



United Church of God
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United News™

News of the United Church of God, an International Association

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January 2008

News At a Glance

293 Baptized Around the World

In 2007, at least 293 new members were baptized around the world. This compares to 335 reported in the January issue last year. Here are the baptisms reported at press time:

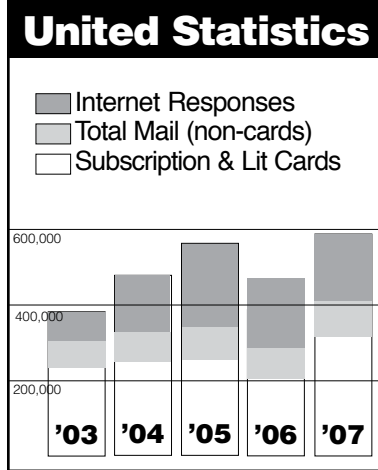
Argentina.....	4
Australia.....	19
Bahamas.....	1
Barbados.....	1
Brazil.....	4
Canada.....	9
Chile.....	13
Colombia.....	1
France.....	1
Germany.....	2
Guatemala.....	4
Italy.....	2
Ivory Coast.....	1
Kenya.....	7
Mexico.....	9
New Zealand.....	2
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Rwanda.....	1
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Elder Hired Into Full-Time Ministry

Ministerial Services operation manager Jim Franks wrote in the Dec. 27 *Ministerial Services Newsletter and Journal*:

"We are happy to announce that we have hired an elder for the full-time ministry. Shawn Cortelyou and his wife, Elizabeth, [began] working for the Church effective Dec. 31. Shawn is

See "News at a Glance," page 2



AP, Fox, Others Interview UCG About Xmas

■ Hundreds of newspapers and radio stations featured interviews with UCG ministers about "Christians Who Don't Keep Christmas."

The weeks leading up to Dec. 25 were exciting ones for several United Church of God ministers who were interviewed by major newspaper and radio outlets. The excitement spread to thousands of Church members as hundreds of stations and papers carried the interviews on the theme "Christians who don't keep Christmas."

UCG President Clyde Kilough attributed the media blitz to "God's power to open doors."

"We did nothing of our own power to plan for or generate that. It was undoubtedly worth hundreds of thousands, even millions, of dollars of exposure—there is no way we can calculate what it would have cost us to have bought our way into such prominent media outlets around the world!"

The blitz began with Tom Breen, an Associated Press writer in West Virginia, who contacted the UCG home office and John Foster, the UCG pastor in his

area. Quotes from Mr. Foster made the lead of his article, and photos of Mr. Foster accompanied the story as well on the AP news wires sent to newspapers around the world Dec. 13.

Mr. Breen's article began: "As Christmas draws near, Pastor John Foster won't be decorating a tree, shopping for last-minute gifts or working on a holiday sermon for his flock. After all, it's been 50 years since Christmas was anything more than a day of the week to him.

"He's one of very few American Christians who follow what used to be the norm in many Protestant denomi-

nations—rejecting the celebration of Christmas on religious grounds.

"People don't think of it this way, but it's really a secular holiday," said Foster, a Princeton [West Virginia]-based pastor in the United Church of God. He last celebrated Christmas when he was 8."

The article also quoted Mr. Kilough saying, "Is it acceptable to God for humans to choose to worship him by adopting paganism's most popular celebrations and calling them Christian?"

The AP story appeared in hundreds

See "Interviews," page 4

ABC Orientation Begins Ninth Year



New ABC students receive guidance from alumni and enjoy reception Jan. 6 (photos by Janet Treadway)

The Ambassador Bible Center began its ninth year with orientation on Jan. 6. The class this year will have 34 students from 18 different states and one international student from Australia. The students range in age from 18 to 67, with 19 men and 15 women.

The orientation weekend included a Sabbath sermon directed toward new students and families. Sunday featured the orientation meeting and information tables, manned by ABC alumni, guiding students through housing, banking, jobs and entertainment opportunities in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area.

Clyde Kilough opened his presentation with an exercise. He had the students close their eyes then asked them to point southeast. When they opened their eyes, they discovered that everyone was pointing in different directions. Mr. Kilough made the point that we don't have an innate sense of direction. In the same way we need a compass, we also need to use the Bible to guide us in developing godly character.

The orientation meeting was followed by a reception for students and family to meet ABC faculty, administration and home office staff. Classes began on Monday, Jan. 7.

David Register

U.S. Pastors Who Serve International Areas Meet

by Tom Clark

The U.S.-based senior pastors and associate senior pastors who serve in Africa, Asia and Europe met at the home office on Dec. 3 and 4.

Attending were Dave Baker (Asia), John Elliott and Tim Waddle (East Africa), Fred Kellers and Mark Mickelson (Nigeria), Melvin Rhodes and Tom Clark (Ghana) and Vic Kubik and Johnnie Lambert (Eastern Europe and Scandinavia). Also in attendance were Doug Horchak, Jim Franks and Joel Meeker. Discussion included improving the efficiency of our work, Youth Corps and the Good Works programs.

The reports given by each senior pastor were inspiring and encouraging as it could be clearly seen how God is working with people who are facing

See "Pastors," page 5

Texas Property Purchased

by Larry Salyer

On Jan. 4, 2008, the United Church of God signed the closing documents on the new property in Texas.

This purchase is an important step in relocating the home office, a decision that was first discussed during the Council of Elders meeting in December 2006, brought forward as a proposal and approved by the Council in February 2007 and ratified by the General Conference of Elders in May 2007.

Further planning for the development of the property is underway and details will be discussed in the regular Council of Elders meeting in February. Many steps and many decisions lie before us before a move can actually take place, but the purchase

of the land brings the reality of the relocation into focus.

Mission Centered

The Church's mission statement is to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the entire world and

care for the flock God calls into His Church in this age. We are deeply committed and desirous to be about this, our Father's business. God has blessed us abundantly with spiritually

See "Texas," page 8

Relocation—How You Can Help

As the Church begins an exciting expansion of facilities needed to more effectively preach the gospel, pass on the truth to the next generation and train ministers for future service, we invite you to participate.

Many brethren have asked how they can help. A special building fund has been set up to help pay for the project. If you would like to contribute to this fund, just write "Relocation" on the memo line of your check.

Please only contribute to this fund as you are able above and beyond your normal tithes and offerings.

As the amount begins to grow, we will report the income, along with land development progress, in *United News*. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

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News At a Glance

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currently serving as an elder in Canton, Illinois. Shawn and Beth will remain in their local area working with their current pastor, Ken Graham, until next summer. At that time we will consider a more permanent assignment. Our budget this year has approval for hiring a total of four men, but it remains to be seen whether we will actually achieve that goal."

Elder Ordained

Ralph Helge was ordained an elder on Dec. 14, 2007, by Larry W. Greider, the pastor of the Los Angeles, California, congregation.

The Helges first moved to Pasadena, California, in 1957 to be a part of the Church. After graduation in 1963 Mr. Helge, an attorney, began working for the Church and continued as legal counselor during the next several decades. Mr. Helge is well known for his work with selective service issues, as well as many court battles, including the receivership in the late 1970s.

Mr. Helge and his wife, Ingrid, still live in Pasadena, and Ingrid often performs special music.

Larry W. Greider

14 Attend Second Annual Pastoral Training Classes

This year, 14 men were invited to attend pastoral training classes at the home office. The first session runs from Jan. 3 to 10. They will also return in March and May to complete the six-week program.

Of the 14, seven are from outside the United States. The attendees are:

Carmello Anastasi—Milan, Italy.
Kambani Banda—Lusaka, Zambia.
Stephen Clark—Gold Coast, Australia.
Tom Clark—Wichita, Kansas.
Shawn Cortelyou—Canton, Illinois.
Angelo Di Vita—Milan, Italy.
Kevin Epps—Central New Jersey.
Mike Erickson—Prince George, British Columbia.
Jack Hendren—Corpus Christi, Texas.
Manuel Quijano—Lima, Peru.
Larry Roybal—Monterrey, Mexico.
Mark Welch—Tulsa, Oklahoma.
Glen White—Missoula, Montana.
Mark Winner—Louisville, Kentucky.

Strategic Planning Timeline Given

Here is the prospective timeline shared with the Council of Elders during a teleconference Nov. 15, 2007:

Nov. 29: The Strategic Planning Steering Committee met with the facilitator in

See "News at a Glance," page 16

Profile: Rainer Salomaa, Canadian Council Chairman

Rainer Salomaa was born on Sept. 28, 1945, in the small town of Ii, Finland, close to Oulu on his grandparents' farm. His father, Tauno, had been born in Rovaniemi, a city in Finland located on the Arctic Circle. His parents had both been involved in World War II, his mother as a nurse and his father in the army.

They built a home along the Ii River on the farm property, gaffing floating logs that they cut into lumber for the home. Tauno was a carpenter and a bricklayer, having started work when he was 12 years old.

In 1951, the family immigrated to Canada looking for a better life after the horrific war years. They settled in Edmonton, Alberta, with a one-year stint in the Cassiar, close to Watson Lake in Northern British Columbia. Rainer remembers the wolves howling at night when temperatures dipped to -40, waking up to see ice in the water pail inside their cabin. His mother used a washboard to do laundry. Fresh fruit and vegetables were rationed.

After moving back to Edmonton, Rainer picked up the *World Tomorrow* radio program on CFRN on a crystal set when he was in junior high school and wrote away for literature.

When he was attending the University of Alberta, he requested a visit for baptism and was met by Richard Pinelli in the fall of 1964. He started attending the newly formed church in Edmonton and went to Ambassador College, Pasadena in 1966, arriving late because of visa problems. He graduated in 1969 from Bricket Wood, England, where he attended his final semester.

He was hired to work in the Vancouver, British Columbia, office, where he met his wife-to-be, Claudia Ranche. They were married on July 5, 1970, by Dean Wilson. In the summer of 1971, they were sent into the field ministry to work under Gary Antion in Toronto, Ontario. A year later they, along with their newborn, Tammy, were sent to start a church in Sudbury, Ontario. His wife was 19 at the time. They served there

for eight years and raised additional churches in North Bay and Sault St. Marie. Their second daughter, Sonya, was born in Sudbury in 1974.

In 1980, they were transferred to Salmon Arm, British Columbia, where Rainer pastored the Salmon Arm and Kamloops congregations for eight years. In 1988, they were transferred to Prince George, British Columbia, where they served for 17 years. In the fall of 2005, they were transferred to Calgary, Alberta. Besides Calgary, Rainer currently pastors Prince George, Kelowna and Penticton, British Columbia; and Grande Prairie, Alberta, congregations.

Rainer has been a YOU coordinator for four years in British Columbia and has been a Festival coordinator for 11 years, having coordinated Penticton, Whistler and Kelowna Festival sites. He has served as the chairman of the Canadian National Council since 1999.

Rainer and Claudia enjoy hunting, salmon fishing and camping as well as



Claudia and Rainer Salomaa

their two grandchildren, Isaac (age 4) and Ava (age 2). Claudia has had her own home-based upholstery business for close to 25 years.

Rainer says, "My years of service in God's Church have been rewarding and certainly not boring. There has been so much to learn, and I feel so blessed to have interacted with so many people over the years and to have been a part of their lives beyond a superficial level. My wife has been a trooper, being left alone so much in the many years of travel." **UN**

If you would like to recommend a member to be featured in the "Profiles" section, send an e-mail to mike_bennett@ucg.org.

FORWARD! Teens Who Helped Make It "the Best Feast Ever"

It's inspiring to hear of brethren and young people serving and making a difference in others' lives. We'd like to share one such story with you, from Ralph Redline of the Bismarck, North Dakota, congregation. He's the father of Britton Redline, who was added to the prayer list Sept. 18, 2007, because of a brain tumor.

My son was diagnosed with a brain tumor about two weeks before the Feast. Our family was all prepared to jump into the Fall Festivals, this time in Lancaster.

The very sudden presentation of a major health trial to our family was something that sent us reeling. God's immediate intervention saved our son's life, and two surgeries later we found ourselves placing our original plans aside.

Two days before the Feast, our family was driving toward the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, with the understanding that further medical attention would be engaged within the next 24 hours. Halfway to the clinic we received a call that it was not a dire emergency, and the preliminary appointment was set for the following week.

We shouted for joy because on the way to Rochester we

were also headed for the Feast site in Wisconsin Dells.

Arriving in the Dells four hours before the opening service and being able to locate a nice suite at a familiar motel raised our family's spirits beyond measure. For the previous two weeks, prayers from all over the country had gone to God's throne, and friends known and unknown had petitioned our loving Father for His direct intervention. We arrived at the opening service completely overwhelmed with the love and attention from numerous brethren quite familiar with this incredible situation.

Though my son was quite challenged to engage in the Festival activities as he had done in previous years, many people attending this familiar site devoted themselves to serving our family.

The most memorable were many teens who knew my son or were recently informed of his plight. With every event we were able to attend, young people in God's Church went out of their way to care for him and give their time and gifts and cards in one of the most heartwarming displays our family had ever witnessed.

My son's face would simply beam with happiness as he received the love that these very considerate future lead-

ers of God's Church presented to him. The warmth and outgoing concern that we witnessed moment by moment during the five days we were able to be at the Dells made this "the best Feast ever."

Our family had to leave early in order to make the appointments at the Mayo Clinic, but the period of time worshipping God with young and old alike made this a most remarkable experience. My family left with a "spiritual high" that had never been realized before, though all of our Feasts have been very rewarding.

We never dreamed that during the greatest trial we had ever encountered, we would also be strongly comforted by some very special young people who let their lights shine to God's glory. **UN**

Update from Britton's pastor, Herb Teitgen: *The tumor that was growing around Britton's pituitary gland was completely removed with surgery performed at Mayo Clinic on Oct. 10. The surgeon commented that this level of success for this kind of situation was "one in one million!" The big concerns and items to pray about are for his pituitary and hormonal production to return to normal. More details in the online version.*

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News From **Around the World**

Canadian National Council Meets in Toronto

The Canadian National Council met in the Toronto, Ontario, area from Nov. 27 to 30 with all nine council members in attendance. Jim Franks from the UCGIA home office attended the first portion of the meetings.

On Tuesday evening reports from all the Feast sites were given. Graemme Marshall gave a short update on *United News-Canada* and David Palmer gave a report on behalf of the Media Team. Mr. Palmer mentioned the exciting possibility of improving the airing time for the *Beyond Today* television program. A PowerPoint presentation showed an update on the *Reader's Digest* ad response rate. As a result of this ad, we have added subscribers from every province at a very good cost per response (the latest figure is \$9.85 per response).

On Wednesday morning Jim Franks gave a presentation on "The Importance of Sound Doctrine." In his presentation, he gave a brief history of how and why United was started. There are only 14 couples who could write the full story about the beginning of UCG. He emphasized that United's beginning was not driven by government or rebellion, but the preservation of doctrine, as heresy was being promoted. Our documents were written in such a way as to make it very difficult to change any doctrine.

Mr. Franks said, "To have sound doctrine, you have to start with Scripture.

How this should translate to us on a practical level is that our Sabbath service messages must be doctrinally sound. It is better to have no speakers than allow personal ideas and 'pet' material to be spread. It spreads like a cancer and causes difficult problems."

Mr. Franks then reviewed scriptures showing how doctrine was established in the New Testament and how ministers are warned to protect congregations from false doctrine. He showed how doctrine is formed from teaching to understanding. Doctrine, he said, is more than statements of facts. There are explanations that go along with it.

He also mentioned that about 150 of our elders were involved in writing our booklet on our fundamental beliefs. These fundamental beliefs came from what Mr. Armstrong had written in 1938 and 1946, with two additions by us—tithing and the return of Christ.

In conclusion Mr. Franks said, "We would prefer to not have a message [at church] than have one that is heretical. We must teach this to all. This is what began UCG, and if we don't protect it, shame on us. It requires our diligence."

The Council was able to get input from Mr. Franks on ministerial functions and on amending the Member Appeal policy.

On Wednesday afternoon the Council reviewed and approved the Operations Plan for 2008-2009. This will be present-

ed to the National Conference for their approval next March. The budget was discussed and a few refinements requested before approval.

On Thursday morning, Dr. Ian Simons from the Winnipeg, Manitoba, area, shared his health concerns with the Council. He has a reoccurrence of prostate cancer and solicited prayers. After that, most of the morning was spent in committee meetings and reports.

Acting upon the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Council approved a resolution allowing the National Office to purchase additional time for the *Beyond Today* television program by using some of our reserves. Council meeting dates for the coming year were also approved.

The Finance Committee also discussed a "crisis budget." While this has no specific numbers as yet, they looked at what and where costs could be cut in a budget crisis.

The 2008-2009 Budget was approved to be sent to the National Conference for their ratification next March. The Governance Committee made recommendations for amendments to several policies. Amendments to the Member Appeal policy were approved.

The meetings concluded on Thursday afternoon with discussion and brainstorming.

Linda Wasilkoff, National Council Secretary

Minister Hired to Serve in Australia

The Australian National Council has announced that Grant Chick, who is currently living in South Africa with his family, has accepted an offer of employment as an elder with the United Church of God—Australia. Grant and Kim Chick and their three sons are scheduled to arrive in Australia in January and will be located in the northern state of Queensland, where Mr. Chick will work with senior pastor Bill Bradford.

Mr. and Mrs. Chick are graduates of Ambassador College and have been heavily involved in serving the South

African churches since they graduated in 1990. Mr. Chick is originally from New Zealand, while Mrs. Chick is South African. They were married in South Africa in September of 1990. His ordination as an elder took place last Feast of Trumpets in South Africa.

The opportunity to serve in Australia came about as a result of André van Belkum raising the matter with Australian National Council Chairman Bill Eddington at the 2007 General Conference of Elders in Cincinnati, explaining that he had been working with the Chicks in the hope that they would be

able to accept greater responsibility in South Africa, but did not have the resources to employ him.

Further discussions with Mr. van Belkum and Jim Franks, operation manager for Ministerial Services, as to the immediate need for additional elders in Australia opened the way for the appointment to be made.

When Mr. Chick takes up his employment, Australia will have five salaried elders serving 20 congregations spread throughout the continent, supported by 11 nonsalaried elders.

Bill Eddington

Minister Makes Fourth Visit to Dominican Republic

For the fourth time since the founding of the United Church of God, a minister visited a group of members and prospective members in the Dominican Republic. From Dec. 5 to 12, 2007, Ralph Levy, an elder who teaches at Ambassador Bible Center and who speaks Spanish, was in this Caribbean island nation to visit.

The Dominican Republic is the Spanish-speaking southern and eastern part of Hispaniola, an island shared with French-speaking Haiti. In comparison with poverty-stricken Haiti, the Dominican Republic is doing well, with its tourism-dominated economy and productive farms.

Dr. Levy held Bible studies in Santo Domingo, the capital, on Thursday

(Dec. 6), Friday and Sabbath. The first two studies covered the subject of the law and its applicability to New Testament Christians, and some of the writings of the apostle Paul on the law, justification and salvation. The Sabbath study was on the third and fourth of the Ten Commandments and their application. Included in the group was member Zoraya Diaz de Gabriel, as well as several others. Numbers ranged from six to 11 present.

Sunday, Dec. 9, the group invited Dr. Levy to join them in a visit to Isla Catalina, a lovely uninhabited island off the southern coast of the Dominican Republic, where they swam, enjoyed the warm sun and a barbecue lunch.

On Monday, Dec. 10, Dr. Levy traveled northward by bus to Puerto Plata to visit Reynaldo Enrique Roman, a young Dominican-American man who has just returned from Florida to the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Roman pulled out a thick, impressive binder carefully loaded with all of the Church's literature (in English). He had read it all and was left with one big question: "When can I be baptized?" He was encouraged to continue to study, with a view to preparation for baptism.

Dr. Levy returned to Cincinnati on Wednesday, Dec. 12, leaving the Dominican Republic as the nation suffered some very heavy rains and storms. Plans call for another visit some time in 2008. **UN**

International News At a Glance

Additional Feast Site for Australia

The Australian National Council has approved an additional Feast of Tabernacles site for 2008. The present sites are all on the eastern side of the continent, but the additional site will be located in Western Australia in the coastal town of Busselton, about 230 kilometers (2½ hours) south of Perth.

Because of age and distance, many of our Western Australian UCG members have not been able to attend the Feast in recent years. After discussions with the growing Perth congregation, it was agreed that 2008 would be an appropriate year to establish a Festival site in the west. Indications are that a number of people with a Church of God background are likely to celebrate the Feast with us. Attendance will also be boosted by UCG members from the eastern states who have expressed interest in visiting this popular tourism destination. Full details will be included in the 2008 Festival brochure.

Canadian GN List Grows 28 Percent

The ad in the November edition of the *Canadian Reader's Digest* continues to draw responses. We've now had over 3,700 responses—far better than we anticipated. The response rate is 0.428 percent, which is considered excellent. A response rate of 0.25 percent is considered very good, and we've exceeded that by a healthy margin. While some of those who responded to the ad have since cancelled their subscription to *The Good News*, others have requested additional literature. Still others have already become donors.

Canadian responses to the *Beyond Today* television program continue to come in as well. The average number of responses per week is now 35, and in 2007 we've had over 1,900 responses.

These two efforts, in combination with our ongoing Internet campaigns, have added substantially to the Canadian subscriber base. The January-February 2008 issue of *The Good News* will be sent to over 15,000 subscribers in Canada. That's an increase of over 28 percent since the beginning of our fiscal year April 1.

Incoming mail in Canada has exceeded the previous year's record. We've had over 21,000 pieces of incoming mail from all sources, for an average of about 60 items per day. Included in the total mail are our Internet and e-mail requests. Those items account for about 8,500 pieces of the total incoming mail. Almost 40 percent of our total mail is from the Internet and e-mail.

Income for the year is very good. Total income in Canada is about 5.5 percent higher than we budgeted.

Ed van Pelt

Part-Time Elder Employed for New South Wales

During the 2007/2008 budget and operating plan discussions by the Australian National Council, plans were made for the employment of a part-time elder to assist New South Wales pastor Bruce Dean.

Elder Doug Gray has accepted an offer to take up this appointment, and current intentions are that he will begin on Feb. 1, 2008, for a 12-month period. This is somewhat dependent on Mr. Gray being able to vary his current employment arrangements.

Deacons Ordained in Australia

Three deacons were ordained in Australia recently.

The Feast of Trumpets 2007 in Perth, Western Australia, was an extra special occasion as Peter Davidson was ordained by Don Goodger as a deacon in the Perth congregation.

Tony Edge of the Melbourne, Victoria, congregation was also ordained on the Feast of Trumpets.

Tom Korrelvink of the Hobart, Tasmania, congregation was ordained by Barry Williams on the opening night of the Feast of Tabernacles at Devonport, Tasmania.

French Public Lectures Held in Montreal

On Aug. 25, 2007, a public lecture in French was presented in Montreal, Quebec. Two split sermons were presented by Daniel Morasse and Walter Hehle from Ottawa, Ontario. English translation was provided through FM headsets for the anglophones in the audience. The attendance was 48, with five new people coming to hear the messages from the 484 *Good News* subscribers who were invited.

Joel Meeker is scheduled to present a public lecture for Quebec in the spring.

Australian Treasurer Reports

The overall tithes and offerings received in Australia exceeded the budgeted amount by \$91,000 (all figures in Australian dollars). During the year the Church in Australia spent \$1.26 million compared to a budget of \$1.19 million, a difference of around \$71,000.

We again received an unqualified report from the audit firm. This is the most desired outcome in the world of auditing.

Allan Hambleton

Media At a Glance

Members Distribute 58,000 GN Subscription Brochures

In 2007 over 175 brethren and congregations participated in our *Good News* subscription brochure program. Members distributed 58,000 brochures on 1,050 displays.

For several years, our "take-one" distribution program has been a cost-effective means of reaching new people with the gospel. Brochures cost about 5 cents each to print and distribute. In recent years, subscriber response has reached an excellent 2.6 percent, making the cost per response only \$1.36.

There are currently 55,000 subscription brochures in inventory awaiting distribution. We encourage more U.S. brethren to become involved in the program. To request a supply

of brochures and displays, you are welcome to write to John LaBissoniere at john_labissoniere@ucg.org or call him at (423) 562-9400 or toll-free at (888) 369-9940.

English GN Print Run Reaches New High

The total print order for the January/February 2008 *Good News* magazine is 529,565, a new record. The previous high was 526,173 in September of 2002.

The quantities printed at three sites around the world are as follows:

R.R. Donnelley & Sons, Glasgow, Kentucky: 445,985.

Offset Alpine, Eagle Farm, Queensland, Australia: 64,100.

CTP Book Printers, Cape Town, South Africa: 19,480.

The total GN print quantity for recent issues are:

November/December 2007 issue: 512,959.

September/October 2007 issue: 519,049.

July/August 2007 issue: 506,754.

18,322 Responses to Beyond Today Television and Radio

As of mid-December, 18,322 responses had been recorded from cable-access television, radio and the Internet since *Beyond Today* first aired in December 2005. The average response per week currently stands at 183. *Beyond Today* is now airing on 185 cable-access television channels and broadcasting on 19 commercial radio stations in the United States. The following are the "top 10" ranking of 76 programs aired so far.

1. "The Easter Charade."
2. "The Myth of the Immortal Soul."
3. "The Coming King of the South."
4. "What Time Is It?"
5. "Death of Darwinism."
6. "Is God Angry?"
7. "Is the Spirit World Real?"
8. "European View of Prophecy."
9. "Stopping the Addiction With Porn."
10. "Saving Africa."

Airtime Added on 50,000-Watt Radio Station

The *Beyond Today* radio program can now be heard at a third airtime on 50,000-watt news/talk WWVA 1170 AM radio in Wheeling, West Virginia. Besides the current 11 p.m. Monday and 8:15 p.m. Friday airtimes, we added a 9 p.m. Saturday airtime as of Nov. 17, 2007.

After sundown, WWVA's powerful radio signal can reach listeners in 18 states and six Canadian provinces.

Publicity Site Gives GN Publicity

"John Kremer's Book Marketing Tip of the Week" included a section on *The Good News* magazine, giving the Web site and address. He listed five articles from the May/June issue and the books quoted in those articles (www.bookmarket.com/tip070522.htm).

Contributors: Peter Eddington, John LaBissoniere

"Pastors," continued from page 1

unique challenges. Some of the difficulties the Church faces in these areas include poverty, scattered and often very isolated brethren, the difficulty of building local leadership, language barriers and the struggles some have faced because of religious persecution.

A major focus of the discussions this year was the need for advance planning and setting goals five to 10 years into the future. Mr. Franks clarified the need to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each area, and then formulate plans to achieve the goals that have been set.

The Youth Corps program is doing a good job at filling needs in areas such as summer camps in Africa. Time was spent discussing additional opportunities for young adults to serve some of

our brethren in the developing world. Good fruit has been born from Youth Corps service, and plans are already underway for the programs that will be offered in 2008.

More information on the programs and photos and commentary from previous programs are available on the Youth Corps Web site at www.ucgyouthcorps.org.

A discussion of the Good Works program clarified its purpose, and also the procedures for submitting additional needs for consideration. The Good Works Web page lists the current projects and where they stand in terms of funding needs. Since its inception, the Good Works program has provided \$300,000 for projects in places like Kenya, Ghana, the Philippines and Mexico, as well as providing assistance to brethren who were

affected by Hurricane Katrina in the United States.

To improve efficiency, focus was also placed on fiscal responsibility. Some of the costs for each area are fixed, but travel costs may be able to be improved. Various suggestions were discussed for ways to secure airfare and accommodations at lower prices. For example, home office employees who travel have found that leaving from other nearby airports has enabled them to save significant sums on airfare. There are also numerous Web sites that offer discounted airline tickets.

One of the most pressing needs in Africa is for further education and training for the leaders. Most of the leaders and potential leaders in Africa cannot realistically travel far, and entrance visas for many Western countries are



Senior pastors and associate senior pastors serving Africa, Asia and Europe meet at the home office (photo by Dave Baker)

difficult to obtain. So the suggestion has been made that the Church consider an all-Africa conference.

Pastors and elders from East and West Africa as well as those in Southern Africa could gather for classes and training. Nothing like that has

been done before in United, and the possibility is quite exciting.

Based on the numbers and costs involved, Ghana was proposed as a likely location, and Melvin Rhodes will be exploring the possibilities more fully on his next trip. **UN**

More Members Share Their Baptism Stories

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

"In an Art Museum Blindfolded"

Growing up in the Church I learned many valuable principles and truths through those years that still impact me today. However, in 1995 the "perfect storm" developed in my life. The Church was splitting apart and I was 18 and free to make my own choice, so I rebelled against God and started to live however I felt like living (Luke 15:11-13).

While many people feel that the music they listen to or things they may read or watch might not have that profound an effect on them, they are sadly mistaken. The more entrenched I became with the ideas of this world, the more it influenced my outlook (1 John 2:15-16).

I guess my perspective could best

be summed up by a picture I had in my room of Kurt Cobain, a musician who committed suicide. Underneath it read: "I hate myself and I want to die." I was so in love with the vagabond lifestyle that I wasn't even working, and I jumped headfirst into a pattern of sinful and very harmful behaviors.

Things began to turn around for good in 2000 when God, in His mercy, began working in my mind. I was so steeped in the way of the world that I feel that I was called out of the world just like someone who didn't grow up in the Church.

When I was counseling for baptism, I compared my calling process to being in an art museum. Growing up in the Church and always believing it to be the truth but not fully understanding it, I felt like I was in an art museum blindfolded. I knew that there were beautiful paintings and sculptures around, but I couldn't see them.

Finally, I was able to clearly see the beautiful truth that had surrounded

me my whole life when God removed that blindfold. It's been a joy and a privilege living God's way of life while still young and being able to raise my family in the Church. Going through this experience has solidified in my mind what my dad has always said about the truth: "I know that I know" (1 John 2:3).

I exhort those in the Church, in particular the youth, to never underestimate the power of the pulls of this world. There is a very real, insane Satan who wants nothing less than to destroy you (1 Peter 5:8). I, along with the other brethren, long for the day when we are born into God's family and will share true oneness forever (John 17:21).

Joe Horton

Cleveland, Ohio, congregation

The Teaching Church

I came to know about "the truth" through nothing short of a miracle. I was a widow and had met a wonderful man who had been in the Church for over 30 years.

I began to share with him how I was struggling with my previous husband's death. I had mentioned my concerns, and he asked me if I wanted to read a booklet on death. I read the booklet and was totally put at ease regarding a lot of questions I had regarding death in general. Everything in the booklet made perfect sense. It had answered my questions in a way I had never thought of. After three years I can say I was beginning to accept my husband's untimely death with new understanding.

I began to attend church with him. I noticed at the first service how respectful the men in the congregation were toward their wives. Men had their arms around them, some holding hands, and some shared hugs. I also made note the minister opened the Bible and asked everyone to go to scriptures. Right away I called this church "the teaching church."

Another observation was everyone in the congregation seemed to know each other. How different that was! I was made to feel welcome by several

people. That was also a first for me. In over 30 years of attending different Catholic churches, all of the above had never occurred.

My husband, Bob, and I were married about a year and a half later. After attending my first Feast in 2003, on the way home I told him that God was calling me! I felt an urgent need to be baptized; I wanted to be one of God's firstfruits. I was baptized on Sept. 7, 2004.

As Bob and I are entering our fifth year of marriage, we both stand firm in our faith that God is building teams to rule with Him in the Kingdom. I have searched my entire adult life for my purpose on earth. The truth has a beginning, middle and end. What beautiful truths to know why we were born. I know what the good news holds in promise for me, and, God willing, I plan to claim it.

Jody Schenfield

Cleveland, Ohio, congregation

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

Council Discusses Relocation, Strategic Planning and More

by John Foster

Robert Dick called this session of Council of Elders meetings to order at 9 a.m. Dec. 11. He mentioned that we have a jam-packed agenda that he had e-mailed to the General Conference of Elders. After the opening prayer and the approval of the minutes of the August meetings, he turned the meeting over to the president for his unified report.

President's Report

Clyde Kilough began his report by quoting from a written report that he received from the treasurer, Tom Kirkpatrick. Mr. Kilough mentioned that within the report there were indications for encouragement and thankfulness, especially within the last few weeks.

The income for the first four months of this fiscal year (July 1 to Nov. 2) was almost exactly flat, when compared with the same period last fiscal year.

The income for the five weeks ending this past Friday (Nov. 3 to Dec. 7) is a different picture. For that period, the total income is up by 16.57 percent (and Category One income, which encompasses almost three quarters of the total budget) was up by 17.14 percent. Of course, we all understand that five weeks does not a long-term trend make, but neither does four months.

The effect of this very good recent period has been to increase the total fiscal year-to-date income, through Dec. 7, to a positive 2.45 percent growth rate.

For the last 365 days, ending Dec. 7, the total income is a positive 4.56 percent growth. For the two 365-day periods ending Dec. 7, the total income is a positive 6.98 percent per year growth rate.

Mr. Kilough mentioned that it's hard to explain the ups and downs of income.

Sometimes finances are seasonal, and so we hope that the first four months were an aberration. Finances can be the easiest part of operations to measure. But, we have to pray for our daily bread. God intended for us to pray often and hard that He would provide us with our daily needs, so we look to Him for our blessings.

After reporting on the finances, Mr. Kilough gave reports on the Media and Communications Services and Ministerial Services areas (see sidebars below).

The Urgency of Ministerial Training

Mr. Kilough then turned the floor over to Jim Franks, who presented the challenges and opportunities facing Ministerial Services.

Mr. Franks mentioned that as we near the end of another civil year, Ministerial Services has been very busy. He said that we are seeing the leading edge of a very difficult situation regarding our manpower. We have the potential of 18 pastors retiring in the next three years—assuming age 70 for retirement. Currently, we have no replacements for these men. We currently have six congregations waiting for a pastor—because of health issues, transfers and other reasons. We are also seeing a few more men experiencing serious health situations.

All of this leads to the inevitable conclusion—we must develop an aggressive plan for training new men and preparing them to become pastors. If we don't, then it may be necessary within three to five years to close congregations and make others into video groups with no assigned pastor. Of course we aren't planning to close congregations—we will simply need to assign more work to current pastors.

The situation in the United States is only the tip of the iceberg. Canada needs help with manpower; Africa is in desperate need; and so on around the world. Canada has six full-time men who cover the entire

country. Without an aggressive training program, the United Church of God will be unable to fulfill its goal of having pastors for all congregations within the next five years. If we do nothing, within 10 years it is quite possible that the United Church of God will be unrecognizable, having lost as many as 46 pastors to retirement or health problems.

Mr. Franks then showed the Council the presentation he made to the regional pastors, to the Northwest Region at their recent meeting in Portland and to the Canadian National Council. He said that this is a critical issue for Ministerial Services.

At the beginning of the United Church of God, he said that we had a desire to provide each congregation with a full-time pastor. We didn't want to have just video groups. In the first few years of United, we had 125 pastors. We now have 90 covering the same territory. We have hired 17 men from the leadership workshops over the past several years.

Mr. Franks mentioned he had a meeting at the Leadership Training Program last September with four couples, who were in their late 20s to early 30s. He asked the men if they would be willing to walk away from their jobs to be a minister. They mentioned that they would be willing to do so because they want to see the Church thrive and grow.

Mr. Franks mentioned that in order to plan for the future, we need to know where we are today. He quoted a Chinese proverb, "The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago; the second best time is today."

Mr. Franks asked, "How and where will we train the ministers? How can we do more? How do we upgrade our ABC program?"

He also asked, how can we retain our youth? He mentioned that we have a whole cadre of young people who are part of the Church. Many have a passion for the Church. Yet, he said, it is sometimes shocking the lack of biblical doctrinal

knowledge among the youth. So, how much of the truth is being retained by our young people?

He also asked how we assist in the international areas. We provide money, resources and manpower to help get the areas up and running. But we need to help more. He mentioned that Ed Macaraeg pastors 16 congregations in the Philippines. Kingsley Mather has the major responsibility for the Caribbean. Africa has serious needs in training issues. Dave Baker has all of Asia. He now has letters from Laos and Cambodia.

There has to be an extensive training program put into place now. Mr. Franks then quoted Paul in Galatians 1:4 and Titus 2:11 and asked how can we provide a community environment in which to immerse these men in training? How do we teach righteousness and godliness in this present evil age without having some type of an immersion program?

Mr. Franks also mentioned that the youth program addressed this to some degree. The summer camps were the start. What is special about the camps? He reviewed the recent camp video that talked about "God's immersion education program."

He also asked us to look at Christ and the disciples, Paul and Barnabas, and Paul and Titus. He said it seems to be the model that God gives to us. This is immersion education for the entire ministry.

He then took time to give some historical evidence, and he quoted from Mr. Armstrong in 1953. It was a major announcement in which Mr. Armstrong wrote: "This is not a one-man work, but a work that is done through his called, educated and experienced ministers." In the next 20 years, to 1973, the attendance went to 100,000. Mr. Franks went on to mention that new people aren't going to come to just watch a video week after week. Pastors are critical for the stability and growth of the Church.

Mr. Franks also reviewed the registration numbers for the Feast in the United States and Canada: 26 percent are over age 60, 11 percent are young adults, 13 percent are 13 and under and 9 percent are teens (33 percent are under age 30). He said that, in many cases, the young people coming into their best earning years are replacing those who are older, with higher incomes than those who are retiring.

He also mentioned that the mission of ABC is to pass on the truth, but we have to focus more effectively on building character in our students. Currently there is little follow-up with the ABC grads. He felt that with onsite housing, character issues can be more effectively addressed.

We have to provide comprehensive training for our ministers, and ABC needs to be upgraded to a nine-month program with onsite housing to provide that 24/7 environment that focuses on character development. Exceptional students can be further trained.

Mr. Franks then pointed out that we are in a very good position to begin these changes. For instance, financial reserves were only \$37,000 10 years ago; now, they are \$7.2 million. He said that last year our income of \$23.5 million was the best ever. He said that even with the subprime loan problems, and other issues such as the periodic drops in the stock market, the income of the Church has not been adversely affected in the last 10 years. "We have no long-term debt!" He said the plans are now to hire three men per year for the next four years. Then we need to hire six men every year for next six years. And that is just to remain even.

He said that the need for training is now. The elders are aging. The pool of AC graduates is drying up. We need an aggressive program for training. We need to change ABC from a commuter school. We will need to replace almost 50 percent of our current pastors in the next 10 years—assuming age 70 for retirement.

Leaders From Living Church of God Visit Home Office

On Dec. 13, Clyde Kilough updated the Council of Elders on the Dec. 5 visit to the home office of three ministers (Richard Ames, Dibar Apartian and Douglas Winnail) of the Living Church of God. This was a reciprocal visit, as Mr. Kilough and Jim Franks had visited the headquarters of the Living Church of God in 2006.

Mr. Kilough gave them an office tour that lasted over two hours. Some previously scheduled activities had brought some UCG elders into town. Many of them, as well as many in the home office, had known these men years ago, and so friendly conversations took place.

Mr. Kilough said it was very good to be able to talk through various issues of mutual concern in a respectful manner. The men presented a gift of a beautiful globe to the home office. It has Isaiah 11:9 engraved on it. Mr. Kilough mentioned that this globe can be seen on the Dec. 6, 2007, *About Our Father's Business* program.

Media and Communications Services Update

As part of his report to the Council of Elders, President Clyde Kilough discussed the activities in the media operations of the Church. We are now moving material such as sermons from the main UCG Web site (www.ucg.org) to the newly created members' Web site (members.ucg.org).

The members' Web site is not password protected, but we don't advertise it to the public. It includes *About Our Father's Business*, and these programs are new each week. This presentation is a means of educating the Church, and we encourage the members to watch the programs.

The numbers of donors and coworkers continue to climb. We have just over 10,000 donors, and just less than 4,000 coworkers. We will be reviewing our methods of developing deeper relationships with subscribers and viewers.

Thus far in the fiscal year, we are spending at about the same rate as last year. None of the additional funds allot-

ted to media have been specifically designated for new thrusts in preaching the gospel. Rather, while we are focusing on developing long-term revisions of our strategies, we have duplicated our previous efforts in advertising. We have received over 53,000 responses from our three ad campaigns in *Readers' Digest*, *Parenting* and *American Baby*.

The Media Steering Group met in mid-October to review and crystallize previous discussions and agreed that the Internet should be seen as our primary vehicle for reaching the world. Therefore, beginning as soon as practical, the media staff will pursue increased effectiveness in our use of the Internet, which is ever changing.

One interesting idea is to create "viral" activity by profound postings, blogs, etc. Web users, particularly the young, now share what they find useful or exciting. This is described in the Web environment as a viral post. For example, here is a comment from one such user who wrote to us in response to the *BT* program "Christmas Without Christ," which was on the YouTube Web site:

"You guys are Great! This was done gently and backed by THE TRUTH—

The Bible not Tradition—Loved it and shared it with many. :)"

Note the comment about sharing! This method of spreading our message is not labor intensive, but we will have to allow others to share our material. Some other ideas we are looking at are:

- "Sermons for the world" (this would include short messages on basic doctrinal and Christian living topics intended for a non-Church audience).
- Numerous one- to three-minute videos.
- Interactive Bible studies.
- Possible online Bible course.
- Daily live commentary.

The Media Steering Group also discussed at length the concept of the "voice of the Church" as a description of the tone and conviction with which we write and speak. This is a critical element of our unified effort to make the truth stand out in a world of religious confusion. It is particularly needful in the absence of an identifiable personality who is the primary voice reaching the world. It is apparent that our message should be recognizable, no matter who is presenting it, or in what form.

The *Beyond Today* planning meeting in late October focused on brainstorming

ways to improve effectiveness. In the next six months, we will be experimenting with different formats on *Beyond Today*. These can include programs that feature a panel discussion, a presentation before a live audience, a magazine format or even what we call a "talking head." We will put every idea on the table.

We recently recorded a *Beyond Today* program titled "Life After Death." The opening and closing segments were shot in a cemetery in Milford, Ohio. The crew then returned to the studio to record the middle segment with one guest and the final segment with all three presenters in a panel discussion of the resurrection.

Mr. Kilough mentioned two terms that we will be hearing in the next few months: "critical success factors" and "barriers." As we develop media strategies, we will have to address the positive factors critical to success and how to deal with barriers in the way. Manpower and resources are key to virtually every possible project in furthering the reach of our media. Manpower means more expense. Yet these jobs are critical for success. There is a lot of potential for preaching the gospel more widely and effectively. We just have to be prepared to carry out these plans.

He closed with the point that now is our window of opportunity. He also said that we all pray that Christ will return before this time, but we have to be prepared as well. He said that the United States has fueled the work of God around the world for the last 75 years, and that United is now in the best financial position we have ever been to implement the changes we need to make.

Strategic Planning Surveys

In the afternoon session Mr. Dick reviewed the timeline of the strategic planning in which the Council will be involved. He also reviewed each of the questions on all the surveys that are designed to gather input regarding our strategic planning.

Resolution to Rescind May 2007 Relocation Ballot

Five members of the Council of Elders (Bob Berendt, Aaron Dean, Bill Eddington, Roy Holladay and Victor Kubik) have submitted to the secretary for inclusion in the agenda for the 2008 annual meeting of the GCE a resolution to rescind the May 2007 relocation ballot.

Mr. Dick asked, with the property approved for purchase and an obligation to act upon a GCE-approved ballot to relocate, "How do we proceed from here?" He then led a discussion on these topics in open session. He felt there was a need to have discussion on both topics, especially since the topics were going in opposite directions.

Mr. Holladay spoke on behalf of the five members who presented the issue. He mentioned that some in the GCE are also bringing forward a similar resolution as well. He believes that they, too, will come up with enough names to put it on the agenda. He said that a number of elders are not upset where the home office might be, but that they were upset by how things were handled. The thought was that this resolution was a way to bring about peace and unity.

After much discussion, Mr. Dick mentioned that this is still an issue that the Council needs to address. He also thanked the Council members for their decorum

and for conducting themselves honorably in these discussions. The meetings for the day adjourned at 5 p.m.

GCE Planning Task Force

Robert Dick called the Dec. 13 meeting to order at 9 a.m. After the opening prayer, Mr. Dick introduced David Register to lead a discussion on planning for the 2008 GCE annual meeting.

Mr. Register handed out the preliminary schedule of events, suggested themes and proposed workshops, and he asked for comments.

The location this year will be at the Kings Island Resort and Conference Center, which is just north of Cincinnati in Mason, Ohio. It is the same place where the Winter Family Weekend was held for a number of years. The date of the annual conference will be Sunday, May 18, 2008. The full schedule of the Sabbath and the day following the annual meeting will be included in the packet of information that will be sent to the GCE.

The Council asked the president, Clyde Kilough, to give the sermon. Last year, Mr. Dick spoke. It was decided that there should be just one sermon and no sermonette. By telephone hookup and webcast, over 100 congregations are able to hear the Sabbath service during the GCE conference.

Then the Council decided that the keynote address, which sets the tone for the meetings, should be given by Chairman Robert Dick.

There is a possibility that the facilitator the Council has contracted for advice on strategic planning may present a lecture to educate the GCE on what strategic planning is all about and why organizations use it in their business plans.

The discussion of the theme for the meeting was next. There were a lot of comments about the importance of "Going on to Perfection—Increasing Spiritual Maturity." That theme was chosen by unanimous decision. The workshops, also unanimously decided upon, will follow the tone of this theme.

- "The Spiritually Mature Congregation."
- "Pitfalls to Godly Wisdom."

- "Ministerial Calling."
- "Planning for the Loss of Life."

The future GCE annual meeting dates were also confirmed: Sunday, May 3, 2009, and Sunday, May 2, 2010.

Mr. Dick thanked Mr. Register and the GCE planning committee for their hard work.

Discussion About Developing the Property

Mr. Kilough stated that since the Council approved the purchase of the property, the next step would be to enter into negotiations with a developer.

A number of Council members asked questions about funding. Mr. Kilough mentioned again that the price of the land is very good. He also said that the Church is in very good financial shape, we have cash in hand, and we have some very competitive financing options. We are in a good position to eventually choose from several options that would best benefit the Church. The Council decided to go into executive session to continue the discussion, which lasted for the remainder of the afternoon.

"No concrete decisions were reached, but the administration is expected to bring forward proposals for development of the property for further discussion and review," Mr. Dick wrote in his "Chairman's Commentary" for the meetings.

2008 Feast Video

Jan. 10 Robert Dick opened a teleconference of the Council shortly after 5 p.m. EST. All Council members were present for the open session except for Victor Kubik, who was in transit on his way home from Scandinavia. After the opening prayer, Mr. Dick asked Clyde Kilough to discuss the proposed content for the 2008 Feast video.

Mr. Kilough had sent the Council members a proposal that he, Larry Salyer and Jim Franks had worked on together. The proposal was intended to be a change of pace, at least this year, for the Feast video. The proposal emphasizes the heritage of the past as well as looking into the future of God's Church.

The concept of the video would be to

build appreciation for the Church's identity as the Body of Christ. It would include what Christ has done and what He still will do in this age. The video would include some of the early history of Sabbath-keepers in New England. Then it would move to the calling of Herbert W. Armstrong, and it would also discuss some highlights from his autobiography.

The Council spoke very positively about this concept. Roy Holladay asked who would be presenting the sermon. Mr. Salyer mentioned they had discussed having Mr. Franks talk about some of the history of the Church, and that Mr. Kilough would also speak. Leon Walker mentioned that he liked this concept, and that the videos in the past few years have focused on some of the international areas, which was good, but a change of pace from time to time is also good. Bob Berendt also mentioned that he liked this theme.

Richard Thompson also agreed with this concept for the Festival video. He said it would put our heritage in a prominent position at the Feast. He further stated that it would be good for the young people and young adults in the Church, as it would give them some contact with where the Church has come from.

Mr. Kilough followed up and said that this video would speak to a need in the Church. He said that knowing the heritage of the Church would help to preserve the Church's identity. As the Church gets further down the road, he said that some young people could lose a sense of identity with the past. He said that what we are now is a result of our past. He also said that this would validate a lot of those members who have been around for a long time, and it would tie in the next generation in understanding that they are part of the continuation of rich traditions of keeping the truth of the Church.

Roy Holladay mentioned that he liked the theme very much and that it would show our connection going back to the first century and the early Sabbath-keepers and what Mr. Armstrong did. He said that would be a very important link, as some in the Church have felt this particular aspect has been overlooked.

Mr. Kilough said that this video could contain some interesting classic footage. He mentioned that Ed Smith, an elder in Cincinnati, has some old videos of the Feast in 1953. Mr. Walker mentioned that he probably has some video of the 25th anniversary of the work of God, which included scenes of Mr. Armstrong doing radio.

Jim Franks mentioned that this Feast will be the 75th anniversary of when Mr. Armstrong first started in 1933. Since comments from the Council members were supportive of the concept, the decision for the administration to pursue this theme of "Our Heritage" for the 2008 Festival video was approved by consent without resolution.

Strategic Planning Update

Mr. Dick informed the Council members they would receive documents in the mail in preparation for their first face-to-face meetings with the strategic planning facilitator in Houston, Texas, Jan. 16-17.

Each Council member will be receiving a 2-inch-thick notebook filled with the survey results from members, subscribers, elders, employees and the Council of Elders. The notebook, known as the briefing book, will also contain statistics from the Ministerial, Financial and Media areas, along with demographic studies. Each Council member will also receive a CD with all the verbatim comments that came from the surveys. The comments are also being placed in a 3-inch-thick notebook that will be mailed to Council members.

Mr. Dick encouraged the Council members to spend the time necessary to take the online classes that will help them prepare for their two days of meetings. Mr. Dick mentioned that the first two days of strategic planning in January will center on situation assessment—the assessment of all the documents in hand to make a clear determination of where we are as a Church. The product of the first two-day retreat will set the stage for the creation of the actual Strategic Plan.

Full Council reports can be found on the Web at <http://members.ucg.org/council/reports/>. UN

Ministerial Services Update

Ministerial Development: The six-week pastoral training program that began in 2007 was hugely successful, and we plan to continue it in 2008. (See article "14 Attend Second Annual Pastoral Training Classes," page 2.)

Ambassador Bible Center: We are preparing to begin the ninth year of ABC. (See article, page 1.)

ABC Continuing Education: Ambassador Bible Center faculty members have been quite busy since the Feast of Tabernacles, conducting seven ABC Continuing Education seminars. As a result, hundreds of brethren from all across the United States have been able to get a little sample of the actual ABC classes.

Education Advisory Task Force: The EATF met in Houston Nov. 16-18 to discuss assessments and outcomes. Five areas of education were specifically discussed: teen camp assessments, women's education survey, preteen camp outcomes, marriage seminar outcomes and race relations outcomes.

We plan to begin marriage seminars in the U.S. regions next year. Ken and Kathy Giese will be taking classes to become certified instructors in

"Intimate Life" to train other facilitators for marriage seminars. We are also now ready to begin Focused Education Seminars in various cities in the United States and Canada. Due to an extremely busy calendar, in addition to budgetary considerations, we are tentatively planning to schedule two or three seminars per year.

A subcommittee of the EATF is the Women's Education Task Force. Its major work since its inaugural meeting in late April has been to develop two surveys, which are near completion. The first will be for pastors, to try to accurately "get a handle" on all of the women's activities and programs that have been instituted in various congregations and regions. The aim is to compile a "best practices" clearinghouse for good ideas of programs specific to women's education. The second survey is for the women in the Church to ascertain their needs. This one will be administered only after the results of the pastors' survey are compiled.

World News and Prophecy Seminar Update: Two *World News and Prophecy* seminars have been held in recent weeks, with an appreciable number of new contacts attending.

Godly Leadership Task Force: This task force has taken up the challenge to research and write a booklet on child rearing for Church members. Several members and elders have requested a

booklet for our young families on this vital subject to supplement the Growing Kids God's Way program.

Youth Education Task Force: This task force is developing new Festival Youth Instruction material for the 2008 Feast. They are also beginning the process of reviewing and evaluating the 240-lesson Sabbath youth lessons. When the review is completed, they will recommend changes in the program and material.

Teen and Preteen Camps and Challenger II Programs: The teen camp directors, Challenger II directors and the preteen coordinator met in Cincinnati Oct. 16-19 to review budgets, policies and other topics to plan for the camps in 2008. The camper and parent surveys reported an extremely high satisfaction rating. A new survey to help assess outcomes and effectiveness instead of satisfaction with our camp programs will be implemented. We are expecting a record number of preteens and teens to attend camp next year.

Regional Conferences: With the beginning of a new fiscal year on July 1, we began a new round of regional conferences. We have conducted three regional conferences so far this fiscal year, and we have plans for two more—South Central (Houston) in January 2008 and Southwest (Los Angeles) in March 2008—and four for the next fiscal year.

Church Statistics

(Figures from Church Information System—number listed as attending fluctuates from month to month):

U.S. Church attendance according to file December 2006: 15,145.

U.S. Church attendance according to file Nov. 30, 2007: 15,485.

U.S. baptisms 2005 through December: 171.

U.S. baptisms 2006 through December: 181.

U.S. baptisms 2007 through November: 173.

Festival Attendance

This year's Feast saw the number attending in the United States drop below last year, but the total for all sites was up slightly. We know from registration that 35 percent more U.S. and Canadian members traveled outside their countries for the Feast this year than last year. This was the largest number for any one year in several years. If the same number had transferred in 2007 as in 2006, we would have roughly the same number this year as last year.

Total Feast of Tabernacles (all sites) attendance:
2004 = 19,765
2005 = 19,765
2006 = 20,436
2007 = 20,476

90 Young People Enjoy Summer Camp in Chile

In December 2007 we had the blessing of having the summer camp for the youth of Chile and Argentina in Lican Ray, in the south of Chile.

For several years we had the camp in the town of Paine, very close to the city of Santiago, but we wanted the youth to have a different experience this year.

Since the Feast of Tabernacles was in Lican Ray, during the Feast we began to investigate the possibility of having the camp there as well.

Several weeks before camp a school with dormitories offered all of the facilities for us to use for a reasonable price. The Church was able to pay for the housing and food for all of the campers, with the only condition that they pay for their transportation regardless where they were coming from. Most of the youth from Chile between 12 and 21 years of age were able to attend camp.

There were 90 campers—87 from Chile and three from Argentina. We also had four adults staying within the facilities to help with all activities of camp.

God provided His help in many ways.

Four Church couples were taking their vacation in the same town during the same dates. They all offered their help, which was much welcomed. The ladies helped in the kitchen, and the men helped with the sports and all aspects of the organization of the activity.

The presence of God was felt all through the camp. No one was hurt. In one instance God's blessing was very much manifested. On the way to camp early on the morning of Dec. 24, the Church van just stopped with an electrical problem. It stopped right in front of a gas station. The workers at the station tried to help but to no avail.

One of the workers said there was an electrical shop just around the corner. However, he said there was only a very small possibility that the shop would be open. But one of the two owners of the shop was there. Since he was at the shop only to pick up some tools, he said it was impossible to help us. He also told us it was almost impossible to find a mechanic at that time and that day—the morning of Christmas eve.

I decided to try to find another electrical shop. Half a block away I prayed to God for help. At that moment the man at the shop called and asked me to come back. The second owner of the shop was passing by and offered to help us! He took care of the problem.

God was so active at the camp that He even gave us free communications! One of the campers is a university student. The university was doing an experiment with a brand-new kind of cellular phone. This student was involved in the experiment only during the month of December. Because of the experiment, phone calls and Internet connections through the cellular were free anywhere! All of us were able to be in contact with our families for free! The cellular phone was going from one camper to the next during the whole camp.

Each day began with breakfast at 9 a.m. Then we had an hour called "Remember Your Creator." This hour was dedicated to prayer and Bible study. Then we had a Christian Living class. This year for the first time we had skiing and swimming

classes in beautiful Lake Calafquen, which is only a few blocks from the school where we were staying.



A Church member provided his boat and his time to teach waterskiing on Lake Calafquen; left, special music



A Church member graciously offered his boat and his time to instruct the campers on skiing on the lake. Another Church member taught swimming classes. After lunch we had free time to rest. The afternoon was dedicated to sports such as soccer, volleyball, basketball and handball.

Before dinner we had an hour for the campers to speak to the rest in informal

speech classes. There were five speakers each day. After dinner we had a group activity before going to sleep. There was a dance, organized games, karaoke and a talent show. At midnight all of us went to sleep.

We left camp the night of Dec. 30 with a feeling of unity, camaraderie and best wishes to come back to camp next year.

Saul Langarica

"Texas," continued from page 1

maturing congregations, energetic and committed youth, open doors for preaching the gospel and the financial stability to make long-range plans.

Relocating the home office will lay a solid physical foundation for years to come from which this work can proceed in building on the spiritual foundation laid by Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. The present home office is being quickly outgrown. Office and meeting space is at a premium and the needs continue to grow.

As the ministry of the Church ages, it is critical that we train new pastors and elders to carry on the work. This is true also for the staff preaching the gospel to the world. Though we have some young staff members, several of our managers are about the same age as the field ministry, and we must be grooming the next generation.

Although we have not seen large increases in membership, growth has been steady, and the home office is seeing significant increases in both incoming and outgoing mail, Internet responses and *Good News* circulation.

Especially encouraging is growth in numbers of donors and coworkers. Christ said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). When coworkers and donors begin contributing financially to the Church, it shows their hearts are turning toward the truth they are receiving. History shows that new members will come primarily from those lists of donors and coworkers

who have chosen to support the work of the Church.

Still, much more needs to be done. For almost 13 years, the United Church of God has been stabilizing congregations and preaching the gospel in ever-widening circles. It is now poised for expansion of both membership and public outreach. Look-



The 81.5-acre Milam Road property north of Denton, Texas, includes a creek at the south end and slopes gently up to a crest where the major Phase I buildings are planned (replacing the house in the photo above).

ing at current space limitations and the need for further training facilities and future employees, President Clyde Kilough saw that the Church would have to consider expansion of the physical plant.

More than a year ago, we concluded that any expansion of the building we now occupy in Milford, Ohio, could support anticipated growth for only a limited time before it, too, would be outgrown. We could have chosen the short-term solution of expansion, but it would have presented a long-term challenge, as the property surrounding the current office is limited in space. Relocating in the Cincinnati area was deemed too expensive and a review of previous studies and current conditions showed the Dallas-Fort Worth area to be a viable and economical

alternative. After the relocation resolution was approved by the GCE, a further property search was begun in Texas, leading to the current purchase.

Details of the Property

The property lies 3 miles north of Highway 288 (the loop around Denton), one half mile east of Interstate 35, on the south side of Milam Road. It comprises 81 acres, sloping gently from a crest of high ground near Milam Road to a creek and pond at the extreme south end.

The surrounding area is mostly vacant except for a few nice homes near the western boundary. However, building in the northwest quadrant of Denton is brisk, with a new shopping mall under construction just a few miles away and four sizable housing

developments on the drawing board, including a 2,000-acre project just to the southeast of our property. Land bordering I-35 is expected to be gobbled up by both residential and commercial expansion.

The Church was able to buy this land for \$19,600 per acre—below market appraisal—for a total of \$1.57 million. It would appear that God's hand was directly involved, as we have come to expect it to be. This location appears to be the best of both worlds—on the edge of the countryside but close to all needed support services, including the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

We realize that many of you may want to view the property, and that is fine. Please understand, however, that a tenant is still residing on the land and has cattle and personal property

that must be respected and protected. Therefore, please do not at this time enter the property.

At 81.5 acres, we now have more acreage than is presently needed on which to build a home office complex. This assures that the Church will have the capacity into the distant future to expand its facilities to accommodate future growth God may give even beyond ways we can envision at this time.

The development currently on the planning table includes a building for administrative offices, an educational center for ministerial training and Ambassador Bible Center, an outreach support building (warehouse, mailing and shipping) and limited housing for those using the training center. Any future development would come in separate stages as needed.

Relocation Fund

Given the last few years' income trends, we anticipate that this project will be completed without affecting the operating budget of the Church. Since it was approved, many brethren have asked how they can help. If you are interested in helping with this exciting expansion for the future, you are invited to donate to a special restricted building fund. This fund was authorized by the Council last May but was not promoted to the Church, pending the purchase of property.

Please donate to this fund only if you can do so over and above your regular tithes and offerings. All money contributed to this fund will be set aside entirely for use in this relocation project.

God's Church in this age has a rich heritage of pulling together to accomplish great things with His blessing. For further information on how to donate, see the box on page 1. **UN**



From the Word

More Is Better

■ A passage in Ecclesiastes reminds us of the need to work together with synergy.

by Robert Berendt

The strongest ropes and cables that we can design and construct are not just a single strand. They are made up of many strands that allow flexibility as well as give remarkable strength. We braid several strands into ropes for strength, and in that sense, more is better.

The Bible alludes to this principle. In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 there are several examples that show that working together in unity is a source of added strength. Some call this synergy—combined or coordinated strength through working together. Two people working together can achieve more than two people working separately. The promotion of unity in a company is one of the major keys to success. We call ourselves the United Church of God because we know that united we stand and divided we fall.

In the passage in Ecclesiastes, five examples are given to show the benefit of “more.” They are: two working together, two traveling together, two surviving the cold, two defending themselves and a threefold cord or rope. These examples are well chosen to really make a point.

Two Are Better

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

The first example states that when two work together in a partnership, they have more success. There are a number of reasons for this. More work can be done because there are times when an

extra pair of hands speeds up a task. There are also two heads to come up with ideas or solutions to problems.

Besides the purely physical reasons for a better performance, people tend to encourage one another. A partner is a great source of support in this way. When Jesus sent out the disciples, He sent them out two by two (Luke 10:1; Mark 6:7). They were to precede Him in every town that He planned to visit.

That is quite a remarkable statement about Jesus’ own plans. If 82 (His 12 apostles plus the 70) men were sent out ahead of Jesus, at the very least He intended to visit 41 towns and villages. It is more likely that He visited three or four times that many. The Bible contains only a fraction of the wonders that Jesus did in His ministry.

Woe to Him Who Is Alone

“For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

Recently a man was alone in the wilds of Stanley Park in Vancouver, British Columbia, and a tree fell on him. He lay trapped for six full days before anyone knew he was there. He could have died, as many have in accidents where they were alone. A friend would have been able to help or at least go for help if the problem was too great.

Avoiding Hypothermia

“Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?” (Ecclesiastes 4:11).

Solomon’s third example shows that two together can supply enough heat for one another to keep warm. One person alone is much more subject to hypothermia than two or three.

On Mount Hood three climbers were



A braided rope is flexible as well as strong. The benefits are many. This principle can also apply to people.

caught in a storm. One apparently dislocated his shoulder. His friends realized he could not climb down, so they left him in an ice cave and went for help. Tragically his two friends didn’t survive the dangerous descent, and he was not able to survive on his own. He was found dead of hypothermia.

Sadly enough these three climbers had a cell phone and the ice cave location was known. Had the three stayed together, they would have had a good chance of being rescued at the first break in the weather. Three in the ice cave would have been able to help one another. A man alone cannot stay warm for long. With the cold, clear thinking is affected.

Protecting Your Back

“Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

The fourth example has to do with self-defense. One man can be easily overcome because he cannot protect his back. With two standing back to back, they add strength to one another and protect each other. The ability to defend themselves is greatly enhanced.

Wolves use this principle. If they can isolate even an animal as large as a moose, they can overpower it in time. Wolves attack in a pack and all focus on the one animal they select. An animal as powerful as a bear can successfully be

attacked by a pack of wolves, because the bear cannot protect its flanks.

Threefold Cord

“And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12, last part).

In the fifth example, we come back to the rope I mentioned at the beginning. A cord of three strands is not easily broken. A braided rope is flexible as well as strong. The benefits are many.

This principle can also apply to people. Three people add to the strength of the group. Decision-making is eased when three are involved because a blockage in communication can be solved more readily. In Matthew 18:16, 20 Jesus said when two or three are gathered in His name, He is there among them and that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is confirmed. So three is like added insurance.

All of these examples show the design of God for humans to learn to work together. We need one another, and we have a great inner desire to feel needed and wanted. The principles seem simple, but because we are complex and all different, working and staying together do take effort.

Someone noted that marriage is the art of two incompatible people learning to live compatibly. We need to develop that art in order to survive.

All of us are incompatible in the sense that we have differing needs, wants, val-

ues and experiences. No two are the same, even if they come from the same family. Male and female are different, and as life goes on, we realize that we continually change. Our views change and so do our values. It is the art of learning to live compatibly that does not change.

The Bible defines this process as loving God with all our heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). We are incompatible with God as well as incompatible with one another. We need to change so that we are no longer incompatible. That does not mean we need to be exactly the same in every way.

The lesson we need to learn is that we cannot stand alone. We need the gift that God offers, which is the sacrifice of His beloved Son to cleanse us of sin. We cannot inherit this universe or eternal life on our own. We need help. In a sense, we need the partnership God offers—we need Him to raise us up when we fall, to keep us warm and to defend us from Satan.

The Bible tells us that God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son dwell in converted people (John 14:23). We can never grow enough in grace and knowledge. We need to continue to increase. More is better when the choices we make are guided by His hand. **UN**

Bob Berendt is pastor of the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation, and a member of the Council of Elders.

Serving With an Attitude

by Milan Janicich

It is a privilege and a blessing to be able to serve in the Church of God. As human beings we don’t always see it that way because serving is not typically convenient and may not even be fun.

Not too long ago, while thinking about my approach to serving, I found I had somewhat of a bad attitude about it. I was serving, but I just wasn’t always happy about serving. Over the course of time I occasionally meditated on this in general and thought about what my approach should be. I believe God revealed some things to me as I pondered His Word.

There are a variety of physical things that need to be done in the Church of God. There are many things that need to be done each week to prepare for Sabbath services. In most congregations there’s hall setup, a sound crew, a mother’s room, a bulletin

board; there may be a tape or MP3 library and in some congregations there may be regular coffee or snacks. And let’s not forget that at the end of the day, all of it has to be taken down and put away.

That can add up to a lot of folks doing the same thing week in and week out for the benefit of all. Fortunately our congregation is large enough so that most of these duties are rotated each month from one crew to another. So, I was really only serving every other month. Still, I recognized that I had a bit of a bad attitude about serving. That is until I reflected on a story in the Old Testament.

Naaman Expected Something Great

In 2 Kings 5 we find the story of Naaman, commander of the army of Syria. Although Naaman was an enemy of Israel, he is noted to be an honorable man who

had actually been used by God. Verse 1 says, “by him the Lord had given victory to Syria.”

However, Naaman also had a pretty big problem. Naaman had leprosy, a terrible skin disease. As we read the story, we see that he was told that there was a prophet of God in Israel who could heal him. Of course it is only God who can heal, a lesson that Naaman would soon learn. The story also shows that Naaman had a bit of a bad attitude that he had to overcome.

As the story progresses, this great Syrian general finds himself at the door of the house of Elisha, the man of God, seeking healing for his leprosy. Only Elisha doesn’t even come out of the house. He just sends a messenger to say, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.”

This is not at all what Naaman expected. He was furious. He wanted some kind of

action, he wanted fireworks, perhaps a ceremony; he wanted Elisha to come out and wave his arms, call on God, something. This just seemed so trivial and menial. After all, he was a mighty general, the conqueror of great cities and nations. So he turned and went away in a rage.

Thankfully for Naaman, he had a wise servant, who came to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” So Naaman calmed down and verse 14 tells us, “So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

The story shows Naaman then realized there is only one true God, stating he would forsake his previous idolatry and worship only the God of Israel.

Thankful for the Privilege

How does this relate to serving and to my less-than-stellar attitude? With this story in mind, I happened to think on a future time when I expect that God will call me to account, as we see in the parable of the talents. I saw myself saying, “I would have done something great, God—I was ready.” And I heard the response, “I just wanted you to set up some chairs.”

It is a privilege to be a part of the most awesome work that is going on in the world. Physical things need to be done, some week in and week out, some less frequently. If we have the ability and the opportunity, we should be willing and thankful to do them.

What may seem simple to us may be something very important we can do to contribute to the work of God. **UN**

Milan Janicich is a member in Salem, Oregon.

Are You Ready to Enter the Promised Land?

■ Today, we are wandering through a spiritual desert on the verge of entering the Promised Land—God's coming Kingdom. Are we prepared?

by Andy McClain

"Three times the Israelites marched around the city. Then a fourth, and a fifth and a sixth. Then the command came. Joshua called out, 'Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!'

"As the seventh round began... Israel's marching seemed to reverberate against the mountains to the west. Then the massive army stopped and faced the city. The horns sounded their blast, joined by a million voices in a ferocious battle cry.

"Dust billowed up as stones broke loose and tumbled down. Entire sections of the wall collapsed, stones pouring in an avalanche onto the roadway.

"By sunset, the once great trading center of Jericho was burning. Jericho looked as though a hand had come down from heaven and flattened it against the earth. The walls and towers were scattered stones that had collapsed and rolled outward.

"The air was acrid, smoke billowing into the darkening sky. Red and orange tongues of fire licked up the last bits of wooden rubble within the circle of tumbled stone."

The excerpted descriptive account of Jericho's destruction comes from pages 110-115 of the book *Unashamed* by Francine Rivers. God destroyed Jericho for Israel on a triumphant seventh day of Unleavened Bread and they finally entered the Promised Land.

Today, we are also wandering through a spiritual desert on the verge of entering the

Promised Land—God's coming Kingdom. We are all anticipating the wondrous physical and spiritual changes that will come to God's creation when this event occurs.

But are we ready to enter the Promised Land?

To answer that question, we need to go back in time and learn from Israel's history. Doing so will help us to see if we have grown throughout the year since the last Spring Holy Day time.

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, it was a magnificent event. Yet there must have been a tinge of sadness when they thought of all of those who were not there to see it. Forty years before this triumphant day, Israel had not been ready, and God had condemned those 20 and over to die in the desert. God had rejected them for one simple reason: sin. The Israelites still had sin in their heart, and it kept them from entering the Promised Land.

While camped in the Wilderness of Paran, God instructed Moses to send spies into the land of Canaan (Numbers 13). They were sent to "see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the land is rich or poor" (13:18-20). For 40 days the spies secretly viewed the land then returned.

Fear Factor

The land was indeed bountiful. They arrived at the camp of Israel carrying a cluster of grapes between two men on a pole. God was going to bless them with a wonderful new home! But immediately we learn of the first sin-producing ingredient in their hearts—fear.

Fear gripped all but two of the spies.



They told Israel that "the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we" (Numbers 13:28, 31). They forgot God's delivering power and His faithfulness despite the many mighty miracles of protection and guidance. Their fears were very real. But fear felled Israel's faith.

We also face very real fears. Yet God offers us intervention and care in our lives the same as He did for Israel. We cannot forget the miracles God has worked in our lives or His power.

God will help us as we make our exodus from spiritual Egypt. Our commitment to God should cause us to look forward, trusting in God without fear. Jesus Christ told His disciples, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). The same power of the Holy Spirit that strengthened Jesus Christ and helped Him to overcome has been given to us to help us follow Him in overcoming (John 16:33). Only as our relationship with our Father grows can we trust Him and not be fearful.

Stubbornness vs. Humility

After hearing the report from the spies, the Israelites wept. They thought God had brought them to the wilderness to die. This led them to the second sin-producing ingredient—stubbornness. They stubbornly claimed that their life in Egypt had been better than this, and they longed to return (Numbers 14:1-3). The Israelites did not want God in their lives (Exodus 14:11-12; 32:9).

They had a hardened heart that blinded them from seeing the benefits of following God. This was a problem that they struggled with constantly. It led God to call them stiff-necked on many occasions (Exodus 32:9; Deuteronomy 9:13; 10:16). In Deuteronomy 10:16 God told them very plainly, "Cleanse your sinful hearts and stop being stubborn" (New Living Translation).

If we do not cleanse our hearts, our human nature will rule our minds, and we will have the same stubbornness. God wants our hearts offered to Him in humility (Isaiah 66:2; Joel 2:12-13). How willing are we to let God rule our hearts and direct our minds?

Self-Reliance

The Israelites did not want to rely on God, and this led to their third sin-producing ingredient—self-reliance. Israel's self-dependence then caused them to reject God's rule and decide to select a leader to take them back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4). They thought they knew better than God. They wanted to depend on their own strength and not God's might. Verses 40-44 detail how Israel tried to enter the Promised Land apart from God and failed.

Similarly, apart from God, we do not know how to live. Jeremiah tells us, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Self-reliance only

drives us away from God. We need God's Spirit to direct our minds toward Him and His will. We must learn to depend upon God, looking for His will in our lives.

Unlike the Israelites, who failed to change their heart, we have the Holy Spirit. With this helper, we can root out the fear, stubbornness and self-reliance that we may still harbor. We can turn our hearts to God.

A Glimpse of Triumph

The day of God's promise did come for physical Israel. As Israel gazed across the Jordan River, waiting to move toward Jericho, we get a glimpse of their triumph, again excerpted from the book *Unashamed* on pages 67-69:

"Salmon went down onto his knees with the thousands of other men, women and children who gathered their share of manna for the day. He thought of his parents often now, praying he wouldn't make the same mistakes, praying he would stand in faith, praying he would not weaken in the face of battling the enemy, praying he would be a man of God, not just a man.

"Soon the manna would disappear altogether, for the people would have no need of it when they entered Canaan, a land of milk and honey.

"Soon the children would cease to be children wandering in the desert and stand as men and women of God in the land of Promise.

"...the shofar blew..."

"The time had come to move forward and receive the gift God had so graciously prepared for them."

As spiritual Israel, we are on the verge of the day of our promise—the coming Kingdom. The heavenly shofar will soon sound. Are our hearts ready to enter the Promised Land? **UN**

Andy McClain is a member of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation.

Deborah, the Judge and Mother in Israel

by Judy Swanson

Have you ever wondered what it must have been like to have been the children or grandchildren of Deborah? She was placed in the highest position of power, with the consent of the people. She was one of very few women in history to have ever attained such public dignity and supreme authority.

Deborah was a woman of great courage and tremendous faith in God. She lived during the time of the Judges, and God chose her to be a prophetess and judge of the nation of Israel. Since Deborah was chosen and not her husband, Lapidoth, some assume that he was either ill or very old. The Scriptures do not tell us.

Some historians believe that Deborah was a keeper of the tabernacle lamps. If this is true, what a wonderful start for this woman who became so great in Israel! Because of the strength of her faith, she would eventually become the keeper of a spiritual vision that would be a light to all Israel.

Deborah's roles that God ordained for her were that of being a counselor to her

people, a judge of their disputes and a deliverer in their time of war. Deborah is also defined as a mother in Israel. Because of her faith and trust in God, she was able to inspire others to have that same trust and faith. Which is why God brought her to great leadership.

Judges: Cycle of Captivity and Deliverance

Each time a judge died, the nation of Israel would go back to their old way of worship, which included idolatry and rebellion against God and His Commandments. Then God would allow a gentile kingdom to subdue them and take them into captivity. After a long time of oppression by the captors, the children of Israel would cry out to God to deliver them. In God's mercy, He raised up judges to deliver them. This is what the book of Judges is all about.

Those who were the judges during that time in the history of Israel were more than what we think of as judges in today's meaning of the term. They were also heroes and chieftains, and their influence was usually felt mainly during the time of war.

After Ehud the judge died, the children of Israel again rebelled against God, and He gave them into the hand of Jabin who was king of Canaan. The captain of his army was Sisera. For 20 years he oppressed the children of Israel. He destroyed their vineyards and gardens, dishonored their women and murdered their children. Many had turned to idol worship.

Before Deborah became the leader, she was a homemaker living in a house on the road between Ramah and Bethel, which is in the hill country of Ephraim. Olive and palm trees flourished there. Deborah would sit under one of these palm trees. This is where the children of Israel came to her for counsel and judgment.

Barak's Fear, Deborah's Faith

Then God came to her with a mission, and that mission was to instruct Barak, of Kadesh in Naphtali, that God commanded him to lead His people out of the hands of Jabin, king of Canaan. God said that with 10,000 men He would deliver Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, into Barak's hand.

But the people were very afraid of their enemy because he had 900 chariots of iron and they had none. Barak told Deborah: "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" (Judges 4:8).

Because of his lack of faith and courage, Deborah said that she would go, but that God would sell the captain of King Jabin's army, Sisera, into the hand of a woman instead of him. He would not get that honor!

When Sisera gathered all of his chariots of iron together and all of his warriors, and Deborah and Barak and the 10,000-man Israelite army had gone up to Mount Tabor, then Deborah told Barak to go up and fight because God had gone before them. So Barak obeyed with his men.

Barak and his men killed all of the army, but Sisera jumped out of his chariot and ran away. He ran to the tent of Jael, who was the wife of Heber the Kenite. Sisera thought he would be safe there, as there was peace between his nation and the Kenites.

Jael ran out to meet Sisera and led him into her tent. She then offered him



milk and covered him with a blanket so he could rest. As he was sleeping, she took a nail from the tent and hammered it into his skull, fulfilling the prophecy of Deborah.

Barak learned a mighty lesson from Deborah's example of faith and courage. He and Deborah composed and sang a song of praise to God for the victory that He had given them over their enemies the Canaanites.

The Israelites lived in peace and rest from war for the next 40 years while Deborah was their judge, counselor, prophetess and "mother."

Can you imagine the pride her family took in her? Can we be inspired by Deborah's faith and courage in our lives? **UN**

Judy Swanson attends the San Antonio, Texas, congregation.

Treasure Digest

Q&A: Counting Pentecost in 2008

Question: Why is Pentecost on June 8 in 2008, instead of on June 15? The latter date appears to be seven weeks from the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the early date seems to be a week too early.

Answer: The instruction for counting Pentecost is found in Leviticus 23:15-16. It tells us to count 50 days from the day after the Sabbath (the Sunday) that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Normally, the task of counting is straightforward. However, when the Days of Unleavened Bread begin on the first day of the week and end on the weekly Sabbath, the Sabbath and the day after it do not both fall during the festival. There are conceivably two ways to count Pentecost in this circumstance—begin counting from the first Holy Day or begin counting from the day after the last Holy Day.

Which way is correct? Thankfully, there is a scriptural example that answers this question. In the year described in Joshua 5, the Unleavened Bread festival began on the first day of the week, just as it does in 2008. In verses 11 and 12, we find that the Israelites ate of the spring harvest on the day after the Passover, something they could not do until the wave-sheaf offering had been made (Leviticus 23:9-14). The wave sheaf, an offering taken from the spring crop before harvesting was allowed to begin, was offered on the same day from which Pentecost was to be counted (Leviticus 23:15).

The only way for the scene described in Joshua 5:11-12 to take place was that the wave sheaf was offered on the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread, allowing the Israelites to begin eating the spring crop immediately. It also meant that Pentecost fell seven weeks from that day.

This example shows us how to calculate Pentecost in a year such as 2008, when the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the first day of the week and ends on the weekly Sabbath. That's why we know that the correct date for Pentecost is June 8.

This is not a new teaching, but rather it continues the teaching of the Church for the last three decades. It was reconfirmed by a thorough study commissioned by the Council of Elders that resulted in the study paper "Pentecost and Its Observance." This paper was sent to all elders in September 1997 and is posted on the Web at www.ucg.org/papers.

Those who have more complex questions and who desire more detailed answers than this summary Q&A can supply may also want to see the article "Counting Pentecost When the First Day of Unleavened Bread Falls on Sunday" that appeared in the January 2005 issue (www.ucg.org/un/un0501/countingpentecost.htm).

Cecil E. Maranville

Pulling Together

In 1885, the World Series of Mule Team Competition was held in Chicago, Illinois. The winning team of mules was able to pull 9,000 pounds. The second-place team pulled slightly less. Someone came up with the idea of hitching both the first and second teams to a load to see how much they could pull together.

It was assumed that the two teams would pull a

little more than the total combined weight. However, instead of pulling only a little more than 18,000 pounds, together the teams pulled 30,000 pounds!

A young foreman named Ed Stiles, working the borax deposits in Death Valley, California, took this concept of multiple mule teams and applied it to the arduous task of hauling the loads of borax out of the extreme environment of the California desert.

Stiles noticed that a team of 12 mules was hauling loads twice the size that eight mules could have. This set him to thinking and experimenting. The maximum benefit seemed to be a 20-mule team, which ended up pulling 10 tons—about half the capacity of a modern railroad freight car. The



Pacific Coast Borax Company later used this image of a 20-mule team in marketing their borax as a cleaning agent.

This concept of teams working together came to be known as *synergy*. Synergy is defined by Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary as the working together of two things to produce an effect greater than the sum of their individual effects. In other words, one and one equals three! It comes from the Greek *synergia*, which means joint work and cooperative action.

This synergy is all around us in metal alloys, combining drugs for greater effect, the combination of muscles in our bodies (opposing sets of muscles to maintain balance, etc.) and even in the animal world. Think of the birds in Africa that clean parasites off of larger animals, receiving protection in return.

What can we learn from this topic of synergy?

First and foremost is that we can accomplish more with God than without Him. We can be better Christians within the body than without. We can serve each other in a variety of ways, each accomplishing more in service to others than we can if we only care for ourselves. A husband and wife working as a cooperative team can accomplish more as a family than as separate individuals.

God's Word usually talks about this concept of synergy under the heading of "love." How are we showing love and, by extension, practicing synergy?

Remember the example of the 20-mule team—we can do more together and with God than we can on our own.

Dan Dowd
Pastor of the Milwaukee, Oshkosh and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, congregations

Open House 24/7

The real-estate sign draped with a few balloons says, "Open house today." At once, my mind is tempted to stop and see it. If I had more time, I would enjoy going to open houses and touring model homes. Once in a blue moon, my wife and I do it as a cheap date. It is fun for us, and we look for ideas to better our home inside and out without having to spend a lot of money.

The Bible teaches us that we, too, should have a kind of sign says, "Open house—24/7." Our lives are to be lived like an open house. When people see our life unfold as they get to know us, what do they see and feel? As they walk through our "house," the rooms of our relationships, emotions and actions, do they react with "oohs and ahs" or "huhs and oops"?

The house plays a role in various biblical analogies. In the Old Testament, God was in the house. His presence was seen in the tabernacle and in the temple. In the New Testament, He was no longer in that same physical house, as God revealed Himself

Turning the Hearts . . . Gifts Show Care, Concern and Love!

As I write this, the stores abound with Christmas shoppers—buyers trying to find the perfect gift or just any gift to help in their celebration. While we do not celebrate Christmas, gift giving is something that we need to include in our families.

When was the last time you gave a family member a gift—not for any special time or occasion, but just because you loved him or her? Gifts are nice to receive any time but especially when they are unexpected. They show thoughtfulness and, if they are truly something that person needs or desires, the gift is especially appreciated.

One of the five love languages has to do with gift giving and receiving. "Gifts are visual symbols of love" (Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*, 1995, p. 75). And again Mr. Chapman writes, "Gifts come in all sizes, colors, and shapes. Some are expensive, and others are free. To the individual whose primary love language is receiving gifts, the cost of the gift will matter little, unless it is greatly out of line with what you can afford."

He goes on to say, "Gifts may be purchased, found or made. The husband who stops along the roadside and picks his wife a wild flower has found himself an expression of love, unless, of course, his wife is allergic to wild flowers. For the man who can afford it, you can purchase a beautiful card for less than five dollars. For the man who cannot, you can make one free. Get the paper out of the trash can where you work, fold it in the middle, take scissors and cut out a heart, write 'I love you' and sign your name. Gifts need not be expensive" (ibid., p. 76).

While gifts are particularly appreciated by those whose love language is receiving gifts, they are appreciated by everyone as showing concern, care, thoughtfulness and love. The giver who takes out time to shop for or make a gift is showing care for the receiver. To create a gift or spend money to buy a gift shows sacrifice for the one who receives it. The world can definitely use unselfish, thoughtful people and you can be one of them. It just takes being interested in the welfare of others and doing what you can to add to their joy.

After all, God sets us a wonderful example. As James wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). God also gives us spiritual gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. So, God has put forth the example of gift giving.

Try an experiment. When it is least expected, bring a gift home for a family member. Wrap it or put it in a decorative bag or have a long stem rose put in cellophane wrap and give the gift to an unsuspecting family member. See what reaction you receive. You will be pleasantly surprised.

It is not only the parents who can do this for their children. Nor is it only for spouses to do for one another, but children can do it for each other and for their parents too. Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). When we give, we show an expression of love to the receiver. And we all need to know that those who are closest to us love us.

I can't wait to hear what that unsuspecting receiver will say and feel after you give him or her an unexpected gift!

Gary E. Antion



Children's Corner Helping Others Word Search

Circle the **BOLD** words from the list below in this Word Search.

D T M W V A L H P M E W O L K A V W A T
F U S E A T R U M E P F S T O R E E S H
G G Q U I E T O U T D Q R D F E B E C D
K L A U I R X O E O T E A C H E R D G I
H M J O Q S Y Z N N N M N L D C E S O U
L A N I M A L S I W E D P O U T A O B C
E E N P D I N N E R D H J T G B K D A A
A Q B R J O B S C G R E F H E R F U A E
V H A C D P O G B B A S D E A W A S H Z
E F B N E E D R T S G W U S V W S T S Y
S G Y D J N G A O N H E T A L K T X M W
T E S I K M R D H O O E L S O P Q R I A
O S I O B T A E C W M P I M L L O J L K
Y G T T R A S H C M R A N R D I S H E S
S S L H O U S E W O R K B E E A F I O U
M L R L P R A Y M G T G C A R L R F T B
A Y O U R S E L F H G R P D L I S T E N

Open the **DOOR** for people
Help the **TEACHER GRADE** papers
Help fix **BREAKFAST** and **DINNER**
Give your **SEAT** to an **OLDER** person
Do odd **JOBS**, **DUST** and **SWEEP**
SMILE, **LISTEN** and **TALK** to others
PRAY for those in **NEED**
WASH the **CAR**, **DISHES** and **CLOTHES**
Go to the **STORE**

Help with **HOUSEWORK**, **BABYSIT**
READ to younger children
Take care of **ANIMALS**
Pick up after **YOURSELF**
Be **QUIET** during services
Pull **WEEDS** in the **GARDEN**, cut **GRASS**
Rake **LEAVES**, shovel **SNOW**
Put **TOYS** away in your **ROOM**
Take the **TRASH** out

John McClain, Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

through Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Since we are the house, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God, our life as lights to the world is mainly about revealing the decor of the Great Interior Designer.

The question is, what do others see as your life is revealed? As people stop and see you, visit with you and tour your life, they are naturally desirous to see what the Designer and Builder has done.

When people tour your life and mine, what kind of impressions and ideas do they pick up about brotherhood, marriage, child rearing and priorities? Do they see who our mentor really is—whose footsteps we really travel in?

As a follower of Christ, you are a novelty, a first-fruit. Perhaps around your neighborhood, you are a "one of a kind," and God wants to design a model home out of your life. So don't hide God's design under a bushel basket. Reveal it, because a major part of our calling is to reveal the Great Designer.



Stuart Segall

Pastor of the Crescent City, Eureka and Red Bluff, California, congregations

Career Choice and the 21st-Century Christian

It is a wonderful blessing to enjoy one's work, and since most adults with full-time jobs spend about half their waking hours at work, that's all the more reason to find work you enjoy. While much can be said about this subject, there are several guiding principles that may be helpful for a Christian.

First, a job or career field should provide sufficient interest. As Dr. David Campbell said, "If you don't like it, you're never going to be good at it" (*If You Don't Know Where You're Going, You'll Probably End Up Somewhere Else*, 1974, p. 78). Boredom can lead to frustration, no matter how high the salary. Discovering one's interests and whether or not they mesh with a particular field is a challenge.

Career-interest or other tests along with a skilled counselor can be helpful in the discovery process. Sometimes taking a particular class or finding experience during an internship that strongly resonates with individual interests can help. Interests may change over time, and it is not uncommon to find new direction in mid- or even late-career stages.

A second principle to consider is that the employment or career should provide income sufficient for you and your dependents. This consideration is particularly important for heads of households, but should be considered by every adult, since circumstances such as illness or death may force a wife to take on financial responsibility for the family.

Not all jobs or career fields are equal in terms of the financial reward they provide. It is possible to have good work habits and character qualities, to work hard and still struggle financially. As one man remarked, "It is possible to work hard and go broke."

Also, the amount and difficulty of academic work in a particular field does not always correspond with its pay following graduation. So, although possible financial reward should not alone be the primary reason for choosing a career field, it ought to be considered.

A third principle is that work, as much as possible, should provide an element of service. "One

motivation that seems important to almost everyone is the feeling that they are doing something worthwhile," said Dr. Campbell (p. 72). A Christian would want his or her work to provide some positive benefit to society, directly or indirectly.

A fourth principle is how much a potential career might provide time for relationships. Time for family and other relationships can contribute to general happiness and well-being. While some job descriptions carry with them regular hours, it is increasingly common to find a written or unwritten requirement for additional hours beyond a 40-hour week, sometimes including nights or weekends. (Long workweeks and limited vacation are more common in the United States than in a number of other countries.)

Whether or not the employee has a degree of control of extra hours is an additional consideration, since it may seem easier to require more of oneself than to have requirements imposed from without.

Follow your passion! If you do what you like, you will find you enjoy your labor and are likely to become proficient. Consider, "What would I do if no pay were involved?" To be successful where strenuous interest and effort are required, it is almost essential that a person's heart and mind be engaged in the pursuit.

While it is important to make decisions using facts and logic, it is also important to be honest regarding what you really want to do.

Compiled from material from several members

Laughter Is the Best Medicine

"Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away and a sunny spirit takes their place." So said American humorist Mark Twain.

Oh, how true that is. Humor and laughter have been proven to be a good medicine for the mind, for the heart and for the soul.

"How Laughter Works" by Marshall Brain explains that laughter does many things. It reduces stress and benefits the immune system, which helps us fight diseases. Laughter is also a great exerciser. Laughing 100 times provides as much as 15 minutes on an exercise bike, and laughter is great for your mental health. It actually releases stored up negative emotions such as anger, fear and sadness (<http://people.howstuffworks.com/laughter7.htm>).

There is strong evidence that laughter can actually improve health. I am reminded of my dear friend and coworker, Carole Gholson. Carole works in mail processing at the home office and has been fighting stage IV breast cancer for months. From the chemo treatments she has lost all of her hair, and her energy level is very hard to maintain. She still comes to work and, for me and all those around her, she has been a shining example.

Even though Carole has lost her hair and her normal energy, there are two things she has not lost: her faith in God and her wonderful sense of humor. Instead of us encouraging her, she spends a lot of time encouraging us. One of the ways she does this is through humor.

Every day Carole sends something funny to her closest friends—a joke, a cartoon, a funny photo—that lifts us up and makes us laugh. This moment of laughter bonds us together and says that we are all in this together, but let's have some fun along the way.

Cultural anthropologist Mahadev Apte says, "Laughter occurs when people are comfortable

with one another, when they feel open and free. And the more laughter [there is], the more bonding [occurs] within the group" (<http://people.howstuffworks.com/laughter2.htm>).

It would be easy for Carole to go the other route, that of self-pity, but she has chosen the route of faith in God and laughter, for hand in hand they are both the best medicine, not just for her, but for all those around her.

We all have our trials to deal with, but traveling that difficult road with laughter energizes us, changes our negative emotions and is a wonderful medicine to the soul. "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Laughter is one of the great gifts God has given us. God knew the importance of laughter way before the scientists discovered how valuable it is to our well-being. It is an important ingredient to our survival in this difficult world.

Janet Treadway

Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregation

A Cloak of Zeal

In Ephesians we read of the armor of God. It speaks of the various parts of the armor of a Roman soldier of the time of Paul, relating each piece to a necessary part of our defense against Satan and his influence. The only offensive weapon is the sword of truth. This is the weapon we use against the lies and deceptions of Satan.

Another important piece of a Roman soldier's uniform is not mentioned in Ephesians—the cloak. The cloak was a garment that had many uses for a soldier. It was his barrier against weather, keeping him warm, and his blanket for covering at night. Put together with another, they could form a tent (much the same as the "shelter half" many soldiers in modern times have as part of their equipment), again, providing warmth.

To fight requires a soldier to be fired up—to have hot blood. He must have a zeal for the fight. The dictionary defines zeal as fervor for a person, cause or object; eager desire or endeavor. We also must have zeal, be hot for the truth, in our fight against Satan. The message to the church at Laodicea says Christ wants us to be hot, not lukewarm (Revelation 3:15). If not hot, He would prefer us to be cold.

Isaiah 42:13 says, "The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies" (emphasis added throughout). Here is the picture of a warrior heated up for battle.

Isaiah tells of God's armor, much the same as that described in Ephesians. "For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak" (Isaiah 59:17).

Yes, God wears His zeal as a cloak, and we should have that zeal also. The Roman soldier had his cloak to keep him warm. Our warmth, our cloak, should come from the zeal we have for the Word of God. That zeal needs to include our efforts in the work of the Church, which is, after all, the work of God in this end time. So let's all put on the cloak of zeal.



Newton Baker

Fort Worth, Texas, congregation

Between the Harvests

As I was preparing for the Feast, I studied the harvest seasons of the Holy Land, and I tried to

visualize the life of an Israelite living in the land of Canaan.

In the Holy Land, the latter rains would have ended by April, and it would have been very rare to receive any rainfall from May until after the Feast of Tabernacles. Water would have been used sparingly during the months leading up to the Feast.

During the Feast the Israelites prayed to God, asking Him to bless them with the early or former rains. This was symbolized in the water-pouring ceremony that was conducted at the end of the Feast (probably the occasion of John 7:37-38).

Prior to the Feast the Israelites would have harvested figs, dates, pomegranates, grapes and olives. The Feast was a time of great joy, coming at the end of the harvest season. When the Israelites returned home after the Feast, they were faced with a lot of hard work. Shortly after the Feast the early rains began to fall. The much-needed water began to soften the hard, baked earth, which allowed the farmers to begin planting their grain for the spring harvest.

In the Bible there are several references to plowing in order to ready the field for the seed, but one author described the process as being more like scraping and scratching. Breaking up the hard, stony soil for planting was hard work. But if the farmer was willing to invest himself in this effort, he would enjoy the fruit of his labor during the spring harvest.

Psalms 126:5-6 instructs us, "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Evidently the "lazy" choose not to invest in the necessary hard work for a good harvest: "The lazy man will not plow because of winter; he will beg during harvest and have nothing" (Proverbs 20:4).

Perhaps there is a lesson that we can learn from the post-Feast experience of the Israelites. We experienced a very joyous Feast with fellow members of God's Church. We heard wonderful messages about the Kingdom of God, enjoyed good food and fellowshiped with brethren. But after we return home, it is easy to experience post-Feast letdown.

We are faced with problems that we left behind as we enjoyed the Feast. Sometimes we face persecution for taking time off from work or school. Our coworkers, neighbors or relatives may not share the same vision of the future. We return to a society that has very different values from those of the Kingdom of God. So at times after the Feast, we must "go forth weeping," being willing to invest the necessary hard work for spiritual growth.

With God's guidance and help, we can face our trials and overcome our problems and shortcomings. Through the power of His Spirit, we can be ambassadors for His Kingdom. Then as we gather with our brethren for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, we can do so with joy, knowing that we have produced spiritual fruit that is pleasing to God and reflects the Kingdom that we pray for each day.

As we examine ourselves prior to Passover, the beginning of the spring harvest, we will be able to measure spiritual growth that we have experienced. Let's invest the effort now so that we can enjoy a wonderful, joyous Spring Feast!

David Baker

Senior pastor for Asia (excerpted from United News Asia)

Share Your Treasures!

Do you have any short items of biblical wisdom, humor or practical information that you would like to share? Please send them to your local pastor and ask him to forward them to *United News* at the home office. Guidelines available on request (mike_bennett@ucg.org).



Local Church Updates

Nearly 2,100 Enjoy Winter Family Weekend in Louisville

With numerous inspirational seminars, new activity venues and a record crowd of nearly 2,100 people,



From top, Louisville participants enjoy basketball, volleyball, Sabbath services, Novelty Olympics and the Family Fun Fair (photos by Janet Treadway)

the 2007 Louisville Winter Family Weekend proved to be quite memorable. The theme for this year, "Building Godly Relationships," prompted many studies throughout Dec. 21 to 25 for all ages.

The weekend opened with a Friday night Bible study titled "We Are the Keepers" led by Todd Carey, the pastor of the Williamsburg, Virginia, and Delmar, Delaware, congregations. A dessert reception and fellowship followed.

Saturday study started early for everyone with Sabbath school classes for children and 18 different seminars. The sermon "Matters of the Heart" was given by Jim Franks, which included a fantastic story encouraging everyone to "have the heart" like his underdog high school baseball team. The total attendance at the Sabbath service was 1,700 people.

Fellowship lasted well into Saturday night with the Ambassador/ABC Reunion and semiformal dances. The city atmosphere was brought into the themes this year with "City Nights" for the teens and "Black, White and Bling" for the young adults.

After a late night of dancing, some competitors rose early to participate in volleyball, basketball, speedway and rock climbing. Although the new basketball facility, Hoops, spread the fellowship to new locations, the quality of the facility impressed basketball fanatics.

If athletics weren't the pastime of choice, American Sign Language

classes, *World News and Prophecy* seminars and "Singles in the Middle" fellowship



fellowship continued through the '80s-themed Family Dance, complete with a fashion show of costumed participants.

The 2007 Winter Family Weekend built and strengthened relationships through a fast-paced and fully-loaded schedule that ensured everyone will be looking forward to '08.

Whitney Smith

Kansas Seniors Treated to "A Picnic at the Beach"

On Nov. 4, 2007, the Wichita, Kansas, congregation hosted a seniors' luncheon for all of those 60 and older in the three congregations in the circuit (Liberal, Salina and Wichita, Kansas). The theme for the lunch was "A Picnic at the Beach." It was a dreary, cloudy, cold day outside, but our "beach" was a bright, happy, indoor spot, complete with everything from sunscreen and beach umbrellas to seashells, sand and a real lifeguard.

A delicious picnic lunch, with brisquet as the main dish, was prepared and served by local members and teens. After lunch, seniors enjoyed a program that included our children's choir, a couple of violin solos performed by Jerry Hawkins, several poem readings and two piano solos by entertainment organizer Kristy Foraker.

Seniors mentioned that they enjoyed having a less formal theme and luncheon this year. Many thanks go to



were also available. The Novelty Olympics on Sunday night allowed the young (and the young at heart) to compete in bizarre and unusual competitions leading to hours of fun.

Preteens, children ages 4 to 11, participated in organized games ranging from fun relays to basketball, and from kickball to an afternoon of bowling at the new Kingpin Lanes. Monday night brought out the younger side of everyone with the Family Fun Fair. Obstacle courses, miniature golf and a mechanical bull, among many other activities, provided hours of enjoyment and entertainment for those who participated, as well as those who preferred to watch.

Throughout the evening there were jam sessions providing bluegrass music, as well as some country and rock-n-roll. "Children at Play" and "J Macadu Band" closed the night with sets performed before an overflowing crowd. The enjoyment heightened as the audience witnessed a marriage proposal during the music set by Garrett Pennington, a member of "Children at Play."

The final day continued the busy schedule with athletics starting in the early morning hours and the completion of ABC Continuing Education classes taught by Dave Johnson, Ralph Levy and Clyde Kilough. The



Senior citizens from Liberal, Salina and Wichita, Kansas, dress for an indoor "Picnic at the Beach" Nov. 4 luncheon organizer Mary Logan for all of her hard work.

Mary Clark

Houston Area Holds Fall Campout

The Houston, Texas, area annual fall campout was held Nov. 9 to 11, 2007, at Lake Livingston State Park about 75 miles north of Houston. The weather had been quite chilly up until the weekend when unseasonably warm weather hit. This did not stop these die-hard campers!

The welcome dinner of fried chicken and hot dogs (thanks to Leo

Ryan and David Buchanan), and potato salad, coleslaw and desserts supplied by campers, was enjoyed by approximately 275 campers who came together to welcome the end of the week and enjoy God's Sabbath and creation.

Despite the warm weather, time spent around the campfire enjoying being with friends was a highlight of the weekend. And, of course, no camp site would be complete without the final touch of lights outlining each camp site!

Morning brought fog, but it didn't put a damper on our spirits! There was a Sabbath sing-along (led by Chris Rochelle and accompanied on the keyboard by Connie Nickerson) and Bible study brought to us by Bill Jahns. Over 300 campers and about 100 canine campers sat overlooking the lake and enjoyed clear blue skies.

The only negative of the weekend was the unusual amount of injuries this year with trips to the emergency room: one with a gash on his forehead requiring stitches (or glue in this case) and another with a broken ankle.

We all look forward to next year's fall campout when we can put aside the stress of the outside world and enjoy a millennial setting for a couple of days.

Laurie Curry

Member Earns Masters

Teresa L. Anderson, of the Paducah, Kentucky, congregation, received a master of science in agriculture degree from Murray State University, in Murray, Kentucky.

Her research at Murray State University included a comparative analysis of taste, yield and mineral analysis of foods grown organically and conventionally.

Her future plans may include teaching, research and organic farming. She is a single parent with five children, two still at home—Luke, 17, and Teela, 8.

Member to Receive Doctorate From MIT

Mark Hampton, son of UCG pastor Arnold and Ann Hampton, is being awarded a doctorate from the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The committee reviewing his doctoral thesis has accepted his argument and he will take his final walk in June 2008.

His thesis subject—"Reducing Exception Management Overhead With Software Restart Markers"—

flies over the head of the average person. Being able to integrate high-performance processor designs into the software and hardware technology for the average consumer is an over-



Mark Hampton defends his doctoral thesis

simplified description of his expertise and field. His field focuses between the hardware and software aspects of computer science, somewhat like a bridge.

Dr. Hampton's post-doctorate objective is to turn his thesis into an actual product. His vision for his future most likely lies in a startup or newly formed company versus a large established corporation.

He is very involved in serving the Church and gives sermons on a regular basis.

Hampton, who is a member of the musical Hampton family, has other talents and goals in his personal life. He hopes to get back to playing chess and "get to master rank at least. I would like to travel; there are some places I still want to visit. Looking back, I am somewhat wistful for the experiences I had like being on stage acting and singing as I did in high school... I have interest in a lot of different things."

For aspiring high school and college students who are looking to successfully attain their goals, Hampton has this advice: "Have a clear vision of who you are, what your priorities are and stick to them. Develop a support network, particularly in grad school, because you are isolated. I had a group, ACME—Academy of Courageous Minority Engineers; we actually had a paper published as a group. It's important to have others with whom you can identify and understand the challenges you face."

E. Joyce Moore

Abraham Meets Isaac in Kansas

It was a modern-day biblical moment when Abraham met Isaac—Abraham Lincoln and Isaac Clark, that is. Members of the Liberal, Kansas, congregation got a chuckle this summer when our most senior member, Abraham Lincoln, 92, met our newest member Isaac Clark, 0.

Even though Mr. Lincoln is a few years younger than the biblical Abraham was when he "met" the original



Abraham Lincoln, 92, meets newest member, Isaac Clark, in Liberal, Kansas

Isaac, he said he didn't think he was interested in having a baby to take care of at his age. Mrs. Lincoln indicated she was *sure* she was not interested.

Mary Clark

High School Newspaper Prints Article About the Feast

High school senior Whitney Smith had the following article printed in her high school newspaper under the headline "Alaskan Getaway: Perfect Retreat Expands Understanding."

Whitney said: "The reaction I received from school was quite surprising. I am the editor in chief of the newspaper, so I was very keen on getting my staff's response. I was approached with many general questions, such as what denomination this church was and what other practices were involved. The overall reaction from my school wasn't very strong, but I didn't intend for it to be... Overall, the reaction I

gained from my staff was the same that I received from my soccer team: lots of questions, but they were generally interested in hearing about it."

I switch my camera off and mockingly laugh at my younger brother, brusquely pulling on his shoes and shivering from the cold as he quickly jumps out of the river created by the runoff from the melting glacier. Alaska is known for its reputation for adventure and discovery; throughout my stay there I was able to live this firsthand.

The scenery was breathtaking; it was everything that the brochures and media portrayed it to be. Although the sightseeing and shopping was incredible, my trip had another purpose. Every morning, I would prepare myself and my younger cousin for the church service that would later follow. This was what it was like being a part of my new religion.

It sounds great, doesn't it? The ability to miss two weeks of school, fly to Alaska, and write it off as a church event? Even though this was what it originally looked like, it slowly came to mean a lot more to me.

My family and I recently returned to the church my parents had been a part of growing up. In the first few months I resented it, quite fervently, because in the world's eyes it is considered very strict. This new religion meant observing a Saturday Sabbath. To me, this meant missing numerous games during my senior year soccer season, having to explain myself to my friends and team, and saying goodbye to anything on Friday night.

It's difficult to explain the immediate transition to people you have known for years. All of a sudden, there's a spe-

cific reason why you are different from everyone else. It became frustrating to explain to everyone else what I was practicing because at the same time I was trying to understand it also.

Along with the Saturday Sabbath came a series of Holy Days that are observed throughout the year. This is where the trip to Alaska comes into play. The Feast of Tabernacles consists of congregating with people of the same faith in "the perfect setting," which in my case was the picturesque state of Alaska.

I came to terms with the practices of my faith and actually began understanding their meaning; I was able to appreciate the differences that I now possessed. I experienced a once-in-a-lifetime trip, while gaining more insight into my faith.



Whitney Smith, high school senior, shares her experiences coming into the United Church of God and attending the Feast in Alaska in her student newspaper

I started out in the church with the assumption that very few would ever accept this way of life. During my time in Alaska, I was able to realize that thousands of people around the world not only held the same beliefs,

but firmly stood strongly in them. This is a comforting feeling for somebody who had spent the past few months attempting to explain why I was suddenly so different.

Alaska also provided a chance for me to see my brother as more of an adult instead of the little kid I had always associated with him. As my brother and I boarded our first flight out of Louisville, a sense of independence burst inside of us. Who could imagine a trip to Alaska alone, only to meet our grandfather once we arrived?

Walking in downtown Anchorage late at night was intimidating to say the least. Homeless men filled sections of town, begging for money. Signs were posted in shop windows encouraging tourists to avoid giving out money, and announcements were made in church about which streets to avoid. Whenever we ventured downtown, my brother would walk alongside me, telling me to slow down or speed up according to what he felt was safe. No longer did I feel like the oldest with him constantly watching out for my safety, which made me realize how much he had grown up in the past years.

I gained a new respect for him; I was able to see him outside of my parents' watch. Even though he sometimes acted like an idiot, jumping into freezing rivers and posing on the top of a snowy mountain in only gym shorts, he had

matured without even noticing it.

This experience opened up my mind. The brief removal from school, stress, and homework (even if I was technically supposed to be doing it) allowed for a chance to just think.

As stress begins to mount for us as seniors, and for underclassmen as they prepare for the end of the semester, I would advise taking some time to think. Finding exactly what we believe in will allow us to become stronger teenagers and eventually stronger adults. In a world where everything is dictated towards us and individual opinions become lost, it's vital that we don't lose sight of ourselves.

Alaska proved to be an unforgettable experience: seeing a moose with giant antlers for the first time, climbing to the top of Flat Top Mountain, and panning for gold in a less than mediocre tourist attraction. But it's the insight into my faith and the respect I gained for my brother that stand out in my mind, proving to me that Alaska truly is a place of discovery.

Whitney Smith

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*.

Letters

Correction

In the article "Pittsburgh Prepares for 50th" in the December 2007 issue, we said Pittsburgh was the first Church of God congregation east of the Mississippi River. It was actually the first congregation east of Chicago. We regret the error.

Financial Statements

I appreciate having copies of the financial statements published in *United News* [November 2007, pages 6-7]. That shows openness about the financial affairs of the Church to the members. However, it would be helpful if the statements were printed larger. We have to use a magnifying glass because the print is so small.

Illinois

Thanks for the suggestion. The statements are also posted in the *United News* PDF file on the Web site at www.ucg.org/un/un0711/un0711.pdf, and you can use Acrobat Reader to display the statements at a larger size.

New Hymnal

I don't normally write the home office, however, I felt bound to write to let know that last week I received the most priceless gift from the United Church of God, a copy

of the new hymnal. What a splendid joy it is! My thanks go to those who worked so hard to put this wonderful piece of work together. What makes this piece of work so wonderful? We went back to the Psalms, as we did many years ago in our worship to praise our heavenly Father when we gather in His house of prayer.

Not that other parts of the Scriptures should not be used to compose songs of praise to God, [but] to me the Psalms are my favorite... I use the Psalms daily in my prayers, that's how I love the Psalms.

Please pass on my warmest thanks to those who worked so hard to put this priceless piece of work together.

Internet

Associated Press Article

Just a quick note to let you know that I discovered your Web site through an article in a local newspaper here in Pennsylvania. It was an Associated Press article by Tom Breen quoting Pastor John Foster of Princeton, West Virginia entitled "Protestants Didn't Always Embrace Christmas Holiday."

I find your Web site an excellent source of information on true Christianity. I intend to read on.

Pennsylvania

"Church Near Me?"

I am writing to ask if there is a local church near me. My family and I have been in the wilderness for two years now. God has revealed so much to us in this time on paganism and the churches of today. We yearn to be with fellow believers who want to live as close as possible to God's instructions on His Holy Days. Is there anyplace near us? We live in a small town.

We get *The Good News* magazines and enjoy them very much. Thank you for being *bold* and telling it like it should be!

Missouri

Contact information was sent.

"Life That Was Changed"

The pastor from Columbia and Augusta e-mailed me a while back, but I lost his name and e-mail address! My family and I (my mother, aunt, etc., want to start to attend church on Saturday! God's Sabbath! In the United Church of God! God is really working on all of us!

Would you please have the pastor for South Carolina e-mail me?

I love your site and *Beyond Today!* And the free booklets you send have helped me so much! I wanted to say thank you so very much! I am a life that was *changed!*

South Carolina

Stopped Celebrating Christmas

Just wanted to say that since I stopped practicing celebrating Christmas, my eyes have been opened to how "shallow" the whole ordeal of Christmas is. As with any pagan holiday, it is falling apart at the seams, much like a lot of these false churches are beginning to do as well. I wonder if Jesus would be pleased to see people beat each other up, some even get killed for an X-Box or any number of materialistic items. I wonder if it pleases Him to see His children get drunk, practice gluttony and coveting, on His so-called birthday, and I wonder how He feels at *not* even being invited to His own so-called birthday party?

As soon as I had figured out that this Church (U.C.G.) was telling the absolute truth about everything, not just Christmas, I completely and gladly gave up Christmas when I realized it did not and does not please God to celebrate pagan holidays and in fact we are commanded to stay away from them.

Sometimes what God has to say "inconveniences" some people. As for me, I enjoy finding ways to please God, because I know there is *never* any way I will be able

to repay Him for saving my life by giving His. So, if He asks me to do simple things like rest on a Saturday or stay away from all forms of pagan practice, then I feel that is the *least* I can do for Him. I feel blessed and privileged that I have been called and heard. I also feel blessed and privileged that God has invited me to His parties and feasts.

I cannot believe how differently I view Christmas today. I also cannot believe how much better I feel inside since I have distanced myself from all the man-made holidays. We now keep all the feasts that God commanded all of us to keep, and we always finish the feasts with a renewed, profound sense around us. We now *know why* God wanted us to stay away from pagan worship and practice.

Internet

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.

Announcements

Births

Matthew and Anne (Dungan) Lucas of the Jacksonville, Florida, congregation are very happy to announce the birth of their first child, Molly Rose Lucas. Molly Rose



Molly Rose Lucas

was born on July 20, 2007, weighing 8 pounds and measuring 20 inches long. Molly Rose is the first grandchild of Jack and Nancy Lucas of Jacksonville and the eighth grandchild of Marcia and the late Eddie Dungan of the Laurel, Mississippi, congregation. The blessing of Molly Rose has brought much love and joy to all.

Brian and Amanda Goethals of the Tacoma, Washington, congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their



Thomas Wayne Goethals

son, Thomas Wayne Goethals. Thomas was born Aug. 9, 2007, weighing in at 9 pounds 3 ounces and measuring 21 inches in length. He is the fourth grandchild for David and Patty Goethals and the 15th grandchild for Jim and Lucy Werst.

Maurits and Julie de Jong from the Tonbridge (Paddock Wood), United Kingdom, congregation are happy to announce the birth of their firstborn daughter, Grace Kristel de Jong. Grace was born on Nov. 3, 2007. Grace was born very quickly and weighed 3.4



Grace Kristel de Jong

kilograms. We are very thankful for good health and realize we have been greatly blessed.

Jim and Almeda (Bauman) Lucas of Barrie, Ontario, are thrilled to announce the arrival of their second child. Daniel Jacob was born Jan. 11, 2007, weighing 8



Daniel Jacob Lucas with big brother Evan

pounds 1 ounce. Happy grandparents are Garry and Emmie Lucas (of Barrie) and Angus and Adeline Bauman (of Guelph, Ontario). Big brother Evan is thrilled with his new playmate. We thank God for our two very special blessings.

Engagements

Dave and Karen Fergen of Wellington, Kansas, and Mark and Colleen Winner, of Jeffersonville, Indiana, along with Debra



Melissa Kaye Fergen and Vincent Rogers Winner

Rogers of Louisville, Kentucky, are delighted to announce the engagement of their children, Melissa Kaye Fergen and Vincent Rogers Winner.

Vince will graduate from Vanderbilt University this spring with a degree in economics and history, and a minor in finance. Melissa is a junior at the University of Kansas majoring in psychology. They are planning a May 2008 wedding, after which they will reside in Lawrence, Kansas, and attend the Kansas City congregation.

Weddings

Mavis Jolin and Harold Stevens were married Dec. 1. The ceremony was performed at Livonia, Michigan, by Keith Haab, an elder in Ann Arbor, Michigan,



Mavis and Harold Stevens

where they are both members. They will reside in Livonia.

Anniversaries

On Feb. 4, 2007, Mike and Helen Hunicke celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. They were baptized together in 1968 on Pentecost by Selmer Hegvold.

Mike and Helen attended church in Alaska from 1968 to 1986 and then moved to southern Oregon where they attend to this day in the Medford congregation. The Hunickses have raised seven children together!



Helen and Mike Hunicke

They both help out with United Youth Camp every year in the Northwest. Mike is passionate about archery, and his award-winning skills provide the Church camp with the blessing of an ultra-qualified instructor for archery. Helen is a talented artist, and her warm, patient and outgoing personality make her artistic skill a beautiful contribution to the arts and crafts program of United Youth Camps. There is a love and warmth in the air around them and their light shines brilliantly in the Church and in the world.

Obituaries

Robert L. "Bob" Galbreath, 73, of Uhrichsville, Ohio, died April 26, 2007, following a long battle with cancer. Known affectionately in his community as "Gilly," he was born on Jan. 18, 1934, in Uhrichsville where he lived and worked his entire life. Bob attended church in the Cambridge, Ohio, congregation where he enjoyed the fellowship of many wonderful friends who filled his life.

He was a favorite face in many local establishments as he made his morning coffee rounds since retirement. His good cheer certainly shined as a bright

light of God's way to many. He also enjoyed music and sports, and especially loved working on his house. Bob annually organized a group of brethren to attend a barbershop music festival in the area. His happy smile and warm greetings will be missed every Sabbath until the first resurrection.

Ewalt B. Schmidt, born Nov. 21, 1921, died Nov. 2, 2007. He was baptized in 1966 and attended the Church of God in Victoria, Texas. Ewalt was married to Iva Mae Schmidt for 30 years. They enjoyed a quiet life on their property outside Victoria after Ewalt retired from farming. Church members remember Ewalt as a quiet, dedicated man. Mae knew him as "a very gentle,



Ewalt B. Schmidt

kind person... with an even more wonderful person inside." He is survived by Mae and her children, Bob Castleberry and Betty Skaggs.

Geraldine (Geri) Brennecke, 78, of Millersville, Missouri, died Oct. 6, 2007, at the Jackson Manor Nursing Home in Jackson, Missouri.

She was born June 1, 1929, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, the daughter of John and Jeannette Kuehn. Geri and Howard Brennecke were married March 11, 1948.

She worked at the former Jackson International Shoe Company. She and her husband were baptized on July 24,



Geraldine (Geri) Brennecke

1963. She was a charter member of the Cape Girardeau Church of God.

She especially enjoyed spending time with her children and grandchildren, and the feeling was mutual.

Survivors include a son, Roger (Stacy) Brennecke of Kansas City, Missouri; three daughters, Brenda (Larry) Wilcox of Springfield, Missouri, Rhonda (Clint) Hornbuckle of Fulton,

Missouri, and Anita (Kevin) Vanover of Sikeston, Missouri. Also surviving are nine grandchildren, a great-grandson and five step-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband; a daughter, Brenda Gillam; four brothers; and three sisters.

Geri Brennecke had been in failing health for a number of years. How good it is to know that at her next moment of consciousness she will be surrounded by the beauty, wonder and good health of the world tomorrow.

The funeral service was conducted Oct. 9, 2007, with Neal Kinsey and Carl Hoffman officiating.

Drexel Hughes Crook, 86, of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, died Sept. 20, 2007. He was baptized in 1983 and attended the Poplar Bluff congregation until ill health made him a shut-in a few years ago.

He was retired from the timber industry as well as the welding industry. He enjoyed spending time with his family, being outdoors and hunting and fishing. As a welder, he also enjoyed creating things.

He was born July 29, 1921, in Ripley County, Missouri, and on Sept. 26, 1939, he married Dellie Luann Elliott of Butler County, Missouri. She survives



Drexel Hughes Crook

and they were just shy of 68 years of marriage.

Other survivors include four sons: Charles Crook and wife Margaret, Don Crook and wife Brenda, Fred Crook and wife Karen, Eddie Crook and wife Charlene; one daughter-in-law, Janice Crook; one son-in-law, Jerry Hudson; nine grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren. Three brothers and three sisters also survive him. Preceding him in death were a daughter, Marie Hudson, and a son, Willard Harvey Crook.

Mrs. Crook, along with son and daughter-in-law Ed and Charlene, are members attending the Poplar Bluff congregation. Mr. Crook was faithful to his calling, and we look forward to seeing him at the resurrection.

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

Cincinnati for a half-day session to draft survey and interview questions. During December there were interviews of Council members and surveys of employees, GCE members, Church members and subscribers. All results will be put in a briefing book, ready for the Council two weeks before their first retreat meeting.

December—Ongoing: Council members, operation managers and Strategic Planning Steering Committee members participate in “Springboard Online,” an online certification program in strategic planning.

Jan. 16-17: The Council will attend a strategic planning retreat focusing on strategic direction—“Where are we now?” and “Where do we want to be?”

Feb. 26-27: The Council will meet for the second session to focus on implementation planning: “What do we have to do to get there?” and “How do we monitor our progress?” This meeting will be added to the front end of the scheduled February meeting.

Action Planning Meeting (date undetermined): The Strategic Planning Steering Committee will review and approve the action steps, deliverables, budgets and timeline.

May 19: There will be an on-site staff briefing of the home office employees to review the strategic plan.

May 20: An all-day “Masterful Meetings” class designed to assist in building facilitation skills.

Follow-up: Semiannual monitoring by the facilitator to assess how we are doing and to provide consultation will follow the completion of the Strategic Plan.

South Central Region Teen Formal Set for March 29

The Dallas, Texas, congregation will be hosting their seventh annual Teen Formal Dinner and Dance for the South Central Region on Saturday night, March 29. All

teens in seventh grade through age 19 are encouraged to attend. As in previous years, graduating seniors will be honored during dinner with a special presentation, and parents are welcome to attend.

Full details as well as online registration is available at www.ucg-dallas.org/teenformal or contact Dora Jennings at (972) 509-4512.

Sunday morning, March 30, the Fort Worth, Texas, congregation will be hosting the final basketball tournament at a nearby gymnasium, and all are welcome to attend.

Dora Jennings

Twin Cities Host Families for God Weekend, March 22-23

“Hand in Hand—Families Walking With God” is the theme for this year’s 11th annual Families for God weekend in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Sponsored by the Twin Cities congregations, the event will be the weekend of March 22-23, 2008.

Jim Franks, operation manager for Ministerial Services, will be the weekend’s guest speaker. Sabbath activities include services followed by informative seminars, a catered dinner, teen prom and family entertainment. Special activities will be planned for children 2-11 during the seminars. Sunday recreational activities for the whole family are also being planned.

More details will be provided soon at www.ucgstp.org/FamiliesForGod or contact Pete or Miquelyn McNair at (651) 714-5428.

Pete McNair

Calendar of Events

- Jan. 13-15: South Central Region ministerial conference, Houston, Texas.
- Jan. 16-17: Special Council meeting on strategic planning, Houston, Texas.
- Jan. 18-20: Women’s Enrichment Weekend, “Becoming Women of Courage and Compassion,” Garden Grove, California, area, www.ucg-gg.org (look under events-photos).
- Jan. 19: Dedication of new church building in Big Sandy, Texas.
- Jan. 19-21: Winter Ski Weekend, Park



What’s New on the Web?

■ Ambassador Bible Center.

Check out the new MP3 audio ABC classes, “Fundamentals of Theology” and “Former Prophets,” at abc.ucg.org.



■ Study Papers.

The Doctrinal Study Papers are now available on the UCG Members’ Web site at members.ucg.org/papers.

■ Breaking Free Journal.

New articles have recently been posted on the *Breaking Free Journal* Web site: “How Could This Be True?” “Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones,” “The Gift of Love” and “You Don’t Need to Be Helpless With Addictions” breakingfree.ucg.org.

■ About Our Father’s

Business. Recent updates on UCG in the news, senior pastor interviews about

Asia and Nigeria, ministerial development and training, etc. members.ucg.org/fathersbusiness

Featured Link

■ World News and Prophecy Online

with blogs on the day’s news, podcasts and more. www.wnponline.org



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

City, Utah (jon_pinelli@ucg.org).
Jan. 28-31: Editorial meetings, home office.

Feb. 9: Family Dance, Receptions Eastgate, Cincinnati, Ohio (FouchB@greatoaks.com or cincywd@fuse.net).

Feb. 12-13: U.S., Canadian and Caribbean Festival coordinator meetings, Dallas, Texas.

Feb. 15-18: Young Adults’ Presidents’ Day Regional Weekend, Dallas, Texas (www.ucg-dallas.org/ya).

Feb. 15-18: Presidents’ Day Family Weekend, Branson, Missouri, mike_blackwell@ucg.org.

Feb. 16-17: Combined services and special family weekend activities, Wooster, Ohio.

Feb. 26-27: Special Council meeting on strategic planning, San Antonio, Texas.

Feb. 29-March 5: Council of Elders meeting, San Antonio, Texas.

March 22-23: Families for God weekend, Minneapolis, Minnesota (www.ucgstp.org/FamiliesForGod).

March 29: South Central Region Teen Formal, Dallas, Texas (www.ucg-dallas.org/teenformal).

April 16-25: Greece Educational Spring Holy Day Tour, (800) 858-6999.

May 2-4: 11th Annual Spokane Women’s Educational Weekend, Spokane, Washington; theme: “Women of Valor.”

May 18-19: GCE annual meeting.

May 21-22: Council of Elders meeting, Mason, Ohio.

June 21: Pittsburgh 50th, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (www.ucgnet.org/pittsburgh/50).

2007 Statistics at a Glance

For 2007, total mail received at the home office was 592,354 pieces (up 25.6 percent from 2006), and 584,880 pieces of literature were sent out (up 26.5 percent). The literature mailed out does not include *The Good News*, *World News and Prophecy*, *United News* and other periodicals that are not mailed from the home office.

Subscription requests came from many sources, including 318,041 from subscription cards (up 58.3 percent), most of which were from card decks, co-op mailers and this year’s magazine ads (*Reader’s Digest*, *American Baby* and *Parents*) but also included 12,765 from the brochure program and even 36 responses to the *Reader’s Digest* ad run in June 2000!

Another 11,721 responses came from the *Beyond Today* TV and radio program and Web site. Of these, 4,961 came in by telephone, and the rest through the *Beyond Today* Web site (6,422), a Yahoo Internet ad (101) and a Google Internet ad (237).

Total Internet responses were 180,596, down 0.9 percent.

The five language editions of *The Good News* (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) are now going into 189 countries and territories around the world, from Albania to Zimbabwe, from Iran to Papua New Guinea. The January/February issue is being distributed to about 513,000 English readers (up 24.3 percent), and 33,546 in the other languages. (See page 4 for more details.)

Below are some other statistics:

	Dec. 2006	Dec. 2007	Percentage Change
U.S. Donors	8,555	10,259	20%
U.S. Coworkers	3,455	3,970	15%
U.S. Baptisms for year	181	178	-2%
U.S. Bible Study Course lessons mailed during year	75,874	180,751	138%
<i>United News</i> Subscribers (worldwide)	13,817	13,838	0%
<i>World News and Prophecy</i> Subscribers	43,360	51,084	18%
<i>Vertical Thought</i> Print Run	22,500	23,250	3%
U.S. Personal Correspondence (mail and e-mail)	2,615	2,892	11%

Tour of Greece Planned for 2008 Spring Feast

During the 2008 Days of Unleavened Bread, the Education Travel Program will offer a biblical study tour of Greece. We will focus on the travels of the apostle Paul and his letters to the Corinthians, examining the meaning and symbols for the New Testament Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Retracing the apostle Paul’s journeys through Greece provides the perfect backdrop for observing and gaining deeper understanding of the Spring Holy Days.

The dates of the tour are April 16-25, 2008. The tour will leave the United States for Athens on Wednesday, April 16. Participants from other regions of the world may be able to reach Athens via a Thursday departure.

David Register, assisted by other elders and educators, will lead the 10-day study program. The tour will begin in Corinth where we will observe the Passover, weekly Sabbath, Night to Be Much Observed and the first Holy Day. The second half of the stay in Greece will provide opportunities to see Sparta, Olympia and Athens. The daily schedule will feature morning orientation talks, special sessions on history and background, on-site lecture, Scripture readings and application discussions.

Participants will stay in superior first-class hotels and travel via motor coach. In addition to Paul’s teachings, the travelers will learn about the Hellenistic world of the first century, the Greek language and cultural influence on the world today and much more.

Space is still available for this exciting educational journey. To obtain more information, call (800) 858-6999, e-mail your request to Info@travelgallery.com or visit www.travelgallery.com.



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