exodus 31:14; 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36**). By breaking the covenant laws, they were showing that they were not part of the covenant people.

But a similar punishment was given for people who broke other old covenant laws. **Exodus 31:14** shows that "cutting off" was the same severity of punishment as execution (see also **Leviticus 20:2-3**). **Numbers 15:30-31** says that any blatant, willful sin should be punished by cutting the person off from his people. This was then illustrated by the case of the man who was gathering sticks on a Sabbath. His rebellion was defiant, and that is why he had to be stoned. He was deliberately rejecting the covenant. He was "cut off" by being killed.

Violations of the Sabbath law were not the only covenant violations with severe punishments, however — covenant violations also concerned worship rituals such as using a sacred recipe for incense (**Exodus 30:33**), an unclean person eating some of the fellowship offering (**Leviticus 7:20-21**), sacrificing an animal in the wrong place (**Leviticus 17:4**), going too near the tabernacle at certain times (**Numbers 1:51**) and prophets who claimed divine authority but whose predictions failed (**Deuteronomy 18:20-22**). All such were to be cut off or killed.

The severity of the punishment is not proof that those laws continue to be in force in the new covenant. They were punished because the law applied to them; it does not mean that it also applies to us.

National captivity for Sabbath-breaking

Hundreds of years later, the Jewish nation was punished for breaking the Sabbath (**Nehemiah 13:17-18; Jeremiah 17:27**). They were also promised blessings for keeping the Sabbath (**verses 21-26**). This shows the importance of the Sabbath in the old covenant system. As a sign, and as part of the tablets of the covenant, it showed covenant allegiance.

The Israelites' disobedience regarding the Sabbath, and their disobedience in worship rituals, was a visible sign of their unbelief. The Israelites broke all aspects of the covenant, and they were punished with the curses that were part of the covenant (**Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28**), but this does not mean that the same covenant blessings and curses apply to us today. We are under a different covenant.

The Jews were punished again in a.d. 70, but Sabbath-breaking was not the reason. Their primary sin in the first century was the rejection of the Messiah, who was far more important than the Sabbath. They were keeping the Sabbath but had rejected the new covenant. Jesus was the "test commandment" of the first century. Faith in Christ is the requirement on which our salvation and eternity depends.

In brief, God punished the Israelites for Sabbath-breaking because the Sabbath was a requirement for the time they lived in, for the covenant they lived under. It is not so today.

Praise for Sabbath-keeping

The Sabbath was a blessing for both Jews and Gentiles (**Isaiah 56:2-8**). Isaiah predicted that God, through the Suffering Servant (the Messiah) would establish a new covenant with his people (**Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:8-10; 54:9-10; 55:1-3**). However, in describing this new relationship, Isaiah also described old covenant customs that in some cases apply only figuratively to the new covenant. In **Isaiah 56:7**, for example, he said that Gentiles will offer burnt offerings and sacrifices at God's house. This is certainly not a requirement today.

Isaiah's main point is that God not only cares for Israelites, but also for Gentiles. God's house will become a place for all peoples, and he will gather Gentiles as well as Israelites (**verse 8**). Eunuchs, who were excluded from the temple in the old covenant (**Deuteronomy 23:1**), would also be accepted. The terms of relationship between God and humans would be changed, and a new covenant would be made.

God's house would "be called a house of prayer for all nations." Jesus quoted this scripture in **Mark 11:17**, but the real fulfillment of the prophecy is not in the physical temple, but in people in whom the Holy Spirit lives. Both Jews and Gentiles are invited into God's household, the church.

The physical details of Isaiah's prophecy — physical offerings and a physical temple — are not required for Christians today. Since we interpret these physical details according to spiritual counterparts, as we must, it is possible that Sabbath-keeping should be interpreted in a spiritual way, too. We should turn to the New Testament to understand whether the Sabbath is to be applied literally or figuratively in the new covenant.

Isaiah also had positive things to say about the Sabbath in chapter 58. As part of his call to repentance, he calls the Sabbath a delight and honorable (**Isaiah 58:13**). He is declaring to the house of Jacob their sins and rebellion (**verse 1**). Although the Israelites had an outward appearance of worship (fasting, for example), they did it for selfish

reasons (**verses 2-5**). Although they claimed to worship God, they did not obey his more important ethical laws: justice, liberty and charity (**verses 6-7**).

If the Israelites did the weightier matters of the law, then God would be responsive to them (**verses 8-11**). He would give physical blessings to the nation (**verses 11-12**). And the same is true of the Sabbath — and of other old covenant laws, too. If the people were obedient to the covenant they were under, if they kept it without complaint, if they used time and material things the way God wanted them to, then God would bless them physically.

Isaiah 58 is appropriate to old covenant conditions, and it does not necessarily tell us anything about new covenant requirements. We cannot assume that the requirements are the same, for we know they are not. All the old covenant laws were good, but their value was temporary. They were designed to lead us to Christ, and they applied until he came. The ritual laws had some benefits, but it is permissible for us to abandon them after we are led to something better: Christ.

Peter was inspired to say that the Law of Moses was “a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear” (**Acts 15:10**). Peter did not specify which aspects of the law were the most burdensome, but it is clear that the old covenant package was stricter, in external regulations, than the new covenant is. We must look to the new covenant to see whether 1) it tells us to look to the old covenant for worship days or 2) whether it gives new instructions regarding worship days and customs.

Prophecies about the Sabbath

Scripture also praises the Sabbath in prophecies that describe a worship of God that includes the Sabbath (**Isaiah 66:23; Ezekiel 44:24**). Does this show that the Sabbath will continue to be part of God’s law?

The prophets described an ideal time in which all peoples worshipped God. To communicate this concept to the Jewish nation, the prophets described old covenant forms of worship, including new moon observances (**Isaiah 66:23; Ezekiel 46:3**) and sacrifices in the temple (**Zechariah 14:20-21; Ezekiel 20:40; 45:17; 46:4**). They also describe discrimination against uncircumcised peoples (**Ezekiel 44:9; Isaiah 52:1-2**) and avoidance of ritual uncleanness (**Ezekiel 44:25-27**). But neither circumcision nor sacrifices are religious requirements in this age.

Prophecies (whether New Testament or Old Testament, whether about Sabbaths or sacrifices or circumcision) are not a reliable source of proof regarding Christian practice. Our doctrines must be based on scriptures that are applicable to the age we live in. Moreover, another prophecy indicates that the day-night cycle will cease (**Revelation 21:25**), which would mean the end of the Sabbath, too. Our question is not really about the future, though — it is about right now, and we want scriptures that apply to us now. For that, we must examine the New Testament.

Review 11

Israelites were punished for rejecting the old covenant and the Sabbath, the sign of the old covenant. The prophets praised obedience to various old covenant details.

Question: Can we assume that something praiseworthy in Isaiah’s day is also praiseworthy today? (see **Isaiah 6:7**, for example)

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GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton; For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor’s contact information: email—evautour47@outlook.com*