

Council Approves 26 Elders to Be Added to United

The Council of Elders approved a record number of new elders for United at their meetings Dec. 6. They approved the credentials of 13 men in the United States, Australia and Jamaica, and approved the ordinations of 12 men in Ghana and one in the Philippines.

"Nearly all of these men were elders formerly with the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship, or the Remnant Church of God in Ghana," wrote Roy Holladay in the Dec. 13 letter from the Council. (Ten of the credentialed men were from the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship, and 12 men to be ordained are from the Remnant Church of God.) "Both organizations have become part of the United Church of God in the last few months. We appreciate the service these men and their wives have been giving already, and look forward to their future contributions to the Church."

The men who were credentialed and the areas they serve are: Flavious Adkins, St. Louis, Missouri; Maurice Benson, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin; Paul Fisher, Kingston, Jamaica; Charles Franke, Soldotna, Alaska; Preston Fritts, Paducah, Kentucky; David Hale, Denver, Colorado.

Alan Kendall, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia; Gerald Knochel, Canton, Illinois; Thomas McCrady, St. Louis, Missouri; Larry Sharp, San Diego, California; Rick Stafford, Portland, Oregon; Bill Swanson, Indi-

anapolis, Indiana; and Hal Williams, Sacramento, California.

A historic ordination ceremony is planned for Jan. 19 in Ghana. UCGIA President Les McCullough will travel to Ghana accompanied by Treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick and pastors Joel Meeker and Melvin Rhodes to participate in the ceremony. On the Sabbath of Jan. 19, elders currently serving as pastors of the Remnant Church of God will be ordained as elders of UCGIA. Following this ceremony, not only will they be recognized as elders of United, but also the congregations they pastor will be officially recognized as congregations of UCGIA.

The following day the Remnant Church of God will officially dissolve, and reform as the United Church of God, Ghana, using documents prepared at a series of meetings between elders of Remnant and United. Dr. Kirkpatrick will also have meetings with the treasurer and national council of UCG, Ghana, to bring them up to date on budgetary and accounting principles, and to assist them in their transition into the United Church of God. *UN*



Above, Council views presentation about using the Internet in an even greater way. Inset, Dr. Joseph Nicolosi addresses the subject of homosexuality (photos by Peter Eddington)

Council Supports "Visionary" Use of Internet

The Council of Elders heard a stimulating presentation Dec. 7 on how the Church can tap into the power of the Internet in an even greater way to help do the work in a cost-effective way. Council Chairman Roy Holladay summarized the Council's response this way: "We are also certainly going to put money and energy into being visionary in using the Internet for the work of the Church."

Excerpts of Mr. Holladay's Dec. 13 summary letter on behalf of the Council are reprinted here:

"The Council members are now returning home from a very profitable series of meetings in Clearwater, Florida, Dec. 3 through 12, including two days of committee work. Our custom is to schedule at least one meeting a year at a site somewhere other than the home office in Cincinnati. This allows us to visit all the congregations and members in that area, gives the local membership an opportunity to give input to the Council and gives the elders in that area an opportunity to sit in on Council meetings if

they wish. Over the last two Sabbaths Council members spoke in every congregation in Florida and one in Georgia, and we greatly appreciated the warm hospitality of all our hosts.

"We logged very full days in these meetings, covering nearly every item on our agenda. Sometimes the business issues we deal with as a board are rather mundane to observers, but all of the matters we address are important to some aspect of God's work, and in this letter we wanted to share with you some of the meeting highlights.

"We are very pleased to announce that we officially approved the ordinations and credentials of a record number of... ministers.... [See article, above left.]

"Reports from the president and operation managers were most encouraging. Exciting new avenues for preaching the gospel continue to open, and existing avenues continue to grow. God has blessed us greatly in the financial arena, not only with stability in an economically unsettled time, but even with growth. Through Wednesday, Dec. 12, our regular income is roughly 7.7 percent more than last year at this time, which is just slightly (1.3 percent) more than we budgeted for regular income. Our governing documents oblige us to always have a balanced annual budget and we certainly feel the weight of responsibility to be wise stewards, planning for potential growth God may give, but

(See "COUNCIL," page 9)

ABC Welcomes 56 Students for 2002

The Ambassador Bible Center welcomed the class of 2002 with an orientation Jan. 6 with the theme, "Coming to Know God." Classes began Jan. 7.

At press time, 56 students were being expected from a pool of accepted students from 17 U.S.

states and three other countries (though some of the international students were not expected to be able to come because of ABC's inability to grant student visas). The largest numbers of students are from Ohio, Arizona, California, Texas and Washington.



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New Records Set

• The *Good News* print run is now 472,000, and 2.4 million English-language copies were distributed in 2001.

• 608,000 booklets were printed, for a total of more than 1.8 million since United started.

• 460,000 subscriber development letters were mailed (130 percent increase), bringing in 64,628 requests (205 percent increase).

See pages 15 and 16 for more details.

Where Has the GN Expanded Edition Gone?

by Scott Ashley

Many of you may have wondered why you haven't received a *Good News* expanded edition for some time. The simple answer is that we haven't produced one for some time. The longer answer is a bit more involved.

We've discontinued the expanded edition for several reasons. One is that our *Good News* print runs have increased so fast—an average of 16,000 copies per issue for the last three years, totaling a 300,000 increase—that we have to watch our printing budget more carefully than ever. Our print run has increased so fast that we haven't wanted to offer the expanded edition to more subscribers, choosing to focus our funds instead on reaching additional new readers.

A second reason is the increased complexity of producing *The Good News*. Several years ago we had only two basic versions—the regular 32-page version and the larger expanded version. For much of the last few years we've been producing as many as 17 versions including different renewal efforts and versions for newsstands, international needs and waiting room versions. The logistics and expense were growing increasingly unwieldy. By dropping the expanded edition we are now producing only 12 versions and saving a considerable amount of money by doing so.

The last reason, and perhaps the most important, is that the most urgent reason for needing the expanded edition has passed.

When we started *The Good News* in the early days of the United Church of

God, we realized we needed to address, in print, many of the doctrinal heresies that had caused us to leave our former association and band together to continue our traditional beliefs and practices. However, many of those heresies, and the way we would address them, would not be appropriate for the general content of *The Good News*, since it is intended primarily for a non-UCG audience.

We came up with the idea of a 16-page insert in *The Good News* that would address such deeper doctrinal topics and began producing it beginning with the July-August 1996 issue. Through the remainder of 1996 and 1997 we produced expanded editions with articles addressing such topics as the Sabbath, Holy Days, covenants, clean and unclean meats, the continuity of God's law, tithing, the Kingdom of God, sin, the Holy Spirit and the like.

Many of these articles were incorporated into or expanded and produced as booklets. Some other topics have been addressed in study papers. Those booklets and papers now constitute the official teaching of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, on those subjects.

In addition, those subjects have been covered repeatedly in sermons and Bible studies in the local congregations as well as the series of tapes on the fundamental beliefs and sometimes in articles in *New Beginnings* and now *United News*. Thus, for most of our members, those things simply aren't an issue any more.

What about the other purpose of providing "meatier" material for those *Good News* readers who want it? Here the need

is being met in other, different ways. The first of these is our growing library of booklets, now numbering 28, covering many basic doctrines and biblical subjects. Early in the history of *The Good News* when we had only a handful of booklets, the expanded edition helped fill that gap. Now, however, with our many booklets we have plenty of material to fill that gap.

We also have our 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*, which we regularly offer to *Good News* readers. On our Web site interested readers can find virtually every article, booklet and *Bible Study Course* we have ever published, plus audio of radio programs and video and audio of various sermons and transcripts of still more sermons.

Also every issue of *United News* carries spiritual articles for the membership. Your ideas for topics of interest are always welcome. All of these tools and methods provide far more material than we could begin to offer in an expanded edition.

All in all, the expanded edition was a good idea whose time has come and gone. That doesn't mean you will never see another expanded edition. It remains a highly cost-effective way to distribute new booklets—at least those suitable for the magazine-size format—to members. We will likely still use it for that purpose once or twice a year when we produce new booklets in that format, because we can save several thousand dollars in postage by doing so.

We are always looking for ways to do things as efficiently and cost-effectively as we can, and that is the primary reason we are no longer producing the expanded editions. *UN*

Volunteers Handle Mountains of Work at Home Office

"Those of us at the office and administration would certainly be remiss if at the close of the year we didn't give an important acknowledgement," said Les McCullough, president of UCGA.

"Since moving to the office in Cincinnati, we have worked with a limited staff to handle all the mailings that go out from the office. We remain somewhat short in staff, but we have a great hidden asset. It is the volunteers who come in to help with the stuffing, mailing and other major activities. They are invaluable and unflinching. Without these volunteers, the office would grind to a stop. We can't allow that to happen, and greatly appreciate the help so willingly given.

"They give up their personal time without thought for as little as a few doughnuts and some coffee," said Mr. McCullough.

Church member volunteers make a vital contribution to 15 major mailing

at the home office every year. In 2001 volunteers provided about 600 hours of labor in preparing six issues of *The Good News* for international mailing as well as nine major mailings of sermon tapes to shut-ins and congregation tape libraries.

"We depend on the volunteers a lot," said Connie Seelig, who coordinates the mail processing and mailing functions for the Church. "We call them inserting 'parties,' and we have a lot of fun," she said. But it is a lot of work and a big savings for the Church.

Most of the volunteers come from the local Cincinnati East congregation, coordinated by Ed and Doris Parrott. Other volunteers have come from congregations in four states. Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Louisville, Kentucky; and Wheeling, West Virginia, have all sent crews to help with mailings.

Ambassador Bible Center students also contributed over \$13,000 in labor last year, including mailings and data entry.



2001 ABC students helping with a mailing

Several dedicated volunteers have also been involved in data entry of the thousands of subscription cards pouring into the home office over the last year.

"Thank you to all those volunteers. We do love and appreciate your efforts and don't know what we would do without you," said Mr. McCullough. *UN*

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Internet access on your computer:

The United Church of God, *an International Association*, has a home page on the Internet's World Wide Web. The address <http://www.ucg.org> gives you access to general information and news about the Church, issues of *The Good News* and *United News*, as well as our booklets. The address <http://www.ucg.ca> accesses the Church's Canadian Web site, <http://www.ucg.org.au> the Australian Web site, <http://www.labuonanotizia.org> the Italian Web site, <http://www.goodnews.org.uk> the British Isles Web site, <http://www.ucg.ph> the Philippines Web site and <http://www.ucgsa.org> the Southern Africa Web site.

International News...

Canadian National Council Meets in Toronto

The Canadian National Council met Thursday night, Nov. 29, through Sunday morning, Dec. 1, in Toronto, Ontario. Members flying in from the west were happily greeted with mild temperatures and green grass. This was quite a contrast to the meetings held last December in Pentecost.

Meetings on Thursday evening lasted three hours. Festival coordinators were asked to give a brief description of observations from the Feast of Tabernacles.

National Office Update

The national office update was given by Anthony Wasilkoff, Ed van Pelt and George Carter. As usual, Mr. van Pelt had prepared charts to help everyone see growth in the various areas of the Church and work. Among other comparisons, the charts show which media outreach methods bring in subscribers and why people have been removed from our subscription list. An ongoing difficulty is when people move without giving the Canadian office their new address. Then *The Good News* is mailed to the old address and Canada Post sends it back to the office and requires us to pay the postage for its return. So the Church loses a subscriber and pays twice for the postage!

Other highlights of the update follow. Membership remains steady. A number of members died since the beginning of the year. On the other hand a number of new members were baptized.

The number of donors has increased substantially. Nearly half the new donors since April 1, 2001, attended one or more Holy Day services. The number of subscribers has increased modestly. The increase is mostly from new waiting rooms that were added in April and the Valpak program that ran in August. The brochure holder program has also added a number of new subscribers to our list. For the first time since UCG-Canada's inception, the number of donors exceeds the number of members (369 to 368).

At the time of the report there were 4,880 subscribers to the *Good News* magazine and another 7,154 waiting rooms receiving the magazine. Additional copies of *The Good News* are distributed locally and most congregations receive a supply for their information tables. There were 182 Canadian subscribers to the *Bible Study Course*. So far 785 have received all 12 lessons.

Up to the end of November the Canadian office had distributed close to 100,000 pieces of literature, for an average of 8,978 pieces of literature per month. This did not include tapes and member, donor or subscriber letters, which would add about 800 pieces per month. The most popular booklets this year are: *The United States and Britain in*

Bible Prophecy, Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion and The Church Jesus Built. A total of 2,902 copies of these three booklets were distributed. The projected number of *Good News* magazines distributed in 2001 was close to 80,000, about 1,200 more than last year. Projections also showed over 110,000 booklets and magazines being distributed in 2001, an increase of about 5 percent. In November, 142 new names were added to the Canadian files, bringing the total to 1,598 new names since Jan. 1, 2001.

Brainstorming, Planning and More

The Canadian Council's brainstorming session is a time set aside to discuss items individual Council members think are important to consider. This time issues concerning another *Reader's Digest* ad, encouragement for members to become involved in "good works" projects, changing the current Council composition and a definition for "salaried" and "non-salaried" Council members were brought up and assigned to committees for further discussion.

On Friday the Council met for the first time in the new Canadian office. Eric

Livermore gave his final report on the office relocation. The Livermores were then presented with a token of appreciation from the Council for the time and effort they expended in locating a new office facility. Since the office will be used to do God's work, Richard Pinelli, operation manager for Ministerial Services in the United States, was asked to offer a prayer for the dedication of the office.

The Council broke into the four committees for meetings for the rest of the morning. During the afternoon, committee reports were given and the Council had time to ask questions and give suggestions.

David Palmer gave a presentation on media outreach. He said, "Media outreach is how a person comes in contact in the first place, preaching the gospel is what happens afterward." He mentioned that when we look at media, we must look at the cost of the advertisement plus the cost of sending out the product. Mr. Palmer then related several ideas the committee and operation manager are considering as media outreach.

Arthur David, UCG-Canada's legal counsel, was invited to the Friday afternoon meeting. Mr. David was able to answer sev-

eral questions of the Council including legal aspects and implications of the bylaws. He complimented the Council and operation manager on how well things are running.

Each year, the Canadian Council must approve the Canadian Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and budget to be sent to the National Conference. It must also approve the agenda for the Annual National Conference meeting in March. During Friday afternoon and Sunday morning these were all reviewed and approved.

The last item on the agenda was unfinished business. During this time, the Council discussed the idea of outreach and is in favor of community service and outreach projects.

Elders Conference

On Sunday afternoon, an Elders Conference was convened for the elders who were in the area and able to attend. Three sessions were conducted on Sunday while the balance of the sessions were conducted on Monday. Mr. Pinelli presented most of the sessions. The ministers and other guests were very pleased to have Mr. Pinelli discuss a cross section of relevant and timely topics. *UV*

UCG-Germany Provides "Answers for Today and Tomorrow"

The UCG-Germany National Council decided at its meeting on April 22 to add a subtitle to the German *Good News* magazine: "Answers for today and tomorrow." In addition, the Council approved a half-page ad for the fall in the health-food magazine *Schrot & Korn* (Grist & Grain) using a more challenging text than previous ads.

In November the ad with a reply card appeared in *Schrot & Korn*. By the end of the month 1,492 responses had been received.

However, earlier in the year, the magazine *Eltern* (Parents) informed us that it would not publish our ad intended for the May issue, even though the ad had received initial approval. The rejection letter from the publisher stated that advertising from religious organizations was not allowed in the *Eltern* magazine. This was the first time in its existence that UCG-Germany had been turned down for an ad.

German Publications

The November-December issue of the *Gute Nachrichten* magazine was mailed to 3,183 subscribers in mid-November, a 21.2 percent increase over the previous issue.

Articles in the November-December issue were "After the Attack on America: What Next?", "When Parents Read With

Their Children," "The Coming Age of Grace" and "When Friends Disagree."

A semiannual letter was mailed to 522 subscribers who have renewed their subscription to the *Gute Nachrichten* magazine. The new booklet *Living Faith* and the booklet *The Bible: Truth or Legend?* were offered, and 193 responses were received to the offer, a 36.9 percent response rate.

During the summer the first lessons of the German-language *Bible Study Course* were printed. Lessons 2, 3 and 6 were printed, and lesson 4 was scheduled to be printed in December.

UCG-Germany also reprinted the booklet *What Happens After Death?* in June. This booklet was the most requested booklet and, therefore, the first one to see its initial print run depleted.

Church News

In July UCG-Germany launched its second Web site as a source primarily for church news: www.ucg-germany.org. The church service schedule, announcements and activity reports can be found on this Web site. Some of the site content will be in the English language.

Also in July the Dormagen congregation started a regular Sabbath school program for six children ages 3 to 9 years.

For the year 2001, the Holy Day

offerings in Germany were 1.2 percent higher than last year.

News From the Netherlands

On Pentecost, 65 brethren from the Netherlands and the Dormagen congregation in Germany met for a special combined service in Arnhem, the Netherlands. During the morning service, UCG-Holland member Martin Arendsen gave the sermon in Dutch. His sermon was translated simultaneously into German by UCG-Holland member Albert van Dijk. In the afternoon, UCG-Germany and UCG-Holland pastor Paul Kieffer gave the sermon in German, and his sermon was translated into Dutch by UCG-Holland member Jamie de Moie.

UCG-Holland's second booklet was printed in July: *The Biblical Day of Rest: Saturday or Sunday?*

The *Good News* mailing lists for the Netherlands, managed by UCG-Germany and the United Kingdom, were combined into one list in November. UCG-Germany manages the list as a service for UCG-Holland. Currently there are 700 subscribers of the *Good News* magazine in the Netherlands.

This information first appeared in the *UCG-Germany e-mail update of Dec. 3*. To subscribe to the update, send a request to info@gutenachrichten.org.

Van Belkum Visits Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe

by André van Belkum

During the period Nov. 19 to 29 I conducted a visiting tour of the congregations in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe. It was heartening to see both the spiritual and physical growth among our members in these regions.

Zambia

Most of our members live in a remote area of Zambia, where they grow maize and cotton. The distance from the capital, Lusaka, is about 90 miles, but the roads are badly potholed and in a poor state of repair. The result is that the journey took our elder in Zambia, Kambani Banda, and me six and a half hours. During the past few years we have traveled in a 1987 Peugeot 504 that has the most remarkable ability to negotiate virtually any kind of terrain. Kambani and I joke that our guardian angels work overtime when we travel in the 504!

The next day we handled numerous counseling sessions, conducted two Bible studies and fellowshiped with the brethren. As usual the ladies supplied the whole group with tasty meals of venison, chicken, rice, ground maize and vegetables, cooked on open fires. By the way, the members have improved their crop yields threefold during the last three years and were beginning to plant for the next season. The rains started a few days before we arrived, which is right on time for the planting season.

It is a challenge to find a suitable place to perform baptisms, and this time was no exception. There were six people ready, and after some discussion among the men, it was decided to use an old dugout canoe. These are

carved out of the trunks of trees, and are often seen on TV programs that show scenes of fishermen paddling canoes on African rivers. This vessel was placed near the local well, and filled to the brim with water. It worked remarkably well, as each one fitted snugly into the craft. With at least three people in close attendance, we made sure each person was totally immersed. After the laying on of hands, the members broke out in spontaneous singing of thanks to God for adding six more members to the Body of Christ.

On our return to Lusaka we encountered a tremendous thunderstorm which turned the track into pools of water and slushy mud. Again I was amazed how Kambani skillfully negotiated sections of the road that appeared impossible to get through. We renamed the Peugeot a 5-by-4, not a 4-by-4, with the fifth factor being an angel.

The next day we visited a group of about 15 adults who had been reading our literature for two years, and as a result had left their former fellowship, a large and well-known Sabbath-keeping church. Once again the area was off the beaten track, and in a remote area about 45 miles from Lusaka. The last section of the road was especially bad, and just as we reached our destination the steering rod on the 504 snapped. Angels must get tired as well! Now we were in a predicament, as there were no other vehicles in the vicinity. The only way out, and back to a road where there could be vehicles to ferry us back to Lusaka, was either by foot or by bicycle. And to make matters worse Shirley Banda and their 18-month-old son, Rangana, had accompanied us.

However, Kambani recommended that, as we had been brought safely to the group,

we should first fulfill the purpose for our going there in the first place. So we held a question-and-answer session, covering the Millennium and what it means, the election and calling, baptism and repentance, the structure of the United Church of God, the trinity doctrine and the Holy Spirit, and other questions. Kambani will be visiting with them about once a month to help with further teaching and understanding.

It was decided that the best way out was by means of three bicycles. Two of the men had to accompany us in order to return with the bicycles. The plan was that Kambani and Shirley, carrying Rangana on her back as the custom is, would be transported on the carrier which is located behind the bicycle seat. I had the use of the third bicycle.

All went well for a short distance, but then Shirley was experiencing difficulty holding Rangana steady. Plan B: We placed Rangana on my carrier, and tied him around my waist. This plan worked like a charm, and Rangana and I enjoyed every minute, weaving our way through the bush and pools of water. We also provided moments of mirth and amusement for the local villagers who had never seen such a funny sight before. I just waved and kept peddling.

Finally we arrived at the main road in the dark, where we waited for nearly two hours before a vehicle arrived. After the usual bargaining, the driver was willing to drive us back to Lusaka. Who says visiting does not have its unusually exciting moments!

Malawi

The next stop was Malawi. There I was met by Mark and Meschak Chonde, two of the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Chonde, who are

members living in Lilongwe. Their clinic, which was built with funds from LifeNets, is functioning and serving our members and the local community. The reception area also serves as a meeting place for the congregation, while one of the baths has been especially constructed to serve as a baptismal font.

On the Sabbath there were 33 people (29 adults and four children) in attendance. Most of these had kindly traveled from Blantyre, a journey of about five hours by bus or taxi, in order to attend with us. The majority were baptized in the '80s and early '90s, and had left our former affiliation because of the doctrinal changes. I am expecting quite a few more to start attending with us. By the way, on my last visit there were only six in attendance.

We had an enjoyable and profitable service, followed by a meal provided by the Chondes. The afternoon was spent fellowshiping under a huge tree, located in the Chonde's front garden. That evening one of the members produced a guitar, and we sang hymns from our hymnal, interspersed with a number of their own songs in the local dialect. The "song service" lasted about two hours. Most of the members slept at the clinic, and left early the next morning for the return trip to Blantyre.

Zimbabwe

The final stop was Zimbabwe. There was some frustration at Lilongwe airport as the Air Zimbabwe flight coming from Nairobi, Kenya, for some reason did not have sufficient fuel to land and take off, and so overflowed us, leaving 27 passengers stranded. Fortunately Air Malawi took control of the situation and put us up for the night at a local hotel. The next morning we caught a connecting flight to Blantyre, and then to Harare, Zimbabwe, where I was met by one of our members, Mrs. Gill Heathcote.

That evening we held a Bible study for our members who live in that area. All were able to make it, except one elderly lady living some distance from Harare. I may also mention that the circulation of *The Good News* has increased from about 100 to well over 500 due to an advertisement we placed in the *Zimbabwe Reader's Digest*, and we trust that God will call certain ones from this list. The government's controversial land reform policy continues to cause tension and stress for the majority of the people.

From Harare I traveled to Bulawayo, where I met with long-standing members Stephen Tshabalala and his wife, Vetina. There were also others showing a keen interest in the Church and the truth. Thursday Nov. 29 I returned to South Africa.

It is encouraging and inspiring to see the growth in membership, and the interest generated by our literature. As one of our members in Malawi said, "Truly the Eternal is blessing the Church, its efforts at spreading the gospel and our leadership." UN

More South African News at a Glance

Johannesburg May Have Pastor in Mid-2002

Bill Jahns and his wife, Cheryl, have volunteered to serve in South Africa. They currently serve congregations in Utah, Idaho, Oregon and Colorado. If all goes well, they are hoping to be able to arrive in Johannesburg to pastor that congregation and help with the brethren in Malawi some time after the May General Conference of Elders meetings.

Narrow Escape for Member When Pretoria Shopping Mall Roof Collapses

After leaving a shopping mall in Pretoria, Eleanor Meiring and her children saw ambulances rushing in the direction of where they had been a few minutes earlier. It was only after reaching her husband Martin's office that she found out the area where they had just enjoyed a milk shake was now under rubble. More than 50 people were injured

when the roof collapsed, but thankfully there were no fatalities. We are grateful for God's protection.

Semiannual Letter to GN Readers

The subscriber letter from the president of UCGIA, Les McCullough, offering the new booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* was sent to the 4,300 GN subscribers who have received at least one issue.

Financial and Promotional Statistics

Neil Becker reported that expenditures are running 2 percent below the budgeted amount, and income is running 23 percent above the budgeted amount for the first nine months of the financial year.

Seven donations from GN readers were received in November, making a total of 104 donors and coworkers on file.

In November, *Readers' Digest* responses were received from: South Africa, 153 (for

a total of almost 1,500, a 3.3 percent response); Kenya, 195 (total 404, an 8.1 percent response); and Zimbabwe, 231 (total 572, a 5.7 percent response).

Presently 318 people are either doing or have completed the 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*.

UCG in Southern Africa has requested 40,000 trifold brochures (with reply-paid card) from Cincinnati for placing in selected post office boxes early in 2002. As a trial run, 700 (non-reply-paid) were placed in post office boxes in the Beacon Bay post office in East London. We received just over a 2 percent response. Reply-paid cards should receive a better response.

Apart from the cost of the brochure (about 3 cents U.S.) the post office only charges 1 cent to place each brochure in selected post office boxes. Thereafter each reply-paid response costs 12 cents. Depending upon the number of responses received, this could be a very cost-effective method of reaching the public. UN

To say that South Africa is a surprise to an American minister is an understatement. From picture books and history, I knew that South Africa is a country as spectacular as its fabled DeBeers' diamond mines which have dominated the world's gem markets for the last 150 years.

I also knew that God had done a work there among people who live in a society both dramatically different and strikingly similar to America.

Difficult to Summarize

It's not easy to write a short summary of lessons. I learned much in the two-week trip to South Africa with a delegation of 35 community leaders from Indiana. From Oct. 27 to Nov. 9, 2001, my job was to be on assignment for WFYI, the PBS television station in Indianapolis, and for our UCG home office. I was to capture television footage of South Africa and the activities of the group of leaders to be used in a PBS special with credits to the United Church of God. The footage will also be available for our future television needs.

The delegates were Hoosiers, the name people from Indiana call themselves. It's an affectionate term which they all enjoy, but nobody knows why or where the name came from.

They were fun loving. They were also very serious. They were intense. I learned early that staying ahead of the delegation to capture their activities and the essence of South Africa was an 18-hour-a-day job.

I completely appreciated the two Sabbaths spent in Johannesburg and Cape Town and the opportunity to speak to our energetic congregations there, pastored by André van Belkum and Peter Hawkins respectively. Our brethren there shine just like the diamonds of South Africa. The delegation, including WFYI's president and Indiana first lady Judy O'Bannon, knew that "Howard, the TV producer from Portland," didn't work Saturday because it is the Sabbath. With enough rest, I was able to capture 28 hours of footage with the help of Lloyd Wright, WFYI's president who asked to be my assistant, an offer I couldn't refuse.

The group was a People to People Ambassador Program delegation. This exchange program for community leaders was initiated under the Eisenhower administration to promote understanding between Americans and the rest of the world. Our particular delegation was organized around the theme of community building. Mrs. O'Bannon, the wife of the governor of Indiana, is an outstanding public servant in her own right, a fact made obvious as she led the delegation.

Courage in Shadow of War

Though the trip was planned in the summer, the delegation members were deeply concerned about the potential threats on Americans abroad after Sept. 11. Many didn't want to come, but when Mrs. O'Bannon let many know she believed it was important to not let the negative events overwhelm the

Lessons From South Africa

Shooting a PBS TV special in South Africa gives a unique perspective on the challenges and potential of this surprising country.

by Howard Davis

very important mission, they all took heart. Some told me that they felt their lives were in God's hands.

The itinerary took us through New York City for a Saturday night departure on Oct. 27 and a return on Nov. 9.

Kennedy airport was deathly slow. Half the restaurants in the food court were shuttered due to the collapse of business after the New York disaster. Throughout the trip, events in the Middle East, New York and the anthrax scare dominated the news in South Africa as we traveled under the shadow of the war on terrorism.

For many delegates, it took courage to travel to South Africa at that time. But once there, the delegates said they would never regret it, come what may.

We flew via South African Airlines to Johannesburg, South Africa's industrial and financial capital. While there, we met with top government officials regarding all aspects of national development. We met student leaders

that work and make progress—are those with leaders who know how to motivate and inspire their communities through their service.

As Americans, it's easy to look down on other peoples and cultures and their problems. But it's more challenging to understand the difficulties, desires, histories and goals of real communities. To serve effectively, you must be ready to learn, to listen, to appreciate. South Africa's problems are not wholly unlike those in America, only in different degrees and settings. Some problems are desperately difficult, however, and can only be solved by the character and determination of South Africans.

Take AIDS, for example. It is estimated between 12 and 35 percent of the black population is HIV positive. The death toll in the next 10 years will be staggering, perhaps 8 million men, women and, tragically, children. It is like knowing that an atomic bomb is coming. We were able to interview important authorities on the topic, as well as tape outstanding professional presentations.

With the post-apartheid challenge of creating an equitable multiracial future for its 43 million citizens, South Africa's task in community building is perhaps a greater challenge than America's. But its black majority of 30 million, along with minorities

of whites, colored and Indian peoples, wish to succeed as much as Americans.

We met many outstanding leaders. We toured landscapes as vast and beautiful as America's. Most important, we saw, met and appreciated its many peoples in the rich, poor- and middle-class settings that make up contemporary South Africa.

South Africa needs outstanding leaders, and is developing many. But it needs more. Its number one employment field is education. Many of its people highly regard the role of the United States in the world and its leadership position. But they know they must solve their problems and that America is now experiencing some of the terror they have known for a generation.

LifeNets and the Ministry Help

Mrs. O'Bannon on three formal occasions talked about the outstanding global reach of the services of Indianapolis-based LifeNets and the associates of Victor Kubik, the UCG Council member who is LifeNets

president. Through Mr. Kubik, the WFYI president invited me to help the delegation. Mr. van Belkum and Johannesburg member Steve Serfontein helped me immensely by providing important side trips to capture the essence of South Africa in the Johannesburg and Pretoria region. We traveled the wonderfully beautiful and lush rolling hills of farmland 300 miles east to Kruger National Park, a wilderness preserve teeming with lions, giraffes, baboons, elephants, tigers, hyenas, rhinos and hippos.

Peter Hawkins provided the same outstanding service in the Cape Town area. Mrs. O'Bannon noticed and commented on the help UCG members provided to the delegation, inviting them to the official banquets, hugging them good-bye and thanking them for their service.

One lesson I saw is the power of real Christianity and service in every situation. Just watching the outstanding service of UCG ministers André van Belkum and Peter Hawkins, deacon Jorge de Campos and member Steve Serfontein as we helped Mrs. O'Bannon was a learning experience.

Elephant-Size Problems, Lion-Like Destiny

Like the Garden of Eden, South Africa has much good. It also has much evil.

Crime is so serious that in most areas property is surrounded by barbed-wire fences and walls that make them virtual fortresses. Tribalism does not threaten civil war, but it does hold a power over many millions, conditioning men to be routinely violent and oppressive to women. Witch doctors tell men the way to avoid HIV or be cured is to have sex with virgins, and the rate of indiscriminate rape of young girls is an outrage, spreading HIV while scarring their lives forever.

Underemployment is endemic. Only 40 to 50 percent of blacks are employed.

Yet the opulence of the rich and middle class and the modernity in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban and smaller cities is no different in type or degree than found in any of America's great cities. I saw shopping malls that were more palatial and superior to the suburban malls in Seattle, Washington, or Portland, Oregon.

It's difficult to sum up the impact of this land, so rich and poor, spectacularly beautiful and full of promising progress and ongoing tragedy. South Africa today is a place of amazing contradictions.

But it is obvious South Africa is also a place where God continues to fulfill His promises to Abraham. It is a place that desperately needs the grace of Christ, the truth of God and the administration of the government of God. He obviously wants His work of proclaiming His truth to grow.

I was impressed with the importance of the small but growing United Church of God in South Africa as it struggles to keep up with the opportunities. It must never feel it is alone. South Africa, and our congregations there, need our prayers, our support and our love, for surely this country will be one of the earth's greatest jewels for a thousand years! *UD*



André van Belkum, Lloyd Wright (president of WFYI), Howard Davis and Steve Serfontein

at the University of Pretoria 30 miles north and celebrated the opening of a joint art exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Museum and the Indianapolis Art Museum officiated by Mrs. O'Bannon. We toured Kruger Park on the border with Mozambique. We flew to Cape Town at the tip of Africa where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. Then for two days we visited Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

Service-Minded Leaders Build Communities

Perhaps the greatest lessons I saw in action among this high-powered group of leaders from many different fields, disciplines and institutions was the theme constantly emphasized by Mrs. O'Bannon. It is one of the greatest principles Jesus taught and one of the foundations of the success of the United Church of God.

Service is the basis of all leadership resulting in true community building. Mrs. O'Bannon stressed constantly that communities that overcome problems—communities

The Message to Smyrna: Endure Persecution

Determination to remain faithful to God in the face of trials and persecution was important for the members at Smyrna and it is an important lesson for God's people today.

by David Treybig

Jesus Christ's message to Smyrna in Revelation 2 is the second of these timeless admonitions for members of His Church. (The message to Ephesus was covered in the December issue.) The setting for this message is the first-century city of Smyrna, "A rich and prosperous city of Ionia, forty miles N of Ephesus, at the mouth of the small river Meles. Anciently, it was one of the finest cities of Asia and was called 'the lovely—the crown of Ionia—the ornament of Asia.' It is now the chief city of SW Turkey, with a population of more than 1 1/2 million" (*New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, electronic database, article "Smyrna").

Another source adds, "Smyrna's superb natural harbor made the city an important commercial center. In spite of keen competition from the neighboring cities of Ephesus and Pergamum, Smyrna called itself 'the first city of Asia.' As early as 195 B.C., Smyrna was given the honor of building a temple to the Emperor Tiberius because of its years of faithfulness to Rome. Thus, the city became a center for the cult of emperor worship—a fanatical 'religion' that later, under such emperors as Nero (ruled A.D. 54-68) and Domitian (ruled A.D. 81-96), brought on severe persecution for the early church" (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, electronic database, article "Smyrna").

The very cause that propelled the city to the favor of Rome's leaders—emperor worship—likely provided the impetus for the persecution of God's people. Though the apostles taught respect and obedience to human government and authorities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:11-17), like Paul, the brethren at Smyrna may have been accused of trying to turn their local city upside down with their Christian beliefs (Acts 17:6).

In this environment, Christ told the congregation at Smyrna: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:9-10).

Determination to remain faithful to God in the face of trials and persecution was important for the members at Smyrna and it

is an important lesson for God's people today. Remember, Christ warns us, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (verse 11). Given the gravity of this warning, it is important to understand some of the biblical concepts that can help us deal with our own modern difficulties. Let's begin by reviewing some New Testament history and instruction on this topic.

Source of Spiritual Persecution

When we face trials and problems in our lives we often see human conditions. Yet the Bible reveals a hidden source of spiritual persecution—an invisible being called Satan, our adversary (1 Peter 5:8). Paul wrote, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:12-13).

Earlier, in the parable of the sower, Jesus had taught that some seed of God's Word fell on good ground and produced fruit, while other seed fell on poor ground and didn't produce anything (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23).

When Jesus spoke of "the wicked one" snatching away the word of the Kingdom, He was referring to Satan who works to take away humanity's spiritual understanding. Jesus also noted that some people didn't continue in the truth very long—they stumbled at tribulation or persecution. Others successfully overcame Satan's deception and pressure to forego the truth. They held fast to Christ's teaching in spite of persecution. Notice the inspiring example of one such individual.

Stephen's Example

Shortly after the founding of the New Testament Church in Acts 2, the apostles ordained seven deacons, one of whom was Stephen (Acts 6:1-6). This man, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people" (verse 8). Apparently, Satan was greatly upset because "the word of God spread" (verse 7). At this point, it seems Satan influenced another synagogue (congregation) to begin a deadly persecution against Stephen. The devil undoubtedly hoped to destroy Stephen's faith and stifle the growth of the Church of God.

Another congregation called "the Synagogue of the Freedmen" raised false accusations against Stephen (verses 9-14). Almost seven decades later, Jesus told the Christians at Smyrna, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9). Ironically and sadly, people who claim to be godly or Christian can also be instruments of persecution in the devil's hands. The congregation at Smyrna at the end of the first century was facing the same kind of persecution Stephen had faced. Their persecution

was coming from people who falsely claimed to be Jews (what the first Christians were called, Romans 2:28-29). Now back to the story of Stephen.

In the face of severe accusations that could take his life, Stephen did not capitulate. Instead of giving in or looking for a compromise to save his life, Stephen appeared to grow stronger in his resolve to obey God and be a faithful witness. In the midst of this trial, the biblical account says, "And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel" (verse 15). Stephen was receiving help from God.

Stephen then preceded to go through some of Israel's history culminating in a powerful statement condemning their resistance to God's laws (Acts 7:51-53).

Though the council became very angry, Stephen, "being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and...said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'" (verses 55-56). Just as Stephen had said, this group of people then treated him as their forefathers had treated God's prophets in the Old Testament. God gave him the strength to endure this most severe trial as He gave Smyrna the strength to endure tribulation "ten days," representing a time of great trouble the congregation would soon experience.

The same comfort and help God gave believers then is available today to all who are faithful to God's instructions. As the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." God promises to help. He will either remove our trials or give us the strength to bear them.

Trials Accompany Conversion

Just as Jesus had predicted in the parable of the sower, persecution often arises when people begin to turn to God. The same thing occurred in the apostle Paul's life. Paul had an active role in the persecution of Stephen and the early Church (Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3).

While Paul was traveling to Damascus to continue his persecution against the Christians, God miraculously appeared to him. Paul was blinded and didn't eat or drink for three days. After Ananias laid his hands on Paul, he regained his sight and was baptized to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:1-18). With baptism, conditions quickly changed.

When Paul ceased being the persecutor, he soon became the persecuted. Paul immediately began to preach "that this Jesus is the Christ. Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him" (verses 22-23).

The reality is that the people of God have always faced trials and persecutions. It comes with being a Christian. As Paul explained, "Yes, and all who desire to live

godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Interestingly, in the long run everyone, whether Christian or not, will be tested. Revelation 3:10 says there will be an "hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." Though temporarily unpleasant, trials help us establish and solidify our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7). God is with us, every step of the way, through all trials (Romans 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 1:4). Next let's consider some common difficulties God's people face today.

Family Influence

When we share the same spiritual values, our physical families can lend powerful support to our efforts to live as Christians. When there are competing and differing values, however, there can be pressure to compromise God's truth. Jesus addressed this unpleasant concept saying, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:34-38, see also Micah 7:5-7).

When we turn to God, He expects us to give Him our highest priority and conduct our lives accordingly. Instead of lashing back at those who persecute us, Jesus said, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

If our physical families do not share our spiritual convictions, we can take comfort that God provides another spiritual family to offer support and encouragement (Matthew 12:47-50).

Monetary Gain

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said "the deceitfulness of riches" caused some to be unfruitful (Matthew 13:22). The lure of wealth or a big salary can be a temptation to forego pleasing God. Paul warns us: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:9-11).

This instruction about money often comes into effect with our employment. Most of society is unaware of God's seventh-day Sabbath. Many employers expect their

Enduring Until the End

employees to work on this day even though God says otherwise (Exodus 20:9-11). Sometimes God's people can be enticed with higher salaries and more income if they will only work on the Sabbath. In the face of such temptation, we need to remember Christ's instruction: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

The World

Still another potential temptation for Christians is the world around us. Because the world has a different set of values contrary to God's, James wrote, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). While the world can appear to be attractive, the end result of focusing on it instead of God is tragic.

Paul wrote, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?... What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, NIV).

At the end of this present evil age, when Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, John, in vision, heard a similar warning for God's people. "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues'" (Revelation 18:4). God's people have no other choice—we must resist the world and its ungodly influences.

Christ's Encouragement to Us

Before Jesus' crucifixion, He shared some observations about the tests His followers would face. In John 15:18-20, He said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." He concluded His remarks, saying, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In His message to the church at Smyrna, Jesus was giving the same encouragement. He admonished them and us today to make sure we endure persecution and trials. If we persevere, Jesus promises us "the crown of life" and that we will "not be hurt by the second death" (Revelation 2:10, 11). *UN*

What a Bataan Death March survivor learned can help us all endure to the end.

by Bill Jahns

On June 23, 1938, John Rynerson, joined the 29th Army Corps of Engineers topographical mapping unit. Little did John realize that he would find himself in a few years involved in World War II and fighting for his life on one of the most infamous and terrible marches of the war.

After several transfers John was placed in the 93rd Bomber Squadron in the Philippines. As it turned out, this transfer saved his life. The plane that he had worked on as a radio operator crashed, and he would have been on that plane if he had not been



John Rynerson in 1945 and November 2001

transferred. John feels that God was already working in his life to preserve him.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the Philippines. On April 9, 1942, the garrison on Bataan was taken over by the Japanese and John's long and difficult struggle for survival began. Only one third of the soldiers taken captive at Bataan survived the Japanese imprisonment.

After the capture of Bataan, the Japanese marched the American prisoners over 70 miles. This became the infamous "Bataan Death March" in which more than 600 American soldiers died. They marched for a period of seven days after already being weakened because of the short rations they had to live on before they surrendered to the Japanese. The soldiers' captors allowed the prisoners to eat only once during the entire march. If any soldier slowed the march, he was killed.

John quickly realized he was in a struggle for survival. He began to make observa-

tions that led to actions that would save his life.

The treatment of the prisoners by the Japanese was horrendous. As they marched, they would meet Japanese soldiers moving south. John noticed that the first group of American soldiers were treated better than the last group of soldiers. The Japanese were taught never to surrender, and they were so startled to see prisoners of war that they passed by the first group without harming the prisoners. As they came to the end of the line of prisoners, they would start beating and mistreating prisoners. Anyone who slowed down or was unable to walk was killed without hesitation. John made the important decision to be in that first group of prisoners who started out in the morning.

John was a prisoner of war for three years.

He was moved to a prison camp in Manchuria on the "death" ship, *Tori Maru*. The ships with prisoners were not marked, so American warplanes often attacked them, not knowing that their

fellow soldiers were inside those ships. John was able to stay on deck during the voyage on the *Tori Maru* and avoided being put below where the conditions were terrible.

He was able to survive because of the mental attitude that he had as he determined that if one soldier was to survive this imprisonment, it was going to be him. He had been taught by his mother to be clean, so when he was given rice, he tried to get the bugs and other unclean material out of the bowl before he ate it. He also knew that he had to have good hygiene and made sure that he stayed as clean physically as possible. He knew that a key to his survival was to stay free from disease. He also had the attitude that he would never give up.

Finally on Aug. 15, 1945, John was released from the Japanese prison camp and returned to his family in the United States. John's family had not known if he was alive for those three long years.

When he returned home, he did not discuss in detail the conditions he endured during his imprisonment as he did not want to burden his family and cause them distress. What an amazing and wonderful example John set enduring the terrible suffering of World War II!

John and Sarah Rynerson were married in 1946 and have been members of God's Church since 1970. They have seen the difficulties and problems that the Church has

gone through over the years and have remained faithful and true to God's Word and to the truths that they have been taught. John is now 81 years old and continues to work cleaning floors for grocery stores in the Ogden, Utah, area. What a wonderful example of perseverance and endurance in spite of difficulties and trials.

Christ told us that we must be prepared to "endure" until the end, and there is much we can learn from John Rynerson's example. One of the main reasons John endured has to do with his mental attitude. He determined that he was going to survive the terrible conditions of the Bataan Death March and the following imprisonment.

In Matthew 24:12-13, Christ said: "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." We have seen this lawlessness on the earth today and conditions will get worse in time. Many have fallen by the spiritual wayside and Satan the devil has completely destroyed their faith, just as the Japanese killed stragglers on the Bataan Death March.

Because of John's determination to survive, he took the steps physically that helped him survive. He ate only "clean" food, removing such contaminants as flies and dirt. He took two canteens of water with him at the start of the march and some food also. He made sure that he was in the front of the line of soldiers marching on the Bataan Death March, which protected him somewhat from the abuse that others later in line were receiving. He tried to do everything he could physically accomplish that would help him with his main goal—survival!

Spiritually, are we doing all that we can to achieve our goal, the Kingdom of God? John ate only clean rice and this helped him avoid deadly physical illness. Spiritually, are we feeding ourselves with a good spiritual diet? This means studying the Bible on a daily basis, attending Church every week possible, going to the Feast of Tabernacles, avoiding contaminating and dirty (unclean) movies, etc. We know the things that lead to a healthy spiritual lifestyle.

Just like John during World War II in a Japanese prison camp, we are in a foreign world. A world that does not know the true God or the purpose of life. This knowledge of God's truth should spur us on to take the measures to insure our success in the only goal worth anything in this life, attaining the Kingdom of God.

John Rynerson had a purpose that he never forgot during those terrible years of World War II—the goal of survival. He had a clearly defined goal that motivated him and a mental attitude that helped him endure.

Let's never forget the spiritual purpose of our life, the goal that God has set before us and the glory and honor that await those who attain that goal! *UN*

Allergies, allergies! It seems almost everyone these days has some sort of allergy, intolerance or high sensitivity to something in his or her environment.

An increasing number of people are “allergic” to colognes. Most of these adverse reactions are not true allergies, so antihistamines don’t help. They are physiological “sensitivities” to commercial colognes. Perhaps everyone has some sensitivity to cologne, but “sensitivity” in this article means noticeable or hypersensitivity that can result in traumatic reactions.

For the sake of simplicity, “cologne” will refer to perfumes, colognes and aftershave lotions, all of which are designed to have a far-reaching and lingering smell. Some people are also sensitive to scented personal care products, such as shampoos, body washes, soaps, hair sprays and sunscreens. But most of those people are not bothered by the tiny bit of smell when other people use them and the products have dried.

Everything a person inhales (breathes), ingests (swallows) or absorbs (through the skin or membranes) has an effect on him. Today toxic chemicals are flooding our environment. As a person accumulates these chemicals in his body, his immune system can become so overwhelmed that he increasingly has adverse reactions to the chemicals, and sometimes even to natural substances. When people become highly sensitive to many chemicals, they have “multiple chemical sensitivity” (MCS). Many people who are sensitive to colognes have MCS.

“Ointment and perfume delight the heart” (Proverbs 27:9). Historically “ointment” and “perfume” were made with natural and harmless ingredients, such as myrrh, frankincense, aloe and cinnamon (Song of Solomon 3:6; Proverbs 7:17).

Colognes aren’t needed to cover up foul body odors like they were in ages past when people didn’t bathe regularly. Today’s popularity is akin to cosmetics, a customary part of dressing up. Advertising and imagery certainly play major roles in boosting sales and usage. This may seem harmless, but the fly in “the perfumer’s ointment” (Ecclesiastes 10:1) is the increasing use of chemicals in fragrances to make the scents travel farther, increase the time they linger in the air, cut costs and boost profits.

A report by the National Academy of Sciences in 1986 stated that “95 percent of chemicals used in fragrances are synthetic compounds derived from petroleum,” and then listed numerous diseases and central nervous system disorders caused by strong exposure to these compounds.

Only a small percent of those petrochemicals are used in colognes, but when a cologne has any toxic ingredients, everyone who smells it is adversely affected. Most people don’t notice the effects because the toxicity is minor and God designed us to have incredible immune systems to deal with foreign substances.

The people who suffer most from colognes are those with MCS and those with chronic respiratory problems, such as asthma

Colognes, Chemicals, Compassion and the Church

by Don Hooser

or emphysema, or with acute conditions, such as influenza or a bad cold. The effects can be immediate or delayed.

One helpful Web site on these subjects is <http://4allergies.com>, where one article addresses medical experts’ concerns for children. It explains that early exposure to chemicals often causes allergies that would have been avoided if exposure was delayed until adulthood. “Neurotoxics that may have only a temporary ill effect on an adult brain can cause enduring damage to a child’s developing brain. The immaturity of children’s internal systems, especially in the first few months of life, affects their ability to neutralize and rid their bodies of certain toxins.”

Jay S. Gartner, an allergy and asthma specialist in Duncanville, Texas, said, “If everyone quit wearing perfumes and colognes, I wouldn’t have enough patients to continue my practice.” An interview with Dr. Gartner was a source for this article.

What Those With MCS Experience

Adverse reactions vary widely, depending on the cologne, the concentration in the air and the duration of exposure. The reactions may be mild, such as congestion, a mild headache or flushed face. Sometimes they are severe, such as asthmatic reactions with difficulty in breathing, severe headaches, other pains, coughing, uncontrollable shaking, irregular and speeded up heartbeat, dizziness, panic attacks, etc. Sometimes the person remains sick for a week or more.

Church members with MCS commonly feel sick during and after services, which detracts from the desire to go to services. When exposed to a strong whiff of cologne, they may immediately get *very* sick, requiring them to leave the service. They don’t feel free to attend socials or visit other congregations during travels. They have to explain to people why they can’t stand or sit close to them. They often avoid or have to leave restaurants and stores. However, in some public places, high ceilings, spaciousness and good ventilation reduce the problem.

How people are affected by colognes does not remain constant. Standard medical advice is for people to avoid putting additional strains on their immune systems during their allergy seasons, or else their symptoms will be magnified. In an article on “Seasonal Allergies,” the 1998 *New York Public Library Desk Reference* states, “Don’t smoke or wear cologne, and avoid others who do.” The body can cope with only so many “enemies” at any one time.

People’s sensitivities often become increasingly worse. The more they are exposed to colognes and chemicals, the more their immune systems become exhausted.

What can members with MCS do? (Quit breathing is not an option.) They move to another part of the church hall to get away from cologne concentrations. Some have worn masks. Some have hauled portable air purifiers to services or even worn little air cleaners around their necks that blow clean air toward the face.

What Can We Do?

Most members and Church leaders have been very sympathetic to those with such sensitivities. Some congregations and Feast sites have provided a “fragrance-free room (FFR),” “environmental room” or “clean room.” This accommodation is much appreciated by those needing it. However, even if an extra room is available and affordable, it is not an ideal solution. It often is difficult to keep a room fragrance-free, and those with MCS desire to be among the brethren, fellowship and serve as much as anyone else.

One of the saddest experiences for those with MCS is when other people (including some Church members) react skeptically and unsympathetically, and view them as weird or crybabies who like to exaggerate problems and complain. They may think “it’s all in their heads.” This adds insult to injury.

Negative impressions of those with MCS can quickly be made worse if the sufferers lose their cool and are impatient, discourteous, demanding or resentful. But let’s be patient and big-minded and remember it is hard to be in the best emotional state when one feels bad, is panicking over getting sick or has suffered for years with MCS.

We must all strive wholeheartedly not to let any issue become divisive. The goal of everyone should be to patiently work together for mutual respect and better understanding, not only of the chemical and biological factors, but also of the needs and viewpoints of others.

Many chemically “handicapped” people would rather suffer silently than reveal their suffering, for several reasons: kind consideration toward others in not wanting to restrict anyone’s pleasure in wearing cologne, not wanting anyone to feel uncomfortable in their presence, fear of being thought weird, fear of less fellowship and fear of alienating close relationships (friends avoiding them rather than discontinuing wearing cologne). Because some chemically-sensitive members and elders have kept quiet about their sensitivities to colognes, the extent of the problem is underreported in the Church.

Let’s be sure to pray for healing for those with MCS and also think about what else we can do. We are to be our “brother’s keeper.”

The apostle Paul pointed out that it is easy for people with differing viewpoints, experiences and weaknesses to “judge” and

“despise” one another rather than “receive” and “edify” each other and “pursue peace” (Romans 14). But he said he would gladly give up meat or wine—in fact “anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 8:13). “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

This is not a suggestion for making rules or “banning” cologne from church activities. The world has millions of laws because people don’t love one another. By comparison, God has only a few laws, and those can all be “summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Romans 13:9). But each of us can ask himself this question: “If I was highly sensitive to colognes, what action would I appreciate for others to take?”

One congregation with members who had MCS included the following announcement in its weekly bulletin:

“Please take note: There are a few members in the congregation that are severely allergic to the smell of most colognes, perfumes, aftershave lotions and certain other scented products. Their ability to attend services and fellowship depends on our abstinence from wearing these scented products. If you have worn a fragrance today, please refrain from going into the Fragrance-Free Room.”

Most members in that congregation willingly gave up wearing colognes to services once they understood the reasons for doing so. When someone forgot and wore cologne, or a new person or visitor came in wearing cologne, the chemically-sensitive members moved to another part of the room. If the fragrances pervaded the room, creating a high concentration in the air, those with the sensitivities had to retreat to the fragrance-free room. But most of the time those with MCS were able to mix with the other members and fellowship.

The abundant information available on this subject should cause us to consider the following: That we pursue further and ongoing education on this subject. That we try our best to consider everyone with any handicap or sensitivity. That we consider refraining from wearing colognes at gatherings where others are directly affected.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. . . . Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:2, 10).

To pursue further understanding of these subjects, a good place to start is Victor Kubik’s Web site. Go to www.kubik.org and click on “Environmental Illnesses.” Articles include: The Bible and colognes, the marvelous sense of smell, interview with Dr. Jay S. Gartner, chemicals around us and in us, multiple chemical sensitivity, members of UCGIA with MCS and their experiences, our immune systems, accommodating the handicapped and a holistic approach to good health. *UV*

At this time of year we come across many advertisements urging the consumer to take a winter vacation in a warmer climate. Enticements are presented to those of us in Canada to venture to California, Arizona or Florida for a few weeks reprieve from the ravages of winter.

When the potential traveler wonders about the costs involved, the real figures are often hidden by the use of the preposition "from." But then it doesn't really matter because the promoters encourage the traveling public to "go now and pay later." It is so easy. All we have to do is use a major credit card and then hope we can handle the 18 percent interest rate that we will be charged until the amount is finally paid off. As a result, a high price tag becomes ever higher!

How different is God's approach toward travel and associated costs as evidenced by His instructions related to the observance of the Feasts. Our loving Creator has given us the annual one-week-plus Feast as a vacation with Him. We experience over a week of educational and spiritual learning. We meet different people in various venues. We travel to different parts of the country and the world. The opportunity for broadening our horizons on many levels is vast.

But what about the finances? How do we pay for all this? The principle God employs is just the opposite from the one the world offers. It is not at all "go now, pay later." Instead it is "save now and go later." That makes far more sense to the discerning, fiscally responsible person.

According to the directives given in the Bible, the believer is to save 10 percent of his or her income for the expenses to be incurred in observing the annual Holy Days. Deuter-

The Better Travel Plan

For many people, the pain of paying for a vacation afterward can overshadow the joy. But God has a better way!

by Tony Wasilkoff

onomy 14:22-25 says: "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year...that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. But if the journey is too long...exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses."

In view of the excessive taxation in the modern world, the Council of Elders has written: "The Church believes that the appropriate definition of 'increase' is net income after income tax. Therefore, the Church teaches that the tithe may be calculated on net income after income tax has been deducted."

Thousands of adherents of the Holy Days have followed God's savings plan for decades. The festival tithe is deposited in a separate account and is used exclusively to observe the seven festivals. Of course, the bulk of this expense occurs celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Church asks the festival attendee to donate 10 percent of their festival tithe amount in order for the costs of planning and conducting each Feast site to be met. We have customarily used the term "tithe of a tithe" for this amount.

Several months have transpired since the Feast of Tabernacles. How much festival tithe have you saved up so far? Have you chosen

to diligently set aside 10 percent from each income source for future festival use? Probably you have. And if you have, you will be blessed accordingly. You will be able to meet all of your festival costs and you may even have something extra to help others. Often, many faithful festival tithe savers find that they accumulate more than they require for their own needs. They then kindly help those less fortunate than themselves. Such generosity is greatly admired and appreciated. Most of all, God notices and is pleased.

What if your income is limited and you are pretty sure you won't be able to save enough to observe the festivals? Should you bother saving anything at all? Absolutely! God's directive to us is that we should save 10 percent from our income sources no matter how great or how small. Each of us must do our part. The principle is "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least, is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

Through the years we have heard of inspiring accounts of people in dire circumstances who found ways to save up for the Feast of Tabernacles. They collected pop bottles, picked berries, delivered newspapers and did various odd jobs. All the money earned from these secondary sources were

then deposited into their festival account. When the Feast arrived, these individuals had (with God's blessing) been able to save up a significant amount!

The Church wishes to help those in financial distress to attend the Holy Days. The principle the Church follows is to help people help themselves. Those who have clearly done their part are assisted as much as the budget will allow. Those who have not done their part cannot be helped because merit is a necessary and qualifying factor.

More than once I have been asked why it seems that some folks don't appear to save appropriately in order to keep the Feast. The question is usually framed as follows: "How is it that they have the funds to buy material goods and possessions that are even better than mine, but they don't seem to have the funds to set aside to keep the Feast?" That is a good question. It would seem that a lot of this has to do with priorities. We devote our financial resources to those things that are important to us. That is why God directs us to save a tithe for the functioning of the Church and an additional tithe so that we can observe the Feast. If He didn't actually direct humans to do that, humans would tend not to do so.

The spring Holy Days are less than three months away and the Feast is about eight months away. There is still time left to save for those wonderful occasions with God's saving plan. The intent of our Creator is that we can rejoice at His festivals and do so without going into debt. His design is that instead of "going now and paying later," we "save now and feast later." God's ways are superior and they really do work. How wonderful are the Holy Days and how wonderful is the financial plan to observe them! *UN*

"COUNCIL," (Continued from page 1)

budgeting conservatively with an eye on possible downturns in the economy that could affect us. Let us never take God's blessings for granted—we do rely on Him for all of our spiritual and physical capacity to do His work in this troubled world.

"Developments and opportunities in various areas of Media and Communications Services seem to be coming along almost faster than we can keep up with or afford, but that's the kind of problem we like to have on our hands! We have printed five new booklets so far this calendar year, bringing our total number of titles to 28, and existing booklets are being steadily reprinted by the thousands. Keeping up with literature requests is one of the ongoing challenges for an already-stretched-thin home office staff. As we head toward the half-million print-run mark for *The Good News*, we hope that God will move forward more and more readers in their awakening to His truth. We are witnessing a steady climb in the number of donors and coworkers, which has been a historical indicator of whether the gospel message is impacting peoples' lives.

"The world is, of course, in the middle of revolutionizing communication and the flow of information through the explosion of

the Internet over the last decade. Not only do we stand on the brink of open doors through this powerful media tool, we have many members who have the expertise to take us through those doors. On behalf of a network of approximately 60 individuals who have been working behind the scenes for months or years on Internet development, Dan Deininger and Victor Kubik delivered one of the most stimulating presentations of our meetings. They offered a comprehensive report of how we can best use the Internet in a scope ranging from preaching the gospel through written and spoken programs, to developing on-line educational resources, to expanding cybercasting of Sabbath services. Virtually anything we produce, both oral and written, can be disseminated via the Internet, and the cost is so much lower compared to many other methods.

"We will continue to maintain, promote and experiment with all possible methods of doing the work, but we are also certainly going to put money and energy into being visionary in using the Internet for the work of the Church. On behalf of the entire Church, the Council extends a heartfelt 'thank you' to all of the wonderful volunteers who have been contributing many hours to this project. This could have never been accomplished

without you. Your service is a prime example of Ephesians 4:16 in practice: 'every joint' supplying, effectively working and doing its share to cause growth of the body.

"In other major developments, we expanded the role of the Education Committee to include the oversight of Ministerial Services, for the purpose of having even better teamwork and coordination between the Council and this vital and large area of operation. We also took another very important step in the months-long process of selecting the next president by devoting an entire day to interviewing the five candidates: Roy Holladay, Clyde Kilough, Dennis Luker, Les McCullough and Richard Pinelli. Each one had a 45-minute presentation, followed by a 45-minute question-and-answer session, to express his views on 28 questions. These questions had been given in advance and covered many aspects of management and leadership. At the next Council meeting in February we will make our selection. All of us are devoting prayer and fasting to seek God's will in not only the selection, but the entire process, and we sincerely ask every one of you to frequently bring this matter to God as well. This is the first time we have put this much time and thoroughness into such an appointment, and listening to five different

perspectives will undoubtedly help whoever is selected have a better foundation than ever before for this job. It is encouraging and enjoyable to be able to engage in such a process where everyone is genuinely on the same team.

"Well, it is not the purpose of this letter to go into lengthy details about all the many other items we covered, but here are some additional items. We made significant progress planning for the 2002 Annual Meeting of the General Conference of Elders; heard a very informative presentation about understanding and effectively counseling homosexuals; discussed issues concerning strategic planning, finances, congregational development, manpower and doctrine; became more aware of the status of brethren in scattered groups in Asia; and covered numerous other items. We hope you will read the more expanded daily reports that Doug Johnson posted [see page 10 and www.ugc.org/a/council/council.htm].

"In closing, thank you all for the prayers, encouragement and support you extended for our meetings. We all have various responsibilities in the work of God, and every single person's role is important, so let's continue to mutually support one another in a spirit of love and faith." *UN*

Council of Elders Dec. 5 to 12 Meeting Reports

by Doug Johnson

Chairman Roy Holladay welcomed the Council of Elders to Clearwater, Florida, Dec. 5, and launched proceedings for a busy day of reports. He obtained Council's input on retaining its membership in the National Center for Non-Profit Boards (affirmative), and continuing efforts to meet with leadership of other branches of the Church of God (also affirmative).

President's Report

"Everyone wants to hear about the new home office building!" President Les McCullough said in his report. Construction continues; recent mild weather in Cincinnati has allowed some seasonal tasks (such as exterior painting) to go forward ahead of schedule. The builder's goal is to have the Church moved into its new facility by Feb. 11.

He next detailed some of the growth in international areas, highlighting South Africa and the nearby countries of Malawi and Zimbabwe. A second pastor for South Africa, based in Johannesburg, is still needed. One American pastor has volunteered, and details are being worked out for visas. Of course, this leaves Ministerial Services operation manager Richard Pinelli with one more "hole" to "plug" in the United States. Growth in the Philippines also makes some help in oversight for the ministry in that country desirable, but difficult to provide at the moment.

Mr. McCullough painted a broad overview of advances in media, but stated that he didn't want to take too much material from operation manager Peter Eddington's report, scheduled for later in the day. He noted with pleasure the growth in the print run of *The Good News*, then at 449,000 (only about 50,000 away from the five-year goal he had set in accepting the post of president in March 1998). Booklet printings continue to surge upward, with over 1.7 million pieces of literature printed by the United Church of God in the last six years. Efforts continue to explore new avenues to add regular subscribers.

Survey Findings

Readers expressed varied opinions about whether more coverage of Council reports was needed in *United News*. Some read the reports on the Internet or printed out at Church. Another wrote:

"I would like to see the Council reports and Chairman's letter printed in the *United News* rather than on the Internet. Some people don't have access to a computer and some read the *United News* from front to back! (I do!)"

In light of this, since space was available, we have expanded the coverage this issue. As always, your input is welcome.

Wrapping up his presentation with a snapshot of the financial picture, Mr. McCullough said to date, income continues to remain ahead of expenses, by roughly 2 percent.

Media and Communications Services

Operation manager Peter Eddington once again brought a wealth of statistical evidence of the burgeoning growth of the proclamation of the gospel. Noteworthy developments:

- *Good News* print run has increased 19 percent in the last six months.
- Print promotions will go into 6.7 million homes this fiscal year (July 1, 2001, to June 30, 2002).
- Incoming mail processed for 2001 stood at 41 percent increase over 2000.
- Internet responses leaped to more than 12,000 for the month of November.
- Several new subscribers to *The Good News* are specifically requesting that their subscriptions begin with the November-December 2001 issue; with its cover photo and numerous articles dealing extensively with the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, it appears to be viewed as a kind of "Collector's Edition."

• The January-February issue of *The Good News*, with a cover article on "The Middle East in Prophecy," bodes well to continue the rapid escalation of interest in the magazine, based on the connection to world events.

• 568,000 booklets had been either printed or reprinted in 2001 at that point (2000 total was 511,000).

• 600,000 copies of the *Bible Study Course* have now been printed; between 3,000 and 3,500 graduates of the course are expected to accept the offer of a 12-month audiotape program following their completion of the written course over the next year.

• "Pay-per-click" services on the Internet have proven a highly successful and cost-efficient way to add subscribers to the magazine.

• Significant changes to the Web page have streamlined operations.

• The mix of print promotions will continue, utilizing card decks, congregational brochure mailings, direct mail and Internet advertising, to name a few.

• Some promotions are more successful than others; some, such as a recent card deck promotion directed specifically at college students, have not produced as much response as hoped.

• Numbers of coworkers and donors continues to steadily advance, with over 3,000 donors and nearly 1,500 coworkers now assisting in the work of the Church.

• *Good News* radio had added about 2,400 subscribers in 2001, with the best responses tending to come on the programs dealing with "what happens after death?"

• Personal Correspondence, whether by "snail-mail" or e-mail, has increased; Cecil Maranville has answered over 1,000 letters this year by mail, and a team of ministerial volunteers has answered about 500 e-mails.

• 25 percent of *Good News* subscribers are choosing to renew after their subscriptions have run out.

• Cable access TV continues to contribute, with over 1,750 new *Good News* subscribers added since July 1999.

• Finally, the latest subscriber development letter offered *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* and resulted in more than 25,000 responses.

Mr. Eddington echoed earlier reports on the impact of the 2001 Feast of Tabernacles video message. Reports have been uniformly positive, and he asked the Council to consider a similar approach in 2002. This would involve bringing material from the General Conference of Elders meetings in May to the brethren via the Feast video vehicle.

Other media efforts include plans to assist in Caribbean radio broadcast production, and a systematic "Web launch" for the Bible reading program, a successful and helpful tool begun by the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship.

Ministerial Services

Operation manager Richard Pinelli brought the Council up to date on Ministerial Services. In the United States, the United Church of God now employs 104 elders, who serve God's people in 226 congregations. The Church had a total of 420 elders; but this session of Council meetings considered nearly 30 applications for credentialing or ordination, so that number was not current for long. Two men have taken retirement for health reasons recently; others have health concerns.

This past year's ministerial conferences were "the best yet" according to several elders. The series of nine regional meetings concluded just before the Feast in Portland, Oregon.

The regional pastors met in mid-November. Paul Suckling addressed the topic of a more comprehensive approach to baptism counseling, and Lyle Welty spoke on premarital counseling. In addition, the regional pastors discussed the following areas: manpower needs; health situations; retirements; relocations; Feast of Tabernacles speaking schedules, Bible study topics and speakers; progress and development of the leadership training program; and pastoral evaluations.

Feast planning continues for 2002. The hoped-for site in Alaska has fallen through due to difficulty in coming to agreement on the cost with local facility management. Hawaii will therefore remain a Feast site for 2002, but the actual island location may shift to Maui. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, may be replaced by a site somewhat further east.

Mr. Pinelli concluded with a brief update on the education program, and introduced Dave Evans, administrator of member assistance, for his presentation. The draft of a manual produced by the task force chaired by Gregory Sargent was presented for review. Council members recommended several minor revisions and a more thorough review



Richard Pinelli gives the report on Ministerial Services at the Council meetings in Florida

of the manual will be conducted at an upcoming Council meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Tom Kirkpatrick gave further information on the progress of construction of the new home office facility, stating that he was hopeful it would be "open for business" by the time the next face-to-face Council meetings convene in Cincinnati on Feb. 27, 2002.

He then discussed details of the proposed loan covenants sought with BankOne to finance the new facility. Working out details with loan officials, the Church proposes to borrow slightly less (\$1.57 million as opposed to \$1.72 million) than originally planned. The interest rate being sought reflects recent favorable rates, and is one-half point lower than anticipated several months ago. These two factors would result in lower monthly payments (about \$13,500 in contrast to just over \$15,000).

As he customarily does, Dr. Kirkpatrick then walked through the budget for the fiscal year to date, which was 42 percent complete at the time of his report. He noted the importance of continuing to monitor the income carefully, given the state of the economy and the possibility that the nation's economic recession could be reflected in Church income. He expressed

gratitude to God for continuing to abundantly provide the financial resources needed for the ever-expanding scope of the United Church of God, and expressed hope that the trend continues.

2002 Annual Meeting

On Thursday morning Chairman Roy Holladay led the Council into planning for the next General Conference of Elders, set for May 5-6, 2002, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He first asked Clyde Kilough to report on the work the Council task force has done in preparation.

The task force felt strongly that the theme for 2002 and possibly 2003 should build on the theme begun last year ("a sense of urgency"). The task force recommends that there be three major goals in the planning for GCE 2002:

- Continue the Scripture-driven approach to all presentations.
- Focus on specific, "how to" information.
- Take the Christlike-servant-leadership concepts to a deeper level of "how to" application.

They suggest a theme based on Ephesians 4:11-16, with possible titles such as "Equipping the Saints, Edifying the Body—Spiritual Leadership for the Church of God" or "Equipping the Saints, Edifying the Body—Spiritual Leadership for Followers of Christ." This would aim directly at the work of the ministry and offer an extraordinary amount of powerful material for a keynote address, and much scope for magnifying aspects of the topic in seminars or breakout sessions.

After discussion, Mr. Holladay asked for the Council's view of the theme, "Equipping the Saints, Edifying the Body—Spiritual Leadership and Followership." Support was unanimous.

Discussion turned to logistics. Charles Melear confirmed that the Holiday Inn Eastgate in Cincinnati will once again be the site of the conference. A question was asked about how many international ministers should attend this year, since virtually all salaried elders from overseas areas have been brought in the last three years. The three international Council representatives—Leon Walker, Mario Seigle and John Jewell—all agreed that bringing representatives from each area, rather than all elders, would be suitable for this year, given the wider scope of the 2003 GCE.

The Council engaged in some discussion of the scope of attendance for 2003, especially in regard to the international attendees. Some expressed concern for those elders from the poorest areas of the globe, who have never traveled to the United States, and the cultural impact such exposure can have. No firm conclusions were reached in today's meeting. In that context, Mr. McCullough also expressed his concerns about the cost of the 2003 GCE, and asked if the Council truly wished to keep the scope of attendance so universal. Mr. Holladay asked Mr. Melear to hand

out the results of his preliminary studies of the projected cost, which he estimates at about \$369,000.

Council Committee

Don Ward moderated discussion of the proposal for a new committee of the Council which would directly interface with Ministerial Services in the same way that the existing Media/Communications Services and Finance/Strategic Planning committees work with their administrative counterparts.

The Council members who worked on the proposal had no preference as to whether a completely new committee should be set up, or whether the oversight envisioned should be combined with an existing committee of the Council. They listed eight points in their rationale for establishing such a committee:

- To provide the Council with a vehicle for spiritual oversight of the Church.
- To standardize administrative structure.
- To serve as an advocate and support arm of the Council for Ministerial Services.
- To effect the best possible communication between the Council and Ministerial Services.
- To help [or work with] Ministerial Services in developing policy and procedures for hiring, developing and removing ministerial personnel, in accordance with Bylaw 8.6.2(1).
- To have better understanding of and accountability for the Ministerial Services budget.
- To consult with Ministerial Services regarding the needs of the ministry.
- To review the utilization of ministerial personnel.

The Council decided to have the work of such a committee be combined with the existing Education Committee (Dr. Ward, chairman). Further discussion on procedure led to a motion by Mr. Antion, seconded by Mr. Jewell. The ballot was 10 in favor (Messrs. Antion, Dean, Holladay, Jewell, Kilough, Kubik, Seigle, Thompson, Walker and Ward) and two opposed (Messrs. Dick and McCullough).

International Updates

Aaron Dean and his family attended the Feast of Tabernacles in Thailand in 2001. Having once again spent time in the country, conversing with many there in and out of our specific fellowship, Mr. Dean reported to the Council on the unusual challenges facing the United Church of God in serving those God has called in the area. Numerous branches of the Church of God have made contact in the area. Some who are sympathetic to the UCG, but not official representatives, often provide for the spiritual needs of the people. Our present practice, which Mr. Dean recommends we continue, is to work to supply all the help possible, and point the people to the unchanging standard of God's Word as their guide in their conduct and contacts.

France

Joel Meeker brought the Council up to date on the situation in France, following the retirement of Jacques LeHoudec from the full-time ministry. The French Board, upon the recommendation of Mr. McCullough, has chosen Mr. Meeker as the pastor for France. Due to the extremely scattered nature of the Church brethren, this is a realistic solution, even though the Meekers still reside in the United States. He feels he needs to spend time in the area at least twice a year.

This would put the United Church of God at the "cutting edge" of Internet use in the proclamation of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Under the guidelines by which the Church operates in France, Mr. Meeker is also the president of the French Association of the United Church of God. He has been able to secure a Feast site for 2002, establish a new permanent address for the Association in Paris, and in general, with Mr. LeHoudec's greatly appreciated help, effect a smooth transition. Some have wondered about Mr. Meeker's being "spread too thin," but some of his duties in Africa have been transferred to Fred Kellers, as pastor with oversight in Nigeria, and Dave Baker, pastor with oversight in Kenya and Tanzania.

The Council closed its day with a long executive session to review 29 requests for credentialing or ordination as elders in the United Church of God.

Committee Reports

Mr. Holladay introduced committee matters on Friday, Dec. 7, by reviewing committee memberships, to ensure Council members are able to contribute to committee work as effectively as possible. No changes were made at this time.

Leon Walker, Doctrine Committee chairman, updated the Council on the work of the committee. Melvin Rhodes has been added to the Prophecy Subcommittee. Jim Franks, chairman of the Doctrine Advisory Subcommittee, has requested additional help due to the increased workload of the subcommittee. A study paper on the covenants is nearly ready for review by the entire Council, and will be presented at or before the next face-to-face meetings in Cincinnati Feb. 27 to March 5. Two other study projects are in the hands of the subcommittee at present—the issue of voting in political elections, and a review of the observance of new moons.

Aaron Dean, chairman of the Strategic Planning/Finance Committee,

reported on that committee's deliberations held before the Council meetings began Wednesday.

Mr. Dean asked the full Council to recall its earlier discussion of inserting \$50,000 into the budget for fiscal 2002-2003 for purchase or construction of local church buildings. There was some discussion on this, as there is an administrative policy currently in place on construction of church buildings, which some viewed as sufficient without a separate budget item. In a straw poll, Messrs. Antion, Dean, Holladay, Jewell, Kilough, Kubik, Seigle, Thompson and Ward favored including this amount as a budget item in the Council's proposed budget for the next fiscal year, Mr. McCullough and Mr. Walker opposed it, and Mr. Dick abstained.

Mr. Dean then asked the Council for its views on how to convey more financial information to the General Conference of Elders in advance of the annual meeting (when the GCE must approve the budget). The decision was made to distribute summary information on each major budget area, with the offer to supply more detail to any elder who requests it.

Lastly, the president's proposal to include an amount sufficient for a 4 percent across-the-board raise in salary for all Church employees (which would be the first such across-the-board raise since the May 1995 inception of the United Church of God) was discussed. Mr. Walker pointed out that the last previous across-the-board raise in our former fellowship (before the founding of the United Church of God) was some time ago.

Mr. Kilough asked if Mr. McCullough had the information on how much this would involve in the 2002-2003 budget. Mr. McCullough answered that it would be in the vicinity of \$250,000 to \$300,000 (the entire budget for fiscal 2001-2002 is \$17 million). Some Council members expressed concern about the timing of the proposal, but Mr. McCullough pointed out that if it can't be worked into a balanced budget proposal it could be dropped. He asked that the Council give the administration the latitude to include it in the planning. Mr. Holladay concurred, noting that it would be simple to remove if the budget can't be balanced in another way. The Council agreed with the chairman and the president.

Internet Proposal

Dan Deininger, an elder serving in Helena, Montana, presented the results of the work of the Internet Task Force. Sixty individuals volunteered to participate in the study. Based on the contributed materials and suggestions, Mr. Deininger prepared a submission for the Council on how the Church can more effectively use the Internet to preach the gospel. He traveled to the Council meetings to present that synopsis of their work.

Mr. Deininger asked the Council to consider the purpose of our Web sites (there are five official sites for the United

Church of God—ucg.org, gnmagazine.org, youthmagazine.org, ucgyouth.org and vcmagazine.org). Do they fulfill a primary or secondary role in pursuing the mission of the Church? That is, is the Internet used primarily to promote print publications or to actually deliver the gospel itself in a manner optimized for the Internet? He stated his belief that it currently serves in a secondary role, but could be optimized to actually deliver the gospel itself (just as the print publications do).

Mr. Deininger outlined several suggestions for that optimization:

- Design a fresh, cohesive look for all the official UCG Web sites.
- Have regular, even daily, updates that feature articles from *The Good News*, *World News & Prophecy*, *Virtual Christian Magazine* and *Youth United* on-line magazine; and supply selected news source links.
- Regularly update and promote the *Good News* radio program, any future TV specials and current cable-access TV productions, and featured Sabbath cybercasts.
- Add on-line Bible study (e-learning).
- Increase cybercast capability to 1,000 streams from the current 60, and feature different Sabbath services from different time zones in the United States.
- Continue to place Internet advertising to draw people to our sites.
- Hire a managing editor for Internet Services in a half-time capacity.
- Subcontract as needed for projects.
- Identify and define volunteer tasks.
- Establish standing Internet advisory teams.

• Increase budget as needed for these proposals—approximately \$55,000-\$70,000 above current estimates for fiscal 2002-2003.

The Council reacted enthusiastically. Mr. McCullough pointed out that this is an avenue we could quickly pursue—in contrast, for example, to trying to develop a regular TV program at this time. Mr. Kubik stressed how this would put the United Church of God at the “cutting edge” of Internet use in the proclamation of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Mr. Kilough recalled the poor response to our print promotion direct mail packages specifically targeting college-aged youth and predicted that this avenue would prove a much more successful way to reach that audience.

Recognizing Service

Richard Thompson asked the Council to consider some manner of recognizing those elders and employees of the Church who have reached the milestone of 40 years of service. He asked what the Council or administration thought would be appropriate, pointing out that there are 46 ministers alone who will reach this milestone of service within the next 10 years. Mr. Pinelli, manager of Ministerial Services, said that his office has already asked for cost estimates for awarding a watch with the UCG logo on its face to all employees with 25 years’ service. The Council agreed that it will pursue a way to recognize the service of full-time ministers,

non-salaried elders and all employees. The straw poll supporting the project was unanimous. Mr. Thompson will gather more information and report back to the Council at its next meetings in late February/early March.

The Council adjourned for the weekend, with its members spreading out to speak in various congregations in Florida and Georgia for the Sabbath of Dec. 8.

The Council interviewed the five candidates for the post of president on Monday, Dec. 10 (see more details in Mr. Holladay’s letter, reprinted starting on page 1).

Homosexuality—Causes, Cures and Help

On Dec. 11 Mr. Holladay asked Dennis Luker, pastor in Seattle, Washington, and former Council member, to moderate the morning’s presentation. Mr. Luker gave a brief background of his study on the subject of homosexuality and his experience in helping those who battle against it. He first became involved 20 years ago after giving a sermon that prompted a Church member to seek Mr. Luker’s help in overcoming homosexuality. Mr. Luker has since written several articles, received scores of letters and counseled some Church members who struggle against homosexuality.

Melvin Rhodes, editorial staff member and pastor in Lansing, Michigan, also spoke briefly. He began his study in this area after discussions with a non-Church member relative convinced him to strive for greater understanding in order to help those who wanted to change. Through a Church member, he was introduced to today’s third presenter, Joseph Nicolosi.

Dr. Nicolosi is a licensed psychologist, and founder and executive director of NARTH, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, based in Encino, California. He has presented his material in numerous television and radio interviews. In addition to his counseling practice, he strives, through NARTH, to provide scientific and psychological support to groups such as the United Church of God that wish to help individuals struggling against homosexuality.

Dr. Nicolosi began by stating that homosexuality is not primarily a sexual problem, but a gender-identity problem. He stated that all human beings are heterosexual—that’s the way we are made. As a result, what we’re really dealing with are heterosexual beings with homosexual problems. In his experience of providing therapy, he consistently encounters clients who hold feelings of emptiness, loneliness and even abandonment, not to mention many other pathologies connected with the gay lifestyle. He listed four myths that the gay activist community would like to have universally accepted:

- 10 percent of the population is homosexual (according to Dr. Nicolosi, it is between 1.5 and 2 percent).
- Some people are “born homosexual” (a false biological argument).
- “Once gay, always gay” (the mistaken notion that change is not possible).

• Homosexuality is normal (the “alternate lifestyle” claim).

“These are all myths,” Dr. Nicolosi reiterated. But the gay activist community desperately wants them to be accepted as fact, and has had great success in convincing many in the media to portray homosexuality in this light. None of this means, according to Dr. Nicolosi, that one needs to be homophobic if a person disagrees with homosexual orientation. There is a difference between tolerance and approval. Withholding approval of homosexual practices does not equate to homophobia or hatred.

Dr. Nicolosi shares the perspective of the United Church of God in trying to provide help for homosexuals who do not choose the gay lifestyle—who want to turn from this sinful way of life.

Dr. Nicolosi calls his counseling “reparative therapy,” indicating a rebuilding and restructuring of a life. This is important, because three factors come into play in the treatment:

- It is identifiable in childhood.
- It is treatable.
- The condition is “mal-adaptive”—that is, it simply doesn’t work.

An extensive question-and-answer session followed Dr. Nicolosi’s presentation. A synopsis of some of the questions:

Q. How can we help families, as they raise their children?

A. Help boys feel like boys, and girls feel like girls. Our society’s “gender blending” tendencies are especially dangerous for those “on the edge.”

Q. If you see a family at risk, is there a type of intervention advice you recommend?

A. Yes—“Mom, back off; and Dad, get involved.” If Mom and Dad work as a team, you can frequently see results within four to six months. If someone waits to get into therapy as an adult, it can take much longer.

Q. What is the success rate of your therapy?

A. About the same as most psychotherapy—one third, one third, one third. That is, one third show no significant change, one third show significant improvement, one third are cured. In this case, “cure” would mean reducing the homosexual thoughts to an occasional distraction or annoyance. The typical length of counseling is two years, once per week.

The Council requested the Education Committee to develop a plan for presenting this material to the ministry. The plan would then be presented to the Council for further discussion. This session was videotaped and could be distributed to the pastors as part of the process.

President’s Role and Expectations

The Council then discussed the roles and expectations of the Church president, and the

procedure to be used in choosing the president at the Feb. 28 meeting in Cincinnati.

The Council deliberated on establishing exactly what the president’s role is in areas outside the United States. As Leon Walker pointed out, this has been an area of concern, with a lack of clarity, since the inception of the United Church of God. All are agreed on working within the scope of the Rules of Association, and the individual national sets of bylaws. The suggestion was made to have a meeting to discuss this with international representatives prior to the General Conference of Elders meetings this coming May. Mr. Antion asked for input in advance of the February meetings so that the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee may study the input and bring the topic back to the Council for its determination.

International Presentations

On Dec. 12 Mr. Holladay reminded the Council of the address John Jewell made in August, detailing the operation of the United Church of God in the British Isles. The

Council had planned to bring in one international Council chairman per session of Council of Elders meetings for similar presentations, but Leon Walker had asked to present an alternate suggestion.

He proposed using the time of the International Meetings before the General Conference of Elders to

have all the chairmen of the various National Councils from outside the United States address those meetings, with Council members present.

After discussion, Mr. Holladay asked the Council to consider a blend of the two ideas.

Robert Dick suggested using the upcoming February meetings of the Council as an opportunity for a “trial run” with two or three presentations being made, then asking those men for “exit polls” as to the effectiveness, in their view. As he pointed out, airfares to Europe are usually very inexpensive that time of year. Others, such as Joel Meeker (French chairman, but residing in St. Louis, Missouri) are close by—expense would be minimal. Mr. Holladay accepted this advice, after polling the entire Council for its preferences. Details will be worked out and invitations issued by Mr. Holladay as Council chairman.

The Council also deliberated on the amendments proposed for this year’s GCE. Two proposals overlap, in that they recommend different changes to Article 12 of the Bylaws. One comes from the Council itself, one from GCE member Warren Poland. The Council decided to follow the recommendation of Amendment Committee chairman Roc Corbett, and support Mr. Poland’s amendment.

The next Council session will be Feb. 27 to March 5. Complete reports of the Council meetings can be found at www.ucg.org/a/council/council.htm. *UN*



Local Church Updates...

Beloit and Wisconsin Dells Sponsor Second Annual Great Clothing Giveaway

On Sunday, Nov. 11, more than 20 brethren from the Beloit and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, congregations joined together for a clothing giveaway community service project in Rockford, Illinois. The day began at 6:30 a.m. by setting up tables, signs, refreshments and more than 20 vanloads of clothing.

The principal of an elementary school donated the use of the gymnasium. The school location was convenient for those who ride buses and allowed easy access for local residents.

Flyers were sent out prior to the event to local crisis centers, abuse centers, area centers for disabilities, hospitals, low-income housing developments and the area media to help

for the free clothing. It was an amazing sight to see so many people come into the gym and begin looking through the piles of clothing. The clothes began to dwindle and the coats, bedding and toiletries were some of the first items to go.

Many lives were touched that day. We served cookies and drinks, and many received needed clothes and items for the cold winter months ahead. Four hours later, we estimated about 350 people had taken advantage of the giveaway event. It was absolutely amazing.



Beloit and Wisconsin Dells members gave away more than 20 vanloads of clothing Nov. 11. Top, Gale Black being interviewed about the event for TV

spread the word.

Since this was our second annual event for the Great Clothing Giveaway, we had some concern if our congregation could supply enough clothing, but our prayers were answered. We had twice as many clothes to provide from our congregations as well as several area community organizations that really appreciated being able to donate clothing to the cause.

The brethren worked for more than five hours separating and organizing clothing before the doors were opened. The fall weather had definitely set in and the winter cold was just around the corner.

Just before the noon opening, about 100 people were standing in line waiting

I personally witnessed something where I could hardly hold back the tears. There was a family with two little girls who came into the gym as we were still setting up. We decided to let them in early because it looked like they really could use the clothing. It was cold outside and the parents didn't speak English. Their 8-year-old daughter served as translator.

We realized the little 3-year-old girl had no clothes underneath the snowsuit she had worn that day. Several members helped the family to gather clothing, toiletries and shoes for the children and parents.

Although they didn't speak much

English, as they left the gym, their smiles said it all. This was just one of the many stories that could be told of the people we met at the giveaway.

One lady wanted to pay for her clothing, but we reminded her that all the clothing was free. She really looked amazed but pleased.

The local CBS and ABC television stations sent news crews to videotape the event. Both Steve Nutzman, Beloit pastor, and I were interviewed and both interviews were aired that evening on local news programs. In both interviews, the United Church of God was mentioned as the sponsoring organization for the clothing giveaway.

That day, many of us were reminded of Acts 20:35: "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Gale Black

Oshkosh and Milwaukee Collect Items for Ukraine

Members of the Oshkosh and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, congregations have been collecting hospital items and clothing for the past year, and Oct. 28 they had a work party to prepare them for shipment to the Ukraine. The medical equipment and supplies will be sent to the "Ukraine Revival" Center for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Children near Chernobyl. The items were counted and



Members of the Oshkosh and Milwaukee congregations at work Oct. 28 preparing material for shipment to the Ukraine

weighed following the directions provided by Vic Kubik, member of the Council of Elders and founder of the LifeNets charitable organization. For more details, see www.lifeness.org/chemobyl/roth/roth1.htm.

After a container arrives, the items will be shipped to the Ukraine.

A chili lunch was enjoyed after the work was done.

Debby Jaeger

Orlando Has Family "Winter" Camp-Out

Dec. 21 to 24, 31 "brave" brethren from Central Florida fearlessly forged into the wilderness to initiate a "winter" camp-out. They faced daytime temperatures that actually dipped into the 60s Fahrenheit in the daytime (whew!) and even into the 40s at night to enjoy fellowship over a three-day period at a beautiful Pine Lakes Retreat. Everyone enjoyed sing-alongs around the campfire, great camp food and a myriad of activities.

An interactive Bible study on the Sabbath was presented by Mike Machin, a local elder, on weathering the changing tides of the Christian life. Later the youth created various crafts related to God's creation. All brethren participated in an exhilarating hay ride on Saturday night.

Sunday morning brought a great brunch, family games including the infamous "egg toss," putt-putt golf and volleyball.

Everyone departed feeling a greater sense of togetherness and hopeful that this will become an annual activity for Florida brethren to enjoy the unique opportunity to fellowship away from it all.

Greg and Kathy Johnson

Cincinnati East Shows Variety

The evening of Dec. 15, 26 acts of music and humor took the stage in the annual Cincinnati East, Ohio, Variety Show. Earlier in the day, after services, the congregation honored and wished a fond farewell to pastor John and Merrie Elliott, who were about to leave for Arizona to serve the Phoenix East and Yuma congregations.

During the show, Mr. Elliott sang "Don't It Make Your Brown Eyes Blue" and showed hilarious and touching animal photos illustrating what to do "When You're Feeling Blue." Other acts ranged from the "Moonlight Sonata" to a sidesplitting "Cows With Guns."

The show had a patriotic theme, beginning with the "Star Spangled Banner" and ending with the entire cast and the audience singing "God Bless America." More than a dozen children and teens participated. The show was so full, master of ceremonies Ed Smith graciously chose to not perform his closing number.

Articles and photos for "Local Church Updates" are welcome! If your congregation's events aren't being reported on, check with your pastor and volunteer. Mail to: *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or e-mail mike_bennett@ucg.org.

Announcements...

Births

Rick and Sharilyn (Loop) Matthews of Sedro Woolley, Washington, would like to thank everyone for their prayers as they were blessed on Sept. 10, 2001, with the arrival of their first child,



Kathryn Ann Matthews

Kathryn (Katie) Ann. She weighed 7 pounds 6 ounces and was 18 3/4 inches long. Grandma Jean (Loop) Groom and Great-Grandpa Frank Groom are ecstatic.

Michael and Paula Jones are happy to announce the birth of their second child, Connor Eric. He arrived Sept. 2, 2001, weighing 7 pounds 14 ounces and was 21 inches long. Connor's big sister Meghan



Connor Eric Jones

loves him very much. Connor's proud grandparents are Bob and Mary Jones of Jacksonville, Florida; Luther and Alice Hollingsworth of Lewisburg, West Virginia; and Ray and Carolyn Poulos of Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Weddings

Ron and Nancy Kelley of Cambridge, Ohio, and Robert and Brenda Messerly of Vancouver, Washington, would like to announce the wedding of their children, Jennifer Leigh Kelley and Chad Edwin Messerly. The wedding took



Jennifer and Chad Messerly

place on Dec. 2, 2001, and was performed by the bride's father, Ron Kelley. The couple will temporarily reside in Vancouver before moving to Maryland in the spring.

Gerald and Ardelle Schwartzrock are happy to announce the marriage of their daughter, Beth Schwartzrock, to Ted Wilson, son of



Ted and Beth Wilson

Tom and Regina Wilson.

The bride and groom were surrounded with good friends and family as they confirmed their union on July 3, 2001, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Darris McNeely performed the summer wedding, which was followed by a reception.

Dawn Booth was the matron of honor, joined by Risa Wilson as bridesmaid. Brian Rolince stood up as best man as well as Ryan McNeely as groomsman.

After completing Ambassador Bible Center, the newlyweds reside in Killbuck, Ohio.

Jim and Joy VanSchuyver of Houston, Texas, are happy to announce the marriage of Joy's daughter, Rhonda Howe, to Ron Smith Jr., son of Ron and Brenda Smith of Stockton, California. The ceremony was performed by a long-time friend and minister, Clyde Kilough, pastor of the Sacramento and Stockton, California, congrega-

tions, Oct. 21, 2001, in San Ramon, California. The wedding was held outside in a beautiful garden setting.

Julia Modad was matron of honor and Vern Smith, brother of the groom, was best man. The bride's attendants were Colleen Edwards, Stacy Malizia and Jeanne Whips. Brian Swailes, James Causey and Ronnie Smith (the groom's son) were groomsmen.

Ron and Rhonda reside in



Rhonda and Ron Smith

Houston where Ron will be completing his degree in nursing and Rhonda will be an office manager of a Houston company.

Obituaries

Josefina Enderes, 59, of Diatagon, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, died Nov. 16 after battling cancer for four years. As a baptized member, Mrs. Enderes' last major wish was to be able to attend the recent Feast of Tabernacles—which she did in seemingly fairly good health. She attended all the ser-



Josefina Enderes at the Feast

vices and activities, and even witnessed the baptism of her husband, Monico! Four days before she died, in a severely weakened condition, she was brought to her home place in Surigao City where her remains were also buried. Her legacy focused on her quality of great

patience and endurance starting even as an orphaned little girl.

She is survived by her husband and a 2-year-old adopted boy. Their only child (a son) died of asthma some four years ago at age 20.

Otto C. Petersen, 80, died peacefully in his sleep Dec. 18, 2001, at the Sehome Care Center in Bellingham, Washington. He was a victim of vascular dementia, the deterioration of the blood vessels in his brain. His daughter, Vivian Fuller, of Seattle, Washington, and his son, Greg Petersen, of Hollister, California, survive him.

Otto was a longtime member of the Church of God, serving congregations in Seattle and Tacoma, Washington; Pasadena, California; Spokane, Washington; and Sedro Woolley, Washington, for over 40 years. He was most recently a member of the Sedro Woolley congregation of the United Church of God.

He served his country as a naval aviator during World War II and the Korean War. He flew missions in the Aleutian Islands and Pacific theaters. Afterward, he worked for the Boeing Commercial Airplane Company and at Ambassador College in Pasadena.

At the request of his family, memorial graveside services with full military honors were held at the Tahoma National Cemetery, Kent, Washington, Dec. 21.

Patricia Ann Arritt, 59, a member of the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation fell asleep very peacefully, Nov. 27, 2001, awaiting the resurrection. She fought the good fight, remaining very positive and a shining light until the end.

Patricia had been seriously ill for the past three years, spending the last three months in the hospital, with one thing happening after another. Despite losing both legs almost three years ago, she never became discouraged, kept her beautiful smile, always thinking of others. Her faith was a powerful witness to all those whom she encountered. Patricia, a faithful member of the Church of God for 32 years, was ordained a deaconess in 1993.

She is survived by her husband, Michael, three daughters, one son, her parents, two brothers, one sister and seven grandchildren.

Stella Mae Vance, 93, of Winchester, Ohio, formerly of West Liberty, Kentucky, died Nov. 15,

2001, at her residence. Born Oct. 14, 1908, in Morgan County, Kentucky, she first heard the broadcast of Herbert Armstrong in 1958. She became a member of the Church of God in 1968 and attended the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation.



Stella Mae Vance

She was preceded in death by her husband, Buford, three sons and one daughter. Survivors include seven sons, two daughters, 38 grandchildren, 74 great-grandchildren and 16 great-great-grandchildren.

Stella's love for God's truth and tremendous example resulted in many in her family being called into the Church of God. She had a heart that cared completely. She had a smile that brought so much pleasure. She had a love that brought joy beyond measure. She will be greatly missed.

Lee E. Welshans, 88, died Nov. 28, 2001, in Ft. Worth, Texas. He was born Oct. 4, 1913, in Sparta, Illinois, and retired in 1975 from the Alton Southern Railroad after serving as a locomotive engineer for 33 years. He loved fishing, trains and travel documentaries, especially travels via train.

He was baptized in 1957 in St. Louis, Missouri, and was ordained a deacon in April 1968. He has served in the St. Louis, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Ft. Worth areas. He was a member of the pioneer Spokesman Club in St. Louis. He loved music and for many years sang bass in church choirs and performed in Feast choirs as well as many specialty programs, including singing with the Chattanooga Symphony.

He and his wife, Mildred, were married 62 years. He is survived by his wife; son, James Welshans, and his wife, Wilma; daughter, Betty Cowan, and her husband, Bill; two grandchildren, Michelle Richard and her husband, Tim, and Roderick Cowan and his wife, Kayce; and two great-grandchildren, Alexia and

Timothy Richard. He was preceded in death by his grandson, Ronald Lee Cowan. He was the family patriarch who inspired family and friends with his love for God and life.

Roy Lanier, 55, of the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation died Nov. 16, 2001. He was baptized in 1969. He is survived by three sisters, Cheryl Bean, also of the Nashville congregation, and Arleie Sanford and Pat Ferebee. He had several nieces and nephews. Roy was a very kind and loving person.

The funeral was conducted by the pastor of Nashville, Fred Kellers, and elder Stan Martin.

Steven Lynn Buss, 50, of Queen Creek, Arizona, died Nov. 22, 2001, in Mesa, Arizona. He was born in Baytown, Texas, and moved to Arizona when he was 4 years old. He was baptized in 1993.



Steven Lynn Buss

Survivors include his wife, Cindy; three daughters, Peggy, Julia and Cindy; a son, Steven; and three granddaughters, Jessica, Elizabeth and Krystal. A memorial service was conducted by Jim Tuck Dec. 1.

On Oct. 27, 2001, Rozel I. Henn, known to most as "Mother Henn," passed away peacefully at her home in Aurora, Illinois. She was born in 1903 and had just turned 98 on Oct. 3. She was baptized New Year's Eve 1967 following her two oldest daughters who had been baptized earlier that year. She attended the UCG congregation that meets in Bolingbrook, Illinois, along with her

daughter, Betty L. Gregory. She was able to attend services until May when she became too weak, but her heart's desire was to be able to attend again.

A memorial service was held Nov. 11, officiated by Robert Fahey.

She was preceded in death by her husband in 1967, her son in 1987 and her daughter Bonnie Friebel (who attended services in Arkansas) in 1995. She is survived by three children, 16 grandchildren, 38 great-grandchildren and nine great-great-grandchildren.

Harold Charles Haskins Jr. of Portland, Oregon, died May 23,

2001, after a prolonged illness and blindness. He was born in Rochester, New York, in 1942.

He was baptized in 1963 and married Jeannette Estep Dec. 18, 1967. He had four children: Barry Charles Haskins, Tamara Irene Kale, Katherine Lynn Stambaugh and he was predeceased by a son, Theodore Robert Haskins.

When Harold died, there were three granddaughters, Keyera RaeAnn Haskins, Jaclyn Ashley Kale and Rachel Cheri Stambaugh. Within 36 days after his death he had two more granddaughters. He is also survived by his sister, Charlaine Sheppard.

News at a Glance...

Volunteer Sets the Pace for New Year

We recently received a phone call from Laura Brewer of the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation. Mrs. Brewer has been involved in the *Good News* member participation programs for some time and phoned to request additional supplies of brochures, magazines and displays. Mrs. Brewer, a widow, discussed how much she enjoys keeping busy helping people learn about the true gospel. She currently services 10 distribution outlets with brochures or magazines and does her best to check on each location every two weeks.

Mrs. Brewer asked for six new brochure displays and six newsstand displays and a supply of magazines. She particularly wants to open up several new free distribution locations on Padre Island to reach tourists visiting the Texas coast of the Gulf of Mexico. She intends to dedicate at least one day a week to locating and servicing outlets.

Our most grateful thanks to Mrs. Brewer, who is nearing 80 years old, and to all our dedicated brethren involved in the *Good News* member participation programs.

Congregations or brethren interested in obtaining information on the programs, are welcome to call toll free, 888-369-9940 or e-mail john_labissoniere@ucg.org.

John LaBissoniere

United Has Printed 1.8 Million Booklets

Since the beginning of United, the Church has printed more than 1.8 million booklets, and about a third of those were printed this year (608,000). Of the 28 booklets, we printed five new ones and reprinted 13 to meet demand.

PC Answers More Than 1,500 Questions

In November, Cecil Maranville passed the 1,000 mark in answering Personal Correspondence questions by mail. Last year he answered 727 for the entire year.

Another 551 e-mail messages were handled by eight field pastors. The pastors are Thomas Clark, Bob Fahey, Mike Hanisko, Vernon Hargrove, Noel Hornor, Dave Johnson, Steve Moody and Bill Winner. Doug Johnson and Herb Teitgen are scheduled to join the Personal Correspondence team this year.

The e-mail messages handled by Personal Correspondence increased by 19 percent over the previous year, from 462 to 551.

More than 6,600 e-mail messages (a 48 percent increase) were received through the Internet at info@ucg.org and info@gnmagazine.org. Nearly all received

a reply, but most are not as extensive as those answered by Personal Correspondence. Requests for the location of Church services are averaging 32 a month, including mail and e-mail. This is in addition to those who look up the information directly on the Internet at www.ucg.org/html/church.htm.

More Than 200 Baptized Around the World

In the year 2001, at least 252 new brothers and sisters were added to the Church around the world.

Here are the total baptisms for those areas that reported baptisms by press time:

Australia	..... 5
Barbados	..... 1
Brazil	..... 7
Canada	..... 14
El Salvador	..... 13
Estonia	..... 1
France	..... 1
Guyana	..... 7
Italy	..... 5
Malawi	..... 1
New Zealand	..... 2
Nigeria	..... 15
Philippines	..... 14
South Africa	..... 5
St. Lucia	..... 1
United States	..... 154
Zambia	..... 6

Bible Study Course Update

In 2001, 149,838 lessons of the *Bible Study Course* were mailed in the United States. Nearly 16,000 new students were added to the course through the subscriber development letter sent to *Good News* subscribers in April. At the end of the year, after renewals and "graduations," there were 9,487 students receiving the course.

Those who finish all 12 lessons of the printed course receive an offer for audiotapes, and at the end of the year 2,554 "graduates" were receiving tapes. In all 16,797 tape packages were mailed out by the St. Paul, Minnesota, congregation. "We really appreciate their help," said Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services operation manager. "Over the course of 12 months they will be mailing out about 36,000 tapes."

Four New Radio Broadcasts Recorded

Gary Petty, pastor of the San Antonio, Texas, congregation and host of the *Good News* radio broadcast, visited the home office Dec. 26 to record four new programs. The titles include: "Valentine, Cupid and Jesus Christ," "What Is Faith?" and "The Feast of Unleavened Bread."

Letters...

Sermon Transcripts

Thanks for adding sermon transcripts to your Web page. Since I do not have a computer with an audio card, it has been impossible for me to hear the sermons. But now I am delighted, for I can read the sermons and sup on the spiritual food contained therein.

Internet

New Home Page Layout

I really like the new home page layout [www.ucg.org] with frequently changing highlights sections on the right, along with weekly *Good News* radio update and rotating ads. Very nice.

The two newflash articles on Harry Potter were extremely timely, as they recently started reading it in public school

to my sister's son without any parental consent, and we had just been praying about that issue this weekend. Thanks!

Internet

"What's the Deal Breaker?"

Please pass along to Janna Thomas my thanks for an excellent article [December, page 7]. I appreciate the

strong resolve of the elderly lady in her matter-of-fact response. Good job.

Missouri

Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Comments and suggestions to improve *United News* welcome. Mail to: *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or e-mail mike_bennett@ucg.org.

News at a Glance...

Teens Receive Ezekiel Award

During Sabbath services Dec. 29 at the Cincinnati Family Tournament, Council of Elders Chairman Roy Holladay announced that Joy LaBissoniere, now 19, and David Kennebeck, 18, would receive a new award—the Ezekiel Award. Joy is the daughter of John and Linda LaBissoniere of Knoxville, Tennessee, and David is the son of Lon and Kathy Kennebeck of Atlanta, Georgia.



David Kennebeck and Joy LaBissoniere receive the Ezekiel Award from Jim O'Brien

During the presentation Mr. Holladay said, "Our goal was to find two persons who in the opinion of peers and counselors make a sincere and genuine attempt to resist wrong worldly influences, to overcome personal weaknesses and to live by the values expressed by biblical teachings. In short, this is a person who, living in a world of increasingly declining morals, displays right character. Thus the name of this award is the Ezekiel

Award. It is a recognition that some of our members, though young 'stand in the gap' of values... Those chosen this year represent many others who live by the same standards."

The award includes a plaque and a \$100 scholarship to use at the college of the recipient's choice.

Year-End Statistics at a Glance

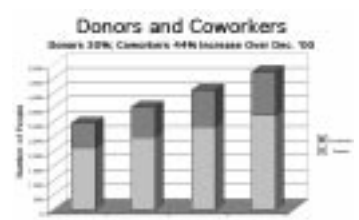
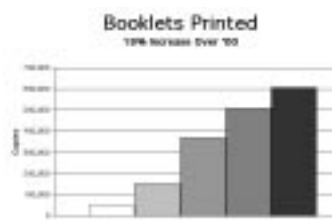
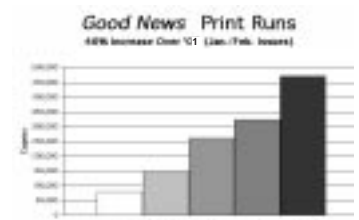
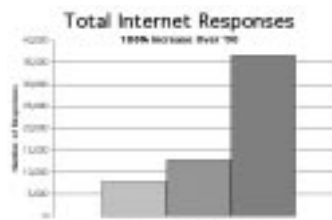
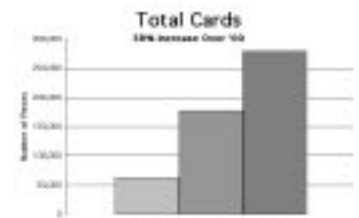
The total mail processed in 2001 was one and a half times the previous year in part because of the increase in subscription cards received. Two direct mail promotions brought in 32,435 subscriptions, a 5.6 percent response. The *GN* was also promoted

in 25 card deck versions, bringing in 31,512 responses. The brochure programs attracted 26,850 new subscribers, while the waiting room program added 11,420.

The *Good News* radio program brought in 2,846 subscribers. The highest number of calls was 122 (week of Sept. 23), and the weekly average was 55. Cable-access TV attracted 971 subscribers.

Residual cards from the June 2000 *Reader's Digest* ad brought in 2,420 new subscribers, and 1,541 cards came in from the newsstand program.

Three subscriber development letters offered literature to *GN* readers. They brought in 64,628 cards, a 14 percent response.



What's New on the Web?

On www.ucg.org

- View the video/audio presentation on "Early Church History" presented by Darris McNeely, now available on the ABC class lecture page. <http://www.ucg.org/abc/classes.html>

- See new sermon transcripts on "What's So Bad About a Little White Lie?" by Peter Eddington, "Preparing the Bride of Christ" by Roy Holladay, "The Grace of God" by Mike Grovak, "Behold, Your King Cometh" by Ed Smith, "The Matter of Zeal" by Ken Martin and "The Spiritual Samaritan" by Richard Pinelli. <http://www.ucg.org/deafhh/transcripts.html>

- See the Spanish page for the December issue of *El Comunicado* and the January-February issue of *Las Buenas Noticias*. http://www.ucg.org/html/espa_ol.shtml

On vcmagazine.org

- The January *Virtual Christian Magazine* has articles on: "Transform Your Life in 2002," "The Bible and Harry Potter," "Mentors Promote Success," "Why Does Evil Exist?" and "Whatever Lies Ahead in 2002, Christians Need Not Worry." <http://vcmagazine.org>



On youthmagazine.org

- The latest issue of *Youth United* contains articles on "Why Understand Prophecy?", "Understanding the Return of Christ," "The Role of Satan in the End Time," "Should a Christian Fight?" and "Dealing With Fear." <http://youthmagazine.org>

Other Helpful Links

<http://www.ucg.org/radio> (*Good News* radio program site. Listen to Real Audio files of the program and see the radio log.)

<http://ucgyouth.org> (Youth and young adult site)

<http://gnmagazine.org> (*Good News* Web site. Sign up for e-mail notification!)

<http://www.ucg.org/a/locale/multimedia.htm> (Check out the local multimedia efforts by United congregations: *Tomorrow* television by Portland, Oregon; *Good News* television by Beloit, Wisconsin; *World News and Prophecy* radio by Donald Ward; and *The World Tomorrow* on MANX radio on the Isle of Man.)

<http://www.ucg.org/a/news/news.htm> (News page with Council of Elders meeting reports, President's Letters, Home Office Updates, etc.)

If you have any questions or comments, please contact: webmaster@ucg.org

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