ANNOUNCEMENT BULLETIN
United Church of God, an International Association
NORTH CANTON and YOUNGSTOWN, OH; PITTSBURGH, PA and WHEELING, WV
February 27, 2016

Services this Sabbath (2/27):
North Canton – 1:00 p.m.
Youngstown at North Canton
Pittsburgh – 10:00 p.m.
Wheeling – 2:30 a.m.

Services next Sabbath (3/5)
North Canton – 1:00 p.m.
Youngstown – 1:00 p.m.
Pittsburgh – 2:30 p.m.
Wheeling – 10:00 a.m.

ANY LAST MINUTE TIME CHANGES WILL BE VERBALLY ANNOUNCED.

SPECIAL NOTE: No Bible Study in North Canton tomorrow—due to the Sabbath social activities. Will resume 4th Sabbath Bible Studies at 11:00 a.m. in March.

1. CHURCH SERVICES
We’re looking forward to our Sabbath “social” in North Canton tomorrow! It will take place after services and the potluck meal. We’ll enjoy some Bible quiz activities and “conversation cards” where you share a valuable experience from some particular time (as stated on each card) in your years of experience in God’s Church.

2. LOCAL PRAYER REQUESTS:
Joan Ball (attends COGWA in Pittsburgh) – Michael Ball requests your prayers for his mother who fell at work Thursday onto her right elbow. Thankfully, it was not broken, but is extremely painful, requiring physical therapy. She said that “it feels like hitting your funny bone constantly.” Ouch!

3. ANNUAL CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS
Our list of activities for the rest of the calendar year is now largely finalized so we plan to have the calendar sent out by email plus paper copies at services next Sabbath.

4. PASSOVER & DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD
We are a mere 7½ weeks away from the Passover, Night to Be Much Remembered and the Days of Unleavened Bread!

Next week’s Sabbath Announcement Bulletin will feature all the dates, times, locations and other details for the spring holy days. However, plans for the Night to Be Much Remembered (Friday evening, April 22) are already underway. We want everyone to, if at all possible, be with other brethren for this wonderful evening which commemorates Israel’s exodus from Egypt and our own calling to come out of this present, evil world and its ways.

In North Canton, in addition to one or two private gatherings, we will have a group dinner at the church hall for all who wish to come there for that special evening on the night after the Passover service. The Stivers will be on hand to host the event at Global Gateway, and Freeman and Debbie Kuhns are
looking after the details of the meal. If you would like to join the group gathered there, please sign the list on the information table.

For all four church areas, if you don’t have a place to be for the NTBMO, please contact one of the deacons or elders and they’ll help get you situated.

4. LOCAL AREA BIBLE STUDIES

Joe and Bess Gabriel hosted our first local area Bible Study in the North Canton church area this past Wednesday. The topic was “Remember the Basics of Repentance & Faith.” It was well attended, and a delightful time for the fellowship and refreshments which were enjoyed by all.

Please contact Mr. Stiver about hosting one in your part of the church area. Brethren in the Pittsburgh and Wheeling areas are welcome to host one too. Please discuss that with Mr. Stiver or Mr. Wilson so we can get a time and place set up. These studies can be during an afternoon or evening. However, with Sabbath service preparations in motion, Friday evenings will be practical sometimes but not always.

Next local area Bible Study in Sugar Creek, OH: The Miller’s plan an in-home Bible Study for those interested on Friday evening March 4th at 6:30 p.m. The topic will be on the book of Ephesians with a focus on the exhortations of Paul which can be categorized in three ways: The “to be’s”; the “to do’s”; and the “don’ts.” A study guide will be provided. Bring a potluck dish and an enquiring mind.

5. KINGDOM OF GOD SEMINAR SERIES

Beginning after Passover, we will begin conducting our seminar series in all four churches. The topic will feature: “Meet the Jesus Christ You Never Knew.” Your prayers and participation in planning the event would be most appreciated.

6. NEWS OF THE WORK

The Council of Elders February/March meeting agenda plus the letter from the Council Chairman are available at the information table for your review. Please pray for God’s wisdom and guidance for the Council members and the meeting itself (Monday, February 29 through Thursday, March 3).

An additional item has been added to the Council of Elders agenda for its Feb/Mar meeting. It is the review and reaffirmation process for church president Victor Kubik. This would normally be done at the Council meeting in May, but that meeting has been scheduled for after the date he took office three years ago. Thus, it will take place at the upcoming meeting on Wednesday, March 2, at 10:30 am. It will be directed by the Council’s Roles and Rules Committee chairman, Rainer Salomaa.

7. MIDWEST TEEN PROM – APRIL 2

The Columbus, Ohio, congregation is once again hosting the Midwest Teen Prom, only two months away on April 2, 2016. All information will be in the upcoming issue of the United News, however, we wanted to remind you of important dates that are coming up soon.

Hotel reservations need to be made prior to March 9 in order to get the group rates. Prom reservations need to be in by March 18, so we have adequate time to plan. Senior questionnaires need to be in by March 18, as well. All the needed information is on the website: www.midwestteenprom.com. We’re looking forward to another great prom!

8. UNITED YOUTH CAMPS REGISTRATION BEGINS
Online registration for the teen camps starts Tuesday, March 1. We encourage both campers and staff to register as soon as possible at http://uyc.ucg.org. Camper scholarships are available; if one is needed, please see your pastor for details.

SABBATH FOCUS

THE PAST AND FUTURE OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

The United States of America has for 240 years been a beacon of hope for millions of often forlorn immigrants from Great Britain, Europe and elsewhere. They heard that they could find “freedom” there, freedom to live, learn, work, and grow families that would also have that same hope and opportunity.

In the history of man, many nations have begun on the basis of existing national models of monarchy, dictatorship or empire. But none before had begun with the concept of such freedom under the law and the opportunity to grow! Some nations had a founding father. But the United States began with dozens of deep-thinking, Founding Fathers who happened to live at the same time and came to the same conclusions to form such a nation as America.

Yet few fully comprehend just how exceptional is the USA—because they don’t consider the Bible as valid history or prophecy. Think about this.

Nations listed in the Bible

In the Bible God inspired His scribes (writers) to name major nations in addition to His chosen nation of Israel. Just after the Flood of Noah’s day, the genealogy in Genesis 10 lists the patriarchal ancestors of many nations in the ancient world—who are also the patriarchs of those nations now in the modern world! Egypt received considerable biblical focus during the several centuries leading to the Exodus. The Philistines, Syria, Moab and Ammon (territory of modern Jordan), Edom and others got biblical mention during the period of Israel as a nation in the homeland God gave her for nearly 200 years after the civil war when King Solomon died.

The great, dominant empires of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome and Parthia were all listed in the latter stages of the Old and New Testament eras.

So would it not be consistent for God to identify in Scripture many modern nations of significance as the end of the age of man draws to a close? That is, by the way, our present time in history leading directly to the second coming of Jesus Christ when He will establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Where is America in the Bible?

America, the greatest super-power in world history, is so listed, but by her biblical name: Manasseh. He was her founding patriarch, one of the sons of Joseph the son of Jacob/Israel, son of Isaac, son of Abraham. Manasseh had a younger brother called Ephraim who was the progenitor of England and thus the British Empire, who also from about 1800 to the 1940’s was the other greatest superpower of her day.

American and also British exceptionalism was spawned originally by the prophetic blessing of their grandfather Jacob who God renamed Israel: “God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked…. Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Genesis 48:15-16).

Jacob clarified to Joseph that although his son Manasseh was older, Ephraim would receive the greater blessing and would “become a multitude of nations,” while Manasseh, “shall become a people and he shall be great” (verse 19).
These were superlative prophecies when taken in the context of God’s historical blessings on the twelve tribes (later nations) that were initially the nation of Israel (see chapter 49). America would be the greatest nation on earth in her day—which is our time now. Exceptional!

No Bible—no understanding of the times

Perhaps it’s clear now why so many Americans fail to understand the typically recognized exceptionalism of the USA. Call it Darwin-damage, or whatever, but they fail to see the significance of America because they fail to comprehend the existence of an all-powerful God and His divine hand in history—which He inspired to be recorded in the pages of the Bible.

Does this mean that the United States is supremely better than all the other nations? Of course not! But God gave her a mission to be a shining example of what He ultimately offers all mankind. Sadly, her people have lost what sentence of God’s blessing the Founding Fathers once had. Her own children mock her as if they were her enemies. Now Lady Liberty struggles through the immoral, crime-ridden, terror-infested muck and mire that she so often beckoned the huddled masses to come out of!

Times will get worse….then better!

If you don’t read the Bible, you won’t know that Jesus Christ personally prophesied about our age: “… then there shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). Manasseh’s descendants will not escape that exceptional, divine chastisement! Only widespread, personal repentance toward God for the nation’s sins would make a difference.

But fear not. America will excel again, after Christ’s return. Then He will rule all nations personally and directly. Those nations descended from the ancient 12 Tribes of Israel will actually lead the way—as anciently they were meant to do had they then the will to so do. There will be founding fathers aplenty then—for all the nations, and drawn from the resurrected saints. Then true liberty will beckon—liberty in and under God’s wonderful law and under His supremely exceptional benevolence and mercy!

Have a delightful, peaceful Sabbath,

Randy Stiver, pastor