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United News™

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

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May 2007

News At a Glance

34,650 Responses Received So Far From Magazine Ads

The first month or so of our most recent space advertising campaign is bringing in thousands of requests for two booklets and a *Good News* magazine subscription. The two booklets being offered are *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* in the April Reader's Digest and *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* in the April *American Baby* and *May Parents* magazines.

Here are the totals as of May 1, with many more arriving every day:

Reader's Digest 25,059
American Baby 7,975
Parents 1,616
TOTAL 34,650

Please pray for the continued success of this campaign.

Peter Eddington

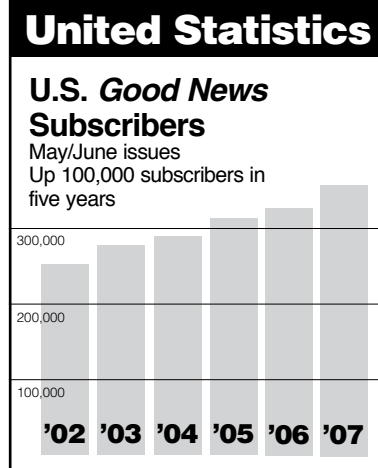
New Florida Region and 10 Transfers Announced

Ministerial Services announced a new regional pastor and a new region in the U.S. field ministry. Jim Haeffele will become the regional pastor for a new Florida region. Bruce Gore will continue as the regional pastor for the Southeast (without Florida).

A total of 10 ministerial moves were announced for this summer, along with eight circuit changes. Most of the circuit changes are to reduce the load for some pastors who currently serve three congregations. The transfers are:

Jim and Lois Haeffele are moving to serve the Miami and Fort Myers, Florida, congregations and serve as the

See "News at a Glance," page 2



GCE Annual Meeting Begins United's 13th Year

Chairman Bob Dick called the General Conference of Elders Annual Meeting to order at 9 a.m. on May 6. He called on Arnold Hampton, pastor of the Columbia and Cumberland, Maryland, and several Caribbean congregations, to open with prayer.

The theme of this year's conference is "Build the House."

Introduction of New Elders

Mr. Dick introduced the 16 new elders ordained or credentialed in the last year: Nelson Arnold, Kim Boykin, Paul Carter, Shawn Cortelyou, Gregory Czech, Randy Duke, Gordon Hannaway, Edward Johnson, Donald Mathie, Scott Moss, Laurie Nyhus, David Payne, John Perry, Elifazi Salawila, Donald Turgeon and Art Verschoor.

Balloting and Results

Mr. Dick then conducted the balloting for the four members of the Council of Elders and the ratification of the Strategic Plan, Operation Plan, budget, nomination and election process and the home office relocation proposal.

At the end of the day Secretary David Johnson presented the results compiled by the auditing firm of Clark, Schaefer, Hackett & Co. to Mr. Dick, who announced that:

- The Strategic Plan was ratified with 318 yes votes.
- The Operation Plan was ratified with 307 yes votes.



International reception May 3 was the first event (photos by Janet Treadway)

- The budget was ratified with 281 yes votes.
- The proposal to relocate the home

office to the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, metroplex area was ratified with 202 yes votes to 195 no votes.



Frank Jarvis and Bill Bradford at international reception

- The revised nomination and election process (requiring potential Council nominees to indicate that they are willing and able to serve on the Council) was approved with 321 yes votes. (The previous process allowed elders to indicate if they were unwilling to serve, but did not require a response to be considered for nomination.)

The Council members chosen were Roy Holladay, Clyde Kilough, Victor Kubik and Robert Berendt (international).

Keynote Address

After the balloting in the morning, Mr. Dick introduced President Clyde Kilough for the keynote address. Mr. Kilough said he struggled with narrowing down the topic of "Build the House" for the keynote. He decided to make it a "question-and-answer" session, except with him asking three questions for the audience to think about.

1. What have we built so far, and how will it stand up to inspection?

Mr. Kilough quoted from 1 Corinthians

See "GCE," page 9

Women's Education Task Force Formed

by Dee Kilough

The Women's Education Task Force (WETF), under the direction of the Education Task Force and Ministerial Services, held its first meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, from April 21 to 23.

The mission of this task force is to encourage women's education and strengthen women's understanding of and commitment to their biblical roles. Future tasks of the WETF include identifying and assessing current UCG women's educational initiatives, programs and resources, and surveying the women to determine their educational wants and needs.

Members of the WETF are Gloria Carey, Colene Erickson, DeLee Hargrove, Dee Kilough (chairwoman), Ina McLemore, Karen Meeker, Marjolaine Meeker, Pam Myers, Erin Roscoe, Barbara Sackett, Kay

See "Women's Education," page 6

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Two New Council Members Chosen, Two Reselected

The General Conference of Elders selected two new members for the UCGIA Council of Elders and returned two men to the Council May 6. Their three-year Council term begins with the new fiscal year on July 1.

Robert Berendt was selected for the international position. He is pastor of the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation and serves three other congregations as well. He has been on the UCG-Canada National Council since its inception. He also served in Europe from 1987 to 1992.



Robert Berendt



Roy Holladay

on the Transitional Board and the Council of Elders from 1995 to 2002. He served as chairman of the Council from 2000 to 2002, when he was selected

Mr. Berendt taught high school science for four years before attending Ambassador College. He has pastored churches since 1971.

Roy Holladay was previously



Clyde Kilough



Vic Kubik

as president. He served in that position until 2005, and is now pastor of the Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Rome, Georgia, congregations.

Reselected to the Council were Clyde Kilough, president of UCGIA since 2005, and Vic Kubik, pastor of the Lafayette and Terre Haute, Indiana, congregations. Mr. Kubik also serves as senior pastor for Eastern Europe and Scandinavia.

Completing their Council terms June 30 will be Les McCullough, who has served on the Council since 1997, and Leon Walker, who has served on the Council since 1996. UN

GCE Approves Move of Office to Dallas Area

May 6 the General Conference of Elders approved "relocating the home office of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, to the greater Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, Metroplex area." The move, planned for 2010, was proposed by the administration to prepare for growth in the Church by investing in the facilities needed for training future laborers and for expanding the work of the Church at a lower cost than expanding in the Cincinnati area.

Phase One Plans

The plans for the first phase, to be completed in 2010, include an administration building, a warehouse, a training center and housing for 48 single students and for 16 married couples.

The 20,000-square-foot administration building would have 35 offices (basically double the number of corresponding current offices), three open office areas (including one for Mail Processing and one for Information

Technology), a conference center and meeting rooms, TV and media studios, a radio studio and production area, an employee break room and an atrium lobby.

The proposed 9,000-square-foot warehouse building would include the mail room as well as warehouse storage space.

The 20,000-square-foot training cen-

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News At a Glance

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new regional pastor for Florida.

Ron and Nancy Kelley will replace the Haeffles in Greensboro, Hickory and Asheville, North Carolina.

Jon and Debbie Pinelli will be moving to serve the Salt Lake City, Utah, and Grand Junction, Colorado, area (replacing Larry and Judy Salyer who are moving to the home office to serve as Media and Communications Services operation manager).

David and Denise Dobson are transferring to the new Huntsville, Alabama, and Murfreesboro, Tennessee, circuit.

Eric and Jeannie Evans will replace the Dobsons in Kingsport and Knoxville, Tennessee, and London, Kentucky.

Paul and Tracy Carter are moving to serve the new Bakersfield, Fresno and Stockton, California, circuit.

Roy and Pauline Demarest will move from the Miami and West Palm Beach area to the Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida, area.

Bill and Cheryl Jahns will move from South Africa to serve the Columbia and Cumberland, Maryland, and Lewistown, Pennsylvania, area.

Arnold and Ann Hampton will transfer from the Columbia and Cumberland area to serve West Palm Beach, Florida, and the Caribbean.

Earl and Carol Roemer will transfer from Idaho to Alaska to serve the Anchorage and Soldotna congregations as associate pastor. Dennis Luker will continue as the pastor in addition to his other duties.

Pastors with new church circuits are: Roy and Norma Holladay, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Rome, Georgia.

Fred and Lucretia Kellers, Nashville, Tennessee, and Bowling Green, Kentucky (also senior pastor for Nigeria).

Bruce and Phyllis Gore, Atlanta and Jefferson, Georgia (regional pastor for Southeast region).

Bill and Carolyn Winner, Birmingham and Gadsden, Alabama.

Larry and Bonnie Greider, Los Angeles, California (regional pastor for Southwest region).

Richard Thompson, Ocala and Tallahassee, Florida.

Dale and Mona Schurter, return to retirement.

Jim and Joan Tuck, Oakland and San Jose, California.

Jim Franks

Pastors in Ghana Given More Training

Melvin Rhodes (senior pastor for Ghana), Jim Franks (Ministerial Services operation manager) and Tom Kirkpatrick (Church treasurer) conducted classes for the pastors in Ghana April 16 to 25. "It is virtually impossible to obtain visas for them to travel to the United States, so we have brought the training to them," said Mr. Franks. "At the end of the classes we

See "News at a Glance," page 23

Council Member Profile: Robert Dick

Robert Dick was born in 1943 in Caldwell, Idaho. His grandfather was the first to listen to *The World Tomorrow* in the early '50s and encouraged Mr. Dick's father to listen also.

In 1957, his father, Raymond, applied and was accepted to Ambassador College in Pasadena. He took his family with him and Bob attended Imperial High School for four years. Following high school he enrolled in Ambassador College, transferring to Bricket Wood, England, after his sophomore year.

The opportunity to visit in the homes of many members from central London to the English Channel and to preach in all the congregations of the Radio Church of God

in England was a highlight of those two years.

Mr. Dick began corresponding during his junior year with Dyanne Moore, who was attending Ambassador in Pasadena. They were married following the Feast of Tabernacles in 1965.

After four months of ministerial training in South Bend, Indiana, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Dicks moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where Mr. Dick served as associate pastor for six months. His first full pastorate was in Mobile, Alabama, where both of their sons, Philip and Timothy, were born. Shortly after arriving he started the church in Geneva, Alabama.

Mr. Dick has since pastored Bir-

mingham and Montgomery, Alabama; Columbus, Ohio; Elkhart, Plymouth and Michigan City, Indiana; Seattle, Bremerton, Everett and Federal Way, Washington; and Portland and Hood River, Oregon.

Mr. Dick has served in YOU administration as a district coordinator, and as regional coordinator for the Northeast, Great Lakes and Northwest. He has also served as a senior pastor in Columbus, Ohio, and as regional pastor for the Northwest.

One of the Dicks' greater ministerial pleasures was serving as a traveling speaker at the Feast of Tabernacles, providing an opportunity to meet and spend time with God's people in Europe, Africa, Canada,



Robert and Dyanne Dick

the Philippines and across the United States.

Mr. Dick has served on the Council of Elders for the last 12 years and currently serves as chairman. **UN**

FORWARD! Don't Listen to the 10 Spies!

by Mike Bennett



After the plagues on Egypt, after the parting of the Red Sea, after the thunder and lightning on Mt. Sinai, Israel moved on and was within striking distance of the Promised Land. During this critical time there was an incident that holds great lessons for us today. It's a story of espionage and betrayal, of courage and cowardice, of faith and fear.

Moses chose 12 leaders, one from each tribe, to scout out the land they were all so eager to reach. He told them where to go and what kinds of information to gather. For 40 days they spied out the land, and found it was all God had promised as a land flowing with milk and honey. All 12 spies also took note of the military strength of the people in the land, and 10 of them took special note of the giants in the area just north of the Israelites' camp.

Apparently as the 12 headed back to camp, they didn't practice their presentation. Maybe 10 of the scouts had already decided that Joshua and Caleb were foolhardy and not realistic about the dangers. Perhaps they spent time on the trip back discussing the situation among themselves,

but somehow not letting Joshua and Caleb in on their plans. Or maybe they just walked back in silence—the typical "strong, silent types."

Fearful and Faithless

Whatever happened, the report ended up a surprise. Yes, there were beautiful large grapes and an abundant fertile land.

But the 10 spies suddenly announced, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." These 10 spies not only laid out the military strength of the Canaanites, but painted vivid word pictures of incredible giants who made them seem like mere grasshoppers in comparison. These fearful and faithless spies scared the people and sapped their strength and courage. They played on their fears and provoked panic.

Courageous Caleb

Into this scene strode courageous Caleb, one of the two faithful spies. When he finally quieted the crowd, he proclaimed a powerful statement that should have turned things around. "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30).

Caleb remembered what God had done for them in defeating the mighty nation of Egypt through plagues and at the Red Sea. Israel hadn't had to fight the Egyptians—

God did it for them. And God was much more powerful than the Canaanites and even the giant sons of Anak. All Israel had to do was go forward!

Israel did not listen, but fell prey to the fears and disbelief that have always troubled mankind. When the going got tough, the Israelites got ready to go back to Egypt.

Today, as we come out of sin, there are still voices of fear and faithlessness telling us: It's too hard! You can't overcome that—it's a deeply engrained giant of a sin. Give up, go back—resistance is futile! But God keeps telling us we are well able to overcome it.

He tells us that through Paul: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

He tells us through John at the end of the book. It's interesting that Revelation 21:8 lists those who won't be in God's Kingdom, including the types of people represented by the 10 spies: the fearful and faithless. But Revelation 21:7 tells about those who don't listen to the negative voices, but instead listen to the voice of Caleb and use God's help to overcome. "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

So let's all encourage each other to go forward, to never give up, to use the spiritual weapons and armor to pull down the strongholds and become more than conquerors. We, with God's help, are well able to overcome! **UN**

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News From **Around the World**

Leadership Training Held in Francophone Africa

From Feb. 2 to 5, 11 men participated in a conference on leadership and service in the United Church of God, presented by French regional coordinator Joel Meeker. The meetings were held in Cotonou, Benin, on the west coast of Africa.

Jean-Marie Mundeli and Jean-Baptiste Sibobugingo came from Rwanda. Kossi Fiaboé and Pierre Kloutsé came from Togo. Paul and Félix Tia came from Côte d'Ivoire. Moïse Mabout, Emmanuel Andang and Jean-Philippe Bikoé came from Cameroon. Michel and Bonaventure Ogoudélé from Benin rounded out the group.

Mr. Meeker gave Bible studies and presentations on the importance of the work of God, how to work together at a distance, differences between the United Church of God and other churches and the

fundamental doctrines of the Church. Participants had many occasions to ask questions and did so, leading to instructive and enjoyable discussion.

On the Sabbath each participant at the conference introduced himself and gave an update to the congregation of the work of the Church in his area. Mr. Meeker gave a sermon about the leadership qualities of Nehemiah. A delightful Sabbath lunch was then served by the ladies of the congregation, organized by Mrs. Ogoudélé.

All the men present said they deeply appreciated this training opportunity and expressed their hope that more such conferences can be organized in the future.

For more about the pastoral trip, see page 4.

Joel Meeker



Leadership training seminars in Benin (left to right from the front): Emmanuel Andang, Félix Tia, Paul Tia, Michel Ogoudélé; Kossi Fiaboé, Jean-Baptiste Sibobugingo, Jean-Philippe Bikoé; Moïse Mabout, Jean-Marie Mundeli, Pierre Kloutsé and Bonaventure Ogoudélé.

Mindanao Pastor Speaks to College Students

by Daniel Roy Macaraeg

Through a series of seemingly coincidental events, God recently opened a door by which His truth can reach a potentially large young audience in Mati, Davao Oriental in the Philippines. Edmond D. Macaraeg, pastor of the UCG Mindanao congregations, was recently invited by the president of Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCT) to deliver a series of lectures to help and guide the students.

Jonathan Bayogan, the college president, is personally acquainted with Mr. Macaraeg as he was a member of our former association attending Mr. Macaraeg's congregation in the early 1980s.

It was recommended by the Office of Student Affairs together with the Guid-

ance and Counseling staff that the first lecture would be held on Feb. 14 on the topic of love, due to the many challenges and problems faced by the students on this issue.

The lecture began at 10:30 a.m. in the college audiovisual room. Mrs. Macaraeg and some Church members from Davao and Mati were present as well. Close to 100 students and faculty attended this first lecture.

Rose Visaya, the college guidance counselor, coordinated the event and also gave the formal introduction. Dr. Bayogan, who was scheduled to have a meeting that morning, went out of his way to also personally introduce Mr. Macaraeg before his PowerPoint presentation titled "Let's Talk About Love."

Mr. Macaraeg began by comparing love to wind, water, fire and electricity.

He asserted that love (as well as sex) is a power that needs to be respected and controlled. Like all the forces of nature, love is governed by laws in the same way as physical things are governed by physical and inexorable laws such as the law of gravity. He then gave some biblical laws and principles governing the power of love and sex.

After answering some questions, Mr. Macaraeg offered the students and faculty a free subscription to *Vertical Thought* magazine, with each attendee receiving a free sample copy as well.

This first lecture in Mati was a success, and we hope and pray that, God willing, this will just be the beginning of more lectures to come. **UN**

This article previously appeared in the January/February 2007 issue of United News Asia (www.ucg.org.ph/una).

Canadian National Conference Holds Annual Meeting

Fifteen members of the Canadian National Conference, along with the secretary, treasurer and legal adviser for the Church, participated in a teleconference on March 4.

In his address, the director of operations, Anthony Wasilkoff, focused on the value of a sense of urgency. He referred to the mountain climbers stranded on Mt. Hood and a young woman lost at sea. He showed from 1 Corinthians 9 how Paul felt urgent about preaching the gospel. When Christ healed the blind man, He said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4). We are involved in a matter of spiritual life and death. We have a window of opportunity open to us now. We have excellent publications by which we can cast a spiritual lifeline to others. We must toil with a keen sense of urgency.

In the stead of David Palmer, Dennis Horlick gave an update on behalf of the Media Team. He gave statistics relating to recent Internet ads and an update on

the *Beyond Today* television program.

Robert Berendt, on behalf of the Ministerial Services Team, reported that leadership development continues across Canada. Currently, two elders (Dennis Horlick and David Palmer) are participating in a six-week training program for newly hired ministers. In February, Canadian Feast coordinators attended Festival planning meetings in Dallas, Texas.

Treasurer Edwin van Pelt discussed finances past, present and future. We have once again received a clean bill of financial health via the annual audit. For the first time ever, UCG-Canada is not applying for a subsidy from UCGIA. Our work is a work of faith, and we do have much to be thankful for.

During his address, the chairman, Rainer Salomaa, discussed the various stages of boards. In stage 1, the administration is barely selected and the board handles many administrative matters. In stage 2, the board works with a small staff. During that stage, the board is

pretty controlling and has to struggle at not micromanaging. Now in stage 3, the board has many crucial policies created. The staff is now capable and experienced. The board can focus more on governing, policy development and strategic planning. The chairman closed by reading sections of 2 Corinthians 4.

The secretary reported the ballot results. The 2006 Minutes, Auditor's Report, Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and budget for 2007-2008 were all approved. All four proposed amendments were ratified and are now part of the bylaws. Three individuals were selected to begin a three-year term on the Canadian National Council. They are: Ian Simons, Rainer Salomaa and Joseph Sheperd. Dr. Simons replaces David Campbell whose term is expiring.

Following the National Conference, the National Council met via teleconference in executive session. Rainer Salomaa was chosen to remain as chairman for another three years.

Rainer Salomaa (chairman) and Linda Wasilkoff (secretary)

International News At a Glance

Passover and UB in the U.K. and Ireland

Services on the First Day of Unleavened Bread were held in 10 locations in the British Isles. The total attendance was 169 (compared to 148 in 2006), and the offering, before currency conversion costs are taken into account, was in the region of £5,680 (£4,104 in 2006).

The first Passover and Holy Day organized by the United Church of God-British Isles in the Republic of Ireland was held this year in County Carlow. John and Jan Schroeder were present and Mr. Schroeder conducted the Passover and first Holy Day service.

Services on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread were held in seven locations, in which the total attendance was 144 (147 in 2006), and the offering, before currency conversion costs are taken into account, was in the region of £4,086 (£4,241 in 2006).

UCG-British Isles National Announcements, April 14, 2007

Canadian Responses Growing

In the first three months of the calendar year, UCG-Canada added nearly 1,500 new subscribers to *The Good News* magazine. As of March 31, we had 11,692 subscribers on file.

Incoming mail from January to March is higher than the same period last year. Especially encouraging is the increasing number of Internet subscription and literature requests—nearly 3,000 since Jan. 1. At the end of April, Internet requests were projected to exceed the total for all of 2004. These requests currently make up more than 50 percent of our total incoming mail. At the current rate, Canada could end the year with about 10,000 such requests—about 30 percent more than last year's record number of Internet requests.

All this incoming mail is resulting in a lot of outgoing mail. For the first three months of 2007, the average number of items distributed per month stood at 14,822. (That's about 500 pieces per month more than last year.)

The Canadian office has also received over 750 responses to the semiannual letter sent in February offering the *Bible Study Course* and the *Holidays or Holy Days* booklet.

Through April 12, 1,548 Canadians have responded to the *Beyond Today* television program. Almost 75 percent of those responses have been new additions to our file. We've added over 900 new subscribers to *The Good News* since the program began airing in May of 2006.

The program "Christians Who Don't Keep Easter" set several records in

early April. It offered the *Holidays or Holy Days* booklet. The total number of responses came to 88—a record. Of those, 54 were from the program itself and the remaining 34—also a record—were from the beyondtodaytv.ca Web site. The phone responses to the TV program came from eight provinces. The average number of responses per program is steadily increasing.

The fiscal year ended March 31 with income for the year being more than budgeted. For that we are very grateful.

Edwin van Pelt

GN Readers Invited in Isle of Man

The latest in a series of special Sabbath services in Douglas, Isle of Man, to which *Good News* readers were invited was held on March 3. The topic was "What Is Your Destiny?" Peter Hawkins gave a PowerPoint presentation on "God's Plan of Redemption" and David Fenney addressed "God's Plan of Salvation as Depicted by the Holy Days."

Over the past year invitations have been sent to around 30 *GN* readers advising them of each of these meetings. To date, seven new people have attended, some more than once. Two others have attended one of the regular Sabbath services in Ramsey, and five others have written or phoned expressing interest in the Douglas meetings, but have not yet attended.

Just before the start of the service, David Payne was ordained as an elder. He will assist David Fenney.

UCG-British Isles National Announcements, March 17, 2007

Mauritius Feast Site Announced

The Ventura Hotel in the village of Grand Bay on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius will be a Festival site this year. The site was announced after the March/April *United News* was printed.

Festival activities will include plenty of time for fellowship with the dozen local Church brethren from Mauritius and neighboring Reunion (we expect a total attendance of about 25), and excursions to sites of interest including the Port Louis waterfront and the Botanical Gardens.

A pleasant walk from the hotel allows access to the waterfront, offering a selection of restaurants and shopping, as well as deep-sea fishing, glass-bottom boat rides, wind surfing, sailing and scuba diving. It is also possible to make a 100-foot dive to a shipwreck on the Blue Safari submarine.

More information is available in the *Festival Planning Brochure* sent in April. Registration forms may be received by contacting info-fr@ucg.org; or by writing to French Department, United Church of God, an International Association, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, USA; or by calling (513) 576-9796.

Joel Meeker

Pastor Visits Members in Indian Ocean, Africa and France

by Joel Meeker

From mid-January to mid-February, I made a pastoral trip through the Indian Ocean, Africa and Europe. I arrived on the beautiful island of Mauritius on Jan. 18, after spending two consecutive nights on planes.

During my stay in Mauritius, I visited a potential Feast of Tabernacles site in the



La Cuvette beach, across the street from the new Feast site in Mauritius

beautiful seaside village of Grand Bay (see the announcement on page 3 about this exciting new Feast site). The hotel we have reserved is across the street from one of the most beautiful beaches I've ever seen!

In addition to several member visits during my brief stay, 10 people gathered together for services in the town of Quatre Bornes. After services we had a roundtable planning discussion on plans for the future of the Church on this lovely island.

Madagascar

My next stop was Antananarivo, the capital city of the large island-nation of Madagascar about 500 miles toward the African continent. The visit to Madagascar was to allow me to meet with the leaders of a congregation that is interested in becoming part of the United Church of God. This was the outcome of a fascinating "coincidence" of the kind that has happened several times in Africa as God has brought people into contact with UCG.

Patrick Rakotomahefa used to attend

services with our previous association in Paris in the early 1990s, back when I was serving as a pastor in Eastern France. When he moved back to Madagascar, he eventually began attending with a local Sabbath-keeping church.

Patrick works for ASECNA, the French-African civil aviation authority. A few years back he was in Niger for some training seminars. While there, he made the acquaintance of Kossi Fiaboé from Togo, who also works for ASECNA. Mr. Fiaboé happens also to be a deacon in the United Church of God. When these men learned that they both kept the Sabbath, they compared their religious beliefs and were amazed to find their common background! Patrick contacted me by e-mail and we began a correspondence that culminated in this visit.

Mr. Rakotomahefa met me at the airport. He was accompanied by Mr. Mamin-



Patrick Rakotomahefa and Maminina Rakotoarivelo in Madagascar. Inset, ring-tailed lemur (photos by Joel Meeker)

ina Rakotoarivelo, the pastor of the local congregation. Mr. Rakotoarivelo doesn't speak much French, so Patrick translated back and forth for us as we discussed various things. Over the course of two days, we discussed our doctrinal beliefs, and I explained many things about the work of the United Church of God around the world. One afternoon as we continued our

discussions, we visited a botanical and zoological garden.

We exchanged information to assist each other in better understanding where both groups stood, and we considered possible ways forward toward unity. These kinds of situations don't always end in a final joining, in fact they rarely do. But unity is a goal worth pursuing, so we will look for God's guidance as we study this further.

Cameroon

My next stop was Cameroon, which I finally reached after 24 hours of travel. While in Douala I had a Sabbath service with the congregation, a Q&A Bible study, a spokesman club meeting and several member visits.

Four people representing another independent Sabbath-keeping congregation from Yaoundé had made the trip to Douala to meet me. They keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and found us via the Internet where they were searching for other, larger churches that have similar beliefs to theirs. They were very excited to find us and had many questions. Their participation in the Q&A Bible study showed a solid understanding of the Bible. It was a great pleasure to make their acquaintance, and we look forward to developing our relationship.

At their request, we made arrangements for them to receive CDs of sermons in French in addition to other Church literature. On my next visit to Cameroon, I plan to make the trip to Yaoundé to visit with them. In the meanwhile, our deacon, Mr. Mabout, will go to see them from time to time.

Ivory Coast

From Cameroon I flew to Côte d'Ivoire. Tensions were higher in Abidjan than they had been on my last visit. Not only is the civil war still simmering between the north and the south, but in August 2007 toxic waste from a European treatment com-

pany ship was dumped illegally in several places around Abidjan, poisoning over 6,000 people and killing at least six.

The ensuing investigation brought to light the collusion and bribery of several government officials. This raised tensions even higher. Certain neighborhoods of Abidjan were still off limits as the clean-up continued. So traffic was thicker and there were more armed police and army checkpoints around town to prevent outbreaks of violence of any kind. Many armed UN vehicles could be seen.

After one night in Abidjan, I went by car out to the rural village of La Mé, where most of our brethren live. I brought my food with me from Abidjan, since I would stay at the local inn which doesn't provide any meals. As I moved into my room, I chased out a frog, and stepped on some cockroaches, but left the lizards on the walls since they eat mosquitoes.



Brethren in La Mé, Ivory Coast, in front of their current hall and the one under construction, holding up French *Good News* magazines

During two days in La Mé, I held three group Bible studies, counseled five people to help them prepare for baptism and went over plans for the construction of a church hall of concrete block with a corrugated tin roof. The group in La Mé is doing well, and is very excited by their

growth in numbers as well as the church hall project.

From Côte d'Ivoire, I flew to Benin where we were to hold three days of Bible studies and seminars for our local leaders from five French-African countries (see article, page 3).

Finally France

Next I traveled to Paris and was greeted by freezing temperatures and light snow. During my few days in France, I had an encouraging visit with a new family in Paris. I also visited Daniel Harper, an American nuclear engineer who is also an ABC graduate. He has just accepted a contract to work in Cherbourg, in Normandy, for the next few years, and offered to help out however he could while he and his wife, Cindy (who will arrive shortly), are living in France. Daniel and I had a pleasant dinner in Cherbourg and discussed

how he might be able to help out.

I spent a delightful Sabbath with the Bordeaux congregation, and had several pleasant visits with brethren in that region before finally heading home to my family. My next trip, if all goes as planned, should be to France, Belgium and Switzerland in June.

More information and photos can be found on the travel blog www.travelpod.com/travel-blog/joelmeeker/jan-feb_2007/tpod.html. UN

Portuguese Work Growing: United Minister Holds First Passover Service in Portugal

"The work of God in the Portuguese-speaking area is a very small work," said Leon Walker, coordinator of Spanish operations, who also coordinates the Portuguese area. "However, we are doing all we can to serve the members in Portugal and Brazil with sermons and literature.

"In the 2007-2008 fiscal year we plan to print four booklets and 12 *Good News* articles in the Portuguese language. We have recently contracted a professional translator in Portugal to help us with the translation work. We also rely upon member volunteers in Portugal, Brazil and the United States to help with proofreading and other editorial responsibilities.

"We have only one elder who is fluent in the Portuguese language—Jorge de Campos. Mr. de Campos has his own job, but enthusiastically dedicates as much time as possible in serving the Church in the Portuguese-speaking areas. He makes two trips a year to Portugal. He also prepares sermons for our members in addition to editorial work.

"We greatly appreciate his service, as without it we would be able to do very little to help our Portuguese-speaking members."

Some History

United's efforts in the Portuguese language began in 2002. Since then a small version of *United News* in Portuguese has been issued on a quarterly basis, the *Fundamental Beliefs* and *Clean and Unclean Meats* booklets have been printed, regular sermons are being sent to the brethren and a small Web-based set of *Good News* articles is scheduled to appear on United's Web site in the next few weeks.

God also opened the door for a Feast of Tabernacles site to be held in Portugal (see www.ucg.org/portugues/feast/).

First Passover

This year God opened the door to hold the first Passover in Portugal since the beginnings of United.

Jorge de Campos arrived in Lisbon on

the morning of Sunday, April 1. After a brief rest from his overnight flight, he visited with members, had discussions on the translation and review work in progress and then helped make preparations for the Passover service after sunset.

The Passover service was held at the home of Jaime Campos, a deacon in Lisbon. Five people attended the Passover. The Night to Be Much Observed was also held in his home with an attendance of eight people.

The First Day of Unleavened Bread service was held at the Hotel Dom Carlos Liberty with an attendance of 10 people. This little hotel hall is the venue of the biweekly Sabbath services in downtown Lisbon. It has a special built-in facility to project video sermons on a plasma screen mounted on the wall. An Internet connection is available to play video sermons directly from the Web.

The main sermon emphasized how we need to encourage each other to obey God and be without spiritual leaven in this



Jaime Campos (deacon in Lisbon, Portugal) with his wife, Maria, and children, Sara and David

difficult world, how we need to have God living in us and how we must desire to be so close to God that we are one, like Christ prayed that we should be in His last prayer with His disciples.

Prayers Needed

God's work in the Portuguese language is small, even though Portuguese is the sixth most spoken native language in the world, and the third most spoken Euro-

pean language, ahead of German, French and Italian.

Portuguese is a difficult language in its orthography, multiple influences and precision of meaning. Many misunderstandings may be created if translations are not thoroughly reviewed and checked for correctness doctrinally.

"We feel that every attempt we have made to further develop the work of God in the Portuguese language has been attacked immediately by Satan," said Mr. de Campos. "We have found that the translators and reviewers are under extreme pressure, which seems to have mounted exponentially since they have committed to help with this effort.

"We need the prayers of the brethren to help the translators and reviewers with their personal trials, which are slowing down the work. We also request prayers that God may add more laborers deeply proficient in Portuguese and English to help in this facet of God's work." UN

Egypt's Ancient History Comes Alive for Education Travel Group

by Linda Register

Forty-nine people participated in the first-ever travel education program that took the group to Egypt during the spring Holy Day season, April 4 through 13.

The education program goals were to



UCG travel education group tours the Step Pyramid (photos by Frank Fish and David Register)

bring the biblical account alive and build faith in God and His Word; provide fellowship to strengthen individuals spiritually; help participants gain knowledge, understanding and respect for Egyptian culture and people; enhance personal Bible study and prayer; and better equip people to explain God's Word to others with clarity and enthusiasm.

The tour was enhanced by the timing—the historical Passover and Unleavened Bread festivals and Israel's exodus all took place in Egypt. Ralph Levy, ABC instructor, and David Register, Education Programs director, accompanied the group.

The travelers made up a diverse group. The youngest traveler was 12 and the oldest was 77. There were students, working professionals, retirees and seven ministers and wives.

Two members of the group had never traveled in airplanes before! Both missed flights and were caught in all kinds of delays due to weather. Several travelers were able to meet up in Cincinnati and New York to comfort and give encour-

agement to the rookie travelers.

Luxor and the Valley of the Kings

Luxor in Upper Egypt was the first stop, and sites visited included the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens, the Temple of Hatshepsut and the temples at Karnak and Luxor. These ancient tombs and temples of the 18th dynasty represent one of the possible time frames during which Moses lived and the Exodus occurred. The group observed the Sabbath at the Sonesta St. George Hotel in Luxor.

Cairo and the Pyramids

Next, the group traveled to the Cairo area to see the Egyptian Museum, shop in the famous Khan el-Khalili market, visit early monuments in Saqqara and Memphis and marvel at the pyramids of Giza and the famous Great Sphinx.

Additional activity options included a tour of Coptic Cairo and a dinner cruise on the Nile. The Last Day of Unleavened Bread was held in the Zoser Hotel in Giza.

Much to everyone's delight, the only known Church member in Egypt was able to attend the service with us! Lizabeth Heath-Mounsey, who works for the Philippine embassy in Cairo, came with a friend who has been keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days.



Member Lizabeth Heath-Mounsey and friend in Cairo

Extension to Sinai

After the main itinerary was completed,

35 members of the tour group opted to stay on for the extension trip to the Sinai Peninsula. We drove by bus to see many interesting possible sites where events in the Bible took place. These included the Red Sea where the Israelites crossed, the Springs of Moses, the mountainous region where the war with Amalek took place, the site of the burning bush and Mt. Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

The next morning, many brave individuals awoke at 1 a.m. and climbed Mt. Sinai to witness the breathtaking sunrise. The hike up took about four hours, and it was dark and cold. Everyone came back tired but enthusiastic.

After scaling Mt. Sinai, the group visited St. Catherine's Monastery where the Codex Sinaiticus, one of the oldest manuscripts of the Bible, was discovered.

Learning About Egypt

Trying to make sense of the contrasts in modern Egypt will give you a headache. The streets are full of cars, buses, carts with donkeys and pedestrians—all at the same time in a noisy, terrible mess. The backdrops to these street scenes are ancient pyramids and temples, medieval forts and mosques, crumbling houses and apartment buildings and modern high rises.

Some other interesting things we learned:

- There are only about 150 to 200 Jewish people currently living in Egypt. Most Jews were expelled by President Nasser after the war with Israel in 1967.

- Our tour guides told us that there is a small Christian sect that they call the "Saturday People." Apparently, they keep the Saturday Sabbath and biblical Holy Days.

- About 10 percent of the population is Christian and 90 percent is Muslim. The main Christian group is the Coptic Christians, who split from the mainstream Eastern Christian church in the 400s.

- The sound of the ancient Egyptian spoken language can be heard in Coptic Christian churches.

- Hosni Mubarak is only the third president in the Egyptian democratic republic, and he has been in power for 25 years. The government held elections in 2005, and although President Mubarak was reelected, in the parliamentary elections a group called the Muslim Brotherhood won enough seats to make them a major player in the system. This marks a change for Egypt, with what some fear will be a trend away from secular leadership to Islamist rule.

- Tourism is Egypt's number one industry, and it is very concerned that

tourists feel safe. There was a visible presence of police, guards and a special group called the antiquities and tourism police, especially in the tourist areas. Many commented on how friendly and hospitable the Egyptian people were toward us.

Plans for Future Tours

After the success of this first trip, Ministerial Services will offer more travel education trips to places such as Greece, Israel, Jordan, Turkey and other sites that are interesting from a biblical perspective. **UN**

Jordan Meetings Open Doors for Youth Corps, Feast and Future Tours

David Register, director of Education Programs, and Cory Erickson, elder and Jordan Festival coordinator, met with Jordanian officials April 13 to 16 to discuss plans for future Feasts, travel education tours and Youth Corps projects in Jordan.

"The meetings were very successful and outcomes surpassed my expectations," reported Mr. Erickson. He worked in Jordan for five years with youth projects during the early 1990s and has many long-standing relationships in the country. Mr. Erickson met with Akel Biltagi, a senator and chairman of the Tourism and Heritage Committee of Jordan, regarding the Feast in Jordan and travel education opportunities.



David Register, Princess Sarvath Al Hassan and Cory Erickson

Mr. Register and Mr. Erickson toured schools and venues including the Young Muslim Women's Association Centre for the Mentally Challenged, American Center for Oriental Research, Al Hussein Society Center for the Physically Challenged and the Amman Baccalaureate School. All of the schools expressed keen interest in Youth Corps involvement in the summer of 2008 and beyond. The elders also met with officials at Le Meridien Hotel to discuss plans for the 2007 Feast of Tabernacles.

During their visit, Princess Sarvath Al Hassan invited both men to visit the Royal Palace and discuss plans for future involvement in Jordanian projects. They had a very warm and cordial visit with the princess and her secretary, Khadijeh Siraj. The princess expressed her excitement about UCG getting involved through United Youth Corps in several potential projects in Amman, Jordan.

We are now making plans for a six-week United Youth Corps project in the summer of 2008, which will include serving at a camp for the mentally challenged, working on an archaeological project and touring biblical sites in Jordan and Israel.

David Register

Local Officials Attend Inauguration of New Church Hall in Nalubanda, Zambia

by André van Belkum

On the Sabbath morning of April 14, the second hall constructed in the Mumbwa province of Zambia was inaugurated, with 96 people in attendance.

In order to negate rumors that the United Church of God is secretive, a number of people from the surrounding area were invited to attend the opening ceremony. Those invited included the local government councillor and his wife, the local headman and various other leading people from the region.

After a dedication prayer, Kambani Banda (our Zambian pastor) and I cut a ribbon at the entrance to the hall. All present were then seated inside the hall, and the first service commenced with Mr. Banda introducing our guests. In his speech Mr. Banda made reference to the fact that we have nothing to hide. Furthermore, he emphasized

that our members strive to be upright and responsible citizens of Zambia and that none of us had caused any problems in the area or to the Zambian government.

Then I gave an overview of the Church, what our commission is and explained the meaning of the terms *gospel* and *Kingdom of God*. In conclusion I gave a brief explanation of the role we as members play within the Body of Christ.

The service was concluded with complimentary remarks in English from both the councillor and headman about the quality and beauty of the building.

After the meeting guests were seated outside under the shade of trees and served sandwiches and cool drinks. The majority stayed for lunch and asked to attend the afternoon service. For the afternoon we followed the usual Sabbath service format, and it gave them an opportunity to see

what occurs during our services.

Apren Moomba, one of our local men, gave the sermonette, and I gave the sermon on the challenge to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. Translators translated from English into the local dialect. The councillor was the first one to mention how much he appreciated the messages!

The Nalubanda and Kasumpa choir performed a number of special music items during both morning and afternoon services. In the afternoon we also had special music from the men's quartet. They sang superbly.

Our members will now commence the construction of the third hall, which will be located about 15 miles away. Costs have been minimized as members contribute their expertise and labor to the building.

Nearby a hall slightly larger than our hall is being built at a school. Even though construction began before we even started our first hall, they still



New church hall at Nalubanda. Inset, Mary Chisevente walks 5 miles to church in Mapoko on new crutches provided by LifeNets.

have not completed the building. What's more, the costs are more than double what all three of our halls will cost! It shows what working together in unity can accomplish.

A number of our members asked me to thank those involved in the Good Works Program who provided the funds for the construction of the halls. Previously members met in makeshift

enclosures, made from poles and grass. The atmosphere for the few days we were together was one of joy, excitement and jubilation. Three people were baptized during this visit.

On this trip we met with members from a number of churches in Zambia. Because of an influx from our previous fellowship, attendance and the number of congregations have more than doubled. Presently Mr. Banda is the only ordained elder, and as you can imagine, he is extremely busy. However, God is aware of the situation and already some of the longstanding men are coming forward to give assistance and leadership. It is planned that they will benefit from the leadership programs the Church has instituted.

One of the reasons we publish these articles in *United News* is to make us aware of our members in the more remote countries of the world, and to request your continued prayers for God's guidance and direction. **UN**

Media At a Glance

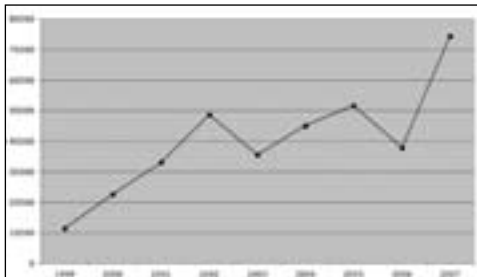
Beyond Today Now on Satellite Television in Africa/Europe for Free

On April 1, 2007, the United Church of God began free, experimental satellite telecasting of *Beyond Today* video programs on the Omega Channel from Johannesburg, South Africa. The airtime is being provided free of charge to UCG. The Omega Channel is a premium quality direct-to-home Christian satellite television service that can be received virtually anywhere in Africa and major parts of Europe with a small satellite dish.

The Omega Channel is available on View Africa Network, which has a potential audience of 200 million people in Africa and Europe. Telecasting via INSAT 10 satellite, orbital position 68.5 degrees east, frequency 12682 MHz, *Beyond Today* has been telecasting daily at 11 p.m. Central Africa Time (CAT) throughout April 2007. In May, our programs begin airing at 11 p.m. CAT on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Record January for Incoming Mail

In January the home office received an all-time record of 74,290 incoming pieces of mail processed and logged! The accompanying chart shows the incoming mail for the month of January for the past nine years—ever since we moved to Cincinnati.

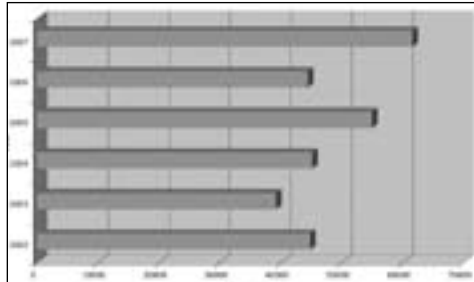


Incoming mail at home office, January of year

In April we had an excellent 63,488 pieces of incoming mail, and March was even better with 68,616. These were bumper months because of *Reader's Digest* ad responses, *American Baby* ad responses, other literature requests, letters, donations and special requests. Our mail processing staff has been very busy!

Resulting Outgoing Mail

As a result of the record incoming mail, guess what? Our outgoing mail also then peaked at 61,500 pieces in March. It was the second busi-



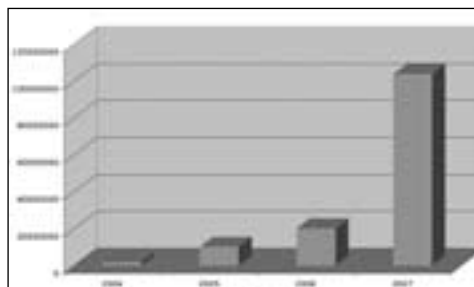
Outgoing mail from home office, March of year

est month on record, beaten only by May of 2004 when we had 70,905 pieces. In addition, April of this year was only a few thousand pieces behind March.

Please note that these are individual literature and other requests, and do not include the fulfillment houses that mail *The Good News*, *World News and Prophecy*, *United News* and new booklets automatically for us—millions of more pieces a year.

Online Ad Impressions Break 10 Million in March

The United Church of God online advertising impressions in March broke the 10 million mark for the first time. The chart below shows March for the past four years. Some significant increases



Google and Yahoo ad impressions, March of year

es for sure, as you can see! We had 10.4 million views of our ads at Google and Yahoo.

Over 40,000 Respond to Card-Pack Ads

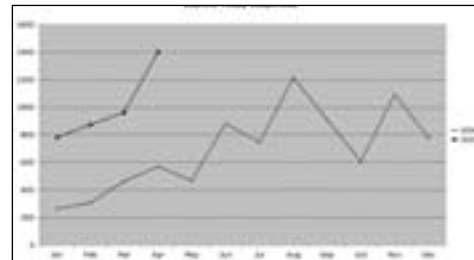
Over 8,700,000 households in the United States are being contacted this fiscal year through card-pack mailers. So far, over 40,351 new subscribers have responded to an offer of a *Good News* subscription and a booklet. Many additional responses are expected. Cost per response for this subscription program currently stands at a very good \$2.97.

Beyond Today Sets New Records

April was our best month to date for *Beyond Today*, with more than 1,400 responses. These

results are mainly from local community cable-access TV stations and radio, with almost equal numbers also coming from the Internet.

One reason for the good response was an excellent return on the two programs about Christians who don't keep Easter. April was also our best response for *Beyond Today* on radio for the past year, with a very good response of over 200 calls.



Beyond Today responses reach new high

Even before the record month, *Beyond Today* was growing. As of April 1, 52 *Beyond Today* programs had aired on cable-access TV since telecasting began in late 2005. Of the seven most recent programs aired by that date, three leaped into the top 10 in viewer response.

Rank	Program
#1	"The Myth of the Immortal Soul"
#3	"Stopping the Addiction With Porn"
#10	"When Terrorism Ends"

Telephone and Internet response for *Beyond Today* programs continues on a steady and healthy increase. Below are average weekly response rankings for the past year.

Report Date	Average Weekly Response
April 2006	73
June 2006	92
August 2006	121
September 2006	138
December 2006	152
February 2007	156
April 2007	165

How Can You Help Beyond Today?

As a member of the United Church of God in the United States, are you interested in placing *Beyond Today* programs on cable-access television in your community? It may be simpler and easier than you think. For more information, please contact John LaBissoniere at john_labissoniere@ucg.org or call him toll free at (888) 369-9940. Why not do it today?

BT Airing Schedules Offer New Feature

A new feature has been added to *Beyond Today* airing schedules. Short, descriptive synopses now accompany each program title. *Beyond Today* member-sponsors have been encouraged to use this information in various ways such as placing it in local church bulletins to encourage brethren to

tune in to the programs. The synopsis could also be placed on the cable-access television station's online menu and in free "events/information" sections of community newspapers. Below are samples of some *Beyond Today* programs with the title and synopsis:

"Europe's Long Dream." Coming events in Europe will catch the world unaware. Discover how those major events could dramatically affect your life.

"Groping for God." Why does God seem unreal or remote to many people? Why does spiritual satisfaction often seem elusive? Learn surprising answers.

"The Rapture: Who's Left Behind?" Why do many people believe a doctrine that has no biblical validity? Isn't it time you learned the real truth?

"Death of Darwinism." Did you realize that virtually every idea of evolution has been proved wrong by true, scientific discoveries? Learn more!

"Is God Angry?" Is God waiting to punish when you do something wrong? Are all bad things in life a chastisement from God? What is the real truth?

South African Printing Location Added for Good News

Growing *Good News* circulation, lower shipping costs and faster delivery times were factors involved in a recent decision to begin printing *Good News* magazines for Southern Africa in that region. Beginning with the May/June 2007 issue, *Good News* magazines for locations in South Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe will be printed at CTP Book Printers in Cape Town, South Africa. Considering various factors, we may later consider adding other destinations on the continent of Africa to the current list of those handled from this location.

The print order quantities for the May/June 2007 *Good News* magazine are as follows: R.R. Donnelley & Sons in Glasgow, Kentucky, 395,594; Offset Alpine Printers in Eagle Farm, Queensland, Australia, 52,000 copies; and CTP Book Printers in Cape Town, South Africa, 16,980 copies. This equals a total print quantity of 464,574. The total print quantity for the previous issue (March/April 2007) was 433,207.

VT Back Issues Put on Newsstands

More than 7,500 back issues of *Vertical Thought* magazine were made available to U.S. members who are current or former brochure and newsstand distributors. In just two weeks 3,300 copies were requested by distributors. One member called from Panama City Beach, Florida, requesting 200 copies to distribute in motel lobbies and other locations to reach young adults during the busy spring break season.

Contributors: Peter Eddington, John LaBissoniere

"Women's Education," continued from page 1

Schreiber and Judy Servidio.

This diverse group of women vary in ages from the mid-20s to early 70s. They were chosen partly to represent many demographics including international experience and perspectives, young professional, single women (through divorce, widowhood, etc.), working mothers, urban and rural lifestyles, children

still at home, empty nesters, married, grandmothers, experience with chronic health issues, home schoolers, etc.

Attendee's Comments

Karen Meeker, from St. Charles, Missouri, stated, "I was really struck by the experience and the talent that the group represented and the desire that each member expressed to help women discover their true roles in their walk with God."

Barbara Sackett, from Olympia, Washington, said, "I think we accomplished quite a bit. We got acquainted, created a plan and worked hard, but with all the positive attitudes and excitement of working together, it seemed more like fun than hard work."

The members of the WETF are excited about this opportunity and are looking forward to serving our women in the months and years to come. UN



WETF: Judy Servidio, Gloria Carey, Barbara Sackett, Erin Roscoe, Marjolaine Meeker, Dee Kilough (chairwoman), Colene Erickson, Karen Meeker, Ina McLemore, Kay Schreiber and DeLee Hargrove (not present, Pam Myers)

Baptism Stories: Members Share Stories of Their Calling

■ In response to requests in previous issues, members share the inspiring stories of their callings and baptisms.

“God Began to Open My Eyes”

On a cool fall evening a little over two years ago, I picked up my Bible, curled up on the couch and began reading. This was unusual for me, however I was about to embark on a remarkable experience. As I read, God began to open my eyes. When I arrived at Exodus 20:8, for the first time I saw that it is clearly the Sabbath day we are to remember and to keep holy. Being confronted with the realization that I had been mistaken on this point, I decided to find out all I could about the Sabbath.

My previous teachings were only fragments of truth. I began to pray that God would teach me His truth, knowing that in His Word were the answers I needed.

As time passed, it was no longer good enough to hear about God. I desired to know God, who He is, what His character is like and what He expects from me. I spoke with some friends, and what they told me I couldn't find in the Bible. The Bible says “prove all things,” so that is what I set out to do.

My next step was to find a church that kept the Sabbath. To my surprise I found a local SDA church, but after a time I realized the Bible wasn't their only source of information. The search continued.

God's hand was guiding me the whole time. In our local supermarket a card titled “Revelation Unveiled” was on display. Having an interest in prophecy, I sent for the booklet. Upon receiving it, I was fascinated by what I read and wanted to learn more about the church that was distributing this booklet.

Within a short time I contacted the pastor of the closest congregation, Steve Shafer, and he and his wife came to visit.

They were both very helpful in answering all the questions I had. After reading every book I could get my hands on, taking the *Bible Study Course* and hearing many great sermons, I knew baptism was my next step. I am happy to report my husband and I were both baptized on Dec. 23, 2006. That night was like nothing I had ever experienced. I was saturated in the love of God, peace and joy. Now I know I am on the path of God.

*Janet LeRette
Saginaw, Michigan*

“God Had Outfoxed Me”

I was confirmed in the Catholic Church. My father was an agnostic and my mother was a nonpracticing Catholic. Up to the age of 21 I probably attended church less than a dozen times. I was antichurch most of the time, even though I believed that God and angels existed.

At age 21 I was working in a small country town where the only activities on Saturday night were fishing and going to the movies. It was here that I was invited through a friend to attend a meeting conducted by a church that believes that every day is a Sabbath day. At the same time my brother was involved with a church that believed that the seventh day was the Sabbath day.

As I had time to spare, I decided to buy a Bible and prove to myself who was teaching the truth according to the Scriptures. I had no idea what I would do with the knowledge once I had discovered it.

In the process of study I proved God existed and that the Bible was His inspired revelation to mankind. After six months of study, I came face to face with the Sabbath question—to keep it or not to keep it. I was reminded of God's instruction that I was to choose between good and evil, life and death. By this time I knew too much. God had outfoxed me.

After four months of more study, I came to the point where there was no turning back. It was time to count the cost. If I wanted all that God was promising me, it would have to be total surrender. After 11 months of studying the Bible, I was baptized.

I could see the only solution to man's woes was for God to intervene in world affairs. To be part of the solution that God was offering me was too good to be refused. And I have never lost sight of those precious promises.

To be baptized was the best decision I have ever made in my life. I thank God for being smarter than me.

*John Lyons
Toowoomba, Australia*

“Something Was Missing”

My husband and I were baptized together in November of 2003. My husband, Jason, was born and raised in Worldwide, then later United. I, however, was raised in a small Christian church in northwestern Kansas. The set of beliefs I had then were 180 degrees different from now. I always felt like something was missing.

My minister at that time was either unable or unwilling to answer questions I had, and it always felt as though God should be “bigger” than they were preaching. They had no answers for me when I asked about the origins of Christmas or what Revelation teaches or countless other mysteries. These topics were taboo to ask about and were often times ignored.

When I met Jason, I found myself intrigued by his beliefs. Here was a walking, talking person with little contradiction in his personal and church life (seldom the case with those in my church).

UCG's minister, Mr. Clark, was able to sit down and answer from the Bible the most pressing questions I had carried my entire life. But most surprising to me was the fact that none of my questions were dismissed or belittled. Jason's sister was also instrumental in helping me along the path to baptism. She was able to draw on her own experiences and knowledge of the Bible to answer other questions. For the first time in my life, things made sense.

It was a “light bulb” moment, when I went to my first Holy Day service in Wichita. It all came together and clicked. Since that time Jason and I have been through many trials, but I find it easier to lean on God, because I was able to have all those questions answered, and He was made “real” to me. He is not just some vague deity I am told to blindly worship. I am now able to better understand His guidelines and what He expects of me. My calling to be baptized was scary, and the decision

was the biggest of my life.

I still have family members who do not understand my choice to join “Jason's Church,” but they have also said they see a more positive person. It is no secret to those around me who I am, and what I believe. I am so blessed I was chosen to be baptized and am grateful to have been called into God's great plan for mankind.

*Kristin Edinborough
Des Moines, Iowa, congregation*

“I Turned My Back on God”

My parents were members of the Worldwide Church of God. My mother heard a radio broadcast by Mr. Armstrong back in 1963—could have been '62—and realized it was the truth. She was baptized, joined the Church and went to her first Feast of Tabernacles at Jekyll Island. My father joined soon after (much to the disappointment of my parents' families—being of Polish and Italian heritage, they were staunch Catholics).

So, that is my background. I enjoyed the Feasts, kept all the Holy Days, studied, prayed and truly thought I knew God's way. I was 23 when I turned my back on God and developed an “it's my life” mentality. I wanted to do what I wanted to do. No more of this Sabbath stuff and Holy Days (what's so bad about pork anyway?). I wanted to enjoy life and do things that others did. They looked like they were having fun—I wanted to join in.

For nearly 10 years I was neck deep in the world, “enjoying” everything it had to offer. I was having fun, but the consequences came along with it. God's law is in effect whether you believe in it or not.

Enter my future wife, Brigitte. I walked into a Starbucks and found love. We started dating, fell madly in love, married and got on with life. My wife was born and raised in a mainstream Christian home, but always had questions about her religion, i.e., why is church on a Sunday when the Bible says to keep the Sabbath, why do we have Christmas when Jesus wasn't born on Dec. 25, etc.

We started talking about attending a church. Well, to be honest, she started talking about us attending a church. We went to a couple of churches she picked that met on Sundays, but nothing was real for me because down deep I knew the truth.

On a fluke one day (or could it have been God calling?) I mentioned to Brigitte that we should find a church that met on the Sabbath and kept things according to the Bible. Well, by researching the Internet, she found that church. It was the United Church of God. They had services 20 minutes away. Talk about God working!

That was in the spring of 2005. We were baptized together in September 2006 on the banks of the beautiful and historic James River, in Jamestown, Virginia, by Todd Carey.

*David D'Andrea
Williamsburg, Virginia, congregation*

“My Career Was Greatly Threatened”

Pastor's note: Sabbath observance for people in Zimbabwe is an extremely difficult test. If they happen to lose their jobs, it is most unlikely they will find another job. The unemployment figure is not easy

to pin down, but some put it at around 65 percent. The inflation figure is presently 1,700 percent. Miraculously the Eternal continues to provide for our members during these most testing and perplexing time.

André van Belkum

I consider it a miracle that out of the dazzling myriad of different purported Christian denominations and doctrines, the Eternal Father has led me to His true Church. Even though it had always been clear in my mind that a church cannot save my soul, I knew it would make a big difference in my life.

I was born into a Protestant church, and my father was strict in ensuring that we attended Sunday school. As we grew up, I started visiting other churches, and I started to wonder why we have so many

ened, but I finally won the war when I requested to be transferred to the head office. My protest against Sabbath work became known by a lot of people around the workplace and eventually my superiors passively allowed me to be off on Saturdays.

I got baptized on Aug. 8, 2006. Even though I know that my life is not yet perfectly free of sin, I am glad that I made the bold decision to try and live according to the will of God. Now my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will help me to bear fruits worthy of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

*Innocent Mushunje
Harare, Zimbabwe*

“Something Made Me Say Instead, ‘I Don't Know’”

My wife, Melissa, and I have four chil-



Five new members were baptized March 18 in Macon, Georgia, by Ken Martin (on left): Troy Lougheed, Dale and Melissa White, Danielle Brenner and Steven Britt

churches with conflicting doctrines and teachings.

At one time I stopped attending any church services because I always found a fault in all the churches in the neighborhood. I later got baptized into a Pentecostal church but eventually moved out because I could not put up with all the noisy sermons and so-called tongues.

I later decided to join a certain Protestant church because I found their church services to be more organized and peaceful.

In 2004 I started requesting UCG literature after I had stumbled on a *Good News* magazine in a local bookshop. I became convinced about the Sabbath, Holy Days, unclean meats and tithing, and I immediately stopped attending Sunday services. For the next several weeks I attended a local Seventh-day Adventist church because I had the impression that UCG was not yet established in Zimbabwe. I was happy to later get in touch with Mr. Hlazo in Harare.

As I continued to learn God's truths, the question of rebaptism boggled my mind. I received counseling from Mr. Hlazo and Mr. van Belkum (regional pastor) and became more determined to get baptized and seek the will of God.

Meanwhile, I was on my internship program at a local savings bank, and my superiors wanted me to report to work on Saturdays. My career was greatly threat-

dren (ages 3 to 10). I attended the Church of Christ for 48 years prior to finding the United Church of God. Melissa and I were married in the Church of Christ. I taught adult Bible classes and Wednesday night services on occasion.

My wife began a daily Bible reading program of her own about 4½ years ago. After reading the Scriptures every day, she asked me one day, “Why is it we do not observe the Fourth Commandment?”

I started to answer with the “same old line” I'd been taught and learned over the years, but instead something made me say instead, “I don't know. Let's study and find out.”

That study took 3½ years. Inquiries to the old church went without a response.

We went on a search to find a group of Christians that followed God's will as we were reading in the Bible. We found the Macon congregation in July 2006 and decided to completely recommit our lives to God's will in service to Him and His Son Jesus Christ and to set the example for our children.

As Melissa says, “We want to fully obey God and teach our children to do the same.”

*Dale White
Macon, Georgia, congregation*

Thanks to all who have sent in a baptism story. We hope to run more of them in a future issue.

Preteen Camps—A Barrel of Fun and Education

■ UCG-sponsored preteen camps reinforce God's way through the camp experience.

by Dave Myers

Would you like an additional way to school your preteen in God's way? Preteen camps sponsored by the United Church of God can be just that—a place of fun and enjoyment for sure, but also a place of spiritual education and reinforcement.

In areas all across the United States, preteen camps have been organized to help our young people become more settled in God's way of life—and become excited about it!

Studies have shown what a critical time the preteen years are in a child's life. Give your children additional spiritual grounding by having them learn and play with peers in the Church at camp. They'll be led by loving adults and teen helpers who will teach God's way and set an example for them.

The various preteen camps all offer different activities and events, but some of the things you might find include Christian living classes, swimming, kick ball, softball, leatherworks, arts and crafts, hayrides, music, dance, novelty Olympics, scavenger hunts, fishing, hiking and much more.

Listed here are the eight preteen camps currently organized for this summer. If you would like more information on sending your child to camp or would like to serve in one of the many needed volunteer staff positions, please contact the good folks listed below.

Texas: Houston Regional Preteen Camp

Kaiserhof Retreat Center, 22610 Tuwa Rd., Tomball, Texas
www.kaiserhofretreat.com

Camp Dates: June 3 to 6, 2007

Age Range: 7 to 12

Fees: Camper, \$200 per child; staff, no charge

Contact Information:

Elisa Hees or Christine Whitley
1413 Axleridge Drive, Conroe, TX 77384

(936) 321-8134

E-mail: a-especialties@charter.net or cwhitley@consolidated.net

Application Deadline: May 15

Local Web Site Address: <http://members.ucg-houston.org/preteen-camp/>

Description: The Houston congregations are pleased to sponsor a preteen camp featuring activities such as swimming, arts and crafts, sports, Christian education, fishing and canoeing, etc.

Again this year, the campers will have the opportunity to showcase their talents and share them with their fellow campers at our annual talent show held one evening during the camp.

It is a multiple-day, resident camp with excellent facilities and is fully staffed to care for the needs of our young campers.

Pennsylvania: Lewistown Preteen Camp

Camp Kiwanis, 3111 Route 287 Hwy., Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania
Camp Dates: June 24 to 27, 2007

Age Range: 5 to 12

Fees: Camper/staff/parent: \$30 each

Contact Information:

Renita Brummett

115 Lake Road, Beavertown, PA 17813

(570) 837-0134

E-mail: renita@ethanjacobscott.com

Application Deadline: May 31

Local Web Site Address: www.ucg-net.org/lewistown

Description: The Lewistown Preteen Camp gives our children the opportunity to get closer to nature and God. Our campers will enjoy the beautiful location of the camp, along a scenic trout stream, with the convenience of cabins, showers, a main lodge, a swimming pool and sports fields.

Many families have come to the camp together to enjoy the relaxing atmosphere that comes with the outdoors and fellowship with others of the same belief. Parents are more than welcome to come, even if they have children that are not of camper age, with the understanding that they would be responsible for them.

Each year we have a camp theme. This year's morning lessons will be about the story of Saul and David. The last evening of camp the children perform a play, complete with costumes and songs written just for the play. Throughout the day the children have crafts, sports, nature classes and swimming.

Indiana: Camp UCanDo (Day Camp)

United Church of God, 850 N. Bluff Road, Greenwood, Indiana

Camp Dates: July 10 to 12, 2007, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Age Range: 5 to 12

Fees: Camper, \$25 (\$20 for each additional child from the same family; \$50 maximum per family). Staff, no charge

Contact Information:

Diana White

324 Wales Ct., Greenwood, IN 46142

(317) 884-3416

E-mail: bdkjwhite@hotmail.com

Application Deadline: May 25

Local Web Site Address: www.ucgindy.org

Description: Our activities include arts and crafts, Christian living, photography, nature, home economics, science, outdoor games, water day, team building and sign language.

Download your camper and/or staff application from our local Web site.

Because this is a day camp, camper families must arrange their own housing in the area. Check out our Web site for information on nearby camping facilities and hotel information or contact the director for suggestions.

Tennessee: Camp Tomahawk

Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park, Eva, Tennessee

Camp Dates: July 15 to 18, 2007

Age Range: 6 to 12

Fees: Campers: \$110 (\$10 discount applied to fee if paid by May 15); staff, \$60 (\$10 discount applied to fee if paid by May 15)

Contact Information:

Michael Fooshe, Director
1286 Walnut Grove Road, Dickson, TN 37055

(615) 740-7915

E-mail: threemom@juno.com

Application Deadline: May 15

Local Web Site Address: www.ucg-nashville.org

Description: Located on beautiful Kentucky Lake, Camp Tomahawk offers many exciting activities including Christian living, swimming with lazy river ride, athletics/sports, arts and crafts, park ranger programs and much more.

We also take pride in our themed dinners (dress in your favorite themed outfit to match the daily theme) and sample some of the tastiest camp food ever!

The camp is a multiple-day, resident camp. Campers will stay in the air-conditioned group lodge with several selected counselors, while the remaining staff are housed in the beautiful park cabins exactly 1 mile from the group lodge. Each lodge and cabin has attached bathroom facilities.

Camp Tomahawk is divided into two age categories for activity purposes, ages 6 to 8 and ages 9 to 12. Because space at Camp Tomahawk is very limited for both staff and campers, we may not be able to accept all applicants. Please apply early, as special consideration will be given to those who possess specific skills that are needed at camp. Please visit our Web site at www.ucgnashville.org for additional information.

Oklahoma: Camp Osage Hills

Osage Hills State Park, HC 73, Box 84, Pawhuska, Oklahoma

Camp Dates: July 22 to 26, 2007

Age Range: 6 to 12

Fees: Camper, \$80 (\$70 for third and fourth camper from the same family). Note: Cancellations after July 1, 2007, may be subject to a \$40 cancellation fee. Teen and adult staff fees, \$20.

Contact Information:

Thomas Clark

P.O. Box 12322, Wichita, KS 67277

(316) 773-3917

E-mail: thomas_clark@ucg.org

Application Deadline: June 15

Description: The park is located about 14 miles west of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, about an hour north of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and two hours from either Joplin, Missouri, or Wichita, Kansas. The park includes a crystal clear river flowing over the natural rock base, a man-made fishing lake, swimming pool and recreational facilities. Deer and wild turkeys are all over the park and are seen on a daily basis.

Camp Osage Hills offers a fully staffed three-day resident camp program. The campers are grouped by ages into dorms staffed with both a counselor and assistant counselor. Activities include swimming, fishing, canoeing, field games, arts and crafts and daily Christian living classes.

We also provide one off-camp trip to Woolarock, the expansive former estate of oilman Frank Phillips. This trip includes a drive through a game preserve with both native and African game animals, a 19th-century "Mountain Man" camp staffed by men in period costumes, a petting zoo and a large museum featuring Western art, artifacts and cultural history of Native Americans and Western American history.

We encourage parents and grandparents to apply to work on the staff, as well as teens and young adults with a desire to serve the youth in the Church. Staff should plan to arrive on site by 2 p.m. on Sunday.

Ohio: Great Lakes Region Preteen Camp

Camp Buckeye, 10055 Camp Road NW, Beach City, Ohio

Camp Dates: July 29 to Aug. 1, 2007

Age Range: 6 to 12



Fees: Camper, \$65; \$50 for each additional child from the same family. Adult staff, \$20. Teen staff, \$30.

Contact Information:

Gary and Peggy Summers (assistant directors)

6215 Bayside St. NW, Canton, OH 44718

(330) 499-4736

E-mail: p_summers@ameritech.net

Application Deadline: June 15

Local Web Site Address: www.ucgakron.org

Description: Activities will include swimming, fishing, leatherworks, arts and crafts, field games, a walk in a waterfall, campfires and games! Be sure to download your application packet today at www.ucgakron.org. It contains all the information you need about camp.

We would also like to remind the teens and adults that we cannot run camp without your volunteer service. Staff application packets are also available from the Web site listed above. Staff positions will be limited, so be sure to get your application in early!

Oregon: Northwest Preteen Camp

Camp Arrah Wanna, 24075 E Arrah Wanna Blvd., Welches, Oregon

Camp Dates: July 29 to Aug. 1, 2007

Age Range: 6 to 11

Fees: Camper, \$100 per child; staff, no charge

Contact Information:

John Cafourek

720 Van Buren Dr., Salem, OR 97304

(503) 587-7053

E-mail: john_cafourek@ucg.org

Application Deadline: June 1

The maximum number of campers will be 70 due to limited housing at the new camp. We may need to accept fewer staff as well, on a first-come, first-served basis.

Description: Nestled in the foothills of majestic Mt. Hood, the Northwest Camp is located at Camp Arrah Wanna, on 132 acres of majestic forests, the Salmon River and some of Oregon's most beautiful land.

Past preteen camp themes have been God Is There and God Is There for You, Character Counts, Challenge Yourself, Bee All You Can Bee and FROG (fully rely on God). This year's theme is Love Bears All Things.

Activities include Christian living classes, archery, swimming, tubing down the Salmon River (lifeguard included), zip line challenge course, low ropes course, arts and crafts, campfire (singing), dance (limbo), hiking, talent/variety show (you bring the talent) and miniature golf.

Minnesota: Camp Ironwood Springs (North Central Regional Preteen Camp)

Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch, Rt. 1, Stewartville, Minnesota

Camp Dates: Aug. 5 to 8, 2007

Age Range: 6 to 12

Fees: Special family pricing: first camper, \$120; second, \$100; third, \$80; family maximum, \$325. Teen staff: \$80. Adult staff: no charge. Scholarships available for those financially in need.

Contact Information:

Steve and Kathe Myers

25897 655th St., Kasson, MN 55944

(507) 634-6363

E-mail: steve_myers@ucg.org

Application Deadline: June 26

Local Web Site Address: www.ucg-calm.org

Description: Camp Ironwood Springs takes place in a spectacular outdoor setting in southeastern Minnesota. The camp is about 90 miles south of the Twin Cities, and just 15 miles west of Rochester, Minnesota, off I-90.

Ironwood Springs offers a variety of children's activities including Christian living, horseback riding, crafts, field games, court games, swimming, hiking/exploring, obstacle courses, music, wagon rides, campfires, sing-alongs and novelty Olympics.

The girls' and boys' dorms are located in the main lodge and are air-conditioned. Each dorm will be grouped by age and will have an adult counselor and cocounselor staying with the campers. The showers are also located in the main lodge, so campers will not have to walk to an outside bathroom. **UN**

"GCE," continued from page 1

3:9-17 to demonstrate that our work will be tested. Collectively we are building one building, the Church. The wood, hay and stubble Paul talked about are shallow things without much substance. Wisdom and character are needed to pass the tests.

Mr. Kilough quoted Matthew 7, showing that we build on a rock by *doing* the things Christ taught. Doing is the hard



Camilo and Agnes Reyes from Bakersfield, California (photos by Janet Treadway)

part. How does the ministry help the people of God build on the rock? Mr. Kilough said we must build ourselves before teaching others how to build.

Mr. Kilough said that the most important things in spiritual real estate (like the saying goes for physical real estate) is location, location, location. Where are we spiritually?

God is keenly interested to see how we respond to tests. Our studies are the class work; our prayers are the consultation with the teacher; the trials in life are the tests.

God can bail us out of bad decisions, but can't teasingly bail us out of a bad spiritual location. God looks at our hearts—what have we built? Have we built faith? Have we built into ourselves a quick spiritual response of prayer and fasting in the face of trials and tough decisions?

Mr. Kilough pointed out that on May 6, exactly 12 years ago, on the first Sabbath after the Indianapolis conference when United was founded, we were flattened and vulnerable. Because of that, we put "prayer and fasting" three times in the constitution of United, realizing the source of our strength and unity.

We want God to be pleased to hear us, and we want to come to like-mindedness. Mr. Kilough related the *Barnes' Notes* comments on 1 Corinthians 1:10, showing that a union of feeling is possible even when our views differ. Wisdom and knowledge will be our stability (Isaiah 33:5-6).

2. What have we learned in the process of building the house?

Mr. Kilough pointed out that our ability to process the lessons we are learning is very important. He quoted a humorous statement he had heard on the news from Donald Rumsfeld, which went something like this: "I have benefited greatly from the criticisms, and at no time have I suffered a lack thereof."

Knowing our strengths allows us to know what to build on. Knowing our weaknesses allows us to see our vulnerabilities.

Mr. Kilough explained that when we

look back on a challenging situation, we need to:

- Analyze what we have done well and done poorly.
- Learn the right lessons.
- Zealously implement what will make things better.

We don't all have the same opinions, but we are required to have the same mind—having the same love for one another and being of the same accord (Philippians 1:27; 2:2). That's the mortar that holds the bricks together, Mr. Kilough said.

Continuing the building analogy, Mr. Kilough said that in the discussions of the home office relocation, we have had to put on our hard hats, since sometimes we have dropped a hammer from the third floor on each other. Have we learned conflict resolution? he asked. One of the keys to conflict resolution is understanding that we may have different positions and opinions, but we still have shared interests.

Mr. Kilough said that one of the greatest lessons is to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15), the word *rule* meaning in the Greek to act as an umpire over our thoughts and emotions.

3. What do we yet need to build?

When Mr. Kilough moved to Sacramento, California, he saw bridges being retrofitted after an earthquake. We also need to do some bridge building, Mr. Kilough said. We have to treat people right in this Church, he's often joked, because someday you may be related to them.

Tying the keynote back to previous messages, Mr. Kilough said we come back to the power of a mission-driven Church—pulled together by and passionate about that mission. The mission unites. It's shared by heroes of the past. We need to ask ourselves: Are my actions and words going to further the mission? When we are all mission-focused, it's easier to overlook the shortcomings of each other. It's God's mission, not ours. We must be visionary people, Mr. Kilough said. Visionaries are rare. They won't sacrifice their futures for short-term frustrations.

We must demonstrate to the Church, the world and to God that we can have a dispute, make a decision and then walk arm-in-arm, Mr. Kilough said.

International Reports

This year five international reports were presented.

Portuguese-Language Area

Jorge de Campos reported that the needs in the Portuguese-speaking areas are great. He said there's low-hanging fruit we haven't been able to harvest because of lack of manpower. Portuguese is the third most-spoken European language in the world and the sixth-most spoken language in the world.

He explained that the Spanish and Portuguese peoples have had animosity toward each other, making it so we can't reach unconverted Portuguese people using the Spanish language. Portuguese people don't learn Spanish as a second language. In fact, now in Portugal they're teaching English as a second language in schools.

Mr. de Campos mentioned that we are

focusing on feeding the flock now. He is recording Portuguese sermons at least once a month that are heard by about 40 people. He also produces a Portuguese *United News*, and several booklets have been printed and several more are translated, but need to be reviewed. We have a Portuguese Web site and hold a Feast in Portugal each year.

Mr. de Campos encouraged everyone to pray for more laborers in the Portuguese-speaking areas. (For more information, see the article about the Portuguese work on page 4.)

New Zealand and the South Pacific

Jeff Caudle reported that about 50 people attend church in Auckland, New Zealand, and that there are about 150 brethren total in New Zealand. (There were 44 members when Mr. Caudle went there.) About 100 brethren don't see each other except at Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.



Jeff Caudle, who serves in New Zealand, the South Pacific and parts of Asia, with Peter Hawkins, British Isles

There are eight nationalities in the Church in New Zealand, and some recent immigrants don't speak English very well at this point. Mr. Caudle also mentioned that Christianity is declining in popularity in New Zealand, and that 40 percent of New Zealanders claim no religious affiliation at all.

Art Verschoor was ordained an elder last Pentecost. He is a great help when Mr. Caudle travels to serve the brethren he also pastors in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Mr. Caudle reported that the income in New Zealand is NZ\$110,000 now, and that they receive a small subsidy from the United States. Currently 2,400 *Good News* magazines are mailed each issue. Brethren help with all the other mailings. He said they hope to increase the *Good News* circulation to about 5,000 using *Reader's Digest* magazine and Google and Yahoo Internet ads. He also mentioned that UCG-New Zealand has just launched a Web site.

In the South Pacific, Fiji is the primary area of growth, with over 300 subscribers. The brethren in Tonga have been migrating to New Zealand and Australia. There have been riots in Tonga since the death of the king, and the new king is unpopular.

Mr. Caudle mentioned that Walesi Toloi in Fiji died April 28. He said it is a very challenging time for her husband, Emori, and their son, Emori Jr., age 8. In spite of all this, Emori told Mr. Caudle that he just wants to do the work of God.

Mr. Caudle also reported that the South Pacific in general is politically leaning away from the United States and toward Asia.

German Region and the Netherlands

Alfred Riehle reported that there are 150 brethren in the German-language region. There are six congregations in Germany and one in Switzerland. There are also 35 brethren in the Netherlands.

The main tool in reaching the German



Jesmina Allaoua translates the GCE proceedings into German for the German elders

areas is the German version of *The Good News*, *Gute Nachrichten*. There are currently 4,619 subscribers, which is a 13.8 percent increase over last year.

Currently there are 17 booklets in German, as well as the entire *Bible Study Course*. The German study course includes three tests that students need to complete to get a certificate of completion.

The local version of *United News* is *Intern*, and there are 400 subscribers. It is offered to *Gute Nachrichten* readers, and so over 80 percent of *Intern* readers have no previous involvement with the Church.

The German brethren help proofread booklets, and a final team of six editors makes the last corrections.

For advertising they are now using Google and Yahoo keyword ads. The German Web site is now averaging 9,000 unique visitors a month.

Members in Germany help with the mailings. After eight years, the Church



John Elliott, pastor in Arizona and senior pastor for East Africa, and Aaron Dean, Council member from East Texas, converse at the GCE

in Germany rented its first office, where Jesmina Allaoua works.

The Netherlands uses the English *Good News*, producing a Dutch supplement that is inserted into it. There are 1,050 subscribers, a 100 percent increase over the last two years. There are six booklets now in Dutch, and two more should be printed this year. They have also translated the entire *Bible Study Course*, and the first two lessons are now online.

East Africa

John Elliott reported that most of the members in East Africa are in Kenya. The Church has been registered in Kenya, and we are working on getting it registered in Uganda and Tanzania.

Mr. Elliott pointed out that these nations are in a dangerous area of the world, very near the problems in Somalia and Sudan, for instance.

There are 850 people attending the United Church of God in East Africa. We have no elders there, but four deacons serve the brethren, two of them full-time. Currently there are 119 baptized members in 15 congregations and a number of Bible studies. Tim Waddle was recently named associate senior pastor and will take two trips a year to East Africa.

There are 1,500 *Good News* subscribers in East Africa. Interestingly, Ethiopia and Eritrea are second and third in *Good News* subscribers in the region. Some of the core literature has been translated into Swahili, Kuo and Kisii. The hymnal has also been translated into Swahili.

Mr. Elliott mentioned that he recently trained 18 new congregational leaders to help in the congregations. The deacons are only able to visit each congregation once a month.

Who are the genuine sheep? Mr. Elliott pointed out that there is a lot of interest in the Church, and it can be challenging to tell who is really being called. He said there is a 60 percent growth rate even though they have to attend weekly, tithe and keep the commandments before they can receive assistance from the Church.

Good Works projects in East Africa include providing Church meeting halls, famine relief, disease preventative water filters, mosquito nets and water wells. Mr. Elliott said water wells benefit Church members and the surrounding communities as well. He pointed out the need for caring for widows and orphans in our

congregations. He mentioned a youth camp will be held in December for 75 teens and 20 staff.

French-Speaking Region

Joel Meeker reported that there are French-speaking members in Europe, Canada, the Caribbean, Africa and the Indian Ocean. (The francophone Canadian areas are administered by the Canadian office.) In Europe, the 50 members are spread across France,

Belgium and Switzerland—in an area bigger than Texas.

There are African members in Rwanda (with 70 to 80 attending), Cameroon, Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast. We also have one faithful member in Burkina Faso and one in Gabon. There are about a dozen members in Mauritius and Reunion islands in the Indian Ocean and 10 in Martinique (an island in the Caribbean that is a part of France).

There are interested groups in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar. (See the story of the “coincidences” that led someone in Madagascar to contact the Church on page 4 of this issue.)

“Attendance” in the French-speaking area is about 300 people who receive sermon recordings.

Currently there are 13 countries with French-speaking members. The French version of *The Good News* has a circulation of 1,200, which they hope to double this year. Bernard Hongerlout helps with the editorial efforts. They also print a wall calendar with pictures of members around the world to remind all the brethren that this is a worldwide work. Mr. Meeker mentioned the French Web site and said they would begin banner advertising on the Internet as well.

He also mentioned leadership training in French Africa and Good Works projects, such as constructing church halls and providing dental care in Rwanda.

Tribute to the Deceased Elders and Wives

Ken Giese led a tribute to four elders and wives, with photos, tributes from family and friends and a printed brochure. He mentioned that 65 elders and wives have died in United since 1995. Those remembered were:

- Robert Allen Borton
- Phillip Carl Fowler
- Evelyn Keeley
- Jack Wayne Williams



Evelyn and Bob Fahey of Chicago, Illinois, talk with Ray Wright of Dallas, Texas (photo by Janet Treadway)

Address From the President

After lunch, Mr. Dick introduced Mr. Kilough again for the address from the president.

What has been done in the last year? Mr. Kilough said there's a lot going on,

and the news has been reported in *United News*, *Ministerial Services Newsletter*, etc. So instead of a recap, Mr. Kilough decided to address the question: “What's on my mind every day as I come to work?”

He said his focus comes mostly from working with the Council and following its directives. Last May the Council discussed four major areas that the Church needs to focus on: the internal spiritual health of the Church; manpower issues (which are being addressed through new ministerial education programs); preaching the gospel (the Media Steering Group has been working on many of these issues); and relationships with other Sabbatarian groups (for example, the friendly meeting with the leadership of the Living Church of God last October).

God has given us an exciting mission and great work to do. Mr. Kilough said he goes to work with energy every day.

Address From the Treasurer

Treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick recounted recent statistics on the growth of UCG's income well above the inflation rate and encouraged the audience to not take these blessings for granted. For example, the increase for the current fiscal year is now 8 percent over this point in the previous fiscal year.

Dr. Kirkpatrick reminded the elders that we continue to face challenges as we face the future, and said that the blessings we receive are financial manna, and its source is God (Matthew 17:27).

Address From the Ministerial Services Operation Manager

Jim Franks said that two things have become abundantly clear. If Christ doesn't return soon, we will have a shortage of pastors, and our best teachers are also aging.

For historical perspective, Mr. Franks described the rapid growth of the Radio Church of God from 1933 to 1953. In spite of the tremendous reach of the organization by 1953, still only about 1,000

people were attending the Feast of Tabernacles. But that time was a turning point, as other pastors in addition to Herbert Armstrong were now being ordained, and growth in baptisms also increased.

Mr. Franks said there is no expiration date on doing the work of God. He

described how the ministerial development program has been instrumental in hiring 14 new pastors. He also talked about taking the training to many other parts of the world. He said another round of the new six-week training program is planned, and will include current pastors. He said they expect to continue that program.

He said there will be five regional conferences this year, and then four the following year, with the theme “Study to Show Yourself Approved.”

He then gave a number of statistics:

- 33 percent of the Church is under the age of 30 (in Houston, where he served previously, 50 percent were under the age of 20).
- 94 pastors serve 217 congregations in the United States.
- Average weekly attendance in the United States is 11,500. On the First Holy Day of Unleavened Bread over 13,000 attended. The total number on our rolls is over 15,000.
- The average increase in Feast attendance has been 4 percent; in local areas, it has been 1 to 3 percent.

Matthew 9:38 reminds us that this is God's harvest. Mr. Franks encouraged everyone to “pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

Address From the Media and Communications Services Operation Manager

Peter Eddington began his address by thanking the many ministers involved as writers, reviewers, editors, presenters,



ABC's *Nightline* program discussed GodTube and aired a clip from the *Beyond Today* program

etc. for the Church's media products.

He listed a number of growth statistics:

- April was the best month ever at gmagazine.org, with 182,500 visitors.
- April was also the best month for *Beyond Today* responses.
- The *Vertical Thought* Web site also showed dramatic increases over the previous year.
- There are now a record 356,000 U.S. subscribers to *The Good News*.
- The *Reader's Digest* ad has received over 25,000 responses so far, and the *American Baby* and *Parents* ad responses are coming in as well.

Mr. Eddington then discussed where the marketing and media industry is headed, showing that broadband Internet connections are growing dramatically around the world. The United States and China are the largest broadband markets, and there were 250 million households worldwide with broadband at the end of



Judy and Bill Swanson perform at the talent show Sunday evening, May 6, at the General Conference of Elders meeting (photo by Janet Treadway)

2006. And now countries like Japan (52 percent) and South Korea (80 percent) are moving to even higher speed Internet. Optical fiber to the home (FTTH) offers 50 to 100 times the speed.

We need to continue to capitalize on these trends, Mr. Eddington said.

Who's watching Internet video? Not just the kids. Over one third of everyone over age 3 watches Internet video at least once a month, Mr. Eddington pointed out. Statistics show 87 percent of the U.S. population has watched video online at some time, and 63 percent of those who visit video sites are over 45. That's why we put a concerted effort into posting videos to Google, Yahoo, YouTube and now GodTube (officially launched May 1, and already the top Christian Web site).

Mr. Eddington showed a clip from ABC's *Nightline* program two weeks before that discussed GodTube and featured video from a *Beyond Today* program on pornography.

Mr. Eddington also pointed out that more information will be produced this year than the total storage space available. Getting the right

information at the right time is getting harder. That's another reason our message has to be relevant, or people will move on.

We need to allocate as many resources as possible to these efforts, Mr. Eddington said.

Address From the Chairman

Bob Dick mentioned that he was giving his address before knowing the results of the home office relocation proposal (which were announced after his speech).

He began by remembering a Feast trip that put him in Frankfurt, Germany, during the reunification of East and West Germany. Soon all of Eastern Europe was free, and Russia itself was on the path to democracy. But with the strong tradition of autocratic rule, the question has long been asked: Can Russia learn democracy?

Mr. Dick reminded the elders and wives that as a Church, we have autocratic roots. The options in the worst case

in autocratic systems are to be quiet or to leave. This only creates a verbal black market. Many left to say: No one will ever tell me what to do again! Others wanted the security and comfort of the same government they were used to.

Mr. Dick said the United Church of God is unique—we chose a different path. We face a similar challenge to the former Soviet Union. Can we make a significant cultural shift? Yes, and we have.

Of course each of us in United has a tendency to lean one way or the other. Mr. Dick said that has not stopped us from putting the work ahead of personal leanings.

He further reminded the elders that either way the vote comes out, the Council will continue to address the primary issues that led to a proposal for expansion, including discussions of ministerial training, of making ABC more of a character-building institution, and of present and future space shortages.

Mr. Dick concluded by reminding everyone that we have chosen a form of church governance that allows us many freedoms, but to preserve these freedoms, we must use them responsibly.

Mr. Dick then received and reported the results of the balloting (included earlier in this report).

Workshops

On Monday, May 7, the elders and wives were able to choose to attend three of the following workshops:

1. Preaching Effective Sermonettes (Richard Pinelli and Jon Pinelli).
2. Bringing the Scriptures to Life (Dave Johnson).
3. Facilitating Interactive Bible Studies (Roger West and Paul Luecke).
4. Conducting Small Group Bible Studies (Bob Fahey).
5. Effective Use of Inductive Teaching (Ralph Levy and Randy Stiver).
6. Congregational Tapestry: Building Cross-Generational Bridges and Bonds in Our Congregations (Dave Register and Julie Zutz).
7. Women's Workshop—“Building Her House” (Women's Planning Task Force).

Mr. Dick concluded the day with thanks to the many people involved in putting on the GCE meetings. He then asked Dave Baker, senior pastor for Asia, to close the meetings with prayer.

Mike Bennett



From the Word

The Sabbath Sign

■ The Bible says the Sabbath is a sign. This concept is more powerful than you might have realized. Are you keeping the Sabbath in such a way that you see the sign? Do people who know you see it reflected in your life?

by Cecil E. Maranville

We are all familiar with our inspiring Church seal that encapsulates our compound mission in the brief, but powerful words, "Preaching the Gospel...Preparing a People." Shown encircling the globe, these simple words portray the heart of Matthew 24:14, Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 13:10.

Such is the nature of a well-crafted logo. Every day, we encounter countless corporate logos that we instantly associate with the product that they market. That's what the merchants hope we will do! If I say, "Get a hamburger," you will probably think of a specific fast-food restaurant, because of the company's advertising. If I say, "Buy yourself a new car," you might also immediately think of a specific manufacturer and model. If I say, "Here's some cash. Get yourself a new outfit," you likely immediately think of a specific mall!

An Utterly Unique "Logo"

As people committed to the Sabbath, we are privileged to see an unparalleled insignia, an "advertisement," if you will, weekly. God revealed this in Exodus 31:13, where He ordered Moses to tell Israel: "You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that

you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you" (NRSV).

He continued in verse 17: "It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

Does the Sabbath cause something to resonate even within our subconscious thoughts, the way a well-designed corporate logo does? Of course, it isn't intended to stir us to buy a product, but rather to be a product. It should forcefully renew our consciousness of who we are to God and who He is to us. Weekly, it should compel us to "change brands" from any "purchases" we have been making to the way of life God intends for us to live.

No Time for the Sabbath

Sometimes, we minimize the impact the Sabbath has upon us.

Recently, I heard of a few people who informed their pastor that they simply didn't have time for the Sabbath or attending church any longer. I felt a deep sadness, knowing that they were shutting themselves off from seeing this phenomenal "corporate seal" and the spiritually rejuvenating effect it could have upon them.

We are aware of how Israel disappointed God repeatedly by also straying from keeping the Sabbath. Pardon the commercial analogy, but think of a billboard prominently placed along a well-traveled highway that you see often. It reminds you of its product, even subconsciously. Then imagine the billboard being replaced by the advertisement of another company's product. You will no longer be reminded of the previous item and you will be more likely to buy the newly advertised one.

Israel essentially tore down thousands of "billboards" that were in

every household throughout their nation every Sabbath by turning away from keeping it. The result could not have been more catastrophic. Their behavior drifted into immorality. Their religion was corrupted with the ideas of the pagans of Canaan. Eventually, God had no choice but to completely dissolve the nation and send it into captivity.

A Portrait of the Great King

The prophecy of Ezekiel addresses this in detail: "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I [am] the LORD who sanctifies them" (Ezekiel 20:12). *Expositor's Bible Commentary* captures the entire picture in its comment on this verse:

"The Mosaic covenant followed the pattern of the international suzerain-vassal treaties of the second millennium B.C. A great king would enter into a covenant with a lesser power in order to provide blessings and protection to that vassal. The subject nation would, in turn, follow the stipulations laid down by the great king.

"God chose to reveal Israel's constitution in this familiar literary form. God was the great king, and Israel had become his vassal. The Lord had been benevolent to Israel by bringing her out of Egyptian servitude. Israel, in turn, was to be a witness for God in the world, living according to God's righteous stipulations of the Mosaic covenant. The great king would seal this covenant by placing his 'sign' in the midst of the legal policy. *The sign was a portrait of himself in some manner.*

"The Lord placed his sign-seal of the Mosaic covenant in the midst of the Decalogue (cf. Kline, *Great King*, pp. 18-19). He represented himself as the Creator in the sign of the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13, 17). By con-



Our inspiring Church seal encapsulates our compound mission in the brief, but powerful words, "Preaching the Gospel...Preparing a People." Consider that the Sabbath also serves as a sign or logo.

tinually observing the weekly Sabbath, Israel would be reminded that God graciously set her apart as an instrument of blessing to the world and as a witness against the pagans who had exchanged the worship of the Creator for the worship of his creation (v. 12; Neh. 9:14; Rom. 1:25)" (emphasis added).

Think of that: The sign was a portrait of the Great King in some manner. The Sabbath is a portrait of the Creator! Keeping it allows us to see our Father, His purpose, *His* mission. What an incredible opportunity! What a priceless privilege!

An Unparalleled Retreat

Notice further that the people of God were to, in turn, reflect this "portrait" to others. Jesus spoke of this concept in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Keeping the Sabbath should stamp His imprimatur upon us, so that we can reflect

Him to those we encounter throughout the week.

My analogies are weak, for the Sabbath isn't a drive-by experience. It isn't something we merely glance at as we rush about our activities. To complete the analogy, we should think of the day as a retreat from daily routines as much as possible in order to fully absorb what the Sabbath affords. Think of a retreat to a beautiful, comfortable, peaceful place, surrounded by people of like mind for enjoying food, discussions and learning together.

Our United Youth Camps seek to create "the Zone," an environment that is safe, as well as infused with a godly orientation that takes the campers out of the world for a period of immersion education. The experience can be life-changing. That is what the Sabbath ought to be for us.

I hope this inspires you to think about how you view the Sabbath, how you keep it and any changes you might need to make. **UN**

Face the Music: Small Congregations Need Music Too!

by Linda Hansen

Isn't music a wonderful gift of God? Not many gifts can bring such great joy and benefit as music. The greatest expression of this gift is the honor and praise music can bring to God. It adds an emotional connection to our relationship with God. Repeatedly in the Psalms we're taught that God appreciates and desires praises to be sung to Him.

Did you know that you can participate in this wonderful way to worship God and edify His people? One way to contribute is by involving yourself in a small group to present special music at Sabbath services. Not all congregations have enough musical members to have a full choir with a director, but most could

still have special music sung or played regularly by a duet, trio or quartet.

Our congregations would undoubtedly benefit by being inspired and having their hearts and minds prepared to hear the sermon. Additionally the musicians are also strengthened as they learn God's Word set to music. Unity is built within the congregation as individuals of various ages work together to rejoice and praise God. Lifelong and eternal bonds of friendship are developed between brethren and with our God.

If you or someone in your congregation has a bit of musical experience, but are unsure how to get started, here are some steps to help you reach your goal:

First, pray for God's guidance and blessing. Ask Him to use you in His

service through music. Ask Him to add to your talents. You can also talk to your pastor and ask for his guidance and support. You may need to be a bit of a salesman to help others to participate in this worthy goal.

Next, consider your accompaniment. Do you have a pianist to accompany your group? If not, you may choose prerecorded music or use a midi file played through a keyboard.

Then choosing an appropriate selection is crucial. It must be easy for the people in your group to sing or play. You might even consider a song from the hymnal. Whatever you choose, be sure that it's a fun and enjoyable experience! By providing each participant with purchased sheet music and a

rehearsal CD to practice at home, you can insure better success.

Remember, it's not just about the music. It's about the relationships between people and with God encouraged through the music. Music is a wonderful tool to help develop peace, joy and unity that fundamentally come from God. When we're motivated by the right reasons, God can take our efforts and bless them. He can inspire those with nominal musical skills to support and even contribute to special music.

Still apprehensive? More help is on the way. The UCG Choir Rehearsal Music Library has been organized as your resource, by Linda Hansen, under the supervision of UCG national music coordinator Steve Myers. **A library of**

rehearsal music practice parts as well as performance demonstrations, stored as MP3s and midi files, has been created. Now you don't have to go to all the effort of finding and selecting new music or producing practice tapes. Many of the selections in the library may be successfully presented by four singers, or even fewer!

If you are interested in receiving a library listing, please e-mail Linda Hansen at lindahansen@juno.com. You can even request a CD of rehearsal music and performance demonstrations of selections suitable for your small group. We can also help with information on how and where to purchase sheet music.

Now you have a resource to make it easy to sing a new song to the Lord! **UN**

That Was Easy!

■ When Christ said His yoke was easy, what did He mean?

by John LaBissoniere

Perhaps you have seen one of several humorous television commercials by Staples, the office supply store chain. In most of the commercials, someone is having a business supply or organizational problem.

Suddenly, a store employee pulls out an “easy button,” pushes it and the particular problem is instantly resolved!

The announcer then says, “that was easy!”—implying if you go to Staples, your office supply problems will be effortlessly solved. The “easy button” commercials are effective

because they appeal to people’s natural desire to find simpler ways to handle problems.

So, wouldn’t it be nice if there were some kind of “easy button” to handle life’s difficulties and challenges? If you encountered a quandary or predicament such as a financial, marriage, child rearing or employment problem, you simply pressed the button and immediately it was taken care of.

Well, as you and I know, there is no such fanciful device. But, Jesus Christ describes something that is easy. In Matthew 11:29-30 He declares, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (emphasis added throughout).

Now, probably when some people read this “easy yoke” passage, they feel somewhat skeptical. They may categorize this statement of Jesus with others such as “turning the other cheek” or “loving your enemies.” To many people, these assertions don’t seem, well, practical. Certainly they are wonderful, idealistic aspirations, but to put them into practice seems to be a different story!

But is Jesus’ “easy yoke” statement truly unrealistic and impractical? Is it unworkable and unfeasible in today’s world? Just what exactly did Jesus mean when He said “My yoke is easy and My burden is light”?

What’s a Yoke?

Let’s discuss this passage by first asking another question: Just what is a yoke? *The Complete Word Study—New Testament* explains that “yoke” comes from the Greek word *zugos* meaning “a coupling or servitude.” *Webster’s Diction-*

ary describes “yoke” as a bow of wood by which two draft animals are united at the neck.

So, two oxen, horses, mules or similar animals are coupled together in a wooden collar or yoke. The animals are trained to combine their strength as a team, to pull heavy loads and accomplish various farm or ranch tasks.

Jesus talks about His yoke—meaning He is working at accomplishing a task or performing a mission.

He invites us to join with Him in His work. We are to be “hitched up” with Him, to labor together, pursuing identical goals.

Additionally, He said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...”

Those “yoked” with Christ are in a position to really get to know Him. In fact, they have a personal relationship with Him.

Next, in Matthew 11:30, Jesus says, “For My yoke is easy...” Just what does He mean? *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* explains that the word *easy* comes from the Greek word *salloo*, meaning better, easy, good, gracious and kind.

Additionally, in verse 30 Jesus says: “My burden is light.” The *Geneva Bible Translation Notes* explains that *geresh* is the Greek word rendered “light,” meaning it “may easily be carried.” Why is Christ’s burden “light” and His yoke “easy”? The answer is certainly not in pressing a whimsical, Staples-like “easy button.” Rather, Jesus offers an easier, less-burdensome way to live compared to another way that is, by far, more arduous and grueling.

Again, why is Christ’s yoke “easy”? Because a person is yoked with Jesus Christ Himself, while conversely sinners are yoked as slaves to the world and its satanic, malevolent ways.

In Galatians 5:1 the apostle Paul says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

So, on the one hand there is Christ’s yoke, while in contrast there is a “yoke of bondage.” It is a way of slavery, oppression and tyranny of sin and the rule of the devil, the results of which are heartaches, sadness, grief, suffering and death.

Satan’s “yoke of bondage” and Christ’s “easy yoke” of humility are poles apart in purpose and results. One is of the flesh while the other is of the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). So Jesus invites all who are weighed down by the burdens of this world to heed His call. In Matthew 11:28

He says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Now does this word *easy* mean that, when teaming up with Jesus in His yoke, a Christian’s life will be carefree, tranquil and effortless? Does a “light” burden mean that Christ’s disciples will not experience hardships or trials? Does an “easy” yoke mean security from conflicts, stresses, troubles and difficulties?

The obvious answer is no. I don’t have to tell you that it is a challenge being a Christian! But, compared to godlessness and to paying the penalties for sin, Christ’s yoke is an “easy” one.

With Whom Would We Rather Be Yoked?

As we are well aware, many brethren endure and suffer stressful difficulties. In the face of rigorous trials, however, there is a serious question for each of us. With whom would we rather be yoked: Christ or the devil?

When we are afflicted with sickness, physical pain or distress, with whom would we rather be yoked? When we are struggling with tension and strain on the job or in our family, with whom would we rather be yoked? When we have lost a loved one, when our friends or family have abandoned us, when our health is failing, when any number of other trials, large or small come our way, with whom would we rather be yoked?

And, now, an even larger question: With whom are we now yoked? What choices are we currently making? Which way are we now choosing? As followers of Christ, we are to be yoked with Him in a life of cooperation, submission, compliance, faith and trust—of developing godly character. We are to be yoked with Him through obedience to His commandments (Psalm 119:172).

Examples of Endurance

The Scriptures give plentiful examples of godly men and women who, while “in harness” with Christ, endured great pressure, tension and trouble. We can read about the mistreatment and troubles endured by Noah, Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Esther, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and many others, including the apostles of Christ.

The book of Hebrews describes many of these God-fearing people. They endured much, as they too were yoked with God, in a world yoked with Satan. “Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Hebrews 11:36-37).

Then it talks about Jesus Christ, who, being yoked with the Father, provided the perfect example for

us: “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:2-4).

Just as Jesus and other men and women of faith, we, too, being “yoked” with Christ, can be called on to bear significant burdens. As Luke 14:27 says: “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Indeed, Jesus’ “easy yoke” and “light burden” requires sacrifice. A cross must be carried to be a disciple of Christ. In Acts 14:22 Paul exhorted the disciples “to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’”

Paul echoes what Christ said about His yoke being “easy” as compared to the bondage of the world’s way. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world” (1 Peter 1:5-7, New Living Translation).

While we undergo and endure trials, we should not give up! As Jude 24 says, God “is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

So we must forsake all to be yoked with Christ. How do we do this? By zealously maintaining a personal relationship with Him through regular and diligent prayer, Bible study and occasional fasting. To be yoked with Christ, we must love God, be involved in the work of the Church, love our brethren, forgive others and seek forgiveness from God when we sin.

If we do this, God promises good things now and life eternal to come. God guarantees that He will not let us down, but will hear us and will be close to us. “Cast your burden on the LORD and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22).

Jesus Christ doesn’t offer us a Staples-like “easy button,” but He



So, the “easy yoke,” this “light affliction,” is for but a short time—from God’s point of view—but, it brings wonderful splendor later on. It is described here in this superb passage: “And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.

“These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith

offers us something much better! He invites us to be “yoked” with Him—to go to work with Him! With Him we can accomplish the task and perform the mission of preaching the gospel and developing holy, righteous character.

Jesus Christ’s yoke is easy compared to the hard yoke of bondage offered by the world. So, if we choose Christ’s way, we will be able to declare at His second coming, as the Staple’s announcer proclaims, “That was easy!” **UN**

John LaBissoniere is an employee of the Media and Communications Services department and an elder serving in the Knoxville, Tennessee, area.

The Dangerous Love

■ Paul warned about a love that would be a symptom of this end time. It can be deadly for Christians.

by John Yavelak

Could love ever be dangerous? That sounds silly at first. But what if God warned us of a different kind of love that would be more prevalent in the end times, a time perilous to Christians? And suppose events have happened and are happening right now in 21st-century America and other Western countries making this dangerous kind of love spread?

This kind of love—bad for society, deadly for Christians—has surprisingly broad prevalence in society. The more research I did into it, the more surprised I became.

Inordinate Love of Self, Also Known as Narcissism

The biblical warning of 2 Timothy 3:2—that in the end time men will be “lovers of themselves”—is a serious prophecy of a subtle yet profound change in society. The word used in this verse is *phlauros*—fond of oneself, selfish. This has manifested itself in our values, culture and families; and beyond that, it is even taught more and more by schools and churches.

It is very important right now to make the point we are to love ourselves and our neighbor as ourselves (Galatians 5:14) and to recognize the worth and potential that God has given to each of us. However, it is not the normal love of self that Paul warned about, but the inward, self-centered, selfish attitude that has been growing especially in American society. Narcissism, this extreme love of self, comes from the name *Narcissus*, a mythical Greek youth who pined away for love of his own reflection!

American society has, especially in the past 50 years, encouraged us to become more and more self-centered. To state it in other words, the individual has become more important. The U.S. Army “An Army of One” recruiting

ads might have been entertaining, but the emphasis on the one lone soldier out there is the direct opposite of the whole concept of teamwork and cooperation that the Army is built upon. No wonder the Army recently decided to change to a new slogan, “Army Strong.”

Love of self has roots going back to the Garden of Eden and beyond. In recent history, though, the 1960s was a time to “do your own thing.” Psychologists in the 1960s promoted easy divorce with the idea, “Take care of yourself and the kids will be okay.” The 1960s was a time when a whole generation was taught to discard stuffy old values prohibiting selfish behavior in sex and drugs.

George F. Will, in his article “About That Sixties Idealism” (*Newsweek*, Aug. 21, 1995), well said: “The Spirit of the Sixties was, strictly speaking, infantile. For an infant, any appetite is self-legitimizing.” The ideas of putting self before responsibilities, moral principles and other people’s welfare unfortunately have been promoted for many years.

The 1970s generation, often referred to as the “Me Generation,” exhibited even more of this self-centered attitude. Business articles of that era warned about the loss of team spirit and cooperation.

Self-esteem itself as an idea really goes back to the beginnings of modern psychology, which had its roots in the late 19th century. That’s a long time ago by our life spans, but it is really a “recent” development, coming at the end of 2,000 years after Christ, and it really fits the period of the end times. This was no coincidence.

With the philosophical foundations laid, the promotion of this way of life continued on to the present time. Trends included consumerist slogans by corporate advertisers such as:

- “Just Do It” (Nike).
- “Sometimes You Gotta Break the Rules” (Burger King).
- “No Rules. Just Right” (Outback Steakhouse).

Schools got in on the bandwagon with programs that pushed self-esteem and values clarification, which would include statements like “Self-interest

is and should be the foundation for all moral decisions.”

In the business environment employees face the “you can only depend on yourself” concept growing from the multitude of downsizings and other corporate events shattering the typical employee’s world. There’s also cynicism toward corporate leadership in the wake of ongoing scandals, cuttingly portrayed in the popular “Dilbert” comic series.

Then there’s the outrageous individual behaviors by leaders and celebrities such as a past U.S. president known for exploiting women, narcissistic movie stars and arrogant corporate executives who make sure they “got theirs” even as their trusting employees were impoverished (à la Enron).

Our society now faces serious consequences over this change, which began subtly at first, then grew into an all-pervasive sea change in our world. It manifests itself in rude behavior, loss of civility, violent crimes, family breakdowns, far more divorces and even deaths.

Irving O. Hockaday, on accepting the Lawrence A. Wein Prize, said: “As a country, while we revere individualism, we are in danger of forgetting that a civil society survives only as long as individuals are subject to moral imperatives that transcend narcissism and egocentrism” (quoted in *Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 1995).

Beyond manners, civility and crime (as though they’re not important enough) is the subtle change in human thinking that comes from this gross distortion. Divorce is much easier for self-centered people who simply feel “too restricted” by obligations. High school and college students can’t understand the need for hard work and diligence. After feeding on “self-esteem” for years, they’re full of empty visions of self.

John Loveless, assistant professor of public policy at Harvard’s School of Government, warned that “American students consistently score near the top in self-evaluations...even though they score near the bottom in academic achievement” (*Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 22, 1997).

When we can’t honestly view ourselves, how can we care for others, fulfill obligations and uphold the principles that hold a society together? Maureen Dowd warned that we live in a society “where loyalty to self yields to no other loyalty” (*New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1996). Self-absorbed people not only are totally oblivious to the noble concept of loyalty, they can’t understand that civilization rests on people putting limits on themselves for the greater good of society.

We Americans must find our way back to a public-mindedness, to a caring for others, an adherence to principles that go beyond the gratification of the self. Cynthia Tucker felt that things really hadn’t changed much since Sept. 11, saying, “As a culture, we are as superficial and self-absorbed as ever” (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Feb. 3, 2002). I must agree with her.

Below is a final warning to our



Love of self has roots going back to the Garden of Eden and beyond. Narcissism is a slow poison to Christians. Only one weapon is powerful enough to block and reverse this—the Bible.

society, well put by Andrew Peyton Thomas in his Aug. 29, 1995, article in the *Wall Street Journal*, “Can We Ever Go Back?”: “Americans are glorifying extreme individualism beyond healthy limits, and beyond anything ever experienced by another national culture. Civilization was created to constrain egoism. When a society decides that its individual members should live for themselves, maximizing their own wealth and pleasures at the expense of even their children, then such a society must expect all manner of unkind circumstances.”

The apostle Paul was far ahead of his time. Consider that this major change in civilization needed as preparation: (1) hundreds of years of philosophical change, (2) a social science movement 1,900 years after Paul’s death, (3) new and seemingly never-before-taught ideas in behavior and culture. All of these would culminate in exactly the mental condition that God warned would exist in the end times.

Effects on Christians

Bad enough for American society, the dangerous love has even more serious effects on Christians in particular.

The entire message of Jesus Christ is one of serving and righteousness. No Christian who is serious about his or her calling can fill his or her mind with this selfish thinking.

How can we fulfill Christ’s admonition in Mark 8:34 to deny self? How do we love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31)? A self-absorbed person can’t do that! How can we “lay down” our lives for our friends (John 15:13)? Christians aren’t to have colossal egos. We are to esteem others higher than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).

This new, prophesied dangerous love uproots the very foundation we stand on and the way we think. It will destroy our religion as it erases our memory. Narcissism—inordinate love of self—could even be said to outrank persecution as a danger to a Christian. A persecuted Christian holding on will at least know his or her beliefs. But narcissistic Christians don’t even realize that they are being hollowed out, being retrained to reject their Savior’s teachings!

Unfortunately, a number of leaders of various Christian denominations have accepted and promoted the self-esteem

concept as good for their followers, not seeing the grave long-term danger. Robert Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral and creator of the *Hour of Power* program with its millions of viewers, called Jesus Christ “Self-Esteem Incarnate,” a statement I find incredible and fearful (Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, 1982, page 135). An entire civilization, along with many of its churches, is changing in a broad, unusual way.

This can seem an ethereal philosophical argument, but it is actually a road to doom for Christians. As more and more of the self-esteem thinking takes hold, a Christian will lose humility. We can’t remain small in our own sight when a powerful argument puffs us up. Christians can’t see the need to serve others, when that same powerful force all around us tells us how “important,” “unique” and “special” we are.

The narcissistic Christian looks good on the outside, but is being hollowed out or vaporized on the inside. The only thing I can liken this to is a subtle type of brainwashing.

All you have to do now is look around at the slogan of our time: “It’s All About Me.” We’re being trained, and in a very wrong, dangerous new way of thinking the early apostles warned about. Only one weapon is powerful enough to block and reverse this—the Bible.

God tells us how to rightly love ourselves, knowing the right value He places on us, without empty ego getting in the way. Also we’re taught not only the right motive and thinking, but practical methods to care for others, set a right example and please the One who called us. Indeed, we ought to not please ourselves.

Narcissism is a slow poison to Christians. Our defense must be a deeper conversion, yes, but beyond that, the ultimate answer is to examine and purify our own motives. We are to lead a whole civilization to greatness someday, to assist in the restoration of the Kingdom of God. We are called to prepare to serve many others—not just for our own salvation. We don’t want to fail them!

The selfish will. The selfless won’t. **UN**

John Yavelak is a member in the Jefferson, Georgia, congregation.

Study Shows Self-Love at All-Time High

“Narcissism and entitlement among college students are at an all-time high, according to a recent study conducted by a San Diego State University researcher.

“The analysis examined the responses of 16,000 college students across the United States who filled out the Narcissistic Personality Inventory between 1982 and 2006.

“The study, conducted by Jean Twenge, SDSU psychology professor and author of *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*, and colleagues at the University of Michigan, the University of Georgia and the University of South Alabama, is the largest ever conducted on generational changes in narcissism, which is characterized by excessive self admiration, vanity and a sense of entitlement...

“Twenge noted that people high in narcissism lack empathy for others, are aggressive when insulted, seek public glory and favor self-enhancement over helping others look good. Narcissists are also more likely to be materialistic and to seek attention and fame...

“The study finds that narcissism is significantly higher in recent generations than in older generations. Thirty percent more college students showed elevated narcissism in 2006 compared to 1982... ‘Current technology fuels the increase in narcissism,’ Twenge said. ‘By its very name, MySpace encourages attention-seeking, as does YouTube, whose slogan is ‘Broadcast Yourself.’”

advancement.sdsu.edu/marcomm/news/releases/spring2007/pr022707.htm

"I Like Ruts!"

■ Habits can be good or bad. How do we get out of the bad ones and reinforce the godly ones?

by Robert Berendt

One of my sisters retired after 27 years working as a telephone receptionist. She has many talents and has done much in her life—but the manager asked her how she could stick with a repetitive sort of job for 27 years. Her reply was: "I like ruts."

That got me thinking about habits, ruts and things that we do almost subconsciously. I soon realized that we all have ruts of some sort. They are either good or bad. Having routines in life, like going to bed at a regular time and such things are said to be healthy. Problems with drinking or gambling are habits or ruts that will cause us much pain.

It seems all of us develop ruts from childhood, and getting out of ruts that are going nowhere is not easy to do.

We do have the ability to change our habits, although in many instances we only do that under duress. This sort of change can be one of the most difficult of human endeavors.

We kind of like our ruts in life. When life has been full of bumps and rough spots, we crave some peace and quiet. Ruts often

give us comfort and reduce stress. If the rut is really good, we need to let it get so deep we never would leave it.

Climbing out of Bad Ruts

God shows us ruts that He hates, and we should respond in love to Him and appreciation to Jesus Christ by climbing out of those ruts and walking in newness of life—that is establishing new ruts—the kind of ruts that please God.

Paul has much to say about the changes we must make. Romans 6:4 carries his admonition to walk in newness of life, and in verses 11-22 he tells us to stop being slaves to sin and to become slaves of righteousness. That means change.

True repentance is the recognition of sin and, when the horror of sin is understood, making a 180-degree turn and running in the opposite direction. We ought to be willing to make any change God asks of us in order to conform to the image of His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29; 12:2).

When I consider the effort some people have expended to obey God, I stand in admiration of them. Paul tells of some ruts or lifestyles that are so deep and so evil that remaining in them would cost us eternal life. He also tells of people who have managed to climb out of those deep ruts and made the needed changes.

Paul lists fornication, idolatry, adul-

tery, homosexuality, sodomy, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling and extortion as examples of behavior patterns that bar the door to God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). He also joyfully states: "And such were some of you" (verse 11).

The "were" carries an encouraging emphasis. These lifestyles often have deep roots that take great effort to fight. Some are so strong that total healing is not possible in this lifetime—but a change of behavior and attitude toward the problem is always possible. For some, total abstinence is the only solution.

Whatever the effort required, the only real choice is to make the change. Claw, scratch and fight your way out of the behavior patterns that could cost your eternal life. God does not want to lose a single person (1 Timothy 2:4).

Overcoming the Adversary

The Bible tells us that mankind has an adversary (1 Peter 5:8). Satan uses every means to disrupt the attempts of those who want to escape his influence and begin living a life that is pleasing to God. Jesus spoke about the ongoing struggle on the spiritual level that affects every one of us.

Matthew 13:18-23 tells the meaning of the parable of the sower and the seed, referring to the calling God the Father gives to those He selects.



Some who do not understand lose that calling almost immediately because the "wicked one" comes and takes it away. Some who receive the seed on "stony places" fall from the calling due to "tribulation or persecution" that arise because of the truth. For some the cares of this world and "deceitfulness of riches" choke the word.

When these passages are examined in the light of our lives, we can readily see that some people have horrendous odds to overcome. It is only with the great power that God offers when He hears our strong

cries and our vehement prayers, that the problems can be overcome. Even Jesus relied on this powerful help (Hebrews 5:7).

Perfect Patterns

What about good habits? God has behavior patterns that are perfect and never change. His "ruts" are so deep there is no leaving them. As the final product of conversion, the children of God will evidence the same deep ruts that the Father and Son already have.

Some of the behavior patterns of God are proclaimed in Exodus 34:6-7: Merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abounding in goodness and truth, forgiving and just. Titus 1:2 states that God "cannot lie."

Those born of God "cannot sin" (1 John 3:9). Applied to this life this means they do not make a practice of sinning, but as spirit beings His children will have accepted the truths of God so completely and obeyed God so fully that their behavior can never again be changed to do something that would offend God.

While we are in the flesh, we could still fall. God's children will be "born" with new spirit bodies and minds, given new names and will dwell with Him for all eternity. They will be like God (1 John 3:2), with perfect patterns of behavior forever. **UN**

"Move," continued from page 1

ter would have seven offices, a 150-seat lecture hall, 10 classrooms (five of which could be opened up into a larger meeting room), a library, a music rehearsal room, a kitchen and dining room and a lobby/reception area.

Student housing planned for phase one includes four 2,000-square-foot buildings with living and sleeping quarters for 12 students in each building, along with a kitchen in each building.

On-campus housing is designed to help make the ABC program more effective. As explained in the *Vision for the Future* DVD presentation by Chairman Bob Dick and President Clyde Kilough (sent to all elders and made available to members in local congregations):

"Time and experience have convinced

us that we must create an atmosphere at ABC more conducive for developing character and the whole person, not just providing information."

On-site housing is seen as a critical factor in creating an environment that allows ABC to focus full time on developing the whole person (similar to "the Zone" developed in the very successful summer camp program).

Housing is also planned for married couples and to reduce the current 700 hotel room nights a year required for those coming to the home office for meetings or training. This would consist of four 2,000-square-foot buildings, each with two two-bedroom sections, for a total of 16 bedrooms (serving 16 couples).

Having this housing available would save \$45,000 to \$50,000 a year in hotel

costs by putting most visitors in on-site housing units. The costs of ABC housing would be partially offset by a nominal amount charged to students.

Master Plan

Phases two and three are not current needs, but are projections of facilities that would be reasonably anticipated. They were included in the master plan to give a view of the amount of land that should be purchased, and to show how a campus-type facility would look.

Phase two preliminary plans include a 20,000-square-foot, 1,000-seat auditorium and additional housing. The additional housing might be needed as ABC grows, and the auditorium could someday be needed as a multipurpose facility for GCE meetings, a Feast site, special weekends, combined Holy Days, etc. The estimated cost of such an auditorium is \$2.25 million.

Phase three could include a recreational/sports complex. "Since that is way down the list of priorities, we did not request any drawings or cost projections for that," Mr. Kilough said.

The conceptual master plan on a square grid uses approximately 50 acres. The size, layout and suitability of the actual property purchased will determine the specific details of the plan and whether there would be additional undeveloped property for future planning.

What Will the Project Cost?

"I believe that [this proposal] represents a balance between necessary and appropriate vision and long-term strategic planning on the one hand, and prudence, caution and conservatism on the other hand," said Treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick.

As described in the DVD, phase one is projected to cost between \$7.2 and \$9.4 million. The "most likely costs" from the DVD are printed below:

Land (65 acres)	\$1.7 million
Administration	\$1.9 million
Warehouse	\$0.6 million
Training Center	\$2.0 million
Housing (48 singles/16 couples)	\$0.9 million
Site development	\$1.8 million
Relocation	\$0.8 million
Total	\$9.7 million
Less sale of current property	(\$1.7) million
Net total	\$8.0 million

To avoid lowballing the estimated cost, these figures include estimates for inflation, worst-case scenarios and buffers. An additional million was added to cover furnishings and an additional buffer, bringing the net cost shown on the DVD to around \$9 million.

Paying for the Project

The three-year plan to pay for phase one combines a budget commitment plus a restricted building fund.

In the 2007-2008 fiscal year, \$1.5 million is budgeted for this purpose. The plan is to budget \$2 million the

following year and \$2.5 million in the 2009-2010 fiscal year, for a total of \$6 million by the time the move is scheduled.

A restricted fund is also planned, which would allow contributors to donate funds beyond regular tithes and offerings to this forward-looking project. Anywhere from \$0 to \$1 million or more a year might come in for this fund. If \$1 million a year came in, the project would be fully paid for before the move took place.

God's Increasing Work

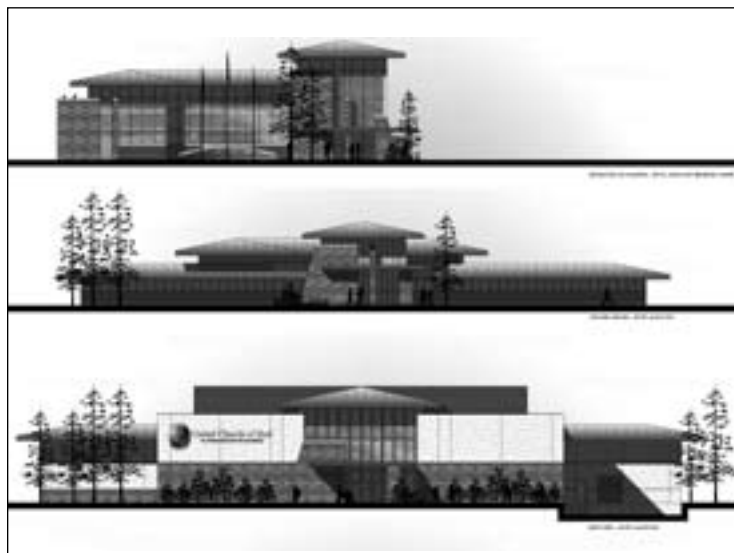
At the dedication ceremony for the current home office building on May 4, 2002, then President Les McCullough made these prescient remarks:

"If you look at our past history you might wonder just how long this building will provide housing for God's increasing work..."

"I certainly hope that in time we also outgrow this building and have to end up dedicating another one somewhere, but we'll have to wait and see how God blesses in that regard.

"Christ has very generously blessed us in the last four years. He has very graciously blessed us and provided us with a physical building, a tool to go ahead and provide for the spiritual building, the Church of God."

Please pray that God will bless the new facilities being planned to also be tools for building the spiritual building and for accomplishing the great work God has given His Church to do. **UN**



Artist's conception of administration building

Artist's conception of training center

Artist's conception of auditorium (phase two project)

Treasure Digest

The Bulletproof Vest

Like everyone else on the beat, Detective Sergeant Joe had heard the lectures on bulletproof vests and had found them entirely convincing. And he'd worn his vest pretty regularly too! At first.

But finding them heavy and cumbersome and taking precious time to put on, once in a while Joe decided he could do without it. But not because he didn't believe they worked. Not at all! There was no doubt in his mind that bulletproof vests could and did save lives. He'd heard the statistics and was utterly convinced that a man had a far greater chance of surviving on the police force if he wore the vest. And he wore his—most of the time.

When the thug he was trying to arrest shot him point-blank in the chest, Joe hardly knew what hit him. His partner, Mike, tried desperately to help him, but, without the lifesaving vest, the bullet had entered Joe's heart and he lived only a few moments after impact. Tears of anger and regret flowed from Mike's eyes as he watched his friend and coworker die in his arms. He would curse himself a thousand times thereafter, telling himself that he should have

somehow "made" Joe wear that vest!

It was a grisly reminder to police everywhere, and the requirement to wear the vest at all times became doubly enforced all across the country. Joe's death was so unnecessary...

"He would almost certainly still be alive if only he'd been wearing his bulletproof vest," was the comment that would not die. If only he'd worn the vest Joe professed to believe in.

Knowledge is not enough. Belief is not enough. Conviction is not enough. Lectures, statistics, evidence—not enough.



"What does it profit, my fellow workers, though a man says he believes in bulletproof vests and does not wear one? Can belief save him? You prove to me you believe in the protection they give without wearing one, and I will prove my belief in their effectiveness by always wearing one. Belief, without action, is dead!"

(very loosely borrowed from James 2:14, 18, 26).

What about us? Do we have faith without works? Are we just believers?

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Carol L. Taylor

Los Angeles, California, congregation

Turning the Hearts . . . Caring for Your Elderly Parents, Part 5



In part 4 we discussed caring for elderly parents whose health permits them to continue to stay in their own home with assistance. But what about when they are no longer able to cope on their own?

The transition from their own dwelling to possibly a nursing home may be made easier by bringing them into the child's home for a short period of time. Thinking of a nursing home may be repulsive to both the aged parent and the child. "The decision to institutionalize a loved one is among the most difficult anyone is ever required to make" (Earl and Sharon Grollman, *Caring for Your Aged Parents*, 1978, page 110). More recently, assisted-living facilities have become another option, offering various services to allow residents to maintain a level of independence.

If it becomes necessary, the child ought to be prepared for a lot of self-pity on the part of the parent. To the parent it can seem like rejection. However, a visit to some nursing homes may prove to him or her that they are not all cold and impersonal. Before making the move, be sure to learn more about the aged parent's financial situation. Have an attorney or accountant prepare a complete inventory of assets. Then check what the government will supply. (In the United States, Medicare, Medicaid and Supplementary Security Income are some sources. The local Social Security office may supply more information.)

When searching for a good nursing home, get recommendations from doctors, ministers, social workers, senior citizens' groups, the Social Security office, friends and relatives. Check your state Department of Health for inspection results and complaints. Caregiver to resident ratio is very important. There are two basic types of nursing homes: "Skilled Nursing Facility (SNFs), twenty-four-hour nursing service for 'convalescent' patients who require constant medical supervision. Intermediate Care Facility (ICFs), less intensive medical care than that offered by SNFs, with a greater emphasis on social and rehabilitative services. Some institutions offer both levels of care" (Grollman, page 121).

Unexpected visits at mealtime and activity periods will help reveal the atmosphere of a nursing home. How do the people look? Contented and well-groomed? Talk with the administrator, head nurse and social worker. Do the nurses seem to know the names of the residents? Talk to the residents themselves. Be careful that you look the facility over well. Bring your parent along to see it and to become familiar with it before admission. On admission day, stay several hours to help him or her settle in.

Once our parent is in the home, we must be careful not to neglect him or her, but to continue caring by letters, calls, visits and by taking him or her out for special events. Jesus Christ praised those who would visit and help the infirmed. He said that it was as if we did it for Him (Matthew 25:35-40).

Whether your aging parents go into a nursing home or live out their lives with you or remain in their own dwelling, caring and loving must always be a part of their treatment. Listening, being patient, praising them, sharing with them and loving them will do much to make their last years of this physical life more enjoyable. Tell them often how much you appreciate them and what they did for you.

"Finding answers for your parents and for yourself is a long, painful process. There are probably no solutions that will satisfy everyone involved. You can, however, choose the best one. It will be worth the effort" (Grollman, page 22).

As Christians, let's make sure that however, whenever, whatever—we treat our aged parents in a loving manner that truly brightens their last years and glorifies our Father in heaven.

Gary E. Antion

Meaningful Fellowship

True biblical fellowship can be an even deeper and more rewarding experience than we might ever have realized before. According to an item I came across in the Bible Society's quarterly newsletter *Word in Action*:

"[The] Greek—'koinonia,' which the Bible translates as 'fellowship'—is strong and dynamic. It was used for business partnership, implying mutual commitment and participation over a long time, with important outcomes. It was used in connection with marriage... evoking a picture of deep, mutually supportive relationships."

The Greek verb "to fellowship" means to do things together, to own something between you, to share a whole life with someone. It's about deep-level integration, not just casual talk over a cup of tea.

The article also mentions that the apostle Paul had that in mind when writing about the collection he arranged for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. In Romans 15:26, the word translated "contribution" is this word *koinonia*. "It had been an expression of deep mutual committed relationship," says the author.

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul refers to the "communion of the Spirit," which, again, is the Greek word *koinonia*, as in Philippians 2:1, where it's translated "fellowship."

As the article goes on to explain, "He [Paul] wants us to understand the presence, company and practical help which the Spirit provides and generates between us. To warrant the use of 'fellowship,' relationships need to be intimate, open, committed and costly."

I wonder how we in God's Church today measure up to this? Here, no doubt, is a great oppor-

tunity to continue to learn and grow.

Caroline Sutton
Lincolnshire, United Kingdom

Our UCG Web Site—a Treasure Trove!

Recently I began surfing through our UCG Web site and was absolutely amazed at what treasures it offers! Let me share what I found sleuthing through our ucg.org Web site.

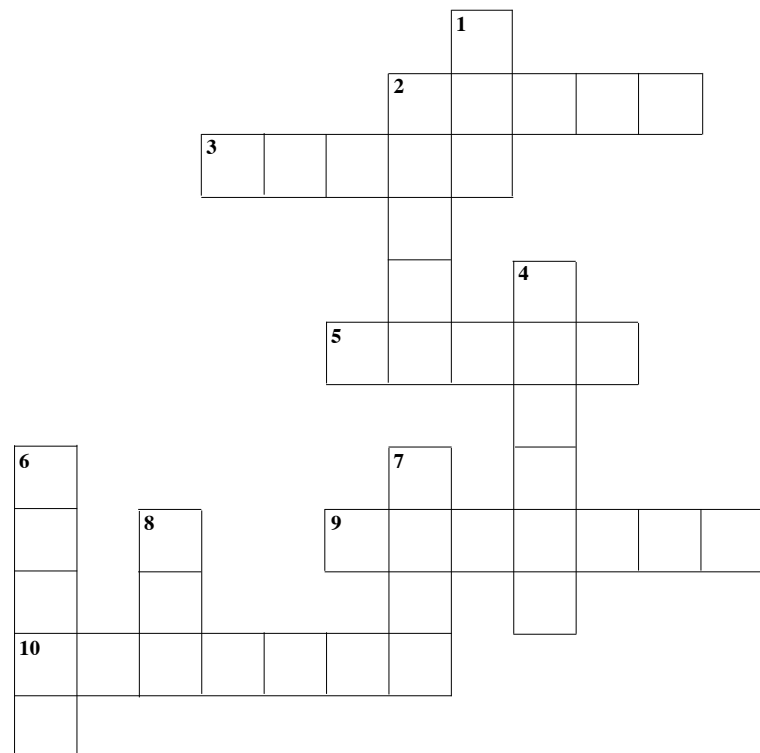
Do you realize that our publications are available online? This includes 33 booklets, the "Bible and Archaeology" series, *Good News* magazines, *United News*, *Vertical Thought*, *Vertical Christian Magazine*, *World News* and *Prophecy and the Bible Study Course*—most from their beginning publication dates.

When I discovered this, out went some of my stacks of printed copies. In addition, there were 38 study papers, 31 article reprints and more than 200 sermon transcripts.

If you have not followed our Bible Reading Program, why not give it a try? It goes through the Bible book by book in depth, giving us background, overall themes, important facts and crucial lessons we can learn. At present, the study of the Old Testament is nearly complete (over 1,000 pages available in PDF format!) and the New Testament readings should begin soon.

I have listened to many of the outstanding Ambassador Bible Center classes. More than 350 sessions have been recorded and are available, covering the entire New Testament, the Pentateuch, our fundamental doctrines, comparative religion and other subjects. What a fantastic opportunity for most of us not able to attend ABC.

Children's Corner Genesis Crossword



Down:

1. Bilhah's first son (Genesis 30:5-6)
2. Abram's wife's name (11:29)
3. Made from one of man's ribs (2:21-23)
4. Jacob kissed her (29:11)
6. Sarai's Egyptian maidservant (16:1)
7. Zilpah was her maid (29:24)
8. Adam's wife's name (3:20)

Across:

2. Sarai's name was changed to (17:15)
 3. Made from one of man's ribs (2:21-23)
 5. Leah's daughter (30:21)
 9. Isaac's wife (25:20)
 10. Pharaoh gave her to Joseph (41:45)
- Pierre Barré, Winnipeg, Manitoba

In addition, there are over 200 specially selected audiovisual sermons available from 2001 to the present. Have you been able to experience a *World News and Prophecy* seminar? You can choose among more than 20 presentations online. Over 60 *Beyond Today* telecasts are ready to access.

Do you want to cover a subject by topic? Just insert your subject into the UCG Web site search function and you may find a sermon or material that may be just what you are looking for.

Would you prefer to systematically go through books of the Bible? Both the Bible Reading Program and the Ambassador Bible Center classes are made to order!

Take time to surf, explore and profit by what is on our ucg.org Web site. Have fun and take advantage of its many treasures!

Jean Updegraff
Garden Grove, California, congregation



Who Are You Going to Rule Beside?

Every week I show up at church and say hello to everyone and give a smile. This is genuine and heartfelt. However, I still have my close friends who I always talk with in depth about life and Church and many other things.

It is fine to have close friends, but why do we limit ourselves? I know I am guilty. Every person at church is our brother or sister, no matter what age or nationality. God brought us together and expects us to rule together in the Kingdom. How can we be good rulers then if we don't know those we are to rule beside?

I have noticed how we tend to stay in our corners with the people we feel most comfortable, but shouldn't we feel comfortable with all of God's people? Perhaps we don't know each other as He wishes us to.

Make a plan. Every Sabbath, pick two or three members that you don't know as well as you would like. Say maybe a man and a woman or an older person and a younger one or a single member and a married member. How about a father or mother, son or daughter or a baptized member and a non-baptized attendee?

When you approach them and start talking to them, ask about *their* lives. Where were they born? Were they born in the Church? What did they study in school? What do they do for work now? How long have they been married? How did they meet their spouse? When were they baptized? What was their calling like? There are so many questions we can ask.

If you see someone new or a visitor, always make a point to introduce yourself to the person.

It's easy for us to make excuses to avoid meeting new people, especially if we are shy. We can pray and ask God to give us the courage to go up to these people and get to know them. Go as a group. Ask your friends to go with you. It also does not matter how large or small our local congregation is. It might take a little longer if it is a larger congregation, but it should give us more motivation to start now.

God expects His people to be friendly and to know one another. How else can we rule and be at one with God in the Kingdom? We can't expect someone else to always come up to us. Sometimes we have to take the initiative, so why not start this Sabbath?

Jennifer Pennington
Columbus, Ohio, congregation

Planning a Garden of Growth

When we plant a garden in the spring, we generally have an end result in mind that we are anxiously waiting for. Do you anticipate a bumper crop of beans, juicy tomatoes, crisp cucumbers, fresh leaf lettuce or maybe fragrant roses?

As we view our spiritual garden, we must also ask, "What are the end results that I am anxiously waiting for?" We must carefully choose good seed, such as seedlings from Galatians 5:22-23.

Soil preparation is important. Once I bought an inexpensive potting soil. Unfortunately, the company had not sterilized the soil. I had geraniums with weeds growing in the same containers. Each was vying for the nutrients that were needed for proper growth.

Many professionals encourage soil tests. These tests show what nutrients are needed in the soil for proper growth and productivity. As Christians preparing for a year of growth, examining our own soil content is extremely important (Matthew 13:1-43). Do I have an acid attitude? Where am I spiritually undernourished?

Your spiritual garden plan will change from year to year, depending on what the previous year has brought. I would encourage you to draw your plan on a piece of paper, remembering the end results that you are anxiously waiting for. Prayerfully label the items that you need to remove: fear, manipulation, rejection, etc. This garden plan can also list activities, places and events that will be helpful for productive growth and harvesting.

We are still human, so remember to leave a corner of your garden for relaxation and fun. If this isn't planned, it might not occur.

Your plan can help you throughout the year; growth will be more abundant as you know what you are working for (James 1:22; Philippians 4:9).

As we meditate and repent from the past year's weeds that crept into our gardens (Galatians 5:19-21), we need to consider what we need for a maintenance program in our spiritual gardens.

God gives us each time to grow; He is a very patient God (Luke 13:6-9). Use your time wisely for a year of great spiritual productivity!

Tina Rupp
Youngstown, Ohio, congregation

Things to Plant in Your Spiritual Garden

Plant four rows of squash:

1. Squash gossip.
2. Squash indifference.
3. Squash grumbling.
4. Squash selfishness.

Plant four rows of lettuce:

1. Let us be faithful.
2. Let us be kind.
3. Let us be patient.
4. Let us really love one another.

Plant a row of peas:

1. Peace of mind.

Make sure you grow enough thyme:

1. Time for family.
2. Time for friends.

Remember, you reap what you sow.

Adapted from the Caribbean newsletter

A Cure for Hiccups

Years ago, someone gave me a "sure cure" for hiccups. I didn't know why it worked for me—it just did. Drink one full glass of water with a metal spoon in it and make sure the spoon handle is touching your cheek the whole time while you drink the entire glass in one long drink. Later, an old Army vet also gave me his sure cure for hiccups. Extend your finger a full arm's length away, hold it still and fully concentrate your eye on your finger with every bit of your energy. This also worked for me.

I'd never understood why the first cure worked until I learned the second one. By concentrating fully on something else, I could "trick" my brain into stopping the hiccups.

Isn't life like that now? We have so many distractions that can cause hiccups in our spiritual lives. We can be distracted from our relationship with God by our games, our televisions, our computers, even our problems.

What we need to do is regularly concentrate fully on God, His plan and what He expects from us. We need to be fully immersed in prayer, Bible study, meditation and also fasting.

Hebrews 10:22-23 says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."

With full concentration on the ways of God, we can avoid or cure the spiritual hiccups!

Carolyn Prater
Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

Stay Focused on the Path Ahead and Don't Look Back

"But Jesus told him, 'Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62, New Living Translation).

I find it interesting how we can look at the past through cynical glasses or rose-colored glasses,

often not realizing that either one is a huge liability. Paul set us an example when he said, "But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Philippians 3:13). I feel many do not take this with the gravity that God meant.

Often, I find people who dwell a lot in the past suspiciously look at the Church and the ministry through that past. While we are to learn from the past, we cannot judge the present or the future by it. The human nature we all struggle with clings to every hurt and feeling of betrayal of the past, which hinders us by stymieing growth. On the other hand, God's plan for us is future-oriented and growth-oriented through overcoming.

Then there is the second scenario. I simply title it the rose-colored glasses scenario. Remember the children of Israel? They had been delivered from the tyranny and bondage of Egypt, where they had been slaves for years. They cried out to God for deliverance, and the Lord answered their prayers.

As they were making their way through the wilderness, God supernaturally fed them with an incredible substance called manna. It was like bread from heaven. They had it daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. But after a while, they got a little tired of it. They said, "We are sick of manna. We remember back in Egypt we used to eat garlic, leeks and onions. Those were the good old days... If we could only go back."

The good old days? Really? They basically ate scraps in Egypt because they were slaves. Their lives were miserable. Yet in their imaginations, they had supersized those scraps to some storybook feast they had every day. They were not looking at the past accurately.

When we go through something that hurts, like what many of us experienced with our separation from our former organization, there are always lessons learned from history, like having a "love" for the truth and being doctrinally sound. But when we allow our present relationships to be governed by the painful past, we hinder opportunities for growth, love and trust.

Don't build up the past in your mind. Remember it for what it was, good and bad, and learn from it. Imitate the good and don't repeat the bad. Don't allow the enemy to pull you down by fantasizing about it. Protect your mind, and don't look back.

Stuart Segall
Pastor, Crescent City, Eureka and Red Bluff, California, congregations

Quiz: Famous Last Words

Some of the most interesting books available today are collections of quotes by famous and infamous people. The following are quotations from among the last recorded words of Bible figures. Who said these familiar last words?

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Zipporah | a. "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." |
| 2. Balaam's donkey | b. "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" |
| 3. Daniel | c. "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" |
| 4. Simeon | d. "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." |
| 5. Gamaliel | e. "Am I not _____ on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" |
| 6. Daughter of Herodias | f. "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" |
| 7. Cain | g. "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?" |
| 8. Stephen | h. "...for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God." |
| 9. Christ | i. "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." |
| 10. Judas | j. "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter." |

Karen Meeker
St. Louis, Missouri, congregation

Answers: 1-f (Exodus 4:25); 2-e (Numbers 22:30); 3-g (Daniel 12:8); 4-i (Luke 2:34-35); 5-h (Acts 5:38-39); 6-j (Matthew 14:8) History knows her as Salome, but the Bible does not give her a name; 7-b (Genesis 4:13); 8-d (Acts 7:60); 9-c (Luke 23:46); 10-a (Matthew 27:4).



Local Church Updates

Austin Holds Annual Youth Day Sabbath

On Feb. 17, 2007, the Austin, Minnesota, congregation held its yearly Youth Day at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch, just outside of Rochester. It was a Mexican fiesta with 140 in attendance. Joining us were members of our three sister churches (Mankato, Minnesota; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and La Crosse, Wisconsin), along with brethren from Eau Claire and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, and St. Paul, Minnesota.

Since it was Youth Day, the teens did their part. Songs were led by Isaac Nelson and Justin Boyer, while prayers were given by Luke Nelson and Jacob Yule.

Special music consisted of a vocal duet by Prisca Myers and Katlyn Whynaucht, a piano solo by Daniel Jacobsen and a vocal duet by Paul and James Myers.

Accompanying the song service were Amanda Boyer on flute and Katlyn Whynaucht on violin. Alex Riess gave a sermonette showing that "Hard Work Does Pay Off," after which Dan-



Bill Bowman and Lloyd Nelson (photo by L. Robert Kylo)

iel Jacobsen admonished us to "Stick to What We Have Been Taught." A PowerPoint sermon on "Signs of a Christian" was given by Steve Myers.

It was an evening of fantastic food, fellowship and fun, as the men and boys donned black mustaches of various shapes, while the ladies and girls were given colorful paper flowers for their hair. Señora Irma Faulkner wore the best Mexican outfit.

The rustic hall was decorated with colorful tablecloths and napkins. There were very large, bright, handmade paper flowers for centerpieces. Mexican blankets and large sombreros added special flavor to the evening.

After sundown, those who wanted to go sliding on tubes left the hall for a couple of hours of exercise, while others chose sleigh rides, gliding along on the fresh soft snow with only the jingle of the horses' harnesses to break the silence. Still others chose to stay inside and fellowship.

A silent auction brought in funds to assist a young German couple needing medical treatment at the Mayo Clinic.

A baking contest, with prizes for appearance as well as taste, was held for 10- to 20-year-olds. There were cakes, bars and pies for all to sample.

Bill and Gayle Baylor organized the social. It was a most rewarding event.
Norma Nelson

Charlotte Hosts Good Works Fund-raiser Auction

Following services and a picnic potluck on Jan. 27, 2007, brethren from several congregations gathered at the China Grove Community Center for a Good Works auction, hosted by the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation. Items donated by Church members from Charlotte, Asheboro and Raleigh included handmade, crocheted, and hand-painted donations; new and gently used items; and services to be performed.

The children participated by collecting pennies in the weeks prior to the



Good Works auction in North Carolina (photo by Chris Leyden)

event. Some children did chores, while others thought of innovative ways to earn them. One creative child sold his loose tooth.

Young adults served along with auctioneer Antoine Smith, who led the lively bidding.

Everyone enjoyed the evening and came away happy with their treasures. The total raised by the auction was \$4,133, which provided funding for two projects in Ochuna Nyahera and Kosele, Kenya, and contributed to the Rwandan dental project. All agreed that our goal of fulfilling Galatians 6:9-10 was achieved.
Marti Springer

Tampa Serves Senior Ladies Tea

The highlight of 2006 for the Tampa senior ladies was the fabulous tea given by our younger members of the Ladies' Club on July 23, 2006. They spent many months in planning and preparing for this elegant occasion. It was perfectly beautiful in every way—



The Tampa tea (photo by Jackie Southall)

from the specially designed invitations and delicious food (teas, soups and pastries), all prepared by the ladies, to the gorgeous decorations. No tea house anywhere could compare with our beautifully transformed fellowship hall.

The senior ladies were greatly honored and they deeply appreciate their loving and generous sisters for giving them this beautiful experience.
Jackie Southall

Marietta Holds Dinner and Auction

Approximately 70 people from the Morgantown, West Virginia, and Athens and Marietta, Ohio, congregations enjoyed an evening of food and fellowship March 3 as Marietta hosted a dinner and auction fund-raiser.

The objective of the fund-raiser was twofold, according to the pastor Tim Waddle. First, it was "to give every young person who wanted to go, the opportunity to go to camp." Second, a portion of the proceeds would also go toward good works projects in the local area.

The evening began with a spaghetti dinner prepared by the Athens-Marietta Women's Club. Candles at each table and a slide show featuring candid shots of Church members added a family feeling to the atmosphere.

Afterward, bidding began in the silent auction. Approximately 30 items, ranging from note cards to necklaces



Marietta auctioneer Tim Waddle gets help from his family (photo by Angie Wilson)

to artwork to baked goods, had been handmade and donated by members of the three congregations. One of the more popular items was a handmade cloth dish-holder, perfect for carrying casserole dishes to potlucks.

As soon as bidding closed for the silent auction, Mr. Waddle, auctioneer for the evening, kicked off the live auction. Friendly inter-church rivalry, and even some sibling rivalry, kept the bidding lively.

The hot item of the evening was a full-length, handmade quilt by Anna Waggoner of the Marietta congregation. It brought a high bid of \$110 for the evening.

Other popular items included homemade fudge; a relaxation basket filled with an instrumental CD, a bottle of wine, chocolates, etc.; a hand-stitched pillow; a pumpkin pie; artwork by one of the older teens; and a blanket decorated with pictures of birds. Approximately 20 items, handmade and donated by Church members, were auctioned off during the live auction.

A total of \$1,017 was raised during the evening's activities.
Angie Wilson

Brethren From 12 States Attend Midwest Family Weekend

Feb. 16 to 18, over the Presidents' Day Weekend, more than 340 brethren from 12 states joined together for the 12th annual Midwest Family Weekend in Branson, Missouri. The event started the very first year of United and has been an annual event ever since.

The weekend began with a relaxing Friday evening fellowship reception. This was followed the next day by nonstop activities that continued throughout the weekend. Sabbath activities included seven seminars on various aspects of being helpers of our brethren, afternoon services, a PowerPoint presentation on the work in Africa and dinner together. This was followed Saturday evening by a talent show and dance.

Sunday's activities included seminars repeated from the Sabbath, lunch, a skating party, a luau pool party and a game night.

The theme for the weekend, "Helpers of Their Joy," was taken from 2 Corinthians 1:24. What a great joy the weekend was, as brethren fellowshiped, served and got to know each other better.

The guest speaker for the weekend was Jim Franks, who attended with his wife, Sharron. Mr. Franks gave the sermon and the presentation on the work in Africa. Many were inspired by the growth of the work there.

Many people commented that the weekend was like a mini-Feast of Tabernacles.
Paul Carter

Tampa Bay Hosts "Walking by Faith" Women's Conference

Feb. 24 and 25, 105 ladies convened in Tampa, Florida, for this region's first women's conference. Attendees ranged in age from mid-teens to octogenarians and came from Texas, Indiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Missouri, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida.

The record 203 people in attendance at Tampa's church service were treated to five special music presentations, each relating to the weekend's theme of "Walking by Faith." Guest speaker Vernon Hargrove, pastor of the Elkhart and Hammond, Indiana, congregations, gave the sermon titled "Faith and Works." After the service, Tampa members provided a bountiful potluck meal, which offered a relaxing time for fellowship.

Saturday evening—after the men and children had departed—Maria Blencowe and her creative crew transformed the meeting facility into a warm, inviting flower garden. The ladies shared a lovely wine, cheese and chocolate reception, enhanced by creative get-acquainted activities coordinated by Tyeise Summers. Courtney Ballo, 17, won a prize for being the first person to gather 25 different signatures to complete the evening's Find Someone Who Has... challenge.

On Sunday morning the ladies were warmly greeted and given a folder with professionally designed handouts detailing the day's activities. The conference then officially began with event coordinator Teddi Treybig welcoming the ladies and sharing research from a UCLA study on friendship among women by Gale Berkowitz (www.anapsid.org/cnd/gender/tendfend.html). This study concluded that friendships between women are especially helpful to them in lessening stress and that women respond differently to stress than do men. While men often respond to stress with a fight-or-flight reaction, women generally respond to stress in a tend-and-befriend manner.

Mrs. Treybig explained that it was the hope of the planning committee that this conference would nurture friendships, new and old, plus encourage and inspire the ladies as they continue their faithful walk with God.

Following the welcome, Kristin Yarbrough led the attendees in a lively warm-up activity. Then Dee Bailey sang "El Shaddai" as a prelude to DeLee Hargrove's keynote address: "You, Too, Are Building an Ark." In her address Mrs. Hargrove likened the faith we need as we follow God's instructions today to Noah's task of building the ark while living in a society that didn't understand his calling or God's plan for mankind.

After a break, attendees enjoyed another vocal presentation, "You Are Still Holy," performed by Colene Erickson. The morning session concluded with an interactive symposium moderated by Cassandra Howard that focused on four key faith areas.

The faith areas and presenters were: "Children Walking by Faith" by Jennifer Zoellner, "Walking by Faith Through Health Trials" by Wanda Smith, "A Mother's Example of Walking by Faith" by Jean Bratnick and "Walking by Faith Through Religious Confusion" by Dee Bailey. After each presenter shared a personal story illustrating her faith area, audience members were given the opportunity to add their own insights and personal experiences.

Elaine Allen and her tireless helpers served a delicious soup/salad/sandwich luncheon, which was organized to allow the ladies to get better acquainted with each other by drawing for seats. Sandi Williams created special Prayer Rocks as favors for all the ladies. Gifts were also presented to the lady who had traveled the farthest to attend (Kathy Cochran from New Hampshire) and to the one who had been baptized the longest (Betty Oldroyd, who has been walking by faith for over 45 years).

The afternoon provided four interactive breakout sessions. During the first time slot, ladies chose between attending "Achieving Balance" moderated by Sharon Babcock or "Faith in Action" by Judy Servidio. During the second time period, the choices were "Enemies of Faith" by Kristin Yarbrough or "A Faithful Approach to Prayer" by Colene Erickson.

The ladies then reconvened for the closing activities: a vocal duet, "I'll Never Leave You," sung by sisters Maria Blencowe and Tami Hannaway, summary remarks by DeLee Hargrove and acknowledgements of appreciation by Teddi Treybig. She gave special thanks to the planning committee members—Elaine Allen, Maria Blencowe, Becky Fisher, Rebecca Krohn, Tyiese Summers and Kristin Yarbrough—and to the dozens of other ladies who worked so diligently on the event. The ladies then joined in singing "God Will See Us Through," exchanged warm farewells and began their journeys home.

After the conference, one attendee wrote: "I loved your theme, and it made for some really good and nourishing stories from our own ladies of faith. Their stories and lives have left a wonderful imprint on my heart."

Another responded: "I was very impressed with this weekend. These conferences show women God's way of being a 'help meet.'" Another participant summed it up this way: "I am looking forward to the next one. We'll be praying we all will be there. And I was not going to go. Glad I did!"

Teddi Treybig

Portsmouth Surprises Pastor

On Feb. 3, 2007, the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation had the pleasure of honoring Gary and Liz Smith with a surprise recognition party for their years of service and dedication to God's Church.

Mr. Smith was ordained a local church elder on the Day of Atonement in 1977 by Bob Boyce, pastor of the Peoria and Macomb, Illinois, congregations. This year marks Mr. Smith's 30th year serving as an elder and his 25th year serving as a full-time minister.

Both of the Smith's children were born while they lived in Peoria. Erinn was born in 1980 and Ian in 1983.

In February 1982, Mr. Smith was hired full-time by the Church and worked for three years in Peoria and Macomb under Jess Ernest.

In the summer of 1985, the Smiths were transferred to St. Louis, Missouri, where they served with Bob Spence for two years. After two years they were transferred to serve the Dallas, Texas, East congregation in the summer of 1987.

In 1990, they were notified that they would be transferring to southern Ohio to pastor the Chillicothe and Portsmouth, congregations. They arrived in the summer of 1990 and moved to the town of Waverly, Ohio. Over the years, there have been many marriages, births, baptisms and funerals.

The congregation wanted to honor

and recognize the Smiths for their years of service to the Church, so the occasion was kept secret by the brethren in Portsmouth and Prestonsburg, Kentucky, until the announcement period during services. At that time Kevin Call, a deacon in Portsmouth, read some expressions of appreciation from a few of the brethren, presented Mr. and Mrs. Smith with a book of appreciation from the brethren, and then brought out their children, Erinn and Ian, who had secretly been invited to the occasion.

The book of appreciation was the biggest surprise since it was a compilation of comments from Church members from Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Portsmouth and Prestonsburg, and from other ministers with whom Mr. and Mrs. Smith have worked over the years.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith have served the Portsmouth and Prestonsburg congregations for enough years that for



The Portsmouth congregation honored Gary and Liz Smith Feb. 3, and secretly invited their children, Erinn Webber and Ian Smith, to the occasion

many young people they are the only minister and wife that they have ever known. One member commented, "He has been with us for 16 years and we hope that we can keep him another 16 years."

Darlene Call

295 Attend Garden Grove's 40th Anniversary Celebration

On Feb. 24, 2007, the Garden Grove, California, congregation hosted a memorable 40th anniversary celebration of the Church of God in Orange County. It was held in their regular church facility in Garden Grove, spruced up festively with a themed banner, balloon decorations, photo and memorabilia displays and beautiful floral arrangements. Approximately 295 came to share the celebration with us—including over 110 guests.

Our jam-packed day began with regular services at 2:30. Guest speakers Robin Webber and Dennis Luker, former pastors of our congregation, gave inspiring split sermons. Immediately following services, three of the charter members still in the Southern California area, Bob Fiske, Randi Hilgen and Drenda Wassner, were presented with appreciation certificates. The other four charter members in the area, Tim Gilroy, Roberta Harrison, Stan and Verna Norton, unfortunately were not able to attend

The Garden Grove congregation



Young people assemble balloons for Garden Grove 40th anniversary (photo by Nancy Dailey)

hosted a special dinner in the Fellowship Hall upstairs, which was attractively decorated with lilac linen tablecloths and floral centerpieces on each table. The meal was delicious and simplified to accommodate our many guests. Several ladies brought main meat dishes, our kitchen crew provided hot side dishes and our members brought a great variety of salads. Anniversary cake capped off the meal.

The evening program began with a 45-minute DVD produced by Robert Bates that entertained us all as we viewed it, clapping and laughing at glimpses from the past 40 years in pictures and sound. Afterward we were treated to reflections by former pastors and wives, Dennis and LeeAnn Luker and Robin and Susan Webber, and our current pastoral couple, Mario and Caty Seigle.

Our members and guests left that evening with warm memories of a day full of joy, happiness and much fellowship with friends past and present. We thank the many in our congregation who worked so diligently to make this event the memorable success it was.

Jean Updegraff

Milwaukee Hosts Dinner Dance

On the Sabbath of April 7, 2007, members from around the Midwest were hosted by the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, congregation at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin.

Traditionally the Milwaukee congregation hosts a dinner dance after the



Milwaukee pastor Dan Dowd joins in the hokey pokey dance (photo by Jack Burns)

Sabbath during Unleavened Bread.

A special guest speaker, Tom Kirkpatrick, was flown in from the home office to give both the sermonette and sermon. His wife was in attendance with him. Altogether 232 people attended the services, some traveling

from as far as Minneapolis, Minnesota, to be with the group.

Special music was provided by the combined Milwaukee and Oshkosh congregations. They sang "You Are My All in All" and their all-time favorite "River in Judea."

Following Sabbath services, 171 people stayed for the evening's events, which consisted of a formal dinner and a dance afterwards. The dinner consisted of a succulent steak and chicken, garlic mashed potatoes with a side of steamed vegetables.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Fabry were honored in one of the dances for having worked very hard in organizing this big event. Everyone had a fun time. Dan Dowd, the host pastor, even danced the hokey pokey. Truly that's what it's all about!

Leone Burns

Good News: Baby James Guerra Prayer Update

Natalie Guerra of the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation wishes to thank the many brethren who have prayed for baby James and have sent encouraging cards. With big brother Marcus and James' needs for supervision, Mrs. Guerra hasn't been able to answer everyone.

James' condition was described in the prayer request sent out Jan. 19: "James Ryan Guerra, the month-old



Natalie Guerra with sons Marcus and James, who was the subject of a prayer request in January

son of Gian and Natalie Guerra, was born with CCHS (Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome). Mrs. Guerra and her parents, Mark and Amalia Monsivais, are in the Corpus Christi congregation.

"James is unable to breathe on his own while sleeping. He underwent a tracheotomy to make it easier and safer for him to breathe on a ventilator."

James still must breathe with help of a ventilator, but is a happy little baby. His doctor anticipates that James will be able to breathe on his own as he matures.

Currently "he must be attached to the ventilator 24/7 and someone must monitor him and the equipment," said Jack Hendren, pastor of the Corpus Christi congregation. "You can just imagine the workload it puts on the family and extended family. I am impressed with the 'grit' of this young mother and the support from her family."

Your prayers are still much appreciated.

Dallas Celebrates 50 Years of Service

On the Sabbath of April 7, 2007, between the Holy Days of Unleavened Bread, the Dallas, Texas, United Church of God congregation celebrated 50 years of God's truth being preached in

the area, 1956 to 2006. Meeting together with the Fort Worth brethren at the Marriott Solana Hotel in Westlake, many friends, family and members and min-



Pioneer members in Dallas: Kitty Brisco, Maisie Wheat and Louise Winant; inset, Bob Hedge (photos by Kelli Hogg)

isters who have moved to other areas enjoyed renewing old acquaintances and reliving joyful times.

At the start of services the *50th Anniversary Keepsake Booklet* was distributed. The booklet contained pictures of ministers and wives who have served in the area, along with a history of the local church.

During the sermonette portion of Sabbath services, the three remaining pioneer founders in the area were recognized: Kitty Brisco, Maisie Wheat and Louise Winant.

It was in Mrs. Winant's home in 1956 that the Dallas church held its first service. Sculptures were presented to each of these ladies in honor of their longtime service in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

A fine sermon was then given by Jim Franks on change from the heart.

After the service there was a lobby reception where many of our brethren could meet and all were having a grand time.

After moving back into the meeting hall, Doug Horchak, who has served as pastor since 2000, introduced Bob Hedge (now in Mena, Arkansas), who was a ministerial trainee in the area in 1972. Mr. Hedge gave a short remembrance presentation, mentioning that the ministers at that time in Dallas were visiting up to 50 prospective members in one week!

Frank McCrady III (now in Dayton, Ohio), who served in Dallas from 1987 to 2000, also spoke to the group. Recordings of greetings from several past ministers were played: Ken Martin (Macon, Georgia), who served in the area from 1966 to 1969; Ken Treybig (East Texas), from 1984 to 1985; Gary Smith (Portsmouth, Ohio), from 1987 to 1990; and Don Hooser (Sedro-Woolley, Washington), from 1991 to 2001.

Another highlight was a heartening presentation from local member Tina Engelbart, who served with her late husband, Ozzie Engelbart, from 1967 to 1973.

Shortly thereafter attendees viewed a 30-minute slide show of the history of the Church of God in Dallas for those 50 years. Tears came to some longtime members remembering the sacrifices many have made to forward God's Church in the area.

Plans are to make that presentation available on a self-contained DVD for those who could not be there that Sabbath.

Later that evening a dinner/dance commenced, with music provided by the Sound Post band of the Fort Worth congregation. During the dance, the slide show was presented once again plus an expanded presentation of many other pictures. The dance ended an exciting day at midnight.

Thanks to all our members throughout the years for the contributions made to God's Church for the first 50 years in Dallas, Texas!

John Lusk

Illinois Member Gets Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Derek Olar graduated with honors from Methodist College of Nursing in Peoria, Illinois, on May 12 with a bachelor of science degree in nursing.

Derek attends the Canton/Bloomington, Illinois, church area. He has been married for 11 years to Kim and has two boys, Andrew and Damien. Derek's wife and children are very proud of his accomplishment.

Derek will begin his career as a nurse with Methodist Hospital in June on the cardiac floor.

Kim Olar

Sacramento/Reno Holds Leadership Banquet

After nine months of interactive Leadership Development Club, the Sacramento, California/Reno, Nevada, group celebrated with a year-end banquet on Jan. 27. Held in an entertaining restaurant, the buffet meal was enjoyed by the 28 in attendance. Club member spouses joined in, as well as several widows and single ladies who were invited as guests.

The club director, Joe Horchak, presented his version of the club's assign-



Sacramento/Reno Leadership Development Club year-end banquet (photo by Jessica Horchak)

ment, "Welcome to My World." An entertaining discussion session was emceed by Scott Butler, who had the attendees comment on a variety of subjects relating to leadership, some quite humorous.

At each meeting one member was selected as the "Sharpest Contributor" and awarded a handsome pocketknife. The year's winners were: Beverly Butler (our only lady to stay with the club all year), Denton Trone, Rufus O'Quin, Jim Lewis (the only Reno member to make all regular meetings), Jim C. Springer, Scott Butler, Dirk Trone and Ken Blanchard. There were five members who attended every meeting throughout the year: Jim Butler, Scott Butler, Joe Horchak II (our youngest member), Denton Trone and Tory Trone.

All participants were required to identify biblical and other examples for the topic covered each month. Formal presentations and discussions focused on each subject presented. Topics covered were: Gaining Knowledge, Building Relationships, Making Decisions, Communication, Setting Strategies, Establishing Vision, Gaining Experience, Leading by Example and Commitment and Action.

The club members decided to take a break and reassess what form the club will take when they reconvene later in the year.

Joe Horchak

Coach Shows Respect for Player's Faith

David Dance, a teen in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, congregation, was recently featured in the Chattanooga Times Free Press in an article by Stephen Hargis. The article is reprinted below by permission.

Pastor Roy Holladay adds, "The coach for Ooltewah changed the schedule this year so that David might be able to play all the games except one. As you may be aware, half of high school games traditionally fall on Friday night."

Once district tournaments begin in high school basketball, phrases like, "survive and advance" roll off coaches' lips. This is the time of year sport typically becomes very cut-throat since any win means the season is extended and most coaches would love to catch an opponent at a disadvantage.

All of that makes the District 6-AAA tournament a bit of fresh air. Red Bank boys' coach John Cherne knew if the tournament schedule remained as it was originally planned, Ooltewah would be without one of its top players.

Owls junior David Dance attends United Church of God, which is similar to Seventh-day Adventists and observes the biblical Sabbath by not working or competing from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday.

Cherne contacted the other coaches in the district and tournament director David Wehunt and arranged for Ooltewah's

game against Soddy-Daisy to be moved from Friday night to Saturday. Red Bank, originally set to play Saturday, swapped its game with Central and will now play that game tonight.

"If we can cater to a kid's religious beliefs, we should make it so he can play," said Cherne, whose Lions are 20-10 and the top seed in the tournament. "He's a nice kid and a good player, and it would be a shame for him to miss the district tournament."

"It's high school sports. The kid should get to play the sport he enjoys. That's what it's all about."

Dance, a 6-foot-2 junior, is Ooltewah's best outside shooter, averaging just under 13 points per game. The Owls actually were able to schedule all of their district games except one on nights other than Friday this year to allow him to play. In the one game he missed, at Soddy-Daisy, Ooltewah lost by three in overtime.

"I think it shows great sportsmanship by our whole district," Owls coach Chris Baker said. "His ability to hit the outside shots makes teams extend their defense and really opens up our whole offense. He's really a big part of our team, and I'm not crazy, so when I got called about it, I said we would love to move the game."

Being different in any way can be difficult for teenagers, but Dance said his religious beliefs are actually a source of strength.

Friday nights are typically spent relaxing with his family. And after church on Saturdays, the afternoons are spent resting.

Who in their right mind would argue with that?

"It's great to have a day to not have to worry about any pressure from school or the world," Dance said. "I've done it all my life, so it's not a big deal at all to me. I don't feel like I've missed out on anything at all. I do wonder how the team does without me when I'm not there, but it's the right choice for me."

"But I really appreciate that the coaches worked things out so I can play."

Stephen Hargis, Chattanooga Times Free Press

A Matter of Faith: For Mark Twain Senior, Sports Is Secondary

Terri Christal is the granddaughter of Dave and Beverly Christal, a deacon and deaconess in United in Columbia, Missouri. She was recently featured in the Courier-Post of Hannibal, Missouri, in an article by Shaun Parker. The article is reprinted below by permission.

The Mark Twain Lady Tigers basketball program hasn't won a district title since 1975... This year, the team is the top seed in its district as postseason play gets under way this week. If the Lady Tigers do play for a second district championship game, they will be without their starting point guard, Terri Christal.

She isn't injured. She hasn't been suspended for breaking any rules. She didn't have a falling out with a coach. She is merely holding fast to her convictions. Christal and her family are members of

the Church of God and follow a strict adherence to the Fourth Commandment...

It is that belief that he [Terri's father Shawn] grew up adhering to; a belief that his wife, Carmen, has also shared since a young age; and a belief that they have passed on to their daughter.

With all the importance put on sports and the value of winning and losing—not to mention the peer pressure that comes with just being a teenager—there should be nothing but admiration for the path that Terri Christal has chosen to follow.

Not only is she Mark Twain's starting point guard during the basketball season, Christal has also played centerfield and hit clean-up for the softball team.

"I think that goes back to her family upbringing and it's something she believes



Terri Christal signs letter of intent to play softball for John Wood Community College (photos courtesy Hannibal, Missouri, Courier-Post)

strongly in," said Brooke Hudson, Mark Twain's softball coach.

"I'm sure Terri will say this, too, if we're at a district championship and she's not there, you can't tell me the thought doesn't enter her mind, but you have to think a lot of a young adult who makes those decisions and follows through with them. It wasn't a choice where she followed it one year and didn't from game to game. She stuck through it and I admire her and her family for that."

Make no mistake, she would love to be at every game... But as much as she wants to be there, it's not worth abandoning her faith.

"At first, it's difficult. It goes through my mind, 'What if I was there?' But I've done it all my life," she said. "I'm just like, 'Well, I wish it was on a different day.' That's the way I look at it..."

Not only does Terri have the support of her family, but also that of her teammates.

"It means a lot to have teammates that understand," she said. "Because if they don't understand and support me, it would be very difficult—much more difficult than it is right now..."

Although somewhat apprehensive to address the issue at first, Terri said she would rather answer questions than deal with rumors or assumptions.

"I don't think people understand how much pressure and how much stress is involved in fighting this all my life," she said. "People not understanding. Ask me questions. I don't mind answering questions. It's always something that's there. It's always been there for me... I'd much rather them ask me a question than just assume..."

An all-conference player in both basketball and softball, on Wednesday Christal signed a letter of intent to play softball for John Wood Community College next season.

"I'm so excited," she said, smiling. "It's just a great opportunity. I just hope that I can be a good asset to the team in the future."

And as she prepares to go out on her own this fall, she doesn't anticipate any changes in her life or her faith.

"I'm not going to change at all," she said. "Our churches are located all over the nation and if we travel somewhere, I can find somebody in my area and go to church on Saturday like normal. Coach Schlager understands..."

And if the opportunity presents itself in two years to move on and continuing playing softball at a four-year university Terri won't hesitate to keep slugging away.

"I'd like to keep playing if I get that opportunity," she said, smiling. "I'd definitely take it."

Shaun Parker, Hannibal, Missouri, Courier-Post

Church Gymnast Wins State Meet

Lauren Kelly, 14-year-old daughter of Stuart and Tammy Kelly of the Portland, Oregon, congregation, became the 2006 All Around State Level 6 Champion (in the 13+ age group) in a competitive girls gymnastics meet Sunday, Dec. 3, 2006. Lauren has been training at the Gym-Nest for over five years and homeschools through Oregon Connections Academy.

Lauren is thankful to her coaches for their support at the meets and for working with her to accommodate her commitment to keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. "Most of my competitions fell on the Sabbath, and my convictions to God's way kept me from participating. So whenever I had a chance to compete, I knew I had to do my very best."

Lauren has also been Irish dancing for a couple of years and has competed several times with success in that as well. She is maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

Teri Hayes, the owner of the Gym-Nest, says, "Lauren is an asset to our gym. Her positive attitude and dedication is a good example to the other gymnasts, and we have appreciated her involvement."

Stuart Kelly

Local Church Updates: If your congregation's news and events are rarely covered in *United News*, why not check with your pastor and write something for him to send in? We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photographs with captions. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Include the author's and photographer's names and your phone number. Please double-check the spelling of names. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give the material to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

Announcements

Births

Ben and Rebekah Mauldin are excited to announce the birth of their second son, Jacob Andrew. Jacob was born on Dec. 30, 2006, and was 7 pounds 4 ounces and 20 inches long. Everyone is doing well. Big brother Benjamin, who is almost two years older, is happy to have a little brother.



Jacob Andrew Mauldin
with big brother Benjamin

Jacob's grandparents are Jim and Becky Shrode of Dallas, Texas, and Ben and Linda Mauldin of Temple, Texas.

Wayne and Lela Solum of the Austin, Texas, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their fifth child, Coleman Walker, born Sept. 3, 2006, and



Coleman Walker Solum

weighing in at 8 pounds 1 ounce. He was welcomed home by brothers Matthew, Ryan and Reagan and sister, Mariah. Coleman is the 11th grandchild of Jeff and Donna Tucker and the eighth grandchild of Jim and Donna Solum.

Brian and Laurie McGuire are pleased to announce the birth of their fourth child, Caleb John. Caleb was born May 26, 2006. He weighed 8 pounds 8 ounces and was 20½ inches long. Caleb was welcomed by his siblings, Andrew (5), Aidan (3) and Audrey (2). The family attends the Ann Arbor, Michigan, congregation. Proud grandparents are Larry and Karen Walker



Caleb John McGuire

of Bend, Oregon, and Bev McGuire of Detroit, Michigan. Proud great-grandparents are Wade and Ginny Cole of Bend, Oregon.

Paul and Kira Spenser in Sweden are very happy to announce the birth of Erin Louise Viktoria. She was born on Jan. 24,



Viktoria Spenser

2007, and was 52 centimeters long and weighed 4 kilograms. Her twin brothers Isak and Aaron are also very happy and have given her the nickname Ninni.

Michael and Alexandra (Rhodes) Kubik are pleased to announce the arrival of their second child, Elena Gloria Kubik. She was born Feb. 15, 2007, weighed 7 pounds 12 ounces and was 20¾ inches long. Big sister Alyssa is thrilled, as are



Elena Gloria Kubik

grandparents Victor and Beverly Kubik of Indianapolis, Indiana, and Melvin and Diane Rhodes of Lansing, Michigan.

Terry and Adrienne (Wills) Hayes of Spokane, Washington, are proud to announce the birth of their first child, a baby girl, Mara Shaunelle. Mara was born on Feb. 24, 2007. She was 8 pounds 4 ounces and 21 inches long. Proud grand-



Mara Shaunelle Hayes

parents Hubert and Barbara Hayes and her aunt Shaunelle attend in Covington, Louisiana. First-time grandparents Brett and Barbara Wills attend the Seattle, Washington, congregation. Both families are proud of this new little bundle of joy.

Mattison Jeanene Jackson and Alexandria (Alex) Margaret Dozier make up the fourth generation in God's Church attending the Joplin, Missouri, congregation.



Alexandria (Alex) Margaret Dozier
and Mattison Jeanene Jackson

Mattison (right) is the daughter of Matthew and Amanda Jackson. She was born Sept. 7, 2006. She was 18.9 inches long and weighed in at 6 pounds 7.3 ounces.

Alex (left) is the daughter of Joshua and Brittni (Jackson) Dozier. She was born Dec. 11, 2006. She was 19.5 inches long and weighed 6 pounds 15.5 ounces.

Matthew and Brittni are the children of the proud grandparents, Wesley and Judy Jackson, and Wesley is the son of the very proud great-grandparents James and Lois Jackson (deacon and deaconess) of the Joplin congregation. The whole family resides in Grove, Oklahoma. And while dads and moms are working, everyone gets to share in the joy of loving and caring for our special blessings.

Jonathan and Elizabeth French of St. Louis, Missouri, are overjoyed to announce the birth of their first child, Katharine Joëlle. Baby Kate swiftly made her debut at 6:39 p.m. Feb. 9, 2007, as the sun was setting Sabbath evening. She



Katharine Joëlle French

weighed 8 pounds 1 ounce and was 21 inches long. Proud grandparents are Jeanie "Grams" Gladden of Red Lion, Pennsylvania; Stephen "Gramps" Mapes of Edwards, Colorado; Bonnie "Bon-Bon" French and Warren "Pepaw" French of Springfield, Missouri. Great-grandmother Jan "Mommom" Hush attends the York, Pennsylvania, congregation. Baby Kate is a blessing and a joy to all extended family and friends!

Kaelyn Brooke was born to Steve and Beth (Whitley) Ferguson on Oct. 14, 2006—a Last Great Day baby! This beautiful baby girl weighed 7 pounds 14 ounces and was 18½ inches long. Kaelyn is adored by her 15-month-old brother, Rylan. At first sight, Rylan called his new baby sister "doggie." He now understands that this "doggie" is a part of our family. This proud family of four attends the Houston, Texas, North congregation. With this new addition, Kaelyn is the 20th



Kaelyn Brooke Ferguson

grandchild for Floyd and Floyce Whitley, also attending the Houston North congregation.

Bill and Jackie (Mullen) Kyle of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, would like to



Matthew William Kyle

announce the birth of their third child, Matthew William, born on March 28, 2007. He weighed in at 8 pounds 8 ounces and was 22 inches long. Sisters Elizabeth and Megan are very excited about their baby brother. Grandparents are Patricia Kyle from the Youngstown, Ohio, congregation and Ronald and Wilma Mullen.

Billy and Sarah (Allen) Hicks of the Gadsden, Alabama, congregation joyfully announce the birth of their son, William Vernon Hicks Jr. Will was born on Nov.



William Vernon Hicks

13, 2006, weighing 6 pounds 4 ounces and was 20 inches long. His loving grandparents, George and Rhonda Allen and Steve and Jan Hicks of Springville, Alabama, are enjoying their first grandchild.

Alex and Danielle Fox of Salt Lake



Julian Alexander Fox

City, Utah, are pleased to announce the arrival of their second child, Julian Alexander, little brother of Annabelle Marie. Julian was born Nov. 14, 2006.

Lauryn Elizabeth (8 pounds 10 ounces) arrived the evening of Aug. 10, 2006, in the home of Ted and Beth Wilson in Killbuck,



Lauryn Elizabeth Wilson

Ohio. She has joined big brother Taylor (4) and twin brothers Samuel and Luke (2). Happy grandparents are Tom and Regina Wilson of Killbuck, Ohio, and Gerald and Ardelle Schwartzrock of Rollag, Minnesota. "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD... Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5).

Engagements

Dr. Garvey Chilopora was engaged to Gloria Milanzi of Blantyre, Malawi, in a colorful traditional family ceremony in late February. Garvey is the son of Dr. Sam and Esther Chilopora and is further-



Gloria Milanzi and Garvey
Chilopora

ing his studies in gynecology in Cape-town, South Africa. Gloria is working for an NGO called Medecines sans frontieres France dealing with HIV and antiretroviral therapy in Malawi. An Aug. 12, 2007, wedding is planned in Malawi.

Emily Ann Orsak, of the Houston,



Jason Hyde and Emily Orsak

Texas, North congregation, and Jason Lee Hyde, of the Louisville, Kentucky, congregation, were engaged at the Winter Family Weekend in December 2006. The couple met at the Winter Weekend the previous year when Emily was attending ABC. A July 2007 wedding is planned in Houston.

Gabriel Dempsey, son of Gary and Gracie Dempsey of Corpus Christi, Texas, and Virginia Jane Mendez, daughter of Arnold



Virginia Mendez and Gabriel Dempsey and Janie Mendez, members of the Corpus Christi congregation, are pleased to announce their engagement. The couple was engaged at the Feast of Tabernacles in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 2006. They will marry Dec. 15, 2007, in Corpus Christi. The couple attends the Corpus Christi congregation.

Tom and Regina Wilson of Killbuck, Ohio, are very pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Risa A. Wilson, to David L. Kennebeck, son of Lon and Kathy Kennebeck of Canton, Geor-



Risa Wilson and David Kennebeck

gia. The wedding will be Sept. 2, 2007, in Ohio where the couple will reside and attend the Mansfield congregation.

Weddings

Michael and Amy Rose of Vassar, Michigan, are pleased to announce the



Stan and Sarah Grabowski

marriage of their daughter, Sarah Rose, to Stanley Grabowski, son of Steve and Ada

Grabowski, of Laramie, Wyoming.

They were married in Bay City, Michigan, on Aug. 20, 2006, by Gary McConaughy, pastor of the Grand Rapids congregation. The bridesmaid was Pamela Chelekis, friend of the bride. Corbin Rose, brother of the bride, was the best man. Alicia and Shelby Howard, nieces of the groom, were the flower girls.

The couple met eight years ago at the Feast of Tabernacles in Conwy, Wales. Sarah and Stan currently live in Laramie, Wyoming, and attend the Loveland, Colorado, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lang of Eugene, Oregon, are very pleased to announce the marriage of their granddaughter Sena



Sena and Samuel Bradley

Marie Martens to Samuel James Bradley on July 23, 2006. Family and friends came from across the United States and England for the outdoor evening ceremony, held along the McKenzie River at Belknap Hotsprings, Oregon. John Cafourek, pastor of the Salem, Eugene and Coos Bay, Oregon, congregations, officiated. A lovely reception followed the ceremony.

The bride is the daughter of Tim Martens of Bentonville, Arkansas, and Debra Martens Larson of Canby, Oregon. The groom is the son of Gilbert and Laura Bradley of Cambridgeshire, England. The couple currently resides near London, England.

Arnold C. Mendez Jr. and Leigha Riley are pleased to announce their marriage on June 24, 2006, in Montgomery, Texas. The ceremony was officiated by John Bald and Tom Clark. The best man was the groom's brother, Adam Mendez, and the maid of honor was the bride's sister, Abigail Riley. After a honeymoon in Maya Rivera, Mexico, they returned to Houston, Texas, where they are both members of the Houston North congregation. Arnold is the son of Arnold and Janie Mendez, members of the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation. Leigha is the daughter of David and Martha McCarble, members of the Houston South congregation, and the late C.W. Riley.



Leigha and Arnold Mendez

Adam C. Mendez and Megan Buntin were married on Aug. 6, 2006. The ceremony, which took place in Houston, Texas, was officiated by John Bald. The couple honeymooned in Maui, Hawaii.



Adam and Megan Mendez

They attend the Houston North congregation. Adam is the son of Arnold and Janie Mendez, members of the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation. Megan is the daughter of Donald and Kathy Buntin of Houston.

Anniversaries

Brian and Jubi Jones observed their 50th wedding anniversary on March 16, 2007, at the home of their son-in-law John and Lolly Parkin, in Johannesburg, South Africa. Children, grandchildren and relatives came from as far as London to be present for this special occasion. It is interesting that both Brian and Jubi were baptized in



Jubi and Brian Jones

on their seventh wedding anniversary in 1964. They are now retired and reside on the Kwazulu/Natal south coast.

Brian and Jubi have three children, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Harold and Marge Shonyo of Bellevue, Washington, celebrated their 60th



Harold and Marge Shonyo

wedding anniversary on March 20, 2007. Their daughters Donna Odar and Patricia Garland were in attendance, as well as

other family members from Colorado, Florida and Oregon. Their son Dwight and his wife made their appearance via live webcam from Australia. Harold and Marge have been members since 1954.

Obituaries

Charles (Chuck) Hayes, a member of the Phoenix, Arizona, Northwest congregation, passed away on March 2, 2007, from melanoma cancer. Chuck was born and raised in a little coal mining town near Hayden, Colorado. At Hayden High School, he lettered all four years in football and basketball. He was also the pitcher for the town of Craig's softball league. He loved growing up in the mountains hunting and fishing.

On Sept. 20, 1953, he married JoAnn (Brenner), and they recently celebrated their 53rd anniversary. He enjoyed his 35-year-long career with Western (now Delta) Airlines. After he retired, he enjoyed pursuing his golfing hobby several days a week.

Chuck was a third-generation member of God's Church. His grandfather and mother were baptized in 1952, and Chuck, along with his wife, were later baptized in



Charles Hayes

1965. The Hayes have been members in the Phoenix church area for 42 years.

Knowing the extent of the cancer, it is a true blessing from God that Chuck lived relatively pain-free during his brief time after being diagnosed last January.

Chuck is survived by his wife, JoAnn; their three children, Cindy Hill, Tom (and Janie) Hayes and Kathy (and Randal) Rapp; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and two sisters.

The family appreciates all of the prayers, love and support received from the Church.

Leroy Bigler, 75, died unexpectedly Feb. 7, 2007. He was baptized in 1969 and was a member of the York, Pennsylvania, congregation.

When he was a boy, milk was still delivered by rubber-tired, horse-drawn wagons. Leroy was drafted into the army in 1952 and was sent to Japan and Korea.

Leroy wrote in an autobiography, "After I came home from the army, I remember another prayer that I prayed. I asked God for a wife; that we could be married and have a good life together. That prayer was answered May 14, 1955, and my Annie Babe was the proof." His wife, who was baptized in 1972, died a few years ago. He faithfully cared for her during her illness. They were very devoted to each other.

They began hearing Herbert Armstrong on the radio. Leroy wrote, "He was the only preacher that sounded like he knew

what he was talking about." They bought a large family Bible that the Acme stores sold in sections. But then they put it on the shelf.

One night they heard Mr. Armstrong advertise the Ambassador College Correspondence Course. They decided to take the course and learn what was in that large book. Leroy finished all 58 lessons and was a student of the Bible ever since.

Leroy was a quiet, gentle and helpful man. He will be missed. Appropriately, he ended his autobiography with these words: "I thank God every day for the many good gifts He has given me."

Eliza Carico of Coeburn, Virginia, died at the age of 97 on Feb. 13, 2007, at the Lonesome Pine Hospital in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. She was baptized into the Church of God in April of 1975. For the last several years, she had been a member



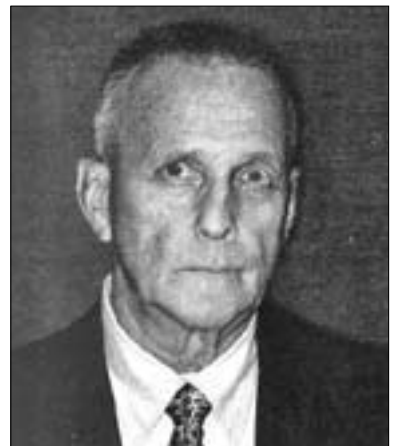
Eliza Carico

of the United Church of God congregation in Kingsport, Tennessee.

Mrs. Carico is survived by one daughter, Rose Mary Sturgill, who is also a member of the Kingsport congregation; four step-daughters; three stepsons; two sisters; four grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and five great-great-grandchildren.

Her smile and cheerful attitude always brightened the day of those around her. The funeral service was conducted by David Dobson, pastor of the Kingsport congregation.

Don Patterson, a member of the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene United Church of God congregation, passed away on March



Don Patterson

4, 2007, in Spokane Valley, Washington. Don was 76 years old. He had been a dedicated member of God's Church since March 1972. Don set a wonderful example of being a faithful member of God's Church. A memorial service was held on March 11, 2007, with Mark Mickelson officiating.

Jennifer LeAnn Elder of Shallotte, North Carolina, passed away Feb. 24,

2007, at the age of 25 after battling breast cancer for two years. The cancer had spread throughout her body despite repeated surgery attempts to remove cancerous tumors, chemo and radiation treatments.

Jennifer fought the cancer with courage, determination and a dignity that set an example for everyone. Her faith in God never wavered. Jennifer approached her battle with cancer as a blessing, never complaining and always seeking to help others whenever she could. She saw the good work God was accomplishing in her



Jennifer LeAnn Elder

struggle and suffering, knowing that it is through our suffering that God purifies us and refines us to become part of His Kingdom; as Christ suffered, so must we.

She depended on God as the source of her strength. She knew that God's promise to bring her through it was kept. She lived her life for glorifying God. In her struggle to live, she knew that the outcome was totally up to God. The strength of her faith continues to inspire everyone she came in contact with worldwide.

Jennifer was raised in the Church, and was baptized with her parents on Feb. 15, 2004. Jennifer and her parents attended the Florence, South Carolina, congregation. Attending services was very important to Jennifer. After each of her surgeries, as soon as she was discharged from the hospital, she attended services the same week. The most memorable Feast of Tabernacles, and the one that gave her the most joy, was the Feast of 2006 when she was able to serve as a greeter.

Jennifer was the beloved daughter and only child of Joan Twigg Elder and David Allen Elder, born on April 9, 1981, in Bay City, Michigan. She attended Michigan State University where she studied veterinary medicine, with a dual major of zoology. She worked for a year as a veterinary technician. After being fired for the observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days, she changed careers to be a professional painter, working at her father's side until she could no longer work.

Jennifer was loved by all who knew her. She and her beautiful smile will be greatly missed. We look forward to seeing her again in God's Kingdom. We thank all of our brethren for the prayers, love and support you gave Jennifer throughout her battle with cancer. It is this love and support that strengthened her, gave her hope and strengthened her faith in the promises of God.

Virginia Ghent was born in Searcy, Arkansas, Feb. 13, 1922, to Robert Cecil and Isa Dora Wyatt. She was the third of 10 children. Wilbur, Flora Goad, Louie and Francis Choate preceded her in death. Edna Orkruhlik lives in Texas, and Martha Mayo, Ina Mae Slaughter, Betty Brixey and

Carolyn Allen live in Louisiana.

On March 10, 1942, Virginia married George Howard (Bert) Ghent. Their only child, Sandy (Mrs. John W. Cafourek), was born three years after they were married.

Virginia was baptized into the Church of God in the summer of 1954 by Gerald Waterhouse and Carlton Smith, who were on a baptizing tour traveling through the South. In 1961 a congregation was established in Little Rock, Arkansas. It eventually grew from a small flock to 600 people.

The Ghents' lives revolved around God's way of life and the truth of Jesus Christ. Virginia served the congregation by providing food for potlucks, socials and work parties and offering her home as a place for Bible studies. She also served by praying for God's work, the sick and for Jesus Christ's return to relieve the suffering on this earth.

Mr. Ghent died in November 1986 from a long bout with cancer. Virginia had been a devoted wife and nurse to her husband. Virginia loved her family above everything else in life. She delighted in her beautiful and precious granddaughters Roxanne (Mrs. Jonathan Sears) and Carmella (Mrs. Berkeley Weis). She loved her great-grandchildren Autumn Amber Weis,



Virginia Ghent

Warren Wolfgang Weis, Austin Noah Sears and Cameron Matthew Sears.

Virginia died Feb. 8, 2007, but her memory lives on in the minds and hearts of her family and her friends in the Salem, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; and Little Rock, Arkansas congregations. We all look forward to seeing Virginia again in the Kingdom of God. Special thanks to so many who participated in the lovely memorial for Virginia Feb. 17, 2007.

Victor Vance Woodbury and Barbara Anna Woodbury, who attended the Liberal, Kansas, congregation, died in their home on Wednesday March 28, 2007. Vance and Barbara, who were second-generation Christians, attended Ambassador College Big Sandy in the late 1960s. Vance also worked on the college farm for several years.

They lived for a time in both Colorado



Vance and Barbara Woodbury

Tribute: Evelyn Keeley

Evelyn (White) Keeley was born on Nov. 27, 1915, in Joliet, Illinois, to parents Will and Ada (Pape) White. Evelyn met her future husband, Glen Keeley, while both were high school students. Glen and Evelyn were married on Jan. 5, 1934, and enjoyed nearly 66 years together. Evelyn was a devoted homemaker and mother. Over the years, she and her husband supported and/or housed her parents, Glen's parents, Glen's sister and her family as well as several brethren.

In 1942, the couple decided to make their dream to become farmers a reality by purchasing a farm in Gobles, Michigan. To get their farming business started, Glen took a job in town and Evelyn raised vegetables and sold them door-to-door. After several years, the couple became leaders in the local dairy business and were credited with the development of a subbreed of red Holstein cattle. Their son, Rockie, and his wife, Hope, now live on the Keeley farm in Gobles.

Both Glen and Evelyn were baptized in a pond on the family farm in

1959 by a young Dennis Luker, who was in the area on a baptizing tour. The family attended services in Chicago.

During the Spring Holy Days, Glen would milk the cows in the early morning while Evelyn prepared food for the family's trip to Chicago and the potluck meal that would be held between the two, long, daily services for all seven days of Unleavened Bread. The family would make the two-hour trip to Chicago, attend both services and the potluck, drive home, milk the cows and start all over again the next morning!

Evelyn was always serving, organizing countless potlucks and gatherings and extending hospitality to family, friends and many in the ministry over the years. Her biscuits were legendary and many a minister and his family enjoyed a meal prepared by Evelyn.

She was an avid gardener, raising produce that was canned or frozen every year. She also created and maintained extensive flower gardens, so striking in their appearance that those driving by would often stop and take pictures. She was her husband's



Evelyn Keeley

helpmate in every way—a tireless worker, a loving wife and mother. Their success in farming was truly a joint venture.

Evelyn loved her husband, her children and her friends. Sadly, Alzheimer's disease took over the last years of Evelyn's life. She died on March 24, 2007, at age 91, at Borgess Nursing Home in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Evelyn was preceded in death by her husband, Glen, and a sister, Dorothy Peterson. Surviving are four children, Joanne Harrington, Glen Keeley, Rockie Keeley and Roxanne Healy; 17 grandchildren, as well as numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

and California, before settling down back in Vance's home area in the Oklahoma panhandle. Vance, who had been involved with farming and ranching all his life, continued a small farm and maintained a small beef cattle herd. He also worked for Beaver County, Oklahoma, as a road maintenance worker, primarily as a heavy equipment operator.

They were both known for serving and helping whenever and wherever needed, and were greatly respected in their community.

One wish Vance and Barbara had expressed to their children was their desire to face the end of their lives together. God granted them that wish when a powerful Oklahoma tornado leveled their home.

They are survived by Barbara's mother, Fern Davisson; Vance's father and stepmother, Ledru and Lola Woodbury; three children and their mates: Curtis and Jolynda Woodbury, Brad and Carissa Woodbury and Vickie and Troy Shook; as well as eight grandchildren.

Emmett Clyde "Bill" Sidars, 77, of Bridgeport, West Virginia, passed away Jan. 3, 2007. He was born Dec. 8, 1929, in Columbus, Ohio, a son of the late Harry Raymond and Rhuea Blanche Cale Sidars.

His loving wife of 53 years, Frances Nutter Sidars, whom he married July 25, 1953, survives him.

Additionally, Bill is survived by his two sons, James Raymond Sidars of Gainesville, Georgia, and his children, Steven, Nikki and Kriston; and Stephen Earl Sidars and his wife, Marci, of Denver, Colorado, and their children, Marissa and Janelle. Also surviving Bill are two of his sisters: Jeanne Pettigrew of Concorde, North Carolina, and Patricia West of Wake, Virginia.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two brothers, Harry Sidars and James Sidars; and one sister, Mary Maribella.

Bill was a very active member of the

United Church of God, and he and his family began attending services with the Radio Church of God in the mid-1960s. He was employed for 15 years with the U.S. Postal Service, but was terminated for not working on the Sabbath. While the U.S. Supreme Court had not begun to grasp the importance of the Sabbath, Bill and Fran's example of obedience was not lost on their sons and other members of the Church of God.



Emmett Clyde "Bill" Sidars

A veteran of the Korean conflict, Bill served as a master sergeant and attended George Washington University while in the U.S. Army, from which he was honorably discharged in 1952.

Funeral services were conducted by pastor Tim Waddle. Full military graveside honors followed at the West Virginia National Cemetery in Pruntytown. The sorrow and the noise of guns at that service were powerful in early January, but they both will be overshadowed by the joy and noise of triumph on the day that our Savior returns.

Bob Fergen, 79, of Kennewick, Washington, died on Dec. 13, 2006. He was born in Parkston, South Dakota, on Jan. 22, 1927. He married Joan Mengenhauser of Plankinton, South Dakota, on Oct. 22, 1953.

Bob spent most of his life in the real estate business, 23 years in Rapid City and

the past 11 years in Kennewick. He also served in the U.S. Coast Guard, attended Northern State College in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and Ambassador College in Pasadena. He was baptized in 1970, and ordained a local elder in 1975 at Rapid City, always having a great zeal for God's truth throughout these years.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years; four sons: Mark of Sundance, Wyoming; David (Karen Woodbridge) of Wellington, Kansas; Ken (Caroline Davies) of Pasco, Washington; and Patrick (Anita Boring) of Spokane, Washington; two daughters: Peggy Morgan (Tim) of Spokane, Washington; and Lisa Amer (Steve) of North



Bob Fergen

Odgen, Utah; 11 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. Burial took place at the Willamette National Cemetery in Portland, Oregon.

Ruby Haydon died on Feb. 5, 2007, in Merritt Island, Florida. She turned 86 on Jan. 21. She suffered severe complications after two major surgeries in one week.

Ruby was baptized in the spring of 1967 while living in Waltham, Massachusetts. She attended services with the Orlando, Florida, congregation. She lived for her Church family and looked forward each week to being with them.

Her husband, Robert Haydon, preceded her in death approximately 15 years ago. She is survived by her two daughters,



Ruby Haydon

Frieda Sikes and her husband, Harold; and Elizabeth Rodamer and her husband, Robert. She leaves seven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Ruby was an inspiration to all who knew her, and she loved everyone so deeply. Her beautiful smiling face and outstretched arms are already missed.

Nancy Ann Skinkle, 68, of Central Lake, Michigan, died Jan. 16, 2007, in Zephyrhills, Florida.

Nancy was born on Dec. 10, 1938, in Detroit, Michigan. She married Allen Skinkle on June 26, 1957. In 1969 Nancy and Al moved from Detroit to Central Lake and built their home on Skinkle Road where they raised their six children. They also had six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They owned and operated Central Heating and Cooling. Nancy also worked for the Antrim County Commission for the Aging, later working there as a volunteer after retiring. She was also president of the Central Lake Women's Club for many years.

Al and Nancy were baptized in 1971 and ordained deacon and deaconess in 1972, and together they served the Church for many years.

Nancy for the last 10 years attended the United Church of God in Wolverine, Michigan. She was a true servant of God. She took Paul's words in Romans 12:1 to heart, presenting herself as a living sacrifice, first to God, her family, the Church of God and the community she lived in.

Arve, her grandson, said, "Our grandmother had a chalkboard and a Bible, and she made us sit down and she taught us about God's way."

Her daughter Karen wrote in a letter

that was read at her funeral: "Mom loved to bowl and play cards, especially euchre. Mom always had a deck of cards in her purse, so when she visited her children, they could play euchre. Mom loved to go to movies, enjoyed the circus and parades and carnival rides. Mom was pretty much game for anything fun. Mom loved to laugh and have fun. At church in a large crowd, all we had to do is listen for her boisterous, cheerful laughter and we could find my mom."

Nancy will be greatly missed by her husband, her family, her community and God's Church.

Funeral services were conducted by



Nancy Ann Skinkle

United Church of God pastor Steve Shafer and elder John Sackrider.

George K. Arnold, 94, of Somerset, Ohio, died Nov. 27, 2006, after a period of declining health.

He was born July 9, 1912, in Boyce Station, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Somerset High School in 1931, he lived a life of diversity. He farmed, worked for the U.S. Post Office and was a machinist. He was always ready to help his family, neighbors and friends when a need was known. He loved working in the soil and following retirement spent many hours in his garden.

During retirement, with his wife, Alta, he did house and barn painting in Florida and Ohio. He has told many amusing stories of his experiences with roofing tar, ladders and paint buckets. He enjoyed traveling by car and was fond of steam engines, trains and model railroading.

George loved studying the Scriptures with his wife of 69 years. He was a member of the United Church of God in Ath-

ens, Ohio, and also a member of the New Reading Grange.

He was a devoted husband to his wife, Alta, whom he married on Oct. 14, 1937. They have four children: Elizabeth "Betty" (and Doyne) Swackhammer of Somerset; George R. (and Barbara) Arnold of Wooster, Ohio; Jim (and Linda) Arnold



George K. Arnold

of Mount Perry, Ohio; and David (and Vera) Arnold of Bowling Green, Ohio. They also have eight grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren and seven great-great-grandchildren. He is survived by a brother, Walter Arnold, and a sister, Lois Winegardner. His sister Avis Rarick preceded him in death.

Over the years, George and Alta sent many hundreds of cards and letters to the sick and shut-ins in the Church. They considered this an important part of their mission in life.

A graveside service was held at Mr. Arnold's request on Nov. 29, 2006, at the New Reading Cemetery with David Rambel officiating.

Mr. Arnold is greatly missed by his wife, his family and all who knew him. He is now awaiting the first resurrection of the saints.

Bonnie Ioline Fulton (Ikey), 85, died on March 4, 2007, following a courageous battle with rheumatoid arthritis for 35 years. Ioline was born July 14, 1921, in Wichita, Kansas, to the late Edward and Blanche (Woods) Woolfer. Ikey had several different jobs throughout her life but retired from Trans American Title.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Charles T. Fulton, in 2003 and one sister, Wilda Epps, in 2002. She is survived by one cousin, Alberta Rollins of Tucson, and two nephews in Kansas. She was a longtime member of the Church of God and a member of the United Church of God in Tucson since 2000.

Nellie Heddleston, 90, of West Union, Ohio, died March 12, 2007. She was born Feb. 19, 1917, at Quick Run, Kentucky, and was the daughter of John and Minnie McCall.

In 1937, Nellie married Wendell Heddleston. Wendell and Nellie farmed south of West Union. Mrs. Heddleston was a homemaker and helped her husband with the work of the farm. Their marriage lasted 63 years until Wendell's death in 2000.

Mrs. Heddleston was baptized on May



Nellie Heddleston

29, 1969, and ran her Christian race for 37 years. She was a member of the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation of the United Church of God. Her children Wilma, Dorothy and Philip are also members of the Church of God.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Wendell, and a daughter, Wilma. She is survived by one daughter, Dorothy; two sons, Roy and Philip; one sister, Mollie; four grandsons; one step-grandson; three great-granddaughters; and several nieces and nephews.

Mrs. Heddleston died in the faith looking forward to God's coming Kingdom and will be greatly missed by her friends and family.

Announcements: Members are welcome to submit announcements of the births, engagements, weddings, significant anniversaries (25, 40, 50, 60, etc.) and obituaries in their families. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Most items are 50 to 100 words and should not exceed 250 words. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give them to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

administered a test on the fundamental beliefs of the Church. The group of men we are working with has shown considerable growth since our first encounter back in 1999, and all did well on the test."

Elders Ordained

Eddie Johnson was ordained Feb. 24. He will be helping the pastor, John Schroeder, in the Tonbridge, England, area.

David Payne was ordained March 3 and will help David Fenney in the Isle of Man and northern United Kingdom.

On March 24, Scott Moss was ordained an elder. He and his wife, Peggy, serve in the Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregation.

On April 9, Elifazi Salawila was ordained. He and his wife, Selia, serve in the Blantyre congregation in Malawi.

U.S. Holy Day Offerings Up

Preliminary U.S. Holy Day offering figures showed increases of 4.8 percent for the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread and 3.5 percent for the last Holy Day. The figures were \$800,476 for the first day and \$764,645 for the last day. These figures are expected to reach \$815,000 and \$775,000 when individually mailed offerings are all processed.

On the first day, 13,181 attended, down from 13,248 the previous year (half of a percent decrease). On the last day 12,066 attended, up from 12,026 (0.3 percent increase).

Gerald Seelig

Canadian Tax Rebate Ended

The Canadian GST tax rebate for visitors from outside Canada has been discontinued. There is talk that conventions may be able to continue to get it, but that isn't official as yet. This tax information was incorrect in the Canadian Feast listings in the March/April issue, but was corrected in the *Festival Planning Brochure*.

St. Lucia Closed

Coordinator Arnold Hampton announced April 17 that the St. Lucia Feast site is closed to further transfers.

Correction: Fundamentals, Not Foundations

In the Council reports in the last issue we reported that the ABC class Founda-

See "News at a Glance," page 24

Letters

"To Vote or Not to Vote"

I thank David Treybig for his article "To Vote or Not to Vote" in the *United News*, September/October 2006. This question doesn't come up in the United States only. It is good that this article was written.

In Philippians 3:20 we read, "For our citizenship is in heaven."

An ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20) does not involve himself in the political affairs of that nation.

As Mr. Treybig rightly put it in his article, God removes kings and raises up kings (Daniel 2:21; Romans 13:1), so we have to pray whenever it is time for elections in our various countries, and leave the rest up to God.

Martin Arantes Agbezudor
Darmstadt, Germany, congregation

Dress for Services

I just want you to know that I really appreciate the series of articles that you published regarding femininity, including the latest article by Richard Pinelli about the proper way to dress in Church services. Those articles are very helpful!

Philippines

Glimmer of Hope in Iraq

Thanks to you for the useful magazine of understanding, *The Good News*, which I receive irregularly because of the bad security. The post office closed for more than two months. In spite of this bloodshed and sectarian civil war in Baghdad's streets, we have a glimmer of hope. Would you please, sir, send me [more] free booklets?

Baghdad, Iraq

"Bearing the Cost on Our Behalf"

Thank you very much for the book *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and the magazine. I found them very interesting as well as spiritual. Today everything has its price. But you provide your service on a complimentary basis by bearing the cost on our behalf. I appreciate that very much.

Sri Lanka

"Never Give Up!"

I'm a 17-year-old boy. Thank you very much for the books. At first I thought you wouldn't send them to me, but I was wrong. Although the place where I live is so far, you really sent them to me. When I received them, I was so happy.

The books are interesting. They contain the truths that I need to know. Here in Myanmar I can't get books like these. So please continue sending them to me. I really need them for my life.

All of you are doing the great work that God wants you all to do. Keep doing! Never give up! You all are really going to get the great rewards from God. God loves all of you very much.

Yengon, Myanmar

Letters to the Editor: Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Comments and suggestions 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.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 23

tions of Faith was being recorded for distribution. Actually, the ABC class to be recorded this year is Fundamentals of Theology, taught by Dr. Don Ward. After recording, it will be posted on our Web site and mailed to congregation libraries.

ABC Continuing Ed Seminars Planned

Due to the positive responses the Ambassador Bible Center Continuing Education Seminars have generated, this year we have budgeted for six weekend seminars in cities around the United States, two Winter Family Weekend seminars and the annual five-day seminar in the ABC lecture hall at the home office.

Our first seminar will be the annual five-day seminar in Cincinnati. Classes will begin on Monday morning, Aug. 20, and run through Friday afternoon, Aug. 24, from 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. All regular ABC faculty members will teach classes, and several of the adjunct instructors will also give presentations.

Cost for the five-day seminar will be \$50 a person. If more than two in a family are attending, or if someone is unable to afford the tuition cost, please contact us for special rates. Space is limited to 60 participants, so those who wish to take part need to register as soon as possible.

You may register by sending your name, address and tuition to: Ambassador Bible Center Continuing Education, P.O. Box 54992, Cincinnati, OH 45254. Please include an e-mail address if possible and we will forward housing information and schedules. For further information, please contact the continuing education coordinator at david_johnson@ucg.org.

Between the end of August and the end of the year we have tentatively scheduled six weekend seminars in local church areas. We will announce the exact locations as soon as the dates and locations are finalized, but we currently plan one seminar in the southern United States, two in the Midwest, two in the

West and one in the Northeast.

These seminars involve two ABC instructors covering classes on the Sabbath and the following day for a total of 11 instruction hours plus Sabbath services. Instructors cover different material each year, so the material will be new even for those who have attended seminars in the past. Certificates of completion are awarded to those who attend all the sessions.

Last year we experimented with including an ABC Continuing Education seminar at the annual Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky. The response was so enthusiastic that we are planning to do another two-day seminar in Louisville this year. In addition, we are also adding a two-day seminar for the Winter Family Weekend in Portland, Oregon.

David Johnson

Young Adults' Weekend Set for Wisconsin

A fantastic young adults weekend of faith, fellowship and fun is planned for Aug. 10-12, 2007, in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. The weekend will include Sabbath services, special seminars, a service project and plenty of opportunities for games, fun and fellowship. For more information, send an e-mail to gary_black@ucg.org.

Gary Black

Tampa Bay Plans Family Weekend

The annual Tampa Bay Family Weekend has been set for June 9 and 10.

The weekend's activities will start with Sabbath services at 3 p.m. at the Treasure Island Community Center, 1 Park Place, on Treasure Island. Mark Winner, pastor of UCG's Louisville and Henderson, Kentucky, congregations will be the guest speaker.

After getting their spiritual fill, everyone will feast on a potluck meal provided by the St. Petersburg and Tampa congregations, then partake in a seminar from Tampa Bay pastor David Treybig.

Following sunset will be the "Treasures Under the Sea" themed dance. During the dance, young children will participate in



What's New on the Web?

World News and Prophecy Seminars online.

View recent seminars given

by writers of *World News and Prophecy* at www.wnponline.org/video/.

2007 Feast Brochure.

Check out the 2007 *Festival Planning Brochure* containing

Feast site and housing information and informative articles on preparing for this year's Feast of Tabernacles. Online at www.ucg.org/feast/.

New Booklet Available.

You can access the new booklet *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?* online at www.ucg.org/booklets/NC/.

UCG Commentary.

"Making Sense out of the Virginia Tech Tragedy"

"A Price Too High Even for a Celebrity"

www.ucg.org/commentary/

Featured Link

Virtual Christian Magazine, monthly online magazine of inspirational and Christian living topics. vcmagazine.org.



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

a treasure hunt. Saturday's activities will wrap up at 11 p.m.

Artsy types will want to arrive at Fort DeSoto Park early on Sunday to compete in the annual sand sculpture contest. Judging will begin at 11:45 a.m. Other beachgoers can arrive at their leisure. A cookout-style lunch will be served at noon in Pavilion 5. Musical entertainment will begin at 12:30, with family games to follow. The cost of lunch will be \$5 per person or up to \$20 per family.

For more details about the weekend, please visit UCG Tampa Bay's Web site at <http://ucg-tampabay.org/>.

Kristin Yarbrough

Flint Announces 40th Anniversary

The Flint, Michigan, congregation will celebrate its 40th anniversary on the Sabbath of July 21. The event will begin with a special Sabbath service with former Flint pastor Melvin Rhodes as the guest speaker. That will be followed by a catered meal, special musical entertainment and other festivities.

The celebration will be held at the Flint United Church of God Church Building located at 4043 W. Coldwater Rd., Flint, MI 48505. The Sabbath service will begin at 2 p.m.

Additional information, including motel accommodations, will be posted on the local Web site: ucgflint.org.

If you plan to attend, please notify Steve Shafer, no later than July 10, by e-mail at steve_shafer@ucg.org or by sending notification to his mailing address: P.O. Box 491, Flushing, MI 48433-0491.

Steve Shafer

Ann Arbor Plans 40th Anniversary

The United Church of God—Ann Arbor, Michigan, will host a 40th anniversary celebration of the starting of God's Church in the area on July 28, 2007. The festivities will begin with a reception on the Sabbath to welcome friends and family as well as renew acquaintances. We will then have a special afternoon Sabbath service with two previous pastors as guest speakers.

That evening the Ann Arbor congregation will host a buffet dinner, including a slide show presentation chronicling the past 40 years of God's work in this area as well as picture/memorabilia displays.

Our theme for the event is "Celebrating 40 Years of Growth in God's Family, 1967-2007." The following day a picnic is planned for the enjoyment of all our Ann Arbor Church family and guests.

The Sabbath evening buffet dinner will cost \$15 per person. Friday, June 29, is the deadline for dinner reservations and payments. Please make checks payable to "UCG—Ann Arbor" and include the number of people attending in your group.

If you would like a flyer or further information, please contact Randy D'Alessandro at (586) 202-4590 or e-mail him at randymary080104@comcast.net.

Randy D'Alessandro

Calendar of Events

May 8-10: Council of Elders meeting.
May 18-20: Spokane, Washington, 10th annual Women's Retreat. Theme: "Fruitful Branches."

May 25-28: Young adults' activity, Jacksonville, Florida (see article, March/April, page 24).

June 9-10: Tampa Bay, Florida, Family Weekend, <http://ucg-tampabay.org/>.

June 28-July 1: Bluegrass Family Fun Weekend, Sally Buffalo Park near Cadiz, Ohio, www.ucgnet.org/wheeling/bluegrass.

July 21-22: Women's Weekend, "The Gift of Godly Friendship," Phoenix East, Arizona, ucgazww@hotmail.com.

July 21: Flint, Michigan, 40th Anniversary (see article, this page).

July 28: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 40th Anniversary (see article, this page).

Aug. 5-8: Council of Elders meeting.

Aug. 10-12: Young adults' weekend, Williams Bay, Wisconsin, contact gary_black@ucg.org.

Aug. 12: ABC graduation.

Aug. 20-24: ABC Continuing Education seminars at the home office.

Sept. 2: Houston Music Festival (see article, February, page 16).

Attention Graduating Seniors and Parents!

Congratulations! We would like to feature the 2007 high school graduates in a special section of the July *United News*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by June 11, 2007.

1. Graduate's Name
2. Parents' Names
3. Congregation and Pastor's Name
4. High School Accomplishments
5. Church Activities/Hobbies/Interests (tell a little bit about yourself)
6. Plans After Graduation
7. Additional Comments (favorite quote, favorite scripture, motto, advice, etc. Please identify which it is, so we don't think your advice is your motto, etc.)

Phone number or e-mail address to confirm spellings, etc. (Will Not Be Printed)
Please send with a recent photo (conforming with biblical standards of dress and hair length) of the graduate by June 11.

By e-mail to: Mike_Bennett@ucg.org

By mail to: *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length; 250-word maximum length. Thanks!



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