

United News™

News of the UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association

United Church of God
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Council Takes Care of Business

by Doug Johnson

Based in part on a positive financial report, the Council of Elders offered to restore full salaries to 29 pastors whose salaries were reduced during the financial difficulties of 1998. This was one of the actions taken by the Council at its meetings December 1 to 6.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick reported to the Council that expenses are slightly under budget, and income is slightly over budget. If this trend continues, his projection is for a total income for the fiscal 12-month period ending March 31, 2000, of \$14.7 to \$14.9 million. The General Conference of Elders approved a budget for the year of \$13.8 million. Dr. Kirkpatrick plans to propose a budget of \$15 million for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2000.

Restoring Salaries

The improved financial position allowed the Council to offer

full salary to the pastors who have been on partial salary.

"We want to express our gratitude to the ministry and their families—especially those who were placed on reduced salary—the employees, and the entire membership for the sacrifices made to restore the Church to a sound financial footing," said a letter from the

Council. "Please know that we deeply appreciate the emotional and financial difficulties many suffered to help the Church survive this financial crisis."

The Council resolution calls for the pastors who wish to receive full salary (at press time 10 have chosen for various reasons to

(See "COUNCIL," page 6)



Ralph Levy preparing for classes; Les McCullough approving the plans for the ABC space; Gary Antion looking over ABC before the carpet was laid

Pioneering Class Starts ABC

At press time, 28 accepted students were expected for the opening of the Ambassador Bible Center January 10.

In December a flurry of remodeling, furnishing and paperwork was completed. The ABC facility "is a bright, cheerful atmosphere that should be a great place for teaching and learning the Holy Scriptures," said Gary Antion, ABC coordinator and admissions officer.

While the walls were being painted, carpet laid, lighting

improved and furniture moved, Ralph Levy, academic officer and registrar, and Mr. Antion prepared schedules, course descriptions and other essential paperwork from temporary desks in the home office next door.

A number of guest instructors have been scheduled throughout the program. "We feel there will be stability from having the three resident faculty members [Mr. Antion, Dr. Levy and Les McCullough], and the three-week

(See "ABC," page 7)

Attracting New People With the Web

by Peter Eddington

A new, cost-effective advertising strategy has been tested on the World Wide Web. The *Good News* magazine is now being presented through several "keywords" on the Web search engine at GoTo.com. When Internet users

search for the keywords we have chosen, a link to a full-page advertisement offering *The Good News* is provided. We pay a small amount to be near the top of the GoTo.com search listing for specific keywords. We only pay for the actual "click-throughs" from GoTo.com to our ad. If you see any of our listings, don't click—or we'll pay for it!

The November test period proved successful. We were able to add 163 new *Good News* subscribers at a cost of only \$1.76 each. This is one of our most inexpensive efforts to date! (This is much more cost-effective than the "banner" ads we tried before.)

We will now tailor future keywords and advertising efforts to coincide with upcoming themes of *The Good News*. We also plan to move this test phase into a more aggressive campaign.

Also, United's Web site now

has hidden "meta-tag" keywords inserted on its main pages. These hidden words will increase the likelihood of Internet users reaching United's site when they use any search engine. Our site was submitted to over 1,760 Internet search engines, link pages, free link pages and Web indexes since those keywords were inserted.

Traffic on United's Web site has now noticeably increased as a result, including the number of new literature requests coming in, separate from the GoTo.com results.

UCGIA Search Engine

The new search function on United's Web site has also proved to be most popular. Hundreds of Internet users are using this tool to research subjects and topics in nearly all of our publications. The page and instructions can be found at: <http://www.ucg.org/search/index.html> un



Council of Elders approves a motion at meeting December 3; right, chairman Bob Dick

International Youth Corps Begins

Young adults in the United Church of God will soon have the opportunity to serve in projects in Mexico, Chile and other international areas as part of the new United International Youth Corps.

"The concept of having young adults serve in international areas has been discussed by the administration of the Church and the Council ever since the earliest days of United," said Doug Horchak, member of the Youth Education team of Ministerial Services that

helped develop the program. "While the projects will start small, the Church hopes to develop more projects and increase participation opportunities in the coming years."

International projects in which Ambassador University students and others were involved in the past "did much to impart a vision to our young adults of a world in need of God's way of life and to set a fine example of service in a world that has too few examples of the

(See "PROJECTS," page 3)

VCM Reaches 1st Anniversary

The Church's experiment with an on-line only publication has had a successful first year, according to Victor Kubik, chairman of the Media and Communications Committee of the Council of Elders. "I think we're on our feet enough to start doing some more serious promotion."

A Look at [vcmagazine.org](http://www.vcmagazine.org)

In 1999, 11 issues of *Virtual Christian Magazine (VCM)* were

published on the Web, at virtually no cost to the Church. Each issue included four or more articles, an editorial, a banner ad for *The Good News* and an invitation for interaction through e-mail feedback.

As Mr. Kubik explained in the welcoming editorial in January 1999, this Internet magazine allows us to "use the cyberspace to reach those inquiring about answers to life's biggest questions."

(See "VCM," page 7)

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The Good Old Days?

by Leslie L. McCullough

How well do you remember the “good old days”? When were they? Which good old days do you have in mind? The answer to that question will certainly depend on your age. For some, it could be the honesty, support and helping hand offered unquestioned during the depression years. It could be the “war years,” the ’50s, the roaring ’80s—all dependent on whether or not you experienced those times.

Many in the Church of God wish for times such as the incredible growth period the Church experienced in the 1960s or the growth years of Ambassador College. If you shared in any of those times, does that make you any better than or more spiritual than others? No, certainly not.

Yet some may feel a little left out when the old timers tell their “war stories”—something all of us are guilty of from time to time. The tales of what used to be a part of our history and play a part in our lives and the life of the Church. Living through them doesn’t guarantee a better person. An individual who is called at a later date shouldn’t be made to feel left out or somehow inferior because he or she wasn’t there. In reality, it is all a part of their history as well.

We have so many pleasant things to look back on, such as the early years of the Feast, S.E.P., Ambassador College. If someone was not a part of those times, did they miss out on something? The answer is “yes.” They missed out on the pain, heartache, frustration and disappointments that went with it. Newer participants in the Church are having their “good old days” right now. There will be more in the future, along with the suffering that is always a part of progress and growth. Future members will then feel left out of what is happening now. That is life. It is a progression for everyone.

None of this guarantees a better or more spiritual person. Paul summarized it when speaking to the Romans. He had discussed how circumcision or being a spiritual person didn’t depend on being Jewish. He went on to say: “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1–2). He later also shows that their judgment was in direct relationship to what they had been given.

I suppose we could all be envious of those who experienced Jesus Christ or Paul as a teacher. But we can’t have that

experience and can only learn from our own. Paul told Timothy that God would have all men come to the truth of Jesus Christ, “Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:6). Another way of expressing it is that we are all called at our specific time in life’s history.

This doesn’t make one more spiritual or better than another. Our spiritual relationship with Jesus is our special, personal relationship that no other can share. The fact is that there are those in the Body of Christ who are more spiritually mature than others. Some of them may have been called more recently, but have developed that special relationship more fully.

True spirituality comes from within, from the way one lives his or her life and yields to God. To quote Paul once again, “But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter” (Romans 2:29).

We shouldn’t be comparing ourselves or our experiences or lack of them with what someone else has had. We certainly shouldn’t make others feel of less value because they weren’t a part of something in the past. We all must look to the future and the conclusion of our calling in Christ Jesus. *UN*

Q&A: Are Our Children Called?; Tithing

Q. Are children of members of God’s Church called now?

A. With the understanding that being “called” means being invited by God, the answer is “Yes!”

Christ used the words *called* and *invited* nearly interchangeably in the parable about those summoned to a wedding, for example (Matthew 22:1–14). Calling is the first phase in the process. Those called must decide whether and when to accept that invitation.

Calling necessarily precedes baptism. As the Holy Spirit was *with* the disciples before it was *in* them (John 14:17), so the Holy Spirit works with called individuals. However, being called does not equate to actually receiving the Holy Spirit. That takes place after baptism with the laying on of hands. Before a person is baptized, he must repent, exercise faith in the sacrifice of Christ for the remission of sins and willingly choose to follow God. Those who respond to God’s calling are described as “chosen.” Those saints who will rule with Christ are “called” and “chosen” and “faithful.”

Can a child be called? Scriptural evidence leaves no doubt that a child can have a relationship with God. Examples include Samuel (1 Samuel 2:18, 26), Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:3) and Timothy (1 Timothy 3:14–15). Young people can understand spiritual concepts (Proverbs 3:1–3, Psalm 34:11).

Parents are told to teach their children God’s way (Deuteronomy 4:9–10) and to follow Abraham, “the father of us all” (Romans 4:16), who commanded his children to keep the way of the Lord (Genesis 18:19).

On Pentecost, after Peter’s call to repentance and baptism, he said, “For the promise is to you *and to your children*, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). God’s promise to the offspring of the converted is a special blessing. They are in a unique category, holy or set apart by God (1 Corinthians 7:14). Though they are not converted, they do have a special access to the knowledge of the way of God.

The way children growing up in the Church are called will differ from what most adult converts experience. A child’s calling is gradual and becomes more personal as he or she grows and matures. Experience shows that, as with all people called, some young people who grow up in the Church relate to and respond favorably to God’s way of life, and some do not. Many factors determine the type and degree of positive exposure to God’s way. These include the child’s age when the parents are called; influence of friends, peers and popular culture; personality, aptitudes, interests and temperament; example of parents and other family members; and influence of the congregation.

The greatest positive factor in children’s

lives should be the parents. Paul told parents not to “provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

The Church also bears certain responsibilities for spiritual child development. Jesus commissioned the Church to make disciples (Matthew 28:19–20). What more fertile ground exists for making disciples than that of our youth who have already been called by God? The entire Church must be involved in this work.

But what about children who choose not to respond to God’s calling? They have not necessarily forfeited their only opportunity to receive eternal life. Only God knows the heart or mind of each individual. Those He deems to have not received an appropriate opportunity for salvation now will assuredly receive one later.

God’s calling is not a one-time event, but a process. It involves ongoing interaction between a loving Father and His children. Some choose to follow the path of the prodigal son, a tragic choice, but God is patient, “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

More details will be available in a video seminar being prepared on this subject.

Q. I am reading the articles on tithing in *The Good News*. It got me thinking that if a

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Internet access on your computer:

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person tithes on his net, then when he gets a refund check from the government, that refund is net, and should be tithed on.

A. You’re correct. Tithes are calculated on one’s increase (Deuteronomy 14:22, 28). Under the circumstances you described, a government refund check would be tithable income. *UN*

The High Calling of Women in the Church

by Dennis Luker

When Loma Armstrong was called to understand the Sabbath in the 1920s, God used her to teach her husband, Herbert W. Armstrong. Though he did his best to disprove it, after six months of intensive study, he finally had to accept the truth that his wife had discovered. Together they were used to spread the truth to multiple thousands.

She is just one of the wonderful examples of women of faith who have contributed greatly to the growth of God's Church both in the modern era, and in the past. Last issue Gary Antion paid tribute to Margaret Cunningham, a deaconess in the Toronto, Ontario, area who recently died and was one of the many unsung heroes of our time.

In the Bible we catch glimpses of other great women. Consider the example of Dorcas, who "was full of good works and charitable deeds" (Acts 9:36).

Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, who Paul called fellow workers in Christ (Romans 16:3-4), taught Apollos in their home. "Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside [invited him to their home, NIV] and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26).

Space does not permit recounting the accomplishments and faithfulness of women such as Mary, Mary Magdalene, Lois, Eunice, Lydia, Sarah, Esther, Deborah and Ruth.

A Shared Inheritance

It is clear from the Bible that both men and women are equal before God as potential children in His family—both are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

God is not a "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34, King James Version). He shows no partiality in regard to one's sex. As Paul explained, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Reflecting this common future for both males and females, Peter encouraged husbands and wives to think of themselves as "heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands and wives are joint or fellow heirs of the kingdom of God. Males and females have the same spiritual future.

The Scriptures are also clear that God grants both men and women His Holy Spirit with its accompanying wisdom. At the founding of the New Testament



Women give, teach and serve in many ways today, preparing for greater roles in God's kingdom

Church on the Day of Pentecost, God poured out His Spirit on both men and women. As Peter publicly explained, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy'" (Acts 2:16-18). Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (Acts

21:8-9) and Anna the widow was a prophetess (Luke 2:36-38).

Prophecy comes from the Greek word *propheteuo* and is used "with the primary meaning of telling forth the Divine counsels" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*). Although prophesying can include inspired predictions of the future, most often it reflects speaking spiritual wisdom. Biblically encouraged ways for women to prophesy include teaching children (Proverbs 1:8; 31:1) and younger women (Titus 2:3-5). This could include women who are spiritually younger and need the wisdom and advice of women who are older or more mature spiritually. Spiritually mature women can be role



models and mentors for women who are younger spiritually.

Outside of Church services, women are able to teach men in areas where they have special training, expertise and experience. For example, last year at the General Conference of Elders in Cincinnati, a woman with specialized experience in abuse counseling addressed all the elders and wives who were present. There is no biblical prohibition against women teaching men in this way.

At Church

However, the Bible says that a woman's role does not include service in the ministry. Paul gives instruction that women are not to preach in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12). Paul's direct statements and

the biblical example show only men in the ministry.

Some have questioned the reason for this, and some have floated various ideas which seem to discount women's abilities. However, consider this analogy. Only descendants of Aaron were allowed to serve in the priesthood, but that didn't mean other Levites—or other tribes for that matter—didn't have the ability to do the job. It was just that God had chosen a specific group for a specific purpose.

Women have long served in many other key roles at services, from providing musical accompaniment, special music and directing choirs, to teaching Sabbath school, welcoming guests, organizing potlucks and church socials and so much more.

Godly Service

With the same potential, women and men are preparing for the same future. We all have different experiences, trials and roles in this life. But there are many areas of service and godliness that we all can practice.

Both men and women can be instrumental in preaching the gospel to the world through their personal examples and by serving in member participation efforts like *The Good News* waiting room and brochure display programs. Both can care for the needy and visit the sick and prisoners (Matthew 25:34-36). Both can encourage, serve and strengthen other members and build the bonds of fellowship. Romans 12 exhorts all to use the gifts given by God, with the understanding that they differ in various individuals (verses 4 to 8). In marriage, both can serve their mates and build a marriage that serves the Church.

Obviously there are situations in our modern world that aren't spelled out exactly in Scripture, and in these areas the Church is continuing to study the nuances of what the Bible teaches on women's roles.

But the foundation remains that God, who created us male and female, has offered us all the same incredible potential, to become like Him and to be His sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18). *UN*

"PROJECTS," (Continued from page 1) give way of life," said Mr. Horchak.

Summer camp in Mexico: A few experienced young adult staff members will be needed for a basic camp planned for Mexico this summer. A few other international areas that request help might also need experienced camp staff next year.

Teaching in Chile: Mario Seiglie, pastor in Chile, has requested two young adults who are adept in fundamental computer skills and English as a second language to help teach young people and adults in Chile this summer (in the Northern Hemisphere; it will be winter in Chile). The church in Chile has offered to house and feed the teachers while there. A working knowledge of Spanish would be very helpful, but not mandatory.

Helping the disabled in Jordan: While still in the idea stage, Cory and Colene Erickson are investigating the possibility of providing young adults who are prepared to assist this summer in a school for the handicapped in Jordan.

Archaeological dig: Possibilities are being researched for young adults to participate in archaeological digs in Jordan or Israel.

Final decisions on project descriptions and applications will be available through U.S. and Canadian pastors early in 2000 and on the United Web site, www.ucg.org. Some deadlines may be as early as February, so once details are made available, interested candidates are encouraged to act soon.

All candidates are expected to be young adults (high school graduates through 30-

something) in good health. Priority will be given to those in regular attendance at United Sabbath services, and a pastor's evaluation will be requested. All candidates will be required to complete pre-project training.

At this point, projects will be primarily self-funded. Youth Corps volunteers will be expected to pay for their own transportation to the international site. "It is our goal to have the sponsoring church area or entity take care of the room and board costs for the volunteers," according to the Youth Corps proposal. "We will continue to explore alternate funding such as foundation grants, corporate sponsorship, etc." The Church is prepared to pay the expenses of United employees and ministers involved in supervision or education.

A wide variety of other projects are

being discussed. These include other summer camps, service to brethren, volunteering in regional Church offices and outside service projects in areas including Africa. Projects will generally be planned for at least two or three weeks during the summer months and possibly at semester breaks of the normal academic year in the United States. Select projects would be planned for longer periods as needed.

The mission statement of the United International Youth Corps is: "Our mission is to help our young adults envision and prepare for the coming kingdom of God. This would be accomplished by helping them to identify with the international nature of the Body of Christ, and with their role in the Work of the Church." *UN*

International Desk...

Church Growing, *Good News* Spreading in Caribbean

by Kingsley Mather

The United Church of God in the Caribbean is on the move after very small beginnings. The first organized group of UCG in the region began in July of 1995 with eight people in the living room of a long-time member in Freeport, Bahamas. Today that group has grown to an attendance of 26. They meet each Sabbath for services and a Bible study is held from time to time. The Spokesman's Club is now in its second year. The club held its first Ladies Night on July 17, 1999, and it was a memorable and spectacular event for that congregation.

There are six congregations in the Caribbean that meet on a regular basis: Bridgetown, Barbados; Nassau and Freeport,

Bahamas; Roseau, Dominica; St. Lucia; and Kingston, Jamaica. There are members and associates on seven other islands: St Kitts; Long Island, Marsh Harbour and Hope Town, Bahamas; St. Thomas, Virgin Islands; Trinidad; and Cuba. The brethren are served by video and audiotapes from the home office and by regular visits by Arnold Hampton and Kingsley Mather.

The first Feast of Tabernacles was held in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1997. In 1999 there were two Feast sites: Barbados and a mini Feast in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. Plans are on the way for two possible Feast sites in the region in 2000. The home office has also received a request to hold a Feast in another country in the region.

The Church was incorporated in the



Family Club meeting in Freeport, Bahamas

Bahamas in 1997 and recently UCG Dominica completed its incorporation. There is a mini office in the Bahamas that oversees the Work in the region. God has led the Council and home office to provide a yearly subsidy so that members, associates and *Good News* subscribers can have better service in the area.

Good News Spreads the Gospel

The *Good News* is spreading the gospel of the kingdom throughout the region with magazines being circulated in most of the English-speaking islands, as well as Guyana, South America. Several of the islands have newsstand programs and many positive comments have been received from readers.

We now have the magazine displayed at the Main Bahamas Post Office in the City of Nassau and at two of the sub-Post Offices. Xerox Copy Service has been our best newsstand distribution point in the Bahamas. We move about 100 magazines per month in that one location.

The *GN* waiting room and brochure display programs have also been implemented in several islands and they are producing good fruits. The magazine has been advertised in newspapers in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas and the circulation is continuing to grow. Plans are underway to advertise *The Good News* and booklets in the early part of 2000.

Here are excerpts of letters from some *Good News* subscribers:

"I am a regular subscriber to your *Good News* magazine. I read very interesting things and learn a lot about the Bible. I would like to subscribe for the free booklets for recommended reading."

Trinidad

"I am spiritually, intellectually and mentally illuminated on each occasion I read any of your literature. This literary ministry is truly an inspiring outreach that pervades every genre of society in the Bahamas and internationally. I am relishing *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* which I recently received.

"These publications will not only

expand my faith and encourage my spiritual stability by attaining the truth, but I will be able to communicate a large portion of this godly wisdom to saints and sinners.

"Assuredly, your labor is not in vain...and your reward awaits. I express gratitude for your generosity and wish you God's speed."

Bahamas

"I was a member of...Church of God for a number of years. I literally grew up in the Church since the early '70s.

"This letter is to inform you that we would be very appreciative if you could send a minister for the Feast of Tabernacles 2000. Also, we would be delighted if members could visit us here...for the Feast.

"I do request that you send your literature, also audio and videocassettes, so I could



Group shot from the Feast in Jamaica 1999

share it with other members and coworkers. We are starving for spiritual food."

Guyana

Good News in Schools

I got an interesting phone call in November from a Catholic sister who is a religious teacher at that church's main high school. She requested 30 copies of the magazine to use in class. She also informed me that she saw a number of interesting articles in the magazine that she wants to use with her students.

Several other teachers have told me that *The Good News* has provided a good source of information for the students in their classes. One teacher informed us that the principal of her school had several issues of the magazine on display in his office. The librarian of another school in the Bahamas placed a brochure display in the library and later, 12 subscription requests came in from teachers at that school.

There are many other interesting incidents that indicate that *The Good News* is reaching out to many in the community and giving the Church an opportunity to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the people in the Caribbean region and around the world. UN

Pastor Visits Scattered Caribbean Brethren

by Arnold J. Hampton

Hurricane Lenny affected my latest trip to the Caribbean. The first leg of the trip November 16 was to carry me through Puerto Rico with the final destination of Trinidad. That flight was canceled due to the hurricane. So I was diverted through Miami with an eight-hour layover. I got to Trinidad after 10 p.m. After clearing customs I didn't get to the hotel until after midnight.

Trinidad is the most southerly of the Caribbean islands, lying just 7 miles off the coast of Venezuela. Its sister island, Tobago, lies 21 miles to the northeast. Although hurricane Lenny passed through the Virgin Islands, it affected the surf all the way down to Trinidad.

The population of this country is 1.2 million. We advertised in the newspaper in Trinidad several years ago and received more than 100 requests for *The Good News*. Kingsley Mather and I made a trip there last year to see if any fruit had been born. There was very little response, but our hopes were not dimmed because in the past this country had the largest congregation in the Caribbean and one of the largest outside of the United States.

An interested reader contacted us this past summer. I saw him immediately after the Feast and told him I would be back to counsel him for baptism. That was the purpose of this latest trip. So as of November 18 we have our first baptized member in Trinidad.

From Trinidad I flew to Barbados. My family and I lived there for three years back in the '80s, so it is always a treat to return.

Eyeing my passport and seeing that I had been to Barbados a number of times in the last four years, the immigrations officer tried to coax me to apply for a work permit.

I respectfully declined. But it did bring up what is one of our greatest needs in the southern part of the Caribbean—a resident elder.

There are dozens of Caribbean islands and we have members on five of them in the south. Since Kingsley Mather lives in the Bahamas and I live in the United States, it is definitely a challenge to see the members on a regular basis.

We have a group of about 20 meeting every Sabbath in Barbados. They view videos until I come down. They also have a weekly Bible study. They are pleased to have hosted the Feast of Tabernacles three times. The Feast has been the highlight of the year for them.

From Barbados I flew to St. Lucia. I have held a couple of Bible studies there this year. On November 27 we had our first official UCG Sabbath service with nine present. After services we all went to lunch and sat around eating and talking for a couple of hours. It was indeed delightful. They have begun to meet regularly on the Sabbath. So we have another church in the southern part of the Caribbean, along with Barbados and Dominica.

Although English is the official language, many of the older St. Lucians speak patois. It is a mixture of French and English. One of my memorable experiences from the island is an anointing years ago. The lady I anointed only spoke patois. So I needed someone to interpret my prayer. The interpreter is now attending the church in St. Lucia and he has these words in patois for everyone: "Bon jour. Moin porteur bon nouvelle." Those of you who speak French can probably interpret the patois phrase—"Good day! I bring you good news."

That was certainly true of this latest trip. UN

Ghana Trip: Remnant Church of God Seeks to Join United

by Doug Horchak

The meetings and three-day ministerial seminars with the elders of the Remnant Church of God went extremely well. Upon arrival in Accra, Ghana, on December 2, Jim Franks, Joel Meeker and I met with a local member, a member visiting from Togo and another gentlemen who is serving a group with our literature east of Volta Lake.

We flew to Kumasi on Friday afternoon, where we met with Pastor Maxwell Azariah Koffie and Nicholas Boaky Arius for dinner. The next day, we all spoke in Kumasi at the Remnant Church of God service. Nicholas Arius had some from his congregations there, and our total attendance was close to 500. We had two sermons by Mr. Franks and I, a sermonette by Mr. Meeker, combined with their personal comments and much "special music." We met for four hours that day—which is pretty typical of their services. We met many of the members and all of the chil-

dren after services. I can truly say we had a Sabbath we will never forget!

On Sunday, Mr. Koffie and the Remnant Church of God executive board requested a meeting with us at our hotel in Kumasi. They made it official that they want to be a part of United Church of God.

What Happens Next?

The request of the Remnant Church of God to join United will be presented to the Council of Elders. "Of course, before any action can be taken it would have to go before the General Conference of Elders," said President Les McCullough. "At this point we are gathering information as well as informing them about us... They were encouraged to go slowly and be sure of what they were doing."

We had some very open and brotherly discussions. These truly are humble men who



Doug Horchak, Jim Franks and local elders shake hands with the Kumasi brethren following services December 4

want to be taught and work together to do the Work of God in both Ghana, West Africa and all of the world.

Since they made this formal request and want to fully proceed with credentialing their elders, we spent some of the initial time in the seminars going over the credentialing process and paperwork. They fully under-

stand how United started, and our rationale for the credentialing application and process.

During the three full days of seminars at a small meeting room in the hotel where the 10 Remnant pastors were being housed, we discussed ministerial ordination, baptismal counseling, the New Testament proof of the Holy Days, God's calling, the formation of doctrine and the 20 fundamental

beliefs, with emphasis on teaching our parents and children. We also had a lengthy discussion on Sabbath services format and our biblical rationale for our traditions.

Praying and giving tithes in public at services, and the need to emphasize education of the brethren during services, were all discussed. While we told them how inspiring their lengthy special music was to us, we did express that it is different from what we have had in the Church the past 50 years. The important thing is that they seem to want to conform more to what our traditions are.

We talked about tithing, its administration—including first tithe, second tithe (saving for the Feast) and third tithe (funds for the poor). We said that few, if any, in their congregations could probably ever give to such a "poor fund," but they wanted to know all of what we taught in this regard. They were very knowledgeable, yet very teachable.

The brotherly attitudes of all of the pastors was very encouraging. After being there for nine days, I feel like I have known many of them for years. They sincerely want to do God's Work, I feel.

The 10 pastors we met with represent almost 1,300 members in weekly Sabbath attendance! They have congregations in 14 locations throughout Ghana ranging from 20 to 320 in attendance. Their congregations are in Accra, Kumasi, Obuasi, Takarodi, Sefwi Esaase, Kuntanase, Agona, Awisa-Oda, Ofinso, Ashanti, Tamale and Akomodan.

While Ghana is a fairly peaceful country by West African standards, the brethren live by a very meager means. Virtually no one has a vehicle and few can find permanent work.

Despite the conditions, however, we found the people very friendly and helpful. *UV*

Minister Meets With Brethren in Gabon and Cameroon

by Joel Meeker

Warm greetings from your brethren in Ghana, Gabon and Cameroon. The three-week trip in December was very successful and provides good news to share. On the first leg of the trip, I was joined by Ministerial Services team members Jim Franks and Doug Horchak, as United responded to a request by the Remnant Church of God in Ghana that we hold a ministerial education seminar for their pastors (see above). The sense of brotherhood and the desire for teamwork in doing the Work of God that we all felt was most inspiring. It was a pleasure to be with this group of men working humbly, optimistically and realistically toward the goal of unity.

From Ghana I flew to Libreville, the capital of French-speaking Gabon, situated on the Atlantic coast almost exactly on the equator. Because of oil and mineral resources, Gabon has the highest per capita income in black Africa. Though life is still a struggle here for many people, in general they live in better circumstances than in surrounding countries. The 20 or so Church members in Gabon had been discouraged by the turbulent period United traversed a year and more ago. After a period of time when we had little or no communication, they recently asked that I come to spend a Sabbath with them and answer various questions about the Church situation past and present so they could decide on a course of action. Urbain Hazoumé, the elder in Gabon and a friend of some years, met me at the airport on my arrival Friday evening.

Sabbath morning eight of us met for services in Libreville. I gave a sermon based on Luke 21—our looking forward to the return of Christ, and the importance of watching

both ourselves and the signs of the times. Following services we shared a delightful meal prepared by the ladies of the congregation. After lunch, we had a question and answer session dealing with recent events in the United Church of God, the current church situation in Africa and our vision for the future. We only stopped when the sun went down (and the mosquitoes came out!)

Aside from Libreville, there are small groups of members meeting in the towns of Port Gentil and Franceville. There are other more isolated people scattered throughout the country, as well. Monday evening the Libreville congregation met again for about three hours to continue the question and answer session. Tuesday morning, before I flew out of Gabon, we all met one last time in my hotel room for a brief Bible study. I was sorry to leave, but encouraged by the warm welcome I received, and the strong commitment I saw to doing God's Work.

My next stop was Douala, Cameroon. Upon my arrival Tuesday night, Moïse Mabout and I immediately began making arrangements to visit the small group in the village of Yagoua in the far north. Visiting Yagoua takes at least three days. There was to be a flight early Wednesday morning for Garoua. Unfortunately the flight was delayed, then delayed again until late at night, to the point where our travel arrangements were too precarious. The visit will be at the top of the priority list for next time.

Thursday, Mr. and Mrs. Mabout accompanied me two hours south of Douala to Kribi, which has been a Feast site in the past, and which we may use again. Kribi is a picturesque ocean side resort with beautiful white-sand beaches, palm trees and many hotels. We also drove out to a local attraction: a jungle river which tumbles down a

beautiful waterfall directly into the ocean.

Friday in Douala we caught up on accounting and administrative questions, and started discussing Feast arrangements. The Sabbath day was especially exciting. After morning services attended by 29, we all shared a meal of chicken, white yam and plantain (a non-sweet banana) prepared by Mrs. Mabout. Following the meal we had a question and answer Bible study for several hours. Then I had final individual baptismal counseling with five people, and they were all baptized in the large bathtub of the house where the church meets. Congratulations to our new brothers and sister: Mathias Bamoub, Jean Nlend, Benjamin Simesse, Theodore Ndjebayi and Annette Ngo Mabout. Another person attending in Douala asked to begin counseling for baptism.

Sunday morning we traveled three and half hours in an old Toyota taxi to the mountain village of Bangangté for a Bible study. Several men from the Douala congregation were so excited at the chance to visit their brethren in Bangangté that they were willing to squeeze in four abreast in the back seat in order to make the trip. The chaotic traffic patterns and high speeds made for a white-knuckle trip. I silently thanked God for His protection when we arrived for a three-hour public Bible study. The local members were joined by other interested people from the village, as we covered questions about the three resurrections and Christ's resurrection not being on Sunday. About 20 people were present. Following the study I met with a lady who had requested baptism. Her son translated between French and Bamiléké, since this was the only way we could communicate.

Before I returned home, we purchased a small fax machine for the Douala congregation, so that we can keep in close touch. *UV*

Old Laptops Needed

To assist with administrative organization in several congregations in Africa, and to assist some members in their businesses, we would like to be able to provide several older-model, used laptop computers. If you have one in good working condition that you no longer need and would like to contribute, please contact Joel Meeker through the home office or via e-mail at: joel_meeker@ucg.org.

Canadian National Council Meets in Saskatoon; New Feast Site Announced

by Anthony Wasilkoff

The National Council of Canada met in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, from December 8 to early afternoon December 12. The meeting on the opening night began typically with a brainstorming session during which time chairman Rainer Salomaa noted subjects that needed to be addressed and then assigned them to respective committees for work and subsequent presentation to the entire Council.

During portions of the Wednesday evening and Thursday morning sessions, new Council members George Carter and Daniel Berendt gave their ice breakers. Special guests included Glen and Connie White, soon to move into the southern Alberta pastorate.

Also present for the proceedings was the Church's legal counsel from Toronto, Arthur David. At the conclusion of this session, the National Council bid a formal and heartfelt farewell to Gary and Barbara Antion, acknowledging their tireless labor during the formative four years of the United Church of God in Canada.



Sabbath services in Saskatoon during the Canadian Council meetings December 11. Above right, Delbert Rogers, injured in a snowmobile accident, with Gary Antion

A major achievement of the Saskatoon meetings was to endorse the strategic plan, operations plan and financial plan (budget) for the fiscal year 2000–2001. Also discussed was the new Feast of Tabernacles site in eastern Canada, Mont Sainte Anne, Quebec, 30 minutes outside of Quebec City and on the north shore of the St. Lawrence river, where whale watching tours are one of the principal attractions. The hotel is Val des Neiges, which offers one and two bedroom units, virtually all with a kitchenette and fireplace. *UV*

From Canada: We Will Remember You!

I remember the telephone call. In August of 1995 Gary Antion called to tell me that he had been given an opportunity to move to Canada to be the operation manager over a fledgling office that had been established in Toronto. He wanted my opinion.

It is always a joy to talk to him. I was flattered that he wanted my opinion (I used to be his ministerial assistant in 1971–1972).

During that short conversation, I expressed my feelings, saying that it would be a good idea. After careful consideration, he and his wife, Barbara, made the decision to return to the area of Toronto and Buffalo—an area that they had previously served for about 14 years.

Since that time, the Antions have been dynamos of energy. They hit the deck running. With God's blessings, the original Toronto congregation numbering in the 30s has grown and is now pushing 100.

Over the last four years, the Antions have worked tirelessly managing the National Office, taking care of the churches in all of Eastern Canada, writing for the Church's publications, working long hours

as a member of the Council of Elders, making church visits across Canada, criss-crossing the country during the Feasts, holding ministerial conferences, taking teaching assignments at special camps in the States and attending National Council and Conference meetings here in Canada. His input has been invaluable.

When word came that he and Barbara would be leaving us to head back to the States to work with the new Ambassador Bible Center, my first thoughts were about what we would do without them. They will be greatly missed.

Now, for the first time, we will have a Canadian operation manager—Tony Wasilkoff. He and his wife, Linda, will need more of our prayers. As the original chairman of the National Council, he earned our deep respect and was our choice to replace Mr. Antion. We have full confidence in his ability to do the job.

Gary and Barb Antion, thank you for all that you have done for us! Thank you for coming to help us. Your energy and enthusiasm have helped launch us to do a Work here in Canada. We will remember you!

Rainer Salomaa

“COUNCIL,” (Continued from page 1)

remain on partial salary) to receive full salary after they “have made plans to cease other employment.” The Council also mentioned that it will consider the report of the Task Force on Ministerial Workload and Remuneration at its meetings in February. This would include guidelines on what workload constitutes a full-time position in the ministry. Sometime after the February meetings the workload of all employed ministers will be evaluated and possible changes in assignments and/or employment status may be implemented at some point in the future.

Ministerial Services

Ministerial Services manager Richard Pinelli brought three policies to the Council. The first two, policies dealing with ordina-

tion, and suspension and expulsion from the General Conference, were given minor wording adjustments and unanimously approved.

The third policy, on outside speakers at United Church of God services and UCG-sponsored events, and UCG ministers speaking at services of other religious organizations, took a little longer to discuss. There was relatively little difficulty in arriving at a clear statement from the Council on UCG ministers speaking at events sponsored by other organizations. The proposed policy asks for elders to seek approval from Ministerial Services (or its international equivalent), with the president authorized by the Council to make the final decision. However, the policy on having outside speakers at UCG-sponsored events will require more input from international areas.

Doctrine and Prophecy

The Council reiterated its support for the doctrinal safeguards built into the governing documents, which require a 3/4 majority ballot of the General Conference of Elders for a doctrinal change.

The Doctrine Committee's work in reviewing literature led to specific discussion dealing with the book of Revelation, the identity of modern Israel and a study paper on the covenants. The material on modern Israel has already been advertised. It is close to completion, but there is work remaining.

Prophecy will be one of the first areas of study undertaken by a new subcommittee, which will assist the Doctrine Committee. Jim Franks, Houston, Texas, pastor and member of the Ministerial Services team, will chair the subcommittee.

Media Policy and Planning

The Council policy on media was edited, with the major focus being to shift the direct responsibility for working with media from the Council committee to the administrative personnel at the home office. This acknowledges the practicality of ongoing work in the media field, which Council committees simply cannot do as effectively as administrative staff. The Media and Communications Committee will continue to work closely with the administration on media planning and initiative. Approval was unanimous, after numerous edits. The Council also reaffirmed its support for the “Council Statement on Public Proclamation of the Gospel” adopted August 31 (see left). This will be the basis for the media plan.

To expedite the media planning process, the Council of Elders named

Peter Eddington as media operation manager in a teleconference December 13.

Other Work

In a session on planning, members spent time fine-tuning the wording for the Strategic Plan to be presented to the General Conference at its next meeting.

The Council had an executive session to review the president's job performance. While the session was closed, the Council wished it to be known that their review of the president's job performance involved a profitable exchange between Council and president, that they approve of the job he is doing, and extend him their full support.

The Council finalized a policy on Member Appeal to the Council of Elders, which was unanimously approved by the 11 members present (Don Ward being absent).

Gary Antion proposed a survey of the field ministry on current outreach programs, in order to glean ideas that could be used in wider applications in more church areas.

The Council also discussed an international proposal that all international elders be brought in for meetings in conjunction with the General Conference of Elders meetings. The Council will look at figures to see if this is possible in 2000, but most likely it would need to be budgeted for 2001.

The General Conference of Elders annual meeting is scheduled for May 6 to 8, 2000, in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. Mr. Dick pointed out that his four-year term on the Council and as chairman would be completed then.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Cincinnati February 23 to 29. For full reports of the sessions, see <http://www.ucg.org/a/council/Cincy1299/cincy1299.htm>. *UV*

Council Statement on Public Proclamation of the Gospel

“Jesus Christ commissioned the Church to make disciples of all nations and to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God as a witness (Matthew 28:19; 24:14). In serving as witnesses, the apostles were commanded to preach the good news of the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God (Luke 24:47–48). The Greek word *kerusso* means to preach as a herald. It connotes formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed. As Jesus came preaching, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent you and believe the gospel’ (Mark 1:15).

“The messages of Jesus Christ and the apostles were highly focused and challenging. Moreover, their messages contained a warning to the listeners that their refusal to repent would result in punishment (Colossians 1:27–28). Furthermore, the Old Testament prophets admonished God's servants to stand in the gap and serve as watchmen (Ezekiel 22:20; 33:1–10).

“In view of all the biblical examples, the Council of Elders of the United Church of God believes that it has the responsibility of making disciples of all nations and feeding the flock, while proclaiming a warning that the kingdom of God is at hand. Therefore, the Council of Elders is determined to fulfill these responsibilities in carrying out the mission of the Church. This determination will be reflected in the Church's public proclamation of the gospel. Thus the Council intends to provide the policies and oversight toward this end.”

World Tomorrow Radio Program, Bible Study Course Hot in Cold British Isles

by John Jewell

The upset weather conditions that are afflicting so many parts of the world are also affecting the British Isles. We have had two of what must be the dulllest, greyest and wettest years on record. At this point we are experiencing colder weather than we can recall in many years. In contrast, however, we have had considerable progress in the Work of the Eternal.

We are now in our eighth month of broadcasting from Manx Radio and it would seem we are building an audience. We have

received responses by mail from areas of the United Kingdom and also from areas of Southern Ireland as far away as Limerick right over to the west of Ireland. Along with the radio program, *The World Tomorrow*, we have been regularly advertising in the Isle of Man's free newspaper, *The Courier*. This is received by every household on the island. There would seem to be a synergy between the radio program and the advertising so that as a result we have seen *The Good News* circulation increase five times over on the island. This is a far greater increase than we are experiencing on the mainland of Britain.

There are further possibilities with radio and we are currently pursuing these. Other possibilities also exist and these are also being pursued. If you don't push at the door, you'll never know if it's open or not!

We have just mailed our second semi-annual letter to the general mailing list and have already within a matter of a few days received nearly 100 replies. The letter offered *Making Life Work, What Is Your Destiny?* and the *Bible Study Course*.

After consultation with Scott Ashley we felt we would try offering the *Bible Study Course* as a correspondence course with a

question paper and a test card to be sent in, marked and returned with a grade point awarded. In the U.K. this worked extremely well in the past. It builds a relationship and a dialogue with people. The first question paper has been prepared, and the first test cards have already been printed. We plan then to award a certificate to those who complete the whole course and have sent in all 12 test cards.

We send our love to God's people around the world. Don't give up! Just keep on keeping on! We all know how the last chapter goes—we win! UN

"ABC," (Continued from page 1)

module instructors—Jim Franks, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker and Don Ward—will add their educational skills to the program," said Mr. Antion. Additional guest instructors are also being scheduled. "The guest instructors will give additional variety by using their unique styles with their areas of educational expertise."

Plans are being made to extend the experience beyond the classes. "We are planning on having weekly feedback time if it serves a good purpose for the students. The lounge area and kitchen should provide areas for the students to interact and discuss the informa-

tion from their classes," said Mr. Antion. "We are planning some social events throughout the learning experience to help add some balance to the program."

Several volunteers were involved in the process of furnishing the ABC space. Mr. McCullough said, "Sarah Kirkpatrick, Lisa Fenchel and my wife have been giving of their time to help in the selecting and ordering of the furnishings.... Their comments and ideas have been very good and are much appreciated. They are very careful with expenditures and know how to find—and negotiate—a real bargain."

Orientation takes place on January 9 and

classes begin the next day. "Please join us in praying for the successful launch of this new

tool for teaching God's precious truth," said Mr. Antion. UN

Why Can't ABC Be Recorded and Distributed?

Several have requested that the classes at ABC be recorded and made available on video- or audiotape to all. The ABC staff appreciates the enthusiasm of those who can't currently attend, and those who feel it would be impossible to attend the courses in person. However, the task of recording, editing and distributing upwards of 1,000 hours of class time is not feasible with the current

staff and budget. ABC is intended to be an intensive program which requires face-to-face interaction.

However, after the first session is complete in August, the faculty plans to evaluate the program and consider recording selected classes in future sessions. Plans also include providing ABC seminars in various locations in the fall.

"VCM," (Continued from page 1)

The mission statement for *VCM* is: "Hope and encouragement for the real world. An on-line magazine of practical Christian living and inspiration for the 21st century."

So far, with very little promotion, there have been more than 10,000 hits on the magazine. Since all the back issues are immediately accessible on-line, older issues continue to get visitors. The January 1999 issue has over 2,000 hits, and several articles have over 500 hits. "While our numbers aren't the highest, in a number of areas articles are being reprinted" on paper and passed around to others, said Mr. Kubik.

Being an on-line magazine has many advantages. Articles "can immediately reflect quickly developing events in the world while at the same time dealing with timeless human issues," said Mr. Kubik. For example, the article by Scott Ashley about the shooting at Columbine High School was on-line in *VCM* weeks before it could be printed in *The Good News*. Suggestions from readers can also be incorporated into articles already on-line. The on-line medium also makes it possible to provide Internet links which guide readers to on-line resources and allows interaction with readers via e-mail.

Reader Response

VCM has brought in a number of encouraging messages from readers. Like this man's interesting story:

"I have just completed reading most of the *VCM* issues and I want to compliment all of you for writing some very inspiring articles. I found my first copy of *The Plain Truth*

in a local convenience store back in 1982! I have been receiving literature from UCG after learning of their existence by a few searches on the Internet. I was very happy to see that the fantastic message of God's plan was still being preached.

"I have heard your message for over a decade. I've never been baptized. The one thing I am convinced of is that the total message you preach, the message I've heard all these years, is the good news of God's amazing purpose for all people. My longing is to somehow be a part of that better world—one that benefits from Christ's righteous rule. I encourage you to keep up the good work!"

Virtual Staff

Besides Mr. Kubik, who serves as managing editor, the virtual staff currently includes two ministerial reviewers, Jack Elliott and Joel Meeker, and seven volunteers: Mike Bennett, Michelle Grovak, Lorelei Nettles, Joan Osborn, Chris Rowland, John Rutis and Aimee Zahora.

Joan Osborn lives in rural Indiana about 35 miles from Terre Haute, and last year received a masters degree in communication disorders and is now a speech-language pathologist practicing in the local schools. She said, "*VCM* has been an interesting learning experience. It is the first time that I have worked with people that I have not met face-to-face, only in cyberspace.

"I enjoy reading and editing other people's work, since I wanted to be a book editor

in 'another life.' The month I was editor for the issue was my most challenging assignment. Communicating everything electronically is so amazing and the turn-around time can be so rapid. It's something I couldn't have imagined 10 years ago."

John Rutis attends the Portland West congregation in Oregon. "As a software engineer/technical writer, I was on the Internet when the user organizations could be listed on two sheets of paper. When the Web was started I felt this could be a great way to spread the gospel.

"When Vic Kubik asked if I would like to help with *VCM*, I didn't hesitate. My wife and I have written articles for *VCM* and some of my kids have drawn illustrations. I've edited the work of other writers and now I'm putting together the January issue. I hope all of our efforts combined can have a positive effect on people's lives."

Aimee Zahora attends church in Lafayette, Indiana, and works for Dow AgroSciences. She is also a certified teacher of English at the secondary level. She said, "I enjoy being a part of the staff of *VCM* because it's a magazine that's personal. The issues touched upon in it are real..."

"Besides being personal, I appreciate the medium of the magazine. Because *VCM* is accessible through the Internet, its potential audience is extremely diverse. That diversity brings with it enormous possibilities which include a greater capacity for understanding individuals and issues, for reexamining our own perspectives and striving toward a more balanced approach, and also for building bridges within our extended communities."

Lorelei Nettles, who locates graphic

images to enhance the message of the articles in *VCM*, lives in Holt, Missouri, and attends in Kansas City. She said: "I guess I do it because I just love being involved with something positive. I started in *VCM*'s beginnings and just enjoy being part of the team. When someone tells me they enjoyed *VCM* or that they were inspired by an article, it makes it all worthwhile. I really hope that more members will submit some articles. It would be great to have a little more diversity in the coming months. There are so many people out there with great and inspirational stories."

Writers Wanted

VCM always needs more good material, and readers are welcome to submit articles. Mr. Kubik's January 1999 editorial described some of the articles the staff is looking for: "We hope to include as many first-person true-life stories as possible to inspire and motivate someone to overcome life's difficulties."

VCM can be entered from the "UCGLA Life & Resources" button on the United Web page at www.ucg.org, or directly through www.vcmagazine.org. Readers are welcome to provide a link to *VCM* and encouraged to let others know about this free e-zine. UN

Unleavened Recipes Needed

We are planning to run unleavened bread recipes in the April/May issue of *VCM*. To enter, include your name, age (for those 18 and under), recipe and a color photo of the delicious food you have made with the recipe. Send by **March 1** to UCG, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, attn. Mike Bennett. All ages welcome.

Divorce and Remarriage Within the Church

by Greg Sargent

Marriage problems have been in existence forever. Every nation, every culture, every religion has been faced with the question of how to deal with incompatible marriages. For many, simply allowing divorce and remarriage for any reason seemed to be the easiest solution. Under the Old Covenant, Moses gave instructions about divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1–4). A certificate of divorce was allowed because of the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites (Matthew 19:8). But for Christians, that was to change.

The disciples were shocked when Christ expressed the limited grounds on which a marriage covenant could be ended—so shocked that they declared, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10). Knowing how often couples had irreconcilable differences, the disciples concluded it would be better never to marry. At that time the disciples were totally unaware of the awesome help that would be available through God’s Holy Spirit for healing and restoring all relationships.

Marriage—A Godly Institution

From the beginning, God intended marriage to be a godly institution. Once Adam and Eve sinned, the fruits of this world’s marriages were too often diametrically opposite to God’s way. But God has called us out of this world in order not to partake of her sins (Revelation 18:4). Marriages in the Church Jesus Christ established should be different from those in the world.

Marriages in God’s Church are to exemplify the relationship of Jesus Christ and His bride. In performing marriages, the ministers of Jesus Christ make it quite clear that, “Within the Church, it is God—not merely man or the laws of man—who joins together husband and wife” (Marriage Ceremony, UCGIA). As the priests were reminded in the time of the prophet Malachi, true ministers are messengers of God. “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 2:7). Included in the context of this reminder is God’s declaration that “He hates divorce” (verse 16). Therefore it is vital for all members to protect and preserve marriage and at the same time recognize the responsibility God has given His ministry to teach truth from the Bible regarding the marriage relationship.

Christ instructed His disciples about their responsibility of making binding and loosing decisions (Matthew 16:19; 18:17–19). God does not want the condition described in Judges 21:25 when, “In

those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” As the Body of Christ, the Church through its leadership has a responsibility to make decisions for the good of the Church, such as determining whether an irreconcilable marriage between believers is bound or loosed. This is based upon the instructions Christ gave His disciples in Matthew 18. The seriousness of marriage demands that we understand how seldom marriages are not actually binding.

Unbelievers

The United Church of God Statement of Belief paper titled “Divorce and Remarriage” states the following concerning one of the reasons a believer can (but does not necessarily have to) dissolve a marriage. “Not pleased to dwell. Paul explains in the book of 1 Corinthians that if an unbeliever is not pleased to dwell and departs that a Christian is not ‘under bondage.’ An individual may express his/her displeasure in a number of ways—habitual misconduct such as immorality (refers back to implications of *porneia*), criminality, addictive behaviors, abuse, desertion or willful failure to provide physical support (1 Timothy 5:8). In such cases it may be appropriate for the ‘believer’ to initiate the proceedings” (page 10).

When an unbeliever is not pleased to dwell with a believer, whether shown by literally leaving the believer or by actions while remaining married, the believer is free. The Church, through its ministry, plays an integral part in helping the believer discern that situation. Members should be encouraged to counsel with their minister and receive encouragement and help in such times of trial. Plus, members can be appraised of the difficulties they can anticipate afterward.

Spiritual Weakness

No one should assume that marriage to a member will be all “peaches and cream.” Marriage to a believer will no doubt have its share of differences also.

But a difference does not a marriage vow break. All believers have weaknesses. We are all growing in grace and knowledge. When two believers marry they usually start with high levels of idealism, “which is rather common in premarital couples” (Prepare/ Enrich Inc., page 89). Newly married couples also have a high level of unrealistic expectations. Expectations about love, commitment and conflicts are often distorted. When marriage disagreements arise—and they usually do—the spiritual depth of each party is tested. Thankfully, most marriages endure. Tragically, some do not.

Why don’t some marriages between believers endure? A lack of spiritual maturity may be a factor. It requires spiritual

strength to bear with one another and be patient with one another. Failure to have or to use these qualities stifles growth in the marriage. And a stagnant marriage decays. An unstable marriage may also stem from a wavering faith that quenches godly wisdom (James 1:5–7). Without godly wisdom, the fruits of peace, gentleness, mercy and being easily entreated will not exist in one’s marriage (James 3:17–18).

Christians are at varying stages of spiritual growth. The author of Hebrews faulted his readers for needing to be taught “the first principles of the oracles of God” at a time when they should have been teachers (Hebrews 5:12). The books of the New Testament are filled with examples of believers who had major spiritual issues. The Corinthian church seemed to have its fair share (see article on “What Does Paul Mean by *Unbeliever* in 1 Corinthians?”).

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he addressed the subject of marriage in relation to spiritual weaknesses. It is evident that Corinthian believers were having marriage problems (1 Corinthians 7:5, 9, 10–11, 15, 27). The command to believers who were having those problems to the extent that they were separating and in need of reconciliation, was to remain unmarried (verses 10–11). Pure and simple, spiritual weakness in a believer is not grounds for dissolving a marriage with the freedom to remarry. All marriages are bound unless proven otherwise—not the other way around.

All of us, whether having marriage problems or not, need to ask ourselves how Jesus Christ would treat our mates.

The inability to reconcile was not grounds for being free to marry. In fact, nowhere in the Bible do we find any of the following reasons, by themselves, as cause to loose the marital bonds: personality and communication problems; inability to resolve conflicts; financial indebtedness; divergent leisure activities; opposing approaches to child rearing; sexual and marriage dissatisfaction; dislike of one’s family and friends; religious differences; or contrasting approaches concerning family roles.

Responsibility and Accountability

Couples who decide to marry are expected to know one another well enough, before they marry, in order to

assess as closely as possible how they will get along after marriage. The Church strongly recommends counseling with the ministry. Ministers have the tools at their disposal to help couples examine specific categories applicable to marriage. Through counseling and spending not only a quantity of time, but also quality time in really getting to know one another, a couple can greatly affect the strength and success of their marriage.

Even if couples have a short courtship, fail to counsel before marrying or have dysfunctional backgrounds, none of these recognized troubles justify the later putting away of [divorcing] a mate with the freedom to remarry. Marriage is a commitment for life. Failure to plan properly is not grounds for the future dissolving of a marriage. The couple must be responsible and accountable for their own decisions and actions. Most of the time the old saying, “we made our bed, we have to lie in it,” is very applicable. Better yet, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

As the United Church of God “Administrative Policy Statement on Divorce and Remarriage” states, “If both partners in the marriage are members, then Paul’s admonition to married couples found in 1 Corinthians 7 should be used in the discussion, specifically 1 Corinthians 7:10–11.” Those verses describe an irreconcilable marriage where two believers are not free to remarry.

“Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God, designed to be a loving, rewarding, continuously enriching, lifelong union. As such, Paul explained that it transcends the human plane, and is actually a reflection of the relationship Christ has with the Church (see Ephesians 5:22–33)” (Statement of Belief paper, “Divorce and Remarriage,” page 9).

Freedom to Remarry

Unlike the world, there are very few reasons believers can be free to remarry after a divorce. Only two reasons can (but do not necessarily have to) dissolve a marriage in which two believers are involved.

The first is: “*Porneia*, or sexual immorality. This would include in the broader sense all cases of sexual deviancy, adultery being an example. The implication is habitual sexual misconduct, but is not limited to this” (Statement of Belief paper, “Divorce and Remarriage,” page 10). Of course, there are cases of abuse that may lead to divorce and subsequent freedom to remarry. This is covered in the same document under the discussion on unbelievers.

It would be highly advisable for any

member having questions on this subject to study the Statement of Belief paper concerning “Divorce and Remarriage” in detail. Ask your minister for a copy.

Besides sexual immorality, fraud is the only other biblical reason considered when making marital judgments where both people involved are (and remain) members.

“A marriage may be annulled or put aside if either party was deceived by the other partner prior to marrying” (page 11). “When it is discovered that one member of the marriage deliberately kept back information that, if known, would have caused the other partner not to marry, we have fraud. In general terms, fraud is something that should be acted upon when it is discovered, and not many years later. Essentially, this would call for the annulling of the marriage. If important information is deliberately withheld by either party, a covenant relationship, such as marriage, is not binding, and therefore can be annulled” (pages 8–9).

Unless there is sexual immorality or fraud, marriage between believers is binding and those believers must refrain from remarrying. Human nature tries to find the easy way out. God’s way, on the surface, seems difficult. But the narrow path leads to eternal life and few find it (Matthew 7:13–14).

Better Not to Marry

Upon hearing the only valid reason for being loosed from a marriage, the disciples exclaimed: “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10). Little did they understand the potential of all future Christ-like marriages.

Christ was about to establish the New Covenant. God’s Spirit, the very power which resurrected Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11) would be available to perform a miracle in the minds of all who received it—Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus Christ would actually dwell in the minds of all who would repent, be baptized and accept Him as their Savior (Galatians 2:20). Christian marriages would not need a “certificate of divorce” because of hard hearts. Unless one quenched the Holy Spirit, the fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control should ensure a happy and successful marriage.

All of us, whether having marriage problems or not, need to ask ourselves how Jesus Christ would treat our mates. Would He respond to our mates the same way we do? Would He display more self-control than we do? Would He be more patient and forbearing than we are? Before we answer those questions, remember that Christ gave His life for His bride. If He were married to our mates, He would do

(See “**DIVORCE,**” page 12)

What Does Paul Mean by *Unbeliever* in 1 Corinthians?

by Fred Kellers

What do the expressions, “does not believe,” “unbelieving” and “unbeliever” mean in 1 Corinthians 7:12–15?

There are three categories of marital situations mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:8–16. The “single” in verses 8–9, the “married” in verses 10–11 and the “rest” are mentioned in verses 12–16. The Church has come to understand that Paul is speaking in verses 10 and 11 to couples where both mates are believers, but in verses 12 to 16 to couples where one mate is a believer and the other mate is an unbeliever.

Paul tells those in category A—where both are believers—that they are not to separate, but if they do, they are to reconcile. What if one or both of these people cannot or will not reconcile? That is, if one, or both, isn’t pleased to dwell with the other? Paul says they are to remain unmarried. This is a hard saying, an unpleasant thought for most. Jesus’ disciples found it so disturbing to think of being permanently bound in an unworkable marriage that their initial reaction was that it was better to never marry in the first place (Matthew 19:9–10). But those in category B, those who have a mate who is an unbeliever, are free and not bound if the unbeliever is not pleased to dwell with them.

Who would want to believe that he or she fits into Category A and be unable to remarry—that he or she might have to remain single the rest of his or her life? Isn’t it logical to reason that if one’s mate were a deeply converted believer, there never would have been a separation in the first place? Or, even if there were a separation, that reconciliation would have been easily achieved? Do serious problems in the marriage relationship mean that one or the other partner—or both—are unbelievers?

What did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 7:12–16 by the term “unbeliever”? The Greek word used is *apistos*, an adjective. *Apistos* is the negative of *pistos*, another adjective. *Pistos* is usually translated “faithful,” “believe,” “believing” or “true.” The same root when used as a noun, *pistis*, is usually translated “faith.” The negative noun, *apistia*, is translated as “unbelief.” The verb form of the word is *pisteuo*, and is usually translated as “believe.” In all forms, this word-group is found over 600 times in the New Testament, 560 times as a positive and 42 times as a negative. But like the English words “believe,” “trust” and “faith,” it was used in a great many ways, both religious and civil. Homer used it to show the gods vouching for a treaty. Only by context can we tell what a writer means by these words.

What does Paul mean by “unbeliever” in the context of 1 Corinthians? Does he mean someone who displays carnal and unconverted traits? If that were the case, it would appear that a large percentage of the Corinthian church would be unbelievers.

Note 1 Corinthians 3:3: “For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”

They were divided, some of Paul, some of Apollos, etc. In several places Paul told them that they were puffed up. They were puffed up about a fornicator in their midst. They were puffed up about their knowledge. Brother was taking brother to court. They were eating meat that had been offered in the idol’s temple, not caring about offending their brothers. They were eating in front of hungry brothers at the Passover—even getting drunk.

It’s no surprise that couples were arguing and separating. It certainly would have been easy to accuse one’s mate of being an unbeliever in this crowd. Yet Paul seems to set a very low standard for people to be called believers, saints and brothers: “But brother goes to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers [*apistos*]” (1 Corinthians 6:6).

Does Paul mean someone who displays carnal and unconverted traits? If that were the case, it would appear that a large percentage of the Corinthian church would be unbelievers.

We assume that when one Church member was suing another, at least one of these “brothers” had to be behaving carnally and in an unconverted fashion. Perhaps it would be easy for one to claim that the other was, by his actions, an unbeliever. Third parties might think both members in the lawsuit were unconverted. Yet Paul called them brothers. And he said that they went to law before “the unbelievers.”

The word translated “unbelievers” is the plural of *apistos*, the same word Paul would use in the next chapter concerning the unbelieving mate. It seems obvious that when he uses *apistos* in 1 Corinthians 6:6, Paul means someone who is totally in the world—someone who is not called in any way. Of course, the Church recognizes that one who has rejected his or her calling and returned to the world is also an unbeliever. In such a case one turns from being a believer to become an unbeliever again. Paul uses the word *apistos* 11 times in 1 Corinthians and three times in 2 Corinthians. In none of these places does it refer to a person who could be called a member of the Church. To Paul, people who are *apistos* are of the world. Here are a few examples:

“Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe [*apistos*], lest the

light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers [*apistos*]. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever [*apistos*]?” (2 Corinthians 6:14–15).

In context, Paul was using the term “unbeliever,” *apistos*, to refer to a person who is of the world, whether never having been called out of it or having returned to it.

Church members can be divided as to whom they follow, “I of Paul, I of Apollos,” and still be believers and hence be bound. Perhaps today it might be “I am of United” or “I am of this or that chosen one.” Members can have a drinking problem, even at the Passover, and still be believers. Believers can refuse to reconcile or be suing another member of the Church. Believers can be puffed up like toads. Yet they can still be believers. A member can behave very carnally yet still fit Paul’s definition of a “believer.”

And so we can be bound to “a carnal believer.” This may be a hard concept to accept. As mentioned above, Jesus’ disciples felt it to be a difficult concept.

The disciples didn’t want to believe that they or others might have to be bound to a disagreeable person for the rest of their lives. Perhaps separated or divorced, unable to reconcile, yet never able to remarry. Here’s what Jesus said to them: “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it” (Matthew 19:11–12).

Some will be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. That is, if they can’t reconcile with their mates, they will live singly for the rest of their lives. They will not commit adultery by divorcing and remarrying.

Why would God want such a thing? Surely God wants everyone to be happily married. That is true. But God also wants us to be true to our promises. God says that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). The importance of being faithful to our promises is forcefully addressed in the Psalms.

“LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?... He who swears to his own hurt and does not change” (Psalm 15:1, 4b).

Here are some other translations of that last statement:

“And is true, come what may, to his pledged word” (*Knax*).

“One who will keep a promise, even to his own detriment, and will not retract” (*Psalms for Today*).

“Who stands by his pledge at any cost” (*Jerusalem*).

“He keeps to his oath, though he may lose by it” (*Moffatt*).

“If he has sworn to his harm, he does not change” (*American Baptist Publication Society*).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul used the term “unbeliever” to refer to people who were at that time not even being called by God. The principle extends to and includes those who

have abandoned their calling and returned to the world. God, through Paul, is telling us that if we are married to a believer we are not to separate from that believer, or if we must separate, we are to work toward reconciliation. God requires two believing mates to remain faithful to their promises. If that is not achieved, they are to remain single for the rest of their lives. If a believer is married to an

unbeliever—someone who isn’t called or who has rejected his or her calling—and that person is not pleased to dwell with him or her, the marriage isn’t bound. The believer is then free to marry, and it is strongly recommended that he or she marry a believer.

God is testing us to see if we can be faithful. When we marry we promise to be faithful for the rest of our lives—“till death

do us part.” This physical life is very short. Life in God’s kingdom will last forever. May God grant us the wisdom and strength to be willing to look past our short-term goals in this life and instead look to the life that will last forever. *UV*

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Fraudulent Marriage

God doesn’t bind fraudulent contracts—including the contract of marriage. Under the first covenant God made with Israel, if a man married a woman and found that she had deliberately hidden the fact that she was not a virgin, he was permitted to put her away. We would say that the marriage was annulled. That is, it was never a valid, bound marriage. The same would be true today for a man who deliberately hid his sexual sins from his prospective wife. There could also be other types of fraud. Let’s look at some of the issues concerning fraud.

There Must Be Deliberate Deception Before Marriage

Fraud is something that occurs *before* marriage and begins in the mind of the person committing the fraud. Fraud is when a person *deliberately* hides a fact that he or she *knows* will cause the prospective mate not to wed. This is not the same as just putting one’s best foot forward. No one is expected to tell his or her prospective mate of every flaw, evil deed and sin committed in the past. We don’t do this; we don’t expect a prospective mate to do this. We aren’t perfect; we don’t expect our prospective mate to be perfect. But what if someone has a flaw so great that he fears that his prospective mate won’t marry him, and then he deliberately hides that flaw? This would be fraud and a person would be free to leave. In God’s eyes there never was a marriage. It is annulled.

Even in civil law, fraud is something that is considered to be a deliberate deception. This is a general principle in contract law. If you purchase a used auto and then the standard transmission goes out in a few hundred miles and you find sawdust in the transmission (an old trick to keep a failing transmission quiet), you can claim fraud. The seller deliberately defrauded you. If no sawdust is evident and it can’t be proven that the seller knew the transmission was defective, there isn’t provable fraud.

A few years ago my son and his wife purchased a home that turned out to be in an area that occasionally flooded. The fact of the flooding hadn’t been disclosed. My son and his wife wanted to claim fraud in the purchase of the home, saying that had they known about the flooding, they would never have purchased the home. But they purchased the home from a government agency that had foreclosed on the home. Representatives of the government agency said that they didn’t know about the flooding. Since they didn’t know about the flooding,

there wasn’t deliberate deception and fraud couldn’t be claimed.

Now back to marriage. Example: a couple marries and they have no children. It is discovered that she can’t have children. Having children is *very* important to him, so he says that he wouldn’t have married her if he had known that she was infertile. Yet, she didn’t know that she was infertile and didn’t deliberately hide that fact. This wouldn’t be fraud. Fraud must start in the mind of the person committing the fraud. But if, on the other hand, she knew that she was infertile and deliberately withheld this information because she suspected that he might not marry her if he knew, then this would be fraud. This would be a deliberate fraud that started in her mind before the wedding.

If Fraud Is Not Acted on When Discovered, It Is No Longer Fraud

Suppose a man has marital problems after being married for some time and then tries to dissolve the marriage by saying that his wife wasn’t a virgin at the time of marriage. His accusation might be true. The problem is that he found it out right after marriage, but it didn’t bother him enough to separate at the time. His marriage was new, fresh and sweet. Later, after arguments and other marital problems, he wants to be loose so he claims fraud. However, once he knew she wasn’t a virgin and he accepted her, it was no longer a fraud.

What Fraud Is Not

Fraud isn’t the difference between romantic fantasies before marriage and the realities of marriage. Most of us, perhaps all of us, have unrealistic expectations about our chosen mate. We don’t really know someone until we’re married. None of us is perfectly balanced, and our lack of balance can make us difficult to live with. Some of us are lazy, and some are workaholics. Some of us never save money, and some of us save to the point of being tightwads. Some of us are temperamental, and some of us are emotional ice cubes. These are the usual, run-of-the-mill human failings. Still, they can be so exasperating that they can lead to divorce.

It’s easy to say: “If I had known about these flaws I wouldn’t have married. I was defrauded.” If that’s all that is needed for fraud, then perhaps all marriages that end in divorce could be considered to have been fraudulent. When people divorce, they do it because there is something they don’t like about the ex-mate. But it doesn’t mean there

A Marriage Without Love: Valid or Fraud?

In the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye’s eldest daughter begs him to not make her marry the wealthy butcher, but to allow her to marry the poor tailor. Why? *Because she loves him*. This stuns the father because love wasn’t considered to be an important consideration in marriage. Tevye goes home and asks his wife if she loves him. Now she is stunned. She had never considered it. Their marriage had been arranged and she had tried to be a good wife. Love wasn’t an issue.

In modern Western culture, most people feel that the only valid reason to marry is love, a word that means many different things to different people. But in other cultures, both present and past, love could be considered as an extra bonus if it was in the marriage—something that might come later. More important considerations might be to find a husband who could support and protect the family, or to find a healthy wife who could bear children and perform domestic duties well. There were “mail-order” brides in the early history of the United States. Farmers and ranchers needed wives and women needed husbands. These were valid marriages made with open eyes.

Sometimes marriages were made to seal a peace treaty. Marriages were made as a business arrangement between wealthy families. Some of these arrangements worked well and the couple was satisfied; others were less satisfactory. But they could all be valid marriages.

A marriage is a covenant and valid covenants and contracts can be made for many different reasons. A girl might marry to get away from the restrictive atmosphere of her parents’ home. A lovely young woman might marry an older man for his money. He might marry her for her beauty. These may not be the best reasons to marry in the eyes of some, but unless there is lying and deception, there isn’t fraud. He knows she isn’t marrying him for his looks and she knows he isn’t marrying her for her experience and wisdom. Later, he may wish for a mature conversation and relationship and she may feel like a bird in a gilded cage.

Yes, a marriage begun without love can be valid. Of course God wants husbands and wives to grow in love (Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:4). We each must do our part to show that love.

Fred Kellers

was *deliberate* deception before the marriage, and that it was done with the knowledge that if the other person were told, the marriage wouldn’t have taken place. Some marriages are doomed from the start, but that doesn’t automatically make them fraudulent.

If a person had clear reasons to suspect a problem before a marriage, but didn’t ask, it obviously wasn’t important enough at the time to him or to her to be a fraud. Not being a virgin is, sadly, a common problem in this age. If a man or woman truly wouldn’t have married someone who wasn’t a virgin, why hadn’t he or she asked? However, if a person does ask and receives a lie, that is a fraud.

Advice for Those Thinking of Marrying

There is a lesson in this for couples contemplating marriage. They should do what they can to avoid fraud. We don’t have to go through a list of all of our gruesome sins in offensive detail, but we don’t want to deliberately hide something that a prospective mate should know. If one has been married before, on drugs or in trouble with the law, he or she should say so. Hopefully both are virgins, but if not, they should let their prospective mate know that they’ve sinned in this area and have repented.

A prospective mate might want to know

how serious a problem the other had and ask if it was a common sin. But, one shouldn’t go into names and details. If the person wants to know gory details, perhaps this is a clue that the other needs to find someone else.

If something is important to a person, he or she should ask about it and not marry someone whose past and present life and habits are question marks. In the desire and excitement to get married, prospective mates shouldn’t overlook clues about possible flaws. Is he very jealous? Does she have a bad temper? It’s another clue—fights before marriage usually escalate after marriage. Has this person been married before? How many times? Been in trouble with the law? These are all matters to be discussed.

When Joseph thought that Mary had been unfaithful, he acted. He didn’t wait to see if the marriage would work out. Hopefully all who marry will never have to consider the subject of fraud. However, if one does find himself or herself in this unhappy situation, he or she can take time to pray about it and counsel about it, but needs to make a decision as soon as possible. If one decides to wait to see how the marriage will work out, then the person is saying that the fraud isn’t enough to reject the other as a mate. It is then no longer fraud.

Fred Kellers

Focused Education Material...

Answer to Child Abuse: Emotional Health

by John W. Cafourek

Melanie Edwards was trying to do everything right at a time when her world was collapsing. She had left her husband—a controlling, abusive man who beat her, choked her and repeatedly threatened to kill her. She petitioned the court system for protection for herself and her 2-year-old daughter. She hired a lawyer versed in domestic violence, found and used a victim's advocate and concealed her new address. In spite of all these efforts, however, her estranged husband found and fatally shot Melanie and her daughter. He later shot and killed himself.

Conclusive research by legendary FBI behavioral scientist Robert Ressler has shown that violence in one's childhood is often a strong predictor of violent criminality. His research "confirmed an astonishingly consistent statistic about serial killers: 100 percent had been abused as children, either with violence, neglect or humiliation."

Proliferation of Child Abuse

Child abuse has become rife throughout the world. As indicated in a recent Cable News Network report, over one million children are abused in the United States each year. A variety of social problems have contributed to this growing plague. The normalizing and even glorifying of violence through the media have added to the problem. Drug and alcohol abuse, poverty and increased family alienation are also contributing factors. Violence within families has threatened the survival of the basic building block of human society and has spawned cycles of abuse from one generation to the next.

All forms of abuse—verbal, emotional, physical, sexual or just plain neglect—produce symptoms in children. Below are some of the signs that may indicate abuse. (There are, however, certain problems and disorders in children that may include some of the following symptoms, but do not indicate abuse. These may include attention deficit disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other difficulties.)

- The child may look undernourished, with unkempt or inadequate clothing.
- The child may show a loss of natural affection with the abuser.
- The child may act out the abuse, either when alone or when with other children.
- The child may act out anger on smaller children or on small animals.
- The child may fear going somewhere with the abuser.
- The child may resist the abuser's touch.

• The child may show signs of provocativeness in dress, talk or actions.

• The child may become promiscuous.

• The child may have symptoms of anxiety, depression, psychosomatic disorders, sleeping problems or eating disorders.

• The child may have school problems: underachieving, oppositional and defiant behavior, fighting, drug and alcohol abuse.

• The child may have difficulty managing his or her anger.

Child abuse is the unleashing of physical, verbal, mental, emotional or spiritual damage upon a child. In effect, child abuse is any action or intent that damages a child's development. It involves much more than the obvious things that emblazon the headlines—from the abandonment of newborns to the unconscionable beating, molestation, rape, torture or killing of children. The worst part about child abuse, in any of its various forms, is that it not only robs a child of his or her present potential, but also robs his or her future potential as well.

Awesome Potential of Children

The formative years of early childhood should be a marvelous time of growth and development. Child development specialists strongly emphasize the importance of these early years. Research continues to decipher how experiences and environment profoundly mold the supple, neural structure of a child's young, growing brain. In the article "Your Child's Brain," pediatric neurobiologist Harry Chugani of Wayne State University says, "Early experiences are so powerful...they can completely change the way a person turns out. By adulthood the brain is crisscrossed with more than 100 billion neurons, each reaching out to thousands of others so that, all told, the brain has more than 100 trillion connections. It is those connections—more than the number of galaxies in the known universe—that give the brain its unrivaled powers."

So how should we care for such a bundle of potentiality? Scripture exhorts us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). We are also warned, "...do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Children are a wonderful blessing from the Creator God to the human family. The Bible presents an extremely positive portrayal of their value and worth. "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5).

Tragically, the world has been deceived into believing and espousing a very negative message about even newborn children. Freudian psychology has influenced many to feel our task is to somehow psychosocialize children as they grow up. Even much of religion tenaciously clings to the notion of children being born evil. The act of procreation is believed to transmit so-called "original sin."

But, what do the scriptures say? "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me'" (Matthew 18:1-5). What a revolutionary, positive perspective on children!

The alarming increase in the number of children affected by abuse in our society today can seem overwhelming in its powerfully negative impact. Are there any solutions available to us? How can we provide our children with an emotionally healthy foundation? What is the connection between spiritual health and emotional health? Let's examine the platforms upon which emotional and spiritual health are built.

Building Emotional Health

Parental love. "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). Love is essential to our spiritual and emotional development. Parental love is a starting point. Its presence is crucial to emotional health. Parents who are good role models, who are emotionally secure themselves and who provide physical and verbal demonstrations of their love for their children are instilling a solid emotional foundation. Parental love includes warm expressions of appreciation for the child at all times, not just when the child achieves unqualified success. A close personal relationship with God as our Parent will increase parental love. Even so, parental love does not stand alone. It must be balanced with two additional building blocks of emotional health—trust and security.

Trust to a child can be compared to the indispensable quality of faith in a Christian's life. "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25). What facilitates the development of trust? Parent-child bonding is an important beginning. This is accomplished through successfully meeting the child's emotional and physical needs. Providing a calm environment is

also essential to this process as well as the basics of food, clothing and sanitary living conditions. Supplying appropriate physical contact, such as hugging and kissing, further develops a child's trust. Verbal expressions of love continue to reinforce the bond of trust in a child's life.

Security. "For You are my rock and my fortress" (Psalm 31:3). Total confidence in God is our greatest source of spiritual security. Similarly, emotional security comes from a child seeing his or her parents' love as unconditional. This does not mean that all behavior is acceptable, since a child cannot feel secure without reasonable parental boundaries. Such boundary setting must be intertwined with love, which is "the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10). Nonetheless, a child should know that his or her value to the parent is not based merely on good behavior, but on the child's intrinsic worth.

The setting of reasonable limits on a child needs to be done in a clear way, so the child knows exactly what is expected of him or her. It must be accompanied with parental consistency, predictability and the willingness to enforce limits in a firm but loving manner. Implementation of a schedule also helps build a positive sense of security.

Once a child has developed the ability to trust, feel secure and loved, this must be maintained. For example, physical abuse or neglect can erase or destroy that ability. There are two vital aspects: (1) helping the child learn to trust and (2) avoiding traumas or tragedies that destroy trust.

Risk taking. Appropriate risk taking is another building block of emotional health. Some people may initially question its inclusion. However, appropriate risk taking must be one of our goals for our children, if we truly want them to succeed in life. There is no such thing as a risk-free life, but there are both appropriate and inappropriate risks. Trying out for the team or working diligently to make the academic honor roll are examples of appropriate risks. Smoking or taking drugs are examples of inappropriate risks. Parental instruction and encouragement should help children see the difference between the good and the bad. The emotional platforms of security and trust provide the launching pad for appropriate risk taking. Spiritually, this is walking "by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

A sense of accomplishment is the next emotional platform. This is the ability to succeed. Encouragement is a crucial part that is often overlooked or neglected. To be effective, encouragement must first be deserved. It must also be genuinely encouraging and uplifting, not a form of manipulation or introduction to criticism. We all need encouragement, but it is especially important in child development.

Acceptance and a positive outlook also send powerful messages that translate into an "I can" attitude in a child's life. Spiritually, this translates into the attitude expressed by the apostle Paul: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Sympathy is another part of emotional health. Scripture describes this as "having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2). This aspect is often neglected or overlooked in our society today, with sad results. Sympathy is identification with another person's feelings, often because we have had the same or similar experience or feeling. Learning and nurturing the ability to feel sympathy for the suffering of others is a vital part of developing healthy relationships with other people.

Empathy is a somewhat rare emotional ability to feel and express genuine concern for another person's suffering. This requires a high degree of emotional maturity, beyond what should be expected for children. In fact, many adults lack empathy. Spiritually, we can liken empathy to *agape*, the outgoing love of God. This is manifested in our lives through the Holy Spirit. None of us is complete emotionally or spiritually without God's Spirit. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Seek Counsel

Prevention of child abuse is an important obligation of each person, particularly parents. Parents who have been abused and have concerns about the possibility of abusing their own children should seek counseling through a qualified minister or abuse counselor. It is often necessary for adults who have been abused as children to get help in order to break the cycle of abuse. With God's help and that of qualified professionals, healing and the development of healthy parent-child relationships can occur.

It is our goal as Christians to become emotionally and spiritually healthy in every way. However, reality reminds us that many lives have been scarred by the ravages of verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse. All these abuses are the result of sin. When we quit sinning we will also quit abusing. God's world of the future will expunge this great negator and destroyer of human potential. In the meantime, we need to take the necessary steps now to prevent or overcome childhood abuse and trauma. The next article in this series will explain the arduous but marvelous process of emotional healing. *UN*

• *John Cafourek pastors congregations in Olympia and Tacoma, Washington, and has been in the ministry for 30 years. He has an M.A. degree in counseling psychology.*

The first article in this series appeared in the January 1999 United News.

"DIVORCE," (Continued from page 9)
the same in an act of totally unselfish service.

Perhaps there's more room for the mind of Christ in us. And for those having some form of marriage difficulty, can we truthfully say that we have done everything Jesus Christ would do to make our marriage successful? If not, we should pray before God's throne of mercy for His help through the same Spirit that was in Christ (Hebrews 4:16).

Choosing the Bride

According to some ancient marriage customs, marriages were arranged for individuals by parents and contracts were negotiated. Although considered married, the individuals did not live together. The woman continued living with her parents for a year, during which time she could prove her faithfulness to her chosen husband. Such a custom may seem very odd to us—I'm not advocating that we should follow it today! But think about the spiritual counterpart of this custom and the implications for us.

God is choosing the bride for His Son, Jesus Christ (John 6:44). At the time of Christ's return, God states, "the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). How had Jesus' affianced bride made herself ready? She had shown her faithfulness by righteous living (verse 8).

God the Father has chosen us to become Christ's bride. We are in that transition period after being chosen but before the marriage itself, proving our faithfulness as a righteous mate to Jesus Christ. If our marriages do not reflect the relationship Christ has with the Church, what does that portend concerning our future marriage to Christ? Will God the Father allow anyone who does not treat his or her spouse in a godly manner to marry His Son?

Rather than dwelling on being free from a troublesome marriage, concentrate on repairing it. Seek a closer relationship with God through Christ. A loving bond in marriage is not cemented between husband and wife only. The bond with your mate is through God: husband-God-wife and wife-God-husband. Quenching God's Spirit, which enables us through Christ to have access to God, can destroy the spiritual marriage bond.

Those with marriage problems who are tempted to give it all up should consider the foregoing. We all must seek God. Control ourselves. Perhaps, just perhaps, through the awesome power of God in us we can change and win over our mates by our godly conduct (1 Peter 3:1). Isn't marriage, which reflects the marriage of Christ to the Church, worth another try? *UN*

• *Greg Sargent serves the Columbia, Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri, congregations.*

What's a Family Christian Club?

by Larry W. Greider

Have you heard of the new speech club format called the Family Christian Club yet? Developed in the Collinsville, Illinois, church area in 1995, clubs have now spread across the United States. The format allows the whole congregation to participate in a speech club that focuses on specific themes. This allows a subject to be explored in great detail and stimulates much discussion and thought.

All ages can participate and speeches are on the theme of the meeting. In our area we usually start the club after the Feast and run until spring. This allows four or five monthly meetings. Some areas have the club after a Sabbath service along with a potluck meal.

"The Family Christian Club is one of the most vital programs for involvement, learning and interaction in our small congregation," said Doug Horschak, Loveland and Grand Junction, Colorado, pastor. "It has brought our group together and enabled us to appreciate each other more than any kind of activity we have done. The beauty is that we structure our themes to make it conducive to having all of our clubs on the Sabbath day!"

Here is more from the Family Christian Club manual (U.S. pastors were given a copy at regional conferences last year):

The purpose of the Family Christian Club is to help build relationships among the brethren of all ages through discussions of

various topics. It provides an opportunity for the entire congregation, young and old alike, to discuss and contribute to topics or themes of mutual interest. The Family Christian Club



Members in Collinsville, Illinois, gather for a Family Christian Club meeting

gives all members of a congregation an opportunity to contribute to each other's growth and understanding, just as "iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17).

Each club meeting revolves around a specific theme, which is developed through the topics discussion and the speeches. After the director's introductory comments and opening prayer, the meeting moves to a 30 to 40 minute topics session in which everyone is encouraged to participate. After a brief break, the toastmaster begins the second half and introduces three or four 10-minute speeches given by volunteers on the theme. Meetings should last about one hour and 45 minutes.

If you are interested in this program, let your pastor know. *UN*

Larry Greider is pastor of Collinsville and Salem, Illinois, and a regional pastor.

Members Invited to Spread Good News

Tests of the Brochure Display Program show it to be a cost effective means to reach new people with *The Good News*. Response was an excellent 3.92 percent with a cost of just \$2.49 for each new subscription.

Due to the test's success, we are now expanding the program to all congregations and, for the first time, to individual brethren. Even if you find there is no organized program in your area, you still can be involved!

How does the program work? You will

be sent a supply of 3½- by 8½-inch brochures and small, attractive, clear acrylic display units. All you need to do is locate stores and shops in your area willing to display the units on counter tops, vending machines or other locations as a free customer service. Once a display is placed, just return to the store periodically to restock. That's all there is to it! You can order additional supplies anytime. If you're interested, just use the coupon below.

John LaBissoniere

I Want to Be Part of the Brochure Display Program!

After two successful tests, the Brochure Display Program is being expanded throughout the United States. Even if your church area does not have enough interest to support a congregational program with a program manager, you can be involved individually. Just mail this coupon, E-mail pglass@usit.net or call John LaBissoniere toll free in the U.S. at (888) 369-9940 Sunday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern time.

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Return to:
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Local Church Updates...

Laura Payne Named Student of the Year

Laura Payne, 16, was named Student of the Year for Ramsey Grammar School, and was then entered in the All Island contest to find the Student of the Year for the Isle of Man where she lives. The Isle of Man is in the Irish Sea halfway between Ireland and England. Laura was named one of the three runners-up, but as the marks were so close—Laura was just one point behind the winner—she was awarded a two-day trip to London and £25 (more than \$40). This was the same award presented to the winner, except the



Laura Payne

winner received double the cash amount.

The award is a joint initiative of Barclays Bank and the island's Department of Education to honor those who make an exceptional contribution to both school and private life, who are gifted in both academic study and sport, and who have outstanding personal qualities. "This year, it was as usual a desperately close run thing," the manager from Barclays Bank said. "The final placements are always by the narrowest margins."

"This is quite a considerable achievement when one is aware of the standard of education and of student" on the Isle of Man, said John Jewell, chief executive officer of the United Church of God—British Isles. "We would all like to congratulate Laura on this fine achievement."

Ladies Encouraged by Twin Cities Seminar

A "Ladies' Day Out" seminar on Sunday, November 7, brought 81 women, ranging from teens to seniors to Minneapolis,

Minnesota. The event, hosted by the Twin Cities' churches, drew guests from Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Nebraska, Indiana and Texas. Jim Servidio, Minneapolis pastor, welcomed the group, and opened with prayer. Following this, he introduced his wife, Judy, who began the meeting by describing women of a generous spirit.

Keynote speaker for the day was Ruth Myrick, who shared practical tips in her presentation "Life Management 101." A question and answer period followed.

The rest of the day consisted of skits and interactive seminars. Anne Teitgen encouraged us to come to consensus in small groups on questions about friendships. Janice Spieker used a skit and interaction to convey a message with the title "Women of Grace and Courage." DeLee Hargrove's motivational presentation was "God Can't Direct Your Steps if You Aren't Taking Any."

Barbara Lee

Houston Hosts Regional Family Campout

Nearly 250 brethren gathered on the shores of beautiful Lake Livingston for the third annual regional family campout, hosted by the two Houston, Texas, congregations November 5 to 7. The weather was perfect, with highs in the 80s and lows in the 50s, no rain and clear blue skies. Campers arrived from as far away as Denver, Colorado!



Bible study on the shores of Lake Livingston

The first event was a welcome meal, served on Friday evening by Cleve and Lila Nickerson. A friendly raccoon decided to join the group for dinner! Fellowship continued long after all had eaten. After cleanup, campers returned to their campsites (or, in the case of pampered campers, their motel).

Sabbath events included a midmorning hymn-sing with Dick Hegna and Gary Barron, preteen activities led by David and DeLynn Buchanan and separate afternoon Bible studies for teens (led by George Thomas) and adults/families (led by Ken Giese). The setting reminded many of Christ's sermons near the Sea of Galilee.

That evening, dance lessons were offered to teens followed by a teen dance, with disc jockey Arnold Mendez, Jr. Table games, refreshments and fellowship were also available, with many enjoying a spirited domino game called "Chicken Foot."

Koehler and June Powell coordinated the campout this year. They are already planning for next year's event.

Melanie Newman, Shirley Scott, Susan Smith

San Antonio Celebrates 45th

Sabbath, November 6, 1999, was the 45th anniversary of the San Antonio, Texas,



The San Antonio, Texas, congregation's 45th anniversary had the theme of the bride of Christ making herself ready

Church of God. It began on the Sabbath of November 6, 1954.

Four visiting pastors who formerly served in San Antonio were asked to speak: Burk McNair, Roy Holladay, John Bald and Steve Moody. Each had 20 minutes.

The celebration began at 6 p.m. The building was decorated with the theme of the

bride of Christ readying herself for her Husband. There was a mannequin dressed in a beautiful gown. Behind the bride on the wall was the scripture from Revelation 19:7: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

In the center of the building, hanging on the wall, was this inscription: "The Bride of Christ, 45 Years Preparing for the Bridegroom, San Antonio, Texas, November 6, 1999." Directly beneath this was the groom's cake with the inscription: "Church of God, San Antonio, 45 Years."

Bill Seelig



The Fresno, California, congregation held its inaugural service October 23

Fresno Holds First Service

Excitement filled the air on the Sabbath, October 23, as 21 attended the inaugural service of the United Church of God in Fresno, California. Camilo Reyes, who pastors in Bakersfield, California, conducted the service and shared the way doors had opened to rent this very fine facility complete with grand piano at a Mennonite seminary.

Refreshments were served after services. The fellowship continued at the home of Bill and Pam Bartholomew over dinner.

Fresno will have services the first and third Sabbaths each month, a blessing considering it's two hours to Bakersfield or Manteca.

Debbie Bates

New Orleans Singles' Activity, April 19-23, 2000

Singles from across the United States are invited to the Second Annual Spring Holy Day Activity in the New Orleans, Louisiana, area. Participants will stay four nights at the Holiday Inn Covington, Louisiana, at a cost of \$69 per room with four per room. Information can be found at <http://www.treybig.org/singles2000> or by contacting Ina McLemore at (800) 445-9622 ext. 345 or InaMc@juno.com.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Arrival Date & Time _____ Mode of Travel _____

Departure Date & Time _____ Willing to Share a Room? Yes/No

Check all items you plan to participate in:

Night to Be Much Observed Meal (\$20) Dinner/Dance (\$20)

"Getting to Know You" Social & Jambalaya Dinner (\$10)

Tour of New Orleans Plantations/lunch/Lee Lane shops (\$25)

"Famous Green Gumbo" Friday dinner at Church Hall (\$10)

Deposit of \$75 required by February 15. Please make check payable to UCG-Covington.

Mail to: Ina McLemore, 42477 Richard Road, Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Salt Lake City Ski Weekend, February 19-21, 2000

The Salt Lake City, Utah, Ski Weekend will be Presidents' Day weekend, February 19 to 21. Costs for this annual event are about \$50 a day for ski passes plus rentals. Some housing available at members' homes, or at hotels: La Quinta rooms start at \$55 (801-566-3291) and Motel 6 starts at \$37 (801-561-0058). Sabbath services 3 p.m. at Cotton Tree Inn, Aspen Room, 1030 N 300 E, North Salt Lake, Utah. Guest speaker: Victor Kubik. For more information call 801-943-6786 or E-mail bill_jahns@ucg.org or rachael.jahns@mciworld.com.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Ski Level: Beginner Intermediate Advanced

Return this form to: P.O. Box 933, Salt Lake City, UT 84091

Announcements...

Births



Briana Angélique Evans

David and Marguerite Evans are delighted to announce the arrival of their daughter, Briana Angélique. She was born at 9:11 a.m. on October 11, 1999, weighed 6 pounds 5 ounces and was 20½ inches long. The family attends the Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation. Briana's proud grandparents are George and Elizabeth Evans, from the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, congregation.

Steve and Donna Ware of Van Buren, Arkansas, announce the birth



Lindsey Natasha Ware

of their beautiful daughter, Lindsey. She was born July 30, 1999. She weighed 8 pounds 13 ounces and was 21½ inches long. Proud grandparents are Ron and Edna May Ware of Alma, Arkansas.

Jonathan and Roxanne Sears of Olympia, Washington, are delighted to announce the birth of



Austin Noah Sears

their first child, Austin Noah Sears. He arrived July 20, 1999, weighed 6 pounds 5 ounces and was 19¼ inch-

es long. Proud grandparents are John and Sandy Cafourek and Debbie Sears.

Karen and Mike McLeod of Houston, Texas, are delighted to announce the birth of their seventh grandchild, Madison Faye West. She arrived November 12, 1999, at 5:51 p.m., weighing 8 pounds 7 ounces and was 20½ inches long. The proud parents are Alysia and Justin West of Houston.

Martin and Ailsa Braun are very happy to announce the birth of their second daughter, Heather Pauline. Heather was born



Heather Pauline Braun

September 10, 1999, just after the Feast of Trumpets began. She weighed 7 pounds 14 ounces and joins a sister, Heidi.

Anniversaries

John and Sandy Cafourek of Olympia, Washington, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary November 22, 1999. They pastor the Olympia and Tacoma, Washington, congregations. Mr. Cafourek was



Sandy and John Cafourek

ordained in 1969, making this the Cafourek's 30th year of service to Church of God members as well. They have two daughters, Carmella Weis and Roxanne Sears, and three grandchildren, Autumn and Warren Weis and Austin Sears.

David and Lynn Sandland celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on October 7, 1999. They have

five children, Carl, Michelle, Laura, Benjamin (deceased) and Travis, and two grandchildren, Emma and Stephanie. Both Lynn (former Demarest) and David graduated



Lynn and David Sandland

from Ambassador College, Brickell Wood campus, in 1969. They presently live in Sydney, Australia.

Obituaries

Rose Reynolds of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation died September 12, 1999, at her home in Columbus, Indiana. She had been ill with cancer. Funeral services were conducted in Columbus by Indianapolis pastor Darris McNeely.

Born in Nottingham, England, Rose married Sam Reynolds in 1962. She is survived by her husband, Sam, who is a member of the Indianapolis congregation. She is also survived by three children and four grandchildren.

Ruadell Marsh, 70, died October 26, 1999, in Indianapolis, Indiana, after a lengthy battle with cancer. She was a long-time member of the Church, having attended congregations in Orlando, Florida, Louisville, Kentucky, and Indianapolis. Her husband, Wally, also a member, preceded her in death. Burial was in Leitchfield, Kentucky, with services officiated by Darris McNeely, Indianapolis pastor.

Beatrice Draper, 71, of the Greenwood, Delaware, congregation, died peacefully in her sleep on October 17, 1999. She and her husband, Charles, attended the Church for 23 years with their children, Jerry and Alana Lewis and grandchildren, Ted and Julia Johns and Dayna Lewis. Beatrice and Charles had celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and recommittal of their marriage vows on April 23. This ceremony and her funeral were conducted by Arnold Hampton.

She is also survived by four

other children, six other grandchildren, one brother and four sisters.

Gladys Clack of Gastonia, North Carolina, died November 1, 1999. She was 81, and was baptized in 1968. She first attended Church in Asheville and Charlotte, and since 1973 in Columbia, South Carolina, until a year ago when she moved back to her home area, Gastonia. She is survived by five children, 13 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. One of her children, Doris Brissom, is a Church member and attends in Columbia.

Hartwell Fletcher, 76, of the Covington, Louisiana, congregation died October 9, 1999. He had been in the hospital nearly a month before the Feast with cancer. He was born in south Louisiana and married Mattie Lee Mixon in 1942. He served in the military during and after World War II. He and his wife had two daughters, three sons, nine grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

In 1972 he was diagnosed with cancer and the doctors didn't think he had a chance of surviving the operation to remove most of his digestive tract. With God's help he proved them wrong. At the time his youngest child was very small and Mr. Fletcher told his daughter he believed God would allow him to raise his son. The family knew it was a miracle and blessing that he was able to do so.

One of his sons died tragically seven years ago. He is survived by his wife, Mattie, two sons, Hartwell and Patrick, two daughters, Carlotta and Katherine, three sisters and two brothers. The funeral was very well attended by community members. It was held in Ponchatoula, Louisiana, with Ken Treybig officiating.

Virginia "Dolly" Pearl (Austin) Birney, 91, died in her sleep of heart failure on October 27, 1999. The funeral was conducted in Sublette, Kansas, by Steve Myers, her grandson-in-law, an elder in Minnesota.

She was born in Milo, Missouri, and married Clyde F. Birney in 1927. They farmed and raised cattle in and around Sublette, Kansas, and later moved to Liberal, Kansas. They embraced the Church of God in 1958. Her husband was a deacon and she was a deaconess for 30 years. When her husband died, she moved in with her daughter. She attended the Springfield, Missouri, congregation.

Virginia is survived by her daughter, Janette Steele and husband Ralph of Stockton, Missouri, and a former daughter-in-law, Nita McDaniel and her husband Frank of Garden City, Kansas. Grandchildren through her son, Gene, are Richard Birney of Fishkill, New York, Larry Birney of San Antonio, Texas, and Linda Helm of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Grandchildren through her daughter, Janette, are Randy Steele of Stockton, Ruth Hoover of Yukon, Oklahoma, Jan Ward of Tipton, Oklahoma, and Kathe Myers of Rochester, Minnesota. Virginia is survived by 21 great grandchildren and two great, great grandchildren, and sisters Bernice Youngren and Neva Wood, both of White Salmon, Washington.

Virginia was preceded in death by her husband, Clyde; her parents, Russell and Emma Austin; her brothers, Laurence and Montie Austin; her son, Gene; and grandson, Laurence Birney.

David Monroe McKee Jr., 80, died August 12, 1999. He was a member of the Huntsville, Alabama, congregation. He began attending services in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1962 and was baptized in September 1967. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Irene, also a member in Huntsville, two sons James and Eugene McKee, daughter Helen Ransom and five grandchildren.

Lena Belle Anderson Forehand, 95, of Madisonville, Tennessee, died peacefully at home September 20, 1999. She was a member of the Cleveland, Tennessee, congregation. She was baptized in July 1974.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Isaac, and a daughter, Frances Lassiter. She is survived by two daughters and a son-in-law, Lorrie and Theron Smith and Jane Whitley; two sons and daughters-in-law, Juetta and Julia Forehand and Gordon and Margaret Forehand; 14 grandchildren and several great grandchildren. Gordon and Margaret Forehand and their daughter Susan are members in Cleveland.

Leslie Jean Porter, a charter member of the Harlingen, Texas, congregation, died November 11, 1999. She and her deceased husband, Jack, were well known for their hospitality, concern and dedication. Jean was born May 26, 1916, in Castle Rock Township, Minnesota, but lived most of her life in south Texas.

Richard O. Anderson, 69, of Amberg, Wisconsin, died November 24, 1999. He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Betty, four sons, two daughters, a brother, two sisters, 22 grandchildren and a great grandchild.

Kenneth E. Iiams, 72, of Rathdrum, Idaho, died of cancer on November 22, 1999. He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Frieda; three sons and daughters-in-law, Gerald and Valarie of Watonga, Oklahoma, Mike and Joyce of Post Falls, Idaho, Steve and Melinda of Glendora,



Ken Iiams

California; a daughter and son-in-law, Linda and James Smyda of Lewisville, Texas; and five grandchildren.

Mr. Iiams was an owner/operator truck driver and visited many

church areas across the nation for 20 years. He was a faithful member of God's Church, having been baptized along with his wife in July, 1954, in Idaho's Snake River by Gerald Waterhouse and George Meeker, Jr.

Ordained a deacon in January 1960, he served in the Pittsburgh and Washington, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, West Virginia, churches for 30 years before retiring to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where he continued to contribute his experience and dedication for the past 10 years.

Funeral services were conduct-

ed on November 26 by Glen White and Mark Mickelson.

Jeanette Brown, 69, of Thomasville, North Carolina, died December 6, 1999. She has been a faithful member since January 1975, attending in the Greensboro and Asheboro churches. She was strong as her health deteriorated the past few years, and her cheerful example will be remembered by many.

Jeanette is survived by two sons, Woody and Ricky; by two grandchildren; and by one sister.

Gaydell Havard, 51, of Carriere, Mississippi, died December 19, 1999, after a six-month battle with brain cancer. Gaydell's husband of 34 years, Tom, had a brain aneurysm several years ago and is in a nursing home. They have four adult daughters, Sherri, Sandy, Susie and Stacie, who took care of Gaydell for the last four months. She is also survived by two brothers, three sisters-in-law and 12 grandchildren. The funeral was held December 21 in Bogalusa, Louisiana, with Ken Treybig officiating.

Letters...

Recapturing First Feast

"We've just finished reading the reports from all the Feast sites in the November *United News*. How inspiring these reports were. We moved from site to site as each one seemed to come alive in our mind. They were so inspiring. We thought of the distance many had to travel and how they traveled. As we read Barbara Eldred's first Feast experience, we recaptured our first Feast.

"We were inspired so much by our brethren in Zambia and how Mr. Banda used the diesel motor in order for the brethren to view the sermon videos. What a zeal for God's Word. Things like these make us more appreciative for our calling. It's things like these that make us yearn more deeply to be a part of God's kingdom."

North Carolina

Search Engine for United's Web Site

"Thank you for the search engine function. It has been enormously useful in providing intelligent, well-thought-out and developed responses to such issues as Gnosticism, immortal soul, Sabbath keeping, etc. I had felt so impotent in attempting to respond on my own. Having to search and dig out material in support of my assertions to those with whom I am in discussion on Christianity in general on the Internet without such a tool was more than seemed reasonable to even attempt most often. Now we can all surely benefit from the work that has already been done by capable and inspired men."

Internet, California

GN at the Library "Exactly What I Was Looking For"

"Today I came across your September/October 1999 issue of *The Good News* at our local public library. I had never seen a copy of your magazine before, but the cover attracted my attention because I was at the library to look up information on Matthew chapter 24. I found exactly what I was looking for in your periodical!"

Tennessee

Miracle at 70 Miles an Hour

"Imagine you are driving your Honda

accord to work or school. You are wearing your seat belt and going the legal limit which is 70 miles an hour. There is a truck in front of you carrying several huge pipes. Suddenly one of them breaks loose. You swerve to miss the pipe and slam into the concrete on the driver's side. Your car bounces back and is hit by the car behind you. The car is totaled and the driver's side is in shambles. You crawl out through the window.

"What are the odds of your survival?"

"With God's protection it is 100 percent. I know because that just happened to my 24-year-old son. They wanted to take him to the emergency room. At first he wasn't going to go, but he decided that it would be wise. Except for a bad bruise from his seat belt and some pain in his back and neck, he is OK.

"When I saw him for the first time afterwards I latched on to him. I then grabbed my camera. I wanted a picture of the man who survived the 70-mile-an-hour car wreck.

"Someone said that God obviously had a plan for my son and considered him to be very valuable. I heartily agree. It will be a very inspiring Thanksgiving this year."

Internet, Texas

Loves GN, Really Wants to Donate

"Just wanted to let you know I love your magazine. It has a lot of great articles in it. Is there any way I can give a donation? I would really like to. I just passed it on to my daughter-in-law. Thanks for a great magazine."

Internet

Waiting Room Wants More

"We received your free sample of the *Good News* magazine. We enjoyed it. We have two offices and we would be very interested in receiving several copies for each office. Unfortunately we had already budgeted for other publications, so we would be unable to pay for more copies at this time. The correct mailing addresses are above if it is possible to receive more."

Tennessee

Hope to Attend Soon

"Thanks for the literature and copy of *The Good News*. It appears I share many

beliefs in common with the Church. I will continue to investigate and hope to attend a service at a local congregation soon."

Internet, Texas

Profile Not Exaggerated

"I was delighted to read the article about Risa Wilson [September *United News*, page 13]. Having observed her the past two years at Pinecrest, I can truthfully say that the glowing description of her was not exaggerated. While Risa excels in energy and perceiving ways to help, I would add that there are other young adults serving at camp who are equally committed to the program, to the concept of 'the zone' and to enriching the lives of the campers. The future of UCGIA looks good as these young staff members are dedicated to God and His way."

Internet

Feast Survey Feedback for *United News*

Of the 4,051 Feast surveys collected in the United States and Canada, 794 had comments on "How do you think *United News* could be improved?"

The top 10 responses were:

- Great, OK as is, etc. (285 responses).
- Include more local church news (66).
- More about the Work in U.S. and international areas (24).
- More often, perhaps monthly (22).
- More human interest stories (19).
- Page size too big, awkward (18).
- Don't just publish favorable news, be open about problems (17).
- More about international brethren (17).
- Make it longer; provide a greater variety of articles (14).
- More spiritual meat (14).

Results were received December 29, just before this issue went to press. We will use these and other comments in planning future issues, and welcome your feedback on how we are doing.

Decisions about printing more pages, more often or reducing the page size would cost more, so would need to be discussed for the next budget year.

Talking About Holy Days and Holidays

"I think the article 'Talking to Your Child's Teacher About the Holy Days and Holidays' [September *United News*] is excellent overall—practical, helpful, timely, etc.

"However, a couple of people have said they didn't care for some of the suggestions in the article. There are two suggestions in the article that I personally would not choose for my child to do. One would be cutting out snowflakes if there was any possibility that they would be hung up as a Christmas decoration. The other is making friendship bracelets just before Valentine's Day.

"Some members in the Church make a strong connection between each pagan holiday and its respective season—because holiday decorations often include season images. Even I feel that it is unnecessary to stick with the current season in doing art work. What's wrong with a summer scene in December and a fall scene in the spring?"

"It's up to each family as to what they want to suggest to the teachers. No one should violate his conscience, of course. Therefore, I suggest that we remain aware of these sensitivities and steer clear of recommendations that the substitute school work necessarily coincide with the present season.

"In addition, the bold subheadings added fuel to the fire. At first glance, one can jump to the conclusion that one section is about how to observe Halloween, the next section on how to observe Christmas, etc.

"Hope this is helpful."

Internet

Editor's note: Thank you very much for your suggestions and input. We apologize for any offense caused. Putting the names of the pagan holidays in bold type gave them too much prominence and may have led to a different impression than the author intended.

We welcome other suggestions to help parents and children with this challenging aspect of Christian living.

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

News at a Glance...

What's New on the Web?

- The Rules of Association were adopted by the General Conference of Elders in December. See:

<http://www.ucg.org/articles/roa.html>

- Full reports on the Council of Elders meetings in Cincinnati December 1 to 6 are available.

<http://www.ucg.org/a/council/Cincy1299/cincy1299.htm>

- The January/February 2000 *Good News* is now available in PDF (2.3mb) format. The expanded edition contains the new booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* which is available in PDF (1.5mb) format.

<http://www.ucg.org/html/literat.shtml>

- The Spanish version of the January/February 2000 *Good News*—*Las Buenas Noticias*—is now available in PDF (1.2mb) format.

http://www.ucg.org/html/espa_ol.shtml

- Gary Antion, member of the Council of Elders and instructor at ABC, gives a sermon titled, "Doing Our Father's Business." View it using RealPlayer G2.

<http://www.ucg.org/RealAud/Sermons.shtml>

- A new page containing sermon transcripts has been added.

<http://www.ucg.org/deafhh/transcripts.html>

- The January issue of *Virtual Christian Magazine* has been posted.

<http://vcmagazine.org>

- See new photographs of ABC:

<http://www.ucg.org/abc/progress.htm>

- Regular updates from the president and home office staff, plus news of the Work United is doing, are posted on our news page.

<http://www.ucg.org/a/news/news.htm>

If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

webmaster@ucg.org

Treasurer Gives Report

As we ended the year 1999, the financial position of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, continued to stabilize and be stronger than it was earlier in the year. For this we are very grateful. The blessings of God, as manifested in the faithful support of the members and others who contribute to UCGIA, make it possible for the Work of the Church to go forward in greater power and scope.

There are various ways to measure the financial position of the Church, and to monitor its financial progress. We'll summarize two of them here. Both are encouraging.

One way is to compare income of the current fiscal year to the previous year. For the first four months of the current fiscal period (April through July, 1999) total donation income received in the mail at the home office (not counting Holy Day offerings) was 15 percent less than in the corresponding months of the previous year, due to the still somewhat unsettled state of things in the early months of 1999. But since then (from August 1 to December 31, 1999), the mail donation income has increased by 7 percent, compared to the same months in the previous year. Thus for the entire nine months (April to December, 1999), the mail donation income is only 4 percent less than in the previous year. In both years, we received one-time special offerings. If the effect of those two special "bumps" in income is removed, we have actually received 2 percent more donation mail income in the period April to December, 1999, than in the corresponding nine months of 1998. This indicates a small, but encouraging, growth trend. Further encouraging news is the very strong start we have experienced in the year 2000. At press time (January 4), we are still processing donation mail that was mailed in December, but not received until January. So far, the very early trend is most encouraging.

The other way is to compare income actually received so far this year to what we budgeted for this year. In early 1999, the Council of Elders chose to propose a conservative budget for the current fiscal year, beginning April 1, 1999. The budget for total income from all sources was set at \$13.8 million. That was below the total income actually received in the previous year (ending March 31, 1999) of \$15.2 million. For the first part of this fiscal year, it appeared that the \$13.8 million figure would turn out to be close to actual results. But, as noted above, in recent months the income has been stronger, including very good Holy Day offerings. At press time, it appears now that we are on a path to exceed total budgeted income for the 12 months ending March 31, 2000, by about 8 to 10 percent. Again, for this positive trend we are very grateful, and pray for God's guidance in using these resources.

Tom Kirkpatrick

End of Year Mail Statistics Released

In 1999, 126,483 pieces of mail and Internet responses came into the home office. This was the highest since United began.

Various literature reply cards, from *The Good News*, brochures, booklets, semiannual letters, etc., made up 62,370 of the total. Another 46,496 was donation mail, and other mail made up 9,694. Total Internet responses for the year were 7,923, with an average of 4.5 pieces of literature for each response.

More than 104,000 subscriptions were added to *The Good News*. Of these, 76,914 were businesses added through the waiting room program. The cards in these waiting room copies were used by 10,222 people to subscribe to the magazine. The brochure program test brought in 2,456 *GN* subscriptions and 5,381 came through the Internet. Although no U.S. *Reader's Digest* ads were run in 1999, 1,045 responses came in from previous ads. The fledgling newsstand program being tested in a few areas has brought in 121 subscriptions. Cable access TV brought in 753. The spots ads run in three markets in September brought in 265 *GN* subscriptions, bringing the spot ad total to 2,358 for the year.

Rules of Association Ratified

The Rules of Association were approved by the General Conference of Elders (GCE) by a margin of 255 yes ballots to 22 no ballots. "The Bylaws require a 2/3 majority of all valid ballots cast to ratify the Rules of Association," said Gerald Seelig, secretary to the GCE, December 27. So 185 were required to pass.

"The Council of Elders and representatives from the international areas agree that [the Rules of Association] will enable the Church to more effectively guide its activities throughout the world," said Council Chairman Bob Dick. "There will be little if any impact upon local congregations as they are structured. These rules define in a general way the level of cooperation that is expected from all parties within UCGIA."

The Rules are posted on the United Web site at www.ucg.org/articles/roa.html.

New United Elders Announced

Paul Nielander, serving in Lafayette, Indiana, and Leo Daniel, in Hobbs, New Mexico, were credentialed as elders at the December Council meetings. Ordained were Leonard Martin in Lansing, Michigan, November 6; Neville Smith in Durban, South Africa, October 2; William Hadley in Wheeling, West Virginia, April 1; and James Beymer in Houston South, Texas, February 26.

Corporate Sponsorships Sought to Boost Camps

As part of the plan to improve and expand the Church's successful camp program, Britton Taylor will be directing efforts to seek corporate sponsors.

"As with any worthwhile endeavor, there is a cost factor involved," said Mr. Taylor, pastor of the Ft. Worth and Coleman, Texas, congregations. "The question is asked, 'Is there a way to provide this wonderful camp experience at a lower cost to the Church and the families who will participate?'" One way is to seek sponsorships.

"Our goal is to have additional funds to help underwrite the programs we offer. If we are successful, the donated money will help us expand our programs so that more young people can participate at less cost to them and the Church. There are individuals in the business community who identify with the purpose of our camps and are willing to financially participate.... In addition, there are major corporations willing to donate equipment or products to camps such as ours if we will display their logo," Mr. Taylor said.

He encouraged readers who would like to give suggestions or help to contact him at btaylor@flash.net or to write the home office attention: Camp Sponsorship Program.

GN Circulation Booming

With the January/February issue, the print run for *The Good News* topped a quarter million for the first time, with 261,372. Subscriptions in international areas served by the home office jumped 98 percent in 1999.

United News

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