

CITY/FAITH & REASON

KEEPING THE FAITH

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Gospel of Mark to be enacted

Retired Mennonite pastor Paul Landis first started memorizing the New Testament's Gospel of Mark, all 678 verses, in the 1970s and '80s. And, by 1996, he was ready to perform it in public, complete with three chairs as props and his baritone voice shifting pitches for the different characters.

And now, after a few years' hiatus, Paul Landis, 67, is returning to the pulpit with his memorized Gospel of Mark, a performance that takes about 90 minutes, with a 15-minute break.

The Gospel of Mark will be recited at First Mennonite Church, 2600 Richmond Rd. S.W., on Friday and Saturday, April 21 and 22, at 7:30 p.m.

Symposium tells Muhammad's story

Calgary's fourth Muslim denomination, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Calgary, is presenting a free symposium on the character and biography of the Prophet Muhammad, this Sunday, following the prophet's birthday, or Eid Milad-un-Nabi, on Tuesday.

The symposium on the life of the prophet will be led by Naseem Mahdi, the national president of the Canadian Ahmadiyya Community.

The Life of Prophet Muhammad as Mercy for All is discussed at Forest Lawn High School, 1304 44th St. S.E., Sunday, lunch at 1 p.m. and the program at 2 p.m. Visit www.alislam.org

TV correspondent speaks for good cause

TV foreign correspondent Brian Stewart has been covering the world's pain for The National since 1992. And, at the end of this month, he speaks at CAUSE Canada's Third Annual International Spring Gala.

Stewart is best known for his coverage of the 1984 Ethiopian famine. There, he filmed a father preparing to bury his starving three-year-old daughter, Birhan. And the girl fought to live.

Canmore-based CAUSE, founded by Paul and Beverly Carrick, works in the world's worst places.

The gala proceeds will go toward the launch of the CAUSE Kids child sponsorship program for education.

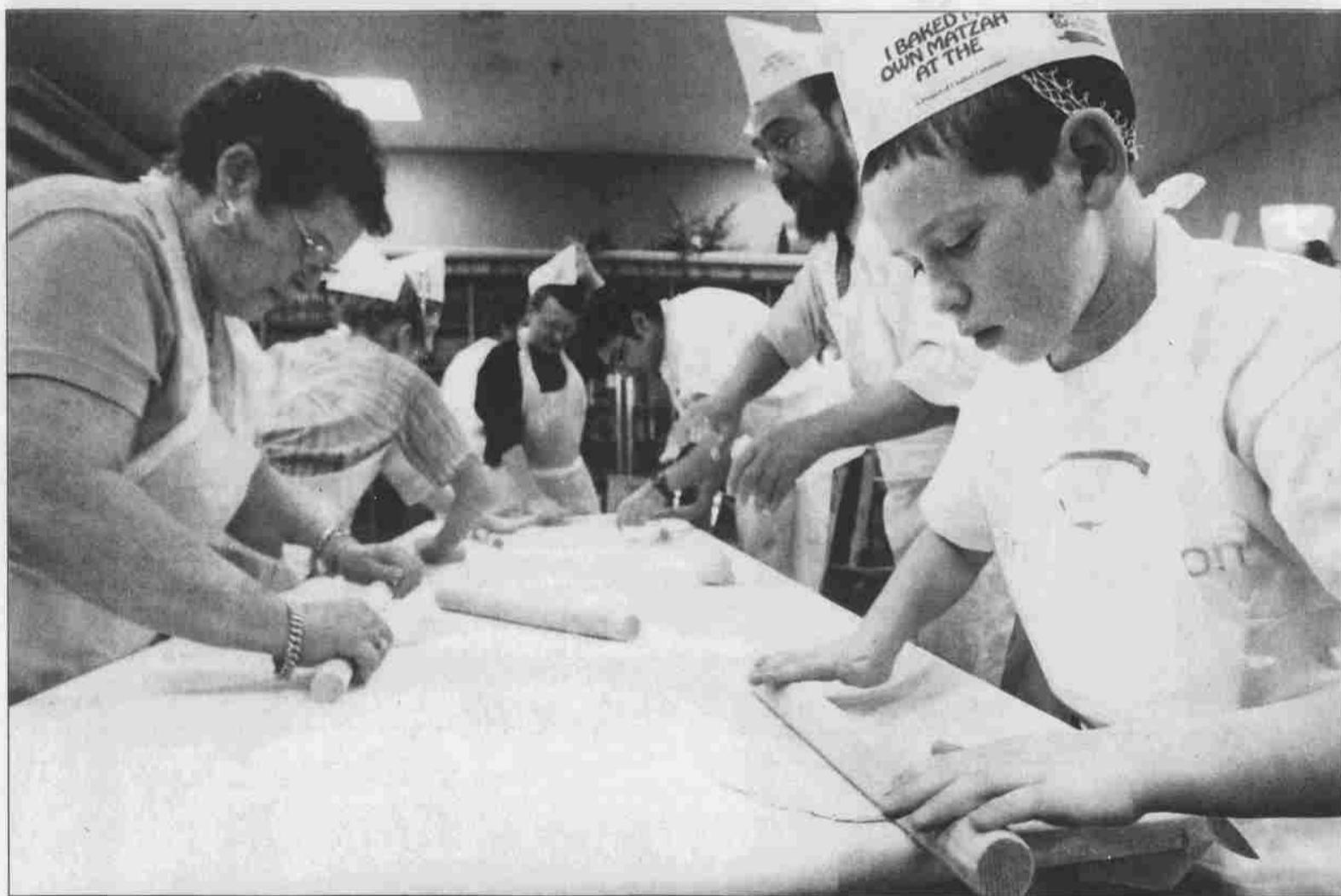
The CAUSE Canada Spring Gala, hosted by CTV's Sharol Josephson, will be at the African Safari Lodge of the Calgary Zoo, Thursday, April 27, from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Tickets, \$125 each or eight for \$1,000, are available at 888-552-2873 or www.cause.ca.

Healing a Hurting World topic of talk

The Engaging the City series of Christian downtown business luncheons presents Health Partnership International of Canada president John Kelsall, speaking on Healing a Hurting World.

With the co-operation of Canada's health-care companies, HPIC ships pharmaceutical kits and other medical aid to doctors in Third World countries. And, in 2005, partly in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami and Pakistani earthquake, HPIC shipped \$39.1 million in medical aid — and from much-vilified private companies.

The Engaging the City luncheon is at the Regency Palace Restaurant, 300, 328 Centre St. S.E. (up the mall elevator) on Tuesday, noon to 1:15 p.m. The buffet is \$20; RSVP to LaVieSociety@shaw.ca or 585-9867



Dennis Brown, 8, rolls out the dough while making matzah, unleavened bread needed for Passover, at the Chabad House in southwest Calgary recently. Mikael Kjellström, Calgary Herald

What would Jesus eat?

Calgary rabbi says Christians should not celebrate Jewish Seders

JOE WOODARD
CALGARY HERALD

The Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, Calgary chapter, mused upon a vexing question, a week before Passover and Holy

Thursday:

WWJE: What Would Jesus Eat?

The Jewish Passover Seder relives the Hebrew Exodus from slavery in Egypt circa 1300 BCE. The Christian Holy Thursday service relives the Last Supper, the institution of the Holy Eucharist of consecrated bread and wine. Yet the Last Supper was a Passover meal, "the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread" (Matt 26).

Many Christian churches now celebrate Seders to reconnect themselves with Jesus's Jewish roots, and "we want to know if it's kosher for Christians to perform a Jewish ritual," said council secretary Joan Poulin.

At the council's annual meeting, Rev. Helen Belcher of Good Shepherd Anglican brought the question to Beth Tzedec Synagogue's Rabbi Moshe Saks: Can Christians celebrate a Seder, recognizing Jesus's Jewishness, without disrespecting Jews and the different meaning of their feast?

"We've tried to understand Jesus as a historic person," Belcher told Saks.

"So we began to study the Passover meal at the Last Supper. And we found all the Seder symbolism very, very moving" — bitter herbs and salt water representing slavery's toil and tears, a burnt shank bone for a Passover lamb, unleavened flatbread or matzah, food for hurried travellers and the wine representing redemption.

Belcher's Good Shepherd Anglican has celebrated Seders for many years. But some Seder symbols just don't fit.

During Seders, four glasses of wine are drunk to remember God's four promises to his people (Exodus 6, 11): to free them, redeem them, make them his people and bring them out of Egypt. A "fifth glass" of wine is left on the Seder table for the Prophet Eli-



Rabbi Moshe Saks stands with Rev. Helen Belcher, who finds the Seder symbolism "very, very moving." Lorraine Hjalta, Calgary Herald

jah, long-awaited harbinger of the Mossiach or Messiah, redeeming Israel. And, late in the evening, the front door is left open to welcome the prophet.

"Our problem has always been, are we leaving the door open for Elijah or Jesus?" Belcher asked.

In response, Rabbi Saks said Christians ought not celebrate Seders, not because it is offensive to Jews, but because that was not the Hag Pesach, the meal Jesus would have eaten.

"It was a volatile period," Saks said. "Judaism itself was at a crossroads."

There were Sadducees, or temple priesthood, responsible for the ritual animal sacrifices; Pharisees or proto-rabbis praying in local synagogues; the tiny monastic Essene sect; Zealots seeking to spark a calamitous uprising in order to bring the Messiah; and Nazarenes, Jews following Jesus.

Jewish families came to the Temple of Jerusalem three times yearly, espe-

cially at Passover. The Passover lambs were sacrificed at the Temple, then taken away by the families to be eaten at a Hag Pesach: "Eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast" (Ex 3).

Jesus ate that meal, not the later Seder, with his disciples, said Saks.

In the year 66, the Zealots got their wish, and Judea revolted from Rome. Four years later, Roman general Titus sacked Jerusalem and completely destroyed the Temple, ending the priesthood and its sacrifices.

The synagogue rabbis then inherited Judaism from the defunct temple priesthood. Ritual sacrifice was replaced by prayer and scripture study — like the Reformation move from sacramental to scriptural Christianity.

The rabbis then rejigged the calendar and transformed the Jewish feasts, making them solely symbolic of Jewish history. The Seder was filled with historical symbols — "the

only ritual where we eat our symbols," Saks said.

The roasted lamb bone and charred eggs are no longer eaten, symbolizing the end of the old temple sacrifices.

Saks point? Jesus's Last Supper was a temple-style Hag Pesach, not a Seder. His advice to Christians? "Eat the lamb!"

In the view of the first Jewish Christians, "He was the Paschal lamb; he was the sacrifice," Saks said.

In later discussion, CCCJ president Rochelle Rabinovitz and Catholic representative Anna Tremblay stressed that "remembrance" in both the Seder and Eucharist goes further than simply mental recollection. They both become timeless reliving of events.

"We're supposed to actually be there," said Rabinovitz.

Tremblay added that, for Catholics, Orthodox, some Lutherans and some Anglicans, Eucharist is not "supper," but a continuing communion outside of time with Jesus's self-sacrifice on the cross, begun at his last Hag Pesach.

In a later interview, University of Calgary religion Prof. Eliezer Segal said the Hag Pesach of Jesus's time would have involved eating the lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread, plus almost certainly a blessing over wine.

There could have been a ritual washing of hands, but Jesus washing his disciple's feet, as recorded in the Gospel of John, was not Jewish, but "a very Jesus thing to do," Segal said.

In a later interview, Anglican Belcher was asked, if the Eucharist is Jesus's own transformation of the Passover Hag Pesach, replacing the Paschal lamb with himself — saying over the bread and wine, "This is my body ... this is my blood" — why a Seder? Is not the Eucharist sufficient? "It is. The Eucharist is wonderful," she replies.

"But the Passover was not just the temple sacrifice, but also the family meal. We have need of a communal meal, and once a year, it's good to find our roots in the family."

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Faith calendar

Saturday

■ The House of Blessing Church presents an Eastern Revival Gospel Concert today at 6 p.m. Highland Park Community Centre, 3717 2nd St. N.W. Call 226-0152 or 669-5298.

Sunday

■ Unitarian Church of Calgary, 1703 1st St. N.W., is holding a special Easter service at 10:30 a.m. The topics explored will include Easter's pagan roots, Peter Rabbit and the eggs of the holiday.

■ Midlands United Church, 250 146th Ave. S.E., welcomes the community to its Holy Week services Easter Sunday at sunrise, 6:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. For information, call 254-2293.

■ Forest Lawn High School, 1304 44th St. S.E., is holding an informative symposium to educate the general public about peaceful teaching of Islam and the Holy Prophet. Today from 1 to 4:30 p.m. (1 p.m. is door opening and lunch). Admission is free.

■ Valleyview Presbyterian Church, 7655 26th Ave. S.W. Easter Sunday Service starts at 10 a.m. today. Rev. Donald Hill.

■ Unitarian Church of Calgary, 1703 1st St. N.W. What is a Bunny Like you Doing on a Holiday Like This? With Meg Roberts, Sandy Cooper and the Ostara Players, starting at 10:30 a.m. Have you ever wondered why a bunny delivers eggs on Easter? At this multigener-

ational service, we will explore various stories about Easter's pagan roots. The Ostara Players will tell their story about how Peter Rabbit became the Easter Bunny.

Forthcoming

■ Exploring Celtic Spirituality: The Tapestry of Life Celtic Nonfiction on Wednesday. From 7 to 9 p.m. with Ita Conery, fcj.

■ The ProArts Society presents Music at Noon. A free music concert at the Cathedral Church of the Redeemer (corner of 7th Avenue and 1st Street S.E., across from Olympic Plaza in downtown Calgary). On Wednesday, the Harp Angel (Debra Nyack) plays harp. Concert starts at 12:10 and runs about 45 minutes. You are welcome to bring your lunch.

■ Adult Singles Ministry, attend Pathways — a New Style Worship Experience, on Friday. Light supper at 6:30 p.m., program at 7 p.m., at St. Andrew's United Church, 924 Heritage Drive S.W., \$5 per person for supper, support of program. Come and share warm fellowship, lively music and great discussion "break-out" groups.

■ Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, Calgary Chapter breakfast meeting on April 22 at 9 a.m. At Holiday Inn, 4206 Macleod Tr. S. Speaker: Billy Sprake, called by God to the Dene people of the N.W.T. Everyone welcome; \$12 per meal. Call Douglas at 254-2616, Eugene at 272-6204 or Wilfred at 280-8412 by Wednesday.

■ Knox Presbyterian Church, 3704 37th St. S.W. will hold its spring tea

and bake sale April 22 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Bake table, marmalade and preserves. Tea tickets are \$3.50. Proceeds from the tea will go to toward a World Without AIDS, CUPS (One World Preschool and Kindergarten), Hospice Calgary and The Brocket Project.

■ The Sandstone Valley Ecumenical Centre, 1100 Berksire Blvd. N.W., is a unique combination of two church denominations: Mount Calvary Lutheran and Ascension Catholic. A garage sale will be held at this centre April 22, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Everyone is invited to browse and have lunch at this annual event.

■ City Wide Hymn Tyme on April 23 at 6 p.m. at First Alliance Church, 12345 40th St. S.E. The HymnTyme Band provides music at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call 246-5722.

■ St. Barnabas Anglican Church is having an Evensong service April 23, at 4:30 p.m., followed by a St. George's Pub Night Supper and entertainment by the Calgary Renaissance Singers. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children up to age 12. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call Isobel at 294-0935.

■ Living Spirit United Church, 900 47th Ave. S.W. Come Messiah, Come. On April 23 at 10 a.m., Easter-themed children and youth musical for the whole family. Free admission.

■ Journey of the Soul: a musical portrayal of our spiritual development, by the Vera Choir, supporting kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta. Southwood United Church, 10650 Elbow Dr.,

on April 23, at 2:30 p.m. Tickets: Call Christian Publications at 265-2772, Universal Church Supplies at 244-5853 or Rideau Music at 269-6062. For more information, call Lorraine at 860-4463.

■ Establishing a Daily Meditation Practice. Clear Sky Meditation and Study Foundation is offering weekly Buddhist meditation classes for both beginner and more advanced practitioners. Tuesday evenings from 7 to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call Edmund at 828-6678. Clear Sky is a registered Canadian charity and is providing these classes for free.

■ Personalize your meditation — experiment with different approaches and traditions. Every Tuesday evening at Spiritual Directions from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. For information, call 210-2802.

■ Faith Calendar is a free listings service for faith groups in and around Calgary. Submissions should be less than 40 words and can be mailed to Linda Del Re, Calgary Herald, P.O. Box 2400, Stn. M, Calgary, AB, T2P 0W8, faxed to 235-7379, or e-mailed to eainbox@theherald.canwest.com. Please do not send attachments.

■ St. Peter's Anglican Church, 903 75th Ave. S.W., invites you to a Journey in the Spirit from April 26 to May 7, 9 p.m. Make connections between the movement of the spirit and the rhythms of daily life through prayer, drumming, art therapy, music and meditation. For information, call 252-0393.



Herald Archives, courtesy, Newmarket Films Jim Caviezel is Jesus in Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ.

Passion in the Park offers up Gibson film

Want to try something a little different for Easter? Calgary's Street Church offers Passion in the Park, Easter Sunday evening: a screening of Mel Gibson's blockbuster The Passion of the Christ, along with more than 1,000 free pizzas, hot drinks and popcorn.

There will be free clothing and more than 2,000 Easter presents. And all this will take place in a heated tent.

That's Passion in the Park in the Triangle Park (or Needle Park) across from the Calgary Drop-in Centre, Easter Sunday at 6:30 p.m. Visit www.streetchurch.ca.