



United Church of God
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United News™

News of the United Church of God, an International Association

Vol. 16, No. 2

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February 2010

News At a Glance

354 Baptized Around the World

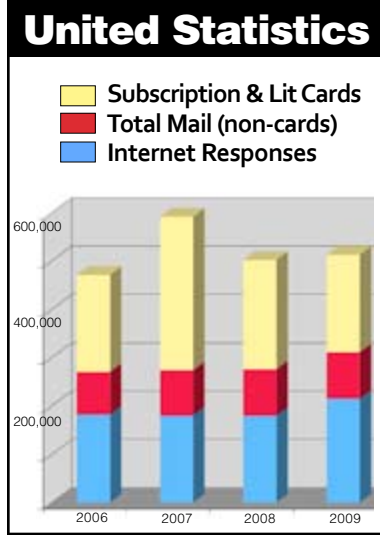
In 2009, at least 354 new members were baptized around the world. This compares to 332 reported in the February issue last year. Here are the baptisms reported at press time:

Argentina.....	4
Australia.....	16
Brazil.....	2
British Isles.....	6
Canada.....	8
Czech Republic.....	1
Chile.....	12
Colombia.....	4
Ecuador.....	2
France.....	1
Ghana.....	20
Guatemala.....	8
Kenya.....	11
Malawi.....	2
Mauritius.....	2
Mexico.....	11
Nigeria.....	10
Peru.....	2
Philippines.....	16
Sri Lanka.....	3
Switzerland.....	1
Togo.....	1
Singapore.....	1
South Africa.....	1
St. Kitts and Nevis.....	2
Suriname.....	3
United States.....	186
Uruguay.....	1
Zimbabwe.....	17

Good Works Announces Scholarship Fund

Good Works has launched a scholarship fund for young

See "News at a Glance," page 2



Winter Family Weekend Exceeds Expectations



"BLAST FROM THE PAST" was the theme for the family dance at the Winter Family Weekend. Attendees dressed in costumes from various eras in history (photo by Karen Deaton)

The Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky, took place Dec. 22 through Dec. 27.

by Whitney Smith

The 2009 Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky, once again exceeded expectations. Additional seminars and activities as well as record attendance contributed to what was deemed the best Winter Family Weekend so far. The theme "Uncommon

Sense—Walking in Wisdom" was reflected throughout the weekend as aspects of James 3:17-18 and Colossians 4:5 were explored.

The event began Tuesday night with a family dance themed "Blast From the Past" followed by karaoke. The sports activities began early on Wednesday morning with volleyball, speedway, basketball, flag football and rock climbing at various sports facilities.

WFW attendees were also able to take ABC Continuing Education classes during the day at the host venue, the Galt House Hotel and Suites. These classes were pre-

sented by ABC instructors David Johnson, Gary Antion, Ralph Levy and Clyde Kilough. A total of 18 classes were given over three days with a focus on different aspects of wisdom. Seminar topics included "Ecclesiastes," "Keys to a Lasting Marriage," "Life Skills 101: Gaining, Grasping and Giving the Wisdom of God" and "1 Thessalonians."

On Wednesday night the Bluegrass Jam Session and the Family Novelty Olympics provided amusement for all, whether from

See "WFW," page 12

Brethren Spiritually Rejuvenated at NWW

by Rob Slocum

The annual Northwest Weekend was held in Portland, Oregon, on Dec. 25 to 27. Held at the beginning of a sometimes dreary winter season, the Northwest Weekend supplied spiritual rejuvenation along with new friendships. It was a welcome link between the fall and spring Holy Days.

The ABC Continuing Education seminars offered a taste of Ambassador Bible Center's comprehensive nine-month program. Jim Franks, Ministerial Services operation manager, taught "Survey of the Gospels," while Dave Register, director of education programs taught "Lies That Go Unchallenged." Both classes provided excellent opportunities to broaden biblical understanding.

The speakers gave attractive PowerPoint presentations, stimu-

lating question-and-answer sessions and informative handouts. They enlivened the Scriptures and sprinkled in humor for good measure.

Sabbath services featured special music from the Portland and Salem, Oregon, congregations' band and youth choir. Other NWW events included deliciously prepared meals, tons of dancing (including dance instruction) and sports. Activities were reasonably priced and well organized.

How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Members attended from vari-



Dave Register teaches an ABC Continuing Education class

ous states in the Northwest region, including Utah and California. Some even traveled a distance from Vancouver, British Columbia, to participate. Thank you to everyone who helped make it a success. We are already looking forward to a spiritually uplifting and rewarding experience next year! UN

UCG Bible FAQs Move Up on Google

by Elizabeth Cannon

When someone searched for "Bible FAQ" or "frequently asked Bible questions" on Google prior to March 2009, he or she would be hard pressed to find any UCG material in the search results. Sure, we had tons of material answering spiritual issues, but we didn't have the content consolidated in an easy-to-find way on the Internet.

Seeing this void in our Internet presence, Internet manager Aaron Booth developed a page on the main UCG Web site specifically for concise answers to common spiritual questions.

"Before we did this, we weren't listed at all in the search results," said Mr. Booth.

Now, after nearly a year of posting around two Bible FAQs to the Web site every week, UCG is now on the first page of search results on Google for these two search terms.

Mike Bennett, UCG editorial content manager, coordinates the questions and answers featured on the page. Some of the questions originate from approved Personal Correspondence form letters. At other times, Mr. Bennett and UCG staff writer Jeremy Lallier brainstorm possible questions people might be asking on the Internet.

As of Feb. 1, the page hosts 111 Bible FAQs that have been viewed a total of 322,742 times since its launch. You can find the Bible FAQs section on the opening page of the UCG Web site at www.ucg.org. UN

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- Around the World: Mexico, Germany, Dominican Republic, and more*
- United Youth Corps Report; Challenger II Report
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- Treasure Digest: Humility Through Service, Are You Helping Your Kids Make Grandparent Memories? With Open Arms, The Warmth of a Hospitable Home, Turning the Hearts; Children's Corner*
- From the Word: Partnering With God and Jesus Christ, Fasting: A Way to Remove Stubborn Strongholds, Putting Pen to Paper*
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News At a Glance

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adults in United Church of God.

The Fund a Future program is designed to assist with scholarship funds for members or children of members of the United Church of God. This exciting program enables young adults in need to achieve their education and career goals, while encouraging them to become strong members of God's Church.

Those interested in giving to this scholarship fund can send their donations designated for "Scholarship Aid" to the Good Works program. You may choose the international region to which you would like to contribute. Currently, we are in need of scholarship aid in Africa, the Philippines and Latin America. You can also simply request that your donation be given to someone in need of scholarship assistance.

Go to www.ucg.org/goodworks to learn more about the program or to donate online. All online donations go the Good Works general fund. If you would prefer to send your donation by regular mail, send a check to the home office payable to "United Church of God" to the attention of "Larry Greider, Coordinator of Good Works." Indicate the project or projects to which you wish to donate.



Please indicate in a note that accompanies the check that any surplus funds (over and above

the amount needed to meet the needs of that particular project) can be used to help with other Good Works projects. Otherwise, the Church will return the funds.

Larry Greider

Pastoral Training Program Kicks Off Fourth Year

On Jan. 11 we began our fourth year of pastoral training sessions with 11 pastors and assistant pastors. Each year we schedule three sessions, 85 topics and over 200 class hours. This year due to finances we have scheduled only two extended sessions, having invited four men from Australia, Canada, Chile and South Africa including three new hires and four experienced pastors.

See "News at a Glance," page 16

Profile: New Council Member David Baker

David Baker was selected to serve on the Council of Elders in December 2009, replacing Paul Kieffer who resigned from the Council.

Mr. Baker studied civil engineering at North Carolina State University, and during his final year there he applied to Ambassador College in Pasadena, California.

After his first year at Ambassador, Mr. Baker had the opportunity to serve on the Ambassador Foundation project in Thailand working with Laotian refugees. This experience impacted Mr. Baker tremendously. "Seeing the shattered lives of the refugees on a daily basis made me realize that there is more to life than just having fun. I came to realize that God's way of life is the only solution to the problems faced by mankind," he said.

Mr. Baker was baptized in the Mekong River, which forms the border between northern Thailand

and Laos. After his experience in Thailand, he was again able to serve in Jordan and Sri Lanka.

During his senior year of Ambassador College, Mr. Baker met his wife, Dorrie. She was raised in the Church in Alaska and attended Ambassador College in Big Sandy and Pasadena. They graduated in May 1985, and the following week Mr. Baker left for Sri Lanka. Just prior to the Feast, they became engaged and then spent the Feast together in Sri Lanka.

They were married in Pasadena and immediately returned to Sri Lanka to continue working for Ambassador Foundation. They continued to work there until the spring of 1990 when Mr. Baker requested to return to the United States to serve in the field ministry. Mr. Baker and his wife have two children, Hannah and Jonathan.

His pastoral experience includes

serving the Colombo, Sri Lanka, congregation in 1989. He then served as the associate pastor to the Albany and Salem, Oregon, congregations and then in Big Sandy, Texas. In the years following his move from Texas, Mr. Baker served as the pastor of the Utica, Syracuse, Buffalo and Elmira, New York, congregations as well as the Lewistown and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, congregations. He has also served as the senior pastor for East Africa and the Philippines.

Mr. Baker is currently the senior pastor serving Asia, currently spending approximately 40 percent of the year in Asia, working with the ministry and membership there. He spends the remainder of the year communicating with the Asian ministry, membership and prospective members as well as the home office to coordinate the Church's efforts to preach the gospel and prepare a people in Asia.



The Bakers

"Working with God's people in various parts of the world has been a tremendous blessing for my wife and me. I am inspired each time I reflect on God's plan of bringing people from divergent backgrounds and cultures into His family, unified through His Spirit and working together for the benefit of all mankind," said Mr. Baker. **UN**

FORWARD! The Culture of the Church



by Jim Franks

One of our future ABC students wrote on her application that one of her primary reasons for wanting to attend was because: "We, the Church, are a group of people of like mind, and the ministers teach us through God's Word, how to be a godly family." I thought of this in connection with John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." I thought of how special our calling really is and how that calling unites us in one body.

Over the years I've thought about the expression "our culture" in relationship to the Church. I've realized that we cannot be classified by whatever part of the world we live in when considering our culture. We are the Church of God, and we have a distinctive culture because of our calling.

Don't get me wrong; we are not all alike, and we can be identified easily as being from certain regions by our accents, our dress, our music, etc. But in spite of these physical differences, we have a unique likeness.

There are several definitions of the word "culture," but I found one that is particularly telling on the Web site of the University of Manitoba, taken from an anthropology class. Culture: "The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behavior that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning."

As members of the Church of God, we share beliefs, values, customs, behaviors to cope with the world and with one another, and we transmit them from generation to generation through learning. Our goal as a body is to achieve the oneness that we read about in the New Testament Church in Acts 4:32: "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul."

By worshipping together, praying for one another, attending the Feast together, singing together and fellowshiping with one another on a weekly basis, we truly form a connection that is stronger than our physical families and our physical culture. We have our own culture. And our greatest desire is to pass that culture on to the next generation.

The mission of Ambassador Bible Center is to pass on the truth to the next generation. It was encouraging to read these words from one of our young adults—"people of like mind" and a "godly family"—in relation to the Church. Our challenge is to live up to those descriptors.

What makes the Church so special? It is our calling that begins when God the Father draws us to Christ. Today we can express our spiritual culture by the way we act, the way we talk and the way we live our lives. We have a culture that we have to continue to pass on. By doing so, we will produce a godly family. **UN**

Jim Franks is the operation manager for Ministerial Services.

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News From **Around the World**

Leadership Conference Held in Mexico

by Jorge Iván Garduño

UCG–Latin America has begun a strategic training program for its members in the region with the goal of training ministers, deacons and other leaders for the present as well as for the future. The program was previously launched in Chile and Guatemala, but not yet Mexico—a nation in which more than 300 people attend UCG Sabbath services each week.

Leon Walker, regional director for the Spanish-speaking areas, chaired the Unified Strategic Ministerial Training Program in Mexico City with the assistance of Lauro Roybal, Mexico regional pastor. The leadership conference took place Dec. 25 to 29, 2009, and had a very positive impact on those attending. Basic themes covered included fundamental beliefs of the Church, Church doctrines and the nature of God.

“It has helped me to learn more about God,” stated deacon Manuel Núñez from Ciudad Victoria. “I am thankful for the opportunity to participate and applaud the efforts necessary to make this conference a reality.”

The majority of attendees were married couples and leaders in their respective congregations. Each day they completed exercises taken from ministerial and pastoral development workbooks. Everyone had the opportunity to put into practice recently gained knowledge about becoming a good leader and, even more importantly, how to



Lauro Roybal teaches attendees of the Ministerial Training Program in Mexico

serve God and the brethren during an especially troubling time for the world at large.

“It was thorough and timely information which increased our knowledge and judgment, thus enabling us to ultimately reach out to the brethren and really connect with our congregations,” said Daniel Granados, a member of the Mexico City congregation.

As the days passed, the meetings became more interactive. People were eager to express their opinions on the topics under discussion and enthusiastically join the dialogue. “I am happy because we are learning so much and we are being given such an extraordinary amount of material and knowledge which we can take back to our areas in order to serve so much better,” expressed Nora Garza, a deaconess from Monterrey.

On the last day of the conference, a final exercise was given whereby

each attendee, as a member of one of the seven teams that had been formed, was encouraged to pledge to achieve a personal goal during the next several months until the 2010 Feast of Tabernacles.

The reason for making it a group activity was first and foremost to have the support of all the team members. Some—such as those from the scattered areas of San Luis Potosí, Guadalajara, Tepic, Monterrey, Chilpancingo or Mexico City—decided to keep in touch by e-mail; others agreed to stay in contact by telephone; and another group even promised to pray and fast so that their brethren might achieve their goals.

This will be just the beginning of a four-year cycle of leadership conferences dedicated to addressing the growing needs of a new generation of leaders to serve the members of the Body of Christ. **UN**

Q&A: Why Hasn't UCG Asked for Haiti Aid?

by Aaron Dean, Council of Elders member, on behalf of Chairman Roy Holladay

Question: We were disappointed to hear that the United Church of God wasn't putting together a relief effort for the earthquake victims in Haiti, and instead it was suggested that anyone wanting to help can give to the major public organizations. Why?

Answer: Your concerns with the recent earthquakes in Haiti are shared by all of us. Our hearts are filled with compassion as we witness the devastation.

With other disasters in recent history, how the Church has helped has varied in scope and success. In the 1980s the Church's Ambassador Foundation assisted several countries with projects and disaster aid.

We found it is very difficult, and often impossible, for small agencies and churches to get into

a disaster area. That was true of the foundation in the '80s, even though Herbert Armstrong had contacts at the highest level of government. They respected the way the Church, through Mr. Armstrong, chose to help.

We found that what was needed and helpful was providing aid well after the immediate disaster had passed. When the disaster is big news, it is easy for charities to raise money and gain publicity even if they can't get to the disaster area.

Once the disaster falls off the “news radar,” little is collected and little is done for the people who must still try to feed themselves and rebuild for the future.

Mr. Armstrong had the foundation look for projects that would help with ongoing rebuilding of the lives of the people in the community. These proved to be more meaningful to the people and showed that we cared beyond the publicity given to a major news

story. There are many who seek the limelight, but few who do truly successful ongoing relief.

You may have noticed that on our UCG blogs and *GN* commentaries on the Internet we did ask that those wishing to help with immediate needs should contribute to the Red Cross and other well-known organizations. These groups are equipped for trauma and medical help that are immediate needs. We could not do this if we tried. We do not have the government clout or the infrastructure to do what large agencies can.

The Church does care, and we try to help where we are able. I am sure that all members are praying for those suffering and hope that we can do something that can prove beneficial on a long-term basis. For Haiti, the needs that have not been filled will be seen much more clearly in the follow-up when the press is gone. At that time, we can look at what can be done by UCG. **UN**

International News At a Glance

Web Site for Scotland Feast Site Now Live

The 2010 Feast site in the British Isles will again be in Stirling, Scotland. Those interested in attending may visit www.ucg.org.uk/stirling2010 for more information about the location and to register. This Web site is a work in progress and will be progressively updated as time passes.

Members planning to attend the Feast in Stirling are requested to follow the registration link on the above Web site or to send an e-mail to info@ucg.org.uk, giving details of everyone in their families or groups who will be keeping the Feast in Stirling. More information will be made available in the *2010 Festival Housing Brochure*.

Peter Hawkins

Members in Dominican Republic Safe After Haiti Earthquake

After the devastating 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit Haiti on Jan. 12, two members of United Church of God in the neighboring Dominican Republic were contacted. Zoraya Diaz lives in Santo Domingo, the capital, and Juan Núñez lives in Mao, Valverde, in the northwestern part of the Dominican Republic, near the Haitian border.

Both reported that they felt the effects of the earthquake, the epicenter of which was reportedly some 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) off the coast, but that neither they nor their homes or families had suffered any damage.

The United Church of God has 39 English and French *Good News* subscribers in Haiti.

Ralph Levy

Northern Alberta Hosts Public Bible Lecture

On Nov. 29, 2009, the Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada, congregation hosted a public Bible lecture. A total of 106 letters had been mailed out, and a quarter-page advertisement had been placed in the *Daily Herald Tribune*, inviting people to attend. The congregation welcomed 18 attendees, six of whom were new to United.

Laurie Nyhus, an elder in the Grande Prairie congregation, pre-

sented a lecture titled “What Lies Ahead for Canada According to Bible Prophecy?” Mr. Nyhus discussed how Canadians have taken a wrong turn on the road of life and that not many people seem to be paying attention to the negative signs along the way. Afterwards, the attendees enjoyed refreshments and plenty of discussion.

UCG–Germany Updates GN Web Site

On Jan. 5, 2010, UCG–Germany completed a Web site redesign with a fixed width display and a background graphic for the *Gute Nachrichten* (*Good News*).

In addition to *Gute Nachrichten*,



ten, UCG–Germany distributed a total of 51,990 publications in the German language in 2009. The booklets requested most often were *What Happens After Death?* and *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* as well as the reprinted article “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.”

Paul Kieffer

Young Adults' Pentecost Weekend in Germany, May 21 to 26

Young adults in the Church are invited to spend a wonderful and uplifting five days in Germany over Pentecost weekend, May 21 to 26. The weekend will take place in the small village of Hollerath in the beautiful Eifel region on the Belgian/German border.

The activity is designed to bring the young adults in the Church from all around Europe together to share quality time with Bible studies, discussion, games, excursions, food and music around the campfire. Young adults in the Church who live outside of Europe are welcome to come and spend time with their European brethren as well.

The cost of this event, which includes room and board for five nights, will be 100 euros (\$140).

Please contact Jako and Claire Kasper at jakasp@gmx.net to learn more about the event and to register. Send your RSVP no later than April 1.

Jako and Claire Kasper

United Youth Corps: Memorial Stones

by **Stephanie Elizondo**

We had just finished hiking up the 998 steps that lead from the basin floor of Petra to the base of the magnificent Monastery. We enjoyed the beauty of the structure and the acoustics of the interior. It was not long until we noticed that we could hike up even a bit higher for what turned out to be a majestic view overlooking Wadi Araba into Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

As we hiked up the path to the mountaintop lookout, I began to notice these stone “monuments” built along the path. Hiking in the sun, through the cut rock up to a point that overlooks the Promised Land, I could not help but think of the time in Joshua when God had the children of Israel build stone memorials.

“And Joshua said to them: ‘Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, “What do these stones mean to you?”...’

“Then you shall let your children know, saying, “Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land”; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you

until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever” (Joshua 4:5-6, 22-24).

It says that the men lifted the stones out from the river and placed them on their shoulders, so they had to be bigger than the ones along the rocky trail where we were standing.

However, seeing these stone “memorials” made me reflect on the purpose of God in having the children of Israel do this—“that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.” He wanted them to remember; He did not want their children to forget. The stones acted as a physical reminder of His goodness, faithfulness and provision in their lives, that they might fear Him and trust Him. Psalm 145:4 says, “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.”

During the time that we have spent here in Jordan, we have not seen God part the waters of the Jordan River or the walls of Jericho come down. We have, however, seen the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord at work in our lives. There are lessons we

are learning and experiences that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives and hopefully share with our children.

Just like when the children of Israel took 12 stones from the Jordan River, we have seen God open the doors for us to be able to volunteer here this year. We have



Memorial stones assembled in Petra

watched Him work through us at the different places we serve, whether through a word in due season, a smile to change the atmosphere, or hard work and a good attitude to get a much-needed task done.

God is helping us to build friendships at our respective projects. He is giving us the wisdom we need to understand the culture we find ourselves living in. He is opening our eyes to see the need



Eduardo and Stephanie Elizondo, Kelley Schreiber, Audry Bauer and Jamie Franks stand on top of Mt. Nebo

for His Kingdom to come to a land torn in the name of peace. These are the stones we take with us from our Jordan experience and place as “memorials” of God’s goodness and faithfulness in our lives.

For each of the five of us here it looks a little different. The facets of His goodness and faithfulness are learned in many different ways. Sometimes they are learned through apparent blessing, other times through challenges and sacrifice and at times simply through living daily life.

In a way, we are also like those stones—“living stones,” as it says in 1 Peter 2:5, “being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,

to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Much of the fruit of our time here in Jordan may not be evident immediately, but hopefully it will stand as a “memorial” to those who knew us here that they “may know the hand of the LORD.”

I may not have walked through the Jordan River on dry ground, but I am walking through experiences that will be with me beyond my stay in Jordan as a “memorial” to God’s goodness and faithfulness. **UN**

Follow the 2009-2010 United Youth Corps–Jordan team on their blog at www.uycjordan09.blogspot.com.

Young Adults Find “Focus” at Challenger II

by **James Capo**

The campfire popped and crackled, spreading its warm light to the circle of staff and young adults gathered around it for their first night together on Mt. Lemmon—one of Southern Arizona’s “Sky Islands,” a 9,000-foot mountain of granite rising dramatically out of the cactus-studded desert surrounding it.

That week, we would march through snowy forest trails high on the mountain to find sun-warmed, south-facing cliffs with stunning vistas where we could climb in our shirtsleeves. We would hike a dry creek bed to a sheltered gorge where we would climb, protected from a chilling wind while enjoying views over the city of Tucson in the valley far below.

We would climb one cloudy afternoon while being dusted by a light snow flurry, and we would climb in bright Southern Arizona sun on a warm and surprisingly windless day at “Windy Point.” Such is the adventure and diversity of climbing in the desert in December.

We camped in the Molino Basin, a bowl-shaped depression near the base of the mountain, surrounded

by cliffs and peaks rising hundreds of feet above us. By the firelight, the 13 participants, who hailed from nine states (one from South Africa but attending college in the United States), shared their reasons for coming to Challenger II, a mentoring-based adventure program designed to challenge young adults of the United Church of God to greater spiritual growth and leadership.

They came to build bonds of friendship; they came for adventure and personal challenge; they came to draw closer to God with like-minded young adults; they came to climb and to learn. And they came to focus.

Life gets filled with distractions and compromises. College, work, social involvements, the busyness of life can dilute the strength and substance of our calling, our relationship with God and our spiritual focus on the Kingdom of God.

Rock climbing has a way of focusing your attention, and that, too, is the idea of Challenger II spiritually. When you’re clinging to a cliff, 60 feet off the ground, there are no distractions as you work your way toward the satisfaction of the summit. You’re focused on your next

hold, on reaching the top.

And compromise isn’t an option. Compromise? On a rock climb? It’s either climb or fall. No compromise on a rock climb. And not on our “climb” toward the Kingdom of God either. Climbing has a way of crystalizing personal and spiritual insights.

Each day began with a Compass Check after breakfast to set our spiritual focus for the day. That was followed by a Ground School lesson on some aspect of climbing, before we headed out to the crags for the day’s adventure. After dinner back at base camp, there would be a Christian Living and Leadership discussion around the campfire. The climbing was great; the spiritual insights gained, greater.

As the climbers worked their way through the week’s challenges, they gained skills in climbing, belaying and rappelling. They each took responsibility for the safety



Wesley Johnson reaches the top (photo by James Capo)

and welfare of the team, preparing meals, maintaining equipment and building the fire.

They encouraged each other, laughed together and held each other’s lives in their hands every day. They gained insight into their lives, their character and their calling.

By the end of the week, participants capped off their experience atop the Hitchcock Pinnacle, a 45-foot tower of rock overlooking Tucson in the desert 4,000 feet below. And they topped out with a new view on service, leadership and character.

Rock climbing is an exciting sport, and it is growing in popu-



Dana Deininger rappels down the rockface (photo by Scott Brady)

larity all the time. But for the Challenger II participants, the fun, thrill and challenge of the activity was only the beginning. As individuals who are serious about their spiritual commitment, it proved to be a unique opportunity to build solid friendships and to strengthen their insight, understanding and commitment to this way of life. **UN**

James Capo is the director of the Challenger II rock climbing program.

Camp in Kenya Provides Mentoring for Promising Youth

by John Elliott

In mid-December, 50 campers and 25 staff traveled to a private 40-acre estate in central Kenya where God blessed a wonderful summer camp experience. The vast expanses of grassy fields were punctuated with modern bathhouses, kitchen facilities and a staff cottage complete with electricity and pure well water.

Prior to camp, the staff erected tents for the campers' dorms, prepared the fields and equipment for the week's activities, and started the preparation for endless meals for the group of 75. The 50 campers streamed onto the estate with eager expectations for Camp Kenya 2009.

The Kenyan church leadership, including elders Antonio Ndung'u and Musa Nyaira and their appointed staff, had everything well organized in advance. Staff members did a great job running camp while mentoring future leaders to assume new responsibilities.

Five campers, known for their service and godly example at their home congregations, were invited to become assistant dorm counselors and began their training for

the eventual role of counselor.

Three experienced United Youth Corps staff from the United States, Jeremy Lallier and Nathan and Jacqueline Ekama, contributed their skills to the program as well as shared Christian living concepts with the teens. Activities included football/soccer, volleyball, capture the flag, novelty Olympics, bookbinding, art, bicycling, hygiene and team building.

The teens enjoyed wearing jerseys donated by a football club this year. During camp last year, a German football team that was touring Kenya shared our campground for one night. After witnessing the United Youth Camp program and the exceptional conduct of the teens, they donated all their football jerseys to the camp. These high quality jerseys have

been a nice addition to our sports activities.

God blessed us with exceptional weather during camp. Sunny days and cool, moonlit skies studded with the constellations of Pleiades and Orion were common. The private and peaceful rural venue provided a near millennial setting for our activities. This is the same facility that will host one of the Kenyan Feast sites this fall.

Following camp, the internationals visited many of the teens and their families at their home congregations during a weeklong tour of the region by the senior pastor.

We appreciated the fine contribution of all the volunteer staff along with the enthusiasm of all

the teens who participated. We encourage young adults to consider Camp Kenya for a meaningful experience with the United Youth Corps. **UN**

John Elliott is the senior pastor for East Africa.



United Youth Corps volunteer Nathan Ekama referees capture the flag



Campers work on a team-building exercise called "helium stick"

UYC–Australia Campers Experience God's Way in Action

by Mandy Jennings

On the outskirts of the beautiful country town of Mittagong, New South Wales, the United Youth Camp–Australia began on Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2009. A total of 72 enthusiastic campers attended this year, willingly served by 25 staff. Stephen Clark, pastor of Melbourne East, Victoria, and Perth, Western Australia, congregations donned the hat of camp director for the first time, ably assisted by Grant Chick, associate pastor of Queensland.

That evening, Mr. Clark gave the camper orientation, stating that the theme of this year's camp was "The Two Trees," taken from Genesis. Campers were then divided into five activity teams, each comprising boys and girls, to participate in daytime activities.

Over the next eight days, campers enjoyed dance, volleyball, badminton, canoeing, orienteering, mountain biking, arts and crafts, speech class, speedball, high

ropes, crate climb, giant swing and vertical playpen. Each day began with Christian Living, during which various lessons related to the two trees were discussed.

We added a service activity this year, enthusiastically introduced by Scott Jennings. Each team had one service activity that involved cleaning the bathrooms and dining hall, as well as doing laundry and rubbish collection. Many campers thanked the Service Staff, as they came to appreciate all the work done behind the scenes.

The beginning of camp saw the weather hot and dry, but then on Friday afternoon much-needed rain began to pour down, lasting for a few days. Only two individual activities were affected. Though

overcast Sunday and Monday, the clouds parted, and everyone was able to enjoy sunny weather again.

On Friday evening, the traditional hymn sing, with a chance for the guys to do some impromptu songleading, was a highlight. The singing was vibrant and spectacular, with numerous campers having the opportunity to lead a hymn, trying hard to lead in time.

The Sabbath morning began with some well deserved sleeping in. The campers also participated in an energetic and deeply meaningful Q&A session. During Sabbath services, camper Russell Balugo gave the sermonette, speaking about three ways to overcome peer pressure. Stephen Clark gave the sermon, continuing the theme of the two trees.

"There are two trees, two ways of life, two outcomes—life or death. No exceptions! No shortcuts!" he said. "And the worst thing that can happen to you is we don't tell you! We want young people to learn to love the truth. Why? Because the alternative is unthinkable!"

After the Sabbath, the campers and staff enjoyed a dance.

Sunday evening the campers had the opportunity to have an escort to speech banquet. Many campers contributed during a thought-provoking topics section, followed by six speakers who presented on

a range of topics, from learning to ride a unicycle to a colorful insight into a day at camp.

At the talent show on Monday evening each team performed two skits—one biblical and one moral. One biblical skit was "The Tower of Babel," made more humorous as two of the campers could also speak two languages.

The last day of camp was a day of team challenges. We had an interteam triathlon involving canoeing, biking and running. Two staff teams went up against three camper teams. To the dismay of staff, one camper team pushed them back to second and third.

The team challenges continued in the afternoon, with the aim being to promote teamwork. One such activity was the team "ski" challenge. Six team members, standing on two planks and holding ropes connected to the planks, had to move the planks through a challenge course.

The final night banquet and dance had a Mexican theme, using decorations created by campers during their art classes. We also reminisced with a memorable slide presentation of our eight days at camp.

Summer camp continues to provide a great opportunity for our young people to see God's way in action, experiencing major enjoyment along with lasting personal benefits. **UN**



Badminton anyone?



Rosalinda Prom wobbles at the top of the crate climb



Staff and campers compete for victory in the camp triathlon

Campers Overcome Sickness, Draw Closer at Winter Camp

by Gary Black

So many campers... so much snow!

Never have so many campers converged on Montello, Wisconsin, for Winter Camp. This year there were 114 campers (plus 44 volunteer staff) gathered for the 15th annual United Youth Winter Camp.

Greeting campers was over 12 inches of snow, plus more that fell during camp. The snow provided just the environment needed for campers to enjoy activities like cross-country skiing, snow football, ultimate Frisbee, ice-skating and downhill tubing. The snow made the horseback riding particularly beautiful. In the extreme outdoor survival class campers learned about surviving in the cold and using the resources around them to provide for their needs.

This year we added a new challenge activity—winter camping. In this activity, campers spent the night in the cold Wisconsin woods and learned techniques for staying warm outdoors in winter conditions. There was enough snow, so campers built quinzees. A quinzee is a snow shelter made by hollowing

out a pile of settled snow. It looks similar to an igloo, except that igloos are made of blocks of snow.

To build a quinzee, campers piled up snow, let it settle for several hours, then hollowed out the inside for sleeping. The temperature inside a quinzee is much warmer than outside. If the temperature is zero outside, it will be about 20 or so in the quinzee—toasty, eh! A total of 25 campers, plus some staff, volunteered to take the winter camping challenge.

Campers also enjoyed the chance to warm up during indoor activities like volleyball, dance class and indoor team challenge.

Winter Camp faced a unique challenge this year. A virus spread quickly and caused many campers and staff to miss a day or two of camp. At first it seemed like the camp experience would be affected negatively by the sickness. But in the end, we saw that while God

allowed the trial to interrupt our plans, it did not ruin camp.

I was truly impressed with the attitude of service and compassion displayed by both staff and camp-

Winter camping challenge participants show off their quinzee snow shelter



ers. The trial brought everyone closer together as a family. One camper commented, "We came to camp as friends; we left as family." It's truly amazing how a trial can have such a positive impact!

Our camp theme was "Insight Today—Leadership Tomorrow." During Christian Living, campers heard many messages about developing insight and wisdom

Campers weather the cold to go ice skating



other Christian qualities, we had the unique opportunity to practice them in many ways.

God certainly blessed us with another successful Winter Camp in this Wisconsin winter wonderland.

We look forward to holding Winter Camp in the same location next year from Dec. 27, 2010, to Jan. 2, 2011. For more information, please watch for the upcoming *United Youth Camps Magazine*. **UN**

Gary Black is the director of Winter Camp.

and how that helps them learn to be good leaders both now and in the future. At the heart of good leadership is service. This year we didn't just talk about service and

God's Word Online: What Is at Your Fingertips?

■ In this first article of "God's Word Online," we take a look at the many online resources available on the UCG members' Web site, <http://members.ucg.org>.

by Jeremy Lallier

When the United Church of God was founded in 1995, the Internet was just beginning to come into its own. It was slow, cumbersome and impractical for transferring anything other than text or cheesy, little animations. Downloading something like an entire sermon was completely unfathomable. Someone's 14.4k phone line would have burst into flames at the mere thought.

Things have changed since then. Fifteen years later most connections can download a sermon video in a matter of minutes, while the user uploads photos to Facebook and chats with friends. With the Internet's explosion in the areas of efficiency and availability, the United Church of God has been incorporating it in its efforts to preach the gospel and prepare a people.

The UCG members' page, located at <http://members.ucg.org> and designed to be a central hub

for all of UCG's online efforts, provides easy access to all of its free online services. Through the "Sites" tab on the top menu, you have easy access to any of our many Web sites.

Some of our members may not be familiar with all these sites, so what follows is a quick overview of what they are and what they have to offer.

Magazine Web Resources

Our most well-known pages are our magazine sites. *The Good News*, *World News and Prophecy* and *Vertical Thought* each have their own site where you can find archives of all articles from the respective print editions.

You'll also find our online-only publications, *Virtual Christian Magazine (VCM)*, *Breaking Free Journal* and *This Is the Way*.

- Ten new editions of *VCM* are released every year, featuring articles from a wide variety of Church members on various topics.

- *Breaking Free Journal* contains articles designed to help members struggling to deal with and overcome various social disorders and addictions.

- *This Is the Way* features short, "food for thought"-type notes that are updated twice a week.

Other Online Resources

Under the "Sites" tab you can also find resources, like the home pages for:

The screenshot shows the United Church of God Members Site. The top navigation bar includes Home, About, Resources, Sites, and a search box. A dropdown menu for 'Sites' is open, listing: Ambassador Bible Center, Beyond Today, Breaking Free Journal, Council of Elders, Feast of Tabernacles Site, Good News Magazine, This Is The Way, UCG Singles, United Church of God - Official Site, Vertical Thought, Virtual Christian Magazine, and World News and Prophecy. A callout box points to the 'Sites' tab with the text: "Go to the 'Sites' tab on the members' site to find links to all of United's Web sites".

- The Ambassador Bible Center, where you can find information on and resources from our nine-month biblical studies program.

- The Council of Elders, where you can find information about our governing body as well as read Council reports.

- Our upcoming Feast of Tabernacles locations.

- UCG Singles, where young adults and "singles in the middle" can go to find information

about upcoming UCG singles' activities.

- The United Church of God home page, which is designed as a landing page for those just finding out about United.

There are plenty of other resources available to our membership via the members' site—if you'd like to find out what they are, watch the Jan. 8, 2010, edition of *About Our Father's Business*, titled "Maximizing the Members Web site." The video is

available at <http://members.ucg.org/about-our-fathers-business> along with other archived editions.

In future installments of "God's Word Online," we'll explore more about the resources available online and how you can help the United Church of God establish a more effective presence on the Internet. **UN**

Jeremy Lallier is a staff writer for the Media and Communications Services department.

Treasure Digest

Humility Through Service

“The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised while he is forgotten,” wrote South African missionary Andrew Murray.

Humility—this simple word conjures up so many different thoughts and emotions. The attitude of humility is central to our Christian walk; and yet it almost seems a contradiction, because any time we think of



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ourselves as humble individuals, we automatically prove that we are, in fact, not humble.

What are we as Christians to do? How do we then grow in humility and learn to love one another (John 13:34) and take care of one another (Matthew 25:34-40)?

When analyzing those instructions, we can understand that we cannot truly practice humility to others without serving them. When we serve others, we begin to care for them; conversely when we expect service from others, we begin to care less for them.

As we practice being humble, we begin to see more and more how much humility we actually lack. Even the apostle Paul understood this self-realization as he wrote: “I am the least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9), “less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8), and the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

How could we ever measure up to God’s standard of humility if someone like Paul fell short? The answer is that our humility before God and fellow man is to never be judged or measured in comparison to another person (2 Corinthians 10:12). Instead, our only standard is the one Jesus Christ set as an example for us: “Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

God seeks humility in us because it is critical in our development in reflecting His character. We must seek to serve each other as Christ did, without selfish motives or a desire to be recognized or to achieve position. That’s a tall order to fill, isn’t it? It would be if we were on our own, but we live with Christ in us.

Always keep in mind what the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write in Isaiah 66:2: “But on this one will I look: on him who

is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

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

Are You Helping Your Kids Make Grandparent Memories?

We, today, are so busy with the cares of this life. Our children, who can become so involved with connecting to friends on the Internet and on cell phones, are no different. It is so easy to slide right over important things in life, such as spending quality time with our family and extended family!

Our parents and grandparents are our children’s link to their past. As a child, I loved sitting and talking with my grandfather. While my grandmother made butter and buttermilk, I listened to the stories of his life as he knew it. It was an age without electricity, TVs, computers, telephones, cell phones, etc. He died at 97 years of age, still mentally alert. What a blessing!

Not only do children need to have contact in some way with their grandparents, but also grandparents have an inner need and desire to connect with their grandchildren. There is a special bond that develops between children and their grandparents.

My parents made an effort for our family to visit our grandparents every month. One month we would visit my mother’s family, and the next month we would visit my father’s family. Those were special times for us!

God also shows the importance of our grandchildren! “May you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel [Jacob’s heritage]” (Psalm 128:6). We are also instructed



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to leave an inheritance for our children’s children (Proverbs 13:22). Many grandparents don’t have monetary wealth to leave to their grandchildren, but they can leave their wisdom and their legacy to them.

Grandparents can pass on their trust, faith and belief in God to their grandchildren by regularly reading to them the Scriptures and showing them how to apply them in their lives. In Deuteronomy 6:1-2 God tells His people to fear Him and keep His commandments and to teach their sons and their grandsons to do so. Joseph’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren were brought up on his knees (Genesis 50:22-23). What a marvelous opportunity he and his family had!

Remember to keep your children’s grandparents’ and your grandparents’ heritage

Turning the Hearts . . . Enjoy the Sabbath With Your Children

While teaching at Ambassador College, I did a survey of some of the college students. I asked them what was one highlight that they remembered about their families when growing up. The answer given by many of them was Sabbath dinner on Friday evening when their parents made the dinner special by adding decorations or by cooking better meals or desserts. Their parents wanted their children to consider God’s Sabbath day to be something special.

Do you enjoy the Sabbath with your children? Do they look upon the Sabbath as a delight (Isaiah 58:13)? Or is it a struggle for you and them?

Here are some tried and tested tips for enjoying the Sabbath with your children.

The first tip starts with the parents. If you want your children to enjoy the Sabbath, you as parents must first learn to enjoy and respect God on His Sabbath day. It was the day He rested after creating the world for us (Genesis 2:1-3) and the day He commanded us to keep as a reminder that He was Creator (Exodus 31:13; 20:8-11). So, if we as parents are respectful of God’s Sabbath and enjoy it, we will be an example to our children to do the same. The Sabbath is an opportunity to draw closer to God through His Word. It is an opportunity to teach our children about the godly way of behaving.

Make the Bible come alive with interactive lessons on the Sabbath. Biblical heroes are exciting to children. Use their toys to illustrate Daniel and the lion’s den, Noah’s ark (particularly effective during bath time), or Israel leaving Egypt. Once stories have been told or lessons taught in a way that reaches them, then quiz them on what they learned. They will delight in giving you answers to questions you make up and present in a lively way.

Finally, make the Sabbath a delight by saving special treats for that day. Once they are a little older, reward them for writing down the scriptures used by the minister in the sermon. In addition to a special Friday meal, invite their friends and their friends’ parents to join you for dinner after Sabbath services. Having some Saturday evening plans to host another family for games or a movie work to highlight the Sabbath that has just been completed.

Those are some tried and tested tips for teaching your children to respect and value God’s Sabbath day. May you use them and be blessed for honoring God on His holy Sabbath day (Leviticus 23:3).

Gary Antion



Caption Contest



Brian Crane

Have a clever caption for this cartoon?

Send it to your local pastor and ask him to forward it to *United News*. You can also e-mail it to UN@ucg.org. We may feature your caption in an upcoming *United News*!

alive and make memories for your children with their grandparents!

*Judy Swanson
London, Kentucky, congregation*

With Open Arms

Her arms were opened wide before I could completely get through the door. Baby blue eyes dancing, her withered mouth crinkled into a smile that overtook her whole face. It was as if she had spent her entire 88 years waiting to see only me. Her frail body suddenly turned fiercely strong as she folded me up in her embrace.

A series of strokes had taken away her ability to get out her vivid memories, clever jokes and words of wisdom. After multiple attempts to tell her humorous stories of life on the farm, she would get tired of trying to make her mouth cooperate, point at me and say, "Well, you know!" Then we would burst into fits of giggles. Of course no one could read her mind, but I couldn't help but laugh at what I didn't really understand. Her joyfulness was contagious.

She showed more love with gestures, smiles and hugs than most people could do in a long-winded letter. Her enthusiastic love for others was so much a part of her that even multiple strokes could not begin to take that away.

When it was time to leave her and go home, that's when her tears of joy were replaced with tears of pain. Her piercing eyes would turn soft, swelling with tears. Engulfed in her arms, I often wondered what was going through her mind. When someone lives as many years as she had, one never knows if this is the last chance to say goodbye. She took advantage of every chance.

How many times had I greeted someone with a hello that lacked warmth or left them in anger? My great-grandma knew better than that. As the final specks of

sand were falling through her hourglass, she used every bit of time she had left to show her affection to everyone around her, to leave her legacy of love, which was all she had left to give.

In May of 2008, she died peacefully and quietly with her children surrounding her hospital bed, which was adorned with one of her precious handmade quilts. I am sure, looking around at her beloved children and closing her eyes for the last time in this physical life, there was no doubt in her mind that she would see them again. When the resurrection comes, I can't imagine her waking up any other way than with her arms stretched out wide, eyes sparkling, laugh tinkling, ready to embrace the first person she can get her arms around.

*Ashley West
Fort Worth, Texas, congregation*

The Warmth of a Hospitable Home

Being hospitable is the reception and treatment of guests or strangers in a warm, friendly and generous way. Many scriptures mention hospitality. For instance, we are to love the stranger and give him food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:18). Paul instructs us to be hospitable (Roman 12:13), and Hebrews 13:2 reminds us, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (King James Version).

How often are we ready to have brethren stop and stay with us even for one night as they are passing through? Let your pastor know you have a bed available in case someone calls and needs a place to stay. When there are church activities in your area, do you open up your home? We are to be hospitable to one another without complaining (1 Peter 4:9). If someone is



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in town for business, invite them over for a meal. Maybe you can meet at a restaurant near their hotel and have a meal with them.

Imagine how wonderful your evening or Sabbath can be when getting to meet someone new, sharing a meal and/or sharing your home. If you are the traveler, it saves expenses of course, but it also gives you a chance to get to know other brethren. It doesn't take much—people just want a place to stay for the night. It doesn't have to be fancy. We remember what Christ said in Matthew 25:43, "I was a stranger and you took me in."

When you are at services and you meet someone traveling through, invite them to join you for dinner after services—either at your home or in a restaurant. People can't always accept the invitation, but it is nice to be invited.

There are many ways to be hospitable besides having someone for dinner or stay overnight. If your budget is tight, invite

someone over for coffee and cake or to play a board game. Make it a snack night and have everyone bring a snack to share. At the Feast of Tabernacles, meet new people at services and invite them to share a meal with you, either at your accommodations or in a restaurant.

For someone to stay overnight, all you need is a bed, table, chair and lamp. Your generous spirit will make their stay memorable and new friendships will grow.

*Jean Cline
Minneapolis, Minnesota, congregation*

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 are available on request (UN@ucg.org).

Children's Corner

Animals in the Bible

Read the Bible verses, then match the verse with the animal it mentions.

Children's Corner

Hawk

Mouse

Leopard

Lice

Dove

Viper


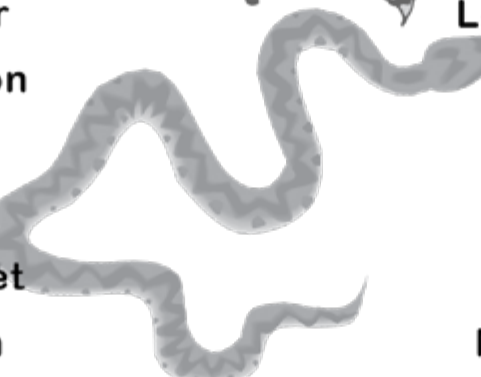
Dragon

Bee

Frog

Hornet

Moth

Revelation 12:3

Deuteronomy 7:20

Exodus 8:17

Job 39:26

Exodus 8:3

Leviticus 11:29



Psalms 55:6

Isaiah 7:18

Daniel 7:6

Acts 28:3

Matthew 6:20

*Answers to last issue's puzzle:
1. seasons 2. lights; signs 3. changes 4. give;
season 5. founded; established; depths
Message: God created all of the weather!*



From **the Word**

Partnering With God the Father and Jesus Christ

■ God is calling new people to His Church. What is our role in teaching them about God and His truth?

by James Cannon

Forty-two years ago God the Father called me into His Church and opened my mind to the truth. I had not heard of Herbert Armstrong, *The World Tomorrow* broadcast, the true Church of God or read any of the Church's literature.

The groundwork was laid two years earlier when I was simply sitting in a class during my sophomore year with a student who was very impressive to me.

To begin with, the student was Austrian, and he had a distinct accent. I had lived in Europe for a couple of years

He pointed to the Austrian fellow who was in my class two years earlier.

I couldn't resist, so I went over to his table and introduced myself and asked him if I could join him for a cup of coffee and ask him a question or two. He said yes, so I sat down and promptly told him that I had heard that he didn't believe in evolution. He confirmed what my friend had told me. Then I asked, "Where have you been for four years of college? How could you miss evolution?"

He paused and said, "I detect an argumentative tone and attitude in your question," in his precise Austrian accent. Then he said, "I have a challenge for you. I have studied evolution, but you have not studied what I have studied. I challenge you to read some of the material I have on the subject, and then we can have an intelligent conversation about it."



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There was a broadcast back then. There was literature back then, and there were Church congregations back then—one in the town in which I lived, in fact. But I didn't know about them until God brought me over to talk with a baptized member of God's Church.

after high school and because of that experience I noticed when people had a German or French accent. And second, he wore a suit and tie every day to class. He was very different, in a good way, from my friends and me.

I didn't come across this fellow again until my senior year in college.

The Challenge

It was early January 1968, and my friends and I were sitting in my university's student center between classes having a coffee and talking about, of all things, Noah's ark and how impossible it would have been for Noah to get all those animals on an ark.

We were also discussing various aspects of evolution, when one of my friends mentioned that there was a guy sitting to my right at another table who did not believe in evolution. This was unbelievable to me at the time, and I asked my friend to point this person out to me.

I accepted his challenge, and the next day he brought me several pieces of Church literature discussing evolution to read and study. At that very moment—that second—God the Father called me and opened my mind to want to study the truth about evolution. The rest is history, as I have been a baptized member of God's Church for over 41 years.

Being Ready to Give an Answer

The lesson I have come to learn and to understand as a result of my calling is that we are in partnership with God the Father and Jesus Christ in the work of God.

As we know, John 6:44 tells us, "No one can come to Me [Christ] unless the Father, who sent Me, draws [calls] him; and I [Christ] will raise him up at the last day." And in verse 65 He reinforces this fact by saying, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Our job is to make the gospel, the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, available to others by encouraging mankind to repent of their sins and by announcing the return of Jesus Christ to bring real peace to the earth.

Additionally, we as God's people need to be growing and overcoming—becoming more and more Christlike daily—so we can be used by God and Jesus Christ as servant leaders in the Kingdom of God.

With that being said, my Austrian friend was the instrument God the Father used to call me to the truth. There was a broadcast back then. There was literature back then, and there were Church congregations back then—one in the town in which I lived, in fact. But I didn't know about them until God brought me over to talk with Ed Bodo, a baptized member of what was then the Radio Church of God.

We need to be ready, as my Austrian friend was, to answer

questions wisely and to properly and wisely defend the faith, as he did, because you and I will never know in advance when God will use us as an instrument of His calling.

The apostle Paul admonished the Church members in Corinth—and you and me as well—to make themselves ready to be good examples of God's way of life and be able to be fellow workers, coworkers, with God. "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you

Ready to Defend

by Jeremy Lallier

"What do you mean, you can't work on Saturdays?"

You swallow hard. This was not a conversation you were looking forward to having. The job interview had been going so well up until about two seconds ago. Your potential employer had nothing but praise for your resume. "Very promising," he'd said. "You seem like exactly the kind of person we're looking for to fill this position."

You have the experience for the job. You have the know-how and the competency. You could do this work in your sleep if you had to, and your interviewer knows it.

The interview was practically a formality—an unnecessary requirement that you were both eager to get out of the way. The job was practically yours from the start.

"Of course," your interviewer had said, "due to the nature of this job, you will occasionally be required to work weekends. Not often, but it is essential that you are able to change your schedule to do this when necessary."

He was about to continue on when you cleared your throat. "Excuse me, sir, but let me stop you there," you said, and then explained that you can't work on Friday nights or Saturday.

"Why?" he asked.

What do you say?

Send in Your Response

How would you respond to the interviewer questioning why you can't work on Saturday? Send your 100- to 300-word answer, along with your name and congregation, to your local pastor and ask him to forward it to *United News*. You can also e-mail them to UN@ucg.org. We may use your response in an upcoming *United News*!

are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

A Lesson From Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

The account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-35 shows us a biblical example of this partnership. "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is a desert place.

"And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was

reading the prophet Isaiah.

"And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.' So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

"Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.'

"And the eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus" (English Standard Version).

Philip didn't force himself on the eunuch. He simply asked him if he understood what he was reading. He let the eunuch talk; and when asked, he clearly answered the eunuch's questions.

God uses many circumstances and instruments to call people into the truth. I know of one man who worked for many years in Pasadena who came across

Church literature during his work as a garbage collector.

New people will be called and are being called to God's Church. Our job is to help nurture and guide them with love and wisdom to a deeper and clearer understanding of the truth.

When new people ask questions regarding God's truth, point them to the Church's Web site, www.ucg.org, where they will find resources that can answer their questions in detail.

If you have Church literature of your own that can help clarify a question, share this information with them and challenge them to read and study the information rather than try to explain

everything yourself. After a new person has studied the booklet or article, then you are in a better position to either assist with an explanation or point them to the ministry.

Always remember, only God the Father can call a person into the truth. It is after a person is called by the Father that we have our part to do.

Just as 1 Peter 3:15 instructs us, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." **UN**

James Cannon is a deacon in the West Palm Beach, Florida, congregation.

Fasting: A Way to Remove Stubborn Strongholds

■ While fasting has always been rightfully taught and encouraged within the Church, it appears to be somewhat of a neglected tool. Could it be that fasting is the essential key to success in overcoming our long-standing issues and problems?

by David King

As Christians, aren't we supposed to overcome our sins? Then why is it that so many of us seem to be trapped in situations that are stubbornly resistant to positive change or resolution, no matter what we try to do?

Perhaps you can identify with some of the following problems: unruly and disrespectful children in the family, mental diseases, habitual and addictive behavior to alcohol or pornography, persecution from hostile relatives or fellow employees, financial hardship and poverty and even long-term sickness. No doubt we all pray for God's will about these circumstances, but quite often these situations are self-destructive and also harmful to other people.

Could it be that the answer to this seemingly puzzling dilemma is found in Paul's statement that many of our battles are not solely physical but spiritual (Ephesians 6:12)?

Fasting to Get Closer to God

In Matthew 6, Christ gave His disciples instructions for leading a Christian life. One of those instructions was to fast regularly.

The Old Testament is full of accounts of both individual and collective fasts. Some examples include David, who asked God to spare the life of his son born to Bathsheba; Queen Esther, who asked God to spare her people from genocide at the instigation of the treacherous Haman; Ezra, who prayed for the safety of the remnant of Israel that was returning to the Holy Land; and the entire city of Nineveh, who beseeched God for deliverance from imminent destruction in the book of Jonah.

In the New Testament Christ gave relatively few instructions on fasting except that it should be done in secret and not as the Pharisees, who fasted to convey an outward appearance of righteousness to others. He did not condemn the Pharisees for fasting, but for their motivation. However, Christ made it very clear that He expected His followers to fast on an individual basis (Matthew 6:16-18).

Fasting, along with prayer, brings us closer to God. As we submit to God, we receive the strength to resist evil, as well as the forces of the evil one, so that he will flee from us (James 4:7). The metaphorical "chains of darkness" that enslave us can then be broken.

God wants to pour out blessings into our lives, but these will never be realized if we are not willing to seek Him beforehand in fasting and prayer. Seeking God's will has to be a priority in our lives (Matthew 6:33). If we draw close to God, He will draw close to us.

Even though Christ Himself gave His apostles the power to cast out demons, they were not able to remove the evil spirit from an epileptic boy who suffered frequently from uncontrollable seizures that caused him to often fall into the fire or the water. Christ was able to heal this individual, and gen-

tly rebuked the disciples not only for their lack of faith, but also for their neglect of fasting, explaining that such healing could not take place "without fasting and prayer" (Matthew 17:14-21).

The evil spirit did not want to leave the boy and resisted all the disciples' efforts. It was stubborn and pernicious. Is this not similar to some of our own problems? Sometimes it takes an extraordinary effort to remove the obstacle completely.

When Christ was confronted by Satan, it was during a 40-day fast that He was physically weakest but spiritually strongest. He was able to successfully withstand the temptation of Satan because He was fasting and had His focus on God, His Heavenly Father. Christ began His ministry after His fast (Luke 4:14), which was accompanied by "great miracles, signs, and wonders."

We should also be spiritually stronger as a result of fasting and be able to demonstrate this power in our lives!

Fasting to Reveal Hidden Sins

Apart from removing unwanted roadblocks or strongholds in our lives, there is another important aspect of fasting. Fasting will also make you more aware of any hidden sins so that you can repent of them.

David was a man after God's own heart, yet he cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Each one of us desperately needs a sanctification of motives and desires. We likewise need sanctification of attitudes and of the right spirit. Fasting is a powerful, often neglected tool for achieving this desired end!

Most people do not like to fast because it means going without food and water for a period of

time. Naturally, they feel pangs of hunger and thirst.

However, the Bible says that man should not live by bread alone, which means that we should look to Him—through studying His Word, praying and fasting—for our spiritual sustenance (Matthew 4:4). The benefits of fasting greatly outweigh the temporary physical discomfort we may feel.

Fasting is essentially a private and deeply personal matter, but you may be surprised to discover that more individuals practice fasting than you realized! Yes, fasting is an effective tool for breaking down spiritual strongholds and growing closer to God! **UN**

David King is a member in the Redlands, California, congregation.

Learn More About Fasting

"Fasting: A Spiritual Power Tool!" by Don Hooser, originally printed in the July-August 2006 *Good News*, <http://tinyurl.com/gnfasting06>. "Godly fasting is poles apart from hunger strikes used to gain political power or draw attention to a personal cause. Fasting liberates us from slavery to our appetites while we focus on the true 'Bread of Life,' Jesus Christ."

"What Does the Bible Teach About Fasting?" by Dean Wilson, originally printed in the September-October 1996 *Good News*, <http://tinyurl.com/gnfasting96>. "In Matthew 6:16-18 Christ explains that fasting is not to be a show of our supposed righteousness before men, but that it is a personal affair between us and God and that by all outward appearances no one should be aware of our fasting."

"How to Stir Up God's Spirit," from the booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*, <http://tinyurl.com/stirup>. "It is important that we also keep our confidence in God alive and active. Sometimes we need to combine fasting with our prayers so as to stir up our zeal and renew our dedication and commitment to Him."

"The Fast That God Has Chosen" by Kurt Hoyer, originally printed in the September-October 2004 *United News*, <http://tinyurl.com/unfasting04>. "Fasting frees us from oppression. It also reminds us to free others. Who are we oppressing? Do we oppress others in our congregations with our disapproval and scorn? Do we treat some as the Jews of Jesus' day treated the Samaritans? Are we oppressive in our jobs or families?"

"Proper Fasting and Honoring God's Sabbath" from the *Bible Reading Program* for Isaiah 58-59, <http://tinyurl.com/brpisaiah58>. "Fasting should involve not only our relationship to God, but also our relationship with our fellow man. We are to seek an attitude of giving, service and esteeming others highly, with the goal of ceasing from malicious talk and finger pointing."

Putting Pen to Paper

■ What can you do to make the Sabbath and Feast of Tabernacles special for those unable to attend?

by Debbie Pennington

If you've been to the Feast of Tabernacles in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, recently, you've seen it: a long table full of large, handmade greeting cards and throngs of people dutifully signing each one.

But in addition to the wishes and prayers reflected in the greetings written on each of the cards, a corps of dedicated volunteers contributes something more.

Sincerely

Each day of the Feast, each volunteer writes a letter to a member unable to attend. Some volunteers write multiple letters. By the end of the week, this adds up to dozens of handwritten letters on subjects ranging from Festival sites and scenery to how the inspiring messages and music have individually affected each writer. This past Feast, these treasured words, written by approximately 80 volunteers, were delivered to 160 highly appreciative recipients, including nine prison inmates in four states.

For so many members who are prevented from attending the Feast



Flickr.com/Marta Colpani

or Sabbath services, the power of a handwritten note or letter from a fellow brother or sister in Christ is highly encouraging and comforting. If you've ever missed a weekly Sabbath service due to illness and received a sincere card or letter from a fellow member, you know the comfort such a note can bring.

The Return to the Sender

Several recipients write of their thanks for the expressions of love, prayers for healing, and the sense of inclusion extended to them.

A prison inmate from Indiana expresses his appreciation for all the written letters and asks that the writers receive public thanks through *United News*. "I can't thank everyone personally," he notes, "so simply put, this is the next best thing."

If you've ever missed a Sabbath service due to illness and received a sincere card from a fellow member, you know the comfort such a note can bring.

Another inmate from Illinois joyfully writes: "Thank you very much for those letters in the church envelope! I appreciate those letters with sermon notes and want to thank them who wrote them! Please thank them for me!"

"How wonderfully uplifting and inspiring to know the many 'shut-ins' are not forgotten and that we will all work together in comfort and good health with no more pain, no more tears or sorrow... Again—thank you, thank you, THANK YOU!" exclaims a shut-in from Michigan.

From Illinois, a shut-in writes,

"Knowing that people care made the Feast special."

One recipient from Indiana is so grateful for the correspondence he received this year that he would like to contribute next year if he is able to attend: "It was very encouraging to receive the letters. What a great idea to have a team of writers communicating words of encouragement to those who could not attend the Feast... Next year, I hope to attend the Wisconsin Dells Feast site. It would give me a great sense of accomplishment to be a part of your letter writing team.

to me by way of Church brethren.

"Most of all is the love I feel in the genuine concern of those who encourage me as we come together to celebrate what our Father has given us. Once again I thank you for all you do for me, and for the many others who, due to circumstances, are not able to attend God's Feasts, and other Holy Days. You make us feel a part of the Body by your generosity. May God continue to bless you for all you do for all."

Postage Paid

The simple act of service of writing a letter provides ample rewards—and one does not have to wait until the Feast of Tabernacles to write a few words of encouragement. Sending cards throughout the year to those unable to attend Sabbath services can help build relationships with fellow brethren. For some volunteers, just one handwritten letter has led to frequent correspondence with their original recipients, nurturing lifelong friendships. For so many cut off from regular interaction with other members in the faith, these communications are eagerly anticipated.

To the dedicated group of writers involved in the Wisconsin Dells Feast of Tabernacles Letter Writing Program this year and the previous five years: Thank you. **UN**

Debbie Pennington is a member in the Bloomington, Illinois, congregation. She also works as a part-time proofreader for UCG publications.

"WFW," continued from page 1

fellowshipping or participating in the comical relay races. The preteens and parents were able to enjoy bowling on Thursday and then return to the Galt House for the Family Fun Fair and a pizza dinner. The Family Fun Fair featured a shaved-ice booth operated by current ABC students, which raised \$500 for the UCG Good Works program.

Musical groups Children at Play and J. Macadu Band filled the Exhibit Hall on Thursday night with a great display of musical talent. The various nightly activities, cornhole, jam sessions, Singles in the Middle hospitalities, additional seminars and athletic venues provided everyone fellowship time and fun.

The Friday night seminars were once again specifically focused on James 3:17-18 for adult and teenage groups. A total of 17 seminars were presented three times each over Friday night and Saturday morning.

Sabbath services had an increase of 133 people in attendance this year with the total reaching 1,712. Four selections were provided for special music, which were all very beautiful and uplifting. President Clyde Kilough presented the sermon, concluding the weekend's



Dave Myers gives a seminar for the youth (photos by Karen Deaton)

focus on applying wisdom in our lives.

Saturday night provided one last chance for fellowship with an all-Ambassador reunion followed by the "Bring Back the '80s" teen dance and "Cowboy Country Cool" young adult dance. For those who didn't want to dance, three movies were featured for viewers of all ages: *Bedtime Stories*, *The Apple Dumpling Gang* and *Up*.

With the abundance of activities and inspirational seminars, this year's Winter Family Weekend would not have been such a success without the help of numerous volunteers. The Galt House has been a fantastic location for this

event and the familiarity with the building from last year allowed for smoother coordination for activities and seminars among the volunteers.

Mark Winner, the Winter Family Weekend coordinator and Louisville pastor, has been able to negotiate with the Galt House in Louisville for future use with exceptional rates. We appreciate all of the hard work that is put into this event by everyone involved and look forward to returning next year for more inspiration and enjoyment in downtown Louisville. **UN**

Whitney Smith currently attends ABC and is an intern for the Media and Communications Services department.



WFW had something for everyone: sports, children's games and family time



Local Church Updates

Cleveland Turns Tinseltown for Dinner and Movie Social



Eliza Doolittle meets Inspector Clouseau

On Dec. 5, 2009, the Cleveland congregation enjoyed a "Dinner and a Movie" social. Following Sabbath services, the pre-K and elementary-age children were entertained by two cre-

ative young moms, Kelly Thomas Mango and Cheryl Goumas, while the dinner crew made preparations in the kitchen. And what a dinner it was—chicken breast, stuffing and green bean casserole for everyone. Table decorations depicted familiar movies including *Up*, *Cars*, *Happy Feet*, *Finding Nemo*, *Seabiscuit*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and many more.

Attendees also experienced a memorable visit by many characters from the films of Hollywood, as participants showed up in cinema-inspired costumes. In addition to the Flintstone family, we met movie stars, royalty, historical figures and even a sea creature or two.

After dinner, all enjoyed watching a costume parade emceed by Sir Lancelot (Joe Mango) who interviewed the young and old alike. Even the shyest of little ones explained to the audience who they were and walked across the stage to model their costumes.

Later in the evening, the "Dancing With the Stars" family dance got us on our feet and moving. Some danced, and some did not; but all enjoyed the variety of music offered by deejays Zach and Emily Smith. And for those young ones who grew tired of dancing? We heard lots of laughter and squeals of delight as they ran exuberantly around in an inflatable playland set up next to the dance floor.

Diane Webber

Fort Wayne Congregation Celebrates Sixth Annual Thanksgiving Meal and Feast Slide Show

The Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregation held its sixth annual Thanksgiving meal and post-Feast slide show on the Sabbath of Nov. 21, 2009. Church began at 10 a.m., a half hour early to ensure plenty of time for services, fellowship and eating. What an abundant display of culinary skills! Several members donated the turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy; the rest of the congregation brought everything else. The tables looked festive and were set in a U-shape around the video projector screen in the elementary school cafeteria where we meet. At that time we also collected donations for the local Community Harvest food bank.

During the meal, the digital photos were viewed while various members filled in

the details of their Feast experiences. Over 80 slides were shown from the Feast sites attended by the Fort Wayne members: Bend-Redmond, Oregon; Branson, Missouri; Jekyll Island, Georgia; Kerrville, Texas; Panama City Beach, Florida; St John's, Newfoundland; Snowshoe, West Virginia; Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin; and Ocho Rios, Jamaica. Photos of Barbados were passed around the room as well.

Everyone left happy and in anticipation of the coming week's Thanksgiving celebrations and travel.

Phyllis Minton

Milwaukee High School Sweethearts Celebrate 50th Anniversary



Robert and Pat Krick

On Dec. 26, 2009, Robert and Pat Krick of the Milwaukee congregation celebrated

their 50th wedding anniversary with brethren after Sabbath services. A cake was served in their honor.

Robert and Pat met in high school. Although they had no formal classes together, they met through activities at their school. Both were in chorus, but they got to know each other better through an operetta they were both in called *Meet Arizona*.

Robert and Pat Krick were both baptized on the same day, Aug. 21, 1971. They have four children, Mary (Dave) Warapiuk, Joe, Daniel and Peter (Terry). They have six grandchildren.

Leone Burns

Family and Friends Reunite for Couple's 60th Anniversary

Scott and Goldia Mabry, members of the Asheboro, North Carolina, congregation, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at a family reunion and cookout hosted by their children at the Uwharrie Community Center on Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009. Over 100 family members, Church members and friends from all over the country were in attendance to mark the wonderful occasion.

On Dec. 25, 1949, the couple exchanged vows; and now, 60 years later, they live on a small farm directly across the highway from the church where they were married. Original wedding pianist David Dennis once again played the "Wedding March" as Scott and Goldia walked down the aisle to everyone's



Goldia and Scott Mabry

laughter and enjoyment. After dinner, entertainment included a bluegrass quartet of Mabry cousins from Stanley County.

Scott and Goldia have seven children, and they believe their family is their greatest blessing in life. A typical Mabry family gathering now includes upwards of 30 immediate family members, including sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, 10 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren (and still counting).

Scott and Goldia have been faithful members of the Church of God since 1968, attending the Greensboro congregation for many years. In 1995 they began attending the UCG congregation in Asheboro.

Leone Burns

Laurel Couple Celebrates 50 Years of Marriage



Levi and Jane Ann Odom

Levi and Jane Ann Odom of the Laurel, Mississippi, congregation celebrated their 50th wedding

anniversary on June 21, 2009, with a barbecue, anniversary cake, punch and a surprise DVD of past events in their lives. The event was held at one of their daughters' homes and was attended by many friends and family.

The Odoms have three daughters, two sons-in-law and two grandchildren. Jane Ann began attending church in the New Orleans area around 1971 and was joined by Levi soon after when the Hattiesburg, Mississippi, congregation was established. They have lived for 48 years in the house that they built on a farm near Poplarville, Mississippi.

Ann Brackett

Silent Auction Raises Money for Activity Fund

The sister congregations of Augusta, Georgia, and Columbia, South Carolina, met on the Sabbath of Dec. 5, 2009, for an all-afternoon gathering. First, we had an excellent Bible study by Don Waterhouse, who continued our study in the book of Zephaniah.

At 3 p.m. we had our regular Sabbath service, and immediately following it we had a potluck meal with boisterous fellowship and more delicious food than we could possibly consume in a day, even though we tried! After sunset our fellowship continued with a silent auction. Many members brought home-baked pies and cakes to be auctioned to each other.

We enjoyed board games and popcorn while the silent auction continued. Every able-bodied member joined in the cleanup, and we went home that night with full bellies and smiling faces. We were able to earn money for our church activity fund, but most will agree that the evening was so much more about fellowship than money.

The idea for the auction originated with Connie Miles and Jeanne Walton. The congregation is very grateful for this good idea, which brought us all together for a great time.

Bea Childs

Phoenix East Acknowledges Member's 90th Birthday

On Jan. 2, the Phoenix East, Arizona, congregation held a chili cook-off and also recognized a member's 90th birthday. After services, everyone headed to the social hall to enjoy about a dozen of the members' best chili recipes and other wonderful items such as sweet cornbread, pasta dishes and desserts. While some members enjoyed a bowl of hot and spicy chili, others stuck to the mild. Meanwhile, six judges taste-tested the entries before deciding on a winner. It was no small task!

The evening was also arranged to acknowledge the 90th birthday of our oldest local member, Thelma Mobley. Thelma was born Dec. 30, 1919, in Humboldt, Tennessee. Her family moved to Arizona in 1936. After marrying and having three children, her family traveled back and forth between Arizona and Missouri. As they made these long trips, they spent time listening to Mr. Armstrong on the radio. She says that in those days he was on the radio quite often across the dial. Thelma was baptized in 1972 and finally settled in Arizona for good in 1976.

John Elliott presented Thelma with gifts from the congregation: a birthday cake, a



John Elliott presents Thelma Mobley with a gift from the Phoenix East congregation

white shawl and a memory book. The memory book had special memory messages in it from each family in the congregation. Thelma was very pleased to also have her daughter and son-in-law in attendance and to share this special day with all of the brethren who love her.

Bingo was the entertainment for the evening, with wrapped prizes for both young and old. Everything from cookies and candy to small ceramics were given out as prizes. A big thank you goes out to all of those who were involved in the planning, set up, cooking and cleanup of this event.

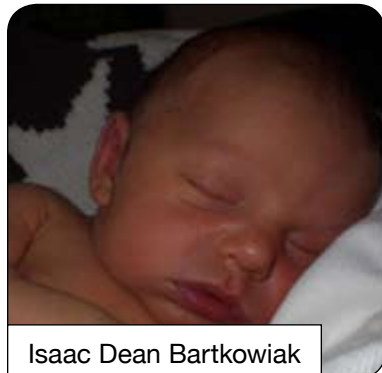
Lorelei Nettles

Local Church Updates: If your congregation's news and events are rarely covered in *United News*, why not check with your pastor and write something for him to send in? We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photographs with captions. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Include the author's and photographer's names and your phone number. Please double-check the spelling of names. Please **e-mail (preferred)** or **give the material to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

Announcements

Births

Nicole and Brandon Bartkowiak are glad to announce the birth of their



Isaac Dean Bartkowiak

first child, a handsome boy named Isaac Dean. Isaac was born on Sept. 21, 2009, weighing 8 pounds 4 ounces and measuring 21 inches. He's a healthy little man and a supreme blessing from God. Isaac and his proud parents attend the Louisville, Kentucky, congregation.

Michael and Leslie (Galinat) Dean of the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation



Lacey Michelle Dean

are happy to announce the birth of their first child, a beautiful baby girl, Lacey Michelle Dean. She was born on Nov. 5, 2009, at 11:57 p.m. After only 6 hours of labor and arriving a month early, Lacey was ready to be born. She weighed 5 pounds 13 ounces and measured 18¾ inches long. Both parents are happy and thankful for their new little miracle.

Will and Jill (Roenspies) Flaman of the Hinsdale, Illinois, congregation



Ian David Flaman

are happy to announce the birth of their son, Ian David Flaman. Ian was a punctual baby, arriving on his due date, Feb. 23, 2009, at 8:48 p.m. He weighed 7 pounds and measured 19 inches. Big brother Benjamin is happily adjusting to his new stepbrother, and proud grandparents, David and Artis Roenspies, are delighted with the new addition to the family.

Brian and Carole Hoselton of the Columbia, Missouri, congregation are happy to announce the birth of



Jack Marshall Hoselton

their second child, Jack Marshall Hoselton. He was born on Sept. 21, 2009, and weighed 7 pounds 3 ounces and was 20½ inches long. Jack is an answer to many prayers, including those of his big brother Max!

Dave and Angela (Lasher) Hyte, of the Dallas, Texas, congregation are



Liam Garron Hyte

proud to announce the arrival of their second child, Liam Garron Hyte. Liam arrived loudly on Oct. 29, 2009, at 4:46 a.m., which is roughly the last time his parents have had any uninterrupted sleep. He weighed 8 pounds 12½ ounces and measured 21 inches long. Big sister Ava is very attentive and excited to have her long-awaited sibling, for whom she prayed daily. Extended family on both sides are elated to have a male addition to the lineage.

Jason and Amy Ranew of the Orlando, Florida, congregation are



Eva Brooke Ranew

pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Eva Brooke Ranew, on Aug. 28, 2009, at 3 a.m. After 12 hours of labor, she came into the world wide-eyed and alert at 7 pounds 3 ounces and 20¼ inches long. Eva is the sixth grandchild of Pamela Ranew of the Tallahassee, Florida, congregation and the first grandchild for Dave

and Connie Zevchak of the Lansing, Michigan, congregation. Both parents and grandparents are thrilled about the addition to their family.

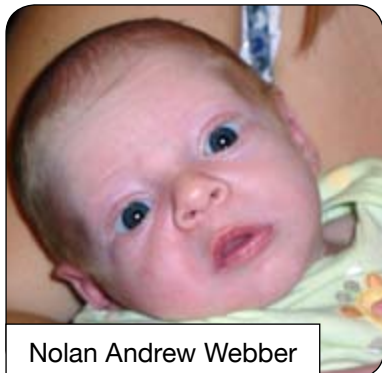
Paul and Heather (Anderson) Wakin of Salem, Oregon, are excited



Amerah Jordan Wakin

to announce the birth of their daughter, Amerah Jordan Wakin. Amerah was born at home on June 17, 2009. She weighed 6 pounds 13 ounces and was 19¾ inches long. Big brother Isaiah (age 3) is thrilled to have a new little sister and can't wait till she is old enough to play with. Proud grandparents are Allan and Jane Anderson of Salem, Oregon, and Michelle Wakin of Ridgefield, Washington. Amerah brightens each day with her wonderful smile, which she freely shares with almost everyone, and has been a wonderful blessing to our family.

Pete and Erinn Webber of the Houston South, Texas, congregation are



Nolan Andrew Webber

excited to announce the birth of their first child, Nolan Andrew, who arrived on Aug. 13, 2009. Nolan weighed in at 7 pounds 4 ounces and was 19 inches long. He is the first grandchild of Gary and Liz Smith of the Portsmouth, Ohio, and Prestonsburg, Kentucky, congregations and the second grandchild of Gene and Diane Webber of the Cleveland, Ohio, congregation.

David and Carrie Wells are excited to announce the birth of the newest member of their family, Ryan Matthew, who was born on Aug. 18, 2009, at 7:44 a.m. Ryan weighed in at 7 pounds 15 ounces and was 19¾ inches long. Loving grandparents are Matthew and Diana Zollner of Fairview Heights, Illinois, and Collyer and Linda Wells of Front Royal, Virginia. Ryan is blessed to have loving aunts, uncles and cousins who are excited to play with him.

Ryan is doing great especially in the eating department. In five months, Ryan has already doubled his weight

and then some. The Wells family currently attends the Fairview Heights, Illinois, congregation, where there has been a recent baby boom. What a

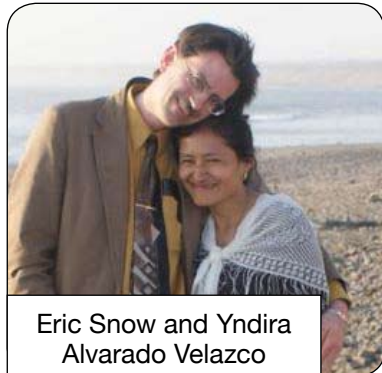


Ryan Matthew Wells

blessing it is to have this little one in our lives! God is truly great!

Engagements

Eric Snow, of the Ann Arbor, Michigan, congregation and



Eric Snow and Yndira Alvarado Velazco

Yndira Alvarado Velazco, of the Lima, Peru, congregation are happy to announce their engagement. Eric proposed to Yndira on the beach on Oct. 9 during the Feast of Tabernacles in Huanchaco, Peru. They plan to marry in 2010. Most likely, Yndira will move to Redford, Michigan, where Eric currently lives.

Weddings

After many years of single life, Bill Palmer and Rennie Banham exchanged vows before family and friends immediately following church services on Sept. 26, 2009, in Melbourne, Australia. Their wedding brought together two families from opposite ends of the world.



Rennie and Bill Palmer

Robert Palmer, Bill's twin brother from Birmingham, Alabama, served as best man; and Natalie McQueen, Rennie's sister living in

Numazu, Japan, served as matron of honor. Barry Williams performed the wedding before members of the Melbourne and Bacchus Marsh congregations, as well as other family members and guests.

The couple enjoyed a honeymoon road trip from Melbourne, Victoria, to Merimbula, New South Wales, where they attended the Feast.

Bill and Rennie met in January 2008 through www.sacog.net, a Web site bringing together the Church's singles. After daily e-mail correspondence for months, they finally met in person for the first time at the 2008 Feast in Mendoza, Argentina. Rennie moved to the United States in February 2009. They now reside in Kenner, Louisiana, and attend the New Orleans congregation.

Anniversaries

Marvin and Imogene Riddle of the Salem, Oregon, congregation,



Marvin and Imogene Riddle

celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with friends and family after services on Sept. 26, 2009. The Riddles were married Sept. 18, 1949, in Lowell, Oregon. They were baptized April 22, 1964. They truly have been a team, faithfully serving the Salem congregation. Marvin was ordained a deacon in 1982, and Imogene was ordained a deaconess the following year. They have two sons, one grandson and one great grandson.

Obituaries

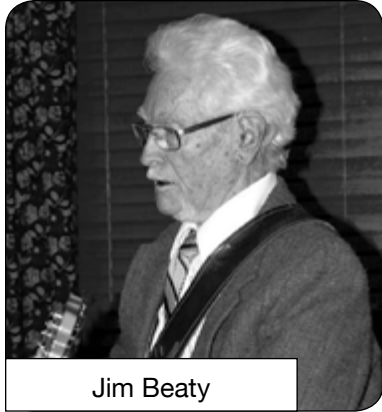
Jim Beaty was born Feb. 8, 1920, in Jamestown, Tennessee. He died Dec. 1, 2009, at the age of 89 in Spokane Valley, Washington. He is survived by his wife, Bonnie, several children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Two of his grandchildren, Kendra and Jeremy Lund, attend the Spokane congregation.

He served in the Navy from 1940 to 1946. He then lived in Virginia, later moving to Alaska. He purchased rental properties in Spokane in the late 1970s and moved there to manage them. He started attending church at that time and was baptized in July 1980.

He met his wife, Bonnie, at church, and they were married Sept. 19, 1982.

Jim loved to entertain and tell jokes. In fact, this past Feast at the

age of 89, he entertained the brethren at the Bend Feast site's entertain-



Jim Beaty

ment night and did a great job. He was also a respected member of the local Toastmaster Club.

A memorial service was held on Dec. 6, 2009, with Mark Mickelson officiating. He will be greatly missed.

Walter Butts, a longtime member of God's Church, died on the evening of Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009, at the age of 85. Mr. Butts lived in the small town of Milan in southeastern Indiana. He attended the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation along with his wife, Mary, via telephone hook-up.

Mr. and Mrs. Butts lived for many years in the Pensacola, Florida, area, but had more recently moved to Indiana to be closer to family. In addition to his wife, Mr. Butts is survived by four daughters, 11 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

As a younger man, Mr. Butts served in the armed forces during World War II. An honor guard was present at his funeral to recognize him as a veteran of military service and to present an American flag to the family. After returning from World War II, Mr. Butts worked at the United States Postal Service for 30 years until his retirement.

Even though Mr. Butts had not been able to attend Sabbath services for many years due to his health, he faithfully participated in the life of the local congregation each week through the telephone hook-up and eagerly welcomed those who came to visit. He was a fine example of hospitality and perseverance in the faith and will be missed by all who had the pleasure of his friendship.

Eugene (Gene) Elmer died Dec. 17, 2009, after a brief fight with cancer. He was 79. Mr. Elmer is survived by his wife of 58 years, Lillian (Jones); four children, Candice (Chuck) Bartley, Patti (John) Kosmalski, Katrinka and Kraig; five grandchildren, Lori, Jill (Kevin) Daugherty, Joanna (Chris) Gordon, Jeffrey and Kyle (Sarah); and three great-grandchildren, Garrett, Carter and Reece. Also surviving is his brother William (Rose).

He was an active and dedicated member of the Ann Arbor, Michigan, congregation where he and Lillian attended along with Patti and John, grandchildren Jill and Joanna, and his three great-grandchildren. He was proud that there were four

Tribute: June Jenkins

June Jenkins was born Dec. 7, 1928, in Agenda, Kansas, to Herman and Julie Moore. She was the fourth of five children. June died of a cerebral hemorrhage on June 7, 2009.

June met the love of her life, James Jenkins, in 1947; and in July of 1948, June and Jim entered into a marriage that lasted over 55 years.

June and Jim had five daughters and inherited four sons-in-laws, Juanita and Conway Magee, Janice and Dan Creed, Jamie and Hubert Stephens, Jolinda and David Schreiber and Juletta Jeanette (who died at the age of 2½). She was blessed with nine grandchildren, Jonathan Magee; Chad and Courtney Creed; Ryan, Rod and Richard Stephens; Julie Lamm; and Jamie and Kelley Schreiber. She had six beautiful great-grandchildren.

About six years after they were married, Jim started reading *The Plain Truth* magazine and listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio. When he was baptized in 1954, June thought their world was turning upside down. For eight years June tried her best to discourage his interest and hoped Jim would get tired and things would return to normal.

After Jim was ordained a deacon in 1962, June said she thought she'd better check this whole thing out more closely before Jim left her behind. A year later she was baptized and began a journey she treasured with all her heart.

In 1965, Jim and June were asked to move from their home in Valley Center, Kansas, to Pasadena, California, for a year of pastoral training. In 1967 they excitedly moved to Louisiana for their first assignment, assisting Vernon and DeLee

Hargrove in the New Orleans, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi, congregations. The following year Jim became pastor of the Jackson, Mississippi, and Monroe, Louisiana, congregations.

June and Jim were a team, serving God's people for over 40 years in Kansas City, Missouri; Wheatland and Casper, Wyoming; Fort Collins, Colorado; North Platte, Nebraska; Union and Jersey City, New Jersey; Houston and Victoria, Texas; and Meridian and Laurel, Mississippi. There wasn't an area they served where they didn't develop lasting friendships, the fondest of memories and a deep love for the brethren.

June was an expert seamstress and loved to entertain. She was also a wonderful cook and loved sharing recipes with friends and family. She was responsible for putting together several church cookbooks.



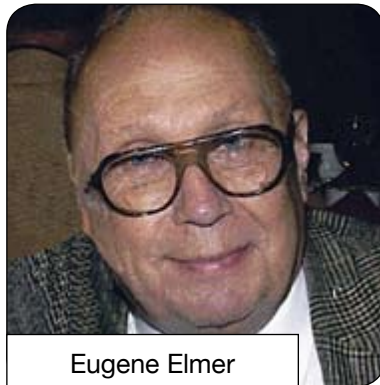
June Jenkins

June was buried beside her husband Jim, who died in February 2003, in the Hazlehurst Cemetery, as she had requested.

Although her family and friends will dearly miss her, they greatly rejoice in God's promise of the resurrection and in the glorious return of Jesus Christ when Jim and June will be reunited with all of God's saints who now sleep.

generations of his family in the same church. He enjoyed his grandchildren and great-grandchildren immensely and was proud to teach the oldest, Garrett, how to fish.

After listening to the radio broadcast in the late '60s, Gene began attending church in 1971



Eugene Elmer

and was baptized in 1972. Lillian attended church with him and was baptized 10 years later. At their first Feast of Tabernacles in 1972 in the Dells, they discovered that Gene had a second cousin in the church, Barbara Kraemer. In 2009 he was proud to be among five generations of cousins in the Church attending the Feast at the Dells.

Upon retirement from General Motors, Gene stayed busy pursuing his many hobbies and interests such as airbrush painting, clock repair, hunting and fishing. But traveling to many areas of the world was among his and Lillian's greatest pleasures. They visited more than 32 countries. They traveled extensively during the Feast of Tabernacles, visiting Israel, Jordan, St. Lucia, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Mexico, France, Uruguay, Thailand, Kenya, Costa Rica, Spain, Greece and many sites in the United States.

He was a dedicated and generous servant in the Church and often brought many gifts for the brethren when attending various Feast sites, such as Spanish Bibles when visiting Chile. Gene lived a fruitful life, was loved by his family and was a faithful servant to the end.

Carol Helen LaForest, 76, a homemaker of Traverse City, Michigan, died Wednesday morning, Nov. 4, 2009, at Munson Medical Center.

Born March 1, 1933, in Traverse City, she was the daughter of the late Clare and Adelaine (Smith) Fowler.

She will be fondly remembered by her children as a loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and the world's best provider. Carol relished studying the Bible and truly lived by God's Word. She always had a good heart, despite the fact that she was very independent and possessed a strong personality. Carol was baptized in February of 2004.

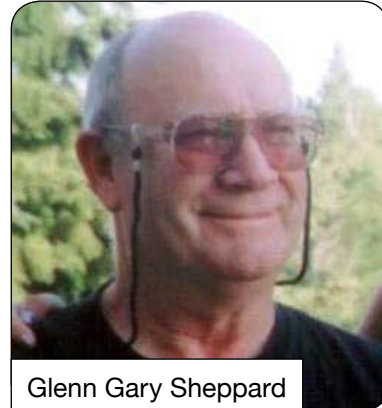
She loved the people of God and always was a great example of contentment and faith. She attended in Cadillac along with her brother, Andy Fowler. Her warm personality and presence will be missed by all her Church family. Carol loved her role as a homemaker, which encompassed raising her family, baking, laundry and caring for the family home. Her stress reducer was ironing for 10 children.

Carol is survived by her large and loving family: children, Kathy Whittaker, Alison Warge, William "Billy" (Gail) LaForest, David LaForest, Deborah (Jeffrey) Scott, Frankie LaForest, Bonnie (David Vesto) Green, Terry L. LaForest, Shelly (Al) Ortman and Amy (Jeff) Nowell; 19 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; siblings, Andrew (Trudy) Fowler and Margo (Mike) Vincent; along with many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, William Frank LaForest, who she affectionately referred to as "My Bill"; a grandson, Eddie Green; and a brother, Buzz Fowler.

Glenn Gary Sheppard, 71, of the Phoenix South, Arizona, congregation, died on Tuesday, Dec.

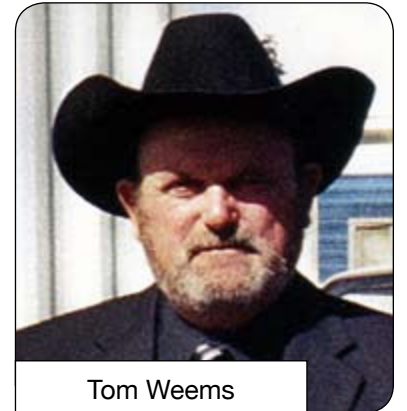
15, 2009, from complications of pneumonia. Glenn was born Dec. 15, 1938, in Kirkland, Washington, and grew up in the Kirkland area. Glenn lived an adventurous life that included serving for four years in the U.S. Coast Guard as captain of a 40-foot boat and living near Fairbanks, Alaska, where he earned his pilot's license. He also enjoyed hiking the mountains, hunting sheep and bears. Glenn was an accomplished musician,



Glenn Gary Sheppard

playing the piano and bass guitar. He spent most of his working life as an electrical engineer, working on power substations and generation plants in the Northwest. He was baptized in 1968 in Seattle. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Wanda, and a brother, one daughter and many close friends and adopted family members. The Sheppards lived most of the past 30 years in Pasco and Vancouver, Washington. Glenn enjoyed meaningful conversations and will be remembered fondly for his warm heart, willingness to serve, natural humility and love of people.

Thomas Weems of the Eugene, Oregon, congregation, died peacefully at his home in Veneta, Oregon, on Nov. 21, 2009. Tom was born March 18, 1940, in Flagstaff, Arizona. He married his wife, Veronica (Roni), on Dec. 19, 1958. They were both baptized on Feb. 22, 1962, in Pasadena, California.



Tom Weems

His final resting place until Christ returns is in North Powder, Oregon.

Norma Jean "Jean" Mumme died Aug. 26, 2009, at 3 a.m. after a short fight with cancer of the pancreas. She was born Jan. 16, 1935, the daughter of J.R. and Stella Taylor, in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

She entered Ambassador College in 1955 where she met her husband of 52 years. She is survived by her husband, Lawrence, and two sons, Malcolm and Arthur.

She will be remembered for her artistic talents and unobtrusive ways.

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 *UnitedNews*.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

The second session will include their wives, with many of the topics directed to them as they help their husbands in local congregations.

Topics covered in this first session included God's high calling to the ministry, the ethics of Timothy and Titus, local church organization and conducting Sabbath services, development of doctrine, governance, examining self and taking correction, and how to work with the four different generations.

Other classes covered character and integrity, the role of a teacher, counseling from the Scriptures, delegating and mentoring, upgrading computer skills, biblical scholarship, divorce and remarriage policies, fitness for ministers, writing for publications and personal correspondence letters, developing the heart of a shepherd, conducting Bible studies, surgical sermons, counseling financial problems, maintaining spiritual health, origins of the New Testament ministry, and pitfalls and risks facing ministers.

Richard Pinelli

2010 Preteen Camp Dates Announced

The 2010 United Youth Camps program is gearing up for another great year. In addition to the teen camps, United offers nine camps across the United States especially for the preteens.

Preteen camps serve our children aged 6 through 12 and generally last four days and three nights.

Listed here are the camps scheduled for 2010:

Houston Preteen, Montgomery, Texas, June 6 to 9.

Condor, Bakersfield, California, June 26 to 29.

Lewistown Preteen, Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, June 27 to 30.

U-Can-Do, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 13 to 15.

Tomahawk, Eva, Tennessee, July 19 to 24.

Ironwood Springs, Rochester, Minnesota, July 25 to 28.

Osage, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, July 27 to 30.

Buckeye, Beach City, Ohio, Aug. 1 to 4.

Northwest Preteen, Sisters, Oregon, Aug. 22 to 25.

You'll find contact information for each camp in the upcoming 2010 *United Youth Camps Magazine* and at the UYC Web site <http://uyc.ucg.org>. We truly appreciate all the work that goes into making this such a

successful and positive program for our children.

David Myers

UCG Videos Pass 1 Million Views on YouTube

On Jan. 4, 2010, UCG Internet manager Aaron Booth reported that we passed 1 million views with our videos posted to YouTube.

"We have 480 videos posted that include *Beyond Today* pro-

grams and commentaries, *Good News Commentaries* and a few *World News and Prophecy* seminars," said Mr. Booth. "I started posting videos to YouTube back in December of 2006. It has taken us a few years to get here, but it is nice milestone to cross."

As of Feb. 1, we have posted 493 videos that have been viewed 1,047,125 times. To watch the latest videos, go to the main www.ucg.org Web site, www.GNmagazine.org or www.WNPonline.org. You can also find them on YouTube.

Mike Bennett

Attendee Survey: Thank You for Your Input

The United Church of God Attendee Survey closed on Jan. 10 having received 3,334 responses from around the globe.

We sincerely appreciate the time and comments everyone shared. These will help assess and improve the programs and offerings United Church of God supports. We are currently in the process of analyzing the responses and plan to share the results later in 2010.

David Register and Julie Zutz

Michigan Family Lock-in Scheduled for April 3

The Saginaw, Michigan congregation will once again host the Michigan UCG Family Lock-In at Saginaw Valley State University on Saturday, April 3, 2010.

The lock-in will begin with Sabbath services at 2:30 p.m. Dave Myers will be this year's guest speaker. After services, a meal will be provided followed by preteen Bible activities, a teen and young adult Bible study and men's and women's seminars.

Later in the evening we will have family-oriented activities, including movies, music, singing and various

sports, such as swimming, basketball, dodgeball and volleyball.

Food, fellowship and fun is sure to be enjoyed throughout the night. The lock-in will end with breakfast at 7 a.m. Sunday morning.

We look forward to seeing you all there!

To register or obtain further information, please visit www.ucgflint.org/events.html or contact Craig Clark via e-mail at craigclark@juno.com or call (989) 695-9415. Be sure to register by March 21.

Craig Clark

Calendar of Events

Feb. 9-10: Festival coordinators meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Feb. 12-14: Dallas Young Adults' Weekend, www.ucg-dallas.org/ya.

Feb. 12-15: Midwest Presidents' Day Family Weekend, Branson, Missouri.

Feb. 21-25: Council of Elders meetings.

March 1-11: Pastoral Training Program, Cincinnati, Ohio.

March 12-14: Families for God Regional Weekend, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

March 13: Southeastern Regional Prom, Atlanta, Georgia.

March 20-21: Regional Teen Formal/Basketball Weekend, Dallas, Texas, www.ucg-dallas.org/teens.

March 29: Passover (service previous evening).

March 30-April 5: Days of Unleavened Bread.

April 2-5: Singles' Weekend, Asheville, North Carolina.

April 23-25: Spokane Women's Educational Weekend, "Beacons of Hope."

April 24: WNP Seminar, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

May 2-3: General Conference of Elders.

May 4-6: Council of Elders meetings.

May 23: Pentecost.

June 7-11: ABC Continuing Education Seminar, Cincinnati, Ohio.



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

Families for God Weekend Scheduled for March 12-14

The annual Families for God Weekend, sponsored by the Twin Cities congregations, will be held on March 12-14, 2010, at the Marriott Minneapolis in St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

The weekend will be a great event for the whole family with a Bible study Friday night, Sabbath services and seminars on the Sabbath and the infamous teen prom on Saturday night!

A Sunday family activity will be take place at the Mall of America at Nickelodeon Universe, where kids, teens and adults alike can join in on the fun.

Special guest speaker will be Doug Horchak, Council of Elders member from Dallas, Texas.

Further details on the seminars, the teen prom, the Saturday night dinner and activities will be posted on the event's Web site <http://ffg.ucgmpls.org>.



For room reservations you can call the Marriott direct at (800) 228-9290 by Sunday, Feb. 20, 2010.

Registration details will be posted on the Web site.

Please call Andy and Karen Lausted for further details at (763) 219-6762 or send an e-mail to karenlausted@hotmail.com.



What's New on the Web?

■ UCG Web Presence Expands

On Feb. 1, Internet managing editor Aaron Booth reported the following exciting stats for UCG Web activity:

12,559 total Facebook fans.

2,348 total Twitter followers.

111 Bible FAQs posted.

322,742 Bible FAQs views.

493 videos posted on YouTube.

1,047,125 video views on YouTube.

120 e-mail campaigns (*This Is the Way*, UCG Weekly Update, *GN Newsletter*, *WNP E-news*) sent.

246,673 clicks to our Web sites generated by e-mail campaigns.

96,325 visits to UCG weekly commentary pages.



Featured Link

■ Members' Web Site

members.ucg.org
Go to the members' Web site to

listen to sermons, learn how you can help preach the gospel on the Internet, find a Sabbath webcast, check the UCG events calendar, read a study paper and more.

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