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United News™

News of the United Church of God, an International Association

Vol. 10, No 9

www.ucg.org

November 2004

News At a Glance

New Stations Added

On Aug. 22, 50,000-watt news/talk station KRMG 740 AM in Tulsa, Oklahoma, began airing the *Good News* radio program on Sunday mornings at 8 a.m. Also, the program began airing Sept. 5 on Sundays at 10 a.m. on 50,000-watt, talk station WTAR 850 AM in Norfolk, Virginia.

Due to low listener response on KCMO 710 AM in Kansas City, we decided to withdraw the program from the station. The final broadcast there took place on Sept. 12. For a complete listing, see www.ucg.org/radio.

John LaBissoniere

12 New GN Radio Programs Produced

On Sept. 20 and 21, Gary Petty recorded six new radio programs for use during our next 13-week contract period, which begins Nov. 6.

Jerold Aust, longtime minister and *Good News* senior writer, was in Cincinnati to record four of the programs with Mr. Petty, and longtime minister and Ambassador Bible Center coordinator, Gary Antion, recorded two programs with Mr. Petty.

In addition, material for six more radio programs is being edited from special sermons given by Mr. Petty in San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Petty has now delivered more than 100 radio programs.

Here is a listing of what was covered:

1. The Untouchables—with Mr. Antion.
2. Is Baptism Important?—with Mr. Antion.
3. The Spirit Realm, Part 1.
4. The Spirit Realm, Part 2.
5. Will the Jews Survive?—with Mr. Aust.

See "News at a Glance," page 2

United Statistics

Media Center Restricted Fund

(to contribute, note on your check that it is for the "Media Center" or "Video Studio")

\$150,000 Goal			
\$100,000			
\$50,000			
	July 31 \$3,224	Aug. 31 \$81,530	Oct. 29 \$102,233

Louisville, Portland Hosting Winter Family Weekends

Excitement is building for two of the major social and educational activities sponsored by United. The Portland, Oregon, weekend is the granddaddy of them all, now in its 39th year. The Louisville, Kentucky, weekend promises to be the largest, attracting as many members and families as our larger Feast sites. Such educational and fun fellowship opportunities play an important role in the Church's mission to "Prepare a People."

Louisville Gets Larger

The Louisville Winter Family

Weekend will begin Dec. 22 at noon and run through a brunch Sunday morning, Dec. 26. It includes sports, seminars, dances and activities for all ages. Nearly 450 rooms have been reserved so far at the Clarion and the overflow hotel, the Holiday Inn. Reservations can still be made at the Holiday Inn at (502) 426-2600.

Each year the highlights of the weekend include the numerous seminars and the Sabbath services. Gary Petty is the guest speaker. Seminar speakers include Todd Carey, Roy Holladay, Doug Horschak, Ralph Levy,

Arnold Mendez, Pam Myers and more. Also this year there will be a Family Fun Fair for all ages on Thursday night, Dec. 23. It will include everything from miniature golf to a mechanical bull, from moon bounce to a Velcro wall. More information and registration information is on the Web at www.ucg.org/familyweekend and was also mailed to families.

Plans for Portland

The Northwest Weekend in Portland runs from Sabbath through Monday, Dec. 25 to 27. The multifac-

eted weekend features Sabbath morning seminars for teens covering "Intelligent Design—Proving God's Existence," a two-part parents' seminar on "Parenting Wisely," plus two young adult seminar presentations.

Specially prepared youth-focused Sabbath services begin at 2 p.m. That night the Portland teens host the much-anticipated Northwest Teen Dance. Sunday sports include volleyball games for teens and adults.

See "Weekends," page 4

Feast Attendance Sets New Record



Speaking in Zambia; children's choir at Steamboat Springs, Colorado (photos by Bev Kubik and Steve Ferguson)

Around the world, high attendance figures plus the number of shut-ins receiving Feast tapes from the home office totaled 20,487, about 3.7 percent higher than last year.

This is also a new high attendance figure for the Feast of Tabernacles for United, surpassing the previous record year of 1996. In the last six years attendance has increased by a total of 30 percent.

This year, five sites also webcast the Feast messages live

during the Feast as an added service to shut-ins. The highest number of connections at one time appears to be more than 80 during services in the Pacific time zone, where Bend, Oregon, and Kelowna, British Columbia, were webcasting. Other sites webcasting were Hagerstown, Maryland, and the sites in Mexico and the British Isles.

Reports from 55 Feast sites around the world are included in this issue, beginning on page 6. UN

Camp Team Plans for 11th UYC Season

The sixth annual Camp Team Conference was held at the home office Oct. 24 to 26 at the end of the 10th season for the United Youth Camps program.

New camp directors Andy Burnett (Camp Davidson, Oregon) and Doug Johnson (Camp Heritage, Pennsylvania) were welcomed to the team. The team reviewed details of the 2004 camp year and made plans for improvements next year. Plans for the camp magazine and the camp video were also discussed.

Larry Greider, coordinator of the camp program, said, "Our camp team works very well together, allowing for synergy among our veteran directors and helps us focus on the details of our program design. According to the over 1,200 surveys, it is evident that parents and campers like what they see. We get many comments about 'the Zone,' wishing we could recreate that in homes and churches throughout the year.

"It is also great to have a couple of new members to the camp team, while we will miss the considerable contributions of Darris McNeely and Matt Fenchel," Mr. Greider said. He said the team is planning for steady attendance numbers next year, and expects to be blessed with even more volunteers for the UYC staff than can be used.

Tuesday's half-day session was set aside to brainstorm ways the Church can continue to serve the young adults who come out of the camp program. UN

Vertical Thought Magazine Begins Second Year

The October-December 2004 issue of *Vertical Thought* (VT) magazine marks the beginning of this publication's second year as an "in-print" periodical.

Written for young people ages 12 through 22, VT began as an online publication called *Youth United* in the fall of 2000. Issues came out every three months and young people were invited to send in biblical questions by e-mail.

After three years of online publication, the Council of Elders gave approval to change the name to *Vertical Thought* and begin printing the magazine. The first issue of VT came out in the fall of 2003 with a print run of 5,000.

Over the course of VT's first year, issues were produced every three months with a mixture of articles writ-

ten by adults and young people. The circulation has grown steadily and the print run for the latest issue was 11,500. According to Connie Seelig, circulation manager, we are adding approximately 1,900 subscribers with every issue. This growth has been a pleasant surprise since there has been very little advertising. New subscribers most often find us and request subscriptions through our Web site, www.verticalthought.org.

A significant number of new subscribers are young people and youth workers without previous connections



to the Church. Several messages have come in requesting permission to reprint specific articles for distribution to youth in other churches. Approval is usually given for these reprints provided the entire article is printed intact and a

See "Vertical Thought," page 2

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News At a Glance

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7. Have Christians Forgotten Christ?—with Mr. Aust.
8. Prayer Can Improve Your Life—with Mr. Aust.
9. Searching for Happiness, Part 1.
10. Searching for Happiness, Part 2.
11. Does God's Grace Have Conditions?, Part 1.
12. Does God's Grace Have Conditions?, Part 2.

Thank you to all those who participated, and may this next round of airings prove to be fruitful in preaching the truth of God and the good news of His soon coming Kingdom!

Peter Eddington

Elders Ordained and Credentialed

On Oct. 4, Gary Steeves was ordained an elder. He serves the Sussex, New Brunswick, congregation.

On Oct. 7, the Last Great Day, Lloyd Teetaert was ordained an elder. He and his wife, Helen, serve the Regina, Saskatchewan, congregation.

Vince Szymkowiak's credentials as an elder were recognized at the Council of Elders meetings in August. He and his wife, Carol, serve in the Rolla, Missouri, congregation.

Two Deacons Ordained in Kenya

Two ordinations took place during the Feast of Tabernacles in Kenya. Moses Meraba Nyaira and David Ogweni Owak were both ordained by senior pas-



Moses Meraba Nyaira and David Ogweni Owak were ordained by John Elliott during the Feast

of John Elliott to the office of deacon. Five deacons now serve in the region, assisting with Church operations and visiting local congregations.

Paralyzed Member Walks Again

Greg Harrigan, a member of the

See "News at a Glance," page 24

Local Congregations Continue Evangelism Efforts

As reported in the August issue (page 2), 36 pastors, representing about 90 congregations, are writing to the *Good News* readers in their areas with various offers. This effort makes the readers aware of the local congregations, and helps in the work of preaching the gospel in those areas.

In addition to those areas covered in August, we received reports from the following areas:

- The Nashville, Tennessee, congregation has done 10 mailings to the *Good News* list in their area since March of 2001, each time offering an audiotape.

The most recent mailing for which statistics were available was in March 2004, when 1,500 letters were mailed offering an audiotape of "Why Does God Allow Suffering?" In addition to the 275 who have asked to receive tapes on a regular basis, 108 responded to this specific offer.

The letters give local telephone numbers, the local Web site address, a brief promo of the cybercast of local services and plug the telecast on cable in the South Central Kentucky area. The letters also invite readers to attend services, and at least three have responded, and one has become a member. Two or three have sent in small offerings, and one lady requested multiple copies of booklets to hand out.

Members write the letters, design the mailing pieces, stuff the envelopes, record, duplicate and mail the tapes.

They have learned that it is not necessary to provide postage-paid reply

cards. The last several mailings they sent out cards that required postage, and there was no noticeable drop-off in response.

- The Beloit and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, congregations have combined for three mailings to *GN* subscribers. The most recent one was in November 2003 when 1,300 letters were sent offering an audiotape, "When Life Throws You a Curve." This offer brought in 208 requests, for a 16 percent response rate.

Steve Nutzman reported that a couple who own a print shop printed and helped mail the letters, and that the seniors stuffed envelopes for one of the mailings.

- The Salina and Wichita, Kansas, congregations used the *Good News* mailing list three times to offer specific sermon tapes to subscribers in central and western Kansas and Nebraska. Four or five members helped with this project. They had a high of 12 percent response to one offer, and a low of 3 percent when they offered one on the subject of the Sabbath. One visit request was generated, about a 12-hour drive from pastor Tom Clark's home!

- The Bentonville, Fort Smith and Mena, Arkansas, congregations did mailings in January 2002 to 435 *GN* subscribers. They offered sermon tapes on "What Happens After Death?" and "Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?" The responses were: Bentonville, 13; Fort Smith, 20; and Mena, 6. One person attended services in Fort Smith for a couple of Sabbaths after receiving the tapes.

- Houston North and South, Texas, sent out just over 2,500 letters and received just over 250 responses (10 percent) over two years ago. They offered two sermon tapes and gave the location of Sabbath services in the area. Three people attended services, but none returned.

- Chris Moen reported on a mailing done in the Savannah, Georgia, area to

determine the interest in having a weekly service or monthly Bible study in the area. Of the 124 subscribers who received the letter, three asked for weekly services and four requested a monthly Bible study. The response was not high enough to fulfill these requests, but all received a follow-up letter and the six who asked for a sample cassette sermon received it. **UN**

Charlotte Youth Help With Local Evangelism Mailing

The Charlotte, North Carolina, youth gathered at the home of one of the brethren on Sunday, July 25, 2004, to assemble invitations to *Good News* readers. Over 800 letters were folded, stuffed and sealed. Labels were placed on letters assembly-line style.

Good News readers were invited to attend services on Aug. 14, 2004, or to request the sermon on tape.

Other members of the congregation, including pastor David Mills, pitched in to help. Pizza and soft drinks afterwards topped off an afternoon of service and socialization with workers and their families.

The mailing has shown over a 17.5 percent response in requests for tapes. Several new families have attended services. Requests are still being processed as a result of this year's mailing. In fact, some responses to last year's mailing are also continuing to trickle in.

Many others in the Charlotte congregation expressed interest in participating in next year's mailing. It is encouraging to see so many wanting to serve!

Marti Springer



Crystal Pettigrew (left) and Kerianne Springer (right) help fold invitations, as others stamp, label and seal

"Vertical Thought," continued from page 1

statement is included saying that this article was produced by the United Church of God, an International Association.

In conjunction with *VT* magazine, a monthly e-mail called *Vertical News* is sent to 1,135 people notifying them of

the latest monthly additions to the Web site. Web designer Aaron Booth manages the distribution of *Vertical News* as well as the online version of the magazine—which includes not only the current issue but additional online content added each month and all back issues.

A team of ministers—including Andy Burnett, Tom Clark, Tom

Damour, David Dobson, Michael Hanisko, Doug Horchak, Mark Mickelson, Jim Servidio and Ken Treybig—share the task of answering *Vertical Thought* Personal Correspondence questions. Members of this team take turns answering an average of 70 e-mail questions each month. Mary Clark helps proofread these answers before sending them back to the readers.

Questions readers ask most often deal with relationships, sex, dating and education. Many of these questions and answers are used in *VT* after personal information is removed. After being published, these answers are then added to the Web site and included in a topical index.

David Treybig

Vertical Thought managing editor

November 2004
Vol. 10, No. 9



United News
News of the United Church of God, an International Association

United News (ISSN 1088-9020) is published monthly except April and October by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. © 2004 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post publications mail agreement number 1487167.

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Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Subscriptions: *United News* is sent automatically to members of the United Church of God and is free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the generous, voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and their coworkers. Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible. To request a subscription, write to *United News*, United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or to one of the international addresses below.

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News From **Around the World**

Hambleton Named Australian Office Manager

The Australian National Council chose Allan Hambleton to be the new office manager of the Australian national office. He will replace Reg Wright, who had notified the National Council earlier in the year that he wished to retire in December. The plan is for Mr. Hambleton to start in November, with Mr. Wright staying on for two or three months to ensure a smooth transition.

Mr. Hambleton was chosen from the list of six applicants, three of whom were interviewed by the National Council on July 18.

"Those interviewed were all qualified to fill the position," wrote Bill Eddington, Australian National Council chairman. "Allan is very qualified to take over from Reg Wright. He was ordained an elder in 1983 and has had considerable experience in office administration and management at a senior level. He has a master's in business administration, a bachelor of science in management, a bachelor of commerce and is a Certified Management Accountant."

"With Allan's appointment, I am content that the office will be in good hands

following my retirement," said Mr. Wright.

"Reg has served in an exemplary manner since the United Church of God—Australia formed in 1995," wrote Mr. Eddington. "It was at that time that



Allan and Helen Hambleton, who are moving back to Australia to fill the office manager position in the national office

he started the fledgling national office for the Church in the spare bedroom of his home."

Biography

Allan and Helen Hambleton met while studying at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, and were married in 1974. They soon came to Australia where Mr. Hambleton worked in the Australian office as an accountant for Ambascos Press. After that closed, they returned to California to look for employment. They have three adult children, Susie, Sam and Sally-Ann, all of whom live in Brisbane, Australia.

Mr. Hambleton has worked in a number of financial and accounting positions during his career. His most recent position was as the director of Fiscal and Support Services for the North San Diego County Transit District in Oceanside, California.

From 1998 to 2001 he worked for the Department of Main Roads in Brisbane. At that time he was a member of the Australian National Council, the Pastoral and Finance committees and served the congregations in the area. During that time Helen Hambleton became an Australian citizen and now has dual citizenship. **UN**

International News At a Glance

Philippine Web Site Redesigned

The national Web site of the United Church of God, an International Association—Philippines has recently been redesigned. Sporting a new look and feel, the site includes a menu structure similar to that of the UCGIA Web site.

The Philippine site caters to literature requests for *The Good News*, *Bible Study Course*, *World News and Prophecy* and *Vertical Thought* subscriptions, as well as our other Church-related publications. It also includes the broadcasts of the weekly radio program called the *Good News of the World Tomorrow* hosted by Davao Pastor Edmond Macaraeg, which can either be streamed or downloaded for playback later in RealAudio. (You will need the free RealPlayer program to listen to the broadcasts.)

A search function is also available at the site's home page.

To visit the UCGIA-Philippines Web site, simply enter ucg.org.ph at the address bar. (You will need an Internet browser that supports JavaScript and CSS. Most new versions are capable of these features and are free for download.)

Richard Macaraeg

New Booklet a Hit in New Zealand

The booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* has been very successful in New Zealand. Jeff Caudle, pastor in New Zealand, reported, "We have received more requests from the May 2004 *Reader's Digest* ad in three months than from any previous ad run in *Reader's Digest* in recent years."

One gentleman responded to the ad, read the booklet, requested further literature and gave up Sunday worship after 49 years. He had taught advanced Bible classes for decades, but he said it never entered his mind that the seventh-day Sabbath should be kept by Christians.

New Australian Council Member Chosen

Howard Pope, a deacon in the Bacchus Marsh congregation, was chosen as a new layperson member of the nine-member Australian National Council. He and his wife, Jan, have been members of the Church for 29 years, and he has also served as a member of the Policy and Planning Committee of the National Council. He replaces Trevor Huthnance, who was ordained during his

last term and so was no longer eligible as a candidate for the layperson election.

Two long-serving members of the National Council were reelected in the layperson election. Drew Efimov and Ruth Root were elected for two-year terms. Mr. Efimov has served as Finance Committee chairman, and Mrs. Root has chaired the Media and Publishing Committee. She is also employed in the office as an administrative coordinator and supervisor of media operations.

Source: United News Australia

Good Works Project Funds Water Purification

The Good Works fund has made it possible to distribute water purification tanks to our faithful families in the East



Janet Owak with a 25-liter water-filtering dispenser

African region. Water is poured into the top of these tanks and passes through a filtering process that helps remove dangerous germs that cause typhoid fever and other illnesses. The distribution of the equipment is nearly complete.

Additionally, we were able to purchase and distribute some food relief to those in drought-stricken areas. Appreciation for the aid has been received from many of those who received it.

John Elliott

Minister Transfers Back to U.S.

Glen and Connie White, who moved to Calgary, Alberta, to pastor four-and-a-half years ago, transferred back to the United States in August. They will pastor in the Missoula, Montana, area. They will continue to pastor the Lethbridge, Alberta, and Regina, Saskatchewan, congregations for the next year, as well as coordinate the Regina Feast site.

For the next year, the Calgary congregation will be pastored by Robert Berendt, pastor of the Edmonton and Red Deer, Alberta, and North Battleford and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, congregations. His pastoring of the Calgary congregation will be augmented by regular visits to the area by Rainer Salomaa, pastor of the Prince George, Kelowna and Penticton, British Columbia, congregations.

Tony Wasilkoff

British Isles National Council Meets in September

Sunday, Sept. 5, the UCG—British Isles National Council met in Polesworth. Before the meeting members viewed a video titled *A Duty to Care* dealing with child protection issues.

Circulation

Jan Schroeder reported on the results of the September 2003 *Selections* ad test. Statistics collected so far indicate that there is a higher likelihood of the responders continuing with their subscriptions to *The Good News* if they received at least three issues, rather than just one.

Advertising Opportunities

Council members considered the appropriateness of an ad in a quality newspaper such as *The Daily Telegraph*. After discussion, it was decided that

immediate efforts and funds be put toward enhancing the Church's British Isles Web site to reflect a more contemporary appearance and functionality. Once this work is completed, the Web site itself will be the focus of any newspaper advertising. It was noted that so far during 2004 over 40 percent of the total subscription requests received have come from the Internet.

Treasurer's Report

Barbara Fenney reported that the accounts for the financial year ending June 30 were with the accountant for audit. Her report highlighted that while general income had been 8 percent higher than was budgeted and Gift Aid receipts 4,000 pounds more than was budgeted, there were also higher than

budgeted expenditures, principally postage, travel, meeting hall rental, printing and the cost of running two offices. This resulted in spending 2,916 pounds more than was received in income.

The treasurer commented that given the unanticipated one-time cost of refurbishing the Eccleston office prior to handing back the lease (4,400 pounds), this slight overspend was understandable, and it was paid for by monies carried over from the previous year and did not involve the use of reserve funds.

Summer Camp Report

Several Council members had been at camp and the feeling was that it had been a most successful activity. The same venue has been booked for next year's camp (Aug. 5 to 14, 2005). **UN**

Encouraging Responses to Australian Ads

July was a record month in the Australian national office, not only for phone calls, but also for the number of requests processed by the Mailing Department. More than 8,000 literature requests were processed from April to July, up from 3,142 during that period last year, a 156 percent increase.

A record 831 *Bible Study Course* lessons were sent out in July. Also, a record 49 Personal Correspondence questions were answered in July.

Different Advertising Media

Of the 1,263 *Good News* subscribers added to the list in July, the office

received responses to seven different *Reader's Digest* ads and 16 ads running on the Internet.

In addition, two unaddressed card deck drops were running in Geelong (105,000 households) and Wollongong (110,000 households), as well as a test of addressed card decks in Brisbane and suburbs (100,000 households).

God Gives the Increase

There have been visit requests from all the eastern states in Australia and Western Australia, and many congregations are also reporting an increase in attendance.

A new congregation of 25 to 30 is now meeting regularly in the Glasshouse Mountains in Queensland, and pastor Bill Bradford spent five days in late July and early August visiting approximately 40 people in the Mackay and Clermont areas on Queensland's north coast. Mr. Bradford plans to conduct Sabbath services once a month.

July was a record month for phone calls to the national office as well. A radio announcer has called the office several times, and has asked to be regularly sent several copies of *The Good News* to give away on his talk show.

Source: United News Australia

Leon Walker: 25 Years Serving in the Spanish Work

It's been 25 years since Leon Walker, who had been teaching at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, was asked to head up the work of the Church in the Spanish region. Many things have changed over those years, but Mr. Walker and his wife, Reba, have been a stabilizing influence throughout that time.

Pablo Dimakis, who serves in Mexico City, said, "Their continuous visits to the Mexican ministry and churches, as well as Mr. Walker's continuous flow of communication through letters first, e-mail next and e-mail later, motivated us to keep focused on the worldwide scope of the Church. They both have also motivated us to keep united in the ministry and in the churches."

Mario Seiglie, Council member and former pastor in southern South America, calls Mr. Walker "an exceptionally dedicated leader," who after 25 years "still has the same basic routine of visiting almost all the congregations in Latin America at least once a year."

"International travel isn't always pleasant," said Alec Surratt, international mail processing manager in the home office, who served in the Spanish area for 34 years. Yet some years the Walkers have "spent more time on the road than

they have been able to spend at home. Their zeal and stamina are to be admired and appreciated."

Friendly Glue

Saul Langarica, who serves Chile, Argentina and other South American countries, described how the Walkers have helped hold the Church together in the Spanish-speaking areas. "His desire and attitude to serve the Latin brethren has been a glue to the Spanish work all throughout the years. More than a boss, he has been a friend to all of us. My personal feeling is that his presence and leadership were of much importance in 1995 in order to keep about 50 percent of the membership of the Church in the region."

Mr. Dimakis agreed: "Both the Walkers were instrumental in keeping most of the Spanish-speaking ministry united throughout Mexico and Latin America during the turmoil of the crisis that the Church underwent during the first half of the 1990s."

Mr. Dimakis also explained how the Walkers identified with the brethren in Mexico. "Throughout the years that they both have been serving in the Spanish work, Mr. and Mrs. Walker have developed deep bonds of Christian friendship and camaraderie with the Spanish ministry and churches throughout Mexico, Central and South America."



Larry Roybal presents a crystal figurine of a lion and child to Leon and Reba Walker at the Feast in Mexico this year, commemorating Mr. Walker's 50th Feast and Mrs. Walker's 51st Feast (photo by Ricardo Ortega)

Manuel Quijano, who serves as a pastor in Peru, said, "Once someone asked me, 'Why do you in the Spanish area love and respect Mr. Walker so much?' I never thought about that before, but after talking to some people and going back to my personal experience with him, I think his living up to [1 Peter 5:2-3 and 1 Kings 12:7] is the answer to the question. He has dedicated the last 25 years to faithfully serving us and teaching us through his personal example what a true servant leader is."

Making Hardships Look Easy

Several of the ministers recounted occasions when the Walkers visited the brethren in spite of hardships, showing their care and winning the respect and appreciation of the brethren.

Mr. Quijano described Mr. Walker's visits to his country during dangerous times.

"In Peru, for many years he was the only personal contact we had with the Church of God in other parts of the world. During the '80s and part of the '90s our country suffered from terrorist violence. For long periods of times our main cities were shattered by car bombs almost daily; we learned to live with daily blackouts. Our country was closed to tourists and businessmen. Large companies were closing and leaving the country."

Mr. Quijano explained that some ministers would, under these circumstances, understandably be reluctant to go to Peru for the Feast or other occasions, "but not Mr. Walker. He never missed a visit to our country, and that meant a lot to us here. We felt loved and that he cared for us. We felt connected to a big-

ger work, not only to the Spanish area, but to the whole world. His visits helped us to keep going through these very difficult times."

Mr. Seiglie said, "I remember back in 1980 that the Walkers wanted to visit the brethren in southern Chile. The highway was in pretty bad shape, and it was a nine-hour ride. We rented a vehicle and made the hazardous trip. There were literally craters on the road, and at times it was impossible to avoid them. Yet the Walkers never hesitated to continue the ride, [even though] sometimes, we bumped our heads on the roof of the car because of so many bumps on the road."

"When we arrived, as the main driver, I was absolutely exhausted, yet the Walkers never looked tired or disappointed. They wanted to meet the brethren. After 25 years, they still take these hazardous trips as if by clockwork, and still are the same cheerful persons." **UN**

Snapshots of the Spanish Work: Chile

"A few months ago we had *GN* lectures in Santiago. We now have a few people attending as a result of those lectures. In the south of Chile, in Temuco, we also had *GN* lectures some months ago and there are also some new people attending services."

Saul Langarica

Snapshots of the Spanish Work: Mexico City

- The Mexico City congregation has increased from around 70 in 2000 to an average attendance of 130 during 2004.

- Many brethren and young people are enthusiastically involved in distributing the Spanish *Good News*. "As a result of this, many people are coming in contact with God's truth," Pablo Dimakis said.

- "We are planning to have a public lecture in Mexico City in February of 2005, and we trust that God might call some of the people that will be invited," he said.

Snapshots of the Spanish Work: Peru

- Baptisms in the last year: 10.
- Congregations: 4 (Lima, Huaraz, Arequipa, Trujillo).
- Sermon tape groups: 20 ("We send sermon tapes each week to 20 different addresses where at least two families gather together each Sabbath," said Manuel Quijano. "Some of these groups consist of more than 12 people.")

- Increase of circulation of *Buenas Noticias* (Spanish *Good News*): 33 percent, from 1,200 to 1,600.

Fourth Caribbean Leadership Training Seminar a Great Success!

The fourth Caribbean Leadership Training program brought together 15 participants from the Caribbean region. These were drawn from several countries: Bahamas (four), Barbados (two), Jamaica (four), St. Kitts & Nevis (one), St. Lucia (three) and St. Vincent (one). The facilitators were Kingsley Mather and Arnold Hampton.

The seminar was held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, from Aug. 6 to 9, 2004.

The program was developed as a result of the shortage of manpower in the area. It is a means whereby a number of men who are submitted to God can be trained and assisted with their development to more effectively serve in their local areas.

It is further designed to provide potential leaders with training to assist the pas-

tor in many of his important roles, build unity in the Church and be lights and good ambassadors for Christ and the Father.

The topics dealt with were the Mission Statement, the beliefs of the Church, ceremonies (funerals, Passover, etc.), why the focus (mentoring), Christ's model of leadership, communications and reporting, Church services (song leading and sermonettes), building unity in Christ's Body, the difference between self-centered human leadership and godly leadership, the Philippians 2 model of leadership and what we need to do as a Church.

The participants found the sessions to be beneficial, valuable and informative. They indicated that the seminar provided useful suggestions, thus enabling the enhancing of leadership

skills. The sessions also demonstrated how to serve with humility as well as how to build unity in the Church. The participants thought that the concepts of leadership were reinforced frequently.

Results of a questionnaire filled out by participants showed that the seminar was very successful. The facilitators were highly regarded. Participants considered their messages as incisive, inspiring and very encouraging.

The facilitators, Mr. Mather and Mr. Hampton, were commended for their timely, encouraging, powerful, rewarding and informative expositions. What stood out most was the teamwork exhibited by the facilitators and their astute mentoring.

The consensus of the group was that the program should be continued and



Caribbean Leadership Training participants—Front: Hopeton Hepburn, Fitzroy Ferguson, Harry Grant, Daniel McKinney; center: Arnold Hampton, Roderick Turnquest, Jeff Neil Weatherhead, Anthony Major, Osmond Douglas, Eustace Ellis, Kingsley Mather; back: Othniel Lindsay, Don Simpson, Andre Arthur, Kelland Barthelmy, Darnley Hazell and Mark Mackey

additional time be given to the participants. The establishment of a Caribbean

office was seen as a number one priority. *Osmonde Douglas*

"Weekends," continued from page 1

A relaxing young adult social activity will take place Saturday evening. Then, Sunday evening, the sixth annual Northwest Young Adult Bible Seminar (NW YABS) resumes through

Monday afternoon. Young adults from other regions are invited to join their Northwest compatriots for a profoundly practical seminar called, "The Basics of True Wisdom—Sane Thinking in a Crazy World." Pastors of the Northwest congregations will teach

the interactive, invigorating classes.

For more information about the teen and adult events, contact Bob Dick at bob_dick@ucg.org; and for details about the NW YABS, contact Randy Stiver at randy_stiver@ucg.org, or log on to UCGPortland.org for details.

Other Winter Activities

Besides these two winter weekends, United is also sponsoring the Winter Camp in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, Dec. 22 to 26 (see the article on page 24 or visit www.wintercamp.org).

The Church is also sponsoring a

young adults' camp outside of Tucson, Arizona, Dec. 22 to 29. This Challenger II program (see June issue, page 1) is designed to take rock climbing and spiritual mentoring "to the next level." This popular new program has already filled up. **UN**

"I Was in Prison and You Came to Me . . .": Serving Prisoners in the Houston Area

■ In September six prisoners in the Houston, Texas, area were baptized. But the story goes back a lot further.

by Jim Franks

I made my first prison visit in 1973. The request was from an inmate in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. It was difficult getting approval to visit the inmate, but eventually I was successful. After all these years I still remember that visit. In order to get into the visiting area I had to submit to a hand search because of the security situation with the man I was visiting. He had recently escaped and been recaptured, so his security situation had been upgraded. It was strange reading in the *Atlanta Constitution* about the prison escape and then a few days later visiting the man who had escaped!

Since that visit in 1973 I have spent many hours and driven many miles visiting and counseling with men in prison.

When I arrived in Houston, Texas, in 1987, I inherited a monthly Bible study at the Wynne Unit of TDCJ (Texas Department of Criminal Justice) located in Huntsville, Texas (about 75 miles north of Houston). This study was established in the 1970s in order to serve all the prisoners who were requesting spiritual instruction from the Church. It was a long ordeal getting approval for the Church to conduct such a study on a regular basis.

This was the only "approved" study in the state of Texas at that time, and any prisoner who desired to be taught by the Church was brought to this unit for the monthly study. This was awkward and difficult for the inmates since they had to travel all day on a bus, spend the night at Wynne, attend the Bible study, then travel all day the next day to get back to their home unit. Our attendance ranged from a low of six to eight to a high of 15 to 20.

I conducted these monthly studies for the next 10 years. Over that time there were only a few men who committed to this way of life and were actually baptized. I have always been reluctant to baptize individuals in prison. Under these circumstances I have found it difficult to truly discern the sincerity of those who requested baptism. But there have been a few over the many years.

When United began in 1995, I continued the studies with those who wanted to meet with us. All the men attending the studies at that time changed their membership status to United Church of God. Shortly after the start of United I began to receive visit requests from other prisoners. From a small trickle the number of requests grew quite large.

Now Studies in Four Different Prison Units

Ultimately I received well over 100 requests from various units around the city of Huntsville, which is the administrative headquarters for TDCJ. Once I had received so many requests that it was

impossible to see the men individually, I made formal proposals to the prison department for more Bible studies in other units. Today we have approved studies in four different units—Wynne in Huntsville (the original unit), Wallace Pack in Navasota, William J. Estelle in Huntsville and Ellis in Huntsville.

We still meet once per month at the Wynne Unit with an attendance that varies from four or five to as many as six or seven. We meet every Friday night at the Wallace Pack Unit with an attendance of 20. We meet once a month on Saturday mornings at the Estelle Unit with an attendance of 30 (we have 39 more on a waiting list for this study). We meet twice a month on Friday nights at the Ellis Unit with an attendance of 15.

We have approximately 70 men attending with us on a monthly basis (this number does not include those on the waiting list) and a total of eight studies each month at the various units. We handle these out of the Houston North congregation. Obviously I can't be at all these locations for each meeting. We have a dedicated group of volunteers that assists me in conducting these studies.

Six Baptisms

It took almost two years to get approval for these studies since we faced considerable opposition from some of the unit chaplains. We finally received approval in 2002. After two years of holding services every Friday night at the Wallace Pack Unit, we baptized six

men just before the Feast of Tabernacles. Seeing the men every week, teaching them and counseling them made it much easier to assist them in coming to the point of baptism. We are excited to report that David Penn, Tom Schmitz, Myron Lillis, Mitchell Kite, Troy Sanders and Jackie Walker were baptized in the gymnasium of the Wallace Pack Unit on Sunday, Sept. 12, 2004.

This is the first fruit to come from our efforts with the multiple studies. We have requests from other units to expand our program, but it is difficult to keep up with all the work. At the Estelle Unit our group is limited to 30 men at a time due to security reasons and the size of our classroom. We have 39 others who have requested to be put on a waiting list to get into our classes. We are appealing to the administration of the unit to find us a larger room and a better time slot (we currently meet at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday morning). In order for me to get from my home to this unit by 6:30 I must leave at 4:30 a.m.

In addition to this study, twice a month we hold a morning service in Huntsville for the membership in that area and we have our regular services in Houston in the afternoon. This, of course, follows the Friday night study in Navasota. Without the help of the volunteers, I would need to conduct four services in less than 24 hours on some Sabbaths—Friday night at Pack; Saturday morning at Estelle; Saturday morning in Huntsville; and Saturday after-

noon in Houston. Needless to say, I have never attempted such a schedule!

It was a great pleasure baptizing the six men just before the Feast. While it is never easy to know a man's heart, especially when he is in prison, by seeing these men every week for a two-year period, it was much easier than in previous cases where you could only see an individual two or three times per year.

It is interesting that our literature seems to be having a profound effect on those who are in prison. I don't have an answer for this, but clearly something is happening!

It has been 31 years since I made my first prison visit. It is always an unnerving experience to walk into a prison unit and hear the iron doors close behind you. But I have always felt that the men in prison were well worth the time and effort. Visiting in the prisons has truly broadened my ministry and now we have six new members to show for our efforts! **UN**

Prisoners Receiving Church Literature

Good News	15,275
World News and Prophecy	1,295
Bible Study Course	481
Bible Study Course grads	2,116
United News	343
Donors and Coworkers	118
Members	30

Letters

Corrections

United Youth Corps volunteer Heather LaFave's name was misspelled in the article about Ghana (September/October, page 3).

Jenny and Bradley Huthnance's wedding date was April 18, 2004 (September/October, page 22).

The photo of the Western Wall in Jerusalem in the August *World News and Prophecy* was flipped.

Thanks to those who pointed out these errors, and our apologies.

"Planning a Better Feast Trip"

This was an excellent article (August, page 8) about traveling to the Feast. It brings to mind some of the 500-mile trips we used to take to Rapid City for the Feast. We went in caravans, some years as small as two cars and as large as seven cars in other years. We had CB radios to coordinate stops for food and fuel; sometimes we were stretched out for miles.

One time one of the cars' oil filter blew at a rest stop, and one of the other cars was able to rush to a nearby town to get a replacement filter just before the parts stores closed. One year one of the cars decided to take a different route. We called on the radio for them to "repent," but they kept going toward the town that we would meet up at again. Then, it

turned into a contest of who would get there first—who really had the better route. I don't remember who got there first, but we had a lot of laughs.

North Dakota

"Keeps Us in Touch"

My wife and I really enjoy *United News*. It keeps us in touch with the Church as a whole and helps us have a broader view of our work and brethren worldwide.

California

"How Would Jesus Vote for President?"

My disagreement with the article "How Would Jesus Vote for President?" (August, page 11) is that it is equally (on the same level) correct that we should not fear that if we choose to vote that we will vote for the wrong person. I am perfectly capable of using human knowledge, education and wisdom and God's Spirit to discern what I perceive to be the values in a good leader and vote accordingly with full understanding and acceptance that God's will be done . . .

The article did not state all sides of the argument, which is an incorrect practice used by many media outlets and sources to convey only the point of view they wish to express.

California

Thank you for your message. The

question is what is in the best interest of the Church based on scriptural principles. The study paper on which the article was based concluded that it is in the best interest of the Church to advise members to "avoid voting and participating in political elections and running for office."

You are welcome to write up a paper showing the scriptural reasons you disagree, and to submit it to the Doctrine Committee. This is part of the process that is set up to handle any needed changes in Church doctrine.

We appreciate your statement about stating all sides of the argument. This is certainly a goal that the independent news media should aspire to, or claim to aspire to. However, *United News* is not an independent news media outlet. In the industry it belongs to the class of publications known as "house organs." For example, the Boy Scouts put out publications for Boy Scouts and leaders, and churches put out publications for their members. These publications are not expected to present all sides of every argument, but to present things pertinent to their organization.

Problem With Perfumes and Aftershaves

This year at the Dells I heard that there were about 25 people who were very much affected by the perfumes and

aftershaves worn at the Feast—not just irritated with them, but their immune systems were affected. One woman never was able to sit in the auditorium; she always sat by the door in the hallway.

I know there are some sites where people have their own room, but traveling to those isn't always an option for everyone. The one lady I know, when it attacks her immune system, she may go home and vomit for the rest of the day, so as I said, these cases aren't just light, irritating problems. Some may think to just stay away from the person wearing the perfume or aftershave, but it shouldn't come down to that—not to mention when you're dealing with over 1,000 people, the problem multiplies. I also think that as this world declines, we're going to see more and more people suffer with the problem.

I do know you ran an article on these allergy problems a couple years ago, but people aren't "getting it." People really do need to think of their neighbor, and leaving off perfume or aftershave seems like a slight thing to be able to do to help someone be able to observe the Feast along with everyone else.

Illinois

For more information, see the article from the January 2002 issue, "Colognes, Chemicals, Compassion and the Church." It's on the Web at www.ucg.org/un/un0201/cologne.html.

Connected by Computer

Just thought I would let you know what a wonderful work you are doing. I attend the Church in Edinburgh, Scotland; we only manage to meet every four weeks, but I have just bought a new computer with Real Player and have watched the ABC class Mr. Darris McNeely gave on early Church history. I must say I was hooked by it, so much so, I was waiting for the handouts.

What a wonderful way to communicate God's Word to those who cannot meet every Sabbath. I have now watched a number of sermons and will be doing this on the Sabbaths we cannot meet.

Scotland

Not the Traditions of Man

I have read your publications for years and have learned so much of God's Word. The fact that you don't teach the traditions of man means very much. Please accept this small contribution.

Colorado

Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Comments and suggestions to improve *United News* are welcome. Please let us know if you would like your name printed. Mail to: *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or e-mail mike_bennett@ucg.org.



The Feast of **Tabernacles**

More Than 20,000 Celebrate the Feast With United

Feast 2004 Attendance Figures

Argentina	560
Australia	
Hobart, Tasmania.....	81
Merimbula, New South Wales.....	151
Noosa, Queensland	404
Barbados	176
Brazil	65
British Isles	253
Cameroon	32
Canada	
Collingwood, Ontario	462
Kelowna, British Columbia.....	586
Regina, Saskatchewan.....	90
St. John's, Newfoundland	48
Chile	90
Colombia	97
Estonia	22
France	125
Germany	193
Ghana	900
Guatemala	
Antigua.....	527
Esquipulas	170
Italy	375
Jamaica	143
Kenya	221
Malawi	102
Malaysia	83
Mexico	354
New Zealand	85
Nigeria	197
Peru	212
Philippines	
Baguio City	131
Davao City	310
Iloilo City	130
Portugal	90
Rwanda	60
South Africa	
George	65
Uvongo.....	242
Togo	40
Tonga	28
Trinidad	8
United States	
Anchorage, Alaska.....	725
Bend-Redmond, Oregon	791
Branson, Missouri	1,286
Escondido, California	845
Hagerstown, Maryland	648
Jekyll Island, Georgia.....	1,213
Kerrville, Texas	840
Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii	393
Lexington, Kentucky	652
Panama City Beach, Florida ..	1,980
Steamboat Springs, Colorado ..	742
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin ..	1,578
Zambia	141
Zimbabwe	23
Shut-ins who received Feast tapes from the home office	722
TOTAL	20,487

Note: Highest daily attendance figures. Actual registration at most sites was higher due to daily absenteeism. Cybercast listeners include some shut-ins counted above, and so are not added into this total.

Argentina

Mendoza

Bienvenidos from Argentina! Pleasant spring temperatures and clear skies welcomed the brethren to Mendoza, Argentina. Thirteen countries were represented by the 560 brethren joyfully rejoicing before God.

The Feast started out with the blowing of the shofar by two boys. On the first night, we were encouraged to realize what a blessing it is to keep the Feast in unity and harmony. Throughout the Feast, we were encouraged to use our time wisely, and to use



The Feast in Argentina started with the blowing of shofars; a group shot at the Feast; the children's choir (photos by Manuel Iturra)

the tools of prayer, fasting and meditation to help us stay close to God.

The location of the Feast in Mendoza, in and by itself, promotes unity as more than 90 percent of the brethren stay at the same hotel. Brethren eat all their meals together; have exclusive use of the hotel facilities, including playground, tennis courts, volleyball courts, soccer field and swimming pool; and fellowship from morning to night.

Special activities included the *Esquinazo* (a welcome party for the visiting brethren), youth dance, children's party, ladies' breakfast, ladies' night, family dance, talent afternoon and barbecue and a city tour. Though everyone had fun at the activities, the highlight of the Feast was when 14 new members were baptized. There were also nine children blessed.

If you enjoy meeting people from other countries, or want to learn to speak Spanish, the Feast in Mendoza is the place to be. Brethren from South America are very friendly and patient while they help their brethren from other parts of the world get to know them. The sharing, hospitality and generosity of the brethren is seen in everything they do. Unity was encouraged at the beginning, and unity was practiced throughout.

Gayle Hoefker

Australia

Hobart, Tasmania

Seasonally fluctuating weather—which means warm one day, freezing the next—greeted 81 brethren from around Australia and overseas at the Hobart, Tasmania, Feast site. We were blessed this year to host three visiting elders and wives from the United States: Robert and Evelyn Fahey, Aaron Dean and Melvin and Dianne Rhodes.

The inspiring opening message reminded us that we are here to learn to fear God! The traditional cutting of a specially made Feast cake took on a greater celebration with 2004 marking the 35th anniversary of Church services beginning in Tasmania (see "Tasmanian 35th Anniversary").

Thursday morning the members gathered for a brunch of Tasmanian delights and enjoyed lively fellowship. Local members willingly provided their talents for the meals and activities throughout the Feast and added much to the spirit and unity felt by all. We enjoyed numerous family activities, a bus tour around Hobart sites, a Q&A session with Aaron Dean and a

letterbox card sorting party and letterbox drop. The opportunity to be involved in local efforts to preach the gospel was very well attended.

The focus of the spiritual diet was toward our preparation for the coming reign of Christ, and our need to learn today to fear, to love, to know and to trust God. The two great commandments received special focus, from our relationships with each other as we develop our relationship with God, to the example of the Ghanaian peoples. Throughout the messages, the unchangeableness of God's character, evidenced in His zeal, His anger, His love and even in His silence, was shown as the catalyst for the fulfillment of God's plan.

As one member and his wife stated after returning to observe the Feast after some years alone, "It was like a spiritual cleansing, being washed and renewed—a wonderful experience!"

Stephen Clark

Merimbula, New South Wales

The Tura Beach Country Club, near Merimbula, provided a cozy, attractive venue for this year's Feast. On the Sabbath, services and lunch were held at the Bega RSL, where attendance reached 151, including visitors. Guest speakers Melvin Rhodes and Aaron Dean added their experiences and wisdom to Feast services, in which songs, sermonettes and sermons fitted together like building stones in a strong wall. Collections raised money to assist brethren in Zambia, and for a charity in India.

Activities included a Last Great Day luncheon, a seniors' luncheon, the youth activity (where Bruce Dean "valiantly attempted" to teach golf) and the Church picnic where unusual athletic skills were displayed by those playing Hacky Sack, hula hoop and three-legged soccer. The small, safe beach at the park was a magnet to smaller children, all managing to get wet without actually swimming. The boisterous seniors' luncheon was held at the Harbour Master's restaurant in historic Tathra. The Country Club hosted an excellent Last Great Day luncheon in



Jeanette Dean reads stories to some children during the picnic at Spencer Park in Merimbula, Australia

a private dining area, with views over the golf course to the sea.

Brethren got together for barbecues, dining out and "doin' stuff"—there were

whale tales, fishing stories and explorings of the lovely Sapphire Coast. Feastgoers were positive and upbeat, encouraging and lively. It was good to catch up with old friends and make new ones. This was truly a Feast of fellowship.

Mavis Stucci

Noosa, Queensland

Noosa, Queensland—where it is "beautiful one day and perfect the next." That's how the saying goes in this part of the world, and it proved to be 100 percent true at the Feast this year.

The semitropical paradise that is Noosa, with its long white sandy beaches, rolling blue surf and spectacular coastal walks, welcomed 404 Feastgoers this year—a record attendance! The "locals" were thrilled to welcome visitors from the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.



Bill Bradford on stage in Noosa

We were blessed with visiting speakers Bob Fahey, Aaron Dean, Roc Corbett, Dave Dobson and Gerhard Marx whose excellent contributions left one and all thoroughly spiritually uplifted and ready to face the years ahead and whatever they may bring.

Activities included a young adults get-together at a Montezuma's Aztec Restaurant, a Family Day "sausage sizzle" and games afternoon (including sighting of whales), seniors' luncheon and river cruise and, last but certainly not least, a Family Dance with a delightful French Café theme. The activities were well balanced and there were plenty of opportunities to catch up with both new and old friends. Once again the Bundaberg congregation hosted the much appreciated daily "morning cuppa," complete with strawberries and macadamia nuts—a real treat!

Tasmanian Church 35th Anniversary

As Barry Williams, elder from Victoria, Australia, introduced the cutting of a specially made cake for the Feast, the tradition took on a special significance. This year was to mark the 35th anniversary of the first Church service in Tasmania, held on June 21, 1969, at Launceston.

As coincidence would have it, Robert Fahey, visiting Tasmania for the Feast with his wife, Evelyn, was also the first minister to give a sermon at a Tasmanian church service. That first message was titled "What God Requires—Total Reeducation," an interesting parallel to Mr. Fahey's Holy Day message this year, "Prepare to Be Teachers."

Attending the Feast in Hobart were 12 members of United who were at the original Tasmanian service, along with Gwen Bay, who was baptized in 1964 on the first baptizing tour by Bill Winner. It was a very special occasion to have the Faheys commemorating the anniversary with some of the original faithful members from Tasmania.

Stephen Clark



35th reunion of first service in Tasmania: Robert Fahey; Jenny Muir; John Muir; Evelyn Fahey; Sue Williams; Barry Williams; David Evans; Lea Evans; Gwen Bay; Ruth Root; Elizabeth Barber; David Evans Jr.; and Judie Birkett. Not pictured: Cathie Clark and Cynthia Walker

Each person attending the Feast, from the youngest to the eldest, all contributed to the harmonious atmosphere, joyous fellowship, good-hearted fun and generous offerings.

It was another wonderful Feast, both physically and spiritually. As usual it is always sad to say good-bye, but each Feast is bringing us one year closer to the coming Kingdom of God for which we must be wholeheartedly and urgently preparing ourselves.

Bill Bradford

Barbados

Bridgetown

Warm weather greeted the Feastgoers to the peaceful, coastal shores and the wonderful ambience in the southern section of Barbados. The Caribbean island hosted brethren from the Southern Caribbean, Canada and the United States. Our highest attendance was 176.

The sermons and sermonettes were thought-provoking and inspiring. Members, and the youth in particular, benefited from the messages that dealt with Christian living and the work of restoration in the Millennium.

The teens were engaged in an interactive Bible session, where they were given the opportunity to show how they, as kings, would solve some of today's problems in tomorrow's world.



Feastgoers enjoy cruise along the coast of Barbados (photo by Mark Hampton)

There were several highlights of the Feast. One was a presentation made to Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Hampton for their outstanding work with the Caribbean Leadership Training program. Some members were also acknowledged for their service to the work in Barbados.

Adults and youth were treated to social, cultural and scenic activities. An exciting and enjoyable activity for many was the catamaran cruise with picturesque views along the west coast of the island as it traveled in the placid Caribbean waters.

The brethren also appreciated the daily special music contributions in addition to the Festival and children's choirs.

Members were in agreement that God had richly blessed them with much spiritual food and physical comforts. Here are a few comments from the brethren: "My best Feast ever! The week has been so fulfilling. Thanks to everyone involved, especially our Great God."

"Great Feast with excellent messages and special music."

"Excellent and ideal Feast site."

"The Feast was well planned and very spiritually packed and well enjoyed."

"It was a very enjoyable and uplifting Feast."

Osmonde Douglas

Brazil

The highest attendance for the Feast in northern Brazil, was 65 on the Last Great Day. Brethren from the north of Brazil and Guyana came together at this site. Every day we had special music performed by the children. Some special music was sung in Portuguese, but most was in the local dialect.

Sermons and sermonettes were presented by the local leaders of the congregation. There were also activities organized every day. Children had lots of fun and each one received a prize at the end of every activity.

God blessed us with really nice weather, as there were some cooling showers during the whole Feast. The Guyanese returned home the following day and would like to say a big thank you to those who made the trip possible.

Gary Atkinson

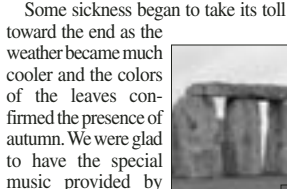
British Isles

Winchester

The Feast in Winchester, England, was marked by much fellowship, helpful and stirring messages and visits to historic sites that gave perspective to today's society. Services were cybercast on the Internet for the first time this year, with the help of the LanCour family. The messages and some photos are available at www.ugc.org.uk/feasthome.htm/. Our final registration number at the Festival was 276 with visitors from Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the United States.

The highest attendance was on the Last Great Day when 253 were present. The generous offerings will help us in the preaching of the gospel to Ephraim. We appreciated the messages from the visiting ministers, and the ABC seminar from Ralph Levy on the covenants was well received.

Some sickness began to take its toll toward the end as the weather became much cooler and the colors of the leaves confirmed the presence of autumn. We were glad to have the special music provided by



Young people have fun at the ceilidh dance in Winchester; tour of Stonehenge; new friends (photos by Sonja Hawkins and Steve Serfontein)

several talented youth and accomplished choirs from Texas and Washington state, as well as local musicians and singers. A couple attending the Feast for the first time with United mentioned, "We enjoyed meeting so many at the Feast [and] enjoyed the whole ambience. I must say that I found everyone very friendly, attitudes that permeate from the

top. The last time I attended church there was an attitude of suspicion and cliquishness. . . . Attending the Feast at Winchester must have been the right thing to do. Friday was one of the best single days in my business as we did half a month's turnover in one day. People just kept on phoning in and signing up agreements and paying. We were both surprised as Friday is usually a very slow day. What a blessing!"

Some of the highlights included the folk band and dance (*ceilidh*, pronounced "kaylee"), the young people's get-togethers (including a meal at an Italian restaurant and 10-pin bowling) and the soft dance music of a jazz trio.

Several tours were arranged: Stonehenge, Roman baths at Bath, Windsor Castle, Hampton Court Palace, Salisbury Cathedral and Portsmouth, as well as two walking tours around Winchester itself. The seniors' luncheon was attended by more than 40, with a follow-up tour to Salisbury Cathedral.

We also had an information session, which 21 people interested in the work of the British Isles National Council attended. Several suggestions were made that will be discussed by the National Council.

The Feast was rounded off by an informal get-together in the Guildhall after the Last Great Day had ended—a sizable audience enjoyed the reciting of Shakespeare, musical pieces and comical monologues.

Many thanks to those who stepped in to help where they saw a need, and the many kindnesses to others that went without recognition.

Peter Hawkins

Cameroon

Douala

The Feast in Cameroon took place in the country's economic capital of Douala. This year 32 people from many parts of the country attended the Feast in the populous port city with a population of over 3 million.

We were not able to have official government approval to hold the Feast this year. Cameroonian law states that any public demonstration or convention is illegal unless a prerequisite authorization is granted by the appropriate prefecture. This year presidential elections were to be held a few days after the Feast, so the government was not allowing any public gatherings. Our request for authorization was denied. Members gathered and observed the Feast anyway, choosing to obey God rather than man, and trusting our heavenly Father for favor and protection. This showed courage and faith on the part of our Cameroonian brethren.

The French-language sermons were all on audio and videocassettes, as there were no visitors this year. Pastor Joel Meeker had visited the brethren in Cameroon on and around the Feast of Trumpets. Festival activities included sharing

three meals a day as a group, children's activities and much fellowship.

Moise Mabout and Joel Meeker

Canada

Collingwood, Ontario

Almost 500 people descended on the shores of beautiful Georgian Bay and the colorful environs of Blue Mountain. Due to the cancellation of Mont-Sainte-Anne, Quebec, this new Feast site utilized the main hall plus two overflow areas including the popular tent, which held 200.

During the Feast there were special activities including the Family Day



Collingwood children's choir and overflow tent (photos by Wayne Lue and Aurelio Calderilli)

BBQ, sold-out boat cruise, breathtaking teen Eco Tour, entertaining Variety Show and scrumptious Seniors' Brunch with 91 in attendance. Our seniors displayed Christian enthusiasm as they cleared the main hall of dishes/tables and reset the chairs after the meal to the amazement of the Cranberry Resort staff. One employee remarked that he had never seen anything like this in his eight years on staff.

The brethren reached out to the local community by providing nonperishable food or cash donations. This was greatly appreciated by the local food bank since the Canadian Thanksgiving Day was celebrated on the Monday after the Feast.

On the Last Great Day, after a lovely buffet luncheon, a representative from the Cranberry Resort, accompanied by several staff members, addressed the brethren at the afternoon service with words of appreciation for their cooperation. She also extended a warm welcome for everyone to stay a little longer and return again soon.

As brethren reflected on their eight-day stay, these thoughtful sentiments were expressed:

"Definitely one of our best Feasts ever"—couple from Illinois.

"Messages were fantastic and very inspiring"—couple from Pennsylvania.

"People were so friendly, it was fabulous"—senior from New York.

"Awesome"—teen from Ontario.

"Fantastic in every facet"—senior from Ontario.

"Beautiful area and local people were very friendly"—lady from Ohio.

God blessed the Collingwood Feast site with sunshine and rain (at night) in due season and a spirit of cooperation and togetherness.

Dennis and Paula Horlick

Kelowna, British Columbia

Sunny blue skies and summerlike weather in the stunningly beautiful Okanagan Valley warmed and welcomed 586 steadfast brethren at God's Feast of Ingathering 2004.

Everywhere you look in Kelowna there are mountain vistas, sparkling lake views, endless rows of luxuriant vineyards and orderly orchards. Sunrises and sunsets give double duty as they reflect in the shimmering waters of the immense lake. As Elsie Hooser remarked, "The emphasis in this area is on its natural beauty, God's creation, rather than the artificial, man-made artifice. There is so much to do in the great outdoors here. I love the flowers and the friendliness—and meeting God's people—it's as close as one can get to the Kingdom."

The brethren were privileged to hear Fred Kellers, pastor of congregations in Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as seven congregations in Nigeria, give the opening message in Kelowna. He set the mood for the rest of the Feast. "The Feast of Tabernacles," he said "reveals that God's purpose is not to picture ourselves, but God's love for all humanity and the world. God's Church reflects what God is going to do to the whole earth."

Mr. Kellers pointed our vision upward and outward to those less fortunate than ourselves. He told us how Nigeria, the wealthy giant of Africa, and its people are destitute and poor through corrupt and avaricious leadership. His sermon revealed how blessed we are to live in this part of the world.

The Feast in Kelowna had many activities in which young and old could make new friends and renew past friendships. As Martin and Martha Reamy of Phoenix, Arizona, whose children are aged 21, 19 and 16, said, "Last year was our first year in Kelowna—we hesitated coming to a small Feast site, but were surprised at the large numbers of young people, their warmth, quick acceptance and affability. The kids were great! Our children made a lot of friends and kept in touch throughout the year over the Internet. So we're back this year . . . and there was instant connection."

There was a flurry of activities well-



Kelowna, British Columbia, Feastgoers LeeAnn and Dennis Luker and Cathy Berendt (photo by Jean Jantzen)

attended during the week: Festival lessons for kindergarten through grade six, all prepared ahead of time by Michelle Mickelson; a teen Bible study given by Don Hooser on "The Wonderful Difference Between Males and Females"; a young adults' seminar/lun-

cheon and golf tournament; a family day at Scandia Golf and Games and Malibu Grand Prix featuring pool, arcade games, bungee jumping and car racing; a penny carnival for young and old, combined with a cribbage tournament; and a senior's luncheon hosted by Dennis and LeeAnn Luker.

The family dance held early in the week was an overwhelming success—300 strong kicked up their heels to the music of TopHat Productions. Dolly Petersen's classic black and white theme, tablecloths, candles, balloons, black top hats, as well as fine food and fellowship added to everyone's delight.

Don Hooser's Last Great Day message "I Want to Live" reassured us that every human being in the world is important to God, not just those in His Church now. He said, "We were all losers before God called us and now we are all winners! . . . This life is just preparation for a destiny more awesome than we can express. As you go back to your daily struggles, remember some of the words of John Denver's song 'I Want to Live' and picture those less fortunate than ourselves and continue to offer your heartfelt prayers that Christ will return very soon to relieve the suffering of everyone, everywhere."

Jean Jantzen

Regina, Saskatchewan

This year 90 brethren and visitors from across Canada and the United States enjoyed the fourth Feast of Tabernacles on the great Canadian prairies in Regina, Saskatchewan. Warm, sun-filled days and crisp autumn nights added to the overall joy of the Feast. The size of the site provided for a close, family environment where many meals and all activities were shared by all.

Glen White, pastor of the Kalispell and Missoula, Montana; Lethbridge, Alberta; and Regina, Saskatchewan congregations, served as the Feast coordinator and launched the Feast with a message of vision for the imminent coming Kingdom, setting an enthusiastic theme for the Feast. Inspiring messages were delivered by the Canadian elders present, as well as David Metzler visiting from Cincinnati, Ohio.

In addition, to everyone's delight, Les McCull-

ly seniors' luncheon in a botanical conservatory, an afternoon of bowling, a bus tour and many opportunities for dining and fellowship.

Each day a special phone hookup provided access to services for Connie White, who was unable to attend due to a present health condition. Brethren sent flowers and created a giant card with personal messages for her, in addition to offering prayers for her and other brethren also unable to be present.

A significant highlight was the ordination of Lloyd Teetaert as an elder. Mr. McCullough and Mr. White conducted the ordination during the afternoon services on the Last Great Day.

David and Colleen Hofer

St. John's, Newfoundland

North America's oldest city, St. John's, was host to 48 of God's people as they came together to celebrate the



Scenes from St. John's Feast site

Feast of Tabernacles 2004. For some of those who transferred in, it was their fourth consecutive year at the St. John's Feast site; others returned for the second time; it was indeed like a family reunion.

We were blessed with a good complement of elders and wives, including Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Hargrove and Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Anderson. Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Wasilkoff also attended for the first four days. George Carter from the Toronto congregation also attended with us. Mr. and Mrs. Satterwhite from Virginia were with us for the fourth year. Mr. Satterwhite also directs the choir.

In the sermons we were reminded that we attend the Feast to reaffirm the family vision, that we are attending a family reunion, that life can be lumpy and that we need to be individuals, yet part of a team—God's family.

We saw the uniqueness and value of laughter, the vision of a new world, the importance of seeking God's Kingdom and proper management of second tithes. As well we enjoyed two very inspiring sermons pertaining to the time of the Great White Throne Judgment.

The small size of the group allowed Feast attendees to do everything together, making for a wonderful family atmosphere throughout the Feast. Everyone was able to get to know and appreciate each other as real families do.

All organized activities were a grand success with most activities hav-

ing 100 percent attendance. Family Day at the Lavrock Centre was the physical highlight of the Feast, being the success we have grown accustomed to. Many also took a double-decker bus tour of many historic sites of old St. John's. It was an opportunity to see the city without having to drive and also for more family camaraderie. The variety show had an unusual number of participants, considering the small group. We were entertained for about two hours by performances of skits, singing, storytelling and harmonica playing.

The Seniors' Brunch gave opportunity for all the seniors, as well as the elders and wives, to enjoy a meal and fellowship. Mr. Hargrove gave the address. We also had a special buffet dinner at Fairmont Hotel on the eve of the weekly Sabbath. The staff set up the beautiful Court Gardens especially for us. The food and fellowship were excellent.

Following the tradition of previous years we were able to send a donation of \$457.47 to LifeNets. The funds came from special donations, and excess funds from the Lavrock Family Day Activity.

The staff of the Best Western Traveller's Inn, where services were held, appreciated our presence there and presented Blanche Smith a beautiful clock for her efforts in arranging and organizing the Feast there. The hotel staff signed the accompanying card. They expressed their appreciation and would like to see us return next year. Their comment was that the place is just not the same after we leave.

St. John's may seem to be the end of the world to some, but to those of us who live here, as well as for those who attend the Feast here, it is a very special place. This year it was, once again, a place to experience in type the peaceful, prosperous, wonderful world tomorrow.

David Smith

Chile

Trailanqui

God has shown His hand once again in blessing abundantly the Feast this year in the south of Chile.

Right before the Feast we came to the conclusion we would not be able to have the Feast in the place we had previously kept it, Calafquen. The meeting hall had not received the improvements previously promised by the owners. God immediately showed He had placed His name



Scenes from the Feast in Chile (photos by Carlos Verdugo)

in another place nearby, Trailanqui. The people of God in this part of the world saw firsthand the many blessings our Creator bestowed upon the new site.

Trailanqui is located in the middle of natural beauty, among the vegetation on the side of a beautiful river that comes from the Cordillera de los Andes.

The days of the Feast in Trailanqui were just wonderful. The weather was beautiful during the eight days. The camaraderie among the people of God was even more beautiful. All of the cabins were taken by the brethren. All cooked and ate together as a real family.

Ninety of your brethren were able to keep one of the most tranquil and gratifying Feasts ever. There was a lot of harmony and teamwork among the attendees, who were mostly from the south of Chile. All of the activities and services injected everybody with the strength to face the world for one more year. Our convictions and hopes were very much strengthened to wait for the return of our King, Jesus Christ.

Jaime Gallardo

Colombia

Santa Marta

This year 97 people met together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Again, the city of Santa Marta on Colombia's Atlantic coast opened its doors to welcome us, and the Colombian and Venezuelan brethren were able to celebrate a very special Feast. It was the very first Feast for several in attendance, and most commented that it was a unique, happy and inspiring experience and they look forward to returning again next year.

Only one member of the United Church of God lives in Venezuela, but her unflinching loyalty to God's ways and her determination to attend each year inspires and invigorates everyone.

The presence of Leon and Reba Walker for half of the Feast contributed

greatly to everyone's enjoyment and happiness. For several years the Walkers have been unable to share the Feast with us, and meeting and fellowshiping with them was a wonderful experience for many of the scattered Colombian brethren. Mr. Walker was able to give several sermons, which everybody appreciated very much.

Among the physical activities taking place were a poolside party for the youngsters, a family dance and an informal social evening in which all had the opportunity to enjoy many different activities. All had a really great time.

Toward the end of the Feast the wife of a member was baptized. As always, the days seemed to fly by, and it was all over so soon!

Eduardo Hernández

Estonia

Tartu

Twenty-two people from four nations came to Tartu, Estonia, to keep the Feast



Estonia (photo by Hazel Lambert)

of Tabernacles. Many spiritual messages were heard as daily services were conducted in the conference center of the Pallas Hotel. The big tabernacle in the wilderness was likened to God's Church as we move from Egypt (this present world) toward God's coming Kingdom.

As usual, three different languages were in play for every service. Bible translations are also a barrier to understanding because translations into the different languages may not be the same. Overcoming both of these barriers is a very important part of correctly learning to fear the Eternal.

Rejoicing is easy in every language, even if it sometimes must be done without verbal communication. A two-day trip was organized by Toomas Schvak to some millennial settings in Estonia. Everyone enjoyed this trip.

As the Feast ended, all were able to take the feelings of this celebration with them to cherish for the coming year.

Johnnie Lambert

France

Annecy

A mountainside resort overlooking crystal-clear Lake Annecy and the Alps



A group shot of Feastgoers in Annecy, France; Bernard Audoin speaking (photos by Joel Meeker)

was the site of the Feast of Tabernacles in France. This year 125 people from six countries were present for the Festival. God blessed us with beautifully clear and warm weather, with only one afternoon of light rain.

Services were held alternately in French and English, with simultaneous translations offered of the sermons delivered by elders from France, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. Several members commented on the fine quality of the sermons and sermonettes. Roy Demarest, who serves as a pastor in Southern Florida, not only gave two fine sermons in English but also a carefully-prepared sermonette in French



Les and Marion McCullough at the Regina seniors' luncheon; the children's choir; and the ordination of Lloyd Teetaert as an elder (photos by David and Colleen Hofer)

lough and his wife, Marion, came to Regina for the last half of the Feast, bringing encouraging messages on the practical aspects of the Millennium and an overview of the Last Great Day.

Besides the spiritual feasting, brethren enjoyed a fun-filled variety show, a love-

(with no harm done to Franco-American relations . . .)! David Palmer, who pastors in British Columbia, was also present with his lively Swiss-born wife, Ghislaine, who was happy to be near the land of her birth, and to be able to visit family members.

Almost all Festival attendees lodged and took their meals on the site, which allowed for abundant fellowship opportunities. Lunch and dinner consisted of three- or four-course meals, including a selection of cheeses, and were accompanied by pleasant French wines.

One evening French-speaking members gathered for the annual association meeting, with reports given by President Joel Meeker, Treasurer James Muir and Secretary Annette Bernal. Plans for the activities of the Church in French-speaking areas during the coming year were discussed. On another evening, French-speaking members gathered for an interactive Bible study on the topic of wise decision making. Our brethren in France, Belgium and Switzerland are widely scattered, so it is important to take advantage of our time together at the Feast.

Festival activities included a Family Day, featuring an introduction to the French game of Pétanque, and fellowship-mixer games warmed by tropical fruit juices and rum-based aperitifs provided by brethren from the Caribbean island of Martinique.

Brethren also enjoyed four excursions during the Feast. The first was to the French alpine resort of Chamonix at the base of Europe's highest mountain, Mt. Blanc. Clear weather afforded fine views of the Alps as many participants took the cogwheel train up into the Alps to see the famous Sea of Ice glacier. The second excursion was to the Swiss resort city of Montreux on the north shore of Lake Geneva, and included a visit to the famous medieval castle of Chillon.

The other two excursions were to the Swiss city of Geneva, important in the history of the Protestant Reformation, and the picturesque French town of Annecy with its old stone buildings and canals. Both trips allowed for sightseeing and shopping.

There was a much-anticipated talent show toward the end of the Feast, and on the eve of the last Holy Day, Joel Meeker showed a PowerPoint presentation of his pre-Feast trip through French Africa as well as a video presentation of his Spring Holy Day trip through East, Central and West Africa.

To sum things up, we can say, *la Fête cette année fut magnifique!*

Joel Meeker

Germany

Schluchsee

Brethren from the German-speaking areas and Holland celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles 2004 for the sixth time in Schluchsee, Germany. More than 30 guests from around the world traveled to this quaint German village located in the beautiful Black Forest to join in the Feast celebration. The high attendance was 193.

We were blessed with inspirational messages, excellent fellowship and beautiful fall weather. Messages this

year highlighted the coming of God's Kingdom and our role in that Kingdom, being an example of God's way of life, the importance of the youth in the Church and maintaining joy in our lives.

Readings from the Scriptures and beautiful special music highlighted the opening service this year. After services brethren were served a "welcome drink" by the youth, and many used the opportunity to renew friendships and welcome guests to Germany.

This year Gary Antion, coordinator of the Ambassador Bible Center, was the guest speaker. In addition to delivering two sermons during the Feast, Mr. Antion also conducted three ABC seminars. It was a wonderful opportunity for brethren to get a "taste" of what the Ambassador Bible Center students receive during their seven-month stay.

Once again, children had the opportunity to participate in three special Bible classes held throughout the Feast. This year's theme was centered around the fruits of the Spirit. In addition, there were two teen and one young adult Bible studies given. Children also had the opportunity to participate in the children's choir, which performed three songs during services.

Feast activities included a kegling party for the teens (kegling is the German version of bowling). On Sunday all children ages 12 and under spent the afternoon at the children's party where they enjoyed a variety of games and crafts. As well, on Sunday afternoon the seniors attended a special Bible study followed by coffee and cake or fruit salad.

On Monday a train outing to Freiburg was enjoyed by over 40 people. The trip included a tour of the city and time spent shopping, eating and enjoying the sites. Young adults, teens and those young at



Young Feastgoers in Germany

heart spent one day go-kart racing and another playing volleyball.

The family dance was held Tuesday evening. This year music by the Italian duo Enrico & Mario provided excellent dancing music, and both young and old enjoyed dancing well past midnight.

The beautiful weather at the Feast provided many the opportunity to spend time outdoors hiking the many trails in the region, taking bike rides along the lake and visiting some of the outdoor amusement parks.

After the Last Great Day many brethren came together to say their good-byes at the *Abschiedsabend*. Food and drinks were available and lots of good fellowship. We all look forward to the Feast next year and draw strength from the time spent together and the refreshing of God's Word throughout the Feast. Until 2005!

Lisa Fenchel

Ghana

Accra, Kumasi and Agona

The cities of Accra, Kumasi and Agona played host to approximately 900



Feastgoers in Ghana (photo by Jim Servidio)

Church members observing the Feast of Tabernacles in Ghana in West Africa. Colorful dress, joyful music, happy children and smiling faces characterized this year's observance. Jim Servidio from Minneapolis, Minnesota, served as guest speaker as he and his wife filled in for Melvin and Diane Rhodes who were attending the Feast in Australia. Richard Dua, pastor in Kumasi, served as interpreter and travel companion for the Servidios.

Besides the scheduled sermons, special seminars and discussions were held for singles, married couples, wives and others. Also a day was set aside for athletic games and activities for the entire family. Thanks to a donation from members in Minneapolis, the Servidios were able to provide each Feast site with a gift for the children, an ice cream treat after services for every member, and to host an elders and wives' dinner one evening.

From previous issues of *UnitedNews* many are aware of the church building project taking place in Agona. Thanks to donations from many sources, including congregations in Ohio and Minnesota, much progress has been made on the building there. Members may now meet in a nearly completed hall, which insures they stay dry in a rain shower.

Overall, the Feast in Ghana was a great success. The dedication of the members is evident as many had to travel a significant distance in order to meet in one of the three locations where God had placed His name. The joy and satisfaction of keeping God's feast days was evident in the faces of young and old alike, as well as sincerely expressed in the singing and special music.

Jim Servidio

Guatemala

Antigua

In the beautiful colonial city of Antigua we had the most pleasant Feast, full of so many blessings. Each year God gives us an invitation to enjoy the Feast, like tasting the Millennium. We had an attendance of 527 persons, congregated in a beautiful auditorium, located in a wonderful city that made us remember that we all are foreigners and pilgrims until Jesus' promise, "I shall return," will be fulfilled.

The Feast here was full of activities

that joined us together like a family and that made real our hope of being someday under God's government.

We enjoyed: a breakfast for our grandmothers and grandfathers in the faith; a ladies' afternoon full of games, smiles, surprises and food (it's incredible what the ladies can do when they have the opportunity to participate and play together!); a talent show afternoon; and a full-dress night for married couples, where we serenaded our wives while they were on the balcony and we saw pictures of some couples when they were just married.

We also delighted in a ladies' night that was sponsored by the members of the Spokesmen Club. We had a morning for the children with gifts and breakfast, and of course, we couldn't miss the spontaneous social gatherings in the hotels and the time we shared at the meals.

The weather was fabulous, and when the rain came, we received it thankfully because in some places in the country we have been having a dry season that has affected the harvests.

The sermons and sermonettes were so inspired and made us think about our calling and about our example. They helped us prepare for the challenges we have to face in society, reminding us that God tells us, "Come out of her, My people." The sanctity we have to practice in this time of the end is urgent, so it is good that there is someone who "cries aloud and spares not."

We also had four baptisms of people who accepted the challenge and decided to join God's family.

It really was an edifying Feast, full of comradeship and pleasure in God's way, and this keeps alive our hope of seeing in a not-so-distant day the future promised by God to all humanity.

Greetings to our brothers in the Philippines: We pray for you and we hope that God will bless you this year with jobs and opportunities. It's so good to get closer to you through the Feast video!

Luis Mundo Tello

Esquipulas

The Feast of Tabernacles in Esquipulas, Guatemala, offered a glimpse of God's Kingdom as 170 brethren from El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Great Britain and the United States assembled together in a tropical setting. Each day began with the sound of singing birds and bright sunshine. Brethren enjoyed a beautiful backdrop of majestic mountains covered with lush greenery as they listened to inspiring sermons in Spanish (or English translation). Each afternoon and evening was refreshed and cooled by tropical rains.

Central American warm hospitality was prevalent throughout the Feast. Two girls visiting from the British Isles, Debi Crook and Laura Payne, wrote, "From the opening night service we were overwhelmed by the warmth and spirit of the people who went out of their way to make us feel welcome—we have never been hugged and kissed by so many people!"

"Our lasting memory is of the people. They made us feel that despite language barriers and being of different nationalities, we really are one family. They

receive very few visitors and visitors from the U.K. are practically unheard of, so they really appreciate the people that come to spend time with them."

Most of the brethren stayed in the Hotel Legendario where services and

most activities were held. Some stayed nearby in the Hotel Payaqui within walking distance of the Hotel Legendario. The hotel personnel



Brethren from the Esquipulas, Guatemala, Feast site visited the Copan ruins in Honduras

were very cooperative and did their best to meet our every need.

Food, dance and music were quite prevalent throughout the Feast. A variety of food was offered by the Hotel Legendario and nearby restaurants. The various Festival dances included salsa, merengue and cumbia music along with some rock and roll and disco. Special music was presented by brethren of all ages.

The children had a special afternoon including games, music, piñatas and gift bags especially prepared for each child.

The ladies attended a special tea party with enlightening topics and other activities.

Some of the brethren participated in an educational trip to the Copan ruins in Honduras. It was truly enlightening to see how the Mayans lived and what they believed, emphasizing the need for Christ's return to this earth.

The Feast was so enjoyable that several visiting brethren decided to extend their stay a week or two.

Loren Oesterle

Italy

Sabaudia

The Feast in Italy had an attendance of 375 participants, including children,



Feasting in Italy

from various countries: the United States, United Kingdom, Holland, Germany, Australia and, of course, Italy. We were a small but enthusiastic group of God's people enjoying good food and Christian fellowship in a very safe and millennial setting.

Our Feast site had rain before and after the Feast. But the weather became and remained sunny throughout the eight days of the Feast. A very calm

Mediterranean Sea was a joy for all of us who could relax in between services. This was true especially for the children, who could play on a warm, sandy beach.

During the Feast, there were very inspiring and powerful messages about God's love and plan for the salvation of God's Church and humanity. This year we were honored by the presence of one of the Council of Elders members, Jim Franks.

The brethren were spiritually mature and committed to growing spiritually in the truth, especially the young brethren. We were living proof that language need not be a barrier to getting to know and love one another in Jesus Christ. We are already looking forward to next year's Feast with many more brethren visiting us from abroad. Your Italian brethren would like to express their heartfelt thanks to all those who have celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with them in Italy this year.

Between the Holy Days we participated in cultural tours to famous historical places like Pompeii, the Roman Coliseum, Imperial Forum, the Vatican museums and other places and monuments that are now a witness of pagan persecutions of true Christianity. It was history coming alive before our eyes. Those who did not go touring were offered the option of attending a Bible study. Also, our members and prospective members offered memorable social activities like the talent show and the evening dance for the enjoyment of all.

At the end of the Feast, there was a send-off toward the blue sky to say "Arrivederci" ("hope to see you again") to all of our brethren before their departure from the Feast site. These were truly moving, unforgettable moments. Many brethren have already written to us in appreciation. Yet we are the ones who need to sincerely express our gratefulness for their brotherly presence, friendship and support.

There are not adequate words to thank all those who served and contributed in various ways to make the Feast truly memorable to God's glory and honor. And, of course, we thank all Feast participants for their generous offerings to support the preaching of the truth in Italy.

Carmelo Anastasi

Jamaica

Montego Bay

Despite Hurricane Ivan's brush with Jamaica, which damaged the Holiday Inn and forced the cancellation of the Jamaica international Feast site, finally a site for the local brethren to keep the Feast was located. The lush and scenic Sea Castles Resort at Rose Hall, Montego Bay, was the site where 143 brethren from the Bahamas, Jamaica and the United States gathered to enjoy eight days of inspiring and enlightening sermons and sermonettes.

The first day of the Feast was the most eventful as services were forced to commence 1½ hours after the scheduled start time due to an electrical power outage and then a downpour of heavy rain that caused services to be relocated twice, resulting in services being held at the



At the Taste of Jamaica activity, Sandra Fisher serves up Jamaican fare to Stephanie McNeely (photos by Darris McNeely)

main bar of the hotel. The brethren through it all exhibited patience, determination and teamwork. There was a good balance of activities for all to enjoy from the Bible study to the Talent Night. The American and Bahamian brethren were treated by the Jamaicans during a beach picnic to sumptuous home-cooked Jamaican cuisine like rice and peas, curried chicken, salt fish fritters and banana fritters, but the spicy feature of the day was Solomon Gundy, a mix made from smoked red herring, onion and hot pepper.

Each day of the Feast we enjoyed the remarkable melody of voices sounded by the Feast Choir and the fellowship after services.

The recurring theme of the sermons and sermonettes focused our minds on the coming Kingdom of God.

Lonneta Fisher-Lynch



Kenya

Nairobi

This year 221 brethren from Kenya,



Eight people were baptized at the Feast in Kenya; Feastgoers got a close-up look at giraffes (photos by Tom Robinson and Rheo Knudson) Tanzania and the United States "safaried" through both God's Word and His creation during a richly rewarding Feast in East Africa. Held in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, the Feast provided spiritual and physical abundance along with hearty fellowship for all with a foretaste of the millennial unity ahead.

Activities included a Family Day with games and balloon animals, tours to the Kenya National Museum and the Giraffe Centre, as well as a game safari through the Nairobi National Game Preserve. Many experienced their first-ever view of African animal herds wandering free on a savanna plain. The animals included zebra, gazelle, impala, hartebeest, topi, rhinoceros, giraffe, ostrich,

baboon, warthog and wildebeest. The group also visited an animal orphanage where rescued young are raised.

This Feast was a unifying assembly of unique peoples from unique cultures experiencing together a unique way of living in a godly environment, one to eventually be shared with all humanity. Eight baptisms and two ordinations of deacons took place during the Feast.

In a farewell statement to the attendees, newly ordained deacon Moses Meraba Nyaira stated, "On behalf of our African brethren, we would like to thank those speakers that God has inspired who have fed us the food of life. We are very grateful to Mr. Elliott for his leadership and to the Church for enabling us to meet here as the Scriptures commanded. God has blessed us with a colorful Feast. We have blacks and whites and browns from many tribes and nations dwelling together as God intended. When you go back home, pass our appreciation to them and tell them we love them . . . for the common love that they have to serve God's people and the common faith that we share." Afterwards, 221 new friends found it difficult to say good-bye and lingered fellowshiping, taking group photos and expressing strong wishes to be reunited again.

The Feast in East Africa was a richly rewarding tribute to the upcoming transformation of future societies under the reign of Jesus the Christ and the saints. Everyone left feeling compelled to rededicate him or herself to preparing to serve together with Christ at His coming.

After the Feast, a group of internationals trekked to the Masai Mara for a three-day game safari to witness the spectacular migration of animal herds beneath soaring eagles and exotic birds. The Feast in East Africa was inspiring, uplifting and spiritually motivating. The brethren say, "Ham Jambo, Karibu Sana": Warmest greetings everyone, you are always welcome here!

John Elliott

Malawi

The Feast in Malawi was held on Monkey Bay on Lake Malawi, with a high attendance of 102. The attendance grew about 20 percent over last year as more people are becoming part of the United Church of God.

Victor and Beverly Kubik visited the site for the first part of the Feast and were also in Blantyre for the Day of Atonement. On Atonement Dr. Sam Chilopora stepped up and offered to do translation into the local Chewa language. After the service there were several exuberant comments about how much they appreciated the translation. While English is widely spoken and understood, sometimes it is difficult to follow the accent (and speed) of American English. Some of the wives speak no English.

Translations from English to Chewa continued during the Feast.

On the first day we had two services. People arrived in chartered minibuses from Blantyre and Lilongwe. The two LifeNets ambulances also provided transportation to the Feast, and while at the Feast they helped some of the elder-

ly get to where they were staying. Otherwise, everyone walks.

The 39 children received Feast booklets. There were also Beanie Babies for the girls and Matchbox cars for the boys.

There was a cruise on Lake Malawi, which was a most enjoyable event as 83 people went out for an afternoon.

Also, the Joe and Vy Young family supplied the money for taking everyone to a special buffet lunch at the Nkopola Lodge. Everyone really enjoyed this event and expressed gratitude to the Youngs.

On Monday evening before the Kubiks left there was a delicious barbecue—three goats were killed. Then there was an evening of entertainment with music, skits and readings.

The sermons centered around the fact that God has a plan for us and that He will finish what He has started.

Vic Kubik

Malaysia

Malacca

The Feast in Malacca, Malaysia, was a historic event for the Church in Southeast Asia. Eighty-three brethren representing 10 nations met for the first Feast of Tabernacles observed in mainland Southeast Asia since United was formed. This was a long-awaited reunion for scattered members throughout Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Services were held at the Riviera Bay Resort, an apartment-style hotel with panoramic sea views of the Strait of Malacca. Local members from remote areas were especially gratified to hear "live" sermons emphasizing the importance of observing God's Holy Days, keeping His commandments and remaining focused on the return of Jesus Christ and God's Kingdom. Special music by the children's choir, performed on short notice, was a real delight. Richard Ma, a young boy from Hong Kong, also performed two lively violin pieces.

Most brethren stayed at the resort and shared cheery conversation and a buffet breakfast every morning in a private dining room. A number of brethren had not seen one another for years and years, and longed to share their stories. In the evenings, some suites became active chat rooms where there was an unmistakable atmosphere of joy, spirited discussion and plenty of laughter.

The normal tropical weather of Malaysia was offset by air-conditioned accommodations and transportation. Refreshing thunderstorms seemed conveniently timed by God to take place late at night or during services.

A city tour of Malacca highlighted its colorful colonial history for international Feast visitors. Malacca was an important port-of-call in the 16th century, colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch and British from 1511 to 1957.

Some brethren visited a rubber plantation and an oil palm estate. The children learned firsthand how latex is collected and processed. They fashioned tiny rubber balls from the latex, prompting one to exclaim, "I didn't know rubber came from trees!" They also learned

how palm oil is processed and about its multiple uses. Another highlight was a visit to a traditional Malay house for a glimpse of Malay cultural heritage.

A beach games activity for parents and children was hilarious and fun. Other brethren spent time in town browsing for bargains on antiques and artwork, and beamed when they succeeded.

Perhaps the best gauge of success for this site was the group of 15 young children who quickly became fast friends and playmates from the start of the Feast. Upon departure, one little girl cried and asked her parents if she would ever see her new friends again.

Thanks to the prayers of many, and much support and assistance from overseas members, the Malacca Feast was inspiring, joyous and memorable for all. It helped reaffirm our resolve to keep God first in our lives and focus on His wonderful plan for mankind. The first UCG Feast in Malaysia was indeed a resounding success.

Rosalind Yong

Mexico

Guanajuato

The Feast in Guanajuato was excellent. Our maximum attendance was 354, with members from all congregations in Mexico and visitors from the United States, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Chile, all joined together with the same motivation and spiritual attitude as members of the family of God.

On the spiritual side there was plenty of spiritual nourishment. We had services and Bible studies every day. The Feast site coordinator was Lauro Roybal. The guest speaker was Leon Walker, member of the Council of Elders. In total there were 11 speakers, including six ministers and five deacons. The sermons, Bible studies and sermonettes focused on the meaning of the Feast and on the family.

Some of the topics covered were: "In Search of a Home"; "Our Hope, Eternal Life"; "A Panoramic View of the Millennium"; "Serving Our Brethren"; "Lesson From Habakkuk"; "Our Pilgrimage"; "Education in the Millennium"; "Your Awesome Potential"; "The Meaning of the Last



Scenes from the Feast in Mexico (photos by Ricardo Ortega)

Great Day"; and others related to Christian living.

The inspiration of God's Holy Spirit was clearly evident in the messages, as well as in the singing and in the special music presented during services, and also in the three baptisms that took place.

The Feast video, "I Shall Return," was very inspiring, especially because of the theme, which points us to the most meaningful event in the history of mankind, the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but also because of the natural bond that exists between our Philippine and Mexican brethren.

Guanajuato provided a peaceful atmosphere surrounded by beautiful, colonial scenery. The climate was excellent—mildly warm during the day and pleasantly cool during the evening. All this provided an outstanding framework for the activities held during the Feast, including a children's party, a family brunch with inspiring live music performed by a string quartet, a ladies' breakfast, a Mexican night with dinner and dance and live music performed by an *estudiantina* (music group with typical dress, instruments and songs) and a professional music band, a talent show (including karaoke) and a typical night stroll and music show through the streets of Guanajuato, led by an *estudiantina*, while sipping punch from a handmade ceramic drink holder, which is typical of Guanajuato.

We enjoyed lots of Christian fellowship in the outstandingly beautiful meeting hall, in the hotel rooms and suites, by the swimming pool, in the restaurants (in the hotel and in the downtown area), and in the lounge areas on each of the hotel floors.

A spiritual family atmosphere reigned during the whole Feast. All the brethren, from Mexico and from abroad, hugged each other as they—some with tears in their eyes—said good-bye and expressed their deep desire to see each other again in the coming Feast or in the Kingdom. All in all, the Feast in Guanajuato was truly the best Feast ever for those privileged to attend there this year.

Pablo Dimakis

New Zealand

Napier

Eighty-five brethren representing six nations from the Pacific region and other parts of the world celebrated the Feast in Napier, New Zealand. Services were held in the War Memorial Centre, a superb facility on the shore of the Pacific Ocean. The seaport city of Napier, reputed to be the art deco capital of the world, is situated in the country's oldest and most diverse wine-producing region. Attendees enjoyed the company of South African pastor André van Belkum and his wife Elize and learned much from Mr. van Belkum's messages focused on the coming Kingdom.

Activities for brethren young and old included indoor rock climbing, swimming in geothermal hot pools, Rollerblading, 10-pin bowling, miniature golf, a youth Bible study with fellowship, a winery bicycle tour and a mystery wine tour. Neville Hoare, a local Napier member and keen hiker, guided a party ranging from 15 to 70 years of age on a bush walk on the edge of the beautiful Kaweka Range.

Other highlights included a barbecue at an elevation with a view of the ocean and wineries, a Feast dinner/dance and a luncheon for the over-50s at the Mission Estate, New Zealand's oldest and

most scenic winery. With so many activities to enjoy and share with one other, along with encouraging messages expounding the various prophecies of a coming utopian world, the Feast at Napier truly reflected the spiritual meaning of this important Festival.

Art Verschoor

Nigeria

Ijebu-Ode and Owerri

"You are welcome" is the common friendly greeting in Nigeria, and it was expressed many times by the 197 brethren keeping the Feast in Ijebu-Ode and Owerri. This year there was special rejoicing in that there were 77 more in attendance than last year, and almost all of them were keeping their very first Feast. Mark, Michelle, Megan and Derek Mickelson from Spokane, Washington, also attended.

God poured out His Spirit in a dramatic way that was a great encouragement to all. A number of people were healed of malaria/typhoid symptoms and some of other diseases and of spiritual oppression as well. One woman was walking freely who had been bound by a painful, crippling disease for 18 years.

Contact was also made with the Church of God (Nigeria) where over 500 people were keeping the Feast of



Groups at Ijebu-Ode and Owerri, Nigeria (photos by Derek and Meagan Mickelson)

Tabernacles outside of Owerri. Their pastor traveled to attend one of our services and then invited some of our leaders to visit with them. We were able to address his congregation and then meet with the deacons and elders. We explained the gospel of the Kingdom of God (including the hope of the second resurrection) and who we, the United Church of God, were.

We were warmly received, and the pastor expressed his desire to work to build a relationship. He said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." He then expressed that we needed to be taking steps in that direction.

The Feast ended with many warm hugs and handshakes and all left with the hope and expectation that we will be together again.

Mark Mickelson

Peru

Huanchaco

A wonderful Feast of Tabernacles 2004 was held as in previous years at the

Hostal Braccamonte in Huanchaco, Peru. There was a new record attendance of 212, which necessitated fabricating a new temporary structure that met the needs for services and activities. In addition to the brethren from Peru, attendees included 21 from Ecuador, five from



Top, the children's party in Peru; above, brethren from Peru, Ecuador and the United States

Chile, two from Colombia and 10 from the United States.

The work in Peru is served by only two ministers—Manuel Quijano and Wilfred Saenz. They gave the majority of sermons, but were ably assisted by leading men from different congregations. There was truly a family atmosphere, with virtually everyone participating or watching the activities, which included three dances, a beautiful talent show, wonderful children's party with gifts and clothing given to every child, seniors' luncheon, beach family games day and special music nearly every service. Special music was even performed by a choir of English-speaking brethren who made a joyful noise.

Other highlights included the blessing of four infants, two baptisms and an announced engagement of David Clark and Carolina Alvarado. The best parts, though, were the very fine, solid, basic spiritual meat in the messages and the love, joy and friendliness evident in the brethren.

Roland Clark

Philippines

Baguio City

Baguio City was once again one of three Feast of Tabernacles sites for the United Church of God here in the Philip-



The group in Baguio City

ippines. For the fourth year now, the services and other indoor activities were held at the conference hall of the Ang Atang Tahanan grounds of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines.

Our traditional opening night service began with a message being given to us by one of our visiting ministers from the United States, Earl Roemer. We expected attendance to be lower than last year

(about 120) due to transfers to other Feast sites, but we were delighted to see that number surpassed as the attendance reached its highest on the third day at 131!

We were likewise encouraged by a record number of overseas brethren who kept the Feast with us. We had brethren come from Hong Kong, Australia, the United States and England to share in our rejoicing and enjoyment of the foretaste of our glorious future as pictured by the Feast.

God did not just bless us with better than expected attendance, but also with two visiting ministers who were instrumental in giving equally inspiring messages. Mr. and Mrs. Roemer kept the first half of the Feast with us and Mr. and Mrs. David Baker with their two children, Hannah and Jonathan, the second half. The messages greatly encouraged Feastgoers to seriously focus on the only sure hope of all mankind: the establishment of God's Kingdom here on earth as pictured by the Feast.

The highlight of the Feast for us was the Festival video. We all felt honored for the Philippines to be featured in this year's video. We were likewise moved by Mr. Baker's message in the video when he compared Gen. Douglas MacArthur's famous World War II promise of "I shall return" to the Filipino people to Jesus Christ's promise to return to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God.

The brethren enjoyed a Festival show during the first half of the Feast. Native Filipino songs and folk dances were "fearlessly" performed and presented by many of the brethren themselves to the delight and enjoyment of everyone present, especially our honored overseas guests.

Various activities were likewise prepared for both the young and old alike as well as for the whole family, where everyone had the opportunity to enjoy fun, food, fellowship and games. Among the activities were the youth day activities for the teens, Family Day, a city tour and the seniors' dinner. For those who love to sing and dance, we had a "videoke" night and a dance night.

We felt the Feast ended too quickly for us this year, but nevertheless all of us felt very much inspired and spiritually rejuvenated. We eagerly look forward to the next Feast of Tabernacles and what it truly pictures: the establishment of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Rey Evasco

Davao City

More than 300 men, women and children from all over Mindanao gathered at the Girl Scouts of the Philippines Regional Training Camp in Toril, Davao City, to observe the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Almost all of the brethren stayed in the GSP camp and shared meals and stories with brethren from the Philippines and around the world.

Our foreign guests were David Baker and family (New York), David Rogers (Colorado), Prakash Mandora and family (India), James Hostetter (who is teaching in Thailand) and Bernhard and Maria Hammes (Germany). The highest attendance was 310.

God abundantly blessed us with good

weather, great fellowship and inspiring messages. Mr. Baker, senior pastor for Southeast Asia, in his message on godly love, stressed the importance of living what we will one day teach. Festival coordinator Edmond D. Macaraeg emphasized the importance of exercising rule and dominion over our own personal kingdoms now (our human nature, attitudes and habits, physical bodies, work, family, finances and leisure time), stating that our reward in that future Kingdom will be based on our faithfulness in ruling our present kingdom.

Everyone enjoyed a colorful variety show, Family Day on the campgrounds and various activities for the kids, teens, singles and seniors. The Feast video, "I Shall Return," was played on the opening night and also on the eve of the Last Great Day. We also had a Bible study on the fifth day of the Feast and a family dance on the sixth day. We also had a wedding and 11 baptisms.

Those baptized were: Marilou



April Roanna Zarate (5) and Charmaine Mae Valdez (3) during the Davao City Family Day (photo by Charles Macaraeg)

Aleguejo, Kristian Antiojo, Victoria Bata, Josephine Delfin, Elizabeth Gervise, Ramon Infantado, Remedios Infantado, Harold Labajo, Ambrosio Mahinay, Rosalia Maraon and Ceferina Yu. The married couple was Charles Macaraeg and Isis Cabahug Macaraeg, who both work at the Philippine UCG office in Davao City.

Daniel Roy Macaraeg

Punta Villa, Iloilo

Truly, the Feast that was held in Punta Villa Resort, Iloilo City, Philippines, where God put His name for the Visayas brethren, was the best in so many years.

The highest attendance during the Feast was 130. Brethren from different islands and some foreign visitors attended the eight days of joyous celebration. Included were 10 people from the United States. The Feast started on the evening of Sept. 29. This was followed by daily morning services and a wholesome variety of activities every afternoon.



The family entertainment and dance night at the Feast in Iloilo (photo by Norman Julag-ay)

The members greatly appreciated the home office's sending Mr. and Mrs. Earl

Roemer as this year's guest minister. Mr. Roemer's sermons deeply inspired and encouraged the listeners.

The Festival video "I Shall Return," which focused on the Philippine history and its analogy with the return of Jesus Christ as the only hope, was very much welcomed by the members.

Young and old alike enjoyed the Family Day held at Sol y Mar Beach Resort. Parlor games and a variety of activities highlighted the day. The family entertainment and dance night showcased the talents of the different congregations that added to the excitement of all. In the middle of the Feast we were blessed with a roasted calf shared with us by a newly wed couple that further gave us a more festive atmosphere. Free swimming was provided to our group only by the management of the Punta Villa.

A number of personnel and employees of the resort, observing how the members conducted their ways, began to ask whether we had a place of services for the Church nearby. One was heard making a comment that we are the only group who stayed in the resort who are responsible, orderly, humble and radiating with joy.

What made this Feast a great success was the love and concern of everyone toward each other. Everyone expressed gratitude and heartfelt thanks to God for His calling and the opportunity to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Florante Siopan

Portugal

The consensus of the 78 brethren who initially gathered at the Costa da Capari-



The group in Portugal; right, Jorge and Kathy de Campos lunching with the Katai family and the Martins family; below, brethren at the western-most point in continental Europe (photos by Stephen de Campos)

ca (just outside Lisbon) was that indeed this was the "best Feast ever." God brought together a full spectrum of skills and capabilities to make this Feast a complete success both spiritually and physically.

The messages focused on our training as obedient children of God, embracing God's way of life in preparing to be kings and priests in the Kingdom of God. Sermons included graphic descriptions to help us visualize the world tomorrow, how God will restore the world and how it will become a safe place for children.

A vivid description of how we must not put "new wine into old skins"

detailed God's great achievement of changing mankind's nature. This change of nature is needed today, and it will open up for us a road of unlimited possibilities as we become precious, like diamonds, in God's sight.

The concluding messages of the Last Great Day clearly described the resurrections and judgment to come. We also had the opportunity to have a Bible study on the covenants by Ralph Levy, our guest speaker for the first half of the Feast.

The Feast was blessed with brethren of all age groups and varying talents, in such a way that the Festival provided the Portuguese brethren, who have not attended a Feast since 1995 (or not at all), a balanced array of activities. These included a Lisbon-by-night tour, an outstanding "fado e guitarradas" show, a senior citizens' luncheon, a talent show, a ladies' breakfast, a family day and a variety of exciting tours, in addition to plenty of time to fellowship and interact with one another. The weather was perfect throughout the Feast.

It is most encouraging to note the value added to the Feast by the young singles and young couples. They came from all over the world, including England, the Isle of Man, Scotland, South Africa, Sweden and the United States. They were an outstanding example of conduct while having clean fun that will be joyfully remembered long after the Feast.

The young people had opportunities to serve in various areas, such as in the production of an excellent talent show that was thoroughly enjoyed and memorable, in performing special music, in assisting with flowers, in the production of the Feast banner, in the sound system and projection of the encouraging Feast video (which was enjoyed by all, at times emotionally), in assisting the translations, and



last but not least, in giving high quality sermons with great confidence and refresh-

ingly young and clean humor.

We really have been blessed with fine young people in the Church! As we gave them our opportunities, they rose to the occasion.

God also inspired a number of the leaders and a few young people of the Alliance of the Churches of God in Lisbon to join us so that on the Last Great Day our attendance reached 90 people. This provided an excellent opportunity

to set an example of Christian love and cooperation.

The Portuguese and Spanish brethren met on the last day over lunch and discussed a number of possible activities to further the work of God in Portugal and Spain.

The location was clearly chosen by God, as it was peaceful, safe and both children and young people could walk and run freely on the streets late into the evening without any fears or concerns. The site has been booked for next year and more pictures of the Feast are posted on the Church's Portuguese Web site at www.ugc.org/feast/portugal.htm.

Jorge de Campos

Rwanda

Muhazi

Sixty brethren from the two Rwandan congregations of Giti and Remera gathered at idyllic Lake Muhazi to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Meals were prepared and shared in common. Some of the children slept outside while the adults shared the three rooms in the house on the property.

There was a problem in withdrawing the assistance funds sent from the home office to help finance the Festival. The local Western Union office required extra account information for which they don't usually ask before they would disburse any money. Regional pastor Joel Meeker was traveling and couldn't be immediately reached on the Internet to get the information, so Rwandan elder Jean-Marie Mundeli advanced personal funds and borrowed other money to pay for Festival expenses. The Western Union funds were finally acquired right after the Feast.

Sermons were prepared or translated from French into Kinyarwanda by Mr. Mundeli or a deacon, Jean-Baptist Sibobugingo. Festival activities included singing hymns specially written in Kinyarwanda for the Feast, and traditional group dancing.

Jean-Marie Mundeli and Joel Meeker

South Africa

George

Sixty-five brethren from the United Church of God kept a wonderful Feast for the first time in George, South Africa. Included were some visitors from the United States.

God blessed this site with beautiful sunshine except on the Last Great Day when the heavens opened, providing much needed rain. Attendance at services remained high throughout. During fellowship appreciation was expressed for the Kingdom-related messages that were presented.

The George area lends itself to a millennial type setting with its beautiful forests, lakes and sea enhancing our vision of the world tomorrow. Another outstanding feature of the Feast was the favor received from the local populace. Their friendliness and helpfulness was quite overwhelming.

The site has been reserved for 2005, and we hope to see more visitors then.

Stan Botha

Uvongo

Near-perfect warm, sunny, windless days added greatly to the rejoicing of 242 happy brethren at the Uvongo, South Africa, Feast site.

The great majority of the brethren stayed in the Laguna La Crete resort right on the edge of a beautiful lagoon opening into the Indian Ocean. Many brethren were on the beach with their children from 6 a.m., as well as at other free times.

Fifty senior citizens enjoyed their annual luncheon with a sing-along, while the teenagers enjoyed a visit to a reptile park and an afternoon at a go-kart



track. The teens enjoyed a romp on a blow-up jumping castle during Family Day.

Daily services, including the viewing of



Uvongo brethren on the beach with Laguna holiday apartments in the background; Jim Haeffele speaks during a service (photos by Neil Becker)

the Festival video, were held in the spacious Uvongo Civic Centre hall. It has already been reserved for our use in 2005 as well.

Sermons were given by Bill Jahns (the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles, government in the world tomorrow), Jim Haeffele, visiting elder from Greensboro, North Carolina (peace, joy, Last Great Day message), Neville Smith (life's journey) and Neil Becker (renew the vision, world tomorrow environment, God—the expectant Parent).

Neil Becker

Togo

Kpalimé

Forty members from Togo and Benin gathered to keep the Feast in the rural town of Kpalimé, about 100 miles north of the capital city of Lomé. Services were held every morning and all meals were prepared by the ladies and shared in common. Deacon Kossi Fiaboé gave several messages and several Bible studies; other messages were given by Togolese member Pierre Kloutsé. The rest of the sermons were on audio and videocassettes. Pastor Joel Meeker had previously visited this area on and around the Day of Atonement.

One surprising event occurred, which showed God's protection for His children. During services 4-year-old Daniel Kloutsé was put down for a nap in a second-story bedroom. The woman caring

for him left him sleeping and locked the door as she rejoined services some distance away, planning to come back and check on him later. When Daniel woke up he was apparently afraid to be in the room by himself. He climbed up on a drum by the window and broke a windowpane. He then climbed through the hole in the broken glass and somehow got down the 15-foot drop to the ground, after which he walked back into services. We were amazed and thankful to find that he was completely fine and didn't even have a scratch on him!

The whole Feast was celebrated with warm fellowship and much rejoicing.

Kossi Fiaboé and Joel Meeker

Tonga

Mu'a

Twenty-eight brethren attended the Feast of Tabernacles in the Kingdom of Tonga. We started off this year with a theme "To Serve and Make a Difference," which became a compass for a successful and most memorable Feast.

We were blessed with wonderful weather throughout the Festival. Also we were blessed with powerful and inspiring sermons along with some great activities that everyone participated in and enjoyed.

Festival activities included a special night at the Tonga National Center, where everyone enjoyed a buffet dinner and watched traditional Tongan dancing.

One of the highlights was the annual Feast barbecue, which was prepared using the Tongan underground oven. We also held a picnic and sports day on one of the beautiful beaches on the island.

Everyone agreed that this was the best Feast that we ever observed in the Kingdom of Tonga. We were so blessed both spiritually and physically. Brethren dwelt in peace and unity to picture the real meaning of this Feast.

Heamasi Ta'ufu'ou

Trinidad

San Fernando

This year's Feast of Tabernacles was a spiritual renewal for the members of UCG Trinidad. The Caribbean island is located off the coast of Venezuela with a



population of 1.3 million. Of the eight persons in attendance, there were two who were celebrating God's Feast for the first time. While the number was small, they knew that God's presence was with them.

Services were held at the charming Tradewinds Hotel in the southern city of San Fernando. Everyone enjoyed the sermon tapes and some could be seen eagerly scribbling notes for future review. Several group lunches were

enjoyed upstairs at The Treehouse.

In addition to daily services, a number of activities were held including trips to the mud volcanoes and a picnic at La Vega Estate, which is nestled at the foot of the Central Mountain Range. In the colonial days, the estate produced one of the highest grades of cocoa beans in the world. Brethren saw unusual trees, birds and fruit, as well as exotic and fragrant flowers.

Just being there reminded them of the magnificence of the Great God we serve. If there is so much loveliness at this time, one can only imagine the beauty that will abound when God transforms this earth.

Steve Basant

United States

Anchorage, Alaska

Anchorage played host to the Festival of Tabernacles this year. Local brethren from the Anchorage and Soldotna congregations welcomed 725 people to the beautiful wilderness state. Due to the early date for the Feast this year, Alaska sported ideal weather conditions and stunning fall scenery as a backdrop for a spiritual harvest of inspiring sermons and Christian fellowship.

At a time when the tourist season is all but over, God's people were blessed with having many establishments open their doors to us. The Alaska Railroad furnished the Church with a six-hour train trip from downtown Anchorage to the Turnagain Arm near Portage Glacier. At a Saturday evening dance, the brethren were treated to a 45-minute presentation on the Aurora Borealis by one of the premier Alaskan photographers who has dedicated his life to the pursuit of documenting this unbelievable phenomenon.

There were also oppor-



Feastgoers in Alaska enjoyed a train trip and beautiful scenery (photos by Doug Horchak and Phil Sandilands)

tunities to visit one of the top dogsled training centers, take a personal tour of a native Alaskan heritage center, hike at any of several glaciers that surround Anchorage and even take a plane ride around Mt. McKinley (Denali to the locals).

Local sightseeing companies commented to many of our people how unusual it was to have so many perfectly clear days at this time of year! Added to the gorgeous weather and yellow aspens were a few feet of snow nestled in the mountains—compliments of our great Creator!

Phil Sandilands

Bend-Redmond, Oregon

About 800 Feastgoers enjoyed the 2004 Feast of Tabernacles in the Bend-Redmond area of Central Oregon. While 522 attended the opening night services, attendance peaked at 791 on the weekly Sabbath, marking the fourth year in a row that attendance far exceeded regis-



Ryan Leiby, 4, enjoys the stage decorations at Bend, Oregon, featuring Isaiah 11 (photo courtesy the Leiby family)

tration figures. This was due in part to the presence of members from other fellowships. Overall attendance was lower due to the new Feast site in Alaska.

Weather was exceptional, with warm, sunny days in the mid-70s Fahrenheit. Over 300 enjoyed the family fun show, which has become a popular tradition. Other popular activities included a barber shop concert, dinner train, cowboy cookout and a Western chuckwagon dinner and Western music show. A senior citizens' social attended by 190 featured a buffet lunch and a special version of "Name That Tune." Teens enjoyed an afternoon of activities capped off by an evening super Frisbee match with glow collars.

Many commented favorably on the sermons and the Festival video. We also enjoyed a wide variety of special music. The Holy Day offerings were generous, with

a larger offering on the last day. Over 900 pounds of food and \$1,194 in cash were donated to the local food bank.

The Feast was featured in an article by Festival coordinator Larry Walker that appeared on the religion page of the Bend newspaper on the Sabbath before the Feast. The Church's press release was also printed on the front page of the Community Life section of the paper the day before the Feast opened.

Larry J. Walker

Branson, Missouri

Over 1,300 members and family gathered in Branson to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Enthusiasm was in the air as 1,286 excited brethren assembled on the First Holy Day. The opening prayer asked for God's blessing and inspiration on all facets of the Feast, and God answered in a spectacular fashion. Even the weather cooperated. We had perfect weather and no cold or rain. (About an hour after the last service it started raining and rained for almost a week.)

The sermons and sermonettes were very inspiring and educational. We learned about the Kingdom of God and

what we need to be doing now to prepare for it. Special music was spectacular this year with all the music reflecting the meaning of the Feast. Brethren were very attentive and responsive the entire Feast. The Senior Citizens' luncheon attracted over 300 seniors, who enjoyed a heaping helping of Ozarks hospitality at a wonderful lunch, entertainment and fellowship. The family dance gave attendees the chance to "kick up their heels," and over 500 did just that.

This was our ninth year to keep the Feast in Branson. Several of the hotel managers commented on how much of a breath of fresh air our members are. They are used to having tour buses and groups who do not express any appreciation. They said that they look forward to having us year after year. One manager commented that he would like to have our people there all year long.

Personnel at the Baldknobber Theater where we held the Feast look forward to our coming each year. One of the main individuals we work with even commented "this is my fifth Feast." Another theater employee we have worked with caught one of the pastors after his sermon and wanted to talk and discuss the topic—with which he was in total agreement.

Michael Blackwell

Escondido, California

This year 845 brethren assembled together in the lovely Performing Arts



Center in Escondido to hear encouraging and uplifting messages regarding the coming Kingdom of God. Jim Tuck began the Festival by reminding each of us of the importance of being "A Light on a Hill"—a theme mentioned by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, reinforced by John Winthrop (an early Pilgrim forefather) and most recently by the late President Ronald Reagan.

This year's special Bible study featured David Register presenting a prophetic topic of much interest. Titled "The Rock," it gave background leading up to the time when Christ will be crowned as King of Kings at the beginning of the Millennium.

The Escondido Feast site once again enjoyed its predictably warm but pleasant early autumn temperatures. This city lies in an interior valley of Northern San Diego County. Within 30 to 40 minutes in each direction, you can either be headed into pine-clad mountains, on a sandy beach, touring the major attractions of San Diego or walking through the vineyards of nearby Temecula. Each year nearly 40 to 50 percent of our people stay in the nearby beach communities of Oceanside and Carlsbad and commute to services.

While metropolitan San Diego has world-class attractions, the primary attraction at the Escondido Feast site rightfully remains the Festival services,



The Escondido, California, children's choir seen through the stuffed animals decorating the stage (photo by Marion Snyder)

activities and the brethren. Throughout the course of the week our people were able to experience young adult and teen drop-in socials, a teen beach party and a senior citizens' banquet.

The most popular event continues to be the old-fashioned Family Day picnic at nearby oak-shaded Felicita Park. Family Day brings all the brethren together, no matter how old or how young, to experience a type of the peaceful harmony of the wonderful world tomorrow.

Robin Webber

Hagerstown, Maryland

Beautiful fall colors served as an amazing backdrop to a spiritually uplifting Feast of Tabernacles in Hagerstown, Maryland. The Clarion Hotel hosted Feastgoers again this year, and we had a high attendance of 648 for the first Holy Day. The brethren were treated to a delightful variety of uplifting messages, which added to the spirit of unity and celebration.



Services at Hagerstown, with scenes from Family Day (photos by Paul Luecke)

The wonderful weather allowed for all outdoor activities to run flawlessly, with the highlight being our Family Day at Antietam Recreation.

Antietam Recreation is a secluded 32-acre rural park containing wooded areas and open fields. Though Antietam Recreation normally closes around Labor Day, it happily opened its doors to the brethren, providing all types of activities from pony rides to participation in a Wild West Show. The Family Day concluded with a night of entertainment with the annual Family Fun Show.

Hagerstown also offered tours again this year, with trips to Washington D.C. and to Baltimore, Maryland. In addition, there was a tour to see the musical production *Noah*. The renowned Sight &

Sound Theatre hosted this live musical dramatization of the biblical story of one of the Bible's true heroes.

The city of Hagerstown truly catered to the brethren this year, as many businesses and dining establishments had small signs posted on their doors welcoming the Church. A general manager at one hotel mentioned how friendly and patient the Church members are, and went on to say that of all the conventions who use their property, the United Church of God is their favorite group to work with.

Todd Carey

Jekyll Island, Georgia

The Feast on Jekyll Island, Georgia, was once again the scenic, peaceful venue brethren have long appreciated.



Brethren enjoy the beach at Jekyll Island (photo by David Treybig)

Due to the cancellation of the international Feast site in Jamaica and the fact that some of our brethren from Florida who were planning to transfer had their airline flights canceled because of Hurricane Jeanne, a few more people attended than expected. The high attendance was 1,213 on the weekly Sabbath. Had there been many more, we would have had to set up an overflow room.

In addition to the usual activities at this site (a family beach party, a family dance and a senior luncheon), this year we added several new activities including a young adult hospitality on the beach after the first Holy Day, a teen dance after the first Holy Day, a golf tournament and a buffet luncheon at the convention center between services on the Last Great Day.

The weather was beautiful the entire time as brethren enjoyed meaty messages, fellowship, spending time at the beaches (where the effects of recent hurricanes was evident) and touring the nearby area.

David Treybig

Kerrville, Texas

This year 840 brethren kept the Feast in the beautiful hill country of Kerrville, Texas. We were blessed with gorgeous fall weather and pleasant sunny days that enhanced all the outdoor activities. In addition we enjoyed a high degree of cooperation and attention to detail from the conference center staff.

Because Kerrville lends itself to outdoor and family activities, brethren had many opportunities to get together at Feast events, like the Family Day BBQ and the Bluegrass and Country Music

evening. We were blessed again this year with outstanding music provided by the Festival choir, children's choir, instrumental ensemble—plus the joy of singing as a congregation 800 strong!

Don Ward remarked that the messages at both the Lexington and Kerrville Feast sites stressed three common themes: peace, reconciliation and restoration. He stated that Ken Giese's sermon about building peace now "one tongue at a time" is truly "where the rubber meets the road." Our words, fitly spoken, can begin to bring peace to our own lives and to the lives of those around us today. He added, "The stand we are going to be called on to take in the future, I don't think we can imagine."

Gary Petty's sermon, taken from Matthew 24 and 25, contrasted committed Christians with unresponsive Christians. He admonished us to reflect on how we line up with the four parables about Christians. Many of the brethren commented that this was an encouraging spiritual Feast, with a good balance of sermons picturing the world under Christ's rule and how to begin preparing now. On the Last Great Day, Burk McNair summarized the meaning of the day and urged us all to go forward and "think deeply" and "visualize what God is going to do."

Jack Hendren

Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii

The Maui, Hawaii Feast site had 393 joyful Feastgoers attend from around the world.

There were many family-oriented activities during the Feast. One was a snorkeling party on Family Day at the famous Kapalua Bay, one of the finest beaches in the world, where children and teens identified the different tropical fish. Also, there was a fun-filled children's party at a miniature golf and bumper boat park. Another awesome activity was a group seeing the sunrise on top of the Haleakala crater and then experiencing a two-hour cycling descent through stunning scenery.

There was a fine Seniors' Luncheon, an entertaining Family Dance and a spectacular luau. The Feast also included very inspiring messages and fine fellowship. Many commented how Maui is such a perfect site to picture the beautiful scenery of the world tomorrow.

Mario Seigle

Lexington, Kentucky

The Feast in Lexington, Kentucky, was a huge success with inspiring messages, invigorating special music and perfect weather (sunny around 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit each day). This year 652 of God's faithful children enjoyed sharing the Feast together in the heart of the Bluegrass State.

Family Day proved to be fun for all who attended. Many spent the afternoon playing games, bowling, wall climbing and shooting pool together. The children's choir was also a highlight of the Feast. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the singing, the smiles, the fidgeting and the showmanship of some of the youngest participants. That always provides a wonderful photo opportunity.

Another highlight was the Feast video, seeing overseas brethren in the family of God standing firm in the faith.

Several commented that it "brings us all closer in unity."

On Monday during the Feast a large group of Feastgoers spent time together enjoying an evening of fine dining and traveling on the Kentucky Dinner Train. Many came back anxious to go again next year. In fact, the consensus was that this year's Feast was greatly needed, greatly appreciated and completely uplifting and fulfilling. May God speed the day of the fulfillment of the Feast!

Mark Wimmer

Panama City Beach, Florida

This was our fifth year to keep the Feast in the tropical setting of beautiful Panama City Beach, Florida, with almost 2,000 brethren in attendance. Our highest attendance was on the first Holy Day with 1,980 people trying to find a seat in the crowded conference center of the Edgewater Beach Resort.

The messages were exceptionally inspiring and spiritually fulfilling. The brethren were very appreciative to have UCGA President Roy Holladay and his wife, Norma, keep the Feast with us in Panama City Beach this year. The special music was outstanding and the children's choir is always a special treat that everyone looks forward to and enjoys.

We had a bit of a technical problem showing the Feast video at first, but were finally able to solve it. It actually resulted in us watching the last part of the video first and the first part of it last, but



Service with a smile at Panama City Beach (photo by Donald Daugherty)

it worked fine and was well received; it reminded one of, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first."

All of the planned activities for the seniors, singles, teens and youth were very successful and well attended.

God was very merciful in sparing our coastal sites this year from the destructive forces of Hurricane Ivan, although the surrounding areas were hit extremely hard. Having to travel through areas that were devastated to arrive at the Feast site and seeing the destruction firsthand was sobering indeed, and certainly made one appreciate being able to keep God's Feast another year in peace and safety.

Harold Rhodes

Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Fall aspen and cottonwood colors were at their peak this year, making for exceptionally beautiful views. The weather was a little rainier, but we had some very nice days. High attendance was 742. It was quite crowded, including the lobby overflow. An excellent spirit of cooperation, unity and responsiveness prevailed and was especially noticeable to the speakers and was reflected in very consistent attendance.

Generosity was quite evident as well. One of the members found out that three of the housekeepers at the host hotel had been burned out and had lost everything. Donations poured in at the front desk. Hotel staff and management were impressed.

Also, a young



Steamboat Springs, Colorado, horseback riding and family dance (photos by Steve Ferguson)

boy, either a younger teen or older pre-teen, lost his wallet. We didn't know the amount when we decided to try to help him out. We set it up for anyone who wanted to help him to give him the money directly. One man handed him a hundred dollar bill. His mother protested that he only lost \$60. The man insisted he keep it and the boy ended up sharing with his sister and writing a thank you note to the congregation. Meanwhile, over \$400 ended up at the information booth to help the young fellow and was directed toward another worthy cause.

The teens enjoyed pizza along with an outing at the "Maze in Steamboat" and preteens visited the hot pool and slide, also enjoying pizza with the event. The family dance began with entertainment by the Yampa Valley Boys, a local duo that performs cowboy and country-and-western music, spiced with humor. This was an especially popular activity. The seniors' hors d'oeuvres-style luncheon was quite popular. They enjoyed an interactive discussion, which included relating experiences about early Feasts.

The majority of housing was handled by the Steamboat Grand. Brethren particularly enjoyed the convenience of meeting in the same building where their housing was located, and also enjoyed

the high quality of the hotel, a AAA four-diamond resort.

Larry Neff

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

More than 1,500 brethren enjoyed beautiful weather, wonderful music and inspiring messages during the Feast of Tabernacles in Wisconsin Dells. Temperatures hovered in the 70s as 1,578 attended Sabbath services on the first Holy Day. The spiritual food was excellent and included messages focusing on the fear of the Lord, how problems will be solved in the world tomorrow, the importance of family, maintaining a clear vision of the Kingdom of God, the meaning of the Last Great Day and lessons from the life of Jeremiah.

Throughout the Feast, brethren had the opportunity to sign handmade cards that were sent to more than 50 senior citizens who were unable to attend the Feast. Also honored were couples married more than 50 years and members baptized 40 years or more.

Brethren gave generously to support the Good Works Program by donating more than \$12,000 at the Good Works concert featuring the Myers Brothers. Several hundred brethren enjoyed the



Festival Youth Instruction at Wisconsin Dells (photos by Joe Jacoby)

"Big Band" sound of live music at the Family Dance and contributed over 800 pounds of food for the local community Food Shelf.

God truly blessed us with a joyful Feast of Tabernacles in Wisconsin Dells.

Michael Hanisko

Zambia

Nalubanda, Mumbwa

This year 141 excited brethren, including for the first time a party of 13 brethren from the Copper Belt region, celebrated the Feast in Nalubanda, 153 kilometers (95 miles) west of Lusaka, Zambia.

Brethren once again stayed in literal

booths made from wooden poles and covered by grass. The well at the site dried up, therefore we carted water 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) using seven 250-liter drums loaded on a tractor-trailer. This provided a daily fun ride for the children and the youth.

Electricity, generated using solar panels, was confined to the main hall. Cooking was done on open fires, but the ladies



Young people welcome visitors to Mumbwa, Zambia

were delighted to be relieved from their daily chores because we hired cooks. All told, the atmosphere was electric, with plenty of laughter. We all ate together in the grass-thatched hall that doubled as a meeting hall. Eating together provided a unique opportunity to fellowship and to serve.

Members thought it a greater honor that Victor Kubik, member of the Council of Elders, should come and visit what must be the most humble Feast in the UCG. He gave all the sermons and sermonettes while he was there for the last half of the Feast.

The major highlight was the abundance and variety of food, thanks to the donation received from the home office. That amount made an unbelievable difference. Other events included giving medicines donated by LifeNets Zambia chapter to the clinic at Nalubanda.

The last day was to be marred by the possibility of the season's first rain. If it rains in Zambia, the skies open, but it held off. The skies opened soon after the Feast, and it has been raining ever since! Certainly God did intervene for His people.

Kambani Banda

Zimbabwe

Up to 23 people traveled from different parts of Zimbabwe to observe the Feast this year. As the brethren are scattered, the Feast is a special occasion for reunion. Minister Neville Smith traveled from South Africa to be with us for the first four days of the Feast.

Members enjoyed a rich spiritual serving of sermons and sermonettes in a mixture of live and video messages.

Highlights included two buffet lunches for the entire group at a beautiful garden hotel.

Although the economy is not what it should be, God has adequately provided for our needs. We remain positive that things will come right, and appreciate some of the good things in the country, such as relative peace and quiet as well as rich natural resources including wildlife, beautiful scenery and great tourist attractions such as the Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba.

Mike Mukarati

Feast Concert Raises Funds for Good Works Program

One of the highlights of the Feast in Wisconsin Dells this year was an opportunity to raise funds for the Good Works Program to serve the needs of our own brethren around the world.

On Sunday evening, Oct. 3, a special benefit concert by the Myers Brothers (Skip, Steve, Dave and John) helped raise funds for the needs of the brethren in Kenya. The brethren there need medications for malaria and yellow fever as well as water purification systems. To serve their Kenyan family, the brethren in the Dells generously donated over \$12,600 to the project.

The Myers brothers (www.myersbro.com) were joined in guest appearances by their father Norm, John's wife Patricia, and next generation Myers children Dan, Paul and James. Further information on the Good Works Program can be obtained at www.ucg.org/goodworks/.



From the Word

Parenting Seminar: Teaching Our Children the Word of God

■ A new seminar will help parents in the vital role of "Passing on Our Faith to Our Children."

by Doug Horchak

As parents, we desire the best for our children—and want for them only that which brings true happiness and fulfillment to their lives. As they grow older, we pray that they will respond to God's call and become converted members of His Church. That is the hope that all parents in the Church share. However, what part in that hope for our children's conversion do we, as parents, play?

Four years ago, the United Church of God developed a seminar that was foundational in nature. "The Biblical Foundation of Parenting" seminar focused on the fundamental truth about our children's spiritual status—that they are called of God. Understanding this truth is important for all Christian parents to understand.

In December, the United Church of God will be releasing a second parenting seminar that will focus on the responsibility of teaching our children from God's Word. It focuses on a direct

part we can play in equipping our children to establish their convictions as they grow older.

This new seminar, "Passing on Our Faith to Our Children," while acknowledging that God does the calling, asks and answers an important question: Do we, as parents, have any meaningful influence on how our children might respond to God's calling at any given age?

Teach the Children

In Deuteronomy, God plainly told parents that they had a duty of teaching their children about God, His Word and His law. Notice Deuteronomy 6:6-9: "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

In these words written by Moses to the children of Israel, parents are admonished to teach their children of and from the Word of God as a regular part of their interaction with them. In

other words, it should become habit.

For most parents, the application of this instruction might involve using the everyday experiences of life to reinforce the laws of God and related principles expounded in the Word of God. Using situations in everyday life to point out how the Word of God works is a very important strategy for parents to use. However, another aspect to "teaching" our children as stated in Deuteronomy 6 is actually teaching our children directly from the Word of God—the Bible.

For many years, some parents have solely relied upon a few "Bible story books" from which to teach their children, or simply assumed the local Sabbath school program would suffice to give the biblical framework to their child's understanding and application of the Bible. While these are very good resources, the Scripture is clear that in ideal circumstances, the primary duty to directly teach God's Word lies with the parents.

We know that from a young child, Timothy was taught the Holy Scrip-



New Seminar in December

This seminar, "Passing on Our Faith to Our Children," will not only explain the biblical injunction from God to teach our children from His Word, but give some very practical strategies and approaches to use in helping your children to have a working knowledge of the Bible—complete with handouts and examples. As an interactive presentation, it will give opportunity to parents to ask questions as well as give input on effective ways to teach our children from the Scriptures.

As with the first seminar, the subject material will be conducive to the Sabbath or Bible study format. However, it will be up to the pastor to determine which approach will best serve the needs of the families of the congregation. In any event, we hope this seminar will inspire and encourage all of you as parents to have the added confidence to become your child's primary teacher and instructor in the Word of God!

We also hope to follow up with additional articles in *UnitedNews*, and your suggestions and input are welcome. **UN**

Heading Off the Four Major Steps to Divorce

by Rex Sexton

Marriage is in a sad state in the Western world. Divorce rates skyrocketed from barely 2 percent of marriages in 1900 to nearly 50 percent by the year 1990. In more recent years these rates have leveled off, not because larger numbers of people are successful in marriage, but because so many couples today simply "cohabit"—bypassing the commitment of marriage.

What are the primary reasons the initial joy, passion and commitment of marriage evaporate? What leads couples who have vowed dedication to each other to abandon their marriage relationship?

The four most common steps in a marriage's progression to divorce are:

1. Breakdown of communication.
2. Buildup of resentments.
3. Open conflict, laced with harmful behaviors.
4. Final separation.

For years marriage counselors concentrated almost entirely on step number 3. My early training in this field was in how to "create peace" by teaching self-control and awareness. In my naiveté I thought what I was doing would solve the problem. I learned later that most couples reverted back to their old habits. What they really needed was assistance in dealing with the root cause of their

problems, not just the symptoms.

Couples normally seek help from ministers and professional counselors only when they are well into the final stage of alienation—with their marriage at the breaking point. In most cases, by the time a couple seeks assistance to save their marriage, they are already doing too many harmful things to each other—either with words or deeds. Salvaging the relationship at this point is always difficult. But, in my experience, it can be achieved if both husband and wife are willing to learn how to *communicate* with each other appropriately.

In recent years counseling professionals have recognized the importance of teaching communication skills to couples in trouble. Ceasing harmful behaviors toward each other is always important, but unless a couple learns how to communicate in a healthy, beneficial and regular manner, the pause in marital warfare will only be temporary.

These four destructive steps also apply to other relationships: children, employers, employees and, believe it or not, even in our relationship with our Creator. To have a meaningful relationship with God we need to stay in contact with Him through prayer and personal Bible study. The Scriptures tell us, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

A good marriage is nourished by lots

of regular and positive communication. However, the very nature of our present society seems to keep us from learning how to really communicate or to even make time to communicate. We live very busy lives. We work and hurry constantly but never seem to have enough time for each other.

Relaxation time is often spent watching televised entertainment. Television may do more harm than good to relationships because it is an easy escape from reality.

Also, we are often tethered to gadgets such as computers and cell phones, even when we are at home. *Rush, hurry, focus, get it done!* If these words describe your daily routine, then perhaps, in your marriage, you are well into step number 1 and are not even aware of it.

The best insurance we have for marriage is *learning how to communicate* with each other in a respectful and loving manner. We then need to make sure we *always* do it. The Bible admonishes us to love and respect one another: "Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33, NRSV). Love and respect cannot be built or maintained in a marriage unless there is regular and consistent give and take of feelings, ideas, shared goals, needs and observations.



Ideally, at the end of each day it is good to make time to relax together and communicate. Yes, you may miss a day or two occasionally but work at keeping those interruptions of your private communication time to a bare minimum.

Marriage can and should be a mutual admiration relationship. Make it a habit to spend time alone together. Ideally, at the end of each day it is good to make time to relax together and communicate. Yes, you may miss a day or two occasionally but work at keeping those interruptions of your private communication time to a bare minimum.

So what I'm saying is this: Do whatever it takes to guarantee that you have a regular time and place to communicate

with your spouse! Don't just hope that it will happen—make sure it does. The key to avoiding the four steps that end in divorce is to never let step number 1 rear its ugly head. Learn how to communicate with your mate regularly and effectively. **UN**

Rex Sexton is pastor of the Olympia and Tacoma, Washington, congregations. This article previously appeared on the *ucg.org* Web site as a "Commentary" the week of Sept. 17-23.

'Help! I've Been Brainwashed!'

■ This article is addressed especially to high school and college students who will be taking biology classes. If you take this subject, you will most likely be exposed to teachers who will falsely teach that evolution is how life came into existence. Don't let them do to you what they did to me.

by Mario Seiglie

I had been brainwashed! Believe me, it was not a good feeling. It happened while in high school, and it happened in my favorite class—biology. Here is how it came about.

My father was a medical doctor in Murphy, North Carolina, and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. Seeing an obvious connection between being in this vocation and science, I couldn't get enough of biology. At that time, I had been taught evolution by my biology teachers, and it made sense. Besides, I had a church background that taught that God created the first cell and then evolution took over to create the rest of the species.

So you see, I had been brainwashed by my church as well. My focus was that God had created the cell and then all living things had evolved. Yet this belief indirectly undermined the Bible's teaching that God had created Adam and Eve as completely finished, and not as evolved beings. So I wasn't interested in the Bible at the time and believed my church was the ultimate authority—what it taught was to be believed. As a result, I started contemplating a loose moral lifestyle. After all, if I had evolved from a monkey, and evolution was true, why should I believe in biblical laws that limited me?

Confronting an Evangelical

Then, in my last year of high school, I met Danny, an evangelical. He said he didn't believe in evolution. I thought that was such an unsophisticated belief and that it showed great ignorance.

So I brought out a host of evolutionary "proofs." I told him about fruit flies evolving after being exposed to radiation and having different colored eyes or more wings. I told him about the British moths that had turned a different color, from white to black, as the industrial revolution had specked so much soot in the air that the white trunks of some trees had been darkened, making the moths change color as a camouflage. I told him about Darwin's finches, and how they had evolved different beak sizes in the Galapagos Islands. I told him about the fossil record, and how species went from simple to complex over time. I told him about the embryos of different species resembling each other, and about the fossils of ape-men. So I managed to convince him, after making him feel very ignorant.

A Life-Changing Experience

Yet a few weeks later I met another fellow student, Sammy, who would change my life. We both liked to play chess, and one day while playing chess at his home I talked about my background. I had come from Cuba to the United States when I was 7. We had lost all our basic freedoms to Communism and were exiled. I mentioned that after my father arrived in the United States, he once remarked, "If the U.S. falls, where will we go to keep these freedoms and be safe?"

Sammy said, "That's interesting. I have an article where it says, if WW III occurs, is there a place of safety?"

I borrowed the article and became acquainted with Bible prophecy for the first time. I was astounded to read that the Bible talks about today's issues and gives a warning as well as hope. I asked him to lend me a Bible, and I started reading it and biblical literature. I was amazed to find everything in the Bible was true—historically, and, more surprisingly, scientifically.

So, I reasoned, if the Bible is historically true, then evolution was wrong. As I read on, all my arguments about evolution crumbled and I realized I had been brainwashed. I had been shown only one side of the story—and a distorted side at that!

I proved God exists and that cells couldn't have evolved. I learned that God created animals and human beings in a perfect and complete way. I slowly realized each "fact" of evolution had been a clever lie! It seems some scientists had chosen not to acknowledge the possibility that there could be a Creator God, which led them, whether knowingly or not, to distort the evidence. Why? It turns out that some of the early proponents of Darwinism had pushed the theory to avoid giving account of their sinful deeds to a righteous God.

As Aldous Huxley, one of the most fierce defenders of evolution, once admitted, "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning, consequently I assumed that it had none . . . For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom . . . There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever" (*Ends and Means*, 1937, pages 272-273, emphasis added).

An Old Argument

This idea that the creation doesn't need a Creator, but created itself or has always existed is not new. The Greeks of Paul's day had similar, although simpler, theories about the origin of life without God.

Paul, in his critique of Greek philosophy, showed the consequences of this type of reasoning.

He wrote in Romans 1:18-24: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

"Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves . . ."

This type of philosophy is certainly alive and well today.

Apologizing to Danny

So after I proved I was wrong about evolution, I went back to Danny and apologized to him, admitting I was mistaken. It left him speechless. It was only many years later that I again met him, and to my surprise, he had become a Church of God member! He had been so surprised by my complete about-face that he had looked into what I believed and came to the same conclusion.

In hindsight, I must say the biggest part of my conversion had been understanding and applying God's holy laws. As each of you mature, you will also face a world deeply prejudiced against God and the Bible. But since my high school days, I've made many additional discoveries that have gone against evolution and for a Creator.

As Stephen Meyer, an expert in physics, philosophy and molecular biology, wrote, "The major developments in science in the past five decades have been running in a strongly theistic direction. Science, done right, points toward God" (Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 2004, page 77).

The Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture

Let's briefly look at some of these discoveries along with the Scriptures that support them.

In Psalm 19, God revealed to David that there are two books that witness to God's existence: the book of nature and the book of Scripture. In this Psalm, David says the majesty and the orderliness of the heavens declare the glory of God. He mentions the wonders of the spinning earth, the cycles of day and night, and our benign sun that emits light and heat.

The more scientists study our galaxy, the Milky Way, the more they see how

perfectly arranged it is for life. It is a spiral galaxy, which is the most stable of galactic systems, and our solar system is situated between two spiral arms, which is one of the safe zones, away from the core of the galaxy, where supernovas explode and can decimate entire solar systems.

The earth's orbit keeps it at just the right distance from the sun. A bit farther away from the sun and it would be too cold, freezing the oceans, while a bit closer would make it too hot, melting the ice caps and flooding the whole globe.

Our moon is situated perfectly to protect the earth from many meteorite hits, and its gravitational pull regulates the tides, another essential part of our ecosystem. The tides keep the oceans oxygenated, allow currents to form and gently sweep the coastal beaches of any debris, not permitting the seas to stagnate.

The earth has the right spin, right size, right core, right chemicals and the right axis. Scientist call this anthropic fine-tuning, where all systems are fine-tuned to permit our fragile life system to exist. They have found that all the laws of nature and its physical constants combine in a mathematically incredible way to make life in the universe possible.

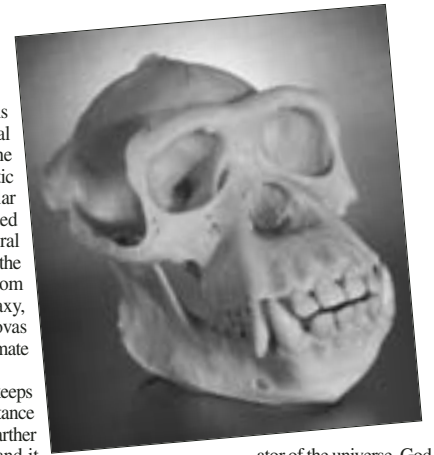
Even the currently popular big bang theory can be viewed from this perspective of fine-tuning. According to Nobel-prizewinning physicist Steven Weinberg, this was not a typical explosion that starts from a definite center and spreads out, but an explosion that occurred simultaneously *everywhere*, filling all of space from the beginning with every particle of matter rushing apart from every other particle.

"In three minutes," said Bill Bryson, "98% of all matter was produced. We have a universe. It is a place of the most wondrous and gratifying possibility, and beautiful too, and it was all done in about the time it takes to make a sandwich" (*ibid.*, page 94).

This is very hard to reconcile with evolutionary thought. Nobel-prizewinner Arno Penzias said about the big bang: "The best data we have are exactly what I would have predicted had I nothing to go on but the first five books of Moses, the Psalms and the Bible as a whole" (*ibid.*, page 77).

What is the conclusion? Dr. Meyer said, "When I look at the stars in the night sky, it is an occasion for me to worship the Creator who brought them into existence. So exploring the scientific and historical evidence for God is not only a cognitive exercise, but it's an act of worship for me. It's a way of giving the Creator the credit and honor and glory that are due to him" (*ibid.*, page 91).

This is exactly what David was saying in the first part of Psalm 19. In addition, as a lasting reminder that He is the Cre-



ator of the universe, God left us with the Fourth Commandment, the command to remember our Creator by resting and worshipping Him on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11).

The Book of Scripture

Then, after David finished mentioning the wonders of the "book of nature" where we glorify God as our Creator, he turned to the marvels of the book of Scripture. He says we should also give God glory for having given us His Word.

In verses 7 to 11, he praised its power to restore the person to a healthy wholeness, by assuring forgiveness and cleansing. God's Word also gives wisdom to those who accept it, even to the "simple" or inexperienced.

By applying the Scriptures, David said, we learn what "the fear of the LORD" is all about—developing a deep respect for God and His way of life. As a result, we will have "joy," or the inner peace and tranquility that comes from loving God with all our heart. The Bible is also "trustworthy" because its laws are true and are verifiable by life's experiences.

As a result of studying God's "two books" that give witness to Him, our faith is strengthened. We read in Hebrews 11:1-3 about this type of faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." This is what scientists are discovering as well—the physical could not have invented itself, but must have come from some superior and invisible source.

We also learn we have a spiritual and moral responsibility to our Maker. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Yes, this is a God who is concerned about us and wants to bless us as we obey Him.

So, please, don't allow yourself to be brainwashed as I once was. Remember what Psalm 14:1 says, that only "the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" UN

Mario Seiglie is a member of the Council of Elders and pastor of the congregations in Garden Grove, California, and Honolulu, Hawaii.

God Gave Us a Miracle!

■ "A year ago we had a true miracle in our congregation. A baby was born perfectly healthy even though the doctors could find no kidney function or lung function in the weeks leading up to the birth. All the doctors recommended aborting the baby or risk delivering a stillborn baby. The mother's amniotic fluid had leaked out, and the baby lived for several weeks with no fluid. The doctors were certain the baby would not live because of no kidney or lung function. Amazingly the baby was born perfectly healthy! I was present at the birth and the doctor blurted out, 'babies without lungs shouldn't cry' when the baby cried. Here is her story."—Jim Franks, pastor, Houston North, Texas

by Diana Irion

It all began during a hurricane . . . OK, it was a tropical storm, but it felt like a hurricane to us! It was June 10, 2001, and tropical storm Allison had hit Houston with a vengeance. We still had our wedding, but it was much smaller than planned. My husband, Hervé, said we would get married that day no matter what happened, even if we had to do it over the telephone!

The next months were happy as we integrated our family, which included two preteens from my previous marriage. In January 2002 I discovered I was pregnant. This was unexpected but welcome news. We really became serious about looking for a house to fit three children. We didn't want to raise our children in an apartment.

In April we had found our home and were set to move in on the 7th when tragedy struck our family. At 2 a.m. on the 6th, a Sabbath, I woke up to a strange feeling. It became very clear to me that my water had ruptured and I was only 14 weeks along in the pregnancy.

My husband rushed me to the hospital where we were told I was having a late miscarriage. The doctors suggested that we should abort the fetus since they were sure it would die. I calmly told the doctor that my baby was not a "fetus" and that as long as he was alive, they would not take him.

After a one-week stay in the hospital, I was released home on complete bed rest. I had to have someone with me 24 hours a day. My doctor told me that my baby had less than a 5 percent chance of living. I knew God could heal me and the baby, and I was anointed. I

stayed on bed rest six more weeks and saw my doctor every Friday when she did an ultrasound.

On the Wednesday afternoon during the 20th week of my pregnancy, I felt my baby move more than usual. He was kicking and squirming a lot, so much that it was painful. I knew that he was dying. I curled up on my side and wrapped my arms around my belly and I prayed for God to end his suffering. I told my baby to just rest and be at peace. I told him how much I loved him and then he was still . . . he had gone.

Two days later my doctor told me during an ultrasound that my baby was dead. I didn't cry. I had already known what she would say. The terrible thing was, now I had to go to the hospital and give birth to him. I gave birth to my baby boy, Sean Michael Irion, May 11, 2002. I was devastated. Our family grieved his loss. I still ache for him.

My husband decided I needed to get away after several months of grieving and so he took us all to Jamaica for the Feast that year. While I was there I discovered that I was pregnant again. Five weeks after we returned I had a miscarriage.

I was sure God was punishing me for something horrible I had done. I fasted and prayed over and over trying to discover what I had done! I resolved to stop trying to have a baby. I just couldn't deal with another loss.

Another Pregnancy, New Worries

Then in December that same year, I discovered I was pregnant again. I didn't mess around this time. I immediately got a referral to a specialist in high-risk pregnancies. I made an appointment at eight weeks and had an ultrasound. The doctor deduced that I had an incompetent cervix and scheduled a cerclage as soon as I reached 12 weeks.

After that everything was fine until four weeks later. The doctor did a routine ultrasound and saw that my amniotic sac was bulging through the stitches of the cerclage and I was put on bed rest for the rest of my pregnancy. I still had 24 weeks to go—that's six months! I became very worried and depressed at this point.

Two weeks later my husband was laid off work and had to take a position in Illinois. Now I was on bed rest with two kids at home and my husband was out of town. I became more distraught each day and begged my brethren for prayer.

At 22 weeks I had another routine ultrasound, and I heard the doctor gasp. I knew that was NOT a good sign. She turned to me and very calmly told me that most of the amniotic fluid around the baby was gone. She said the baby was fine but I should think about terminating the pregnancy because there was less than a 5 percent chance (again!) of the baby living. I explained to her my beliefs, and she agreed to help me through the rest of my pregnancy, however long that would be.

She carefully examined me physically and by ultrasound to try to dis-

cover the reason why my amniotic fluid was so low. She found that the sac around the baby had not ruptured this time, and the placenta looked healthy, so she thought the only reason the fluid was so low was that the baby was in kidney failure.

My family has a genetic kidney disease (polycystic kidney disease) which can manifest in the unborn babies and, if so, is always terminal. Knowing this, the doctor tried to prepare me for another tragic loss.

At first, I refused to accept it. I was anointed and requested prayer. I prayed day and night for a miracle. When I went to the doctor a week later, everything was still the same.

My doctor began to explain a little every week about what to expect. She said there was some hope that the fluid had not been too low before the 20th week. If that was true, then it was possible for the baby's lungs to develop.

Over the next few weeks my baby turned head down where the last pocket of fluid was. The doctor saw on the ultrasound that her internal organs were smaller than they should have been.

I went to the doctor every week and had an ultrasound, and I was told the same bad news every time. I began to be very depressed. I was still on bed rest till the end of my second trimester. I prayed for God to do His will. I no longer prayed for my miracle. I prayed for my will to match His will and for Him to bring me peace.

I thought about the future all the time. I ran over possible outcomes day and night. Either I would give birth to another stillborn baby or my baby would be born alive and then die shortly after or—dare I hope—I would give birth to a live, normal baby. I never gave up that hope. I just tried to prepare myself for the other outcomes.

I was hoping it wouldn't be as devastating as last time, but I knew better. I was still grieving for my son and would for a long time. I couldn't imagine burying another baby. When I thought of it, I wanted God to let me die with the baby.

Well, week after week I went to the doctor and week after week the baby was still growing fine and was still alive. When I came into my third trimester at 28 weeks, the doctor said the baby could be born at any time, but it would be much better if it weren't until after 34 weeks, so I had to be monitored very closely. I still saw my doctor every Wednesday, but now I also had to go to the hospital twice a week to be monitored in the labor and delivery unit for an hour on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Wonderful Volunteers

My husband was still working in Illinois, and I was not allowed to drive, so I had to ask people in our congregation to drive me 40 miles each way three times a week.

There were many wonderful people who volunteered to help and never accepted a penny for gas. Let me just mention that there were also many people who helped by preparing meals,



Naomi Christine Irion (and our loving God) surprised the doctors

shopping, cleaning house and just coming over to keep up my spirits. Since I was on bed rest, I couldn't do anything in the house or for my children myself. I also received many cards and phone calls. Whenever anyone came over or called, it helped to distract me from my plight. I probably would have gone insane without everyone's help. Thank God I am part of such a large congregation!

In the third trimester most pregnant women have a glucose tolerance test, so I had one too. I failed miserably and was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. Great! One more issue to deal with. Now all those wonderful people who were cooking our meals had to be sure that the food they made was diabetic and eat a special diet. I did pretty well because I was determined to do my part. I was hoping that if I did everything right, God would have mercy and my baby would live.

When I reached 33 weeks I was sure I was having contractions. When I went to the doctor, she looked at me and immediately checked me into the hospital. I was put on complete bed rest and monitored every four hours. They also managed my blood sugar with insulin. While I was in the hospital my blood sugar went very high and they had to give me two shots a day.

My doctor came to see me every day. She kept things calm and simple and very quiet. She would say that everything was fine and to just rest. She knew I was holding on by a very thin thread. You know when a doctor says that, she means that everything is *not* fine!

I had been in the hospital for 10 days and I was about to reach my 36th week when the doctor said it was time to take out the cerclage and let this baby be born. She took it out the day before I was due to be induced. My labor was

induced on the last day of my 35th week at 9 a.m. My husband was there (he had transferred back to Texas while I was in the hospital) and some very good friends and also my mother.

God Really Does Do Miracles!

After 15 hours of labor our daughter was born at 12:25 a.m. on July 25. She was born crying at the top of her lungs! She was alive! Everyone was crying, me the hardest. The doctor said that babies whose lungs aren't developed don't cry at birth. I had hope! I was sobbing and thanking God. Our pastor, Jim Franks, immediately anointed her.

She wasn't getting enough oxygen so the neonatologist put a breathing tube into her lungs, but the best part was, as he was working on her, she urinated on him! She was supposed to be in kidney failure! This baby should never have been able to take a breath or pee at all. It was a miracle!

She was crying so LOUD that the people in the waiting room down the hall through two sets of doors and down another hall could hear her.

Naomi Christine Irion was 5 pounds 12 ounces and 19 inches long. She spent two days on the incubator and they gave her two lung treatments. She was on oxygen for another 1½ days and then on room air. After four days in the NICU she was transferred to the PICU (for preemies). She was there to learn how to suck and to gain weight. After three days she was nursing well and gaining weight. All of her tests came back completely normal. So they sent her home! There was nothing wrong with her!

Naomi is now a year old and walking and starting to talk in two languages. She is a joy to our family and everyone in our congregation. God really does do miracles in our day! **UN**

Treasure Digest

E-Lies in Your Inbox: Check Before You Forward

If a person let you in on some gossip that you knew wasn't true, would you repeat it to others? Probably not. As Christians, we are striving to obey God's commandments in every situation. We know that Scripture warns us against spreading gossip or speaking lies. Yet modern communication methods are putting a new wrinkle in this, and making it harder to know what is true and what is not.

In this information age, we can instantly communicate with our family, brethren, friends and colleagues through e-mail. Many of us use e-mail to share heartening stories, keep in touch with others and pass along prayer requests on a moment's notice.

In the course of this instant and far-reaching communication medium, we might have received a few forwarded e-mails from Church members about shocking news items, missing persons, ways to make quick money or supposed truths behind various situations on the world scene. The problem is, most of these forwarded e-mails are not true. Fact-finding Web sites call them hoaxes, scams, urban legends or, in other words, lies.

Take for instance, a few of these forwarded e-lies I have received lately: "Madeline Murray O'Hare getting 'Touched by an Angel' taken off the air," former Vice President Al Gore misquoting Scripture, get rich from a chain letter, Amber Alert: "Help Find 9-Year-Old Penny Brown," "HIV-Infected Needles in the Handles of Gas Pumps in Florida" (or other states), "Forward an E-Mail for Disney and Microsoft and Win a Chance for Money or Travel," "Forward E-Mails to Help Provide Financial Support for Cancer Victim Amy Bruce" (various names have been used) and so the e-lies go.

Have you ever wondered about the truth of these

types of e-mails yet felt guilty if you didn't forward them, especially the humanitarian e-mails such as finding a missing child? I have. Yet I recently took a moment to check the validity of an e-mail at a search engine. Using the Internet, you can quickly uncover the truth or fiction of these legendary e-mail forwards.

One of the most useful sites I have discovered is www.truthorfiction.com. Launched by a talk radio host who has been researching Christian urban legends for years, the site is devoted to uncovering whether "rumors, inspirational stories, virus warnings, humorous tales, pleas for help, urban legends, prayer requests and calls to action are truth or fiction." Another good site is www.scambusters.org. You can often find helpful information as well by searching on the topic at www.google.com.

Not all forwarded e-mails are hoaxes. You may receive some "e-rumors" that are true, such as "Iraqi Statue Honoring American Soldiers." An article in ARNEWS, the Army news service, reported this story. Unfortunately, however, many

forwarded stories are false and we should therefore strive to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" in this increasingly deceptive world.

In the past, we may have forwarded these types of e-mails to help, inspire or inform our brethren. That is very understandable. However, with the online resources at our disposal, perhaps we can seek out the truth before we forward. As Paul says in Ephesians 4:15: "Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church" (New Living Translation).

*Jennifer Gosse
Las Vegas, Nevada, congregation*

Who Is Your Root?

We talk about getting to the root of a problem. We say storms uproot trees. With our mobile society, we talk about staying put—putting down roots.

Who is your root? Have you gotten to the root of your problems? Will the storms of life uproot you and destroy you? Do you have a deep, strong taproot? Notice Revelation 22:16: "I, Jesus, have sent

My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Jesus Christ must be our taproot, running down deep and strong into the ground, holding us fast through life's troubles and storms.

Matthew 13:21 warns about not having roots: "Yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while."

Notice this deeper meaning: We do not have this root IN us. No matter who we are in the Church, no matter what our responsibility, we must have Jesus Christ as our taproot. If He is not, when life's storms rise to assail us, we will be blown away.

A recent experience illustrated this to me. Some Church friends arrived home late one night to find a tree toppled on their street. An orange traffic cone stood by the hole where the tree had been.

This was caused by a unique weather phenomenon called a microburst. Tremendous torrents of wind come virtually out of nowhere to wreak devastation.

This particular tree was a 50- to 60-year-old cottonwood. Cottonwoods are majestic trees with thick trunks and large canopies of leaves. They look like the epitome of strength. Yet storms blow cottonwoods over all the time. Why? When I moved the orange cone and pushed aside the dirt to peer into the hole, I found no taproot.

There is a lesson God wants us to learn. No matter our age, position or appearance, each of us is vulnerable. While we can put down some roots, they can be shallow and in thin soil. These roots can branch into bitterness and other bad soil. We simply do NOT have this taproot in ourselves.

One day, a great storm will arise. Only with God's help will we be able to stand, as Ephesians 6 says, Matthew 7 instructs us to build on the Rock to withstand the storm: our little rootlets must be intertwined with the taproot wound around the Rock. Otherwise, the storm will uproot us.

If we remember the admonition in Ephesians 3:17—"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love"—then we will stay close to the trunk (and the root) of the tree of life.

We can get to the root of our problems. We will keep our roots in the Bible, in prayer and faithful church attendance.

And when life's storms and Satan's stirrings erupt, we won't be uprooted. For our rootlets will be enmeshed and entangled around the taproot, wrapped around the Rock—Jesus Christ.

*John Fox
Salt Lake City, Utah, congregation*

Rejoice, and Again I Say, Rejoice!

Can we rejoice when times are difficult, or do we rejoice only when times are good? Are we truly happy all our days? In our stress-filled lives, it's hard to rejoice. It seems impossible to experience great joy, yet God says, "Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!" (Psalm 144:15).

Actually, of ourselves we cannot be truly happy in Satan's sin-sick world. Trials press upon us, making it very difficult to be happy. Haven't we been

there, done that? Let's remember what God tells us, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

But how is it possible to rejoice when we're suffering great trials? The Holy Spirit is mighty and powerful, ready to bolster us up with great joy. Yes, it is there for the asking, so let's claim God's promise in whatever trial we may find ourselves. "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). God loves for us to be joyously happy as His children even in difficult times. What better way to be a light and example to others!

Serving our fellow man is another way to receive joy in our hearts. By serving, the Holy Spirit flows from the Father's throne, through us and out to others in joy. An example of this might be in praying for others. So many times, the very person I've prayed for during the past week will have a smile and encouraging words for me on the Sabbath. God is a God of joy, and He loves to share His joy with us every day and especially on the Sabbath.

Joy is there for the asking. Let's cry out to God as we seek Him day and night. He provides our every need! "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace" (Romans 15:13). Let's be about our Father's business serving our brethren and fellow man. Let's not forget the widows, our seniors and all those in special need, serving them with joy in our hearts.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). After all, aren't we preparing to live with our heavenly Father and His Son who are full of joy? Let's look forward to that day, when God will say, "Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21).

*Sherry Michaud
Los Angeles, California, congregation*

Esther's Test of Faith

Esther was a member of a hated minority race, living in exile in a foreign land, and raised by her older cousin, Mordecai. But Esther was also very beautiful. When King Xerxes suddenly "divorced" his wife and began looking for another, Esther became one of the young maidens apparently snatched off the streets by men searching for beautiful women for the king. They did not

know that Esther was a Jew.

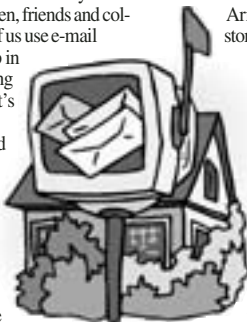
Once in the king's harem, Mordecai instructed Esther not to reveal her identity, and Esther was chosen to be the new wife of King Xerxes.

Esther could have bemoaned her fate—taken from her home and her cousin against her will, to become the wife of a man she did not know, who was the leader of a people who hated her people.

Nothing in the Bible tells us how Esther actually felt about this situation. What we do know is that when Mordecai came to Esther with the news that the Jews were to be killed by decree from Haman, Esther had to make a faith decision.

"Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish'" (Esther 4:15-16, NIV).

Esther knew that the king had the power to put her to death for coming before him without being summoned. She may have seen it happen to other people. So Esther ordered a three-day fast before she made this endeavor. She then went into the king on behalf of her people, having put her



Turning the Hearts Reducing the Risk in Selecting a Mate, Part 2

How may we take some of the risk out of mate selection? Last time we looked at three important points: Take plenty of time to make a decision. Pray for God's guidance and wisdom. Seek wise counsel.

Now let's consider another vital biblical principle:

- **Consider the biblical roles.** In Ephesians 5:21-33, the apostle Paul lays out two major areas for married couples. For the wife, he says that a key role is that of submission. But what does that mean and how do both potential spouses understand "submission"? A woman should ask herself, "Do I find myself easily following his lead?" Does her potential spouse lead her in the right direction and make wise choices? Or is she going to be challenging him regularly because he is not one that she can easily follow? The man should ask himself, "Does she follow my lead or does she object to my style of leadership regularly?"

Similarly, the man should ask himself if he is prepared to love his wife and give himself for her as Christ loved the Church. Is the woman you want to marry lovable? The woman should ask herself if she feels loved by being with the man she is hoping to marry. Does he show honor and respect? Do you feel "warm" being with him?

These two roles are stressed in the Scriptures, so it is vital that the couple consider them before making any decision to marry.

Since marriage is at the heart of the family according to God's Word, we must do all that we can to take the risk out of mate selection. Then our marriages and our families may be blessed and bring stability to our communities, God's Church and our country. And our wonderful, loving God, the Founder of marriage, will be honored in this holy institution.

Gary E. Antion

life in God's hands. By making her request known to God through prayer and fasting, she knew that the outcome was up to God.

The same is true in our lives. The outcome is always up to God, and if we have a serious request and put it before God, prayer and fasting is the best way to take the time to talk to God about it. We will find that God will have the same mercy for us that He had for His people in the days of Esther.

Victoria E. Nelson
Los Angeles, California, congregation

Doubtful Disputations

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Corinthians 13). Human nature loves to be right. It feels great to be right. We love to revel in how special we are because we're right about something. As zealous Christians, we can get pretty excited about doctrinal issues, but we must not wreak havoc like a bull in a china shop. There is a right way to handle the different rates at which we learn God's truth and the differences of opinions we may have because of it.

One of the seven things God hates is the sowing of discord among brothers (Proverbs 6:16-19). The truth is not to be used as a weapon to sow discord. How we handle the truth is a test of spiritual character. It can be a real trial of our patience and faith in God when we have knowledge that we want to share, but the person we want to tell isn't ready for it, or it isn't God's time for it to be widely known.

If an item of truth is genuine and needed, we must trust that God will lead His children to understand. We must not injure our brothers in the Church by stirring up controversy. We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves (Romans 15:1). We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We are to handle the Word of God with meekness and fear (Isaiah 66:2), and we are to treat our brothers with gentleness and patience (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Behaving in a spiritually mature manner is far more important than savoring the satisfaction of having our doctrinal opinions validated.

When King Saul acted rashly to hold on to his following, Samuel rebuked him and told him that the real issue was obeying the voice of God (1 Samuel 15:22). When there are dozens of scriptures where God has spoken on a matter, there isn't much doubt about what the truth of the matter really is. But when we need to cite scholarly opinions to establish an interpretation, then that is an indication that the matter could fall under the "doubtful disputations" category. Often if an issue is murky enough for brothers in the Church to hold different opinions, the real issue is whether we will obey what God has said about how to approach disputable matters.

In Romans 14, Paul takes the congregation to task for mishandling disputes about vegetarianism and fasting days. He sums up the matter with this advice: "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

It's more important to be patient and gentle—and cause no harm to our brethren—than it is to win the argument at the expense of driving someone else out of the Church. Paul gave this advice to Timothy: "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24). Impatience and the desire to glory in being right are just human nature rearing its ugly head.

The real victory we should be striving for is not to win the argument, but to be victorious over our

own human nature (Proverbs 16:32). Every matter will be settled in God's time and His way—and it takes more faith and more spiritual character to trust God and deal with differences patiently.

Jay Turner
San Jose, California, congregation

Apparent Problems Could Be Strengths in the Job Search

In putting together my employment credentials and thinking positively about how to present the Sabbath and Holy Days to employers, I came up with these thoughts:

Does a potential employer balk at giving you the Sabbath off? Explain that the same command that gives us the Sabbath also says, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Exodus 20:9). So we as Christians strive to have a strong work ethic and to be well organized in our efforts to get everything done on time.

Not only are we used to our weekly deadlines, but our annual schedule is well planned too. Any employer who has to schedule employees' vacation days and holidays will be impressed if you show a copy of the Holy Day calendar giving him or her your plans five or more years in advance!

Plus you can mention that you can work other holidays like Christmas and Easter that most other employees don't want to work. This can make you a valuable asset to the company as well.

Lynda Lynes
Salina, Kansas, congregation

20 Ways to Show Teens "I Love You"

Young people need to be loved, and in addition to their parents, Church members can help them feel a part of the greater spiritual family. Here are some ideas to help break the ice and bridge the generation gap:

1. Send them care packages for their trip to summer camp.
2. Give graduation cards. (I still remember the message on a card a minister's wife gave to me when I was 18: "Dear Grad: Keep your ear to the ground, your shoulder to the wheel, and your nose to the grindstone . . . and you'll end up with a dirty ear, sloped shoulder and pointy nose!" Corny, yes, but it meant the world to me.)
3. Give cards congratulating them on getting their driver's licenses (these are at card stores, believe it or not).



4. Throw snowballs at them. (Be ready to get some back.)
5. For those going to camp, buy a special notebook for Sabbath and Christian Living class notes. Ask them to write down any really good material to share with you.
6. On about page 10 of that notebook write a personal note like, "Hi! How's this class going? Thought I'd just pop up here to wish you a great rest of the day. Can't wait till you get back and tell us all about it!"
7. Anytime you get coupons for discounts at anything they like (putt-putt golf, bowling, hamburger places, etc.), randomly pass them out.
8. Go to the bank, get some two dollar bills and on a special occasion give them out with a note saying they're special just like this bill is.

9. If you have violinists or flutists (or any other instrumentalists) in your area, take time to watch them practice and ask them to show you how to hold the instrument, how to make a sound come out of it, etc.

10. Buy a bunch of Baskin-Robbins \$1 gift certificates with your second title and give them out before everyone goes to the Feast.

11. At church when you are talking with an elderly person, if a teen walks by, stop the teen and ask them if they know each other. If not, introduce them.

12. When a teen is going through some trial or trouble, tell him or her you'll pray about it.

13. Find out who is a real "Garfield," "Dilbert" or other comic strip fan. Cut out really good ones, put them in an envelope and give them out at church on a regular basis.

14. Let them know your philosophy is: Teens aren't problems; teens have problems (just like everybody else).

15. Ask them questions about things in teen culture that you don't understand.

16. Look for things in their personalities that you like or that affect others in a positive way. Compliment them on these traits and encourage them to use these qualities.

17. Ask a lot of "What do you think?" and "What is your opinion?" questions.

18. Smile at them!

19. Talk to them.

20. Tell them you love them.

(Source: "101 Ways to Show Your Church Teens 'I Love You,'" by Clyde Kilough, December 1998 Ministerial Quarterly.)



Photo © 2004 www.photos.com

arents aren't always in touch with what their kids are thinking. For example:

- 77 percent of children would like to have more time with their parents, yet only 46 percent of parents know it.
- 49 percent of teens say they admire their mom or dad more than anyone, but only 32 percent of parents think so.
- Nearly a third of 12- to 17-year-olds say they have drunk alcohol at some point, but only 6 percent of parents think they have.

Parents did come closer in understanding their teens' emotions (41 percent of parents described their teens as happy and 46 percent of teens described themselves that way; 2 percent of parents said their teens are sad and 3 percent of teens described themselves as sad).

Parents also underestimated their teens' top worries:

- Mom or dad getting sick (51 percent of teens said this, but only 29 percent of parents realized it).
- Terrorism (40 percent of teens, 24 percent of parents).
- School violence (34 percent of teens, 21 percent of parents).
- National disasters (29 percent of teens, 20 percent of parents).
- Bullies (25 percent of teens, 18 percent of parents).

Share Your Word Treasures!

Do you have any short items of biblical wisdom, humor or practical information that you would like to share in this section? Or if you have any suggestions, please contact *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 or mike_bennett@ucg.org.

Do You Know What Your Kids Are Really Thinking?

The Oct. 1, 2004, issue of *Family Circle* magazine reported on a survey showing that some par-

Be Ready to Give an Answer: Why Don't You Believe in Evolution?

Whether we study the vast expanses of the universe or the minute inner workings of a single living cell, we see evidence that convinces us it was all designed by a Creator (**Romans 1:20; Genesis 1**).

Many scientists from Albert Einstein to the present have marveled at the creation. Einstein described a "rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection" (*The Quotable Einstein*, Alice Calaprice, editor, 1996, page 151).

Complex design: Darwinism says that all life evolved from simple cells by small variations and natural selection. But there is really nothing simple about a "simple" one-celled bacterium like *R. coli*. In fact, the DNA information in it could fill 100 million pages of an encyclopedia! And scientists are finding that small variations cannot produce complex systems. For example, the biochemical process that turns a photon of light into a signal to the human brain is so **irreducibly complex**, it could not have developed by a series of small mutations over time (Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, 1996, pages 18-20). There would be no benefit to survival (natural selection) unless the entire intricate process of sight developed all at once. Indeed, scientists have found mutations to be harmful to a species, not helpful.

Defining evolution: While "microevolution," the slight changes within a species that shows the variety within the gene pool, has been demonstrated; scientists have never provided evidence of macroevolution. The fossil record—which Darwin thought would show simple life forms changing into more-complex forms and countless transitional links between kinds of creatures—shows complex life forms suddenly appearing with no evolutionary predecessors and no transitional links.

The conflict is not between science and the Bible, but between the materialistic philosophy that underlies Darwin's theory and the evidence for intelligent design. Since the evolutionary philosophy begins with the assumption that everything must have a natural, physical explanation, it by definition rejects any evidence of supernatural design. But many scientists have found that the scientific evidence of the fossil record, genetics, biochemistry, probability and other fields shows that Darwin's processes of variations and natural selection could not have produced the world we see.

For More Information, request our free brochures *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* and *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* You can read or request them at www.ucg.org/booklets. They also list a number of recent books with further scientific evidence.



Local Church Updates

Midnight Hike a Highlight of Phoenix Young Adult Campout

Central Arizona young adults spent the weekend of Aug. 20 to 22 camping in an alpine forest near Mormon Lake, Arizona.

The 7,500-foot elevation provided relief from summer heat for 43 adults and children nestled among ponderosa pines.



Monte Knudson and son Rheo climb a ponderosa pine; Shaun Tuck discusses a section of the Pentateuch (photos by John Elliott)

The group enjoyed a myriad of activities, including Sabbath services, a Bible study on the Pentateuch, several "breakout" Bible studies, a nature walk and an evening sing-along. Saturday night, pastor John Elliott led everyone on a "midnight hike" through the dark forest without the aid of artificial light. The next morning several hiked across the grassy valley at Mormon Lake to approach a herd of 300 wild elk.

We all look forward to spending a weekend together again next year.

Ed and RaeAnn Dowd

Pals Program Pairs Young and Old in North Carolina

Young people in the Charlotte and Asheville, North Carolina, congregations are continuing to serve through a program begun two years ago. The "Be a Pal" program pairs young church members with elderly members, widows/widowers and shut-ins.

Each month the young people send cards and notes to their "special pals" in the Charlotte, Asheville and Raleigh areas, pastored by David Mills. Participants are encouraged to pray for and visit their pals as well.

The program is monitored by Marti Springer and Mary Davis. Local Church members support the group by

donating cards to be used. Recipients of the notes have commented about how much their days are brightened by the cards received and how much they look forward to hearing from their young friends each month.

Marti Springer

Deacon Completes L.A. Triathlon

Hector Roybal, a 51-year-old deacon in the Los Angeles, California, congregation of UCG, finished his first L.A. Triathlon, a 1.5-kilometer (9-mile) ocean swim, 40-kilometer (24-mile) cycle, climaxed with a grueling 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) run through the mid-day heat of downtown Los Angeles streets. The race was held Sept. 12, 2004. His 9-year-old daughter Caroline threw flowers as she encouraged him at the end of the run (see photo). Hector was greeted at the finish line by family and friends.



Hector Roybal is showered with flowers as he completes the L.A. Triathlon (photo by Knute Josifek)

Knute Josifek

ABC Holds Mini-Sampler in Lansing

An ABC Mini-Sampler was held at the West Lansing Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Lansing, Michigan, over the weekend of Sept. 11 and 12, 2004.

Combined services for the Michigan congregations featured split sermons by Darris McNeely, pastor of the Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Indiana, con-



Members hear Ralph Levy at ABC Mini-Sampler in Lansing (photos by Darris McNeely)

gregations and managing editor of *World News and Prophecy*, and Ralph Levy, a resident professor from Ambassador Bible Center in Cincinnati. Dr. Levy presented the first split sermon, titled "Keep the Feasts With All Your Heart," and Mr. McNeely presented the second split sermon, titled "Lessons From the Seven Churches of Revelation."

After a break for lunch, the sampler began, with classes on "The Early Church—History and Apostasy" presented in PowerPoint format by Mr. McNeely, and "Topics in the Book of Genesis" presented by Dr. Levy. There were two hours of classes on Sabbath afternoon, two more on Saturday late afternoon and early evening, and a full seven hours on Sunday. A total of 96 people were present for the Sabbath afternoon classes, and 58 were present at the Sunday afternoon sessions.

At the completion of the classes, special recognition was extended to the "Most Senior Participant," 78-year-old Kenneth Harrington from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the youngest, 17-year-old Corbin Rose, from Flint, Michigan. Also recognized were Larry and Fran Haney, who had traveled farthest to attend the Mini-Sampler; the Haney's live in Columbus, Ohio.

Ralph Levy

Barbados Has Picnic and Youth Outing

On Sunday, Aug. 15, 2004, several of the Church brethren in Barbados journeyed to Bath, St. John, for a picnic.

Those present engaged in activities including dominoes, meaningful conversation, sea bathing, strolling on the beach, badminton and soccer skills.

It was a potluck luncheon where the brethren collaborated effectively to make the lunch an appetizing delight. The gentlemen's contribution was the refreshments.

Everyone remarked that the occasion was very delightful and afforded much socializing and fellowshiping, which was the main objective.

On Aug. 29, the youth in Barbados visited the 35-acre Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary. This is one of Barbados' National Environmental Heritage sites. At least 84 bird species have been recorded there, and it is the home to the widest diversity of resident and migratory birds on the island.

We were treated to an excellent tour of the sanctuary by Damien Catlyn, the tour guide. His enthusiasm and sound knowledge concerning the resident and migratory birds, the fish and plants were breathtaking.

The youth were very excited about this ecosystem with its brackish waters fed by springs that run off within the 1,156-acre Graeme Hall watershed.

The plants were even more astonishing, as Mr. Catlyn explained the variety of species to the youth and the

accompanying adults. The sanctuary is one of the last significant mangrove woodlands and is the largest inland body of water on the island.

The group could not help reflecting on the Great God we serve as we observed the lovely and varied species of birds, fish and plants in the well-kept sanctuary. What a creation and Creator!

The youth have expressed a desire to revisit the sanctuary.

Osmonde Douglas

Fourth Christian Leadership Camp Held in Australia

The Christian Leadership Weekend, held June 25 to 27, was attended by 44 eager young adults—the largest attendance yet. The theme of "Allowing God to Prepare Us" was thought-provoking and provided many hours of discussion.

The young adults attended seven seminars, plus the usual services on the Sabbath. The speakers, Bruce Dean, Geoff King, Roy Hickford and Jeanette Dean, covered many points, from goals and financial management, to relationships with others and God and what is required of us as young Christians.

The Sabbath services began with some extremely rousing hymns played by Peter Forster. Martin Kusz was the song leader and gave us the challenge of drowning out Pete's playing. We sang out with all our hearts and what came out was a beautiful and joyful sound, even though we could still hear Pete loud and clear. I don't think any of us wanted it to end and so we sang four more hymns in praise of God throughout the service.

Immanuel Koks, who has cerebral palsy, gave an extremely moving sermonette that was an inspiration to us all. Then Roy Hickford presented the sermon on the prodigal son.



Attendees at the Fourth Christian Leadership Weekend in Australia

In between seminars, the campers talked (and talked), caught up, met new people, discussed the seminars and generally experienced iron sharpening iron. It was the sort of environment and conversation that one wishes you could have all the time. It was great to see the mix of ages and everyone having such positive, warm attitudes.

Karen Vaughan summed up the leadership weekend as being spiritually rejuvenating and motivating, while Sandy Herold said the weekend was an amazing experience and that she couldn't wait till next year.

This fourth Christian Leadership Weekend was a rewarding spiritual experience that strengthened and encouraged us all as we went back to our daily lives. There was an incredible buzz and atmosphere that joined us all in one spirit as we continue on our journeys in Christ.

Hayley Michelson

"Mad" Professor Visits Brisbane Youth Bible Study

On June 12 the southeastern congregations of Queensland, Australia, held their annual Youth District Weekend.

It started off bright and early Saturday morning with a creative and inspiring Bible study conducted by the pastor, Bill Bradford.



Was the "mad professor" who visited the Queensland, Australia, youth Bible study, actually pastor Bill Bradford in disguise?

About 20 young adults were casually sitting around anticipating the start of the Bible study. After an opening prayer we were surprised to hear that our always-early pastor was delayed due to traffic. Talk resumed for only a short time as a surprise came striding through the door . . . Decked out in a stunning black cape (which made him look like Dracula), a black bowler hat and swinging a cane, a "mad" professor stood in front of us and began questioning our reason for being here. He then went on to challenge our belief in God.

Not fooled by his disguise, it was clear to all of us that this

crazy professor was, in fact, Mr. Bradford. Confronted by our strong belief in the truth, the professor soon ran away to be replaced shortly after by a capeless, hatless and caneless Mr. Bradford!

He talked to us about the story of David and how he was able to discover and understand the type of being God truly is, by not only having faith in Him, but also through reasoning and rationale.

At the end of the Bible study we concluded that the reason the mad professor graced us with his presence was to prove that we were there of our own accord and not due to any other influences.

Just like the youth of the Church have made their own decisions to believe in God, David chose by himself to put his trust in God through reasoning, rationalization and faith, therefore destroying Goliath. We too by ourselves have to decide through reasoning the type of being God is, so we can enhance our faith in Him.

David and Jessica Archer

New Congregation Begins in Grande Prairie

A dream came true for eight people in Northern Alberta on June 12, when the United Church of God rented facilities for Sabbath services in the bustling northern community of Grande Prairie, Alberta.

With the members being scattered from Hythe (45 minutes to the west) to Sexsmith (an hour to the north) to McLennan (two hours to the northeast) to Valleyview (an hour to the east), Grande Prairie seemed to be an obvious choice to centralize services. Prior to having facilities in Grande Prairie, worship would take place at members' homes.

Rainer and Claudia Salomaa from Prince George, British Columbia, visited the area on July 17 to conduct open house Sabbath services. This was followed by a luncheon at a local restaurant. There were 13 in attendance.

The group invites anyone who may be through to join them for services!

Douglas Lesh

Greensboro Does Good Works Project

This summer the Greensboro, North Carolina, congregation began a Good Works project to raise money for the Kenya project. It began with a weekly



A sign at the Greensboro, North Carolina, "yard" sale said "all proceeds from this sale will go to purchase medical supplies and water purification equipment for Christians in Kenya"

collection in a "fish bowl" on the information table and ended with a yard sale.

Each week the amount collected was recorded in the congregation's bulletin to show the growth. At first it was hoped we would collect \$500, but as the weeks went by we began to see that \$1,000 might be reachable. With the yard sale, which included generous contributions from the Asheboro, North Carolina, congregation, we ended up collecting

\$1,500 for the Good Works project.

Janice Smith

Dayton Remembers the Often Forgotten

In 1991 a nursing home resident who was a member of the Dayton, Ohio, congregation, made a request of then-pastor Dale Schurter: Would he consider giving Bible studies for him and other interested nursing home residents?

Mr. Schurter agreed, and so began a program that today serves seven nursing homes in the area. There are eight speak-



90-year-old Dayton, Ohio, Church member Lloyd Philbeck speaks at Fairhaven Nursing Home in Sidney, Ohio (photo by Carolyn Paclleb)

ers and several others involved in the program as song leaders, accompanists and soloists.

The Bible studies are tailored somewhat along the lines of a church service. There are two opening hymns, an opening prayer, announcements, special music (when available), the Bible study, a closing hymn and closing prayer. When possible a nursing home resident may give the prayers. It is especially encouraging when his prayer summarizes the points of the preceding study!

But there are some present who, from all outward appearances, seem unable to understand the message being given. Could it be that it is sinking in and they just can't respond? At the very least, their being in the presence of others who care can't hurt. And, seeing their physical disabilities, how can those presenting the program not feel compassion and a deeper desire for God's Kingdom!

As the members have gotten to know the residents, they relate more of what's going on in their lives. Visiting members sometimes hear that the residents' relatives rarely stop by. And because of the regular visits, they've come to look upon the Church members as family. The feeling is mutual.

Of course, without the help of the nursing homes' activities directors, the program would not be nearly as successful. They announce that the study is beginning and bring in those folks who have difficulty making it on their own. There is even one activity director who, on her own, is reading to the residents from Church literature! (Those wanting their own copies are encouraged to request them.)

On occasion, family members and other visitors drop in on the Bible studies, and are always welcome.

Dayton pastor Frank McCrady and nursing home program director Jean Dawson have both spoken positively

about the program. They point out that we are preparing to be teachers in the world tomorrow.

Nicolas Nick

Church Employee Profiled in Trade Magazine

Charles Melear, who serves as Festival and conference planner and relocation coordinator for the United Church of God, was profiled in the August issue of *Religious Conference Manager* magazine. Mr. Melear and the U.S. Festival coordinators are members of the Religious Conference Management Association, which produces the magazine.

The article gave details of the planning for the Feast of Tabernacles, "an eight-day festival of worship and fellowship. The meeting includes 11 U.S. sites, each with an average attendance of 1,000, as well as 40 international sites. Held from late September to early October, the meeting is attended by nearly the entire U.S. membership of the United Church of God," wrote Brenda Delhanty, author of the article.

The article also covered Mr. Melear's conversion from being atheist after hearing Church radio programs and reading its literature, and discussed the fact that he telecommutes from his home in Colorado. The article was titled, "Long-Distance Meeting Planning."

Church Youth Develops Web Site for North Carolina Churches

Recently Nathan Villaescusa of the Raleigh, North Carolina, congregation developed the Web site for the North Carolina churches. Nathan is 17 years old and in his senior year in high school. He worked on the Web site under the oversight of his father, Steve Villaescusa, Webmaster of the site and an elder in the Raleigh congregation.

Nathan fell in love with computers in the seventh grade when he took his first programming class. He later took an introductory class on how to make Web pages, but he says it was very basic and didn't help him very much. He learned his Web page programming skills by taking Web pages, viewing their code and learning what each line did.

He wrote the North Carolina congregations' Web site in Notepad on his computer, the hardest way to do it, but the method giving him the most control. He drew up all the graphics in MSPaint.

The hardest part of the Web site was creating the template. First he drew out what it was to look like; then he wrote the code for it. It was pretty hard, and he got stuck quite a few times because he



Nathan Villaescusa

had difficulty finding any examples of exactly what he wanted to do. The template took around 10 hours to create; then it took about three hours on each of the six congregations on the site. To maintain the site, he spends a few hours each month updating the calendars and events and other changes.

Nathan is to be commended for using his computer skills in developing and maintaining the Web site for the churches in North Carolina.

David Mills

Dells Senior Citizens Treated Royally

This year the Central Illinois congregations decided to make the Feast in Wisconsin Dells extra special for the senior citizens. Here are some of the projects they undertook:

- Senior citizens received small daily gift items. As the seniors signed up for the luncheon, they were given an ink pen printed in gold with "Feast of Tabernacles 2004." They also received an enlarged and laminated Holy Day calendar, bookmark and other useful items of interest. The chocolate rosebuds were a big hit, making the seniors feel special. This was the goal.

- There was great enthusiasm, by young and old, to sign the more than 40 large greeting cards going to those not able to attend the Feast. These cards represented more than 50 people. Each of these people also received a gift bag with the same items received by the seniors at the Dells.

- In addition, there were 42 people writing daily letters to the seniors at home. Some as young as 12 wrote each day about that day's messages and activities. These writers really added a lot to those unable to attend.

- Seniors married more than 50 years and those baptized more than 40 years were pictured in the lobby with their incredible stories of love, faith and dedication to mates and God. It was very exciting to see this information shared with the younger generation.

Chattanooga/Cleveland Sponsors Youth Day 2004

The first annual Cleveland, Tennessee, Youth Day was held on Aug. 28. The day began with congregational hymns led by Jason Mammen and accompanied on the piano by David Bradford. Wesley Johnson provided the opening prayer. Various pieces of special music were performed by local teens. Ericka Bradford and Jacob Butler provided piano solos, Wesley and Asty Johnson performed a piano and harp duet, and the Younger Children's Choir sang under the direction of Michelle Fox and Sherry Haney.

During the sermonette time, a special slide show presentation, "Camp Woodmen 2004" was introduced by Danny

Dance and narrated by Jeff Clowdus and Jacob Mammen.

Bruce Gore, regional pastor and pastor of the Birmingham and Gadsden, Alabama, and Rome, Georgia, congregations, delivered an inspiring sermon titled "Pioneers for the Kingdom" about the Donner party and the difficulties they faced after leaving the known trail to go off on their own.

After a final congregational hymn, Adam Butler provided the closing prayer.

Many of the youth were involved in other aspects of the service. Angel Prince and Tiffany Stinnett were our greeters, and Tim Clowdus and Josh Penney provided ushering duties under the direction of Grady Penney.

Tim Clowdus, Amber and Emily Epperson, Angel Prince, Seth Fox, Benjamin and Emma Bradford, Reno Haney, Jonathan and Esther Johnson and Julia Jackson provided refreshments, assisted by Susan Forehand.

Local pastor Rick Beam was impressed with the willingness on the part of our young people to participate. Special thanks were given to Rick Clowdus for his direction in helping to make the day run so smoothly.

Many in the congregation commented how pleased they were at how the day turned out and were greatly impressed with our area youth.

Debra Doss

"Running With Religion"

Devin Schulz, a senior at Mandan High School in Mandan, North Dakota, was named athlete of the month in September, and was featured in the *Mandan News* weekly paper.



Devin Schulz

The article, by a former teammate, Matt Leingang, was titled, "Running With Religion." It began:

"In a time where moral values are all too commonly compromised for one's desires, Mandan cross-country runner Devin Schulz offers a change of pace . . .

"This season Schulz was considered the number one threat to [the] 2003 state champion . . . But as the weeks pass the coach's polls find Schulz slipping in rank."

After explaining that it wasn't because he was having bad races (Devin took two firsts and a second in the meets he ran), the article continued:

"The truth is that Schulz has never run on a Saturday, due wholly to his religious beliefs."

The article mentioned the United Church of God, "a non-denominational Christian faith that embodies roughly 20,000 people worldwide, and has been around for years."

The article quotes his coach, Leon House, saying, "That's one of life's choices, and we respect that. The team could definitely use him, but his religious convictions are very strong."

Announcements

Births

Michael and Zelda Hanisko of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, are very excited to announce the birth of their very first grandchild, Lauren Julia Kost.



Lauren Julia Kost

Lauren Julia was born to Jon and Janah (Hanisko) Kost on Aug. 26, 2004, weighing 5 pounds 9 ounces. She surprised everyone, arriving weeks ahead of schedule. Mom, dad and baby are doing very well, and the entire family is thrilled.

Craig and Rashele (Rapp) Hoyer of the Phoenix Northwest, Arizona, congregation, proudly announce the arrival of their son, Caleb Scott Hoyer. He was



Caleb Scott Hoyer

born June 4, 2004, weighing 7 pounds 14 ounces and was 20 3/4 inches long. Big sisters Averie and Raegan, grandparents Gerald and Kathy Hoyer and Randal and Kathy Rapp, and great-grandparents Chuck and JoAnn Hayes are also thrilled with the new addition to the family.

Amber Rose Cunningham, daughter of Terry and Tracy Cunningham of Bruce, South Dakota, is happy to introduce baby brother Clay MacCoy Cunningham, 9 pounds, 20 3/4 inches long.



Clay MacCoy Cunningham

Ron and Rhonda (Howe) Smith of Houston, Texas, are delighted to announce the birth of their second child, Ryan Landon Smith, born April 13. He weighed 7 pounds 1 ounce and was 19 inches long.

Big sister Kaitlyn (age 2) loves to give Ryan hugs and kisses. Proud grandparents are Jim and Joy Van Schuyver of Houston and Ron and Brenda Smith of



Ryan Landon Smith

Stockton, California.

Kelly and Aileen Walker of Bend, Oregon, are pleased to announce the birth of their second son, Zachary William Walker, on March 2, 2004. He



Zachary William Walker

weighed 8 pounds 2 ounces and was 20 1/2 inches long. Big brother Kyle (3 years old) can hardly wait for Zach to be old enough to surf for real!

Malcolm and Cassidi (Chapman) Murray of the Flint, Michigan, congregation are happy to announce the birth of their fourth child, Malcolm Earl Murray III. He was born on June 4, 2004, weighing 8 pounds 11 ounces. His siblings, Michael (5), Samantha (3) and Wyatt



Malcolm Earl Murray III with Michael, Samantha and Wyatt

(2), are thrilled with their new little brother. The baby's grandparents, Malcolm and Francie Murray and Chris and Andi Chapman, all attend the Flint congregation as well.

Oluwatomiwale Tioluwalope Emily Oluwaseyi Oluwarinu Eberechukwuka Akinbo was born Aug. 3, 2004, weighing 6 pounds 5 ounces. Her parents are Oludare and Tohungbogbo Akinbo, and



Oluwatomiwale Tioluwalope Emily Oluwaseyi Oluwarinu Eberechukwuka Akinbo

her grandparents are Mrs. F.M. Ibrogba and Mr. and Mrs. E.O. Akinbo.

Rotiwa (3 years 9 months old) is thrilled to have a sister as he had been asking his parents to "buy" a sister for him for quite some time. He was excited all through the pregnancy and enjoyed talking to the baby in Mummy's stomach every evening.

Dennis and Joan (Hoffahrt) Sheets of Madison, Wisconsin, are pleased to announce the arrival of Lauren Vivian Ruth on July 12, 2003. She weighed 7 pounds 14 ounces and was 21 inches long. Happy grandparents are Fran and Kurt Schuster and Dennis and Marva Sheets of Madison and Tom and Irene



Lauren Vivian Ruth Sheets

Hoffahrt of Edina, Minnesota. Big sister Lily is pretty happy too. Now two girls.

Scott and Tammy (Neely) Haapasaaari of Frisco, Texas, joyfully announce the birth of their second child, Michael



Michael David Haapasaaari

David, on Nov. 27, 2003. Michael weighed 8 pounds 14 ounces and was 20 inches long. Big brother Luke, age 2, is very excited to have a new baby brother! The proud grandparents are Rudy and Patricia Neely of Nashville, Tennessee, and Allen and Lori Haapasaaari of Panama City, Florida.

Engagements

Melissa Tuit and Joe Palmer of Monroe, North Carolina, would like to announce their engagement. The prospective groom proposed at sunset on the beach in Panama City Beach, Florida, at the Feast of Tabernacles.



Joe Palmer and Melissa Tuit

Plans are being made for a spring wedding in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area.

Weddings

Elizabeth Proctor and David Frayer were united in marriage on Aug. 7, 2004, by Wayne Dunlap in Trinidad, California. They were surrounded by family



David and Elizabeth Frayer

and friends to enjoy the sunshine on the beach for a footwear optional ceremony. Best man was the groom's brother Dan Frayer and maid of honor was Clarajane Reynolds. The couple resides in McKinleyville, California, and attends the Eureka congregation.

Anniversaries

On July 31, 2004, the brethren of the Lubbock, Texas, congregation took the opportunity to thank their pastor, Tom Damour, and his wife, Lisa, and local elder, Ward Shamblyn, and his wife, Carolyn, for their ser-



Tom and Lisa Damour

vice and godly example, by honoring them with an anniversary reception.

On Aug. 3 the Shamblyns celebrated their 42nd wedding anniversary and the Damours celebrated 25 years of marriage on Aug. 5.

Two tables were beautifully set by the ladies with snacks and anniversary cakes decorated by deaconess Bar-



Carolyn and Ward Shamblyn

bara Abbott. Each couple was also presented with a gift.

Obituaries

Gertrude Renner, 96, of Harrison, Idaho, died Sept. 4, 2004. She was a long-time member of God's Church, having attended in both Spokane, Washington, and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Mrs. Renner was born Sept. 14, 1907, in Corsica, South Dakota. She moved to Idaho in 1938 with her husband, Floyd, and remained there until her death. Life in rural Idaho was primitive in the early years. Gertrude and Floyd had no electricity until 1947, no tractor until the early 1960s, and no hot and cold running water until they were in their 60s. Nevertheless they raised seven children there and logged and farmed the land. One year Gertrude canned 700 quarts!

Gertrude was preceded in death by her husband. She is survived by her children, most of whom still live in Idaho, and numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

A graveside service was held Sept. 8 in Coeur d'Alene with Mark Mickelson officiating.

Ethel Kopp, believed to be one of the Church of God's oldest members, died

Tribute: Garry Barber

Garry spent his early years in the fishing village of St. Helens on the East Coast of Tasmania. He was the eldest of a large family involved in the fishing industry in the area.

In his early 20s he moved to Hobart, and Southern Tasmania became his home for the rest of his life. He found his permanent employment niche in the furniture trade, spending many years as a furniture buyer for some of the larger retailers in the area.

Garry first became involved and committed to the Church of God in the late 1960s. Through shared beliefs he met his wife, Elizabeth, whom he married in 1970. Garry and Elizabeth had two sons, Simon, who lives in Germany, and Richard, who lives in Japan.

Garry's service to the members of the Church included time as a deacon, and later as an elder. He was greatly respected for his strength of conviction, and his kindness toward those with whom he came in contact.

Following retirement from his employment, Garry and Elizabeth moved into a rural community about 25 miles from Hobart. They sought to serve the local community, and were readily accepted by them.

Although he had always been a very fit and energetic man, about 14 months ago Garry's health started to fail. Starting slowly, it accelerated from the beginning of this year. His weight fell dramatically, and other weakening symptoms appeared,



Garry Barber

gradually but inexorably curtailing all the activities he had once enjoyed. His health problem proved difficult to pinpoint until only days before his death, when hospital tests revealed that he was suffering from motor neurone disease.

Garry's acceptance of the diagnosis was calm and stoical, and his faith in His God and Creator remained strong and unwavering. He was not afraid of dying, but only of how Elizabeth would cope as a widow. This was typical of Garry's outgoing concern, his unselfishness and his gentlemanly and caring character.

From the time of diagnosis his condition deteriorated rapidly, and he died peacefully in his sleep.

To the end he remained a faithful servant of God and Jesus Christ and the members of the Church of God, and he will be sorely missed as a fine man, a friend and a dedicated elder.

Barry Williams

pectedly Sept. 14, 2004, after a short illness. He was born March 26, 1939, in Menard, Texas. He graduated from Menard High School and attended Texas Tech College in Lubbock, Texas. He served for six years in the Texas Army National Guard.

Conway married Lenna Nixon from Mason, Texas, on May 6, 1967. They had three children, Jesse Conway III (Jesse), Owen Nixon (Nick) and Lareina Len. Jesse and his wife, Jeana, along with their four children, Rebecca, Jesse IV, Jacquelin and Jacob, reside in Union, Kentucky. Nick, Sarah and Isabella live in Austin, Texas, and Lareina lives in Cupertino, California, with her husband, Gary Stainthorp, their daughter, Kayla, and Gary's daughter, Amber.

Conway and Lenna were introduced to the Church in 1974 by a business acquaintance and friend who gave them literature to read about the Sabbath, clean and unclean foods, etc. They were baptized together July 5, 1975, three weeks after the birth of their daughter. In April 1985, Conway was ordained a deacon.

Conway's love for people showed through in his whole life. He was always happy to coach the youth in Bible Bowl and many sports, as well as chaperone youth activities, host Ambassador College students or try to help anyone in any way he could. He never considered any undertaking as being too hard or impossible to do. He and his family were privileged to take part in the Ambassadors on Wheels bicycle tour of the South Island of New Zealand in 1985-86.



J. Conway Slaughter Jr.

On Sept. 19 a memorial service was held at the UCG home office in Cincinnati, Ohio. Speakers were Ed Smith, Cary Slaughter and Richard Pinelli, who delivered the sermon.

A second memorial was held in San Antonio, Texas, on Sept. 26 at the Baruch Ha Shem Masonic Congregation Hall. Speakers were Charles Jordan, Nick Slaughter and the sermon was given by Gary Petty.

Leonard H. "Whitey" Burton, 82, passed away Sept. 6, 2004, at his home in Midwest City, Oklahoma. He was born Aug. 14, 1922, in Richmond, Virginia, and raised in the Masonic Children's Home for 14 years before entering the military service. He served in the Army during World War II and in the Air Force during the Korean War. Leonard received

his degree from Oklahoma City University.

He was a loyal member of the United Church of God. He worked for Mobil Oil Co. for 16 years and then went to work as an agent for State Farm Insurance Co. for 22 years. He loved sports and people, and he never met a stranger. He had many friends and will be greatly missed.

Leonard was predeceased by his parents, Leonard H. and Susie Burton. He is survived by his wife, Janice, of 43 years. Funeral services were held on Sept. 9 with Mark Welch officiating.

Alex Lewis Kelenske, 89, died July 22, 2004, in his sleep. Alex suffered



Alex Lewis Kelenske

from dementia/Alzheimer's for the last three years of his life. While he did not recognize family or friends, he was cheerful and happy, always smiling.

Alex was baptized in 1971 in Detroit, Michigan. He is survived by seven children, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

John Fletcher Land, 89, of Fort Worth, Texas, died Sept. 19, 2004. John worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 33 years. Baptized in the early 1970s, John deeply loved his Church family. Even after a series of heart attacks beginning eight years ago, the loss of his beloved wife of 63 years and a fall that broke his neck a little over a year ago, John would insist on attending services if it was at all possible. His faith, determination and dedication were always an inspiration. He is survived by three sons and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

On Sept. 17, 2004, a large number of family and friends gathered for a memorial service at the Penticton Lakeside Resort to pay tribute to Eugene Desmond Burke who passed away peacefully at home in the company of his family on Sept. 12. The service was conducted by Rainer Salomaa, pastor of the Prince George, Kelowna and Penticton, British Columbia, congregations.

Desmond Burke was born in Wapole, Saskatchewan, on Nov. 2, 1929, and was the eldest son in a family of 13 children. He was predeceased by his parents and one sister.

After growing up on the Prairies, he left the farm and moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1950 and continued his education to become a teacher. He taught in the Kelowna,

Williams Lake and Summerland High Schools before going into the machine shop business with his brother Ed Burke in Penticton.

While he was growing up, his parents determined to educate their family in regular Bible reading, a practice that Desmond continued to do all his life. Although they did not have a religious heritage, and almost no church affiliation, Bible instruction was a faithful practice. Desmond often said he was thankful for that teaching because it spared him many wrong choices in life.

In 1965 he began to listen to the *World Tomorrow* program and realized that the Bible revealed more knowledge than his family had been able to understand reading at home on their own. The result saw both his parents as well as nine members of his family eventually involved with the Worldwide Church of God.

Desmond Burke was ordained into the ministry by Richard Pinelli in 1978, and was later employed by the Church of God International for 17 years. He became affiliated with the United Church of God in 1995.

He enjoyed life to the full with his children and grandchildren. Traveling through the years took him to many enjoyable and interesting places. Desmond was also blessed with a wonderful natural talent for music, and in his retirement years he volunteered many hours of musical entertainment at senior centers.

Love of his home workshop provided him with a great deal of happiness and enjoyment even to the last few weeks of his life, but the most important and valuable part of life for Desmond was a love for God, His Word and the glorious hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God!

Desmond and his wife, Jean, were married almost 47 years. They had three children and seven grandchild-



Desmond Burke

ren. Surviving family members include his devoted wife, Jean; daughter, Glennis (husband Mike) Park of Calgary, Alberta; sons, Graham (wife Kim) of Kaleden, British Columbia, and Brian (wife Trish) of Summerland, British Columbia; and grandchildren Amy, Stacey, Matthew, Allison, Laura, Teagan and Natasha.

Jean and family would like to express their deepest appreciation for all the kind expressions of sympathy received. The response was truly overwhelming and a great source of encouragement.

Aug. 28, 2004, in a Seattle-area nursing home, three days short of her 106th birthday.

Mrs. Kopp, born in Locust Grove, New York, was baptized in 1955. "She was a dedicated and faithful member of God's Church," said Dennis Luker, pastor of the Seattle-Bellevue, Washington, congregation, who first met Mrs. Kopp in 1980. "She was a tremendous example to everyone around her."

More than 100 people, including caretakers from her nursing home, attended a Sept. 11 memorial service for Mrs. Kopp, conducted after Sabbath services in Bellevue. "It was obvious she was loved and appreciated by many people in and outside of the congregation," Mr. Luker said.

An avid reader and diligent student of the Bible, Mrs. Kopp lost her eyesight and her ability to walk in her later years, factors that longtime friend Merle McIntyre said did not diminish her love for God.

"Ethel said she had never been as close to God as in her bedridden years," said Mrs. McIntyre, a member in the Seattle congregation.

"While laying in bed, she spent a lot of her waking hours praying. When she was struggling with the frustrations of being an invalid, she could be heard praying quietly, asking for God's help and praying for others."

Mrs. Kopp's faithfulness did not go unnoticed by the nursing home's personnel. "The staff often remarked how caring for Ethel was easy, how she was a joy to have in the house," Mrs. McIntyre said. "What stood out the most was the fact she never complained.

"Her caretaker once said, 'God hasn't taken Ethel yet because He enjoys her so much. Besides, He knows I have more to learn from her.'"

The fourth child in a family of five sisters and five brothers, Mrs. Kopp discovered the Church through Herbert W. Armstrong's radio broadcasts in the 1950s. She attended her first Feast of Tabernacles in Big Sandy, Texas, in 1955. Twice married before coming into the Church, she had no children and worked in an accounting office until she retired in 1964.

"She loved to talk about God, His promises and His plan for mankind," said another close Church friend, Nancy Corbett. "She loved to encourage others, comfort others and teach others. With all her heart she wanted to be useful to God.

"She taught me about faith and courage, about holding fast and being strong in the Lord," Mrs. Corbett said. "Mrs. Kopp was a part of my life for 42 years. What a blessing!"

J. Conway Slaughter Jr. died unex-

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

UCG congregation in Victoria, British Columbia, an individual in his 40s, recently had a very serious bicycle accident. Thrown from the bike, Greg lay on the ground for over two hours before help arrived. When it did arrive, it was obvious that he was badly injured.

Airlifted by helicopter to Vancouver General Hospital, Greg was immediately transferred to the intensive care unit of the hospital's spinal cord section. Once he regained consciousness, he learned that he was paralyzed from the neck down, with no feeling or movement in his hands and feet. The prognosis: Greg would be hospitalized for at least six months, during which time he would have to undergo rigorous rehabilitation, but he would likely be in a wheelchair the rest of his life.

Greg was anointed and prayers requested from UCG brethren around the world, and now the only way to describe his progress is "miraculous." After only weeks in the spinal cord unit, he is once again able to walk. Doctors are absolutely amazed. In less than six weeks he was not only walking, but allowed to leave the hospital to attend Sabbath services in Vancouver. He left the rehab center at the end of October, returning to his home on Vancouver Island.

Having Greg at Sabbath services on Oct. 23 was very emotional considering the initial seriousness of his accident. He has expressed how very grateful he is for all of the cards and letters received from UCG brethren around the world.

"I am very thankful for the care and support of the doctors and hospital staff, but even more grateful to God's people for all their prayers. It certainly shows me that prayer is a very powerful tool. A special thank you to all of my brethren all over the world. The cards of support and all the prayers are the real reason I can walk again. I am so thankful to God for all His love and mercy."

There is no doubt in our minds that Greg Harrigan's healing was a miracle from God.

David Palmer



What's New on the Web?

On www.ucg.org

■ Compass Check

See video of home office weekly meeting.
www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/compasscheck.htm

■ UCG Commentary on This Week's News

Weekly commentaries by UCG written on world news and trends, from a biblical perspective. Read these and more:
"Politics and Character"
"The Unelectable Candidate With an Unpopular Platform"
"Feast of Tabernacles: A Harvest Festival for God's People"
www.ucg.org/commentary/

■ Current World News & Trends

Browse up-to-date world news events by subject categories!

www.ucg.org/worldnews/

■ E-mail Updates and UCG eNews

Receive e-mail updates relevant to UCG members and weekly HTML newsletters with ucg.org updates. Sign up today!

www.ucg.org/contact/updates.htm

On vcmagazine.org

■ The November *Virtual Christian Magazine* includes "Can Science Give Us Eternal Life?," "What Should I Do When Others Sin?," more.
vcmagazine.org

On verticalthought.org

■ The October-December issue features: "Is the Spirit World Real?," "The Battle for Your Mind," "You Don't Keep Christmas?" Experiences" and much more.

verticalthought.org

Featured Links of the Month

■ **Good News/Tomorrow TV station listings.**

www.ucg.org/multimedia/gntv.htm

■ **Good Works Program.**

www.ucg.org/goodworks

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



ABC Accepting Applications

As of Oct. 18, 30 students had been accepted for Ambassador Bible Center for the 2005 year. Several more were awaiting the Admissions Committee and a few more, who said they were planning to attend this year, have not yet sent their applications to ABC. We are expecting around 35 to 40 students when ABC begins in January.

We would recommend that any students who are planning to attend in 2005 submit their applications as soon as possible. The deadline for applications is Dec. 20. Applications can be found on the Web at www.ucg.org/abc.

Gary Antion

Sacramento Hosts Mini-Sampler

An ABC Mini-Sampler will be presented in Sacramento, California, the weekend of Nov. 13 and 14. Presenters will be UCGIA president Roy Holladay and ABC instructor Ralph Levy.

Those interested should contact Clyde Kilough, pastor of the Sacramen-

to congregation, for details. You may contact Mr. Kilough at clyde_kilough@ucg.org or (916) 725-7957.

Ralph Levy

Canada Breaks Mail Record

For the first time in its 10-year history, UCG-Canada has surpassed 10,000 pieces of mail received. Through Oct. 14, the Canadian office received 10,412 pieces of mail. Requests made through the Church's Web sites made up 23 percent, up from 15.7 percent last year.

New Good Works Projects Posted

As previous projects have been completed, several new projects to help brethren in Africa and Asia have been added to the Good Works Web site.

As highlighted in the Festival video, unemployment and underemployment are major challenges in the Philippines. A project was announced to provide \$8,000 (\$2,000 for each pastoral region) to help members further develop their job skills or start their own businesses.

There are also projects to help provide

meeting halls in African countries where suitable rental halls are not available or government recognition requires churches to have their own building. These projects include Cameroon, \$14,000 for two congregations; Kenya, \$14,000 for a meeting hall/office; Rwanda, \$6,000; and Togo, \$4,000 for construction (they have already purchased the land).

For more details on these programs, see www.ucg.org/goodworks.

BSC Graduates Surveyed

Bible Study Course graduates who are receiving audiotapes from the Church were surveyed in July about their preference between receiving tapes or CDs.

Overall, the listeners were fairly evenly split on their preferences, with 49 percent preferring audiocassette and 43.3 percent preferring CD. The rest wrote in that they are happy with either. One commented, "Send whatever is more cost effective for you."

Most of the respondents were over 45, but of those under age 46, 71 percent preferred CDs. The survey was conducted by the Eau Claire and St. Paul, Minnesota, congregations, which handle the mailing of the tapes to *Bible Study Course* graduates.

Camp Dates Set

The United Youth Camp dates for next year are:

- June 20-30, 2005, Pinecrest, Missouri.
- June 26-July 3, Hye Sierra, California.
- July 3-10, Woodman, Alabama.
- July 4-14, Teton Challenger, Wyoming.
- July 24-31, Carter, Texas.
- Aug. 7-14, Davidson, Oregon (wilderness session through Aug. 18).
- Aug. 14-21, Heritage, Pennsylvania.

Web Visits Top Quarter of a Million

In September ucg.org broke the 250,000 mark for the number of visitors who browsed the Web site. Over 278,000 visitors accessed the site, topping the previous record of 246,000 in April. We have seen an increase in visitors who are responding positively to our online ads through Overture.com offering various booklets. We estimate that for the month of October our visitor numbers will remain strong.

Aaron Booth

Winter Camp Application Deadline Extended

Do you want to experience the fantastic personal growth, friendship and fun of a United Youth Camp during your winter break? The 10th annual Winter Camp will be held from Wednesday, Dec. 22 to Sunday, Dec. 26. Planned activities include basketball, Christian Living, cross-country skiing, dance class, floor hockey, team challenge, tobogganing and more. There will be plenty of enjoyable group activities in the evenings as well.

The camp application deadline has been extended to Dec. 1. Youth ages 12 to 18 are welcome as campers. Camper tuition is \$185 and high school staff is \$95.

Free transportation will be provided from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, airport on Dec. 22 (after 2 p.m. and before 10 p.m.) and back to

the airport on Dec. 26, arriving at the airport at noon. Please plan arrivals and departures accordingly. There is an extra charge for room and meals for early arrivals. Please contact Director Steve Nutzman for any transportation needs at (608) 758-9228 or e-mail him at steve_nutzman@ucg.org.

Campers can download applications at www.ucg.org/youthcamps. Camper applications are also found in the *United Youth Camps 2004 Magazine*. For the latest Winter Camp news, visit www.wintercamp.org.

Camper check-in is Wednesday morning, Dec. 22, and checkout is Sunday morning, Dec. 26. Staff orientation begins late afternoon on Dec. 21.

Steve Nutzman



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