



United Church of God
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June 2006

News At a Glance

Elder Credentialed

On May 10, 2006, the Council of Elders approved the credentialing of Randy Duke as an elder. He and his wife, Laurie, are serving in the Cape Girardeau, Missouri, congregation.

King of the South Lecture Draws 32 New People in Washington

Brethren in the Tacoma and Olympia, Washington, congregations sent out over 500 letters inviting *Good News* subscribers in the area to a special public Bible lecture, "The King of the South and the Abomination of Desolation in History and Prophecy."

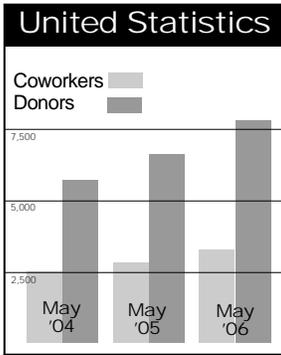
Fred Reeves, an elder in the area, put together a PowerPoint presentation that led the audience through the somewhat detailed subject. He used history to highlight the accuracy of God's prophecies and to explain how to understand the abomination of desolation. Mr. Reeves said, "The lectures went well. We planted some seeds."

Many local brethren came to serve and benefit from the message and fellowship with the 32 "new people," about half of whom had a Church of God background.

Pastor Rex Sexton said, "These lectures drew the largest response percentage-wise that I have ever seen. The subject was specific and timely, plus we asked the members in both church areas to pray and set aside one day to fast, asking God to inspire people to respond."

Two of the lectures were held before the Feast of Unleavened Bread (in Tumwater and Bremerton.) The upcoming feast added exciting conversational

See "News at a Glance," page 2



GCE Focuses on Service and Leadership

Chairman Bob Dick called the General Conference of Elders Annual Meeting to order shortly after 9 a.m. on May 7. The theme for this year was "Service and Leadership—Today, Tomorrow and Beyond." Mr. Dick said that the welcome receptions and Sabbath services had started the weekend well. In light of the conference he recalled Mrs. Loma Armstrong's favorite scripture, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity . . ."



Bob Dick, Bill and Jenny Bradford and Richard Thompson fellowship at GCE (photo by Janet Treadway)

Introduction of New Elders
Then Mr. Dick introduced the new

elders ordained or credentialed in the last year. Last year there were 11 new elders introduced; this year there are 19:

- Oludare and "Ton" Akinbo
- Bart and Joan Bomhorst
- Dempsey and Susan Bruton

- Paul and Merlen Cebrian
- Gladstone and Alice Chonde
- Ken and Jean Cline
- Jim and Marlene Cowell
- Russell and Tammy DeVilbiss
- Martin and Denise Fekete
- Don and Jackie Finger
- Alberto González Peña and Yulun Langarica Verdin
- Tim and Mary Heine
- Dennis and Paula Horlick
- Morgen and Joleen Kriedemann
- Leroy and Maxine Neff

See "GCE," page 5

Denver Hosts First Regional Conference



Larry Salyer, Tom Clark and Tom Damour listen to Clyde Kilough; right, Richard Pinelli (photos by Scott Ashley) by Larry Neff

On April 26 and 27 the Mountain Region was the start-up point for the two-day ministerial development conference, which will be held in every U.S. region and several international areas over the next year.

Clyde Kilough and Richard Pinelli came from the home office to give many of the presentations.

The conference was attended by all pastors in the region,

along with full-time employees Charles Melear and Scott Ashley who live nearby. A few of the wives were present as well.

- Sessions at the conference covered the following topics:
- Why are we doing this?
 - What are we looking for in new elders and pastors?
 - Discernment: How to find it and how to use it.

See "Denver," page 4

Council Holds Strategic Planning Brainstorming Session

by Don Henson

During the February/March meetings, the Council determined it would evaluate and revamp its approach to the creation of the Church's Strategic Plan.

At the May 11 Council meeting Chairman Robert Dick emphasized that an effective strategic plan has a horizon of about three years. The Church's current Strategic Plan has been modified and updated from year to year. However, Mr. Dick emphasized, it is now time to rethink and reprioritize the strategies it enumerates.

As an initial step in that direction, Mr. Dick led the Council in a brainstorming session. Prior to this session, Mr. Dick had asked each member to be prepared to discuss what he felt were the Church's three most urgent issues and how they can be met.

The format was a "roundtable" discussion, with each member in turn enumerating the items on his list. Council

See "Planning," page 15

Two New Council Members Chosen, Two Reselected

May 7 the General Conference of Elders chose four Council members to serve the next three years. Bob Dick and Richard Thompson were returned to the Council, and Bill Eddington (international) and Richard Pinelli were added as new members. Tony Wasilkoff and Mario Seiglie will



Bob Dick



Richard Thompson

leave the Council as their terms expire June 30.

Following are brief biographies of the new members.

William (Bill) Eddington
Bill Eddington and his wife, Rae, live in Melbourne, Australia, and have six adult children.

He was baptized in 1970 and ordained as an elder in 1975. Since that time he has served the Church in many capacities—counseling, preaching, giving Bible studies, baptizing, acting as a Festival coordinator and a Festival elder and conducting weddings and funerals. He currently assists Australian Southern Region pastor Barry Williams and pastors a small congregation several hours' drive from Melbourne.



Bill Eddington

He has been a member of the Australian National Council since 1997 and chairman since 1999. He also serves on the Pastoral and the Policy and Planning Committees.

Mr. Eddington gained considerable experience in sales, logistics, strategic planning and human resources during his years of employment with several major companies and the state government of Victoria. For several years in the early 1980s he was a member of the governing council of the state's premier teacher training college,

Richard Pinelli

See "Profiles," page 2

Inside:

- 2 Council Profiles: Bill Eddington and Richard Pinelli
- 2 Forward! by Clyde Kilough
- 3 Around the World: Smiles for Rwanda; Asian Web Sites; Canadian and German States
- 4 BT in Canada; Malawi Growth; GCE Exit Survey; Education Task Force
- 5 GCE Reports; Ballot Results
- 7 From the Word: Making Sense of World News; Good Sex, Bad Sex; Meditation; Who Made Paul Cry?
- 11 Treasure Digest
- 13 Local Church Updates
- 14 Announcements: Letters

News At a Glance

Continued from page 1

material and opportunities to talk about God's Holy Days. The final lecture (Tacoma) was recorded on video for a person who couldn't attend.

Jerry Berg said, "The literature table we set up was well received, the atmosphere was very friendly and the people were happy to stay late and fellowship." Some asked for directions to services and one family contacted Mr. Sexton for a personal visit.

Mr. Sexton added, "It is important that we keep in communication with those that God might be calling. These lectures give people who are interested an easy way to make contact with us and see what we are about."

Logan Smith

U.S. Holy Day Offerings Reported

The offering reported for the First Day of Unleavened Bread in the United States was \$764,048.09, with an attendance of 13,248. This represents a 1.2 percent increase in attendance and a 2.8 percent increase in the offering amount over 2005. Once all offerings that were individually mailed to the home office are processed, this figure should reach \$780,000.

For the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, the reported offering amount was \$738,648.30, with an attendance of 12,026. This represents a 0.9 percent increase in attendance and a 3.2 percent increase in the offering amount over 2005. Once all offerings that were individually mailed are processed, this figure may reach around \$760,000.

Gerald Seilig

Singapore Site Replaces Malaysia

A new Feast site in Singapore is replacing the previously announced Malacca, Malaysia, site this year. Singapore is a modern Asian city-state offering a wide array of cultural, historical and outdoor attractions for visitors of all ages and nationalities.

Local brethren from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore welcome international visitors to attend services with them in the spacious Orchid Country Club in Singapore. All services are conducted in English.

Many brethren also plan to stay at the Orchid Country Club (www.orchid-club.com). The grounds include three swimming pools, a fitness club, tennis courts, a 30-lane bowling alley and an 18-hole golf course. This facility is owned and operated by the Singaporean government and offers reasonable pricing for both Singaporeans and international visitors alike. Various cuisines

See "News at a Glance," page 4

New Council Member Profiles: Bill Eddington and Richard Pinelli

"Profiles," continued from page 1

chairing the staffing and legislation committees. He is now retired.

He has never been employed by the



Bill and Rae Eddington

Church and feels that his outside employment experience, noncareer

Church involvement and hands-on knowledge of the operations and needs of a UCGIA international area may provide a different perspective during some Council discussions.

Mr. Eddington said, "This will be a new experience for me, and I look forward to making an effective contribution to the workings of the Council of Elders and the Church generally."

Richard Pinelli

Richard Pinelli was born and reared in Chicago, Illinois, going through what he describes as a normal childhood and finishing grade 12. He then went to and graduated from Ambassador College.

He married his wife, Mary, in 1960, and they were transferred after graduation to Vancouver, British Columbia.

They worked in Canada pastoring in 12 church areas for 23 years. They moved back to the United States in 1984 where they pastored three areas before the church split in 1995.

He has been a pastor for 43 years and has 12 years of experience as a Feast



Mary and Richard Pinelli

coordinator, 14 years as a regional pastor, two years as Ministerial Services operation manager in Canada and 10 years as operation manager for Ministerial Services in United.

Currently Mr. Pinelli serves as coordinator of ministerial development programs, focusing on training the trainers of future ministers. Mr. Pinelli has mentored 36 trainees in his career and is very enthused about his new job and about serving on the Council.

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve on the Council at this time," he said. "I have worked with the Council closely for 10 years when I worked in Ministerial Services as well as with the home office administration. I hope this experience will be helpful in my time on the Council." UN

FORWARD! You've Got to Stop to Go Forward!

by Clyde Kilough



I'm delighted to contribute to this new feature called "Forward!"—a short editorial designed to help us think in a, well, "forward" direction.

The first thing I want to say is . . . we need to stop!

The '60s musical *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off!* captures my fancy, but that's wishful thinking—"this world ain't

stopping for nobody." If anything, the heat's increasing to suck us into the "cares of this life" whirlpool.

We'll move forward, though, if we stop.

What do I mean? Consider one of the cares of this life unique in history: the overwhelming nature of the "Information Age," driven by the science and communications revolution. I read recently that 1,000 new books are published in the United States every week—300 per day in Britain!

Thomas Kuk, in an essay titled "Coping With Technology," observed, "Our society is so permeated with

technological advancements that it is virtually impossible not to be influenced by one form or other."

Kuk quotes a study of 1,300 junior and senior managers throughout the United States, England, Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore. "Seventy-three percent indicated they needed enormous amounts of information to be successful in their job. At the same time, 33 percent reported ill-health as a result of information overload, 66 percent reported increased tension with work colleagues and diminished job satisfaction caused by information overload. Sixty-two percent admitted their personal and social relationships have suffered as well."

Can spiritual relationships likewise suffer?

"In our rush to stay connected, we make the assumption that technology is our solution to managing our life and lifestyles. We make the assumption that technology always saves time . . . assessing technology has created an inability to accurately appraise time. People often underestimate the amount of time something takes to complete because they overestimate their own abilities or those of their tools or devices they use. We have become victims of multi-tasking madness—the ability to juggle multiple thoughts, tasks and jobs."

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Mission Statement: The mission of the Church of God is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples.

President: Clyde Kilough

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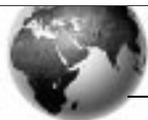
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News From **Around the World**

Good Works Brings Smiles to Rwandan Brethren

UCG elders Greg Swartz and Joel Meeker spent 10 days in April in Rwanda on a groundbreaking Good Works project providing free dental care to our brethren in this East African country.

Dr. Swartz, who is a dentist, and his wife, Jan, had accompanied Mr. Meeker on a pastoral trip to Rwanda two years earlier and was struck by the faithfulness of our brethren, but also the lack of dental care available to them.

Dr. Swartz volunteered his time to provide dental care for one week, and after consultation with UCG Good Works coordinator Tom Kirkpatrick, an official project was organized. Mr. Meeker, pastor for French-African churches, would provide logistical and translation support in the predominantly French-speaking nation.

Dr. Swartz brought much personal equipment, worth many thousands of dollars, to use as he worked. The project got off to a somewhat tense start when his luggage, filled with dental supplies and his clothing, didn't arrive in Rwanda when he did. Everyone was relieved when the luggage arrived intact the next day.

"We really felt God's blessing on the project" said Dr. Swartz. "We had originally arranged to rent the office of a private dentist in Kigali, but the Rwandan Medical Board only authorized us to work at the Centre Hospitalier de Kigali, one of the two largest hospitals in the capital city of Kigali. This turned out to be a great blessing not only because the hospital was better equipped than the private office, but also because it allowed us contact with medical authorities in Rwanda who really saw the Church's light shine."

The department head, Dr. Immaculée Kamanzi, graciously invited Dr. Swartz to use her personal office, which was the best equipped at the hospital.

In spite of everyone's best efforts, conditions were sometimes challenging. For example, the water supply at the hospital was often cut off, forcing the dental assistants to irrigate teeth manually with a syringe. This was new to Dr. Swartz, but unfortunately often

the way local dentists have to work.

During the five days that Dr. Swartz worked, he treated 25 Church members and family members ranging in ages from 8 to 84, providing services ranging from teeth cleaning and filling cavities, to root canals and extractions. He also accepted other challenging cases suggested to him by the dental staff, so that they could observe the most up-to-date procedures for treatment.

Each day, some Church members and their children would travel several hours by bush taxi from their rural villages for treatment in Kigali. For some, it was their first trip to the "big city." When asked how they found the experience, several children replied that the city was very big, there was so much traffic it seemed like a "car race," the dental treatment didn't hurt at all (contrary to what they had been told to expect) and the dental chair was very soft (they had never before sat on a padded chair).

Toward the end of the week, Dr. Swartz and Mr. Meeker hosted the hospital director Dr. Munyarugamba, the dentists and staff to a special dinner. Rwandan Church elder Jean-Marie Mundeli, who had done a great deal of advance work in preparing for the project, made introductory comments, and extended thanks to everyone for their help in making the project a success.

Additional comments, thanks and expressions of friendship were presented by Mr. Meeker and Dr. Swartz as well as by the hospital director, Dr. Munyarugamba and by Dr. Kamanzi.

Hospital staff and other observers also commented on how impressed they were by this labor of love. Dr. Kamanzi commented, "You really make a great effort to help your Church members." In addition to serving brethren and others in need, this project has already raised awareness of the Church's existence in Rwanda and favorably impacted the Church's reputation with government authorities.

Both Dr. Munyarugamba and Dr. Kamanzi have asked that Dr. Swartz

return to repeat the kind of work that he accomplished this year. They expressed a continuing need to update both their understanding of new technology as well as their professional skills.

As a personal parting gift, Dr. Swartz left the dental department a \$1,000 apex locator apparatus, which allows dentists to precisely measure progress in root canal procedures. Dr. Kamanzi was very touched by this generosity and excited to



Brethren at inauguration of new hall in Giti, Rwanda; inset, Dr. Greg Swartz with patient Damascène Bazatsinda

have this machine available in her department.

Inaugurating New Building

Before leaving Rwanda, Dr. Swartz and Mr. Meeker had the chance to participate in another joyful occasion also made possible by the Good Works program. About 60 people attend UCG services in the remote village of Giti. Until recently, services were held in a mud-brick and bamboo shelter built next to the house of Jean-Baptiste Sibobugingo, a deacon in the Church. However, the mayor of Giti had condemned the shelter as inadequate.

Through the generosity of the Good Works program, a new building was constructed on a beautiful hilltop lot. On the last Sabbath the American visitors were in Rwanda, the official inauguration of the hall was held. During the special Sabbath service, Mr. Meeker gave a sermon on appreciating God's blessings, and taking care of what He gives us.

After services, everyone gathered in front of the building, for the official dedication prayer asked by Mr. Meeker. Both the sermon and the prayer were translated from French into Kinyarwanda, the local language. He was then joined by Mr. Mundeli, Mr. Sibobugingo and Dr. Swartz for the official ribbon cutting. Then everyone entered the building to share a meal prepared under the direction of Mrs. Mundeli.

During this time, brethren asked Mr. Mundeli to translate and read a letter of thanks addressed to Dr. Swartz.

Our Rwandan brethren were overjoyed at this blessing from God, and at the generous love of their brethren in other parts of the world. They send their heartfelt thanks to all those who have participated in Good Works fundraisers.

Joel Meeker

International News At a Glance

Three New Asian Web Sites Created

Three new Asian Web sites—for Singapore, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong—are being created. The initial focus is on countries where United already has members, readership and ministerial involvement. This will help overcome the impression that we have no physical presence in other Asian nations besides the Philippines.

Web site domain names have been secured and work has begun on these Web sites in the Philippine office. The sites for Hong Kong and Sri Lanka are already up and running. Members can even register for the Feast in Sri Lanka on the Sri Lankan Web site. They can log onto the sites via the main UCG.org Web site (these sites are listed under international congregations).

We're very excited about the prospects of this new initiative, and we feel Asian readers throughout the region will appreciate the more specific attention offered.

Dave Baker

A Record 715 Attend in Canada

The First Day of Unleavened Bread saw a record attendance of 715 across Canada, an increase of 11.2 percent over last year's attendance of 643. The previous record attendance of 700 was reached on the Day of Atonement 2004.

The Holy Day offering for the First Day of Unleavened Bread came in at 9.9 percent over last year.

The average Sabbath attendance in Canada is up 2.1 percent over last year for the first three months of the year.

Edwin van Pelt

Canada Reports on Mailing Responses

The Canadian office began mailing letters the second week of May to over 9,000 former subscribers of *The Good News*. The letters are being sent to those who did not respond to the two renewal letters that were sent in late 2004. The letters are being mailed at the rate of about 500 per day so the office staff won't be overwhelmed with responses all at once. Based on the results of the other letters sent out this year, we expect over 1,200 responses to this letter.

The other letters the Canadian office has sent this year have been quite successful. In January we sent 5,223 letters to people on our database who were not subscribers of the *GN*. To date, we've received nearly 1,000 responses

and added over 400 new subscribers.

Also in January, 499 letters were sent to those who were receiving the *Bible Study Course* but did not renew it after Lesson 3. To date, 90 people have requested to continue receiving the course as a result of the letter. The most recent subscriber development letter was sent to 2,771 people, and we've received 436 responses. The responses to these letters continue to arrive every week.

Edwin van Pelt

German GN Goes to 20 Countries

The May-June issue of the *Gute Nachrichten* (German *Good News*) magazine is mailed to 4,071 readers in 20 European countries, a 2.8 percent increase over the previous issue. For the first time, a "Readers ask, we answer" column was included to answer questions from subscribers. Including former readers, the *Gute Nachrichten* database now contains 15,088 subscriber records.

German Statistics Announced

This year 101 people met in the German-language region to keep the Passover. On the First Day of Unleavened Bread, 132 people attended services in four locations: Haan-Grüiten (48), Munich (10), Schriesheim (29) and Winterthur in Switzerland (45). The offering was 7,108 euros, a 11.1 percent decrease compared to 2005.

On the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, 112 people attended services in four locations: Cologne-Portz (42), Munich (13), Schriesheim (29) and Winterthur in Switzerland (28). The offering (5,870 euros) increased 1.2 percent.

UCG Included in University Project

As part of a project on religious diversity in Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany's largest state, the University of Bochum will provide information on the Internet about 250 Christian churches, including UCG-Germany.

Brethren Safe After Indonesian Quake

Jeff Caudle reported May 27, "I've been in contact with Soegito and Martha Widjaya, Indonesian brethren who live in a small, rural village about 1½ hours' drive to the east of Yogyakarta. They are safe and doing fine after the 6.3 magnitude earthquake in their region . . . I'm sure they would sincerely appreciate our prayers for God's intervention, protection and comfort for their countrymen . . ."

Language Barrier Overcome by Smiles

In April, I had a wonderful opportunity to do dental work in a hospital clinic in Kigali, Rwanda. Leaving from the States with a suitcase and a carry-on stuffed with dental equipment and supplies, I really did not know what to expect.

We were assigned to the Kigali Hospital Center, a facility with four dental chairs, three dentists (25 percent of the dentists in the entire nation!), an oral surgeon from Cuba, as well as a support staff. From the very first hour, the clinic doctors were asking me to see their patients. I was happy to accommodate them as much as possible, although the schedule became pretty tight.

What a privilege to be able to do work for our brethren in the rural portions of Rwanda! While language was still a roadblock of sorts, it was overcome by smiles, warm embraces, appreciation on both sides, some helpful interpreters and spending time together. Services the next Sabbath were once again one of the highlights of my life. My patients and I now have a special bond, and it was visible and palpable by the look in their eyes, the warm smiles on their faces and the mutual regret that our time together had to come to an end. And their smiles are cleaner and brighter (and bigger) than before!

Greg Swartz

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

are offered in the on-site restaurants. Free shuttle bus service connects guests with the efficient Singaporean mass transit system, which operates more than 18 hours a day.

Room rates for the Orchid Country Club are listed in Singapore dollars (S\$), including 5 percent goods and services tax (GST). Prices are per room (or suite, as indicated) per night. The current exchange rate is approximately S\$1 equals US\$0.63 or US\$1 equals S\$1.58 (www.xe.com).

- Deluxe twin room (one queen bed and one single bed or two single beds), includes breakfast: S\$116 (single occupancy) and S\$126 (double occupancy). Extra bed is S\$37, includes breakfast for one person.

- Deluxe family room (one queen bed and two single beds) for two adults/two children, includes breakfast for four: S\$147.

- Deluxe suite (two bedrooms and one living room), includes breakfast for four persons: S\$315.

A brief listing of local sites and attractions includes the Singapore Botanical Gardens, Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, Chinese Gardens, Jurong Bird Park, Underwater World, Sentosa Island, the Asian Civilizations Museums, the Merlion and the Singapore Science Centre. A wide variety of tourism information is available from the Singaporean Tourism Web site www.visitsingapore.com.

For further information and bookings at the Orchid Country Club, contact Jeff Caudle by mail at P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1015, New Zealand; by phone at +64-9-817 5496; or by e-mail at jeff_caudle@ucg.org.

Jeff Caudle

Electronic Contributions Being Studied

Treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick gave the Council of Elders a brief overview May 10 of preliminary research by a task force into the feasibility and advisability of using an electronic system for contributions to the Church. The Council asked Dr. Kirkpatrick to provide more information at the meetings in August.

Don Henson

President Gives Hymnal Update

UCGIA President Clyde Kilough gave the Council an update on the new hymnal project May 10. He said it is not likely that the hymnal will be ready prior to this year's Feast of Tabernacles, as hoped. He emphasized that the goal is to "get it right," not to get it fast.

See "News at a Glance," page 16

Beyond Today Television Program Begins Airing in Canada

Airing of the *Beyond Today* program began in selected areas in Canada on the Christian Television network at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, May 21. (The Christian Television network is currently available only to Rogers digital cable subscribers in Ontario but will be expanded across Canada over the next several months.)

The *Beyond Today* television program also began on Vision TV at 11 p.m. on Sunday evening, May 21, on the West Coast. There is no adjustment for different time zones, so the program airs at 2 a.m. Monday, Eastern Daylight Savings time and at 3 a.m. in the Maritimes (3:30 a.m. in Newfoundland). Vision TV is

available across Canada on cable and satellite.

Response for the very first showing was 15 calls from six provinces. "This is even better than what we had hoped for," said Anthony Wasilkoff.

The Council of Elders passed a resolution May 11 allowing *Beyond Today* to

be aired in Canada on a month-to-month basis as a market test. The resolution also stipulates that until the airing of *Beyond Today* has completed its research and development stage in the United States, airing the program in any other part of the world requires Council approval.

Edwin van Pelt and Don Henson

Brethren in Malawi Experience Growth in the Midst of Hardship

by Nicholas Mbicholo

The Church in Malawi, once a British protectorate in central Africa, is growing, and *The Good News* magazine is reaching all corners of the country.

There are about 50 members across the country in two congregations, over 300 kilometers (about 200 miles) apart. About half are in the country's capital, Lilongwe, in the central region where elder Gladstone Chonde feeds the flock.

The other group of a similar number is in the commercial city of Blantyre in the southern region where recently ordained deacon Elifazi Salawila serves.

South Africa-based pastor Bill Jahns regularly visits Malawi. There are two prospective members counseling for baptism on the heels of one baptism after the Feast last year.

Feast preparations have started. The Feast is to be held at the same place it has been held the last three years, the Nkopola Lodge on Lake Malawi. International visitors are expected.

Against the background of Malawi's poor economy, the brethren have to rely on the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ to see them through.

Like other countries struggling to survive, Malawi's 12 million people face critical conditions such as HIV/AIDS, which has left behind a million orphans, and a recurring famine. In addition, the chief export crop, tobacco, is declining due to global antismoking awareness.

To comfort the Malawi brethren, brethren in Canada have donated famine-relief funds. Another form of relief is from LifeNets grants. Some brethren in Canada have assisted in their

livelihood development projects.

In Blantyre, there are plans to build a house for worship services. A senior member, Gilton Gwire Chakhaza, who first listened to the gospel over the radio in 1955 preached by the late Herbert W. Armstrong and who was baptized in 1975, is helping with the site acquisition for the Church building.

Blantyre sits on the eastern edge of the Great Rift Valley. Experts trace a geological fault line from Damascus through Jerusalem, along the Nile River and through Malawi. This may be the fault line described in Zechariah 14:4 that will burst at the coming of Christ.

Despite geological threats and other possible prophetic disasters, the brethren in Malawi exhibit high spiritual morale. Like a mustard seed bearing abundance, there has been a big increase from only

18 in 2002 to 48 members who took the Passover in 2006.

The Blantyre deacon, Mr. Salawila said, "We were only eight including Dr. Chilopora when we first met in 2001. Later in the year, on Sept. 27, we, including Mr. Gladstone Chonde, met Victor Kubik in Lilongwe."

Malawi has 12 senior members whose ages are between 62 and 75. There is one widow and there are three widowers.

Sabbath lessons are being prepared and will be taught by Loney Mpilangwe. Bilton Salawila, a son of the deacon, who runs a private school of music, regularly conducts choirs in Blantyre.

The Church in Malawi is growing stronger in faith day by day. Despite social problems, there is hope of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. UN

GCE Exit Survey Results Presented to Council of Elders

On May 9, Ken Giese, chairman of the GCE Planning Task Force, gave the Council of Elders an overview of exit survey results compiled after the conclusion of this year's conference, which concluded May 8. Total attendance at the conference was 370 (210 elders and 160 elders' wives). Approximately 100 elders and 68 wives responded to the survey.

- Primary reasons for attending the GCE are fellowship opportunities, the

business meeting, workshops and lectures. Many stated that they attended for "all" of the conference activities.

- Similarly, the areas of most value included fellowship opportunities, keynote address by the president, workshops and lectures, business meeting and international reports.

- Of those who completed the survey, 96 percent of the elders and 91 percent of the wives indicated they were "satisfied" or "very sat-

isfied" with the conference.

- 92 percent said that they plan to attend next year (down 3 percent from last year).

- 84 percent of those responding planned to attend the workshops and lectures on Monday.

Areas of opportunity for improving the conference include attracting more elders and wives to participate, continuing to improve the fellowship aspects of the weekend and maintain-

ing the level of attention to wives at the meeting.

The Council offered suggestions for changes to some of the social events and modifications to the exit survey form to help gather additional helpful feedback from those attending.

Mr. Giese and the Council agreed that the conference once again this year was very positive and successful.

Don Henson

Education Programs Task Force Established

Clyde Kilough updated the Council of Elders May 10 on the progress in developing a comprehensive plan for the Church's education programs.

As part of the update he announced that Dave Register, director of education programs, has established an Education Programs Task Force, made up of UCG members who have professional background and experience in public and corporate education programs.

Their responsibility will be to help

develop an outcome-based criteria for measuring the effectiveness of education programs in the future. Members of the task force are:

- Andy Burnett—elder, teacher, former school principal, church pastor.
- Eileen Clark—director of quality control, excellence evaluator.
- Scott Delamater—Web designer for youth Web sites.
- Michelle Delamater—preschool/elementary teacher.

- Glen Doig—elder, counselor, Ph.D. candidate in family studies.

- John Karlik—deacon, Ph.D., professor and mentor.

- Kay Schreiber—pastor's wife, curriculum coordinator Arizona schools.

- Judy Servidio—pastor's wife, women's education coordinator.

- Keith Tomes—elementary school principal, Ph.D.

- Julie Zutz—director of marketing, promotions writer and editor.

Mr. Register is also evaluating suggestions for new or expanded educational programs in a number of areas such as a preschool program, an improved teen program and local leadership clubs.

The education programs area is developing an overall proposal outlining outcome-based educational programs that will be presented to the Council in August of this year.

Don Henson

"Denver," continued from page 1

- Where do we find potential pastors?
- Working with the younger generation.
- Godly leadership: The heart of a servant.

- Models of mentoring.
- Working with smaller congregations.

- Working with the present leadership in congregations.
- Where do we go from here?

Four of the sessions were conducted by pastors from the Mountain

Region. A great deal of interaction took place in the sessions, and we all came away with a much better concept of not only the need, but how to go about finding and training future elders and pastors. The ladies who were present added excellent insights in their comments.

The feedback from the group was overwhelmingly positive, and some of the men expressed that it was the best conference they've attended in United. At the very least, the conference provided an excellent beginning for the series to follow in other regions. UN

GCE: "Service and Leadership—Today, Tomorrow and Beyond"

"GCE," continued from page 1

- Geoff and Judy Nelson
 - Jonathan and Deborah Pinelli
 - David and Jolinda Schreiber
 - David and Sarah Witt
- Mr. Dick then conducted the balloting (see sidebar for "Balloting Results").

Zeal Revisited

After the balloting Mr. Dick introduced Clyde Kilough for the keynote address, "Zeal Revisited: Service and Leadership Through the Eyes of Paul."

Mr. Kilough began with the example he used last year of Christ driving out the moneychangers in John 2. Christ's zeal for His Father's house had not faded later when He again drove out the moneychangers in Mark 11.

Christ loves His temple today, the Church. Mr. Kilough said he believes Christ looks down on the Church today and sees a people who are zealous in wanting to serve and lead like Him. This year's theme of service and leadership was chosen because it reflects this desire to grow even more in these areas.

We have built a foundation of this study in previous years, but in addition to Christ's example, there are other examples we can examine, such as Paul, who said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

Acts 20 gives the powerful story of Paul addressing the elders in Ephesus. Paul reminded them of his example—that he had served the Lord with all humility. It's hard to say you are humble without showing vanity, but Mr. Kilough pointed out that Paul truly had hard-earned humility. He had gone through beatings, stonings, shipwreck, hunger, as well as his deep care of the churches (2 Corinthians 11). Also, he was facing a thorn in the flesh. Paul was practicing what the book *Good to Great* said was a top level of leadership—to have great ambition for the institution, not for himself.

Paul's conversion went to his heart, cut him deeply, moved him. He taught with feeling and invested himself in His care for the brethren.

Mr. Kilough said one of the simplest ways to have zeal is to be around those who have zeal. He advised avoiding regular contact with zeal killers. An effective ministry will be one that spreads zeal to those around.

In Acts 20:22 Paul said he was going to Jerusalem "bound in the spirit," even though it meant facing further trials. Mr. Kilough encouraged the elders to ask, "What am I bound to?" Psalm 118:27 mentions the sacrifice being bound by cords to the horns of the altar. We are to be living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). Paul considered that he was a drink offering being poured out. The human heart is restless, so it needs to be bound to God's work. The cords are the vows we made at baptism, the calling God gave us and the love for the brethren.

Paul found that there is a joy that comes in this sacrificial fulfillment of ministerial duty. He taught the Ephesians the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:24, 27).

Mr. Kilough encouraged the elders to

remember how Jesus' teaching affected the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" (Luke 24:32). It takes a sacrificial spirit to dig deeper into the Word of God to open the Scriptures to reach the heart.

Mr. Kilough said every person in the Church is valuable to God. Paul told the Ephesian elders to "take heed." We have to be on guard. The ministry faces all the temptations common to man plus more, from flattery to weariness in well-doing. Paul gave warnings with tears about external and internal dangers. It



Spanish ministers sing during Sabbath services May 6; Anthony Wasilkoff gives split sermon (photos by Janet Treadway)

takes discernment to guard the flock, to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

We all need a heart of sacrifice and giving as Paul displayed. Paul prayed with the Ephesian elders before saying his final farewell, then they all wept freely.

We have also had a rugged path these last 15 years. Mr. Kilough encouraged the elders to follow and lead down the narrow path that says love, duty, honor, sacrifice. This type of leadership cuts through the fog of sin and temptation with a zeal that is steady and ingrained.

Australia

Australian National Council Chairman Bill Eddington led off the five international reports scheduled for this year. Each international area is scheduled for a presentation every three years.

He gave some demographic facts about Australia, including that 92 percent of the population is Caucasian and 7 percent Asian, and that there is 100 percent literacy in the country. Professing Christians have declined to just 67.4 percent of the population, with unspecified religions making up 28 percent.

Australia is just south of Indonesia, one of the largest Muslim nations in the world, and by accepting refugees from rebel areas of Indonesia, Australia risks angering Indonesia.

The United Church of God in Australia also serves the country of Papua New Guinea, where the median age is only 21.2 years, there are many ethnic groups and only 1 to 2 percent have English as their first language. So there are many challenges in spreading the gospel there.

The ministry in Australia is spread thin, covering many congregations

each. Attendance at the Feast was 621; 544 is the average weekly attendance. There were 19 baptisms last year and the *Good News* circulation is 20,800, of which 18,550 are subscribers. *World News and Prophecy* circulation is 1,998, which has a major impact on the mailing budget since it comes out every month. There are also about 800 *Bible Study Course* graduates in Australia.

The Church in Australia uses volunteers extensively in spreading the gospel and is using the Web a great deal as well.

Romanian, Russian, Serbian and soon in Swedish.

Mr. Kubik also mentioned that he had been working with Sabbath keepers in Ukraine since 1990. About 10,000 Sabbatarians are in the area around Ukraine. He talked about the resettling of a group of Sabbatarians from a dangerous situation in Tajikistan to Ukraine in 1997. These people have adopted the Holy Days (which many Sabbatarians don't). He mentioned that the LifeNets charity he founded is helping with street children and other projects in Ukraine. He also said there is a lot of interest in the Church from the nation of Romania.

Nigeria

Mark Mickelson, pastor of the Kennewick and Spokane, Washington/Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, congregations, reported on the work of the Church in Nigeria, where he assists senior pastor Fred Kellers.

Mr. Mickelson explained that the northern part of Nigeria is Muslim, while the southern part is mainly Christian. Violence between those groups flared up earlier this year, and Jim Franks on his recent trip traveled right through the area where fighting had occurred. There are over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, and the median age is under 19—42 percent are under 15. The Church in Nigeria will be having a youth camp for the first time this summer. There are congregations in Lagos, Benin City and Owerri.

Even police at roadblocks trying to get his money were generally very positive about ministers and would ask him to pray for them. He said he obliged, praying that they would stop being corrupt and taking advantage of other people! In the Nigerian culture, political leaders lord it over the people and husbands often lord it over their families. To teach the leaders to be kind and caring is challenging.

The Church has provided seminars in Nigeria almost every year. We have also given a seminar to the Church of God—Nigeria.

Our brethren in Nigeria face economic hardships and health problems. When you stand up for the truth in Nigeria, you can be risking your home and your health. One family was denied access to the community well and was forced to move. Without a source of good water, their children became ill and required medical care.

Mini-banks have been established with donations from the United States to help members start businesses.

Mr. Mickelson said because the people are receptive to religion and English is widely spoken, the opportunity to preach the gospel there is wide open. There are 6,500 *GN* subscribers. Our recently ordained elder there, Dare Akinbo, started a Web site, which—with no advertising—received 800 hits in the first month.

Southern Africa

Bill Jahns, who pastors the congregations in Malawi and in Johannesburg, South Africa, presented the report on Southern Africa this year.

In South Africa, there are four churches with 204 in attendance. In Zambia there are two churches, and attendance is 160. In Malawi, there are two churches with 95 in attendance. In Zimbabwe, attendance is about 20.

Mr. Jahns showed photos of the congregations with commentary about the difficulties faced in various areas. He pointed out that Johannesburg has been called the crime capital of the world. He described the roads in Zambia and what a toll they had taken on elder Kambani Banda's car. He explained how the government of another country had been taking farms away from those of another ethnic group. The brethren in Malawi had recently suffered a severe drought, especially in the southern part of the country. A Church member who is a nurse, age 76, was infected with HIV while trying to give a shot to someone. The brethren in the region have been very thankful for various Good Works Program projects that have helped in various ways.

Neil and Erline Becker run the office in East London, South Africa. There are 11,740 *GN* subscribers. Also, there has been an exciting 55 percent increase in donations from readers!

Mr. Jahns also mentioned that the brethren in South Africa encourage visitors to come to the Feast there. The modern infrastructure, pleasant accommodations and natural beauty make it an enjoyable place to keep the Feast.

Spanish Region

Leon Walker gave an overview of the Spanish-speaking areas, which includes 43 congregations, plus 23 audio or video groups (including one in United States). The Spanish region includes 16 countries and is served by 20 ministers, 12 of whom are employed by the Church. Many of the congregations are large ones, including Santiago, Chile, which has 314 in attendance. There are now 1,169 members in the Spanish region, with an attendance of 2,393—more than a 35 percent increase since 1996.

Circulation of the Spanish *Good News* is now about 20,000 and will increase to 22,000 next year.

Ballot Results

Secretary Gerald Seelig announced Sunday afternoon, May 7, that all three documents had been ratified:

- The Strategic Plan passed with 305 yes to 23 no.
- The Operation Plan passed 302 yes to 26 no.
- The budget passed 290 yes to 38 no.

The Council members chosen were announced Monday morning, May 8:

- Robert Dick
- Bill Eddington (international)
- Richard Pinelli
- Richard Thompson

They now have a central Web page in the Spanish area that looks like the main UCG Web page, but with the words in Spanish. They are in the process of producing local Web pages for different countries, including Feast site information, camp information, etc.

Half of the members in the southern area of South America live in Santiago, but how do we serve the scattered members without a resident pastor? We have a live cybercast of services from Santiago, and there is also a webcast from Mexico.

Another development is that about 100 members have returned to the Church recently. Mr. Walker told two stories about members who remained faithful to the truth, but didn't know anyone else was still keeping the Holy Days, etc. When they found out about United, they were very happy.

Tribute to the Deceased Elders and Wives

Ken Giese led a tribute to 11 elders and wives, with photos, tributes from family and friends and a printed brochure. Those remembered were Anne Burchar, Elmer Conley, Jo Ann Dennis, Mildred Prettyman, John Robinson, Irene Schnippert, Marge Seiver, Onnie Thompson, Harold Treybig, Jack Yeager and Yvonne Young.

Address From the President

Mr. Kilough said that God has blessed us immensely over the years. The Church is in a stable condition, ready to reach the world. The financial condition is encouraging. Ministerial Services is going through a restructuring that will bear good fruit. Media is growing.

In the areas that needed to be restructured, he explained it was best to do it now before those areas become a crisis. People have been wearing too many hats, so we have tried to take some off. Because of the manpower challenge, Richard Pinelli was asked to focus on training the trainers of future ministers. Because of the importance of education and the need for coordination to avoid duplication of effort, Dave Register was asked to coordinate that area.

Mr. Kilough said our focus in the coming year will be on the media area. He explained that in United teams have done our best work, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety. So a media think tank or steering committee of four or five people, in addition to Mr. Kilough and Peter Eddington, will be formed. This group will be evaluating where we are and asking questions like, Is it working? What new ideas can we try? He said the names of those to serve on this team will be announced a little later.

Mr. Kilough reminded everyone that we are all here because of the labors of those who have gone before us, and so we have a responsibility to those who will come after us.

Address From the Treasurer

Tom Kirkpatrick was happy to report that we are nearing the end of another year of God's blessing, where the

income, it appears, will be above the \$20.3 million budgeted amount. He thanked God and the members for their faithful support. He said the income has increased nicely, especially in the last couple of months, but we must still continue to manage the finances conservatively.

He explained the background principles for the budgeting process. First, provide funding for the operational imperatives of the Church: preaching the gospel and preparing a people. Then live within a balanced budget and address



Jim Haeffele, Chris Moen, Fred Kellers, Todd Carey, Rick Beam and Mike Grovak show their talents at the talent show; left, Clyde Kilough receives information from Jerry Rehor, who headed the sound crew (photos by Janet Treadway)

long-term challenges and needs.

He said the Church is sitting on a demographic time bomb. We face retirement and health-care costs for an aging workforce, legacy costs that have been inadequately planned for. We have an aging donor base. And we need to replace ministers. He mentioned a history of periodic instability and crisis in the Church and a history of often making pleas to members for more money, leading some members to wonder why the Church can't live within its budget.

Only this year have we reached the goal of a minimum of 10 weeks in cash reserves before the Fall Holy Days. A strong foundation has been poured and is hardened, Dr. Kirkpatrick said, and we need to keep people with jackhammers away from it. He said he recognizes that a few million dollars in reserve seems like a lot. He asked, Could having some money in the bank tempt us to be Laodicean and to let down in zeal? It could, but shame on us if we do, he said.

The Year-to-Date Cash Flow Report provided by Dr. Kirkpatrick showed that income had exceeded expenses by \$742,000 as of May 5. Since the Church has this year, for the first time, met the Council-mandated minimum 10 weeks of cash reserves, some of the extra income will be available to boost the work of the Church.

Address From Ministerial Services

Jim Franks reported that there are now 89 full-time U.S. pastors and 10 other employees in the Ministerial Services area. There are 214 congregations in the United States and about 400 congregations around the world. The average age of U.S. pastors is 58.3 years. The oldest pastor is age 80, and Gary Black is the youngest at age 40.

Mr. Franks explained that the Church plans to hire more ministers. We have full-time pastors assigned to all congregations now, but we must be looking ahead for more. We are unabashedly saying we are looking for younger men. It is a great career, he said.

Mr. Franks also reported on some of the changes in Ministerial Services. He mentioned Dave and Becky Johnson's and Dave and Linda Register's moves to Cincinnati. He discussed working with the senior pastors in three areas of Africa and with Dave Baker in Asia. He also mentioned the Ministerial Development Program conferences that will be held in all U.S. regions, as well as in Canada,

the Philippines, the United Kingdom and Latin America.



Jim Haeffele, Chris Moen, Fred Kellers, Todd Carey, Rick Beam and Mike Grovak show their talents at the talent show; left, Clyde Kilough receives information from Jerry Rehor, who headed the sound crew (photos by Janet Treadway)

long-term challenges and needs.

Address From Media and Communications Services

Peter Eddington thanked media employees and the elders who serve as editors and writers for Church publications. He mentioned that his focus in this report would be on the use of the Internet in preaching the gospel. The Internet is becoming the major mass media. Penetration has hit an all-time high in the United States, and 42 percent now have broadband connections!

Mr. Eddington gave a number of *Beyond Today* statistics showing the rapid growth of visitors to the *Beyond Today* Web site as well as the number of people responding to the program (see the May *United News* for details). He also showed several video clips from *Beyond Today*.

He also mentioned some of the cutting-edge methods of getting the message out. For example, so far Google has 16 *Beyond Today* programs posted for free, and many searchers are downloading it from their site. Also, Apple's iTunes browser has *Beyond Today* programs available, and users can "subscribe" to receive future programs there.

Mr. Eddington mentioned that plans are to make the programs available to international areas as well. We will keep on putting the program on cable-access TV as well as the Internet.

Mr. Eddington also mentioned that TV didn't kill radio. Actually now there are more choices than ever. Satellite radio, Internet radio and podcasts—we're using all three. Also, we're still using broadcast radio as well. Now 52 million people are listening to Internet radio. Also the active podcast audience is now 3 million, but is expected to reach 15 million by 2010.

Mr. Eddington also mentioned the use of keyword advertising on the Internet. For example, there were 6.62 million

impressions of our Easter-related keywords on Google and Yahoo in April. From those who clicked on our ads, 1,484 became *GN* subscribers.

Also, there has been a 278 percent increase in visits to our *gnmagazine.org* Web site in the last year.

Mr. Eddington said we aim to allocate an even greater percentage to Internet advertising, while maintaining a strong print advertising program. He mentioned the growth in the number of coworkers and donors, and he asked for prayers that this trend will continue.

He said it's nice to see us being quoted by others. For example, the History Channel contacted us to talk to Mario Seigle about the Exodus. The Caribbean Examination Council wanted to use our material on teen sex and a PR firm in New York wanted to provide guests to appear on *Beyond Today*.

Although the *GN* print runs have been level, there has been a 4 percent increase in U.S. subscribers.

Because of the strong income, Media and Communications was just given approval to take out additional advertising (print and Internet, including outside the United States). Mr. Eddington said we believe the seeds we are sowing will bear fruit. Please continue to pray for the Church's media efforts.

Address From the Chairman

Mr. Dick rehearsed the themes from the letters he sent out before the last three Council meetings, addressing the approach and direction of the Council.

His Aug. 19, 2005, letter talked about beginning a unified report from the president, along with his team, rather than individual reports. Second, the Council asked for written reports in advance, and then used the time during the Council meetings to ask questions and discuss the material. Third, he addressed using the Operation Plan as a basis for outcomes-based reporting. This year's plan is a step forward, but still more metrics are needed in future plans. One of the outcomes of these steps was to streamline the Council meetings, lopping off a day.

Mr. Dick mentioned that the president had asked the Council to tell him how they want him to relate to the international areas. This raised the bigger question of the roles of the Council and

the administration, which the Council is continuing to explore.

Mr. Dick said we are a fruit-based organization. We must promote growth. He said he found it exciting to see the growth in the donor and coworker numbers. Where your money is, your heart will be also, so he sees these people making a further commitment in the future.

So what does it mean that the Council is to govern? James 3:4 uses the term "governor" (KJV)—the governor's role in this verse is to steer. The Council is to steer, to convey the vision. The Council wants the president to preside.

Mr. Dick said the challenges for the future include: How to preach the gospel today. How to retain the young people in the Church. How to prepare the next generation of leaders. How to care for those employees who have given their lives to the Church and are reaching retirement.

After Mr. Dick's address and announcements, the meeting was adjourned. In the afternoon and evening the elders and wives were able to attend a question-and-answer session with the Council of Elders and a stress-free, fun-filled talent show.

Concluding Remarks

After the workshops on Monday (see below), Mr. Dick thanked everyone who contributed to making this GCE a success, including the GCE planning committee, chaired by Ken Giese, which has been working on it much of the year.

He talked about the spirit of calm and settledness enjoyed at this meeting. He related the story of a Cherokee elder talking to two of his grandchildren. The grandfather told them that we all have two wolves fighting inside of us: one of love and good, one of hate and bad. The grandchildren asked, Which wolf will win? The grandfather replied: Which-ever one you feed.

Mr. Dick then read Philippians 4:8, reminding the audience to think on these good things. The verse before it tells us about the peace of God that passes understanding. He said he hoped everyone would enjoy the peace that was felt here throughout the coming year.

Mr. Dick called on Dennis Luker, regional pastor and pastor of the Seattle, Washington, congregation, to close the meeting in prayer.

Mike Bennett

GCE Workshops Held May 8

On Monday, GCE attendees could participate in three workshops from the following:

- Effective Preaching Every Week (Randy Schreiber and Donald Ward).
- Identifying and Working With Future Leaders (Richard Pinelli and Lyle Welty).
- Equipped for Works of Service (Jim Servidio and Dave Myers).
- Be the Spiritual Leader You Were Meant to Be (Bill Bradford and Doug Horchak).
- Computer/Technology Workshop (Richard Kennebeck, Ken Treybig, Paul Wasilkoff and Dan Dowd)
- Women Sharing and Fulfilling Titus 2:3-5 (Jenny Bradford, Dyanne Dick, Dee Kilough, Marian Sargent and Jane Suckling).
- Cancer—Healthy Perspectives for an Effective Ministry (Dr. Dan Berendt and Dr. Rick Berendt).



Randy Schreiber leads a workshop (photo by Peter Eddington)



From the Word

Making Sense of World News

■ Christians are told to be watching and aware of the trends taking place in the world around us. But with news coming at us 24 hours a day, it can seem overwhelming. How can we get a proper handle on world news from a biblical point of view?

by John Ross Schroeder

As the weeks and months roll by, a few surprises emerge in the news, as well as what we generally expect to happen.

Actually, knowing what to expect is an important key in filtering through the flood of news and in understanding the significance of individual occurrences that over time can and do become overall trends in the news.

To know what to look for is essential if we are going to obtain the most from our reading and viewing—whether by newspapers, magazines, radio, television or the Internet.

In the midst of all these themes that will characterize the end time, we need the encouragement of remembering the good news of God's coming Kingdom—the solution to all these problems. This wondrous knowledge helps us to lead the balanced, abundant life that Jesus promised (John 10:10).

Major Themes From the Bible

World events should be seen and understood in the light of Bible prophecy, of course (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36). Between a fourth and a third of the Scriptures consists of predictive prophecy.

Over the last 60 years or so the Church of God has emphasized several major themes with which we should all be very familiar. They serve as good general guidelines and undergird our understanding of the news—helping us to evaluate world events with some of the wisdom that comes from God. The Church serves as our Creator's modern watchmen.

It is not a responsibility that members of God's Church can ignore or neglect. So what trends should we be watching?

1) The Rise of a European-Centered Superpower

Several chapters in both Daniel and Revelation provide the primary source material, which we put together with what we understand from secular history. In broad historical outline God's revelation to the prophet Daniel disclosed the identity of four major empires on the world

scene. The last of these, the Roman Empire, was to experience seven resurrections after its original appearance—the final of which is yet to come (Revelation 17:10).

The book of Revelation talks about this last resurrection of the Roman Empire. The emerging "beast" power will be a powerful political force undergirded by a major religious organization headed by a miracle-working false prophet—combined to produce the most dangerous, over-arching dictatorship that mankind will ever experience. "All the world marveled and followed the beast" (Revelation 13:3). The true people of God will be in mortal danger (read verse 7 for yourself).

For more on this, read or reread our publication *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

2) The Prophesied Decline of the Modern English-Speaking Nations

A missing dimension in the proper understanding of biblical prophecy has been a general lack of knowledge of the identity of the modern descendants of Israel, and particularly of the patriarch Joseph. Careful biblical and

historical research shows that these consist of the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. (See our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

After World War II we witnessed the rapid decline of the British Empire as nation after nation in Africa and Asia gained or was given independence, beginning with India and Pakistan in 1947. Now the United States, as the world's only real superpower, is beginning to come to terms with its limitations in influencing world politics.

At the end time the English-speaking nations are prophesied to continue their descent into sin with massive violations of the Ten Commandments along with their historical rejection of the seventh-day Sabbath and God's annual Holy Days. Many of these countries have been in serious spiritual decline, especially in the last half century.

In the last few years America in particular has been reaping some of the curses promised to those Israelitish nations that consistently refuse to obey their Creator—after long experiencing many of the blessings promised to Abraham for his obedience (see Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26).

3) A General Increase in Violence, Selfishness and Religious Deception

Remember the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy just before his martyrdom:

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love [for 'natural affection,' KJV], unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God—having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (2 Timothy 3:1-5, NIV).

This is a devastating indictment of humanity's modern-day conduct. It's hard not to notice a marked proliferation of these trends in our world today. They punctuate our daily newspapers.

4) Jesus' Olivet Prophecy

The Olivet Prophecy is related in the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). This prophecy of Jesus Christ is dual in nature and covers events from the sacking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to the second coming of Christ—emphasizing end-time events just before Jesus' return to earth. It specifically mentions wars, rumors of wars, famine, disease epidemics and religious deception.

The chronology of events in Matthew 24 dovetails especially well with those in the seals (the four horsemen) of Revelation 6.

5) Prophesied Unrest in the Middle East

The historic prophecy of Daniel 11 is of particular significance. It covers a period all the way from the time of Daniel in the sixth century B.C. to the return of Jesus Christ. At the end time the king of the South will push against the king of the North (Daniel 11:40), leading to the invasion and



Winston Taylor

occupation of the Holy Land (verse 41).

The events of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ will soon follow. Our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* explains in detail.

6) Isaac/Jacob vs. Ishmael/Esau

More specifically, the age-old hostility between the descendants of the patriarchs of Genesis still manifests itself in the general Arab hatred for the state of Israel and the desire of some Islamic fundamentalists to destroy the United States, Britain and Israel. This theme is especially significant because Islamic countries, particularly in the Middle East, have grown in power due to Western dependence on oil. The map of Islam in today's world is rather frightening.

Recent news reports merely confirm what we already knew. Take *The Economist* account of April 22 as an example: "Every so often unpopular Muslim regimes on the periphery of

the Palestine conflict find it expedient to propose eliminating [Israel] . . . Iran's president and chief holocaust denier, has become a leading exponent of this familiar ruse . . . What is more depressing is the rise of a similar atavistic strain of Israel-destroying rhetoric among the Palestinians themselves."

Ultimately, the rescue of the state of Israel and her English-speaking brothers will only come from the returning Messiah Himself!

7) The Gospel of the Kingdom

In the midst of all these themes that will characterize the end time, we need the encouragement of remembering the good news of God's coming Kingdom—the solution to all these problems. This wondrous knowledge helps us to lead the balanced, abundant life that Jesus promised (John 10:10). It would be good to regularly reread our booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. UN

To Better Understand the News: Some Resources

The publication *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* embraces the whole panorama of time from the creation on through Christ's millennial reign and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20) and on beyond into limitless eternity.

If you do not have copies of the free booklets mentioned in this article, please ask for them in print or download them from our Web site at www.ucg.org/booklets. They provide essential background information in understanding important world news and trends.

For more timely information, be sure to read our free newsletter *World News and Prophecy*. As the name indicates, it analyzes world news and trends in the light of Bible prophecy.

Finally, if you are not doing so already, skim through our compilation of world news items at www.ucg.org/worldnews. Every week we sift through many news sources and post summaries of and links to the most significant items, most of which tie into the major prophetic trends listed above. Significantly, many if not most of these news items receive little coverage in the mainstream media, so this may be the only place you'll read about them. A glance at any week's articles shows that events are inexorably marching forward in accordance with Bible prophecy!

Good Sex, Bad Sex

■ Satan hates everything about God, including His plan for our sexuality. God's Word teaches how to achieve sexual fulfillment as well as how to avoid sexual disasters.

by Don Hooser

All of God's creatures are designed with exquisite perfection! There are no flaws. Everything works perfectly. "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

However, only we humans were blessed to be made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). The human body and mind, including the human spirit, are incredibly awesome. "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

The second thing God said about humans was that they would have dominion "over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26). In other words, everything else on earth was made for our use and enjoyment!

Significantly, the third mentioned feature of humans is their sexuality—their maleness and femaleness (Genesis 1:27). The world is a much better and more interesting place with two complementary sexes. "Vive le difference!"

"And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (Genesis 2:18). God was primarily referring to His plan for marriage—the union of one man to one woman.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Thus God intended for them to form a separate household with their primary loyalty to each other.

Good Sex

"One flesh" means a powerful and permanent partnership that would draw them into ever-closer intimacy physically, mentally and spiritually. God clearly meant for it to include regular sexual relations to foster that intimacy (1 Corinthians 6:16-20; 7:2-4). That is good sex, even godly sex—God's precious gift to be shared exclusively by husbands and wives.

What Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:20 about "glorify God in your body and in your spirit" has many applications. However, the context shows Paul was specifically referring to glorifying God by abstaining from sex before marriage and then enjoying it to the full within marriage.

God instituted marriage, but let's also remember that a desire to marry should be much less important than to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 even explains some strong advantages in remaining single.

When God ordained marriage, His plan was for most married couples to have children—to "be fruitful and mul-

tiply" (Genesis 1:28). God is in the awesome process of greatly expanding His family! And children are a great blessing (Psalm 127 and 128).

Especially precious in God's sight are "godly offspring"—children who are "holy" because their parents are holy (Malachi 2:15; 1 Corinthians 7:14).

Bad Sex

Any sexual relations or activities outside of marriage are bad. They are sinful and evil as they break God's laws; adulterate or pollute the sanctity of marriage; do much harm physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually; and blaspheme the profound portrayal of the marriage of Jesus Christ with the Church (1 Corinthians 6:9-18; Ephesians 5:25-33; Revelation 19:7-9).

Those who want to discredit the Bible accuse God of being repressive, ascetic, antipleasure and antisex. This couldn't be further from the truth! God is the One who designed us, made us sexual and instructed married couples to "become one flesh"! The Song of Solomon describes ideal married love, which is sensual and sacred, passionate and pure.

Just think, God carefully designed every detail of our bodies and minds, including our sexual organs, hormones, etc. The sexual organs of animals are designed only for reproduction, whereas those of humans are intended also for pleasure—even when conception is not possible. Our unique biology and anatomy demonstrate God's wonderful love for us.

Physical bodies are not the least bit evil, and sex in marriage should not seem shameful. When the Bible speaks of "sins of the flesh" (Colossians 2:11), the word translated "flesh" does not mean the human body—it means sinful human nature (compare the New International Version translation).

Proverbs 5:18-19 illustrates the purity, beauty and sensuality of marital love: "Let your fountain be blessed, and and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured [captivated, exhilarated, intoxicated] with her love."

But notice the strong warning before and after this scripture to only "drink water from your own cistern"—get sexual satisfaction only from your spouse (verse 15 and the rest of chapter 5).

We also see the contrast between godly sex and immoral sex in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." The Greek word translated "bed" is *coitus*—which is now also an English word meaning sexual intercourse.

God's Laws Are Good for Us

"God is love" (1 John 4:8). Out of love for us, He gave us His perfect laws—to keep us from harm and to bring us maximum blessings.

All types of sexual sins are prohibited by the Seventh Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). To protect the blessedness of marriage, the Bible specifically

warns against extramarital sex (adultery), premarital sex (fornication), homosexuality, incest, bestiality, prostitution, sexual worship, gender confusion (cross-dressing) and sex during a woman's period.

The Tenth Commandment is closely related to the Seventh. "You shall not covet [lust for] your neighbor's wife . . . or anything that is your neighbor's" (Deuteronomy 5:21). This shows that obeying God with our minds and hearts is as important as obeying God with our actions.

This is partly because thoughts lead to actions—sinful thoughts lead to sinful actions. When one allows lust in his mind, he is tempted to take further steps to pursue that lust.

But that is not the only reason. God looks on the heart and He wants us to have a heart like His (1 Samuel 16:7; Deuteronomy 5:29). He wants us to wage spiritual warfare against wrong thoughts to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). God says one purpose of the New Covenant is to "put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10).

Jesus Christ made it clear in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 through 7) that we must obey God in the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law.

He said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Think carefully about this. This is a "hard saying," especially for us men, but Jesus meant what He said—literally. Just because practically "everyone is doing it" is no excuse. The immodest dress and actions of people in this highly sexualized society makes it tough, but that is no excuse either. Jesus was dead serious. In fact, it is a matter of life and death, because the penalty of sin is death in the lake of fire.

This means more than the technical wording. It of course means that when a woman lusts for a man, she is committing adultery as well. The Bible often states the most common example to represent the general principle.

It also means that all mental lusting is sin, even when not looking at a woman. At least in Western society, there is more lusting over pictures, images on a screen, and/or fantasies and imaginations than while looking directly at women. This has been Satan's world for thousands of years, but now modern technology makes many more opportunities for sin. For example, the vilest pornography can easily be brought into one's home via the Internet.

Flee Temptations!

Jesus went on to say more. In His next two shocking statements, He is referring back to what He just said about not committing adultery in your heart. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be

cast into hell [Greek, *gehenna*]" (verse 29).

Then Jesus practically repeated Himself, using a slightly different example, to put maximum emphasis on this principle. "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you" (verse 30).

It should be obvious that eyes and hands are not the causes of sin. Jesus meant that we should do whatever it takes, no matter how drastic, no matter how great the sacrifice, to keep from sinning. We should get away from temptations or get the temptations away from us as quickly as possible. It is foolish and dangerous for one to stay near a temptation trusting in his own fragile strength to resist it because "the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

God makes it absolutely clear that He expects His people to flee from temptations. "Flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). "O man of God, flee these things [love of money and other temptations]" (1 Timothy 6:11). "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22).

This includes not "hanging out" with people who are of weak character and are potentially bad influences. The Bible frequently warns about this danger. See Proverbs 2:16; 4:14-19; 5:1-23; 6:23-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; 13:20; 14:7; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 15:33; 1 Peter 4:4; and Revelation 2:14, 20.

Proverbs is a book of wisdom, and notice that the first several chapters are largely devoted to warning people to stay away from those who are provocative and seductive.

Likewise, we must do our best to never be a bad influence, to never be a "stumbling block" to someone, to never cause "one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin . . . woe to that man [or woman] by whom the offence comes" (1 Corinthians 8:9; Matthew 18:6-7).

Those who are called by God to become part of His Church should have the highest standards for choosing companions (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). We should only consider marriage with someone with whom we are highly compatible. "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

And God's Word makes it clear that if one is called to be in God's Church ("in the Lord"), he or she can only choose to marry someone "in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39).

The things God created with the greatest power and potential for good also have the greatest potential for evil. One of those is our sexuality. An extremely important part of our character is how we rule over our sexuality.

Immoral sex has always been one of the greatest temptations down through history, even for members of God's Church and their children. Practically every book in the New Testament warns about the great danger of sexual temptation! Speaking of children, parents—please teach and prepare your children well!

Remaining morally pure means much more than just not "going all the way."



An artist's rendition of Joseph fleeing from Potiphar's wife

When one correctly thinks of sexual intercourse as being the whole process of initial intimacy and arousal all the way through to the climax and after-play, it becomes clear that engaging in any part of it outside marriage is contrary to God's will. Oral sex and all alternatives to vaginal intercourse are likewise forbidden outside of marriage.

Much of what has been called necking, petting, making out, fooling around, etc., was meant by God to be the intimacy, stimulation, wooing and foreplay that would be special and sacred for a husband and wife because they had never been shared with anyone else.

You can read in Ezekiel 23 about how God is dismayed and disgusted with the immorality of His people, characterized by women whose "breasts were fondled and their virgin bosoms caressed" (verse 3, NIV).

If you are single, please protect until marriage what is of incredible value—your virginity. "Virgin" is a beautiful word. We speak of virgin forests, virgin land and virgin wool. It means unused, unspoiled, uncut, unplowed, uncorrupted, innocent or spotless. "Don't excite love, don't stir it up, until the time is ripe—and you're ready [you are married]" (Song of Solomon 2:7, MSG).

If a person has already lost his or her virginity before marriage, the person should dedicate himself or herself to a life of what has been called "secondary virginity." That means one deeply repents, is forgiven by God, abstains from sex from then until marriage and prays for God to "create in me a clean heart, O God!" (Psalm 51:10). God will mercifully respond with gradual healing and cleansing of the mind and heart.

The Church is to be a "chaste virgin to Christ" awaiting His coming and "the marriage of the Lamb" to His Bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7).

May we be deeply inspired to follow that pattern of loyalty, patience and purity. Then when one relies on God to be his or her Matchmaker and ultimately gets married, he or she can experience the full joy of God's blessings without any shame or mental and emotional scars. Such a person can truly say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3).

In the next issue, a second article is planned that will primarily be for men and teenage boys. In the following issue, an article is planned that will primarily be for women and teenage girls.

Be sure to read our wonderful new booklet, *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*, for more on all the points in this article! UN

Maintain Your True Course Through Meditation

by Arthur Morris

Ever since I was a navigator and an aircraft performance engineer in the U.S. Air Force and a few years later came into God's true Church, I have been intrigued by the physical analogy of both those endeavors to the spiritual calling God has given to His people.

Each flight we flew was called a mission; and, today, we are constantly reminded of the mission of the Church. We even have a mission statement.

A navigator's job is to guide the aircraft to its destination in spite of all the obstacles along the way. And the aircraft performance engineer's job is to be sure all systems function in the most efficient way to be sure the plane has sufficient fuel and power to reach the destination. Being in the Strategic Air Command, our mission was to be ever poised and ready to fight against an "evil empire" threatening to overtake the world. I'm sure these terms have a familiar ring to anyone in God's Church today.

Navigating the Course

To illustrate this analogy, let's consider the work of the aircraft navigator. For a mission he takes the map, called an aeronautical chart, and draws a line on it from the point of departure to the destination. This line is called the true course. It is the course he wants the aircraft to follow, but there are several obstacles that he will invariably have to deal with to keep the aircraft on course.

All his calculations are based on true north, but his magnetic compass does not point to true north. Two factors throw it off as much as 8 degrees. One is called "variation," which changes with the magnetic fields in each geographical location. Lines are plotted on the chart showing the degrees plus or minus that must be adjusted on the magnetic compass. The second thing is

called "deviation," which is the deflecting of the compass due to magnetic influences within the aircraft itself. These factors are known, and the navigator can compensate for them.

The unknown factor is the wind that will be encountered, which is seldom constant throughout the mission, and may vary up to 360 degrees along the course. The navigator has to take a fix every so many minutes to find his true position.

The Bible is our magnetic compass and the different translations and Bible helps each have their variations and deviations requiring correction. For example, the Scofield Reference Bible is a good study Bible, but Scofield believes in the "Rapture Theory," which can be easily disproved. We need to take note of these types of variations or they will throw us off course.

So let's say you have prepared to embark on the spiritual flight to God's Kingdom. You have plotted your true course from wherever you are now to God's Kingdom. You have adjusted your magnetic compass so that it points to true north. You have asked for the full power of the Holy Spirit received at baptism, you have lifted off and are on your way to God's Kingdom.

Now, because the wind, or in our case, "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), is doing all he can to blow you off course, how can you be sure you stay on your true course? (In 1995 he succeeded in blowing many off course by enticing them to forsake God's laws.)

Meditating to Find Our True Position

The way true Christians stay on course is to take a spiritual fix to determine their position often and then to make any course corrections necessary to get back on true course. The naviga-

tor calls these *alter headings*. Periodic meditation helps us determine our true position and enables us to stay on course to the Kingdom. We pause and look at where we are spiritually versus where we should be and then correct our course to head directly toward the Kingdom.

We have the knowledge, the tools and the power (the Holy Spirit) to make it to our destination, the Kingdom of God, but we don't know how much, or how subtly, we are being blown off course. Now is a good time to begin the habit of meditating often to stay on our course to the Kingdom.

The authors of the Psalms speak often of meditation. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).

Notice that throughout the Bible a Christian's life is referred to as a "walk" or a "journey" led by God. A Christian also meditates day and night, not just occasionally during the year, showing that we should meditate often.

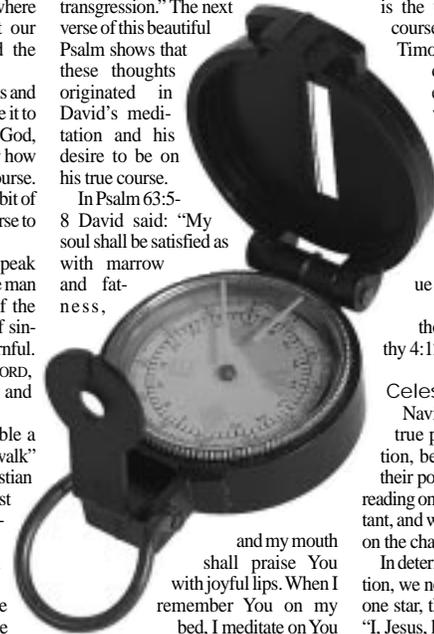
The reward for staying on course is a prosperous and abundant life, especially spiritually: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season; whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

In Psalm 5:1, David's prayer for guidance begins: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation," and in verse 8 he says: "Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face."

In Psalm 19:12-13 David asks God: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep

back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression." The next verse of this beautiful Psalm shows that these thoughts originated in David's meditation and his desire to be on his true course.

In Psalm 63:5-8 David said: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,



and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches . . .

My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me." Notice he follows God very closely through meditation.

David stayed on course through meditation much of his life, but when he didn't make course corrections, the "prince of the power of the air" was able to blow him way off course, as in the time he numbered Israel or in the affair with Bathsheba. Had he meditated regularly through these times, he would not have made these mistakes and the prophet

would not have had to come and correct his path.

Meditation on God's laws of love, with the needed course corrections, is the way to constantly stay on course to the Kingdom. Paul tells Timothy to do this: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity . . .

Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:12, 15-16).

Celestial Navigation Navigators often determine their true position by celestial navigation, because the stars are fixed in their position in the sky. They take a reading on two or three stars using a sextant, and where the resulting lines cross on the chart is their true position.

Celestial Navigation

In determining our true spiritual position, we need to take a reading on only one star, the Bright and Morning Star. "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16).

This Star is forever fixed in the universe. We need to continually ask ourselves, "How does my life compare to this Star? Am I on track, or do I need to make a course correction, an alter heading?" Frequent meditation helps us stay on a true course to God's Kingdom.

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Art Morris is an elder in the Mansfield, Ohio, congregation.

Who Made Paul Cry?

by Robert Berendt

There is a saying about serious things that "could make a grown man cry." That comment is sometimes made in jest, because grown men seldom cry. It is not mainly, as I was taught as a little boy.

Paul was a very strong man. He survived the arenas of the Roman Empire when he was thrown to the wild animals (1 Corinthians 15:32). He successfully fought those animals, it seems. Paul also was beaten more times than he could count (although he did count the times—2 Corinthians 11:23-25) and took those beatings "like a man."

He also faced raging crowds who were shouting for his death and picking up stones that they then used to try to put him to death. When they left him, he was considered dead.

A person is hard pressed to find a more heroic, strong-minded, death-defying hero than Paul—and yet the

Bible tells us that Paul was reduced to tears on more than one occasion. Here is a man's man who cried and yet who lost none of his manliness.

Who was responsible, and what made Paul cry?

Served With Many Tears

Acts 20:17-31 describes the work Paul was doing in Ephesus and other cities. He had come to Asia and served with "many tears." Those tears were not for himself—they were for the people he was serving. He was so deeply concerned about their well-being that he was emotionally involved.

In verse 31 he speaks of the warning he had given. That warning described dangers the members of the Church would face. He wrote about "savage wolves" that would come in and not spare the flock. Paul would have liked to be there with the Ephesians to fight off these attacks. The savage wolves were not animals as he had fought in the arena—they were humans pushed

on by Satan to destroy the Church.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul found many things to remind and warn the people about. He detailed the kind of sin that would keep them out of the Kingdom of God.

He knew the background of those he served and worried about them slipping back to the darkness from where they came.

Crying for the Converted

Those responsible for Paul's tears, then, were the converted members of the congregations he served. As time passed he began to feel like a father to them, and a genuine love and concern had grown. Paul writes about his heartfelt bond as he addresses the members of the church in Galatia as "my little children" (Galatians 4:19).

Parents (who see the potentials of their children and want only good for them) are reduced to tears by children who reject every good gift that is offered.

Paul had learned the hard way that God's way is the only way and God's promises have no equal or parallel. He had suffered physical loss and abuse in order to preach the word of truth and hope to them. He spent his years instilling the hope for the Kingdom of God and eternal life in all people—Jew and Gentile alike. Paul must have felt that his work was for nothing sometimes.

Genuine Love

Paul explained to the Corinthians that he wrote with many tears that they would know the genuine love he had for them. His intention was not to make them grieve (2 Corinthians 2:1-4), but he was looking for spiritual growth in them and thus was suffering the deepest inner grief and anguish over his inability to come to them and help solve the ongoing problems.

Those who made Paul cry were those whom he loved and for whom he had given up everything. He feared

that they might be "castaways" (1 Corinthians 9:27, KJV). He knew that once the blood of Jesus had been shed for a person, that person had to go forward. His or her eternal life would be at stake if he or she failed (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Paul was not able to make decisions for them, and he was not always able to be there. He was forced to stand by and watch how they responded.

We can also read the story of Jesus who wept as He approached Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). He wept because He knew that they had rejected Him, and He could foresee the warfare and devastation that was to come to the city, the pain and suffering that was not necessary.

Those are the reasons the strongest men weep. It is not for themselves, and it is not caused by suffering or weakness. It is for others that these men weep. Paul wept for the sake of those he loved and who loved him. That's who made him cry. UN

Raising Kids in the Internet Age

by Teddi Treybig

"Kids will be kids."
"Every generation has had to deal with negative peer pressure."

"I remember what it was like being a teen. Kids have always pushed at the rules. It's not so different today. What's the big deal?"

Reality Check

Sound familiar? As parents and grandparents, is this how we think? If so, then it's time for a 2006 real-world reality check. Today it's like the temptations of the past are on steroids.

Schoolyard bullies have migrated to the Internet where anonymity has fueled even more vicious attacks with less chance of being identified and held accountable for their painful defamation campaigns.



- Talking on the phone for hours with your best friend has blossomed into IMing, chat rooms, MySpace accounts and daily blogs, in addition to instant audio and visual access to your friends via cell phones. In addition to concerns about the content of this constant communication, some of these new methods can open naive children to new dangers from identity thieves and sexual predators.

- Begging your dad to let you play the latest rock hit on the family phonograph is archaic in this world of iPods and PCs. The latest movies, videos, songs and games are available 24/7 via the Internet, cable TV and cell phones. And the violence and sexual content has increased exponentially.

- Every imaginable sin and perversion makes its way onto the Internet, set to snare new generations into accelerating spirals of sin. We have great kids in the Church who

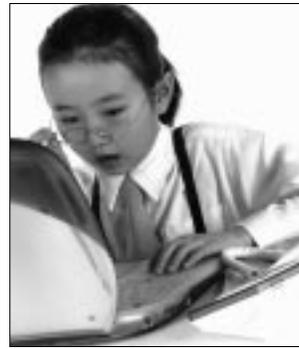
are striving to live godly lives—but that doesn't mean they aren't exposed to (and influenced by) the society around them.

The instruction that God gave to parents thousands of years ago (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) still applies to us today. Binding God's words on our hands, keeping them as frontlets between our eyes and writing them on our doorposts is more vital than ever.

It is naive to think that our children will somehow absorb what we value and believe just by living in our homes. We must help our children see the world they live in through God's eyes. Of course, this presumes that we have laid a foundation of love and trust with our children where they feel comfortable talking with us about what is really going on in their lives.

Navigating the Internet Responsibly

Are you teaching your children how to navigate the Internet in a responsible way? The book of Proverbs warns young men to avoid the enticements of immoral women on the street corner. Today, the street corner is in our homes



via the Internet and our TVs. Banner ads for cyberporn and online gambling are just a click away.

Some parents find it helpful to draw up an Internet contract detailing guidelines for the privilege of using the home's computer online. Many children are familiar with this concept since they have to sign such a contract in order to use the computers at school. Children and parents sign the contract after discussing the terms and conditions.

Sample contracts, plus other helpful tips for parents regarding how to safeguard their kids on the Internet, may be found at sites like koman-

do.com/kimskidscontract.html, www.wiredsafety.org, www.isafe.org and www.mindoh.com.

Another informative resource for parents who are fighting the culture war battle is *Home Invasion: Protecting Your Family in a Culture That's Gone Stark Raving Mad* by Rebecca Hagelin (2005). This 288-page book details numerous ways that society around us does invade our homes.

It also includes helpful suggestions and 38 pages of resources covering everything from Internet filters to where to get values-based movie reviews (www.pluggedinonline.com) to hundreds of other groups, counselors and Web sites that can help parents as they encounter new challenges as their children navigate their way to adulthood.

As parents, we mustn't abdicate our role as our children's primary teachers regarding godly, moral values. God commands us to teach our children—His children—from His tree of life.

If we don't, how can we expect them to battle the negative influences from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that entice them from every side? UN

What Does It Mean to Be Justified?

Why is justification so important in God's sight? How can we be justified?

by Ken Murray

Countless books and theological papers have been written on the subject of justification.

What does it really mean? Why is justification so important to God? How can we become justified?

What Is Justification?

The words *justification*, *justify*, *justified* and *just* are found numerous times in both the Old and New Testaments. Both the Hebrew *tsadaq* and the Greek *dikaiosis* refer to justification, meaning "made righteous."

Justification means to be made righteous in God's sight.

Righteousness is being like God and having the same character as our holy, righteous God.

Why is justification so important in God's sight?

Paul encouraged us to understand the importance of being justified or made righteous before God, because it has a lot to do with our precious calling and being part of His family.

"Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:30-32, emphasis added).

It is clear from the Scriptures that being justified or made righteous is an important part of our personal salvation.

Confusion About Justification

There are so many different viewpoints about what is justification in God's sight.

The Catholic viewpoint was formulated at the Council of Trent (A.D. 1547), primarily to counter Martin Luther's and other Protestants' divergent points of view about justification being "grace versus works":

"If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy . . . which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema" (Canon 12, Council of Trent).

Catholics believe that it is not only faith in God that justifies a person, but it entails works too. They believe in obeying their version of the commandments, participating in the sacraments, going to church, doing penance, giving alms, reciting prayers and so on, to merit salvation. The Catholic Church teaches that faith is important; but it also insists on the necessity of good works to merit eternal life.

Most Protestants have a different viewpoint and base their beliefs upon their early founders such as Luther who believed that justification only comes by faith in Christ and does not require the works the Catholics believe in, either before or after faith is exercised.

According to Luther, by faith God justifies us, for the sake of Christ, and no longer imputes to us our sins. If we continue in faith, He will treat us as if we are just and holy, even if we remain the same sinners as before.

Catholics criticize Luther by quoting statements made by him in a letter written to Melancthon in 1521: "Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in

Christ more strongly, who triumphed over sin, death, and the world; as long as we live here, we must sin." Also, they criticize him for saying: "If adultery could be committed in faith, it would not be a sin" ("Justification," *Catholic Encyclopedia*).

Of course, Martin Luther was also critical of Catholic ideas regarding justification and works:

"How they mislead people with their good works! They call good works what God has not commanded, as pilgrimages, fasting, building and decorating their churches in honor of the saints, saying mass, paying for vigils, praying with rosaries, much prattling and bawling in churches, turning nun, monk, priest, using special food, raiment or dwelling—who can enumerate all the horrible abominations and deceptions? This is the pope's government and holiness" (Sermons of Martin Luther, www.trinitylutheranms.org/Martin-Luther/MLSermons/Mathew21ConcerningGoodWorks.html).

Paul Dealt With the Confusion

The problem of people being confused about how they can be justified or made righteous before God was something Paul had to deal with.

On the one hand, he had some Jewish people in the Church being proud and boasting of their law keeping. Apparently they felt God owed it to them to give them salvation, thus abusing the proper use of the law. "Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God" (Romans 2:17). "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27).

On the other hand, he had to correct

the gentiles in the Church who were also proud of their newfound knowledge and spiritual gifts and felt that God was somehow indebted to them to reward them with salvation: "What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Paul answered the extremism of both camps when he said: "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" (Romans 11:34-35, NIV, emphasis added).

It is a common fault of us as mankind to think that by the good things we do, God owes us salvation.

How Can We Become Justified in God's Sight?

It is important to understand that we don't earn righteousness by self-righteously keeping God's laws and then claiming that we are righteous before God.

Paul explained that we need to understand "that a man is not justified [or made righteous] by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

In other words, there is a right sequence to becoming righteous in God's sight.

That sequence begins when we come to believe and have faith in the "true God" (1 John 5:20). Secondly, when we grow in faith, we see our sins, our wrong thinking, wrong words, wrong actions and our need to repent.

Our faith in God drives us to repent of

our sins and be baptized. At this point we are forgiven by God's grace (free unmerited pardon) and are considered righteous before God.

Thirdly, we continue to remain righteous in God's sight when we lovingly obey and live by His laws and don't practice sin any more, having left the false ways of the world behind (1 John 3:3-4). We continue the process of becoming converted to the mind and conduct of Christ (Philippians 2:5).

The apostle James clarified this point by saying: "You see then that a man is justified [considered righteous] by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Once we set our course God's way, by faith in Him and by repentance from our sins, we are to follow Him and live by His laws and right way of life, not our own customs and religious ceremonies.

If we slip, we should exercise faith and repentance immediately and follow God's laws.

Each year when we perform the foot washing, and partake of the unleavened bread and the wine during the Passover, it is an annual reminder of our baptism and renewal of us being re-washed, recleansed, forgiven and made righteous or justified in God's sight.

Daily in our prayers and lives, we should put to death the old man or old woman, just as Paul admonished us, and be renewed in our minds daily, with God's Holy Spirit by the gift of God, to be the new converted man or woman (Ephesians 4:22-24).

It is then, through daily faith, repentance and loving obedience, that we will be considered justified or righteous in God's sight. UN

Ken Murray is an elder in Queensland, Australia.

Treasure Digest

Lessons From My Small Vineyard

"I am the vine, you are the branches," Jesus said (John 15:5). He also said, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (verse 2).

The pruning season is just coming to an end as I write this from my home on the Costa del Sol in Spain. This is my first brush with having a vineyard, and though it is small, with the weeds, the lack of rain and my lack of knowledge, it's very hard work! (Perhaps we present the same challenge to God . . .)

All the branches are now cut back and the old wood burned. No fruit can be borne without this annual pruning. It must be done in just the right way or else there will still be no fruit. And if not pruned at all, the vine goes out of control and will eventually die. It won't die immediately, but will produce unwieldy branches and run to only wood.

All year long false growth comes from the base of the vine. These are short, stubby branches that grow only to about 18 inches high. These must be cut out all year round as they appear, or they will in time take over and ruin the main stock. Some of this growth may



even produce false grapes, but they come to nothing in the end. These, too, must be removed promptly.

On the true vine, it can look as if there isn't much fruit as well. It is often hidden under the large leaves. Grapes can stay on the vine ripening quite a while. The longer they are in the hot sun and dry soil, the sweeter they become!

The soil is like concrete, desert-like, hard and dry, but the roots of the vines go way down, often into clefts in the slate-like hillside, where moisture collects.

All these features have spiritual parallels. Our Father prunes us perfectly, which is painful and not easily understood. The world is the dry, unyielding soil we are locked into. We are the branches, connected to Jesus Christ, hopefully, and through Him producing the fruit He needs us to produce for His future Kingdom. Each year the vine must be pruned hard.

Wendy Culff
(One of three members in Spain)

Be a Pioneer!

Being a pioneer in any pursuit is one of the most exciting, challenging and rewarding experiences anyone can have.

Armstrong, Hillary, Bannister. What do these names mean to us? They were all pioneers. Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon. Sir Edmund Hillary was the first to climb Mt. Everest and Dr. Roger Bannister was the first athlete to run a mile in under four minutes. They were all first in their field of endeavor.

We, too, are called to be pioneers, or firstfruits, in God's Kingdom. The three pioneers mentioned were all part of teams. Neil Armstrong was accompanied by Buzz Aldrin and

Mike Collins, plus the backup of Mission Control in Houston. Sir Edmund Hillary had the help of his Sherpa guide, Tensing Norgay, and many others in camps along the way. Roger Bannister was helped by a team of coaching staff and medical advisors.



On our pioneering journey to God's Kingdom we need the support of our fellow workers in the local churches. We also need the invisible spiritual support team of God's Mission Control.

In Exodus 17:8-14 we see an example of Moses relying on close teamwork to hold up his hands during a time of war. We must hold up each others' hands. We also pray to enlist the spiritual help from God's Mission Control.

Pioneers have an absolute belief that they can achieve their objective. In Proverbs 10:24 we are told that our desire (belief) will become a reality. We must concentrate on our vision of God's Kingdom of beauty, peace and harmony.

As pioneers, it is essential that we obey the rules of our calling, God's commandments. Encapsulated for us in Exodus 20:1-17, they mark the boundaries for us on our journey.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate pioneer. He made it as the first into God's Kingdom. We can be next to join Him! Paul confirms our calling to be the firstfruits and in the first resurrection to join our fellow pioneers from all ages (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

It's a wonderful future for us all. Much more exciting than going to the moon. We shall experience galaxies yet undreamed of! Much better than climbing a mountain. We shall reach higher and greater wonders. And much more exhilarating than a four-minute mile. We will travel at the speed of thought! Truly wonderful!

Frank Jarvis
Gloucester/Preston, British Isles, congregations

A Good Word

People never tire of hearing a good word. Good words give courage—the spark to continue forward. There's a word that seems to breathe a magic of its own, giving backbone, lifeblood and vitality to all it touches.

That word helps relieve those in distress. It's dedicated to a way of life that creates something of lasting value for everyone. It sees a need and chooses to do something, however small, about it.

That word? *Volunteer!* How valuable each and every one of them is. Each volunteer betters the lives of every member of the community because he or she is there.

Who is the volunteer? A living, breathing human, derived from the richest of the rich to the poorest of the poor. Educated or illiterate, male or female, child or senior, white or black or any color in between. There are no boundaries. No confines.

Volunteers are individuals who believe that as long as they breathe, they are somehow responsible to care for the needs of those who are their brothers by life association, as well as birth. They strive to make light the heavy burden of those who are hurting, hungry or just down and out.

Believing the best comes back brimful and running over. The more volunteers give and share, the more they grow and mature, becoming in fuller measure that which they can be.

Volunteers—thanks for the good word!
A. Gail Donahue was a member of the Los Angeles, California, congregation before her death.

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Turning the Hearts . . . I Remember Mama

There's nothing more "homey" than a child coming in the front door and smelling the aroma of fresh-baked bread! Put a pat of butter on the hot slice of bread and enjoy the moment and make a memory.

When I was a youngster, one of the early programs on television was *I Remember Mama*. This sitcom featured stories in the home that revolved around the mother of the household. This past month Mother's Day was observed. Cards, phone calls and visits were made to "mamas" all over the world. Whether you observe the day or not, mothers need to be honored by those who believe in following God's teachings (Exodus 20:12).

What may we do to honor our mothers as part of the Fifth Commandment?

- **Show our mothers respect** throughout the year by spending time with or on them. Taking time to write cards or telephoning them to let them know how we are doing and finding out how they are doing is showing respect. Seeking their advice on difficult issues is another way of acknowledging them as our mothers. A gift occasionally sends a loving message that we care about and love them.

- **Thank them** for what they have done for us. Reflect on all of their sacrifices for us and let our mothers know that we remember and appreciate what they have done and may still do for us. Memories are important to our folks as they grow older. To recall memories of their love and service to us as children is another way to show respect.

- **Help them.** We need to make every effort to help our mothers in their older age, though this can be difficult if we are not close by. Our mothers may not be as strong or able to do the chores they once performed with ease. Help them with some of the cleaning, ironing and shopping—you get the idea. This also will show them respect.

- **Being a quality, godly person** will mean that they may see you and me as successful in life. Many mothers have told me with a glowing face of the successes of their children. You could just feel that they were "pleased" with what their children had become. When we are people of character, we bring respect to the woman who bore us.

- **Pray for them.** Thank God for your mother (and father, too) and ask Him to help them in their latter years. Remember their needs and present them to our loving Heavenly Father for His attention to them. I'm sure God will appreciate His children remembering their earthly parents as He appreciates being remembered by us.

Proverbs 31:28 states, "Her children rise up and call her blessed . . ." Let's all "bless" our mothers by showing the respect and love to them for all they have done and do for us!



Gary E. Antion

Children's Corner

Hi, kids! This section is just for you! If you or your parents have any ideas or suggestions for this section, let us know. Write to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 or e-mail mike_bennett@ucg.org.

God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai. It was just a few weeks after they had crossed the Red Sea. The mountain was smoking and shaking! Then God spoke the Ten Commandments.

Here is a short form of the Ten Commandments with missing words to fill in. (If you need help, see Exodus 20:3-17.) Then unscramble the letters in the boxes to spell out an even shorter summary of God's law. You can find more about the Ten Commandments in the booklet called *The Ten Commandments*. Have fun!

The Ten Commandments

1. You shall have no other before Me.
2. You shall make idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your in .
4. Remember the day.
5. Honor your and your mother.
6. You shall not .
7. You shall not commit .
8. You shall not .
9. You shall not bear witness.
10. You shall not .

Unscramble the letters in the boxes to spell out an even shorter summary of God's law in the blanks below. (See Matthew 22:37-39 for clues.)

Pillars of Wisdom: Managing Money

Money. Some say it's what makes the world go around. No matter how much you get, there always seems to be a need for more. For many people, the amount of money they possess—and the things it can buy—are the measure of how successful they are in life.

The book of Proverbs contains a number of important points on how to manage money.

Points to Build On

Honor God with your possessions. Giving to God in thankfulness is an important key to successful living.

Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."

Plan for the future.

Proverbs 6:6-11: "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man."

Generosity produces more happiness than stinginess. Real wealth lies in who we are, not in what we own.

Proverbs 11:24-26: "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it."

Be careful about cosigning for others' debts.
Proverbs 22:26-27: "Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts; if you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?"

Be careful about borrowing money.

Proverbs 22:7: "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."

Application

There are many proverbs about managing money and the proper approach to wealth. Proverbs teaches that wealth isn't evil, but the accumulation of wealth without living a life according to God's purpose is useless.

Gary Petty

Pastor of Austin, San Antonio and Waco, Texas, congregations



Let's Win the Race!

Recently I watched the popular movie *Seabiscuit*. After it was over, the tears just flowed as I thought of all the lessons that I learned from this movie based on a true story.

The movie started with a broken horse, a broken young man (Red Pollard) and two men who reached out to help them mend and rebuild from all the damage done by neglect, abuse, being abandoned and the hard knocks of life. They helped them not only mend, but become champions! To win the race! To become better than they thought they could ever be.

It was also a movie of courage. After getting on top, both horse and rider sustained crippling

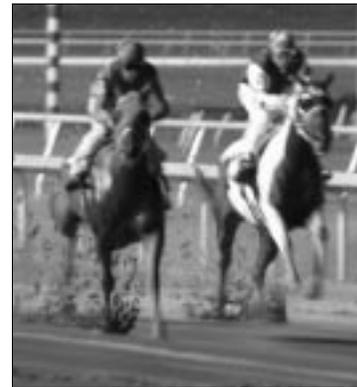
injuries that seemed impossible to overcome. But with the will and determination to not give up, once again they regained their championship. They did the seemingly impossible!

Our race in this life is much like the story of Seabiscuit. God has called many of us who have been broken by the difficulties of life. We are people who have many obstacles to overcome to win the final prize. God's goal is to mend us, to challenge us beyond our wildest dreams, to help us to not give up. Most of all, it's to help us reach out and win the prize of a lifetime. Our golden prize will never tarnish but will last for eternity.

Sometimes it can become difficult to see through the clouds of trials and see that golden prize. Sometimes it seems that our opponent, Satan, will overtake us and cause us to be defeated. We can be like Seabiscuit who had a determination to not be beaten. During a race, when he caught sight of the horse he was racing against, he took off like lightning and left the other horse in the dust.

When we feel that we are losing the race, we can reach up to our Trainer and ask for renewed strength, a new fire within us to get up and get going again.

Without the special care of a great trainer and



jockey, Seabiscuit would not have become a champion horse. Without the jockey being taken in, encouraged and cared for by a special benefactor, he would have never ridden a champion horse.

Our Trainer and Benefactor, God, is there to make sure that we win the race that He has set before us. We need not go it alone! With God's help we can win the race!

Janet Treadway

Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

Fasting and Perfection

In Matthew 5:48 we find a startling statement. "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." God is saying, through Matthew, that human beings have the awesome potential for perfection!

The word in Greek for perfect in this verse is *teleios* and it means completeness or maturity. Complete perfection will come at the resurrection to those who are becoming spiritually mature in this life.

But God knew that the human heart would be a major stumbling block (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore He has given us powerful tools to use with the help of His Holy Spirit. Fasting is one of those tools. For our growth into perfection, fasting is an absolute necessity.

Many have struggled with various problems and sins for years or even decades. Some have become "spiritual casualties." Fasting helps to prevent this tragedy. When we humble ourselves through fasting, God takes note of us! He knows that we are serious about becoming perfect.

An effective spiritual fast must be accompanied by diligent Bible study, zealous prayer and meditation. God's response to this type of fast is recorded in Isaiah 58:9. "Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry and He will say, here I am."

There are numerous examples of fasting in the Bible. In Leviticus 23:26-32, God commands His people to abstain from food for one day, on the Day of Atonement.

Psalms 109:24 states that David's knees were weak from fasting, his body had become gaunt. The apostle Paul fasted often (2 Corinthians 11:27). And evil Ahab humbled himself through fasting in 1 Kings 21:27.

Even our Savior, who had the fullness of the Holy Spirit, fasted 40 days and 40 nights in preparation for His titanic battle with the devil. If Jesus Christ fasted, can we do any less? These examples tell us that we cannot survive Satan's fiery darts and reach perfection without fasting!

Although fasting may cause physical discomfort, it will cause spiritual healing to come about quickly! (Isaiah 58:8, New Revised Standard Version). When we approach the throne of grace through fasting, God will help us "loose the bonds of wickedness" (Isaiah 58:6). He will help us remove the sin that has us trapped (Hebrews 12:1).

In these perilous and trying times, we must employ the powerful tool of fasting. Indeed fasting may keep us on that narrow road that leads to perfection.

Leon Leonard

Akron, Ohio, congregation

The Tomato Plant

In 1975, I was a 20-year-old mother of two, in an abusive marriage, and the impact of the hopelessness of my life was hitting me. I knew if there was any hope at all, it would come only from God. I began to earnestly pray and to read the entire Bible.

For months, I felt numb and wondered if my life was so useless that even God did not want it. But I kept on praying anyway. And I went to several churches, but as soon as I saw that they were not teaching what the Bible said, I would try another one.

That year I had planted my first tomato plant, beside my front step. Someone ran over it, and I had picked the bent plant back up and strapped it with nylon to a stake. A short time later, someone kicked a ball into the middle of the plant, and it split down the middle. I attempted another mend job, and then I went to my room and prayed.

I told God that I felt just like that plant. I was broken and beaten down. I didn't mean to not trust Him, but I needed some encouragement. If He would just let that tomato plant have one tomato on it, it would encourage me and let me know there was still hope and He cared for me.

Shortly after, I went outside and, just like the song about the yellow ribbons, my plant was full of yellow blossoms! Now I had confidence in God!

I happened to see a broadcast on TV and recognized that it was a program sprouted from Mr. Armstrong's radio broadcast that had often caught my family's attention since I was a young child. Though abnormally shy, I dialed the toll-free number and a very gentle male voice took my requests for booklets and a visit. I was soon invited to attend church services and happily drove an hour each way with my two babies.

My family and I enjoyed many tomatoes from that one little plant. But most of all I began to learn about true faith in things yet unseen.

Carolyn Prater

Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

Question and Answer: Why Doesn't Your Church Use the Symbol of the Cross?

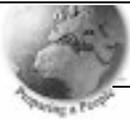
Thank you for your interest. The Greek word translated as "cross" is *stauros*. It means the upright or stake portion of an instrument of execution that has been used in several cultures down through history. Sometimes executioners used a crosspiece at the top of or in different places on the stake; at other times, there was no crosspiece. It's impossible to know exactly what type the Romans used in the crucifixion of Christ. It is clear, however, that the Romans attached a sign over His head (Matthew 27:37), which could have been upon a stake or a crosspiece.

Because Christ's death is of such monumental significance to the Christian, some have mistakenly thought that the cross should be a part of Christian worship. But we should remember that it was an instrument of torture. When we stop to realize that fact, it should be clear that it's grossly inappropriate to wear it as religious jewelry or an object of worship. Some would argue that using a cross in this manner symbolizes the value of Christ's death. We disagree.

It's true that the apostle Paul referred to the cross in a symbolic way (1 Corinthians 1:17, 23). Paul also used the cup of wine from the Passover as a symbol (1 Corinthians 10:21). And John the Baptist referred to Christ as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:36). But this doesn't mean that we should begin to use cups or figures of lambs as religious ornaments or as objects of worship.

Furthermore, the second of God's Ten Commandments strictly prohibits the use of objects in worship. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them" (Exodus 20:4-5). (For more information about how the Ten Commandments apply in everyday Christian life, please see our booklet *The Ten Commandments*. If you do not have a copy, we would be happy to send you one. Or you can find it online at the literature library of our Web site at www.ucg.org.)

God wants us to direct our worship and prayers to Him, not to any physical object. Christ explained this principle in John 4:24: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." Following the biblical instruction, the United Church of God does not use the figure or image of a cross in its worship services. Neither do UCGIA members wear crosses as symbols of devotion. We refer to the cross in the way that the Scripture refers to it—that is, as a figure of speech to explain Christ's atoning death for us.



Local Church Updates

North Carolina Congregations Combine for Holy Day and Meal

The Charlotte, Asheboro and Greensboro, North Carolina, congregations enjoyed services together on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread.

Brethren heard speakers from all three churches and listened to special music from the combined choir led by



Beth-Erin Springer (Greensboro), Amber Powers (Charlotte), Brandy Brinkley (Asheboro) and Amber Pettigrew (Charlotte) doing dishes (photo by Olivia Pettigrew)

Catherine Crawford. A piano solo was played for offertory by Inez Burrow.

A meal was provided between services by Jack and Nancy Holloway of the Asheboro congregation. Afterwards the young ladies of the church had fun as they pitched in to help with the cleanup. The beautiful weather inspired brethren to remain outdoors to fellowship long after services were over.

Marti Springer

Dallas Seniors Enjoy Texas Barnyard Barbecue

The fourth annual Dallas seniors' luncheon was held on Sabbath,



Dallas senior panel members answer questions from teens; inset, Dick Knapp discusses painting as a hobby (photos by Diane Bennis)

April 29. The theme this year, choreographed by Kris Brooks, was a Texan barnyard barbecue honoring our seniors for being a special part of our congregation.

A CD compiled by Mike Westberry

of many all-time favorites of country music was given to each honored guest. The teens from the Dallas congregation joined with our older members to enjoy a fine home-cooked meal prepared by Dora Jennings and J.J. Brooks.

John Lusk welcomed the guests and provided introductory remarks to get the luncheon off to a stimulating start. After a blessing on the meal, each guest was served by one of the teens.

During the luncheon everyone enjoyed the down-home country atmosphere and dinner music. Afterwards, J.J. Brooks introduced a few of the teens and their parents (Katie Collins, Amber Benedict and Dara and Greg Vaughn) who treated us to a variety of musical selections.

After a break, Rick Bennis facilitated our traditional panel including three of our senior members (Tillie Crandall, Mary Ann Brennan and Dick Knapp) who answered many questions from

the teens about their own lives as teens, the lessons they learned growing to adulthood, and the influence of God's way throughout their lives. This was a great opportunity for us to get know our panel members better and have them share their life experiences with all of us.

In addition, this year one of our senior members, Dick Knapp, offered a few words encouraging the teens and elder members regarding the benefits of painting as a hobby. He brought in one of his beautiful landscape paintings, which was given to a selected honored guest, Charles Oren.

After concluding remarks and thanks given by John Lusk and Rick Bennis, the teens came up on stage and led everyone in a rendition of "Happy Trails to You . . . Until We Meet Again."

The luncheon then came to a close so that everyone could attend the regular Sabbath service.

In addition to the teens, the following Special Services team members helped make the luncheon an enjoyable success: John and Danny Bynum (sound crew); Rhona Springfield, Karen Collins and Denise Vulchev (food service); D.J. Palacios (transportation); and Diane Bennis (photographer/hostess).

Diane Bennis

Member in Holland Earns Master's Degree

After already earning a bachelor's



Marcos Rosales (head of the UCG national council in Holland), attends Maarten de Jong's graduation and hands over the diploma

degree in engineering, Maarten de Jong received his master of science in (international) business administration (MScBA) at the Rotterdam School of Management.

He specialized in marketing, and the title of his final thesis was "Just Do It, *Gewoon Doen* . . . The Influence of Using Dutch vs. English Advertising Slogans."

Wisconsin Brethren Gather at Lake Lawn Resort

Brethren from the upper Midwest gathered at the scenic Lake Lawn Resort in Delavan, Wisconsin, to hear the president of the United Church of God, Clyde Kilough, speak on the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Brethren from four church areas—Wisconsin Dells, Oshkosh, Milwaukee



Brethren enjoy dinner during the Days of Unleavened Bread in Wisconsin (photo by Leone Burns)

and Beloit, Wisconsin, with guests from Chicago, Illinois, and Minneapolis, Minnesota—got together April 15. Mr. Kilough's sermon was titled "The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod."

The combined Wisconsin church choirs sang "On Eagle's Wings" and "Upon This Rock" accompanied by the ensemble. Randy Schmidt directed the music.

After services, there was a social hour while the dining room was being set up. A catered dinner was later served to those staying for the event. It consisted of roast beef, chicken, green beans, mashed potatoes, pasta salad, tossed salad and desserts brought by the brethren. That gave everybody a chance to try other peoples' unleavened creations!

After sunset, a delightful dance took place. The dance lasted until midnight, so some had opted to stay overnight at the Lake Lawn Resort.

The weather was cooperative—sunshine and warm gentle breezes. This was a time of great spiritual and physical refreshing for all who had the fortune to be in such serene surroundings.

Ray and Francine Fabry and all their assistants worked hard in organizing this grand event.

Leone Burns

Albuquerque Tries a Mystery Dinner

The other night in the library when many of the storybook characters were out of their books and enjoying a sojourn in the night air, a crime was committed. Henry VIII—that famous monarch from the English history books—disappeared.

Dressed as storybook characters, the members of the Albuquerque, New Mexico, congregation gathered for a mystery dinner after the Sabbath on March 11.

The mystery was not in the meal itself, as Robin Hood thought might be the case, it was *who* erased Henry VIII from the history books and *why*. The prime suspects included Goldilocks, Alice in Wonderland, Snow White, Robin Hood and Cinderella.

The investigators puzzled over details from table to table and finally addressed the dinner guests to present their clues.

To find out "whodunit," see the Albuquerque Web site at www.ucg-abq.org for pictures from the event. Clue: She's wearing blue and she is not from Kansas.

Susie Velazquez, aka Dorothy

Women's Retreat Held in Oregon

"Hidden Treasure—The Pearl of Great Price" was the theme of the women's retreat held March 24 to 26 near Portland, Oregon. The setting at the Canby Grove Conference Center provided a wonderful woody atmosphere, with the rippling Molalla River flowing a short distance outside the wall of windows in the meeting room.

The opening evening began with a luscious meal and a warm welcome from the Canby Grove hospitality person. Dyanne Dick then gave a second welcome to the group of 76 ladies and outlined the activities of the weekend.

LeeAnn Luker ended this session by challenging attendees with lessons we can glean from the pearl, relating it to the friendships we make. Just as genuine pearls always have small flaws, we will have imperfect friendships. It takes practice to be a true friend, but a friend loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17).

John Cafourek conducted the Sabbath service, which was followed by a delicious lunch and fellowship time.

Five ladies of various ages and backgrounds spoke briefly on how each one found her pearl of great price—being called into God's Church. Then the moderator, Sandy Cafourek, split the group up into smaller groups to discuss how each one was called, how each dealt with problems, goals for being more involved in the local church, etc.

Following the Sabbath dinner, Becky Hornor spoke on "God's Pearls and Other Jewels."

Saturday evening and Sunday morning the ladies made fleece blankets for orphans in Balaka, Malawi, supported by LifeNets. Terri Werner coordinated this service project. The ladies completed 222 blankets, exceeding the goal of 200 blankets.

Ruby Scruggs

Cincinnati Teens Serve Seniors

The Cincinnati East, Ohio, AM and PM congregations put on a dinner April



Marc Eddington and Bonnie Kirkpatrick serve Betty Evans (photo by Peter Eddington)

29 to honor the senior citizens in the congregations. The teens helped plan, decorate, prepare, serve, provide music for and clean up after the event.

"The teens did a wonderful job in serving," said Ken and Jean Pulliam. "Everything was done in such good taste and we were so impressed with the meal itself, but also the many details—the table settings and decorations, etc. How nice to dine on china instead of paper plates."

Each table was decorated to represent a popular song of the 1940s, and the background music also carried on a '40s theme. "The background music brought back quite a few pleasant memories," said Dolores Mootz.

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

Announcements

Births

Tony and Diana Garcia of the Los Angeles, California, congregation, formerly from Corpus Christi, Texas, would like to proudly announce the birth of their second



Rowan Delmos Anthony Garcia with big sister Malena Ann

grandchild, Rowan Delmos Anthony Garcia. He was born Feb. 21, 2006, weighed 7 pounds 8 ounces and was 20 inches long. Parents are Isaac and Michelle Garcia and big sister, Malena Ann, all from Altadena, California.

Charles and Markera Dupuch Sr. are pleased to announce the birth of Charles James Dupuch Jr. Born on Jan. 27, 2005, he weighed 6 pounds 14 ounces and was 20.5 inches long. Mom Markera Dupuch and grandmother Eureka Smith are members of the Nassau, Bahamas,



Charles James Dupuch Jr.

congregation. Charles Jr. makes the second child (big sister Cherith Jalynn Dupuch, born Sept. 8, died Sept. 15, 2003) and 11th grandchild.

Engagements

Michael and Amy Rose of Vassar, Michigan, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Sarah Michal Rose to Stanley Earl Grabowski, son of Stephen and Ada Grabowski of Laramie, Wyoming. The couple will wed in August of



Stanley Earl Grabowski and Sarah Michal Rose

2006 and plan to reside in Laramie.

Weddings

Mr. and Mrs. David Roenspies of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, are happy to announce the marriage of their daughter, Jill Marie Roenspies to William (Will) Frederick Flaman. The ceremony took place on March 26, 2006, in Lake Geneva, and was performed by the bride's father, David Roenspies. Robin Roenspies (sister-in-law of the bride) was matron of honor and Peter Ross (friend of the groom) was best man.

Over 120 friends and family attended the happy celebration, blessed with a day that was unseasonably sunny and warm. The couple lives in Elgin, Illi-



Will and Jill Flaman

nois, and attends the Chicago congregation.

Julie Richardson and Maurits de Jong



Maurits and Julie de Jong

are happy to announce their marriage on April 2, 2006, in Bedford, United Kingdom. They attend the Brickett Wood and Tonbridge congregations.

Paul Kieffer performed the wedding ceremony. Guests came from all over the world, but were mainly from Britain and the Netherlands. Afterward Julie and Maurits honeymooned in Malta for a week.

At the moment the couple live in Brighton in the United Kingdom.

Anniversaries

Al and Shirley Segall of the Sedro-Woolley, Washington, congregation were wedded on March 23, 1946—60 years ago! They are the parents of two sons—Stuart Segall, pastor of three



Shirley and Al Segall

United congregations in California, and Mark Segall.

The Segalls celebrated with a family reunion in Florida, March 30 to April 7. Then the Sedro-Woolley congregation hosted an anniversary reception for Mr. and Mrs. Segall on April 22. They were presented with a gift of a framed collage of photographs of the beautiful Skagit Valley where they live.

Not long ago, two wonderful people had a very special anniversary. After 75 years they love each other more than ever. Robert and Addie Ice were mar-



Addie and Robert Ice

ried on Feb. 6, 1931, in Piggott, Arkansas. Mr. Ice was 20 and Mrs. Ice was 16, almost 17.

Mr. Ice was born on Oct. 20, 1910, about 4 or 5 miles south of Campbell, Missouri. Mrs. Ice was born on May 25, 1914, near Wapapello Lake in Missouri. They met at a church called Hell's Beginning. Later the Ices would find the truth while listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio in the 1940s.

The Ices' first congregation was Cape Girardeau, Missouri, not too far from their current congregation of Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Mrs. Ice remembers their first Feast in Big Sandy, Texas, under the big tent. They were both baptized the same year, 1966, so they have had 40 years to live the truth.

Mr. Ice is now 95 and last year was still driving. His driving experience began at age 14, giving him 81 years of practice. When he was 94, he finally stopped changing his own oil in his truck. Also, this lovely couple kept a garden for 75 years until gravity told them they could do it no longer.

The Ices' family expanded over the years to include five children (two girls and three boys), 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Mr. and Mrs. Ice are very proud of them all.

When the Ices were asked, "How did you stay together so long?" they replied, "It wasn't easy" and "Commitment."

"They are truly an example of love and understanding. Never in all our years around the Ices have we heard them say a mean or spiteful thing," said Cheryl Wright of Poplar Bluff. "The Ices' long and loving relationship should be an example for the entire Church. Only with our faith and love in God will we ever hope to live as long and still be in love with our mate as the Ices are."

Obituaries

Velma Dite from Spokane, Washington, died April 14, 2006. She was born July 2, 1924, in Colorado. She enjoyed fishing much of her life. She has been a member of the Church of God since 1994. There was a graveside service for



Velma Dite

her in Yakima, Washington, on April 21, with Mark Mickelson officiating.

Russell R. Decker, 93, of Barre, Vermont, and formerly of Mill Village in Craftsbury, Vermont, died at his home on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, April 19, 2006.

He was born in Arlington, Nebraska, Sept. 24, 1912, the son of Roy and Hattie (Bump) Decker. He entered the U.S. Army from Camp Upton, New York, on March 13, 1942. He served as an assistant squad leader with the 307th Infantry, 77th Division, in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater, during World War II. Wounded in service to his country, his discharge was from Rhoads General Hospital in Utica, New York, on Jan. 4,

1946. Sgt. Decker's awards included the WWII Victory Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon, Philippine Liberation Ribbon, a Purple Heart and the Good Conduct Medal.

He later made his home in Mill Village in Craftsbury where he operated a goat farm for many years. He enjoyed trading goats, crops or other things for items he needed.

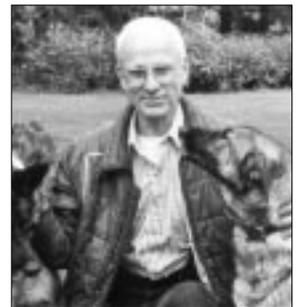
In October 1996 he sold his farm and moved to Cobble Hill in Barre, where he continued his quiet life of poetry writing and Bible study.

Mr. Decker leaves a brother, Clyde Decker of Lincoln, Nebraska, as well as other extended family. He was predeceased by two brothers, Earl and Clarence Decker, and a sister, Violet.

Mr. Decker was a long-time Church member, and was a member of the United Church of God from its beginning.

A funeral service was held April 25 in Craftsbury Common, with Paul Stuckling, pastor of the United Church of God in Worcester, Massachusetts, officiating.

Raymond Fred Driver, a member of God's Church for many years, died on March 9, 2006, after losing a battle with cancer. He was 77 years old. He leaves his wife, Mildred, and a stepson, Clarence Chappell. He attended the Olympia, Washington, congregation and was baptized in 1979. He worked in



Raymond Fred Driver

the woods for many years and lived in Chehalis, Washington.

He was the third youngest of 11 children (three of whom remain). Born in Colorado, he moved to Washington with his family at the age of 9.

He met his wife, Mildred, and stepson, Clarence, who are former Canadians, at a Feast site in Eugene, Oregon, in 1986. They married in July 1987.

He will be sadly missed by many.

Announcements: Members are welcome to submit announcements of the births, engagements, weddings, significant anniversaries (25, 40, 50, 60, etc.) and obituaries in their families. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Most items are 50 to 100 words and should not exceed 250 words. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give them to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

"Planning," continued from page 1

members will give further thought to these items in preparation for the meetings in August.

As a brainstorming session, this two-hour discussion was a free-flowing expression of thoughts and ideas. It was not intended to lead to decisions or conclusions. The following summaries are a composite of the comments, some of which are overlapping or may even seem somewhat conflicting. The purpose was to put ideas on the table to provide a platform for further and more specific discussions in future meetings.

As each Council member added his comments, a theme and consensus quickly became apparent. The primary issues that were addressed were the spiritual health of the Church, development of pastoral leadership and media efforts

in preaching the gospel message.

Comments dealing with the spiritual health of the Church included:

- A reminder that we must always focus on getting ourselves in "working order" if we are going to take a message to the world.

- The Council should emphasize that, as individuals and as an organization, what we teach must be consistent with how we live.

- When United was first formed, doctrine was a driving force. While doctrine brings us out of the world, it is vision and mission that holds us together. It is a unified, passionate voice of the Church that holds us together.

- Our teachings should emphasize the critical importance of the "basics" of our Christianity through prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting. When most of the Church does these things

most of the time, there will be stability and growth.

- We should be able to articulate a more effective defense against those who attack United or leave because they don't think this Church can provide what they need.

- We need to remind members to be watchful and alert.

- When we create the proper environment in a local congregation, the future leadership we need will emerge.

- A sense of mission and urgency must be maintained in the Church.

Specific dangers include:

- A lack of commitment to God and His way of life.

- Falling into the "cares of the world" and materialism.

- Ongoing doctrinal criticism on matters, most of which seem to recycle every few decades and that negatively

influence members, such as calendar issues and the use of sacred names.

Comments dealing with developing and strengthening the ministry included:

- Continue to develop the ministerial training program and focus on developing younger leaders for the future.

- We must do what we can as a Church to facilitate growth, education and opportunities for God to work through His people.

- The Church has a pool of potential leaders (30- to 45-year-olds) who already have a great deal of training. We need to provide them with opportunities.

- Encourage the ministry to continue their education and to hone their skills.

- Provide older and retired elders with opportunities to continue to serve.

- Empower and encourage pastors to make them feel part of what the Church is doing.

- The pastoral ministry needs to have confidence that administrative leadership will support their efforts in doing what needs to be done and vice versa.

Comments dealing with media efforts and message included:

- We need a more unified direction and strong leadership for media efforts.

- We need to establish a stronger and more visible "trademark" or "brand" that sets us apart.

- We should ask ourselves, "How well does our message resonate with people's needs both on a rational level and on an emotional level?"

Mr. Dick concluded by again emphasizing that this kind of "think tank" session will help the Council continue the process of strategic thinking and planning in the August meetings. For complete Council reports, see www.ucg.org/about/council/updates.htm. UN

Letters

"Promptly Read With Anticipation"

I greatly appreciate receiving *The Good News* and your *World News and Prophecy* publications. We get a number of various kinds of literature, but I can assure you that when yours arrive at our mailbox, it is promptly read with anticipation. You certainly seem to have a grasp of what is going on. Please keep them coming.

Pennsylvania

"I Choose to Continue Learning"

This is my final lesson (#12) in the wonderful *Bible Study Course*.

I had so much fun doing this, but even better, I got to learn about my Heavenly Father, God, and my precious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This might be my final lesson, but indeed it is not my final lesson, because I choose to continue learning all I can.

Thank you for this great opportunity.

California

"How Am I Going to Change My Life?"

Thank you so much for the booklets you are sending to me. You do not know how much they have changed the way I see life now and understand the Bible.

The problem now is, how am I going to change my life—meaning from the traditional Christian way to what is God's way? Could you please pray for my family and me? Thank you so much. And may God continue to bless you, to open the minds and eyes of everyone who has received *The Good News*.

Internet

"Wish You Had a Church Nearby"

I've been studying with you for a long time. I am disabled and want to thank you tremendously for helping me with my Christian walk. I wish you had a church nearby. I visit you on the Web often. God bless you all!

Internet

"It Has Me Studying as I Have Not Done Before"

I am thrilled and greatly impressed with the obvious depth and intensity your Bible researchers display in all the publications I have read. In every instance of expressing an interpretation or teaching of the Bible, a reference is made to the book, chapter and verses that justify the position taken for the expressed interpretation.

In a former e-mail some time ago, I had provided the information that I am the son of a Southern Baptist minister, and that I became a Christian at the age of 8 (I'm now 79). Having grown up in that environment, I had accepted the belief that I was well informed about the teachings of the Bible and the beliefs of my home doctrine. After I started reading your many publications, I have started reading the Bible as if I had never done so before.

There were many expressions in your publications I felt surely you had made some misguided judgments; then there were the sources cited to justify the position taken. I asked myself how I had gotten so much misled in all of my thinking, which I had obviously just absorbed from my religious environment! I am very impressed with your teachings, and it has me studying as I have not done before. I pledge to myself to continue to do so!

California

Discovering the Truth in Singapore

I am from Singapore, and I have been subscribing to *The Good News* magazine for the past six months. I have been enlightened by the articles in the magazine, and I appreciate the effort and time taken by the various writers of these articles that make people like me come to learn the truth about Jesus Christ and His teachings and the way that God wants us to live our lives.

I have been a Catholic since birth and have grown up in the ways of the Catholic Church. But I believe that it was through God's grace that He is slowly

but surely on a daily basis revealing His truth to me. I am amazed that I have come to comprehend that we have been living our lives and celebrating festivals and encouraging idol worship of statues that are made to look like Jesus Christ, which Jesus Himself condemned. But this realization is slowly and surely changing me.

There is no United Church of God based in Singapore, and I do hope and pray that the Church will base its roots here in this country as well so that the good news of Jesus Christ will settle firmly in the hearts of Christians here in Singapore.

I pray that the United Church of God will continue in its efforts to bring more and more people to God, and I hope that you will provide me with information as to how I can give back to the Church just as you all have given me the ability to know my true Jesus. I thank you.

Singapore

We replied with information about our congregation in Singapore.

Two Subscriptions to the Greatest Magazine on the Planet

How fortunate am I to have two subscriptions to the greatest magazine on the planet! Apparently, I sent in two request cards from different addresses and using different names. After I moved, my first subscription caught up with my new address. So, yesterday I received two *GNs*.

So I'd like to free up one subscription to make it available to someone else.

Incidentally, the extra *GN* actually came in handy, because a young lady (my daughter's best friend) wanted a copy. I gave her UCG's Web information last night. Through my daughter, she has become very "interested" and wants to know more.

New Jersey

Literature Helps With Sunday School Class

I have enclosed a small contribution. I realize you do not charge for your lit-

erature, but I wanted to show my appreciation for what you have sent me. Use as needed.

Today I received *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* This latter will be of special help to me as my Sunday school class is in Revelation chapter 7 starting this Sunday. I've skimmed through it and found it quite interesting. I'm looking forward to perusing it more fully tonight.

I am in my 43rd year as an adult Sunday school teacher and count it a blessing and a privilege to do so. I appreciate other resources and rely on the Holy Spirit and the Word to enlighten me as

I study. My pastor says the United Church of God and the Church of the Nazarene are not very different. He knows I use many resources, and he knows what I believe that honors God to do so.

Arkansas

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

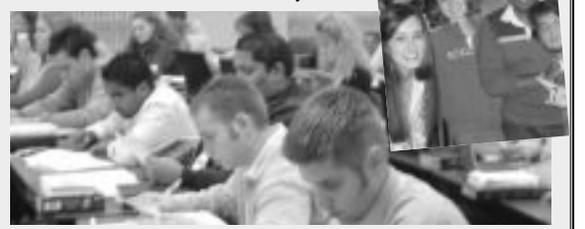
What ABC Can Mean for You!

ABC represents the first letters of the alphabet. ABC may be a television network or the name of a nursery. But ABC to the United Church of God means Ambassador Bible Center.

ABC means a biblical education among those of like beliefs. For the first time in your educational experience, you may have an institution that is geared to your spiritual needs and that places a priority on the morals that you embrace. It means that you may participate in all of the activities because they are scheduled at times you may attend. It means forming close bonds and friendships with fellow ABC students whom you will be with for seven hours a day, five days a week for seven months. ABC means service opportunities in the home office and surrounding church areas.

ABC means an opportunity to enhance your life by being taught living principles from God's Word. At ABC, we are accepting applications! Write for yours at: P.O. Box 54992, Cincinnati, OH 45254-0992 or download an application at our UCG Web site at www.ucg.org/abc. Or you may call (513) 576-9796 and ask to speak to Registrar Ralph Levy or Admissions Officer Gary Antion about any questions you may have.

ABC denotes the beginning of the alphabet. For you, it may mean the beginning of a new experience that will have an eternal effect on your life!



News At a Glance

Continued from page 4

A number of elements of the task remain, including reviewing the 250 hymns submitted by members, correcting mistakes in the current hymnal, reviewing the doctrinal accuracy of all the proposed hymns and producing pianist and song leader editions and an accompanist CD of the new hymnal.

A further update will be provided to the Council in its meetings in August.

Don Henson

Staff Members Tour Bulk Mail Center

On Thursday, May 18, nine employees from the home office attended a Cincinnati Postal Customer Council meeting, which included a tour of the Cincinnati Bulk Mail Center. The purpose of the tour was to help postal customers better understand why sortation and barcoding help keep the cost of postage down.

The Cincinnati Bulk Mail Center is a huge facility, covering 55 acres. It has 166 dock spaces and over 33 miles of conveyors in the 543,150-square



Paul Wasilkoff, Larry Perkins, Richard Kennebeck, Doris Phelps, Connie Seelig and Carole Gholson listen to Post Office employee on tour (photo by Janet Treadway)

foot building. Cincinnati is sixth in volume of mail processed in the 21 bulk mail centers in the United States.

Home office staff members who attended were Richard Kennebeck and Paul Wasilkoff from the Information

Technology Department, and Connie Seelig, Doris Phelps, Emma Kennebeck, Carole Gholson, Janet Treadway, Lina Reid and Larry Perkins from the Mail Processing Department. The tour helped the staff understand the processes the U.S. Postal Service requires in order to receive reduced postage rates.

Connie Seelig

Bend Designated as Deaf and Hard of Hearing Site

The officially designated Feast of Tabernacles site for deaf and hard of hearing brethren in 2006 is Bend, Oregon. Interpreters skilled in oral interpreting and American Sign Language will be available at this site.

If you would like to serve as a notetaker, interpreter or real-time captioner, or if you have questions regarding our services for the deaf and hard of hearing, either at Bend or another site, please contact Mark or Barbara Welch at (918) 247-4325 or mark_welch@ucg.org.

Mark Welch

Lafayette Hosting Melody of Music

This July 4th weekend the Lafayette, Indiana, brethren are sponsoring Melody of Music, a weekend of camping, Christian music and fellowship. A variety of music is being planned, including jazz, folk, rock, country, blues and much more. Some of the other activities include swimming, bike rides, a nature hunt, face painting, horseshoes, checkers and a fireworks display by the owner of the campgrounds.

The chef has been planning a nutritious menu with campers' health in mind, or campers can bring their own food. The Lafayette brethren want their guests to share this event for the 2½ days with a minimum preparation time. Visitors can bring a tent, pop-up, RV or just camp underneath the stars.

A video promo is available on the Web site. Please register on the site at www.mom07.com; by telephone, (765) 404-6509; by fax, (765) 447-7051; or by



What's New on the Web?

■ Youth Media

Visit www.ucg.org/youth/video/mp3.htm to watch past United Youth Camp and Ambassador Bible Center videos.

While you're there, download MP3 files of informative and helpful sermons targeted toward teens and young adults.

■ Home Office Information

Do you want to know more

mail, P.O. Box 5314, Lafayette, IN 47903.

All net proceeds from Melody of Music 2006 will go to LifeNets Developing Nations Scholarship Fund that helps more than 60 United Church of God youth and young adults attend university or finish high school.

Sabbath services on July 1 will be at 2 p.m. A detailed map to services in West Lafayette is located on the Web site www.ucg-lafayette.org.

Tony Pacelli

Southern California Holds Young Adult/Teen Weekend

The Garden Grove, California, congregation will be hosting a summer weekend for young adults and teens on the weekend of July 13 to 16. Activities include a meet-and-greet pool party, beach bonfire, Sabbath brunch/Bible study, followed by services (with guest speaker, Clyde Kilough), open gym night, beach party and a farewell dance. Young people ages 13 to 25 are welcome. There is a \$20 per person registration fee to help cover the cost of the weekend meals and activities.

For more information on Southern California's "O.C. Summer Bash," you

about the home office? Visit www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/ to read UCGIA President Clyde Kilough's biography and view a new photo of the home office staff.

■ Study Papers

Interested in studying a doctrinal topic in depth? Visit www.ucg.org/papers/ for a list of study papers available for download in Adobe PDF format.

■ UCG Commentary

"The Growing 'Wellness' Revolution"

"End-Time Scoffers Seek to Discredit the Bible"
"Why Did I Find Just One Watch?"
"Half of Africa Is Disappearing"
"Is 'The Gospel of Judas' Believable?"

www.ucg.org/commentary/

Featured Link

■ Good Works Program

www.ucg.org/goodworks

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

may contact Aaron Weis at EhsJock14@yahoo.com or DeAnn Weis at Luky2binhb@yahoo.com.

Aaron Weis

Wild Game Recipe Deadline Aug. 1

The Loveland, Colorado, congregation would appreciate more recipes to make their wild game cookbook as complete as possible. All profit will be donated to the United Youth Camp Scholarship Fund. Please contact Tammie Pearce at pearcet@heska.com or write her at 617 N. 1st St., Johnstown, CO 80534. The deadline is Aug. 1, after which the book will be produced with the available recipes.

Larry Neff

Calendar of Events

June 10-11: Fifth annual Family Weekend, St. Petersburg/Tampa, Florida (<http://ucg-tampabay.org>).

July 1: Creation Seminars on Noah's Ark and Early Man, Toronto, Ontario. Guest speaker: Arnold Mendez Sr. For more information, contact Anthony Wasilkoff by e-mail at anthony_wasilkoff@ucg.ca or by phone at

(905) 876-9966 or see www.ucg-toronto.org or www.amendez.com.

July 2-4: Melody of Music, Lafayette, Indiana (www.mom07.com).

July 13-16: Teen/Young Adult Weekend in Garden Grove, California (Luky2binhb@yahoo.com).

July 20-23: Bluegrass Family Fun Weekend at Sally Buffalo Park near Cadiz, Ohio (www.ucgnet.org/wheeling/bluegrass).

Aug. 5-6: Denver, Colorado, 50th Anniversary (larry_neff@ucg.org).

Aug. 6: Ocoee white-water rafting trip, hosted by Cleveland, Tennessee, congregation. Details next issue, or contact Allen Dance at (423) 855-0868 or at attendance@hotmail.com.

Aug. 21-25: ABC Continuing Education Seminars, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Sept. 3: Second Annual UCG Houston Music Festival.

Sept. 9-10: ABC Continuing Education Seminars, Denver, Colorado.

Oct. 28-29: ABC Continuing Education Seminars, Atlanta, Georgia.

Nov. 4-5: ABC Continuing Education Seminars, Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas.

Nov. 11-12: ABC Continuing Education Seminars, Calgary, Alberta.

Nov. 18-19: ABC Continuing Education Seminars, Morton, Illinois (dates still tentative).

Please send calendar items to mike_bennett@ucg.org.

Attention Published Authors and Musicians!

We occasionally hear of United Church of God members who have published a book or recorded a CD. Congratulations! These are great accomplishments, and we know many members would be interested to know about your achievements. Though we strive to avoid promoting or seeming to advertise any products, for news and informational purposes we would like to feature the published authors and musicians in a special section of the August *United News*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by July 10.

1. Your Name, Congregation and Pastor's Name.
2. Name of book(s) published or musical recording(s) produced in the last five years (include date of publication or production).
3. Tell a little bit about the work(s) and how it (they) came about.
4. Tell a little bit about yourself (date of baptism, church activities, family, hobbies, etc.).
5. Optional: Comments from one or two Church members about your accomplishment.
6. Web address or e-mail address for more information.

Please send with a recent photo (conforming to biblical standards) by July 10 by e-mail to Mike_Bennett@ucg.org or by mail to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

We reserve the right to use or not use items at our discretion and to edit for clarity and length; 250-word maximum length. Thanks!



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