

## GCE Celebrates United's 5th Year

by Doug Johnson

Elders and wives representing more than 25 countries attended the General Conference of Elders (GCE) meetings in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, May 7 and 8. May 4 and 5 elders from outside the United States met to discuss issues relevant to the international Work. Other preconference meetings were held for Feast coordinators, camp directors and editorial staff.

### Special Sabbath Services

On the Sabbath, May 6, a total of 577 attended services, including the elders and the Cincinnati congregations. Another 140 congregations were connected to the service via phone hook-up; 60 cybercast connections added more to the virtual crowd. Council of Elders members Roy Holladay and Dennis Luker gave the split sermons.

President Les McCullough surprised those present by announc-



Henrikas Klovas after being ordained by Les McCullough

ing a special service for the day—the ordination of Henrikas Klovas as an elder to help with the growing Work in the Baltic republics and other areas of Eastern Europe. Mr. Klovas has been working closely



Council member Roy Holladay speaks at services May 6 before the GCE

for some time with Victor Kubik, the Council member who has served many of God's people in Eastern Europe for a number of years. Special music provided by the Ambassador Bible Center choir added to the enjoyment of this special Sabbath.

East Texas and Texarkana, Texas, pastor Roy Holladay spoke first, expanding on the concept of humility as a crucial component of God's laws governing human conduct.

Seattle pastor and Ministerial Services team member Dennis Luker gave the second split sermon on the application of true godly love. God's love is the only power in the universe that can bring about healing of the negative emotions so common and destructive in human lives. It will motivate God's people to do His Work and will help them come to unity.

### International Reports

A strong tone of optimism ran through the full day of meetings May 7. Reports from seven of the international areas initiated the proceedings, followed by operational reports from Ministerial Services and Media Operations. The afternoon session devoted time to balloting, and addresses by the chairman, president and treasurer, followed by a question and answer session with the Council of Elders.

Leon Walker began the international updates. Today over 1,900 brethren attend services throughout the Spanish-speaking region. Circulation of the Spanish language *Good News* is slated to increase to 15,000 in the next year, helped by

ads in six regional editions of *Reader's Digest*. Personal contact with current Church members, however, remains the primary method of "first contact" for new members in this area of the world. With applause, elders and wives warmly welcomed the return of Eduardo Hernández, who has rejoined the United Church of God after a brief departure to another fellowship last year.

Henrikas Klovas and Victor Kubik reported on Eastern Europe. Nineteen now attend in Estonia, six in Lithuania. Translation of numerous articles and *Bible Study Course* lessons into Lithuanian, Russian and Estonian continues, with some of the material being placed in public libraries. Several hymns have been translated for use by brethren in these regions. Mr. Klovas expressed gratitude for the financial help offered through the home office for efforts to preach the gospel, thanking U.S. members for

## Mario Seiglie Named to Council of Elders

Mario Seiglie was selected by the GCE to serve a three-year term as a new international representative on the Council of Elders. Gary Antion, Robert Dick and Richard Thompson were returned to the Council.

Mr. Seiglie was born in 1953 to a well-to-do family in Cuba. Then his family's lives were shattered in 1959 when Fidel Castro established Communist rule. His father sent his mother, sister and him to the United States, and in 1962 he escaped to join them.

"We lost home, work, relatives, future and country in the same day we left our beloved Cuba," he said. "This event marked my life as it was indelibly etched in my mind how fragile is our world.... This experience helped the conversion process at the early age of 17, when I came into contact with a Church member who was in his last year of high school."

His father practiced medicine in Florida and in North Carolina, where his mother, now widowed, brother and two sisters live.

He graduated from Ambassador College in 1975 and married a Chilean member and school teacher, Catalina, in 1977. He served in the ministry in San Diego, California, for two years, and in Latin America for 22 years. He and his wife have four daughters ages 14 through 20.



Mario and Catalina Seiglie

He presently pastors congregations and video groups in Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil. UN

their support.

Jeff Caudle addressed the General Conference on the Work in New Zealand, where he and his family have been serving since December 1999. Approximately 50 brethren attend in three groups, the largest being in Auckland (30). Current circulation of *The Good News* stands at 2,200, including waiting room subscriptions. Subscribers in Tonga and Fiji are also served from New Zealand. Mr.

Ha'angana, long-time elder serving in Tonga, continues in poor health and needs the prayers of the brethren. Mr. Caudle concluded his session by issuing an open invitation to the Feast of Tabernacles at Taupo, New Zealand; and asked elders and wives to remember the sometimes-difficult financial circumstances caused by frequent changes in government policy.

Doug Horchak updated the (See "GCE," page 13)

## China Trip Reopens Relationships

"The China trip was a wonderful opportunity to reopen our relationship with the Soong Ching Ling Foundation, which had an excellent relationship with the AICF and especially Mr. [Herbert] Armstrong," said Larry Greider, United Youth Camps coordinator. He accompanied Council of Elders member Victor Kubik to Beijing and Shanghai, People's Republic of China, March 23 to 30.

"It is clear they like our values and trust us," said Mr. Greider. "We were warmly welcomed and

encouraged to participate in any project that we would like to entertain."



Luncheon with Soong Ching Ling Foundation leaders. From left, Richard Liu, Yu Gullin (vice chairman and secretary-general of SCLF), Larry Greider, Victor Kubik, Cunyu Wu (assistant secretary-general of SCLF)

A variety of possible projects are being discussed that would involve United and the LifeNets nonprofit organization Mr. Kubik founded.

"Who knows what God has in mind for the most populous nation," Mr. Greider said. "I was very impressed with China and have a strong desire to return, especially if God is opening doors for doing His Work." For more on the trip, see page 3. UN

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# The Work That God Has Done

by Burk McNair

Five years ago many of God's people gathered together to reorganize to preserve the truth and to continue doing the Work that God had given His Church to do. In order to continue doing God's Work as His instruments, together, we saw the need to do everything possible to hold on tightly to the truths revealed to the Church from God's Word. We continued to acknowledge God and His Son Jesus Christ as the foundation and Head of the Church. We looked to God and made every effort to give Him the glory and call upon His power and might for our strength.

The organization God led us to set up was formed after prayer and great deliberation. The purpose for setting up an organization was to provide what we believe is a way to do God's Work in an effective, orderly and peaceful manner to bring Him greater glory.

By whose power is all this work being done? In all that we do, who gets the glory and the praise? Who is doing the Work?

The power of God working in His people through the Holy Spirit inspires the dedication of the membership, the Council of Elders and the General Conference of Elders. None of us can take the credit for what God has done by His power through His people. Only God gets that glory. Any good done and any progress in continuing the Work of spreading the gospel of the Kingdom of God has been done by the Spirit of the living God. We are only instruments of clay in the hands of the Master Potter. In all that we do, God gets the real thanks and glory, not men.

## "Not by Might"

There are special words in one of the minor prophets that I read early in my study of God's Word, and they continue to have a special meaning to me today. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

These words recorded by Zechariah still ring in my ears when I see or hear anyone take credit for doing a work in the name of

God or take the glory that belongs to Him. The mentality of saying "Look what I (or we) have done," without giving God the ultimate honor, glory and recognition for His gifts and the opportunity to use them in His service, is unwise and even dangerous. We can recall several examples in Scripture that may sober us and make us be more careful to give God all the glory and the praise for what He has done or will do in us as His instruments.

Nebuchadnezzar is one enlightening example of man failing to give the glory to the Most High God for the wonders He had done. In taking the glory and honor to himself, Nebuchadnezzar quickly lost the throne of Babylon (Daniel 4:27-37). Later Nebuchadnezzar came to acknowledge that the real gifts and opportunities originated with "the Most High [who] rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Daniel 4:32-34) This example shows us that a man can learn his lesson and be restored to his position.

Luke records another example in Acts 12:21-23. Herod was celebrating in royal apparel as he sat upon his throne making a speech to the people. The people, in their superstitions, extolled Herod as a god. Herod accepted the worship from the people instead of turning their focus toward the Most High God. He did not stop the people's adulation toward him and failed to give the glory to God. The terrible price he paid was his life, which God took from him.

We of the membership, the Council and the General Conference know God will always be for us as we faithfully support and practice His ways and give Him "the glory due His name" (1 Chronicles 16:29). As long as God is with us and we are with Him, nobody can get the victory over us. So long as we give God the glory due His name, He will be with us and work in us.

## Christ's Instruction

Satan has been working overtime to separate us from the love of Christ. One of the last instructions given by Christ to His apos-

tlés was: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Paul was inspired to tell us that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:39). We cannot be separated from the love of Christ if we continue to have the love of God toward one another and a desire to extend that love more and more to all mankind. The love that we extend to one another is one way of showing God honor and giving Him glory.

In the early part of the 1990s we, the people of God, began to go through major attacks in this spiritual battle against Satan. That warfare has continued unabated for about 10 years. Our brethren are still scattered and confused and need special help from God's power. Our prayers must continue to go up for all of the people of God wherever they may be scattered. We will always pray for God's people that they may find the spiritual strength to overcome what Satan has thrown their way and be able to glorify God.

In our reorganized state we have been allowed by God to continue with His business. There is a big world out there and Satan does not want to see salvation revealed to its people. He is still busy blinding the eyes of those who do not believe. He will use every effort to slow down or stop God's people from doing God's business.

In the end it is the Most High God and Jesus Christ who will receive the Kingdom, the power and the glory. Hopefully we all will continue our efforts to serve God and hold tight and help our brethren to do likewise. Then we will all share in God's glory in His Kingdom.

Our love for God's Work and all our brethren, whether together or scattered, must be growing and must continue unabated. Our love for God's people must grow more and more until that perfect day. Until then, let us continue to do God's Work, give Him the glory due His name and love one another. *UN*  
*Burk McNair is on the Council of Elders and pastors the Victoria, Texas, congregation.*

## Q&A: Aramaic Bible Better?

**Q.** Since Christ spoke Aramaic, isn't Lamsa's Bible translated from Aramaic better?

**A.** George Lamsa wrote the Lamsa Bible in the 1940s based upon, he claimed, an Aramaic text of the scriptures—the Peshitta. His approach offered a strong appeal, for he contended that Christians could understand Christ's teachings much better from "His own language," rather than from Greek texts.

That presumes that Christ did not know Greek and that there is an authentic Aramaic text. But Christ very likely spoke Greek for the purpose of business if not routinely, having grown up in "Galilee of the Gentiles." The Syro-Phoenician woman would have

spoken Greek to Him (Mark 7:26). He took a preaching tour through the Greek area of Decapolis and likely spoke Greek there. The Jews of Jerusalem did not doubt that He spoke Greek (John 7:35). And we find that Greeks came to Him to ask questions (John 12:20-23), indicating again that He likely spoke Greek. That's not to say Christ did not speak Aramaic, for He certainly did. However, it challenges Lamsa's implication that we're disadvantaged by using Greek texts.

It would be wonderful to have an Aramaic text to compare with the Greek, but it has never been established that an authentic text exists. Lamsa failed to produce any

Aramaic text for other scholars to inspect. It is generally assumed that his claim to have translated the Scriptures from an Aramaic text is fraudulent. One authority goes so far as to say that Lamsa was simply out to make money. Kubo and Specht's *So Many Versions? 20th Century English Versions of the Bible* comments: "George M. Lamsa's translation purports to be produced 'from original Aramaic services.' Lamsa's original claims for his work are generally questioned. The Peshitta is not to be identified with the 'original Aramaic'" (*The Bibletexts Online Bible Commentary*, www.bibletexts.com).

*Cecil E. Maranville*

## United News

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Editor: Peter W. Eddington

Managing editor: Mike Bennett

Copy editor: Becky Bennett

United Church of God Council of Elders:  
Gary Antion, Aaron Dean, Robert Dick (chairman), Roy Holladay, John A. Jewell, Victor Kubik, Dennis Luker, Les McCullough, Burk McNair, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker, Donald Ward

President: Leslie L. McCullough

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### International addresses:

**AUSTRALIA:** United Church of God—Australia  
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia  
Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

**BAHAMAS:** United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873,  
Nassau, Bahamas  
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

**BRITISH ISLES:** United Church of God—British Isles,  
P.O. Box 4052, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK13 7ZF,  
England. Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978

**CANADA:** United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box  
144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada  
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (416)  
231-8238

**FJI:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 10-577, Nadi, Fiji  
Phone: 723-678

**FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS:** Église de Dieu—  
France, B.P. 51254, 45002 Orléans Cedex 1, France

**GERMANY:** Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15  
09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany  
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637  
E-mail: gutenachrichten@compuserve.com

**ITALY:** La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita,  
Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy  
Phone: 0039-035583474 Fax: 0039-035582140

**MAURITIUS:** *The Good News*, P.O. Box 53, Quatre  
Bornes, Mauritius

**THE NETHERLANDS:** United Church of God Holland,  
P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

**NEW ZEALAND:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 22,  
Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

**PHILIPPINES:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 4774,  
MCPO, 1287 Makati City, Philippines  
Phone: (+63-82) 241-0733; (+63-2) 728-5952

**SOUTHERN AFRICA:** United Church of God,  
Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East  
London 5205, South Africa. Phone/Fax: 043 748-  
1694

**SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS:** United Church of  
God, P.O. Box 458, Big Sandy, TX 75755, U.S.A.  
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# International News...

## Renewing Contacts in China

by Victor Kubik

From March 23 to 30, Larry Greider and I visited the People's Republic of China. Our visits were primarily to the capital, Beijing, and the spectacular economic show-place of Shanghai, one of China's special economic zones. Our purpose was to investigate how the United Church of God could continue the work once done by the Ambassador Foundation in the early '80s and what humanitarian work LifeNets could do.

I asked United Church of God minister Larry Greider to accompany me on this mission since he works with United Youth Corps and is head of the Church's camp program. He has experience in developing program models and I felt that this skill would be useful for any future ventures in China.

Our primary contacts in China were with the renowned Soong Ching Ling Foundation named after the great humanitarian wife of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, leader of the first post-Imperial government of China that commenced in 1911. She tirelessly worked for children and women's rights and is highly revered by the Chinese. She died in 1981, and the foundation was founded in 1982.

Herbert Armstrong first traveled to China in 1979 and then again in 1984. He was one of the first non-political Westerners allowed to enter the country to officially meet with Chinese leaders.

About the time that Herbert Armstrong visited China the second time, Nancy Reagan, wife of U.S. President Reagan, also visited the Soong Ching Ling Foundation in Shanghai. Shortly after this a troupe of musically talented children, known as the Little Ambassadors from Shanghai, performed in San Francisco, the White House and the Ambassador Auditorium. Plans were afoot to continue the Ambassador Foundation's work in China, but after the death of Herbert Armstrong further projects ceased.

In 1999 Richard Liu, who had worked with the Ambassador Foundation, wished to reestablish contact with people who once had an interest in China. On September 1, 1999, at the United Church of God Council meetings in Seattle, Washington, a dinner was organized by Chairman Robert Dick to which Richard Liu, Frank Fish, Leon Walker, Aaron Dean and I were invited. We talked reminiscently of the days of working harmoniously with the Chinese for the mutual benefit of all parties. The question was, "where do we go from here?" At the dinner we discussed possibly working with youth, camps, service projects and teaching through the United Church of God and providing humanitarian assistance in the form of medicine and medical equipment through LifeNets.

Through the winter there were further consultations about setting up an exploratory

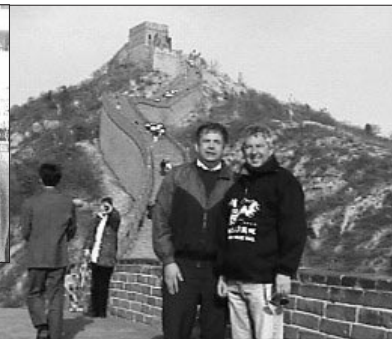
trip to China in order to assess their needs and determine how we could, with our limited resources, be of service. One message that came through from the Chinese was respect for the values Ambassador Foundation once represented.

Upon arrival in China we were struck by the immensity and grandeur of a great nation that is still little understood. The Chinese have the oldest continuous civilization dating back to the eighth century B.C.

Beijing is a city of 13 million people and is the seat of government. Touring Tiananmen Square, seeing the massive Great Hall of the People and the huge Imperial Gardens and walking through the seemingly endless Forbidden City, one senses an enjoyment of power by those who had or have it.

A trip to the Great Wall is an unforgettable experience in that it is far more awesome than can ever be explained or pictured.

In Beijing we met with leaders of the Soong Ching Ling Foundation, including Yu Guilin, the vice chairman and secretary-general; English-speaking Cunyu Wu, assistant secretary-general; and Chen Shaodi, department of International Relations. After discussion, we drafted a statement of intent about working together. We had earlier presented a letter signed by Aaron Dean and Ellis La Ravia, former Ambassador Foundation lead-



Clockwise from upper left: Victor Kubik and Jin Shunde, deputy secretary-general Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation; Mr. Kubik and Larry Greider at Great Wall and at Tiananmen Square



ers, introducing Robert Dick and the Council of the United Church of God.

China is a quickly developing nation with its one billion three hundred million people seeking a better life. Just as one senses the grandeur of government in Beijing, one senses the economic potential of China in Shanghai, its largest city of 15 million.

But other parts of China are not faring as well. The need to help in the development of several autonomous regions in western China kept coming up time after time in our meetings. China, the Soong

Ching Ling directors said, is developing unevenly and there is need to help with the construction of schools.

Opportunities for helping are everywhere and helpers will be enriched by the experience of doing something in this land. Tuberculosis is reviving and sulfa drugs are needed. There is a need for eyeglasses, antibiotics...you name it.

At times we were overwhelmed about all that China is. One cannot be in a hurry to decide how to proceed. We were the ones who were learning about this magnificent culture and it will take patience to learn how to interface with it. We flew back with lots of things to think about. UN

## President to Visit Australian GCE in August

Les McCullough, president of the United Church of God, an *International Association*, has accepted an invitation to visit Australia in August. Preliminary plans are for Mr. McCullough and his wife to visit Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmania, as well as being guests at the planned General Conference of Australian Elders and a National Council meeting.

### General Conference of Australian Elders

The Australian National Council has begun planning for a conference of Australian elders to be held the weekend of August 26 and 27 on the Gold Coast. A National Council meeting will be scheduled for August 28.

The last time such a conference was held was February 1996. We have relatively few elders in Australia and the geographic vastness of our country means opportunities to meet as a group are difficult to schedule.

An agenda for the conference has not been finalized, but it is likely sessions will be held on leadership development and encouraging the use of spiritual gifts in congregations, common pastoring challenges and how to meet them, manpower issues,

peer review, the progress made in carrying out the commission of the Church and how we can serve God more effectively as ministry and members.

Funding for the conference was provided by UCGIA in 1999 and has been reserved for this purpose so there will be little or no direct cost to the Church in Australia. We are very grateful for this and other sup-

port generously offered from Cincinnati.



Left: Ken and Ruth Murray, recently credentialed, serve in the Toowoomba area. Above: First Sabbath service in Beerwah, Queensland.



port generously offered from Cincinnati.

### Course Draws Good Response

In January, the new *Bible Study Course* was offered to 2,919 subscribers of the *Good*

*News* magazine throughout Australia. Over 18 percent requested the lessons.

### Elder Credentialed

The Council of Elders, on the recommendation of the Australian National Council, recognized the ministerial credentials of Ken Murray. Mr. Murray, with his wife, Ruth, and their family, serve the brethren in the Toowoomba, Queensland, area.

### First Sabbath Service in Beerwah

Surrounded by the beautiful Glass House Mountains west of the Sunshine Coast, on February 12 scattered members of the Church held their first joyful Sabbath service in the quaint little town of Beerwah. Allan Hambleton presented a thought-provoking sermon which was followed by a lovely afternoon tea and lots of stimulating, friendly conversation. There were approximately 35 people in attendance, including a number of guests. Sabbath services are held on the second Sabbath of every month followed by a Bible study on the following Sabbath.

Ruth Root

## Canadian Meetings Held in Vancouver

The Canadian National Council met in Vancouver, British Columbia, beginning March 22, followed by a ministerial pocket conference and the annual meeting of the Canadian National Conference.

Anthony Wasilkoff and Ed van Pelt gave an update to the Council on the work of the office. The most encouraging news is the continual growth shown by record-breaking attendances and a steady increase in income. The average attendance is over 13 percent higher than last year. However, there was caution to continue to stay within the budget.

David Palmer, on behalf of the Media Advisory Committee, presented ideas for spreading the gospel. At this time, it was recognized that it is necessary to continue finding the most economical way to do this.

Robert Berendt, on behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee, made suggestions for revisions to the Strategic Plan. The Council decided to request that UCG/IA begin to publish a French edition of *The Good News* so Canadians may receive literature in either official language.

The National Council meetings were shortened in order to have a ministerial pocket conference on March 24. Anthony Wasilkoff spoke about the pursuit of compe-



Canadian Council meeting

tence. Glen White covered material on alcoholism. Dr. Dan Berendt handed out material and discussed pacing oneself for the long haul. Dr. Rick Dubler covered the three *Rs* of

rest, relaxation and rejuvenation.

On the Sabbath, Rainer Salomaa went to Nanaimo and Robert Berendt was in Pentecost for services. The rest of the Council was able to meet with the Vancouver brethren where Glen White and Anthony Wasilkoff gave split sermons. Fern Berendt sang special music. An extra special event occurred during services: David Palmer and Lorne Davies ordained Chuck Chase as a deacon.

On Saturday evening, emotions ran high as Rick and Dan Berendt from Edmonton, Alberta, were ordained as elders.

Sunday morning was the annual meeting of the National Conference. The National Conference is made up of the National Council plus all other elders in Canada.

There was discussion of the Strategic Plan, Operations Plan and budget for the year 2000-2001. The date of the next annual National Conference was approved for March 11, 2001, in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Linda Wasilkoff

## Gospel Reaches New People in Germany

UCG-Germany's National Council met February 27 and discussed plans for the year. Highlights included a *Gute Nachrichten* subscriber lecture series planned for fall 2000 in North Rhine Westfalia, where subscriber concentration is the highest in Germany.

The Council also decided to initiate a "first contact" program for interested *Gute Nachrichten* readers. Long-time members throughout the country will be trained to meet those who request personal contact, since Paul Kieffer, UCG-Germany's only employed elder, can't make all "first contact" visits in the German-language area.

Jesmina Allaoua is being hired half-time to work for UCG-Germany's editorial department. Her help in the editorial area will make it possible for Mr. Kieffer to devote more time to pastoral duties.

January's UCG-Holland Bible study in Arnhem was successful, with 23 people in attendance, of whom 5 were visitors.

The overall income for 1999 increased by 17.2 percent over 1998. The positive cash balance at the end of the year enabled UCG-Germany to pay for a half-year of advertising (July-December 2000) in the health magazine *reform rundschau* in advance in exchange for a 20 percent discount.

The January-February issue of the *Gute Nachrichten* magazine was mailed to 2,594 subscribers in mid-January, a 16.5 percent decrease over the last issue. The drop in sub-

scribers is a result of the recently initiated subscriber renewal program for subscribers who have received 10 issues of the magazine and who did not respond to a special literature offer.

A new advertising campaign in the health food magazine *Schrot & Korn* (Grist & Grain) resulted in 683 responses by March. The ad will run for six months, and 100,000 insert cards were placed in the March issue in addition to the print ad. Initial estimates, projected over the six month period, are about US\$6 per response.

Paul Kieffer

## President Welcomed to Peru, Chile

President Les McCullough and his wife, Marion, joined Leon and Reba Walker on a trip to Lima, Peru, and Santiago, Chile, in March and early April.

"It was a great trip in every way," said Mr. McCullough, who was impressed with the warm welcome they received. "Most of the people in the Spanish area are firm believers in a huge hug and a kiss on the cheek as a welcome. I can honestly say that in one day I was kissed by more women than the entire rest of my life put together. It is a great experience to feel all this

"It was a beautiful visit," said Rosario de Herrera. "I appreciated the sermon and the news which updated us with things happening in the Church. It is always important to be informed about the progress the Church is doing in preaching the gospel."

Cynthia de Herrera, age 11, said: "It was a special day for me. I was very excited to meet the president of the Church. I also liked the interesting sermon he gave."

### On to Chile

On March 28, the McCulloughs and Walkers landed in Chile. The party toured parts of Santiago, the capital of Chile, which has a population of 6 million, and traveled to the coast.

"On Friday evening, Mr. McCullough fielded a variety of interesting questions in a Bible study attended by 100 brethren," said Mario Seiglie, pastor in Chile. "This session allowed the brethren to ask



The brethren in Peru even had costumes for Leon and Reba Walker and Marion and Les McCullough (back row)

warmth from people you are meeting for the first time."

### "Encouraging Visit" to Peru

March 25 Mr. McCullough spoke to 133 brethren in Lima, Peru. "We had people coming from every church area where we have a congregation—Lima, Huaraz, Trujillo, Tacna, Arequipa, Chimbote and Nazca," said Manuel Quijano, pastor in Peru. The brethren told him that "this makes them feel part of a truly united body with leaders that care about the flock."

"It was a very encouraging visit," said Ines de Portilla. "We read about our Church officials...and it is good to see them in person. The visit also makes us feel closer to our leaders in the home office."

the president such things as: the role of the Council of Elders, plans for future growth, the identity of the tribes of Israel and why we do not keep New Year's Day.

"On the Sabbath, Mr. McCullough gave the sermon on God's sure promises to physical Israel and how they were even more assured to spiritual Israel—the Church. There were 286 brethren in attendance," Mr. Seiglie said. In Chile there are two churches and six video groups, for a total of 350 brethren.

After the Sabbath, the Chilean brethren presented a variety show with some folkloric dances and ended with a children's rendition of a chorus line dance. The McCulloughs and the Walkers left later that night for the United States. UN

## Church Office in Mexico Moves to Monterrey

From the beginning of the United Church of God, the Mexican office was located in the capital, Mexico City. But when the owners decided to sell that property, "This looked like a good time to reevaluate the office location and make some new decisions," said Larry Roybal, who pastors in Monterrey, Mexico, about three hours away from the Texas border.

Since Mr. Roybal coordinates the office, it was logical to have the office where he lives "in order to save on travel and be more in control and contact with the employees and office work," he said. "The doors opened up in Monterrey and a nice home suitable for

office space was rented at an affordable price."

Monterrey is a large industrial city, and because of its closeness to the United States, Church publications can be received easily and without mail problems or delays.

Ricardo Ortega and Andrés Cisneros work with Mr. Roybal at the office, serving the literature and tape needs for the whole country, as well as keeping up a Web site with literature and, soon, sermons in Spanish.

Mexico has three full-time ministers and one local elder: Adan Langarica who will move from Nayarit to San Luis Potosí this summer, Enrique Granados in Mexico City,

Larry Roybal in Monterrey and Pablo Dimakis (local elder) in Chihuahua.

"The Monterrey office is sending out more than 3,400 *Good News* magazines to subscribers in all of Mexico's 32 states," said Mr. Roybal. "There are also 33 small groups located in 18 states that receive regular sermon tapes. Thanks to the help and coordination of the [Phoenix Northwest,] Arizona, congregation, Mexico is also receiving regular sermon tapes from other ministers in Latin America... The brethren have been of great service to those in far away places. They have truly been a cool drink of water for many of us." UN

# Meeker Visits Kenya and Ghana

by Joel Meeker

During the end of February and the beginning of March I made a two-week trip to Kenya and Ghana. I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, on Sabbath morning February 26, and the Gichuru family kindly met me at the airport. It was a joy to once again visit the small but faithful congregation in Nairobi.

The next day Mr. Gichuru and I discussed plans for the Feast of Tabernacles, which will be held in the village of Tigoni about 15 miles from Nairobi. Our Kenyan brethren are excited at the thought of having visitors spend God's Feast with them.

Monday morning I left on a three-day trip to make visits to the southwest corner of Kenya near Tanzania. We have been corresponding with several people in that region, including a group called the African Global Ministries centered near Kisii.

I started out Monday with Martin, a driver whose services I have used in the past (he's very good at avoiding potholes). After a full day in the car crossing the Great Rift Valley, observing African wildlife along the road and dodging potholes, we arrived in Kisii. I checked in to the best local hotel which was of the no-frills variety (irregular electricity, non-functional shower, no toilet seat, etc.). That night and the next day I met with the African Global Ministries, a group that had asked us to visit them (see "Visit With African Global Ministries," below). We made several other visits Tuesday before heading to Kericho for the night.

## Dealing With Drought

On the third day of the trip we drove back to Nairobi stopping near Njoro (in the Rift Valley) to visit Joseph Kihara, a long-time member of God's Church. He lives on his family farm, more than an hour off the paved road, on a very poor dirt road.

Joseph was excited to have a visit at his home. He gave me a tour of the farm. The houses in the family compound are made of mud and wattle, as are all the houses in this village. There is no running water or electricity. Joseph explained that the whole area is experiencing a very serious drought. Joseph asked that we pray that they receive rain, since they have now had several very dry years. They have had to rely on government food relief to survive the drought, which shows no signs of abating. All the water they use must be carried by hand several miles.

In spite of these difficulties, the family generously offered to share their noon meal with me: a tasty dish of rice, potatoes and beans, accompanied by a cup of Kenyan tea. Joseph also showed me the fields he tills by hand, his new corrugated tin roof that he was able to purchase with some Church assis-



Joseph Kihara, member in Kenya

tance, as well as the small tape player and supply of batteries that he uses to listen to sermon tapes on the Sabbath. On the way out, we gave Joseph a ride into town, stopping briefly at the home of a *Good News* subscriber who lives nearby.

During the rest of the week in Nairobi, we made plans and arrangements for the Feast of Tabernacles, and had a meeting with a lawyer on our ongoing efforts to have United officially registered by the government. I also drove up into the Ngong hills (made famous by Karen Blixen in *Out of Africa*). Not far from the old Blixen farm lives another UCG family, the Ndungus.

Anthony Ndungu has worked many years in the banking industry, but due to the severe economic difficulties faced by Kenya, the bank for which he works is being liquidated. It is very difficult to find a job in Kenya at this time, and without God's help nearly impossible to get a job in the banking field without working on the Sabbath. They also have four teenagers they're trying to keep in school, which costs quite a bit in Kenya. Anthony and his family would very much appreciate our prayers that God help them to find the "way of escape" from this trial. We shared a delightful meal and lots of enjoyable conversation.

## Missing Nigeria, on to Ghana

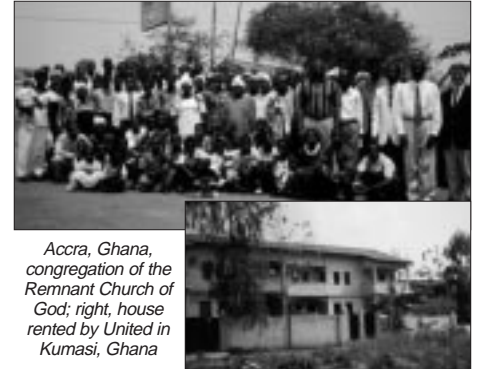
I was to have gone on to Nigeria, but due to communication difficulties I could not be sure of being met at the airport. Since Nigeria had been suffering from tribal conflicts between Christians and Muslims, resulting in rioting and many deaths, it did not seem prudent to arrive in Lagos without being met at

the airport. I delayed my departure from Kenya as long as I could in the hope of receiving communication from Dr. Akin-Ogundeji in Lagos, but without success. I was sorry to miss them, but happy they would receive a visit from Fred Kellers during the Spring Holy Days.

Finally when I could delay no longer I continued on to Ghana. I arrived late Friday after a full day on two different flights separated by a long layover. Sabbath morning Pastors Clement Omoako-Atta, Ofori Manu and Richard Duah accompanied me from the hotel to Sabbath services with the local Remnant Church of God congregation. They normally have two sermon-length messages during their services, and they asked me to give both of them! I spoke on God's calling, and about preparing for the Passover. The messages were translated into Twi, the Ashanti language. Following services I met briefly with some of the congregational leaders to make their acquaintance. It is a very warm and brotherly group.

Sunday morning I took the 8:30 bus to Kumasi. The trip takes about four and a half hours. They waste no space on the buses in order to keep the price down. When all the normal seats are full they begin folding down seats into the center aisle. Stopping to let someone off the bus can take a while, because everyone seated in the aisle must get up. There is not much elbow room, but fortunately the Ghanaian people are very polite.

Pastor Azaraiah Maxwell Coffie met me as I got off the bus. We drove about 20 miles



Accra, Ghana, congregation of the Remnant Church of God; right, house rented by United in Kumasi, Ghana

out of Kumasi to look at a potential Feast of Tabernacles site, and also began looking at some used furniture and appliances for the house we hoped to rent the next day. Since United will be having elders visit the Remnant Church pastors frequently over the next year or so in our efforts to help them become part of United, it is less expensive for us to rent a house than to stay in a hotel.

## Renting a House

Monday was my last day in Ghana, and a very full one. We visited two houses for rent. One was just what we needed. It had just been built, and is large and very clean. There are five bedrooms, three with attached bathrooms (one even had a hot water heater). There is a large living room area that we can use for seminars. Best of all, the rent per month is less than the cost of two nights in the hotel. We agreed to rent the house, and arranged for some minimal furnishings.

My flight home was to leave Accra at 10:30 p.m. Counting back four and half hours for the bus trip and giving myself a four-hour security margin, I decided to take the 2 p.m. bus. The bus was delayed, then delayed again. Finally at about 3:30 we were set to leave, when the baggage hold door that had just been closed, fell off the bus with a loud clang. After much discussion among the drivers, and much banging and hammering, the door refused to be repaired. So, tying a rope to it to keep it from falling out, the driver simply placed the door inside the hold with the suitcases, and kept an eye on his mirror during the trip. My four-hour margin had shrunk to two hours. Traffic was especially bad. That cost another hour. The taxi I was able to get from the Accra bus station to the airport stalled at every stop sign, and could be coaxed back to life each time only with increasing difficulty. I finally arrived at the airport 15 minutes before my flight closed. Next time I'll leave a five-hour margin...

Jim and Sharron Franks spent the Spring Holy Days visiting several congregations of the Remnant Church of God in Ghana. Fred Kellers kept the Passover and Holy Days with our brethren in Nigeria. I spent the Passover and the first day of Unleavened Bread with the members in Cameroon, then visited brethren from Togo and Benin, before spending the last day of Unleavened Bread and the Sabbath that followed in Nairobi, Kenya. See an article on an open house in Nairobi on page 12. *uv*

## Visit With African Global Ministries

When I arrived in Kisii, Kenya, February 28, a runner was sent to find the elders from the African Global Ministries. They are a Sabbath-keeping church comprised of about 200 people that meet in several different congregations.

The elders arrived shortly, and we discussed the work of the United Church of God for an hour or so. They had learned of the United Church of God through our Web page. A friend of the leading pastor has Internet access, and they went "surfing" looking for Sabbath-keeping churches. They said they were most impressed with our Web page, and had immediately requested subscriptions to *The Good News* as well as several booklets. They also made inquiries about receiving a visit from a UCG elder. Apparently our Web page even reaches small villages off the beaten track in Africa!

We drove out at 7 the next morning to the village of Ogembo. Then we drove farther out on a dirt road to Pastor Aungu's home, where they also have a small meeting hall made of mud and wattle. About 20 people, those who were able to take off work from the tea plantations, gathered for a Bible

study. They sang several hymns in Gusii, the local language, and I spoke briefly about the work being done by the United Church of God, before giving a Bible study on the topic of God's calling. As I spoke, the message was translated into Gusii, for the sake of those who didn't understand English well. Afterward I met with their congregational leaders, and they explained to me the situations in their various congregations.

It is too early to know whether anything substantial will come of this contact. The group does not really know United very well yet. On the other hand, they struck me as being humble and teachable, very committed to the truths of the Bible, and they have a strong desire to better know the United Church of God. They asked if I would visit them again, and I said I would certainly do my best.

Before we left they gave Martin, my driver, a large bunch of bananas (about 50 pounds) fresh off the tree, as a sign of hospitality. They offered me a bunch too, but I said I didn't have room in my suitcase, which gave them all a good chuckle.

Joel Meeker

# UCG Philippines Moves on the Web and on the Road

by Edmond and Daniel Macaraeg

The official Web site of United Church of God—Philippines is now online at [www.ucg.org.ph](http://www.ucg.org.ph). The site was developed and is being maintained by Davao Church member Richard John Macaraeg. His younger brother, Charles Phillip, developed and maintains the youth pages.

## Prophecy Booklets Promoted Following *The Omega Code*

When the apocalyptic suspense-thriller *The Omega Code* hit the local theaters in Davao City in March, it was decided to use this as a springboard for offering some of our literature, using the headline, “Will the Omega Code Happen?” We distributed 350 of these flyers in two Christian bookstores and one movie theater, offering the booklets, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. A free one-year subscription to *The Good News* was also offered. In this experiment, we got a good response at 12 percent!

Interestingly, most of the responses came in through one particular Christian bookstore—which is presenting us with a good number of “open doors”—while the rest were phone and mail requests. We are thankful for this opportunity to latch onto a movie theme to present the real truths of prophecy and the good news of the Kingdom of God!

## Philippine Brethren Receive New Bibles From ABC

UCG brethren in the Philippines recently received 50 brand-new NKJV giant-print Bibles courtesy of the Ambassador Bible Center students and others. Many brethren, especially in the Mindanao area, are poor and could not afford to buy a good Bible. Therefore, they are so grateful for this gift, which was made possible by the fund-raising efforts of the ABC class and also by the generosity of brethren in United Church of God congregations. Along with this shipment of Bibles was a beautiful handmade card with a quotation from John 6:33, which was created and signed by all the ABC students.

## Baptism in Butuan City

Paulette Cebrian, 19, was baptized in Butuan City, Agusan del Norte, March 25. Paulette is a college student and served as a counselor in last year’s first youth camp. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cebrian, UCG Church leader serving the Butuan City and St. Christine, Surigao del Sur, congregations.

## Bible Study Group Restarted

A Bible study area was reestablished in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, on the island of Mindanao in southern Philippines February 26 by church pastor Edmond Macaraeg with 21 in attendance. Mr. Macaraeg also started a

Bible study in this area in 1979. Meeting at the home of the Domingo family as a central location, it serves brethren from Cotabato City; General Santos City; Surallah, South Cotabato; and M’lang, North Cotabato.

This latest Bible study area is actually the 11th group to be established in Mindanao since mid 1997. However, since two of them have been combined with the Davao City congregation last year for lack of manpower, and one was dissolved in 1998, the total number of active congregations still remains at eight.

## Mindanao Update

There are presently about 260 members and affiliates on Mindanao being pastored by Edmond Macaraeg. These are: Davao City; Butuan City; Bunawan, Agusan del Sur; Tago, Surigao del Sur; St. Christine, Surigao del Sur; Kiara, Bukidnon; Banisilan, North Cotabato; and Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. Many of these congregations are meeting every Sabbath using local manpower augmented with taped messages in some of them.

Mr. Macaraeg tries to personally visit each congregation at least once a month while these are still in their early formative stages and while local manpower is still being developed. One northern circuit of four congregations takes a full weekend and covers almost 1,000 kilometers. Assisted by some of his sons in driving, they usually arrive back home Monday morning. Another two-church circuit is an eight-hour drive away. UCG members in Mindanao are scattered over 20 municipalities and nine provinces in Mindanao. To understand the distances involved, it takes about 16 hours of continuous driving from Tago, Surigao del Sur, to Banisilan, North Cotabato. Many of the roads are winding and rough, although some, especially toward Davao City, are paved.

While on his travels, Mr. Macaraeg is assisted primarily in the Davao City mother church (which meets weekly) by Rodrigo Florencandia. Also assisting in the ministerial responsibilities is Daniel Macaraeg, a 1995 graduate of Ambassador University. Many other local leaders are being used and trained in serving the many congregations in the area.

## Other Philippine Areas

A small monthly family Bible study in Baguio City (250 kilometers north of Manila) is being maintained by Eriz Dizon who, with his wife, Teresa, and children live in Dagupan City, Pangasinan (about 180 kilometers north of Manila in central Luzon). He assists in the Manila congregation once a month while he oversees a few scattered brethren in central Luzon. He augments his income by driving his own passenger vehicle.



New Philippine Web site is found at [www.ucg.org.ph](http://www.ucg.org.ph)

The Manila congregation is being pastored by Rey Evasco. Dr. Evasco’s primary employment is with the Bureau of Patents as its director, while his wife, Cynthia, works with the government’s Commission on Audit. Mr. Macaraeg usually visits the Manila congregation on months with a fifth Sabbath. A few families have been added to the Manila congregation since last year.

The Bacolod City congregation (in the western Visayas island group in the central Philippine archipelago) is being pastored by Florante Siopan. From time to time he earns income by producing organic fertilizer for sugarcane planters; while his wife, Lina, augments their income by operating a beauty parlor. The Bacolod congregation was the first group in the Philippines to join UCG and incorporate locally. Their former pastor, Edmond Macaraeg, visits them from time to time. UN

## “A View From the Peak” Theme for Philippine Youth Camp

Plans are underway for the second Philippine youth camp, which will last 12 days from May 21 to June 1, at the Girl Scouts of the Philippines Training Camp in Davao City.

The first part of the camp (May 22 to 27), will consist of orientation, various workshops, sports and social activities, Christian Living classes, culminating with Sabbath activities in camp. Some of the sports activities and workshops will be basketball, volleyball, dance, orienteering, first aid, swimming, mountaineering, computers, art illustration, journalism, public speaking, cooking and baking, basic electricity, carpentry, flower-card making and Web page design. The campers will attempt to create their own Web site.

The second week (May 28 to 31)—dubbed as “Apo Challenge 2000”—will be a four-day adventure up the slopes of Mt. Apo, the tallest peak in the Philippines at 10,028 feet above sea level. Campers and staff who would like to embark on this adventure will have to be prepared and physically conditioned. This should prove to be the highlight of the camp, where the theme, “A View From the Peak,” will be fully realized. “The Peak” refers to the literal Mt. Apo peak and is a fitting word picture for living the best life possible—God’s way of life—now and in the future fullness of God’s Kingdom.

## News From New Zealand and Pacific

The 2000-2001 budget proposal was passed by the New Zealand Board with minor revisions March 19. The total projected income for the next fiscal year is about NZ\$54,000. More than 40 percent of the new budget is allotted toward preaching the gospel. This includes new media efforts and the follow-up costs of telephone, printing, mailing and the posting of requested literature.

The Waiting Room Program in New Zealand has reached its targeted goal of 450 locations, including doctors’ and dentists’ offices and public libraries. The New Zealand Board decided to put expansion of the program on hold in order to allow time to analyze response statistics.

A *Good News* renewal letter will likely be sent out to consolidate the readership base before new media efforts begin. Jeff Caudle, pastor and office manager, is preparing a media plan for the Board’s consideration.

At the January meeting of the Board new officers were selected. Art Verschoor was elected as chairman, Daniel Porteous as treasurer and Jeff Caudle as secretary. Leon Walker, director of Spanish operations and UCG Council of Elders member, was added to the New Zealand Board at the recommendation of Les McCullough, president of

UCGIA. Mr. Walker attends meetings by telephone link, and plans to travel to New Zealand for the June 18 meeting. Mr. Walker will assist in the ongoing process of revising the UCGNZ Bylaws. “It is my desire to bring to New Zealand whatever benefit I can from the many years of experience God has given to me in the international Work,” said Mr. Walker.

A motor vehicle for ministerial use was purchased in January. Also, a new computer, with scanner and printer, was purchased. The Microsoft Access database, previously handled from the home office, has now been downloaded on this computer. It can track and update the New Zealand and South Pacific *Good News* subscriber database. Microsoft Excel is also being used as a backup *GN* database.

## South Pacific Trip

Mr. Caudle traveled to Fiji and Tonga March 29 to April 5. Dick Marr, the UCG deacon in Nadi, Fiji, handles literature distribution to Fijian *Good News* subscribers. In Tonga, four families gather on the first Sabbath of each month in Nuku’alofa for services.

This information first appeared in United News New Zealand.

# New Web Site Highlights Youth/Young Adult Programs

by Doug Horchak

On May 1, the United Church of God launched a new Web site that makes information and resources available to parents, teens and young adults of the Church. The name of the site is YouthUnited and the URL is [www.ucgyouth.org](http://www.ucgyouth.org).

With its initial mandate and direction from the Education Committee of the Council of Elders, the Youth Education team of United has been coordinating the development of many programs and resources for the education and growth of preteens, teens and young adults. Feeding the flock of God is a vital part of the commission that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples.

The apostle Paul gave a directive to the Church to bring our children "up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians

6:4). The United Church of God fully realizes the foundational role that parents play in such teaching of their children. However, the Church also bears certain responsibilities for spiritual child development and education. Since Jesus commissioned the Church to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20), what more fertile ground exists for making disciples than that of our youth who have already been called by God? In one sense, the entire Church can be involved in this work. It is to this end that we are focusing on the godly education and development of our youth. These younger age groups are vitally important to God, and make up the core of the future membership and leadership of the Church.

To date, the Youth Education team has coordinated the following programs and resources:

**United Youth Camps:** The camp program began in the summer of 1995 with five camps for our older preteens and teenagers throughout the United States. Since that time, we have grown to eight youth/teen camps—including our Teton Challenger Camp and Winter Camp in Wisconsin.

**United Sabbath School Curriculum Development:** Most congregations within the Church have been using various curricula for Sabbath education programs over the past five years. However, during that time many professional volunteers and ministers have been developing a United Church of God Sabbath education curriculum to offer to our congregations. Curriculum outlines will be made available to all interested Sabbath school teachers by August of 2000.

**Festival Youth Instruction:** Our Festival Youth Instruction program for grades kindergarten through 5 has become a much-anticipated and educational aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles for our children. Two separate classes during the Feast provide specific age-appropriate lessons pertaining to God's coming Kingdom. In addition, the Festival Activity booklets for both preteens and teens provide helpful Feast messages and fun activities to do on the way to the Feast or during the Holy Days.

**United Youth Corps:** The United Youth Corps begins this summer by offering opportunities to qualified young adults in the Church to participate in various international service projects within the Church and the world at large. This year we offer programs in Jordan/Israel, Ghana and Chile.

**Young Adult Educational Seminars/Weekends:** Over the past three years, United has conducted educational seminars for teens and young adults at all U.S. Festival sites, and throughout the year on weekends at different regional sites. We believe our young adults are the future leadership of the Church and feel compelled to help and teach as many as we can. While the Ambassador Bible Center is the Church's premier educational effort for young and old alike, these weekend seminars

and social gatherings are designed to reach out to all young adults (high school grads through 30s).

**Parenting Seminars:** Our first parenting seminar was recently sent out to all Church pastors for use in their local areas. The interactive video seminar, "The Biblical Foundation of Parenting," is based on the Church's understanding that youth in the Church are being invited by God to be a part of His Church and its dynamic Work at the end of this age. We plan to develop another parenting seminar during the year 2000.

**Teen Bible Study Discussion Guides:** These discussion guides have been developed by a group of volunteers within United Church of God. They are two-page outlines designed to cover areas of doctrine, societal concerns and personal relationships—issues of relevance to all young people today. They offer stimulating questions to help guide young and old alike through the maze of our complicated world, cut off from God. The guides are also designed to give context and meaning to biblical group discussions that can take place in local congregations between teens, young adults and the local ministry. Such subjects as "The Sabbath," "Does God Exist?," "Dating" and "Military Service and War" are but a few that make up the current list of more than 30 subjects.

These programs along with others will be highlighted on the new YouthUnited Web site. In addition to current information and updates on these and related projects, we also plan to have informative articles, resources, sermons and eventually interactive Bible discussions on the site. All of these resources and tools will strive to address the real needs and challenges of living God's way of life in a confused and mixed-up world.

We invite all to visit this new Web site. We welcome your comments, suggestions and input to make this site a viable tool for the edification and development of our families and youth—the future leaders of the Church and candidates for God's family and government in the world tomorrow! *UN*

## Congregations Host Preteen Camps

Preteen summer camps are planned in various areas. Here are the ones we have received information on at press time:

**Houston, Texas,** June 4 to 7. Age range: 7 to 12. Fees: \$140. Contact: De Lynn Buchanan: 20406 Peryoak Drive, Humble, TX 77346; phone (281) 852-8179; e-mail [ELBUCH@aol.com](mailto:ELBUCH@aol.com). Staff consists of parents, grandparents, teens and other Church members. Activities include fishing, swimming, arts and crafts, games, sports, music and Christian Living. Air-conditioned dorms.

**Oakhurst, California,** June 25 to July 2, concurrent with teen camp. Age range: 9 to 10. Fees: \$190. Contact: Bill Bradford, Camp Director, 3145 Kennedy St., Livermore, CA 94550; phone (925) 455-4829; e-mail [william.bradford@mciworld.com](mailto:william.bradford@mciworld.com). More information can be found in the *United Youth Camps Magazine*.

**P.A.W.s (Pre-Adolescent-Workshops) Annual Camp Out, Alberta,** June 30 to July 3. Age range: 4 to 12. Fees: \$15. Contact (before May 31): Heidi Poffenroth, 16 Bergen Cres. N.W., Calgary, Alberta T3K 1J3 Canada; phone (403) 295-7000; e-mail [hpoff@home.com](mailto:hpoff@home.com). Enjoy "Seeking the

Kingdom" with activities, games, crafts, fun lessons, nature hikes and much more. Parents are encouraged to stay, however, tents or campers will be a necessity.

**Cincinnati North, Ohio,** July 9 to 12. Age range: 5 to 12, younger if parents accompany. Fees: \$5 plus canoe rental. Contact: Call Jenny Veeman at (513) 756-9947. Primitive camping with educational opportunities. Adult helpers always needed. Sunday evening meal is open to everyone and a square dance is planned. Also the Sunday canoe trip is open to everyone.

**Camp Galilee, Arkansas,** July 10 to 13. Age range: 7 to 12. Fees: \$65. Contact: Mike Blackwell, P.O. Box 4045, Springfield, MO 65810; phone (417) 886-8204; e-mail [mblackwell@atlascomm.net](mailto:mblackwell@atlascomm.net). More information: [www.ucg.org/a/local/galileecamp.htm](http://www.ucg.org/a/local/galileecamp.htm).

**Camp Highlands, near Middlefield, Ohio,** August 6 to 9. Age range: 6 to 12. Fees: \$50. Contact: Dave Myers, 3878 Hile Road, Stow, OH 44224-4221; phone (330) 686-5881; e-mail [dave\\_myers@ucg.org](mailto:dave_myers@ucg.org). Information as well as downloadable applications are available on the Web at [www.ucgakron.org](http://www.ucgakron.org).

## Festival Activity Booklet Drawing Contest

Attention preteens and teens! Have you ever wanted to see your creative work published? Now is your chance to display your talents. The Youth Education Committee is looking for artwork to be displayed on the front cover of the Fall Festival Activity booklets.

The contest is open to all youths and young adults ages 10 to 18. Artwork will be judged based upon creativity, festival theme appropriateness, originality, neatness and design. There will be three categories for different age groups: ages 10 to 12, 13 to 15, and 16 to 18.

Please submit your artwork on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch piece of white paper, use black ink and please do not color your artwork. Be sure to print your name and address on the back of the artwork and sign your name on the front. Artwork must be received by June 30, 2000.

Mail your completed artwork to Tony and Kari Kardell, 2500 Overlook Drive, Bloomington, MN 55431 U.S.A. Note: Artwork will not be returned.

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim or Judy Servidio at [JmServid@msn.com](mailto:JmServid@msn.com) or (763) 323-0257.

*Jim and Judy Servidio*

## Canadian Camp Set for August 13 to 20

The Canadian summer camp will be August 13 to 20, and will again be at the McGillvary Creek Youth Camp in the Crowsnest Pass area of Alberta.

This camp is operated by the Southern Alberta Fish and Game Society. It's a wilderness camp geared to outdoor activities such as hiking, canoeing, archery, mountain biking and riflery. The camp has all the necessary basics, with cabins for the campers, but it is rustic and without the extra frills.

Each day starts with Christian Living classes. Campers enjoy campfire evenings several times a week, plus a bonus opportunity of a day at the Coleman gymnasium for volleyball and an evening of live theater performance, Crowsnest style.

**Age range:** 12 to 18.

**Fees:** \$100 Canadian. At press time this was about US\$68.

**Location:** Coleman, Alberta, on Highway #3, in the Crowsnest Pass area, just inside the province of Alberta near the British Columbia border.

**To apply, contact:** Larry DeLong, 908 21-A Ave., Coaldale, Alberta T1M 1B4 Canada; phone (403) 345-4051; e-mail [delong@telusplanet.net](mailto:delong@telusplanet.net) or Glen White, Box 68, Site 1, RR 9, Calgary, Alberta T2J 5G5 Canada; phone (403) 873-2001; e-mail [glen\\_white@ucg.org](mailto:glen_white@ucg.org). Application forms and additional information will be on the Web at [ucg.ca/cong/calgary](http://ucg.ca/cong/calgary).

*Glen White*

# Festival Survey Helps in Future Planning

by John LaBissoniere

Brethren 18 and older attending the 1999 Feast of Tabernacles were asked to fill out an anonymous survey. The survey was designed to solicit ideas and information for planning and improving the Church's efforts at spreading the gospel and serving the membership.

Surveys were distributed at all 11 U.S. and two Canadian Festival sites. From a total Festival attendance of 11,580, there were 4,051 surveys completed and returned. Brethren were asked for input on four major survey sections including, "About the Feast," "About UCGIA Publications," "About the United Church of God" and "About You." I had the opportunity to tally the results of the survey using special survey software and other software tools.

Although there were many questions with a choice of boxes to mark, there were also several questions seeking written responses. These questions sought general comments on particular Feast sites, on the strengths and weaknesses of UCGIA and on how UCGIA publications and the Church itself could be improved. Many brethren took the time to write extensively and many were passionate in their comments. For example, in the "Strengths of UCGIA" section alone, there were 3,736 comments in 85 categories. (Be assured that if you included a comment in your survey, it was read.)

Comments were then logged to indicate the frequency of response. To give you an example of the responses, in the box below are the top 10 comments on strengths and weaknesses of UCGIA and suggestions on how UCGIA could be improved.

The "About You" section revealed some interesting data. Considering the age of the membership for example, brethren 18 to 24 years old comprise 3 percent of the Church. Those 25 to 44 constitute 27.4 percent; 45 to 74 make up 46.4 percent; and those 75 and older comprise 6.4 percent of the Church.

The survey also indicated that 2.5 percent have attended Church of God services for less than five years, while 41.6 percent have attended 30 or more years. About half (48.7 percent) said they are employed full-time, 12.4 percent are employed part-time, 19.9 percent are retired and 10.3 percent said they are not employed. Those who have attended Ambassador College/University made up 12.3 percent.

First generation Christians made up 60.1 percent; second generation, 21.9 percent; and third generation, 5.5 percent. More than half (52.7 percent) of the respondents said they have a computer with Internet access in their homes. The survey also showed that 86.7 percent consider themselves members of UCGIA while 5.4 percent said they regard themselves as unaffiliated or members of another group.

The "About UCGIA Publications" section showed that 89.2 percent of the membership rated *The Good News* as above average or good. For the booklets this was 87.4 percent; for *World News and Prophecy*, 78.7

percent; for *United News*, 75.4 percent; and for the *Bible Study Course*, 67.6 percent.

Mike Bennett, managing editor of *United News* said, "We are trying to keep especially the top 10 comments in mind as we plan each *United News*. We have proposed increasing the frequency to 10 times a year to cover more news of the Work, brethren and congregations around the world, more often, as requested in the survey."

Brethren were asked to provide written comments on the Festival site they attended. Charles Melear, conference planner for the Church, said, "The Festival Surveys are carefully considered. Each Festival coordinator read every handwritten comment before the surveys were tabulated for statistical feedback. Both the handwritten comments and statistics provide information which help to improve the Feast spiritually and physically."

Richard Pinelli, Ministerial Services operation manager, said: "A copy of the Festival Survey was sent to each Festival coordinator to help him with his plans. Ministerial Services looks for a specific pattern of complaints or concerns. We spotlight these concerns for discussion with our Feast coordinators, our special music coordinator and at times talk with the regional pastors, Ministerial Services team and our president, Mr. McCullough. We do consider each survey carefully in our planning for the next year." *UN*

## Helping Subscriber "Seeds" Grow

After a new reader starts receiving the *Good News* magazine, how does the Church nurture and help the relationship with that subscriber grow?

"Our goal isn't just to get them started reading the magazine," said Scott Ashley, *Good News* managing editor "Our goal is to preach the gospel and make disciples. So what we are trying to do is get people's attention, get them interested and motivated and then get to the point where we can reach them."

Promoting the magazine through *Reader's Digest* ads, radio, the Internet and other means can be compared to sowing the seed. Subscriber development is like watering and helping those seeds grow. This means "building a relationship and two-way communication," said Mr. Ashley—letting readers know we care about them and making it easy for them to respond and receive other helpful material.

### First Impressions

The first thing a new U.S. subscriber receives is a special issue with timeless articles from previous issues. Wrapped around the issue is a welcome letter and a card the reader can send back for a free booklet. After that introductory issue, the reader will receive the next issue to be printed.

All U.S. subscriber copies now have a literature request form inside offering the literature advertised in that issue. "This seems to have dramatically increased our literature requests as indicated by our greatly increased mail volumes," said Mr. Ashley.

The Church has also been sending subscriber letters offering free literature. The letter last July offered *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, which drew a 17 percent response, and the December letter offered the *Bible Study Course* and received a 13 percent response. "We plan to mail three or four subscriber letters in each calendar year," said Mr.

Ashley. The next booklets scheduled to be offered are *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe? or Heaven and Hell*.

"In the *GN*, we've recently begun including the Web site address [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org) in all booklet plugs," said Mr. Ashley. "We've also begun including color booklet covers in the 'recommended reading' boxes at the end of articles. Both of these efforts are to encourage more requests for literature."

### Donors and Coworkers

Those readers who have taken the step to send a donation to support the Work receive a thank you letter that includes an offer for the *Bible Study Course*.

Those who donate more regularly will also receive a thank you letter offering the expanded edition of *The Good News*. They will also begin receiving quarterly update letters "to give you a brief overview of the growth of the efforts you are supporting."

### Renewal Efforts

If someone isn't reading the magazine, it doesn't make sense to continue sending it. The renewal program includes brightly colored cover wraps on the subscriber's last three issues with these messages: "Time's Running Out," "Urgent Renewal Notice" and "This Is Your Last Issue." Mr. Ashley expects a 60 to 70 percent attrition rate through the renewal program. "It's something you have to periodically do so that magazines are not being wasted," said Peter Eddington, Media and Communications operation manager. "Then you can redirect the magazines to other people."

Other programs are being developed to water the seeds, including those that involve local congregations. *UN*

| Comments on Strengths of UCGIA   | # Comments |
|--|------------|
| Commitment to God's truth, laws and doing God's will; balanced biblical teachings        | 802        |
| Many dedicated, friendly, experienced, humble, caring, Spirit-led ministers              | 383        |
| Many faithful, friendly, mature, generous, cooperative, encouraging, Spirit-led brethren | 295        |
| Strong, balanced, well-organized structure; humble, competent, dedicated leadership      | 210        |
| Commitment to and various efforts towards preaching the gospel around the world          | 204        |
| Form of government; checks and balances with Council of Elders; not one-man rule         | 187        |
| Quality, biblically based, well-researched, well-written publications                    | 186        |
| Love and concern shown toward one another; friendliness in congregations                 | 145        |
| Unity, peace, stability in the Church; efforts to strive for unity                       | 139        |
| Leadership of and cooperation/teamwork within the Council of Elders                      | 129        |

| Comments on Weaknesses of UCGIA  | # Comments |
|--|------------|
| Need additional youth/teen activities and education                                  | 95         |
| Leaders, ministers need to take a stronger stand in dealing with problems            | 86         |
| Too few ministers to handle workload; can't visit churches and brethren often enough | 83         |
| Immodest, inappropriate, careless dress at services, especially by some young women  | 53         |
| Too few brethren; congregations too scattered  | 53         |
| Sticking to old non-doctrinal teachings, traditions, ways of thinking, acting        | 48         |
| Some brethren uncommitted—often "float" from group to group                          | 47         |
| Some brethren lack godly love and concern for others                                 | 44         |
| Human beings and human nature—we cause our own problems                              | 43         |
| Some don't trust the organization, brethren and ministry since church split          | 43         |

| Comments on How to Improve UCGIA  | # Comments |
|---|------------|
| Need more Bible and Christian living instruction, social and sports activities for teens  | 49         |
| Give brethren sense of involvement, belonging; allow them to use their talents, education | 25         |
| More ministers  | 21         |
| Ministers need to become more involved in the lives of brethren, to call/visit more often | 20         |
| Better communication and cooperation with other Church of God groups                      | 19         |
| Preach the gospel on radio  | 17         |
| Need children's Bible lessons and activities  | 16         |
| Make ABC type material available to brethren through video, correspondence or Internet    | 15         |
| Preach the gospel on TV   | 14         |
| More fellowship opportunities among local congregations; more mixing of all age levels    | 14         |

# Pentecost Speaks to the “Heart” of Being Firstfruits

by Graemme Marshall

In revealing His plan for mankind, God chose Holy Days focused on the harvest seasons of Palestine (Exodus 23:14–17). Reaping crops at three festival seasons provided spiritual symbolism for God’s people. For us, Pentecost shows how God is harvesting people for eternal life in His Kingdom. Jewish tradition connects Pentecost with the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. For New Testament Christians the meaning is how to keep the spiritual intent of God’s law.

Pentecost shows we need God’s Spirit to keep the law in our hearts.

No matter how hard we try to avoid it, we still sin (Romans 3:10–18, 23). Acknowledging this inherent human weakness, God lamented in Deuteronomy 5:29, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”

Oh, how we can agree. If only we had a heart in us that would willingly always do what Jesus did. God shows we have a heart problem. Merely doing our human best to keep God’s law does not enable us to think like God. Becoming godly in thought, attitude and action is beyond the ability of men and women without the additional ingredient of God’s Spirit.

God reminds us every year through Pentecost that He is now dealing with only a few people—just a small part of the huge spiritual harvest to come. All who have ever lived will in their own time have the opportunity to know God. But for now God extends His truth only to a few—the firstfruits of His plan. That’s a miracle too, because only God can unlock the human mind so it can comprehend spiritual understanding (1 Corinthians 2:14). The firstfruits have the awesome responsibility of possessing God’s truth. Such knowledge must be used well.

## Christ Tests the Heart of the Church

The firstfruits are challenged to be the first to do as Jesus would do. The early New Testament Church was the first to take on this task. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit dramatically changed their lives. Their transformation was viewed as turning “the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Such was the dynamic, miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. It was the same divine power at work in Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:14).

The first century Church was taught about their battle with human nature (Romans 7:22–25) and with unseen evil forces (Ephesians 6:12). They learned about the sanctity, symbolism and purpose of marriage and family (Ephesians 5:22–25). Wives were encouraged to sub-

mit to husbands, good or bad, “as unto the Lord.” Christians were to obey authorities, whether emperor, king or magistrate (Romans 13:1; 1 Timothy 2:1–2). Christians were to call on the elders of the Church to be anointed when they were sick (James 5:14–18).

Firstfruits in the Kingdom of God will be able to explain to others how, from painful experience, they subjected themselves to the authority of men while under the authority of Christ; how they understood the philosophies of false teachers and sorted out what was true and false. In effect they will be able to use the modern phrase: “Been there, done that and bought the T-shirt.”

## Firstfruits Are Called to Be Holy

Christians are called to be different. They learn when there is a conflict with a job and the Sabbath, it isn’t a Sabbath problem but a job problem. They know the Sabbath was here before the job.

*The firstfruits are challenged to be the first to do as Jesus would do.*

They are prepared to be different to serve God. When Unleavened Bread comes, they set themselves apart by a different diet. When major tests of obedience come, they respond as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did: “We want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:18, NIV). They don’t consider compromising with pagan customs, hoping that God will understand.

Firstfruits have demonstrated a willingness to follow, obey, take orders, learn and repent because God’s Spirit gives an attitude of respect. Being holy is to be different, and the firstfruits don’t apologize for being different in a world under the sway of the devil.

But some firstfruits have succumbed to evil. Christ’s corrective words to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 reveal how sorely lacking in holy character some were. They failed to make right choices after apostasy had entangled their lives. Christ said: “You tolerate that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess” (Revelation 2:20, NIV). Paul warned similarly for the end time about those who want teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear and turn aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:3–4). Divergent opinions and independent spirits held sway. We see evidence of similar attitudes today.

However, as we keep Pentecost, we are reminded that the power given to the first century Church is still the same power available for the 21st century. We too can apply that power with miraculous zeal.

## Firstfruit Privilege

The firstfruits are the first of their family tree to be called. And marvelous pioneering firsts belong to our calling. The printing press has given us inexpensive access to the complete Bible. The Old Testament patriarchs lived out the truth with occasional direction from God. The disciples had the Old Testament manuscripts and lived out the experience of Acts. Only in recent times has the complete Bible been freely available, along with the most up-to-date handbooks and Bible helps.

The firstfruits of today are able, through the technological revolution, to participate in never before imagined ways to spread the gospel. The Church in our age has enjoyed the color printing press, radio, television, videos and now Internet Web pages. We have the special opportunity to share in making the truth of Scripture available globally to any who will respond.

Every age on earth has been a violent, dangerous one in which to live. Firstfruits are called to be the first to demonstrate that commandment keeping can be done, even in an evil time.

Firstfruits are first in learning the limitations of man’s government, whether it be a Caesar, emperor or Western democracy. Yet they learn to respond to government in a godly way.

Firstfruits are first in being accountable for their actions. They are confronted with making righteous judgments—about what is right and wrong, asking what Jesus would do—and in striving for a Christian attitude.

## Firstfruit Qualities

God reveals that Spirit-born firstfruits will be those who are as good as their word—people of high integrity. “They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless” (Revelation 14:4–5). They are pictured as free of deceit, falseness, pretense or window dressing.

Saints through history, along with us, will eventually be models for the rest of humanity. It’s being first in keeping God’s law against all odds.

Until that future time, the daily goal of a firstfruit is patient commitment to producing the fruits of God’s Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)—the finest spiritual character possible. *UN*

*Graemme Marshall pastors the congregations in Beerwah, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Perth and Wide Bay, Australia.*

## Make a Joyful Noise!

by Nicolas Nick

How long have you been singing hymns traditional to God’s Church? Two years, 10, maybe even 20 or more?

Over the years has this part of Sabbath observance become rather routine? As you sing those familiar lyrics for the umpteenth time, perhaps your mind has wandered to other things—who you are going to see after services, what you might have to eat, etc. I know mine has.

How important is the song service and how can we put more into it and get more out of it? The apostle Paul thought it was important enough that he exhorted both the Ephesians (Ephesians 5:19) and the Colossians (Colossians 3:16) about it.

Notice that in both scriptures our singing of hymns is to praise God and edify the congregation. We can be more effective in this if we maintain a proper focus during this short, but important, part of services.

Recently this was brought home to me by a personal experience. A regular part of my Sabbath routine is a short walk, during which I listen to a tape of the Church’s hymns. Having done this for some time, I hadn’t really noticed how

much the notes and words competed for my thoughts until I received a compact disc in the mail.

A former high school friend, who is now a professional music arranger, had sent the CD to me. On it were hymns he had arranged for choruses and orchestras recorded at a performance at his church. I must admit it contained some beautiful melodies. But what really struck me was the message. It contained statements that we know to be in conflict with the Word of God. Of course this was done unknowingly by my friend. With this in the back of my mind, a few days later I was again taking my Sabbath walk with the Church’s hymns resounding in my ears. But now the old familiar strains took on a deeper meaning as I refocused on the message I had heard so many times before.

I’m sure you can probably reflect on similar times that the hymns have had a deeper meaning in your life. As Paul said in Ephesians 5:19, let us use those times to renew our zeal, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” *UN*

*Nicolas Nick attends the Dayton, Ohio, congregation.*

# The Blessings and Benefits of Church Services

*Sure you can “get” a sermon at home, but God’s command to assemble on the Sabbath and Holy Days is also about “give.”*

by Don Hooser

Most of God’s people are deeply thankful to be a part of God’s Church. And most of those who live within a reasonable driving distance consider the opportunity to attend services to be among their greatest blessings. For them, Sabbath services are the highlight of the week and Holy Day services are the highlights of the year.

They consider services an oasis in a spiritual desert. They look forward to each service as a time to be recharged spiritually. They have a love of learning and come hungry to hear God’s Word.

They love coming out of an alien world to be among like-minded brethren. They delight in the fellowship, hymns, music, prayers and hearing news of God’s Work. They relish the opportunity to serve and encourage fellow members and take on responsibilities within the congregation. In addition to the fellowship with members, they know they have a special fellowship with God as they come into His presence to worship Him.

May this article benefit all members. For those who love God’s services, may your appreciation be reinforced. For those who have begun to take them for granted and have let down in regular church attendance, may you recapture your first love.

For those who are not convinced of the importance of weekly attendance, may the following scriptures and principles from God’s Word convict you of the emphasis that God places on regular participation in church services. And for those whose absenteeism is a symptom of apathy, may these words be a small part of God’s effort to bring you out of the lukewarm attitude.

There are several related subjects that point to the importance of church services. Much is said in the New Testament about local churches. There would hardly be any need for local congregations if God didn’t intend for His people to attend the services. Much is said about ministers, teaching and preaching. What would be their purpose if there were no assemblies and no one to hear the preaching? Much is said about relationships among God’s people. This would make no sense if God’s people were never together.

## Holy Convocations

Church services are holy convocations. The English phrase “holy convocation(s)” is in four chapters of the KJV and the NKJV: Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, Numbers 28 and Numbers 29. In most of the scriptures, the

phrase “holy convocations” is in connection with the annual Holy Days, but in Leviticus 23:3, it is in connection with the weekly Sabbath. In Leviticus 23:2 and 4, the phrase relates to all of God’s Feasts, including the Sabbath.

According to these scriptures, the principal feature of each Sabbath and Holy Day is “a holy convocation.”

A convocation is a commanded or required assembly. A holy convocation is an assembly that God authorizes and announces and expects His people to attend. It is as if God sounds a trumpet call to assembly. The convocation or assembly is not a suggestion; it is not optional; it is God’s command.

The assemblies are an important part of Sabbath-keeping. God made holy time partly to provide a time for God’s people to assemble and worship Him. And it is a time when Christ can cleanse His Church with “the washing of water by the word” and remove its spots and wrinkles (Ephesians 5:25–27).

## God Wants Togetherness

When Jesus said, “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18), He clearly intended a team effort where His followers would work and worship together. The word *together* appears in the KJV 469 times, and many of the scriptures refer to God’s people being together. God wants the unity and community that comes from togetherness.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). “Now I plead with you, brethren...that you be perfectly joined together” (1 Corinthians 1:10). In Colossians, Paul speaks of being “knit together in love” (2:2) and “all the body, nourished and knit together” (2:19).

The next set of verses that use the word *together* clearly state the main purpose of this article: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25).

How can we stir up love and good works if we don’t meet together? God tells us that we should strive to assemble and encourage one another more often, not less often, as we see the Day of the Lord approaching.

The logical conclusion is that God’s people should try to get together every Sabbath as a minimum. If they can get together during the week for Bible studies, social and recreational activities, meals, etc., so much the better.

One of the themes of the book of Hebrews is an exhortation to spiritually persevere to the end. “For you have need of endurance, so that...you may receive the promise” (10:36). Long-time Jewish Christians had become discouraged and were letting down, and Hebrews pleads with them to renew their zeal, since those who continue

to “assemble together” are much more likely to endure to the end.

## What About Staying Home and Listening to Sermons?

Some members have stayed home on the Sabbath to listen to tape-recorded sermons. Perhaps they reasoned that if they hear a sermon, pray and sing hymns, they get almost as much benefit as from attending a service. There are several flaws in this reasoning. First, what does God think of it? God wants us to get spiritual nourishment every day of the week, but for the Sabbath, He ordained that His people also assemble in holy convocations. There are many benefits of group worship and fellowship. Also, we should examine ourselves to see if there is a wrong motive for wanting to stay home. Is it a character flaw, such as laziness? Is it a desire to avoid someone with whom we have experienced a conflict?

There is a major flaw in thinking only of what one can *get* from services. Members should think more in terms of what they can *give* at services rather than what they receive.

We give to God with our reverence, singing and worship. God is pleased when we gather to worship Him (Psalm 111:1).

We also give to our brethren through our fellowship. We reach out and serve one another by being good listeners and by giving encouragement and comfort. Almost everyone is experiencing trials, and many members carry heavy burdens and sorrows. So a Sabbath service is a wonderful time to practice Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

And fellowship builds love. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). It certainly won’t appear to

the world that we love each other if we aren’t doing our best to meet together.

We also give to the world through our collective effort to preach the gospel, and to the community through outreach programs. These are discussed in announcements and fellowship at services.

## Not “Worthy” to Attend?

Some members have stayed away from services because of feelings of guilt or unworthiness. But the Church is not a club of honorees whose members are invited because of their achievements. Instead, God’s Church should be viewed as a spiritual hospital that all of us need because of our various spiritual “sicknesses.”

The actions and attitudes of the early Christians should be our model in many ways. “Now all who believed were together... So continuing daily with one accord...” (Acts 2:44, 46). They were fervent in their desire to spend as much time as they could with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Many members long to attend services but are not able to, or not able to on a weekly basis, because there is no congregation close to them or a health problem prevents them from going. God will bless them for having a right attitude and doing the best they can. They can at least benefit from the opportunity to have video and/or audiotapes sent to them from the home office.

God’s holy convocations are a great blessing for His people. God wants us to have the attitudes described in the opening of this article. When we have the opportunity, He wants us to be committed and faithful in church attendance. He wants His Church to be a family that prays together, plays together and stays together. *UH*

## People Problems in the Pews

Over the years, many Church members have quit attending services either temporarily or permanently because of hurt feelings, offenses or conflict with someone. Although the emotions are understandable, such things are no excuse for withdrawing from God’s worship services.

God wants us to learn to get along with all kinds of personalities and to love all of God’s children. Services are a workshop where we can practice human relations skills. Fellowship before and after services is a time to build and repair relationships.

God wants us to have a tough skin concerning our own feelings, but to be soft-hearted and sensitive concerning other people’s feelings. Rather than retreating and licking our wounds, God would have us focus on healing the hurts of others.

Even when there has been a serious conflict, God wants us to “turn the other cheek” and apply the biblical principles of

peacemaking. (See Matthew 5:38–48.) Prayer, fasting, humility and diligent effort usually bring about reconciliation. Ministers are available to help as peacemakers. And when the other person won’t respond favorably, we can take comfort knowing we tried our best to do it God’s way.

People problems are nothing new. In the epistles, we read of many conflicts among members and instructions on how they were to solve them. We can apply those instructions to solve similar problems.

Jesus Christ, during His ministry, suffered hostility and persecution from His enemies, and even desertion and betrayal by His followers. We can be extremely thankful that He didn’t give up and desert His mission or His disciples because of being hurt. We now owe it to Christ to follow His example of commitment by being committed to the Body of Christ.

*Don Hooser*

# Preparing to Be Christ's Bride

*The Bible tells how we can be ready for the greatest wedding ever!*

by Wilbur A. Berg

The apostle Paul made a statement in his second letter to the Church of God at Corinth that needs serious examination and consideration by all of God's people.

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

This passage describes God's people as collectively being a betrothed or engaged woman who is to be married to Jesus Christ. Revelation 19:6-8 amplifies this further by showing that this marriage will take place when Christ returns to this earth, and that His bride will have made herself ready by becoming obedient to Him.

## Righteousness Necessary

While salvation is attainable only by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), continual growth in obedience to God's laws is expected. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin [at baptism] live any longer in it?... Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts" (Romans 6:1-2, 12).

Even in the earliest Old Testament times, men like Enoch, Noah and Abraham obtained God's favor because they obeyed Him (Genesis 5:22; 6:9; 7:1; 26:5). God's people under the old covenant were told to become blameless or perfect (Deuteronomy 18:13). The same standard continued under the new covenant. Jesus told His disciples to "be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

While this has seemed like an impossible goal to some, Jesus went on to say, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). The Hebrew and Greek words for blameless or perfect both convey the meaning of being upright in conduct, fully developed in a moral sense. They define the goal of behavior that God has set forth for all His people throughout the ages, which is attainable under the new covenant, with the power of God's Holy Spirit, to those who sincerely seek such righteousness.

People who follow Christ need to understand that He looks in anticipation to a chaste, bride who has cleansed herself spiritually. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

## A Higher Standard

One of the major differences between the old and new covenants that Jesus high-

lighted was that Christians are now required and expected to obey God's laws on a higher and more complete level of understanding and application (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). The prophet Isaiah foretold this by stating that the Lord would "magnify the law" (42:21, KJV), which meant that it is now to be understood and practiced in the fullest way possible, in its complete spiritual intent that goes far beyond just the letter of the law.

For example, being angry with someone without cause, even if you don't kill him, breaks the Sixth Commandment (Matthew 5:21-22). Sexually lusting after someone breaks the Seventh Commandment (Matthew 5:27-28).

Jesus emphasized that more is required than just acknowledging and accepting Him as Lord. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Just accepting Christ, without obeying what He taught, is a satanic deception.

## A Better Covenant

But how is this kind of spiritual perfection developed and attained? Anyone familiar with the history of the Old Testament knows that the great majority of God's people Israel continually backslid and sinned, even though He revealed His laws to them.

What needs to be understood is the unique and awesome relationship with God that He has established for His people under the new covenant. Under the old covenant, only the high priest was allowed to enter the innermost sanctuary of the tabernacle—the Holy of Holies—once a year on the Day of Atonement, with designated sacrificial offerings (Leviticus 16). This most holy place behind the veil represented the throne room of God, where reconciliation with the Almighty was obtained for the high priest, his household and all of Israel (verse 17).

This important ritual pictured God passing over their sins of the past year committed in ignorance (verses 30-34; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:7). Other sacrifices were offered at other times for sins committed knowingly but unintentionally (Leviticus 4:2).

But Hebrews 7 shows that Jesus Christ supplanted the Levitical priesthood, and now administers a new covenant that is better than the old one (verse 22 and 8:6). Because He was from the tribe of Judah rather than of Levi, a change in the law (verse 12) had to be made regarding who could serve in the priesthood and also receive tithes, since only those of Levitical descent were appointed to these responsibilities under the old covenant (Numbers 18:21-26; Hebrews 7:5). Therefore, this change in the law concerning priesthood eligibility had to be made so Jesus could legitimately take over these duties.

But notice that this change did not do away with God's laws, as some have wrongly interpreted. Hebrews 8:8-10 goes on to

clearly explain that one of the great purposes of the new covenant is to put God's laws into the hearts and minds of those who repent of their sins, so they will be able to obey the instructions of God.

The weakness of the old covenant was not in the law of God, but in the people who did not have the power, mind and love of God's Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 29:4; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 8:8; 2 Timothy 1:7).

## Spiritual Maturity Now Possible

Returning to Hebrews 7, notice that spiritual perfection was not possible under the Levitical priesthood (verse 11). The various sacrifices were only substitutionary and therefore not sufficient to pay the penalty for human sin, which is eternal death (Romans 6:23). As the Son of God and Creator of mankind, only Jesus Christ's singular sacrifice and death is able to forgive the sins of those who ask, so they can be cleansed and offered eternal life (Hebrews 7:25, 27).

But even after repentance and baptism, Christians still occasionally sin because of weakness. Even the apostle Paul acknowledged that he struggled with his sinful nature and had not yet attained full spiritual perfection, though he pressed continually on toward this goal (Romans 7:15; Philippians 3:12). He was therefore thankful, as we should be, that Jesus acts as Helper (Advocate) and Intercessor to the Father on our behalf (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2).

This is necessary because sin interrupts and mars our relationship with God who separates Himself from evil (Isaiah 59:2).

God's revelation goes even further. In the first 10 verses of Hebrews 9 Paul summarizes Leviticus 16 and what happened on the Day of Atonement under the old covenant. He explains that no complete offering for sin could be made under that administration, because those offerings could not make perfect the inner conscience and mind (see also Hebrews 10:1). Such sacrifices could only symbolically purify the flesh (Hebrews 9:13), and did not pay the penalty of sin. They only caused God to cover over sins committed up to the time of Christ's death (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:15). They were incapable of forgiving sin.

Paul goes on to explain the marvelous truth associated with the new covenant. Unlike the blood of bulls, the blood of Christ is able to cleanse the conscience and mind of repentant sinners. His sacrifice has made spiritual growth and maturity possible! Read Hebrews 9:14. This is how God is refashioning His converted followers, who formerly were habitually sinning human beings, into a spiritually chaste bride. He is transforming their minds by giving them the power and qualities of His Spirit to resist and overcome sin!

## Our Unique Relationship

Converted Christians have direct entry into the presence of God the Father, and are

encouraged to boldly use this privilege (Hebrews 10:19-22). God's repentant people have obtained mercy and are considered a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10), which allows them to have an intimate relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are specifically instructed by Jesus to pray directly to the Father, who forgives them as they forgive others (Matthew 6:6, 9, 14-15).

Therefore, spiritual growth and maturity of Spirit-implemented Christians is not only possible and necessary, it is anticipated and expected by God! It was planned out "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). This is the process, of being spiritually perfected by overcoming the temptations of sin, that God uses to bring many children into His family and ultimate glory.

While God's people attain various spiritual levels during their lifetimes, and die without having overcome every weakness, God's mercy and righteous judgment will reward us appropriately at the resurrection (Revelation 11:15, 18; 22:12). We should keep in mind that we are saved by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8), but rewarded according to our works (Matthew 16:27). It is therefore imperative that we properly use whatever abilities we have to continually press on toward the goal of spiritual maturity and perfection. Review Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-27.

But in order to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5), each of us has to come to grips with himself in a totally sincere and honest way, and learn to approach God in prayer with our problems and deficiencies.

This may make us feel uncomfortable, because we are revealing our most private thoughts, but such matters should not be swept under the rug. Realize that God already knows what is in our mind (Psalm 139), and is waiting for us to face our faults so we can begin to correct them with His help.

We all have deeply seated habits that are contrary to God's laws, which need to be overcome. The more strongly ingrained shortcomings are so much a part of us that it often takes years to control and conquer them. This is why we must stay close to God by daily prayer and study of His Word (2 Corinthians 4:16). We also need to continually monitor our thoughts, and replace the evil ones with others that are edifying (Philippians 4:8). If sinful thinking continues, it will ultimately bring eternal death (James 1:13-15).

Jesus Christ is judging His Church now (1 Peter 4:17), and is purifying His spiritual body (Ephesians 5:26-27). We need to do our part by having the confidence to go directly to God for help, because the sacrifice of Christ has given us personal access to God's throne of grace (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:20). Therefore, never tire of seeking the spiritual perfection that is pleasing to God, and becoming the chaste bride who is to marry Christ. He has made this possible by His death, Spirit and love for you and me. *UV*

# Local Church Updates...

## Nairobi Open House Draws 40 GN Readers

On April 29, the Sabbath following the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the small Nairobi, Kenya, congregation held an open house Sabbath service. Invitations had been sent to the 230 people on *The Good News* mailing list in Kenya. About 40 of those invited attended the service.

Several came from very far away, including the region along the border with Uganda (more than 300 miles over poor roads) to attend the service and meet with members of United. Following services, during which Joel Meeker gave a sermon about God's plan of salvation, we showed the 1999 Feast of Tabernacles video, which was very warmly received.

Several guests asked if they could begin attending services with us, while others asked if they could begin receiving sermon tapes since they lived too far away to attend services in Nairobi. One man, however, expressed some frustration. He said, "I've been receiving *The Good News* for four years, and it's only now you tell me you have a church congregation in Nairobi. You should have told me sooner!" We will watch with excitement to see what fruit may be borne from the seed sown in East Africa.

*Joel Meeker*

## Open Houses Held in West Texas and New Mexico

In March, four congregations of West Texas and eastern New Mexico held open house Sabbath services for *Good News* readers. On March 4, the readers in the Lovington, New Mexico, and Odessa, Texas, areas were invited to services designed to introduce readers to the local congregations. On March 11, the same types of services were held in Amarillo and Lubbock, Texas.

Planning for these open houses actually began about 24 months earlier as each congregation became involved in the *Good News* Waiting Room Program. Just about everyone got involved. By July 1999, these four congregations had mailed a sample copy of the magazine to every waiting room in their respective areas. After allowing a little time to pass so that a readership base could develop, we were anxious to try some open houses.

## Your News Needed!

Has your congregation had an activity or service project that we haven't reported on? Don't let it happen again! We need your news. Check with your pastor to avoid duplicating effort, and keep your articles short (100 to 300 words), but keep them coming! Photos welcome! E-mail to [mike\\_bennett@ucg.org](mailto:mike_bennett@ucg.org) or mail to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Thanks!

About three weeks before the open houses, we sent invitations that explained our plans, the title of the sermon that would be given, "What's My Purpose?," and an offer of a tape of the message if the reader could not attend. My phone number was included and another number to call if they desired a tape. The letter also let people know friends and family were also welcome and that childcare would be provided. The total number of letters sent for all four areas combined was 1,118.

The expense for mailing the letters (envelopes, duplicating, postage) was approximately \$200. We also had the expense of renewing our bulk mailing permit—an annual expense of approximately \$90.

On the day of the open houses, members served as greeters and supplied light refreshments. During the sermonette time, I introduced myself, other elders, the congregation, and explained that we were the local sponsors of the magazine. I also shared the United Church of God's plans for running an ad for *The Good News* in an upcoming issue of *Reader's Digest* and explained some of the history of our magazine's phenomenal growth over the past four years. We then had a hymn and some special music before my sermon.

Total response for all four areas was: 14 new people in attendance, seven requests for tapes of the sermon, three phone calls and six letters from prisoners. This is about a 3 percent response. Although responses were not evenly divided among the congregations, we were very pleased with the initial results of this effort. At press time, four new people are in regular attendance and one was baptized.

One new lady who attended told me that she has only been keeping the Sabbath for less than a month and that she had prayed asking God to show her a congregation where she could attend. Our invitational letter came the same week and she believes it was an answer from God. She plans to attend with us now on a regular basis. Another lady told us that she has now read three issues of *The Good News* and that it was very interesting, but she didn't know how to make contact with us. She said the invitation helped her through this process and that she was very appreciative of our effort.

This project generated a lot of excitement among our members and we plan to offer more open houses in about six months. It is also interesting to consider that 1,118 readers now have the information on how to contact the Church in their respective areas. Seeds have been sown. Now we look forward to serving/teaching those God moves to respond.

*David Treybig*

## Phoenix Northwest Provides Spanish Tapes

The Phoenix Northwest, Arizona, congregation helps duplicate and distribute sermon tapes for Spanish-speaking areas. Initially only 20 tapes were sent to Mexico, but now households enjoy this service in 14

nations. The master tapes come from several pastors in Central and South America. Every few weeks the pastors send some of their best tapes for reproduction. The tapes are reproduced and then packaged and sent back to Spanish-speaking members in isolated areas. The congregation is able to purchase quality new cassette tapes in bulk at a reduced rate. These cassettes are then copied using high speed, multi-tape duplicators.

Tapes are labeled and packed in bubble pack mailers suitable for international mailing. Eight sermon tapes are sent in each packet. They are mailed small packet, air mail as this is the least expensive and yet safest way to make sure the tapes arrive undamaged. The average packet costs about \$4 to send, which is the same as domestic two- to three-day service.

Every so often the amount of tapes being sent to Spanish-speaking members increases or decreases. Members in Latin areas are thrifty and find ways to economize. Often the tapes are listened to by as many as 10 different households.

"The Spanish Tape Program is one way we can help others in isolated areas with the resources we easily enjoy," said Phoenix Northwest pastor Chuck Zimmerman.

## St. Petersburg Youth Experience Formal Dinner

A group of 17 young people in the St. Petersburg, Florida, Church Youth Group gathered for an evening of fine dining in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Suckling, the local pastor. The parents prepared the food and served their children. The menu consisted of hors d'oeuvres served on the patio, garden salad, le brocoli dans lait, smoked venison, red bliss au gratin potatoes, sautéed asparagus and glazed carrots. The dessert was cherries jubilee.

This is the second year that a formal evening has been hosted by Mr. and Mrs.



*Young people in St. Petersburg, Florida, get a taste of fine dining*

Suckling for the youth of the St. Petersburg congregation.

The event followed Herbert W. Armstrong's example of formally entertaining the students at Ambassador College. Mr. Suckling told the youth of his experiences as a young man and the opportunities that had been offered to him through Mr. Armstrong.

He explained that each formal exposure added to his experience, which helped to bring about confidence in formal situations.

"In life, you never know what opportunities will come your way or when you will benefit from such an experience," said Mr. Suckling. The objective of this evening was to prepare the young people for formal situations in the future so that they would know how to conduct themselves.

## Eureka Enjoys Variety

After a delicious potluck meal February 12, the Eureka, California, congregation held its 10th annual winter variety show. There was a variety of talents from serious poetry reading, singing, instrumentals, lip-sync and many jokes from young and old.

Lacey Buck, 13, read a heartfelt poem that she wrote called "Christopher," about her little nephew who died two years ago. Frank Alves had us roaring in laughter as he did his lip-sync version of "When Mom's Not



*Lacey Buck, 13, and big brother Casey clown around at the Eureka, California, costume and game night*

Happy, No One's Happy." Special guests from the Sacramento area were Clyde and Dee Kilough and Roger and Carole Booth. Both Mr. Kilough and Mr. Booth participated in the show and kept us in stitches.

In the last couple of months the Eureka congregation has enjoyed family activities such as bowling, roller skating, a teen Bible bowl and a costume and game night. Costumes included everything from a shark, a baseball player, a clown and even a Y2K bug! The congregation is also starting a Family Christian Club.

*Kandy K. Goodrich*

## 1976 Bike Tour to Celebrate 25th

The 1976 U.S. Bicentennial Coast-to-Coast Bike Tour members will celebrate their 25th anniversary with a book, "Where Are They Now?" If you were part of this 100-person team led by Coach Larry Haworth and Ambassador College students that cycled from Oregon to Virginia, e-mail [Lister\\_Chen@bc.sympatico.ca](mailto:Lister_Chen@bc.sympatico.ca), call (250) 964-3849 or write to Lister Chen, 8113 Princeton Cres., Prince George, B.C., Canada V2N 3V6.

“GCE,” (Continued from page 1)

General Conference on the Work in numerous regions of West and East Africa, focusing especially on recent contact with the Remnant Church of God in Ghana. He provided some background material on the Sabbath-keeping history of these brethren and their history of contact with the United Church of God. As noted in previous reports of Council of Elders meetings, ministers and members of the Remnant Church of God wish to become part of the United Church of God. “If we are brethren, we should be one” was the sentiment expressed to Mr. Horchak, Jim Franks and Joel Meeker on their December 1999 visit.

Alfred Riehle provided details of the Work in Germany, addressing elders and wives in his greatly expanded command of



Bill Eddington gives update on Australia

the English language. *Good News* circulation is being maintained at 3,000 using renewals and promotions to insure new readers are constantly being added. The number of German booklets is to increase from eight to eleven this year. Continued work on *Bible Study Course* translation is greatly helped by the addition of part-time editorial help. New, small congregations in Berlin and Holland highlight regional growth. Germany currently operates without home office subsidy by extensively using volunteer member help.

Australia’s Bill Eddington provided information on the Work “down under.” The 628 Church members in Australia are in some cases widely scattered, and are served by four salaried and nine non-salaried elders. Extensive work on the youth program is a main goal in the coming year, as is a projected increase in *Good News* circulation from 2,000 to between 4,000 and 5,000. Redesign

of the Australian Web site in 1999 proved very helpful, and provides more response work for regional office employees Reg Wright and Ruth Root. Australia continues to serve outlying areas such as Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia.

André van Belkum wrapped up the international reports with news from Southern Africa. There are 148 baptized members in this area; high attendance runs at about 220. *Good News* circulation is climbing past 2,000, headed for a goal of 4,000 by February 2001. Literature mailings are increasing; income is running above budget, with expenses below budget. Requests for visits from Malawi added to the encouraging tone of Mr. van Belkum’s address. Three young South Africans will attend summer camp in the United States this year (Camp Woodmen).

### Operations Reports

Richard Pinelli, Ministerial Services manager, provided updated information for the General Conference. A total of 401 ordained elders (333 U.S., 68 international) serve 371 congregations around the globe (230 U.S., 131 international). Attendance trends have been moving slowly but steadily upward since the Feast of Tabernacles last fall; approximately 16,200 brethren attended UCG spring Holy Day services around the world this year.

Recommendations of the Task Force on Ministerial Workload and Remuneration are being implemented, accelerated by the untimely death of church pastor Ozzie Engelbart. Ministerial job performance review is part of the program as well; plans for peer review, self-assessment and management review are already in various stages of development and use. After initial concerns by some in the ministry about this new review process, Mr. Pinelli reported that understanding is growing of its intended positive impact—improvement in the service to God’s people.

The ministerial candidate program is moving forward on three levels—leadership in the local church, leadership for future ordination as elders, and ministerial candidate identification and selection (salaried elders). The aging of the ministry (nine of the current 98 salaried elders in the United States are

already past the age of 67) is a reminder of the urgent need in this area.

Peter Eddington, Media Operations manager, wrapped up the morning session. He echoed earlier comments about the growth trends in the Church. Early ground-work now gives us a sound base of literature to offer. There are small but encouraging trends of further financial involvement from first-time donors and new “coworkers”—those beginning to donate on a more regular basis. In April, 3.5 new donors were added, on average, each working day.

With a comprehensive media strategy now in place, many programs are now moving forward concurrently, including radio production, print advertising, Church logo finalization (special thanks to Nicole Graham), Internet development, video production, continued development of the literature base and expansion of the *Good News* circulation. He mentioned the greater role congregations will play in “watering the seed,” which was also discussed in a lunch meeting about congregational evangelism.

### Formal Business Meeting

The formal business portion of the annual meeting took place in the afternoon May 7. Elders first approved the minutes of last year’s meeting. They next balloted on four operational issues, six proposed amendments to the Church Bylaws and the selection of four Council members.

All operational issues passed—the Strategic Plan, Operations Plan, budget for fiscal 2000-2001 and a method for enacting amendments to the Fundamental Beliefs were approved. Five of the six proposed amendments passed, the only exception being a proposal calling for a 25 percent quorum of GCE participation in balloting for business to be considered official.

The elders selected to three-year terms on the Council of Elders were first-time international representative Mario Seiglie and incumbents Gary Antion, Robert Dick and Richard Thompson (although Mr. Antion will now be considered a U.S. representative, not an international representative).

The business portion continued with addresses by the chairman, president and treasurer.

Chairman Robert Dick expressed appreciation for work done by various staff members that helped the General Conference run smoothly. Citing the old proverb “may you live in interesting times,” he commented that it has been nice more recently to live in less interesting times! The replacement of interesting times with productive times has been an encouragement to many. Yet much has been learned in the trying of our faith—crucial lessons in patience and endurance. Mr. Dick concluded his remarks by pointing to the messages delivered on the Sabbath by Roy Holladay and Dennis Luker as the most vital components of the knowledge of the calling of God. The Church, when growing in love and humility, becomes a place where God can bring those new individuals He chooses to call.

President Les McCullough focused on the growth of the Church’s efforts to preach the gospel. He called attention to the increase in the proposed budget for this fiscal year, the success of the Ambassador Bible Center, the *Bible Study Course* development, new booklets printed, increase in baptisms, youth programs and growth in donor involvement. He expressed appreciation for God’s blessings. Our job, he stressed, is to sow an abundance of seed as God gives us opportunity. The president ended his address by calling on all to join together in expanding our efforts to carry the gospel—sowing the seed. God will then help us serve and care for those He calls.

Treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick continued the tone of appreciation to God for what He is allowing the Church to accomplish. The financial position is much stronger than it was two years ago or last year. Controlled costs are enabling expansion in planned areas; and income is growing slowly but steadily, returning now to levels experienced three years ago. Dr. Kirkpatrick outlined his approach as “not believing in large cash reserves, but not believing in no reserves either!” Currently, the Church has an operating reserve of 10.9 weeks’ expenses.

The United Church of God’s financial statements were audited and received an unqualified opinion by the audit firm of PriceWaterhouseCoopers for its first four years of financial operation ending March 31, 1999. Clark, Schaefer, Hackett, and Company has been contracted to audit the books this year, and the treasurer hopes their opinion will be available by September (the current fiscal period ends June 30, 2000). Dr. Kirkpatrick also stressed the importance of



Council of Elders members, joined by Ministerial Services Director Richard Pinelli, answer questions from GCE

working to please God. He ended his message by announcing salary ranges for all Church employees as required by policy.

On May 8 elders attended an inspiring session on “Servant Leadership” by Howard Baker, United Church of God member and former faculty member of Ambassador University. Dr. Baker currently teaches at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Breakout sessions on various subjects concluded the day’s agenda.

Full reports of the GCE, including the question and answer session, as well as the Council of Elders meetings that followed it, can be found on the Web at [www.ucg.org/a/council/council.htm](http://www.ucg.org/a/council/council.htm). UN

## Ballot Results

| ITEM  | # YES | # NO | PASSED |
|---|-------|------|--------|
| 1. 2000-2001 Strategic Plan   | 280   | 6    | Yes    |
| 2. 2000-2001 Operation Plan   | 273   | 8    | Yes    |
| 3. 2000-2001 Budget   | 273   | 13   | Yes    |
| 4. Provisional Manner of Amending the Fundamental Beliefs                                 | 251   | 24   | Yes    |
| 5. Amendment to Section 7.5.4 of Bylaws (balloting to nominate and elect Council members) | 212   | 59   | Yes    |
| 6. Amendment to Section 7.8 of Bylaws (alternative ballots)                               | 242   | 36   | Yes    |
| 7. Amendment to Section 7.10 of Bylaws (quorum requirement)                               | 148   | 123  | No     |
| 8. Amendment to Section 8.1 of Bylaws (nomination and selection of Council members)       | 212   | 61   | Yes    |
| 9. Amendment to Section 8.2.1 of Bylaws (office of chairman of Council)                   | 241   | 32   | Yes    |
| 10. Amendment to Section 9.1 of Bylaws (officers)   | 244   | 35   | Yes    |

The text of amendments can be found on the Web at [www.ucg.org/amendments](http://www.ucg.org/amendments).

# Announcements...

## Births

Larry and Sigrid Powers of Charlotte, North Carolina, are delighted to announce the birth of Caitlin Briana Powers. She arrived February 23, 2000, weighing 7 pounds 5 ounces and measuring 20 inches long. Big brother Calum, age 3, is thrilled to have a little sister in the family!

Max Henderson is excited to announce the arrival of his sister, Alexandria Juliette Henderson. Born December 28, 1999, she weighed in at 8 pounds 4 ounces and was 19½ inches long. Proud parents are Don and Kathy Henderson of Woodinville, Washington.

Managing director and executive producer, Eric and Kalee Wiesman, would like to announce completion of their production of *Our Three Sons*. This feature introduces Oliver Andrew-Young Wiesman as the 7 pound 12 ounce, 20¾ inch star of the show. His co-stars are older brothers Hunter and



Hunter, Sawyer and Oliver Wiesman

Sawyer Wiesman. The three stars have all bonded well. This current feature was released to the public September 9, 1999. Executive producer and managing director are thrilled with their current production and are still recovering from the creating ordeal.

E.B. and Sherry Haney of Chattanooga, Tennessee, are delight-



Reno Austin Haney

ed to announce the birth of their first child, Reno Austin Haney. He arrived September 29, 1999, during the Feast of Tabernacles, weighed 8 pounds 6 ounces, and was 22 inches long. Proud grandparents are Jim and Jean Rickard and E.W. and Bess Haney.



Kailee Christine McKeon

Scott and Carrie McKeon of Phoenix, Arizona, have been blessed with the arrival of their second child. Kailee Christine was born October 23, 1999. She weighed 7 pounds 12 ounces and was 20 inches long. Big brother Logan is very excited to have a baby sister! Proud grandparents are Kirk and Susan Iverson and Richard and Patty McKeon.

Lee and Karen Dolby of Kernersville, North Carolina, are



Seth and Colin Dale Dolby

very pleased to announce the birth of their second child. Colin Dale was born on December 9, 1999. Big brother Seth has welcomed him with open arms and plenty of kisses. The Dolbys attend services with the Greensboro, North Carolina, congregation.

Bob and Gail (Whetson) Iacobucci are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Jordan Robert. He was born on January 2,



Jordan Robert Iacobucci

2000. He weighed 7 pounds 8 ounces and was 19½ inches long. Proud grandparents are Lucio and Fernanda Iacobucci of New Jersey and Charles Whetson of the Youngstown, Ohio, congregation.

Steve and Lori Anderson announce the birth of their first



Cora Nicole Anderson

child, Cora Nicole Anderson. Cora was born December 17, 1999, weighing 8 pounds 5 ounces, and was 21 inches long. Delighted grandparents are Gerald and Kathryn Hoyer, of Tumwater, Washington, and Dan and Barbara Anderson, of Phoenix, Arizona.

Ed and Shannon (Siebert) Oliver of McMinnville, Oregon



Danielle Faith Oliver

(Beaverton congregation), are excited to announce the birth of

their second child, Danielle Faith. Born November 17, 1999, she weighed 6 pounds 15 ounces and was 20 inches long. Big brother Derek, 3, along with grandparents John and Fran Siebert and Dan and Ruth Oliver are very happy for the wonderful addition to the family.

Matt and Melissa (Kellers) Puckett are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Lucretia



Lucretia Ann Puckett

Ann. Lucretia was born December 17, 1999. She weighed 8 pounds and was 19 inches long. Thanks to all who prayed for her healthy arrival.

## Wedding

Perry and Sharon Harold of Orlando, Florida, along with Roy and Pauline Demarest of Boynton Beach, Florida, are pleased to announce the marriage of their children, Jennifer Harold and Daniel Demarest on April 1, 2000. The ceremony was performed in Orlando by the father of the



Jennifer and Daniel Demarest

groom. The maid of honor was Jennifer Ketchum and the best men were Cliff and Chad Demarest, brothers of the groom. The happy couple reside in Orlando.

## Obituaries

Ethel Miller, 91, died January 15, 2000, from complica-

tions resulting from a fall in her home on January 1. A member of God's Church for over 30 years, Mrs. Miller had been a member of the Mansfield, Ohio, congregation since relocating to the area from Michigan in 1992. The funeral service was conducted in Hamlin, West Virginia, on January 18 by Doug Johnson, pastor of the Mansfield and Canton, Ohio, churches.

Jeremy Garnet Snyder, beloved and cherished son of Mervin and Patricia Snyder and faithful brother of Sean Conrad



Jeremy Garnet Snyder

and Chantel Snyder of Strathmore, Alberta, died suddenly early March 25, 2000. Jeremy was born on January 4, 1976 in Didsbury, Alberta. Besides his loving family, Jeremy leaves many, many loving friends. Jeremy will always be remembered for his acts of kindness, his ability to talk and fellowship with the elderly, as well as children. His enthusiasm was refreshing. He was always willing to pitch in and assist where necessary. Jeremy gave a willing ear to others when in need and pressed the buttons of many in encouraging a challenge in a variety of subjects. Jeremy was also humorous and would often entertain in the most artistic manner. He will be greatly missed by many.

Harry R. (Bob) Lowder, 77, of Coatesville, Indiana, died January 19, 2000, of respiratory and congestive heart failure. He was a long-time member of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation for 33 years, after having listened to Herbert Armstrong beginning in the early 1960s.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Thelma; two sons, William and Robert; five daughters, Linda McLain, Terri Durham, Sherry Evans, Kathy Flake and

Elizabeth Landing; 21 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Burial was in Indianapolis, with services conducted by Darris McNeely. A special tribute was also given by son-in-law Steve Durham.

After the service, a graveside ceremony was co-conducted by Darris McNeely and the American Legion, followed by a 21-gun salute and presentation of the American flag to his wife. Bob was a World War II veteran.

Members of the Indianapolis congregation then hosted a lunch buffet inviting all the family, friends and Church members to attend.

After a long struggle with the rigors and complications of muscular dystrophy, Ja'Van "Von" Lee Johnson-Story died on March 1, 2000, at the young age of 20 years. He was born on December 4, 1979, the son of Talicia (Johnson) and Elton Story, grandson of Eddie and Lorraine Johnson and great-grandson of Dorothy Redman who preceded him in death. All were members of the Flint congregation. Other grandparents were Daisy McGee and Jimmie and Tezzie Story and great-grandmother, Hattie Clark. He has two surviving brothers, Ja'Mial and Jarred, and a sister,

Jasmin. Ja'Mial and Jarred also have muscular dystrophy, but attend services regularly with the family. Several aunts, Cheryl (Sedgwick) Perry, Latayna Johnson, Krystal Johnson, and an uncle, Mark Johnson, were also



Ja'Van "Von" Lee Johnson-Story

brought up in the nurture of the Church.

Von was as active as his condition allowed him to be. His hobbies included music, MDA summer camp, computer activities, reading his Bible and bonding with his family. He was an active part of the local congregation. Just last fall he gave a most inspiring speech that brought many to tears. His stamina under his difficulties inspired many. He strengthened

others with his strong faith and fulfilled one of his lifetime goals of becoming a full-fledged member of the United Church of God by his own volition. He was baptized by Steve Shafer while hospitalized for complications shortly before his death.

Von was a living example of how one could live with a severe health problem, overcome any feelings of negativity and be a positive light to others. He was a 1998 graduate from Southwestern Academy. He was an honor student and was listed in the *Who's Who* for outstanding achievement, which is how he lived his life, trying to be the very best he could be. Nothing daunted his spirit of enthusiasm and determination. He was a vibrant participant and member of the 1999 State Champion Flying Eagles basketball team. Several busloads of other children with muscular dystrophy attended the services. Local pastor Steve Shafer gave the eulogy and bereavement message. Ja'Van's life will always be remembered as a light to others; he relished living in the arena of God's truth. For him all systems were "Go!"

Frieda Lechler, 86, died in January in Germany. She was baptized in October 1971 and was a

pillar in the Stuttgart and later Nuremberg congregations of God's Church.

Wolfgang Preuss, 73, died in February in Germany. In the early 1990s Mr. Preuss lived with his wife, Ursula, in Australia, where he was baptized in March 1994. He returned to Germany in late 1995. Health problems prevented him from attending services, but he was active in the Church's Work by regularly contributing suggestions for improving the text of booklets.

Lelva Curington Womack, 100, died peacefully on December 16, 1999, in Corsicana, Texas. Affectionately known as "Baba" to her family, Lelva was given a large birthday celebration by her family about a week after the Feast in 1999. It was videotaped and she immensely enjoyed watching it afterwards. Many Church members attended.

Lelva's late husband, Edgar Womack, first started listening to the radio broadcast in the early '60s, and they soon became part of the Church. They owned a peach farm just on the outskirts of Corsicana for over 40 years, and many members enjoyed a picnic there from time to time.

Her husband died 24 years



Lelva Curington Womack

ago, and her son, John E. Womack, died in 1994. She is survived by her daughter, Evelyn Womack Murphey, three younger siblings, six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. The grandchildren are: Susan Womack Griffith, Tim Womack, Robin Womack Nabors, Rebecca Murphey Kinsey, Suzanne Murphey and J. Scott Murphey. The great-grandchildren are: Matthew Parker, Meredith Deaton, Keely Nabors, John Nabors, Julie Bennett, Amy Bennett, Miranda Murphey (nee Smith) and Megan Murphey.

Daughter, Evelyn Murphy, and her grandson's ex-wife, Jacqueline Murphey, are also members of the United Church of God.

## News at a Glance...

### ABC Seminars Planned for Cincinnati, Phoenix, Toronto and St. Petersburg

Ambassador Bible Center will present the ABC Sampler Seminar at the ABC classroom in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 14 to 18. The seminar will feature portions of some of the ABC class material, and will be taught by the resident ABC instructors, Gary Antion, Ralph Levy and Les McCullough.

To register for this exciting week of Bible classes, please send your name, address and phone number to Ambassador Bible Center, P.O. Box 54992, Cincinnati, OH 45254-0992, and request enrollment at the ABC Sampler in Cincinnati. The \$50 tuition fee will be necessary to complete your enrollment and is due by July 15.

Seminars are also being planned for Phoenix, Arizona, September 9 to 11; Toronto, Ontario, Canada, November 4 to 6; as well as St. Petersburg/Tampa, Florida, December 23 to 25. More details on these seminars will be in a future issue of *United News*. Tuition fees (if any) for these mini-ABC seminars will cover the hall expense and any other incidentals.

We are excited to make ABC instruc-

tion available in a limited way to many of our brethren.

Gary Antion

### ABC Applications for 2001 Available

Applications are coming in for the next session of Ambassador Bible Center to run from January to August 2001. At the beginning of May, 17 applications had been received, and 10 students had been accepted.

Those thinking about enrolling for 2001 should write for an application form to Ambassador Bible Center, P.O. Box 54992, Cincinnati, OH 45254-0992, or download the application from the UCG Web site at [www.ucg.org/abc/abc.html](http://www.ucg.org/abc/abc.html). A new *ABC Catalog* is also available on request.

### Editorial Plans Discussed

During editorial meetings May 5, Managing Editor Scott Ashley discussed proposed *Good News* cover themes for the next year.

"What Is Man?," playing off the current news about the human genome project, is scheduled for the July/August

cover. "Can AIDS Be Stopped?" and an article about true leadership are planned for the last two issues of this year.

"The End of the World: Utopia or Annihilation?" is slated for January/February 2001, followed by "Right or Wrong: Who Decides?" and "Where Have All the Fathers Gone?" "What Happens After Death?," "Why Human Suffering?" and "Where Is the Technology Explosion Taking Us?" round out 2001.

Mr. Ashley also mentioned the plans to complete and print all 12 lessons of the *Bible Study Course* by December 2000, as well as completing half a dozen booklets, several reprint articles and preparing a direct mail promotion for *The Good News*.

There are currently 17 versions of each issue of the English *Good News*, mainly with different cards or overwraps to meet the needs of programs for waiting rooms, gift copies, renewals, other countries, as well as the expanded edition.

### Spanish Reader's Digest Responses Increase

More than 2,200 responses have been received from the *Reader's Digest*

ads run in Latin America in December. This is up from the 1,551 reported last issue. The largest number of responses came from Mexico, with 1,588. Of the 750,000 copies carrying the ad, about 650,000 went to Mexico. Responses to the Spanish ad have even been received from Indonesia and Japan!



Saul Langerica (center), pastor of the churches in Guatemala, is presented a laptop computer May 6 for translating US TEENS into Spanish. Presenters include Managing Editor Janet Treadway, Cincinnati North Pastor Jim O'Brien, President Les McCullough and area teens. US TEENS is produced by members in Cincinnati North

# News at a Glance...

## What's New on the Web?

- Full reports on the General Conference of Elders meetings in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, May 6 to 8, and the Council of Elders meetings in Cincinnati, starting May 9, are available.

<http://www.ucg.org/a/council/council.htm>

- The 2000 *Festival Housing Brochure* is available online in PDF (928K) format.

<http://www.ucg.org/feast.html>

- The May/June 2000 *Good News* is available in PDF (2.1mb) and HTML formats.

<http://www.ucg.org/html/literat.shtml>

- The May/June edition of *Las Buenas Noticias* is available in PDF (1.1mb) format and the latest edition of *El Comunicado* is now available in HTML format.

[http://www.ucg.org/html/espaa\\_ol.shtml](http://www.ucg.org/html/espaa_ol.shtml)

- Watch a special video titled "Preparing the Youth of God's Church," which highlights the importance of our youth and the role that United's Youth Camps play in this regard. View it using RealPlayer G2 from our Sermon Video Library.

<http://www.ucg.org/RealAud/>

- Our latest German booklets titled *Die Zehn Gebote* and *Schlüssel zum Verständnis der Bibel* are available online in PDF (256K and 448K) format, along with the Mai-Juni issue of *Gute Nachrichten* (1.0mb).

<http://www.ucg.org/html/deutsch.shtml>

- The April/May issue of *Virtual Christian Magazine* is available.

<http://vcmagazine.org>

- Regular updates from the president and home office staff, plus news of the Work United is doing, are posted on our news page.

<http://www.ucg.org/a/news/news.htm>

If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

[webmaster@ucg.org](mailto:webmaster@ucg.org)

## U.S. Holy Day Offerings and Attendance Up

The attendance and offerings for both Holy Days of the Days of Unleavened Bread were up in the United States. On the first Holy Day 12,111 were in attendance, and the offering was \$568,846.82, for an average per person of \$46.97. This represents a 1.4 percent increase in attendance over 1999, and a 3.6 percent increase in the offering. Once all individually mailed offerings are processed, this figure should reach \$585,000.

On the last day of Unleavened Bread, the attendance was 11,703 and the offering was \$565,007.52, for an average of \$48.28 per person. This is a 3 percent increase in attendance and a 0.8 percent increase in the offering amount over 1999. Once individually mailed offerings are processed, this figure should reach \$580,000.

Gerald Seelig

## Radio Taping Begins

On May 30 Gary Petty will come to the home office to begin taping the first 13 half-hour radio programs for the Church-sponsored weekly radio broadcast scheduled to begin in August. Plans are for the broadcast to consist of three sections of eight minutes each, separated by commercials for *The Good News* and other Church literature. The middle segment may also include interaction between Mr. Petty and a second person who is knowledgeable in specific subjects.

Radio audiences and formats have changed considerably over the years, so it is hard to know what results to expect from this test phase. It can take time to build a radio audience. "We would appreciate the prayers of the brethren," said Peter Eddington, Media and Communications operations manager.

## Mail Up 61 Percent for First Four Months

Through the end of April, 61,481 pieces of mail and Internet responses had been received at the home office. This is a 61 percent increase over the first four months of 1999. Of the total, 38,330 pieces were response cards requesting literature. There were also 3,786 Internet responses.

In March, the office received a record number of new subscribers who found a card in a waiting room copy of the *GN*, with 1,329. April wasn't far behind with 1,204, for a total of 4,705 for the first four months. Since the program started, 17,316 subscribers have been attracted to the magazine through seeing a magazine in a waiting room.

The office is preparing for the onslaught of cards from a nationwide *Reader's Digest* ad in the June issue. Meanwhile, responses to *Reader's Digest* ads from several years ago continue to come in. For the first four months of the year, 160 responses were received.

*Good News* renewal responses are also beginning to come in. More than 6,000 renewals had been received by the end of April, but it is too early in the renewal cycle to determine the response rate.

The renewal program will not affect members, "but non-member subscribers will be given several opportunities to renew their subscription," said *GN* Managing Editor Scott Ashley. "To make the most effective use of our funds, we want to be sure we are only sending the magazine to those who really want it."

"This will be our first renewal since 1998 and we anticipate there will be a certain percentage decrease in our subscriber list," said President Les McCullough. "However, that loss will probably be more than offset by the new subscribers we will receive from the *Reader's Digest* ad that begins running nationwide this month."

## 115,000 Booklets Reprinted

After projecting our booklet needs over the coming months, at the end of March we sent to the printer our largest booklet reprint order ever—a total of 115,000 booklets. This order includes:

- 60,000 copies of *What Is Your Destiny?* for expected responses to our upcoming *Reader's Digest* ads. (This will be our sixth printing of the booklet; we have already distributed almost 75,000 copies.)

- 20,000 copies of *The Ten Commandments* booklet. (We have already distributed almost 30,000 copies in the last year and a half since it was first printed.)

- 15,000 copies of *You Can Have Living Faith*. (We have distributed 25,000 copies since it was first printed a year ago.)

- 20,000 copies of *Is the Bible True?* (We have already printed and distributed almost 30,000 copies since it was first printed two years ago.)

With this reprinting, along with 35,000 copies each of two new booklets, *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Matter?*, UCGIA will have printed 879,000 copies of our 20 booklets over the last four years.

Scott Ashley

## New United Elders Announced

Ken Murray, serving in the Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, area, and James Capo, serving in Colorado Springs, Colorado, were credentialed as elders at the February Council of Elders meetings. Frank Fish, of the Los Angeles, California, congregation, was ordained February 26.

## Feast in Tonga Announced

The Feast will be held in Mu'a, the old capital city of Tonga, which is 12 miles from Nuku'alofa. Activities will include scenic tours with wonderful views, as well as visits to historic sites. Coral reef tours and snorkeling will be available, and the traditional dancing at the Tonga Cultural Center would also be interesting for visitors. The temperatures usually range between 20 and 26 degrees Celsius (68 and 79 Fahrenheit).

There are a number of cafeterias near the site, and it is only a few minutes walk to the shopping center and bank. Rental cars are available, as are taxis and buses.

Accommodations for overseas guests will be in hotels in Nuku'alofa. The best hotel is the Pacific Royale Hotel. Room rates there range from about \$65 (single, economy) to \$175 (fully furnished penthouse). A discount was offered for those booking through the Church. Booking for this hotel should be done through Tolu Ha'angana, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga, or by telephone +676 32-122.

Other hotels are: International Dateline Hotel, telephone +676 23-411, fax +675 23-410; Harbour View Motel, telephone +676 25-488, fax +675 25-490; and Nuku'alofa Hotel, telephone +676 24-244, fax +675 23-154.

**Location of Services:** The Church's building in Mu'a.

**Reservations:** Contact Tolu Ha'angana, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga, +676 32-122 (phone); or Heamasi Ta'ufu'ou, P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga, +676 29-165 (phone).

Tolu Ha'angana

## United News

Periodicals Postage  
paid at Milford, Ohio,  
and at additional mailing offices