



United Church of God
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Vol. 12, No. 10

www.ucg.org

December 2006

News At a Glance

Members Safe After Violence in Tonga

Pro-democracy demonstrators looted and burned many businesses and buildings in the Tongan capital city, Nuku'alofa, Nov. 16.

Heamasi Ta'ufu'ou, the UCG pastor in Tonga, wrote Nov. 21, "Thanks for your prayers for us. All the brethren are well and safe."

The Tongan brethren would appreciate your prayers for their ongoing safety and also the stabilization of their country after this event.

Jeff Caudle

GN Readers to Be Offered Bible Course

In December a subscriber development letter will be sent to about 200,000 U.S. *Good News* subscribers offering the *Bible Study Course*. This is the largest number who have received this offer, and the first letter offering the *Bible Study Course* in two years. The December 2004 letter received a 7.8 percent response. Your prayers for the success of this offer are requested.

Gospel Available in Your Supermarket

On Oct. 1 distribution of 721,000 bifold "take one" subscription brochures began on 4,503 "Good Neighbor" displays located at the entrances of major supermarkets and discount stores, including Wal-Mart, A&P, Safeway, Kroger and many others. The states and number of stores in which distribution is now occurring are:

Arizona 204
Arkansas 47

See "News at a Glance," page 2

United Statistics		Bible Study Course Graduates, Cumulative
2006	2005	
50,000	40,000	Total number of lessons mailed from the home office: 979,707
40,000	30,000	
30,000	20,000	Total graduates: 56,709
20,000	10,000	
10,000	0	
0	0	

ABC to Launch Eighth Year With Largest Class

The Ambassador Bible Center begins its eighth year with orientation on Jan. 7, 2007. The class will have 62 students—the largest class we have ever had at ABC! We decided to cap the class this year and in the future at around 60 students since this is the capacity for our facilities at the home office in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area.

We have several additional applicants on our "wait list" this year. These accepted applicants will fill any open spots as the year begins or be deferred to next year.

The class of 2007 consists of 22 men and 40 women (two wives will be attend-

ing with their husbands), ranging in age from 18 to 67, from Canada, Sweden, Germany and the United States.

After several meetings with the ABC Administrative Team, we have now established long-range, mid-range and short-range outcomes for ABC. We are now in the process of developing a plan to implement those outcomes. The ABC Administrative Team consists of Clyde Kilough, Jim Franks, David Register, Gary Antion, David Johnson and Ralph Levy.

ABC will begin to focus on a more holistic approach for the ABC experience.

We will focus on character development and leadership, not just biblical education. In addition to our regular classes, we will have more Friday evening Bible studies and more personal faculty contact with each of the students by assigning faculty advisers. There will be more opportunities to interact with the ministry and faculty.

We have added two classes—a speech class with labs and a class on basic Christian principles, including proofs of God's existence and proofs of the Bible as God's Word. We have reduced the hours of the Comparative Religion class and will fill

the time between modules to make time for the new classes. These changes will help us achieve our outcomes.

We will also add some additional measurement tools, like tests and surveys, to develop benchmarks for measuring effectiveness. We need to know that what we are teaching in ABC is effective and helps us achieve the outcomes for our students.

Long-term we envision ABC as an integral part of educating our youth in godly character, knowledge and understanding, as well as developing leaders for the future.

Dave Register

Feast 2007: Alaska Accepting Applications



Feast 2006 memories: Caloundra, Australia, children's choir; Kenya baptism (more 2006 photos, page 13)

by Charles Melear

The United Church of God will again sponsor a Festival site in Anchorage, Alaska, in 2007.

The 500 to 600 anticipated attendees will be hosted by the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel just 15 minutes from Anchorage International Airport. The downtown location provides easy access to Anchorage's busiest

shopping centers and the most popular events.

The 16-story hotel features 375 comfortable guest rooms with museum-quality sculpture and artwork. The hotel claims an international reputation for dining excellence and friendly service. The impressive atrium lobby features a jade staircase and a

See "Alaska," page 4

Senior Pastors and Associates Serving in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe Meet

by Melvin Rhodes

The home office was the venue for the second annual Senior Pastors' Conference, Nov. 1 and 2. The first one, held a little over a year ago, was just for the U.S. pastors with responsibilities as senior pastors in Africa. This year's conference was broadened to include David Baker, senior pastor for Asia, and Victor Kubik, senior pastor for Estonia and other countries in Eastern Europe. Attending with Mr. Kubik was Johnnie Lambert, an elder from New York who has been assisting him in that area.

The senior pastors for Africa are Melvin Rhodes (Ghana), Fred Kellers (Nigeria) and John Elliott (East

Africa). Joel Meeker also attended the meetings since, as director of the French work, he travels extensively in Africa.

Fred Kellers has been assisted for some time by Mark Mickelson, while Tom Clark has recently been appointed associate senior pastor for Ghana. As of the date of the meetings, no associate senior pastor has been appointed for the areas administered by Mr. Elliott.

Also present were the president of the United Church of God, Clyde Kilough; Jim Franks, operation manager for Ministerial Services; Tom Kirkpatrick, treasurer; and Dave Register, director of Education Programs, including the United Youth Corps,

which is actively involved in helping to serve at camps across Africa.

Inspired by Africa's dire poverty and the limited resources of the Church, the theme of the conference was "Silver and Gold Have I None..." Lectures were given to those present on "Using Our Limited Resources Wisely in the Third World" (Joel Meeker), "Arranging Travel Plans/Getting the Most out of Each Trip" (Dave Baker), "Budgets and Good Works Programs" (Tom Kirkpatrick), "Managing the Feast of Tabernacles in Africa/Asia" (Doug Horchak) and "Youth Camps and Youth Corps" (Dave Register).

See "Senior Pastors," page 3

Days of Unleavened Bread Tour of Egypt Planned

■ An extension to Mt. Sinai is also being offered for 2007. Plans for 2008 include a tour of Israel.

During the 2007 Unleavened Bread



Tour to visit pyramids of Egypt

Holy Day season, the United Church of God will be offering a biblical study

See "Egypt," page 3

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Over the years, supermarket brochure distribution has proved to be one of our most effective advertising efforts in terms of response. This year, seven brand-new brochures are being displayed, including "The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy," "The Middle East in Bible Prophecy," "Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension," "Managing Your Finances," "Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?" and "Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?" Each colorful brochure offers a booklet by the same title and a subscription to *The Good News*.

As always, your prayers for God's blessings on this major advertising campaign are much appreciated.

John LaBissoniere

Feast Webcasts Appreciated

"Thank you so much for the Feast of Tabernacles 2006 via the Internet, telephone waves, radio waves and all

See "News at a Glance," page 16

Council Member Profile: Joel Meeker

Joel Meeker was born in Wisconsin in 1961. His father, George Meeker, listened to Herbert Armstrong on the radio in the 1940s, entered Ambassador College in 1950, and was among the early ministers to be ordained in this era of the Church.

Joel Meeker attended Ambassador College in Pasadena from 1980-85, participating in service projects in Thailand, France, Switzerland and Scotland. He graduated in 1985, after serving as student body president his final year.

After graduation he married Marjolaine Dubois, an Ambassador graduate from Montreal, Quebec. The couple moved to France where Joel was ordained to the ministry in 1986. Until 1994 they served congregations in Marseilles, Narbonne, Metz, Strasbourg, Mulhouse and Colmar, France. They directed the French youth

camp program from 1990 to 1994. The Meekers' daughters, Fiona and Tatiana, were born in Strasbourg during this period.

While in France, at the request of Ambassador faculty members, Mr. Meeker completed a *licence ès lettres* (bachelor's degree), and a *maîtrise ès lettres* (master's degree) in modern literature at the Université des Sciences Humaines in Strasbourg. His master's dissertation was received with the highest honors accorded by French universities.

In 1994 the Meekers left the employ of the Worldwide Church of God over doctrinal differences and returned to the United States where Joel enrolled in a doctoral program in French literature at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. The Meekers joined the United Church of God

shortly after its founding in 1995.

In 1996 Joel cut short his degree program in order to serve the Church in French-speaking Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. As initial coordinator of the United Youth Corps International Service projects, Joel organized young-adult projects in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America.

He is pastor for French-speaking areas in Europe, Africa and the Caribbean, serving members in more than a dozen countries. He is editor of French-language publications, including the French magazine *Bonnes Nouvelles*, the member newsletter *Renouveau* and other literature. He spends four to six months each year traveling internationally. In addition to serving as chairman of the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee of the Council of Elders, and



Marjolaine and Joel Meeker

on the Council's Media and Communications Committee, he also serves on the media steering group.

Marjolaine has a master of education degree and teaches high school French. The Meekers currently make their home in the Cincinnati area.

Mr. Meeker's personal interests include military history, English and French literature and scuba diving. UN

FORWARD! It's Not About Living Longer

by Clyde Kilough



"How to Live Longer."

This headline caught my eye today in a newsletter that home office employees regularly receive from our insurance provider. "You need to pay attention," it said, "to all five spheres of wellness"—physical, mental, family and social, spiritual and material.

It should have read, "How to Live Better," because the author's advice focused on establishing better priorities, values and lifestyles. But the advice was sound—live better and you increase your likelihood of living longer.

It reminded me of a story I read recently:

A boat docked in a tiny Mexican village. A rich American tourist complimented a local fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took him to catch them.

"Not long," said the Mexican.

"So why didn't you stay out longer and catch more?" asked the American.

The Mexican explained that his small catch was sufficient for his family's needs.

The American asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a siesta with my wife. In the evenings, I go into the village to see my friends, play guitar, sing a few songs. I have a full life."

The American interrupted, "Listen, I have a business degree and I can help you make it better! First, start fishing longer every day. Then sell the extra fish you catch, make more money, then buy a bigger boat. The larger boat will bring even more money, and you can buy a second one, a third one and so on until you have a fleet. And, instead of selling your fish to a middleman, you negotiate directly with the processing plants, maybe even open your own plant. Then you can leave this little village and move to Mexico City, LA or even New York! From there you can direct your huge enterprise!"

"How long would that take?" asked the fisherman.

"Maybe 20, 25 years," replied the businessman.

"And after that?"

"Oh, then it gets really interesting," answered the American. "When your business gets really big, you can sell stock and make millions!"

"Millions—wow! Then what?"

"Then ... you can retire, live in a village near the coast, sleep late, play with your grandchildren, catch some fish, take siestas and spend your evenings singing with your friends."

Good story. Makes you think.

Makes you think even longer about what Jesus said about the heart of this issue: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

Makes you think about the hundreds of other "health tips" God gives in His Word, which is loaded with sound advice for healthy living in all five of those "spheres of wellness." Makes you think about the need to "take heed."

The moral is, it's not about living longer, it's about living better.

However, the reward is, "Live better, and live forever!" UN

December
2006
Vol. 12, No. 10



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

United News (ISSN 1088-8020) is published monthly except April and October by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Techcenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. © 2006 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post publications mail agreement number 1487167.

Editor: Peter W. Eddington Managing editor: Mike Bennett Copy editor: Becky Bennett

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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.

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Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Subscriptions: *United News* is sent automatically to members of the United Church of God and is free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the generous, voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and their coworkers. Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible. To request a subscription, write to *United News*, United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or to one of the international addresses below.

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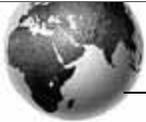
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News From Around the World

Philippines Hit by Typhoons; Brethren Safe

President Clyde Kilough reported Dec. 1: "Dave Baker telephoned this morning from the Philippines, and I am relieved to report to you that all of the Church members are safe after Typhoon Durian passed through.

"Durian, the fourth typhoon to hit the Philippines in three months, was a category 4 storm that was bearing down on Manila but veered south through the central part of the country. Hundreds are feared dead, many are missing, thousands have been left homeless, and the nation has suffered millions of dollars in damage.

"While we are indeed grateful that all of the members were protected, it is sobering to see the destruction and grief that another disaster

has yet again put upon people."

Enduring Milenyo Before Feast

Audrey Ruth Angcos reported in the September/October *United News Asia* that the strongest typhoon to hit Metro Manila, Philippines, directly in 11 years toppled trees and billboards, triggered flash floods and landslides, shuttered offices and the financial markets and caused a Luzon-wide power outage on Sept. 28, 2006, just over a week before the Feast of Tabernacles.

Typhoon Milenyo (international name: Xangsane) brought Metro Manila to a near-standstill with all flights and sea travel in and out of the region canceled. It also forced officials

to suspend operations of two commuter train systems.

With the death toll rising to 200 as of Oct. 3, and with losses estimated to surpass 1 billion pesos—with 1.3 million people displaced including 171,000 evacuees and about 43 million kept in the dark by widespread power blackouts for days—Milenyo seems headed into the record books as one of the most destructive typhoons to hit the Philippines.

It was nine days before the start of the Feast of Tabernacles when this killer-typhoon ripped Metro Manila. Some of the properties of the brethren in the Manila congregation were reported to be damaged by the typhoon, but it was a great blessing that no serious casualties occurred. **UN**

International News At a Glance

Sweden Tests Google Web Advertising

After talks with Peter Eddington at the UCGIA home office and Peter Hawkins in the British Isles, Sweden is being added to the Google search Web advertising currently being used by UCG for the month of December. We will then gauge cost and response and consider if we are to continue or not.

Other advertising opportunities are being investigated and prayers for the work in Sweden would be greatly appreciated.

Paul and Kira Spenser and Solveig Hammar

Germany Celebrates 10th Anniversary With Growth

During the Feast of Tabernacles in Schluchsee, Germany, a brief presentation highlighted the first 10 years of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes (UCG-Germany). The Church was officially registered on Aug. 13, 1996. The Powerpoint presentation (1.1 MB) shown during the anniversary is posted at www.ucog.org/PDF/vkg10years.pdf.

GN Grows 24.5 Percent

The November-December issue of the *Gute Nachrichten* (*Good News in German*) was mailed to 4,234 readers in 20 European countries, a 24.5 percent increase over November 2005. Of these, 364 also receive *Intern* (*United News in German*), representing 8.6 percent of the total *GN* circulation.

German Web Hits up 205 Percent

In the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2006, 50,435 visitors from 41 countries visited the *Gute Nachrichten* Web site, a 60 percent increase over the previous 12-month period. The number of "hits" increased by 205 percent.

Source: www.ucog.org.

"Senior Pastors," continued from page 1

Other topics included "Working With Other Groups in Third World Countries" where a number of other churches have contacted us with a request to join United. This presentation was given by Jim Franks and Doug Horchak since both were involved in the process of leading the Remnant Church of God in Ghana to membership in United.

Doctrinal issues were also discussed. Marrying outside the faith, polygamy and Sabbath observance were all covered.

Developing countries have unique challenges that are totally different from anything in the United States or other Western nations. It is difficult serving people in these regions because of travel difficulties, hygiene problems (those present shared accounts of health problems that have arisen due to their travels) and general uncertainty. How best



Jim Franks, Ministerial Services operation manager, addresses the Senior Pastors' Conference (photo by John Elliott)

to help members in circumstances of great deprivation was another subject that required a great deal of discussion. By sharing experiences and ideas, waste can be avoided

and greater progress made.

In contrast, Estonia has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, but members there are scattered and their needs are also unique. **UN**

"Egypt," continued from page 1

tour to Egypt. The spring Holy Days will provide the perfect backdrop to visit the land of the pharaohs and the captivity of Israel. Ambassador Bible Center instructors Ralph Levy, Ph.D., and David Register, Education Program director, will lead the seven-day/six-night study program April 4 to 11, 2007.

This tour, tailor-made exclusively for United Church of God members,

will split time between the upper Nile with the Valley of the Kings and Queens and Cairo with the pyramids and famous Cairo Museum.

An exciting two-night extension will be offered April 11 to 13 to climb Mt. Sinai before sunrise and read the Scriptures aloud from this monumental spot.

We will need a minimum number of participants to operate the tour and the extension. Please send your contact information to EgyptUCG@travelgallery.com. The full schedule,

pricing, terms and conditions will be sent once we have enough interest.

Looking ahead, we will plan another biblical study program to Israel for the 2008 Spring Holy Day season. Hopefully, by providing a little more time to pass, Israel will be a calmer and safer destination in 2008. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for the 2008 Israel program, send an e-mail to IsraelUCG@travelgallery.com.

David Register

Good Works Project to Raise Livelihood Seed Money for Sri Lanka

A Good Works project has been launched to raise funds to help members in Sri Lanka. Some of the members there are having great difficulty maintaining jobs due to conflicts with the Sabbath. The local economy has taken a beating due to the continuing civil war, and unemployment is high.

We would like to use \$2,500 of Good Works Program funds as seed money to help some of our members there start up small businesses so they can provide for their needs and the needs of their families. For more details on the Good Works Program, see www.ucg.org/goodworks.

David Baker

Good Works Begins Church Hall Project for Ivory Coast

In several African countries our brethren have difficulty finding suitable halls. This is either because meeting halls simply don't exist, or because the price is too high.

Currently the church in La Mé, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), is meeting in a bamboo and grass-thatch structure. However, with recent growth in the congregation, they are at the point of outgrowing this venue, and the local authorities have informed them they may not use electricity in this structure because of the risk of fire.

In addition, most African governments expect churches to own their own buildings and resist accrediting

church organizations that don't have their own building. This government recognition is necessary for us to operate legally in these countries (have bank accounts, have phone lines or P.O. boxes in the name of the Church). Not being recognized can place our brethren at some risk of being mistaken for belonging to a secretive or illegal entity. This is presently the case in Côte d'Ivoire.

The members in Cote d'Ivoire, in spite of very difficult economic circumstances, are faithful in contributing their tithes and offerings, which barely cover the expenses of the Church in their country. They have, with their own means, acquired a lot in La Mé, and have broken ground for a concrete block structure.

We estimate that they will need \$2,000 to finish the construction of the building, so this has been listed as a Good Works project. For more details on the Good Works Program, see www.ucg.org/goodworks.

Joel Meeker

British Isles Semiannual Letter Sent

UCG-British Isles sent a semiannual letter to 6,300 *Good News* readers Nov. 13 and within three days received the first 47 responses (including 10 donations) requesting the booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. As of Nov. 30, 600 (9 percent) had been returned.

The text of the letter was varied slightly for three groups: Members, coworkers and donors (521 in the United Kingdom, 81 not); those due to be renewed (997 United Kingdom, 240 not); and the remainder of the *Good News* readers (3,611 United Kingdom and 850 not).

British Isles Summer Camp Planned

UCG-British Isles plans to hold a summer camp next year for young people from approximately 9 to 18 years old.

The activity will take place at Buxton Field Centre in Derbyshire between Sunday, July 29, and Sunday, Aug. 5, 2007. The center can sleep up to 32 and there is also camping available on site and other lodging in the town if parents wish to come but not camp.

The organizers are also looking for a small number of young adults to act as helpers.

Please contact David Fenney for further details or to express an interest. He can be reached by e-mail at david_fenney@ucg.org.

UCG-British Isles National Announcements, Nov. 18, 2006

Camp Team Comes to Cincinnati

by Larry W. Greider

U.S. camp directors met Nov. 16 and 17 for the eighth annual United Youth Camps camp team conference. Directors gathered to report on the regional camps and discuss future plans. Part of the agenda included sharing new innovations to help our youth accomplish the goals of the Church.

The camp directors enjoyed the camaraderie and benefited from the group discussions, sharing lessons learned. This year, the Church sponsored seven summer and one winter program in the United States. (Winter Camp will run Dec. 27 to Jan. 1).

David Myers, liaison with the preteen regional programs, reported that 485 preteens attended at nine camps in 2006. He stated that these programs help prepare young people for an even greater experience at United Youth Camps.

New Camps

In 2007, two camps will be held in different facilities: The Northwest camp will probably be located near Portland, Oregon (details have not yet been confirmed), and the camp in the Southeast will also be moving. Details will be announced later.

Additionally, the Teton Challenger Camp in Wyoming will not be held in 2007, but plans are for an enhanced program in 2008.

2007 Camp Dates

The planned dates for 2007 are:

- Pinecrest, Missouri: July 10-17.
- Hye Sierra, California: July 1-8.
- Carter, Texas: July 29-Aug. 5.
- Heritage, Pennsylvania: Aug. 12-19.

The camps in the Northwest and Southeast will be announced later.

Parents' Comments

Each year, surveys are sent to parents of campers requesting feedback about their children's camp experiences. When asked "Do you feel the overall effect of our camp staff was good for your child(ren)?" the response was 99 percent "Yes." Here are a few comments from the parents:

"It's almost like they are on fire after camp. It's up to us to keep the flames burning" (Camp Davidson).

"My kids enjoyed the Bible studies and group discussions. It supports the values we have been establishing for them at home" (Camp Carter).

"We have two children who have gone through the camp experience every summer since 1995. They are both baptized, responsible young adults now serving as staff. This is testimony to the effectiveness of camp when coupled with godly



Larry Greider and the United Youth Camps team share a lighter moment (photo by Janet Treadway)

example and instruction at home and each Sabbath at church" (Camp Pinecrest).

Camp Team

Camp team members include camp directors Gary Black, James Capo, Dave Dobson, David Holladay, Paul Luecke, Doug Johnson, Greg Sargent and Ken

Treybig; Larry Greider, overall coordinator; David Myers, preteen camp liaison; and Steve Nutzman, American Camp Association liaison.

The camp team thanks all the volunteers (over 400) who give of their time and talent to help prepare our youth for the exciting future that "the Zone" pictures. **UN**

Beyond Today: A Snapshot

by Peter Eddington

Nov. 8 and 9 saw three guests in the *Beyond Today* studio recording a wide range of programs for the upcoming weeks. John Cafourek, Bob Fahey and Jim Franks were led by host Gary Petty. On the heels of a lively October production meet-

ing, energy was high in the facility.

Subjects covered in the November tapings included:

- Conquering Addictions.
- The Dark Cloud of Depression.
- What's Missing in Xmas?
- Making Life Work.

We've continued to have some very



Gary Petty with guests Bob Fahey and John Cafourek on the set of *Beyond Today* (photo by Peter Eddington)



interesting feedback on our recent "Halloween: Treat or Trick?" program, particularly by viewers with questions about the soul, heaven and hell. It is encouraging to bring our viewers the truth of the gospel.

In addition, we had our best week for telephone responses so far during the first week of November. Our programs on "The Four Horsemen of Revelation" and "The Coming King of the South" elicited a very favorable response during this period. Once again, prophecy seems to be fascinating to many people!

On Dec. 6 and 7, Darris McNeely will host guests Melvin Rhodes, Don Hen-



Behind the scenes (from left): Jerry Merritt runs camera one, Clint Porter at the audio console and Clay Thornton at the video switcher (photos by Peter Eddington)

son, Dave Myers and Pam Myers in an exciting array of topics as follows:

- Islam and Christianity: Can They Get Along?
- The Immortal Soul Myth.
- The Easter Charade.
- Walking With God: Prayer.

Please pray for the continued success of our video effort and that these contacts will bear fruit. Responses

continue to increase overall, and the program is making some excellent headway!

You can view all programs online at www.beyondtoday.tv as well as on many U.S. community-access cable television stations weekly. *Beyond Today* also airs nationwide across Canada on the Vision and Christian cable channels. **UN**

"Alaska," continued from page 1
Native Alaskan design motif.

Prices

The rates are \$108 for standard rooms and \$128 for club level rooms.

Children under 18 are free, but there is a \$10 charge per adult for a third and fourth person. The tax is currently 12 percent. Parking is free for those who drive or rent cars.

Local Area

Anchorage offers the convenience, excitement and ambience of a small but cosmopolitan city nestled into the upper reaches of historic Cook Inlet. Recreational and cultural activities coexist within walking distance of each other.

Wildlife viewing, fishing, hiking, biking and cross-country ski trails are minutes from downtown. Anchorage

is a jumping off place for a myriad of wilderness and outdoor adventures, including some of the world's most famous fishing and wildlife areas:

Kenai National Moose Range, Kenai River, Prince William Sound, Denali National Park, Katmai National Park, Alaska Botanical Garden, Ben Boeke and Dempsey Anderson Ice Arenas, Lake Hood Air Harbor, several ski areas (Hilltop, Alyeska and Alpenglow), Alaska Zoo and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.

First-Come, First-Served Registration/Application

Due to the Church being directly responsible and liable to the Sheraton Anchorage for the hotel rooms reserved and for providing the meeting space, all accepted attendees must stay at the Sheraton. Exceptions to this will be members living in Alaska

or those given prior approval.

Acceptance is based on a first-come, first-served basis due to limited space.

There is a \$125 per adult and \$50 per child (age 18 and under) nonrefundable application/approval fee. This will be applied to your hotel room bill. This will be returned only under two conditions: 1. If the capacity of the site is full and no more approvals can be made. 2. If there is a cancellation and another party can fill your hotel space.

Unexpected emergencies may result in the loss of monies. The Church suggests taking out travel insurance for protection.

A personal check, traveler's check or a money order made payable to the United Church of God is the only acceptable form of payment for the application. Note "Alaska" on the memo line of your payment. A credit card number will be required upon notification of

approval to hold your hotel room.

The Sheraton Web site is at www.sheratonanchoragehotel.com. For

further information write to USFestival@ucg.org or call (970) 484-5878. **UN**

Anchorage, Alaska, Feast 2007 Application

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail address _____

Total # of adults times \$125 \$ _____

Total # of children age 18 and under times \$50 \$ _____

Total Applications/Approval Fee (nonrefundable to those accepted; will be applied to your hotel bill) \$ _____

Room Type Request: Standard King _____ Standard Double _____

Club Level King _____ Club Level Double _____

Mail with check made out to the United Church of God to:
Anchorage Feast 2007, 631 S. Loomis Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80521

Education Programs Focus on Outcomes

by Dave Register

As previously reported in the August *United News*, the Council of Elders unanimously approved an outcome-focused approach for education programs of the Church. Education efforts will be driven by the Church's mission statement and an expanded statement of direction for all the education programs.

The mission of the Church and the statement of direction for education are as follows:

"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" (UCG Constitution, Article 1.0).

"Making disciples (Matthew 28:19) is the process of educating (Colossians 1:28) for the purpose of presenting spiritually mature individuals to Christ; that is, people who internalize and demonstrate biblical knowledge and understanding (2 Timothy 3:15; James 3:13)."

We currently have over 37 different programs and projects that have been identified as "inbound" education for the Church (as opposed to "outbound" programs targeted to preaching the gospel to the public). These include such education programs as: Sabbath youth instruction, teen and preteen camps, ABC, Ministerial Education, Continuing Education and many others.

Most of these programs have been up and running for the past several years. As a church, we have produced a lot of excellent educational material for various age groups and levels of the Church over the past 11 years.

Working With Outcomes

In the book of Isaiah, God explains

that He works with a purpose, and His great plan and drive to fulfill that plan distinguish Him from the gods and idols of this world.

"Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9-10).

God expects us to focus our lives this way as well—to know and state where we are going before we launch ourselves down the path. In Matthew 6:33, He tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." That is, stay focused on your end goal. We intend to do this with our education model as well. Stating our desired outcome will help us stay on track and measure the effectiveness of our education programs.

As we further develop our education programs, we must ask one or more of the following questions: "What do we want to produce with our program?" "What will our children, members or elders know at the end of the program?" "What knowledge and understanding do we want our members to possess after participating in the program?" "What behavior changes do we desire as a result of our program efforts?"

A simple question may be asked about each step in our educational process. When we participate in education at any level, we must ask ourselves, "So that?" In other words, why are we doing what we are doing? Where should it lead? What is the outcome? A good example of this model is found in Deuteronomy 6:

"These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the

land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

"Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and [so] that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you" (Deuteronomy 6:1-3, New International Version).

When we ask, "So that?" each step of the way, it helps us determine

A simple question may be asked about each step in our educational process. When we participate in education at any level, we must ask ourselves, "So that?" In other words, why are we doing what we are doing? Where should it lead? What is the outcome? A good example of this model is found in Deuteronomy 6.

our outcomes. For example, if you begin personal family Bible studies, you would do well to ask this simple question, "So that?" In other words, what is the purpose of your family Bible study? What is the product you hope to create with the family Bible study? What will your family members know at the completion of the Bible study?

The new education outcome model seeks to build upon our successful programs to better measure our effectiveness. The new model centers on desired "outcomes." Outcomes are defined as benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. They are influenced by a program's outputs, which are the statistical measurements of what

happened, such as number of classes taught, DVDs distributed or people who participated in an activity, etc.

Outcomes may relate to behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, status or other attributes. They are what participants know, think or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is that is different following the program.

Outcomes will be established for each program at three levels: initial outcomes, intermediate outcomes and long-term outcomes. These three levels are defined as follows: *Initial Outcomes*—changes in participants' knowledge, attitude and skills; *Inter-*

mediate Outcomes—changes in participant's behavior because of new knowledge, attitude and skills; *Long-term Outcomes*—meaningful changes in the condition or status of the participants.

Determining Our Progress

Once the outcomes are established, then measurement tools and benchmarks will be put into place to see how effective we are in each of our education programs. It will take time to reexamine each of our programs and determine the outcomes. All of our education programs will be analyzed to determine if the current organization and structure is based on the mission and desired outcomes.

Each program will then develop benchmarks to measure the effective-

ness of the program's efforts. Benchmarks will include testing, surveys, questionnaires and other measurement tools. Over a period of time we will be able to develop metrics for measuring a program's effectiveness by using these measurement tools. Based on the benchmarks and metrics, we can determine the effectiveness of the program and make adjustments where necessary.

To help in the development of these programs by recommending program outcomes and benchmarks, an education advisory task force has been named to assist the education programs director, David Register, in formulating recommendations for our education programs.

The task force consists of Church members who are professionals experienced in education and business. Their recommendations are then discussed with current program coordinators and the operation manager of Ministerial Services, Jim Franks. Through this collaborative team effort, education program outcomes and benchmarks will be developed and implemented for each of our programs.

What's Next?

The education advisory task force is now working to determine guidelines for choosing the first five priority programs for beginning this process. The task force will meet with current program coordinators and together they will establish outcomes, benchmarks and measurements for those programs. The task force is scheduled to meet for a face-to-face meeting in December to begin this process. **UN**

David Register is Education Programs director in Ministerial Services.

ABC Continuing Education Seminars Reach New Areas

by David Johnson

Each year the Ambassador Bible Center faculty members look forward to visiting in a variety of local congregations and sharing with brethren a small sample of the classes ABC students receive.

The ABC Continuing Education Seminars, formerly called "Samplers," have been a regular part of the ABC program for several years. Several of the participants have enjoyed the program so much that they make the seminars a regular part of their annual calendar.

The planning team tries to schedule the seminars in areas where there is sufficient interest and we can serve as many brethren as possible. Some areas would eagerly host a seminar every year, and we appreciate their enthusiasm, but we also want to share the program with areas that rarely have the opportunity to host a seminar. Whether an area is large or small, if there is sufficient interest, we are eager to see if

we can work it into our annual schedule.

The first and longest seminar each year takes place shortly after the ABC graduation, and is a five-day presentation at the home office. This year, Clyde Kilough, David Register and Jim Franks each gave presentations, along with regular faculty members, Gary Antion, David Johnson and Ralph Levy. Sixty-one people filled our classroom to capacity for the seminar and received ABC Certificates of Completion at the end of the program.

We have also completed five two-day weekend seminars in local areas. Denver, Colorado; Atlanta, Georgia; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Calgary, Alberta; and Morton, Illinois, all hosted seminars this year, and over 400 people received certificates.

In the two-day seminars, two faculty members give split sermons on the Sabbath and then alternate with five or six 50-minute presentations on various subjects. The subject matter for each seminar is unique, so even those who

have attended previous seminars are able to gain new information each year.

Participant Comments

Each presenter seeks input from the audience, and participants have been very encouraging in their comments about the programs. Here are a few of the comments presenters received this year:

- "The presenter has a knack for making the Bible come alive."
- "It encouraged me to set better goals about my personal studies."
- "I absolutely felt the love he felt in telling about these books! In love with God's words. That's how I feel. I could have listened every day—for many days. I'd like to attend ABC if it's like this!"
- "Great 'meaty' content. Not a lot of fluff. I learned something instead of merely 'doing my duty' of attending church."
- "I feel that these classes are one of the most important programs that the

Church has. God seems to call a large portion of new people through converted members. It would seem that preparing the members to live godly lives and be ready to give appropriate answers when asked is very important."

• "I was skeptical of what I would get out of these topics, but the historical background alone was very informative. Not to mention the spiritual aspects of the books. As usual the Bible continues to amaze me in that it truly is the 'living' Bible. Always opening my mind more and more. Thank you for your diligence."

Winter Family Weekend Seminar

This year we are adding one new seminar, and we are hopeful that it will become another annual tradition. We will be conducting a three-day, 18-hour seminar at the Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky, Sunday through Tuesday we will have six classes per day for

all who would like to attend.

Mr. Kilough, along with the three resident faculty members, will give presentations on "The Quest for Character," "Marriage and the Family," "Key Concepts From the Book of Genesis" and "Themes and Insights From the Book of Acts." Even those who cannot attend all the sessions are welcome to attend as their schedule permits. Those who complete all 18-hours will receive the ABC Continuing Education Certificate of Completion.

Those directly involved in the ABC program deeply appreciate the prayers and support of the brethren. We have therefore included most of the costs for these seminars in our annual ABC budget. If you would like to attend a seminar near you, let your pastor know of your interest so he can contact our planning team.

Even though we can only travel to a few locations during the annual ABC break, we will be glad to consider any and all requests as we plan our calendar for next year. **UN**



From the Word

Guard the Door to Your Mind!

■ We see the need to protect our computers. Can we do any less for our precious minds?

by Steve Myers

To the 21st-century ear, 1 Peter 1:13 sounds a bit peculiar in the King James Version of the Bible, and the New King James Version didn't update the wording. It tells us to "gird up the loins of your mind."

When I first read that verse I couldn't help thinking, "I didn't even know that my mind had loins, and how do you gird them anyway?" As unusual as it may first seem, Peter was inspired to record those curious words for us because they do have meaning and significance for our lives today.

What Do You Mean, "Gird Up the Loins"?

Imagine living at the time of the apostles. First-century dress was very different from today and people normally wore long robe-like garments. If they tried to hurry, they could easily trip and fall over their lengthy clothing. It would be like trying to run somewhere in your long bathrobe.

To offset this dilemma a man would gather the folds of his long garment and tuck them into his belt so that he could move freely and speedily. Examples of this are also found in 1 Kings 18:46 and Luke 12:35.

Peter takes this common expression of his day and, instead of speaking about running with robes, he applies it to our minds. He tells us to take those long robes and pull them up, tuck them in and turn them into activewear. It's not time to lounge around in lengthy robes and take things as they come, but it's time to be ready for action. The NIV translation echoes this idea saying: "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled."

What should our minds be actively doing? How do we prepare and protect our minds? We should begin by guarding the door to our mind. The process of guarding our minds is similar to protecting our computers. If our mind is to be ready for godly action, we must guard it like we secure our computers.

Install a Firewall

To keep our computer safe from attacks, we try to strengthen its defenses. What can be done to ward off computer problems? Install a firewall. A firewall isolates our computer from outside influences like the Internet. It allows the data we consider safe to enter and blocks the data we don't consider safe from corrupting our computer.

It's no different with our mind. We must strengthen our defenses by installing a spiritual firewall to guard our thoughts.

Proverbs 4:23-27 (New Century Version) tells us: "Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life. Don't use your mouth to tell lies; don't ever say things that are not true. Keep your eyes focused on what is right, and look straight ahead to what is good. Be careful what you do, and always do what is right. Don't turn off the road of goodness; keep away from evil paths." We must constantly be on the defensive to ward off wrong thoughts.

Isn't it true that our thoughts dictate the direction of our lives? The greatest battlefield of life is the mind, and we are constantly at war for its control! If we want to live right, we must put up a spiritual firewall and not allow just anything to affect our thinking.

We have to be careful what we let in, and what we allow to influence us. We have to keep wrong thoughts and wrong ideas out of our minds, because how we think will affect how we live.

Computer geeks have a name for this process. It's called GIGO. GIGO is an acronym that stands for "garbage in, garbage out." It means that the quality of the output is directly dependent on the quality of the input. In other words, if we put bad data in our computer, what comes out will be bad results.

Jesus taught that it is exactly the same with our minds. In Mark 7:20-23 He said, "The things that come out of people are the things that make them unclean. All these evil things begin inside people, in the mind: evil thoughts, sexual sins, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, evil actions, lying, doing sinful things, jealousy, speaking evil of others, pride, and foolish living. All these evil things come from inside and make people unclean" (NCV).

Don't allow ungodly thinking. If we allow wrong thoughts into our minds, it will result in wrong sinful actions. We must keep our minds clear, uncluttered, pure and right. By being filled with God's Holy Spirit, it is possible to keep the garbage out of our minds.

Install Antivirus Software

There are circumstances, impulses and desires that constantly threaten our thinking. This is reminiscent of how our computer's processing, its thinking, is also threatened.

A common threat to guard against is a computer virus. A computer virus is a small piece of software that piggybacks on a computer program. For example, a virus might attach itself to a program on your computer and then each time that program runs, the virus runs too and has the chance to wreak havoc.

The key to controlling a computer virus is to prevent it by using antivirus utilities. Installing antivirus software and keeping it updated will keep our computers secure by not allowing a virus access to our programs.

The same is true with our minds. We have to guard our minds so that wrong

thinking is stopped even before it can begin. We must be sure that we have God's Holy Spirit activated in our life.

The apostle Paul didn't know about computers, but he understood that our minds are under attack. He tells us in 2 Timothy 1:13-14, "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us" (New Revised Standard Version). The word for guard is the Greek word *phulasso*. It can mean "to keep by way of protection." We must protect our minds by using God's Spirit. It's like a spiritual antivirus program that helps us to guard against wrong thinking.

Romans 8:5-6 states, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Have we set our mind in order to guard what has been committed to us? Have we shielded our minds by thinking according to the Spirit?

Computer techs tell us that we should be sure to use real-time monitoring and keep our antivirus software updated. To safeguard against the latest virus, we should be sure that the update process is set to the daily mode.

Spiritually speaking, we must be "updated" daily. Are we sure that we are building a close relationship with God every day? We are spiritually updated as we constantly focus our minds on submitting to God and build godly character as we live His way. We are told in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

Protecting and directing our minds during our daily spiritual update will bring remarkable blessings. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah" (Psalm 68:19).

Guard Against Spyware

When you use the Internet, it is possible that spyware could invade your computer. Without knowing it, spyware (also called adware or malware) can track your computer usage, what Web sites you visit and even what keys you strike on your keyboard. It knows what you're doing, collects your personal information and can send it to a third party without your permission. This can certainly be a threat to the health of your computer and your personal information.

There is a direct correlation between spyware and the way Satan and his demons try to track what we are doing. They watch us and try to influence us. They see what we are doing. Remember 1 Peter 5:8? We're told to "discipline



Image © 2006 Jupiterimages Corporation

yourself, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour" (NRSV). Satan tracks our movements and watches for an opening so that he can go on the attack.

We cannot let Satan's spyware influence our minds. Our perspective must be one of self-control so that we are not a vulnerable target for attack. As Ephesians 4:14-15 states, "...we will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from people who are trying to fool us. They make plans and try any kind of trick to fool people into following the wrong path. No! Speaking the truth with love, we will grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head" (NCV).

We should be sure of the integrity of all of the thoughts that we allow in our mind. To get rid of Satan's spyware, we must raise the security level of our browser (our mind) from minimal safeguards to the highest security level. Proverbs 13:6 tells us how we can accomplish this: "Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner" (NIV).

Unfortunately, some have the misguided idea that somehow thoughts have a life of their own and that these thoughts determine what goes on inside our heads. This is not true. Each of us has control over our thoughts and the ability to guard them if we're determined to do so.

"We fight with weapons that are different from those the world uses. Our weapons have power from God that can destroy the enemy's strong places. We destroy people's arguments and every proud thing that raises itself against the knowledge of God. We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, NCV).

With God's help we can take control to root out wrong thinking before it even begins. John confirms this: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Reject the Dangerous

Computer security experts tell us to further protect our system by refusing unknown software, unfamiliar e-mails and unspecified attachments. Do not download unknown software. Don't open unknown e-mails, especially if they have interesting headlines. Make every effort to stay away from questionable and

dangerous Web sites. If you browse them, your computer will be at risk and you can imagine what will happen next.

When applying these principles to our minds, the spiritual implications of this kind of protection are even more serious.

We must have the resolve to refuse wrong reasoning. We have to be always ready to recognize sinful influences and defend ourselves from attack. The apostle John reminds us to "look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward" (2 John 8). "Look to yourselves" in the NRSV translation conveys this ready resolve by telling us to "be on your guard."

Be an Effective Guard

We worry about the safety of our computers, but how much more should we be concerned about what enters our minds? Do we stop to consider our daily diet of radio and television? What about the newspaper or our favorite magazine? How many times are our minds under attack by the philosophies of our day?

Do we realize the extent of the powerful influences that movies and music produce on our thinking? Even the people we associate with can have a detrimental effect on us. Do we just take it all in, or do we set a guard at the door to our mind?

Let's be ready for mental combat. Think about what we view. Contemplate what we read. Let's ask ourselves: "Where is this coming from?" "How does it want me to think?" "Is this the way God thinks?"

We can secure our lives by keeping our eyes open, being vigilant and resisting wrong. A breach of computer security could result in a hard drive crash and the loss of our data. If we do not guard our mind, the loss of life will have eternal consequence.

Remember, the most powerful weapon in your arsenal is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17)—a sound knowledge of and a deep respect for the Bible.

As we stay close to God, we can take security in His promise in Psalm 121:7-8: "The Lord will protect you from all dangers; he will guard your life. The Lord will guard you as you come and go, both now and forever" (NCV).

Guard the door to your mind. **UN**

Trials and Tribulations of God's People

■ Dealing with the trials we go through involves faith, obedience, understanding God's will and a lot more. The end results of this training ground are precious and eternal.

by Lou Fakhoury

On the subject of trials, I can say that I have had my share. First there was the pain and weakness in my legs and feet. Then I had a colon cancer operation, followed by a blood clot in my leg.

I hope what my wife and I have learned will help you too.

Some of you are now fighting the good fight of faith and perseverance with sickness and other problems. I hope this will help you to continue to persevere and not give up on God and His promises.

This is also for those who, for the present, seem to be enjoying life free from trials and sickness. Thank God for that!

But we don't know what is planned for us in the future. My knee collapsed on me suddenly, without warning. Before that I was perfectly healthy! Reluctantly I took a test for colon cancer, with no prior indication that I had cancer. And the blood clot? Where did that come from?

I hope we all stay healthy. But we need to understand why God allows trials and suffering for His people. We suffer the same afflictions as the world does. But God uses our suffering as a means to increase our faith, our patience and our trust in Him. Building righteous character is important to God and to us.

When we study God's Word, we find assurance that there is a godly purpose for our trials.

Nothing tests your faith like a trial in your life, or in the life of a parent, child or close relative.

Intellectually we know God loves us, but emotionally and humanly, a trial can make us feel neglected.

Tests of Faith

God's Word prophesies that His people in all generations will suffer trials and afflictions. As Paul told the brethren soon after being stoned, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22; see also 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 12:5; and Psalm 34:19). These scriptures seem to carry more weight when we are in a trial. Taken alone, they sound like we have signed onto a life of pain and suffering.

But other scriptures balance this, promising a joyful future as well as happy times in this life. These tough times will soon be behind us forever.

Many of you have already passed critical tests of faith when you were first called into the Church. You may have had to tell your mate, as I did, that you will no longer keep Sun-

day, but will keep the Sabbath and Holy Days instead. Can you imagine someone of Arabic heritage saying he is going to keep the "Jewish" Sabbath and Holy Days?

If that didn't test my faith enough, I also had to tell my boss I could no longer work on Saturday.

Whatever trials you faced or are facing, remember, there is a purpose for our suffering.

God Has a Purpose for Our Trials

Peter wrote, "In this [salvation] you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

God tests us for as short a time as possible on areas where we are weak or can improve upon. If we are steadfast, then we will receive praise and honor when Christ returns.

"We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

Our trials help us to grow in patience, a necessary spiritual quality. As humans, we don't like to wait.

Even Christ was made "perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). When we go through a trial, we need to examine our spiritual life to determine where we might be slipping. Some trials are the result of sin. Others are not.

God needs to know our reaction to suffering before He will give us the power to rule people in the Kingdom. "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word" (Psalm 119:67). Sometimes we go astray and break God's laws, bringing on ourselves pain and suffering. The psalmist was reminded that he should not neglect God's Word. Studying the Bible helps us to make changes in our spiritual lives.

Trials can bring us face-to-face with the dark side of our human nature. We can examine ourselves for pride, stubbornness, selfishness, gossip, holding grudges, being critical, being domineering and the like. These can be controlled and changed by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

God speaks to us through His Word. We should respond to Him by our prayers and right deeds. Trials help us look to God's Word for strength and encouragement.

Count It All Joy

"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [or steadfastness]" (James 1:2-3).

Is God joking with us? How can we be joyful when we are suffering?

The answer is found in 1 Peter

4:13: "Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

Putting it another way, we don't rejoice in our pain and suffering, but we rejoice in the end result—eternal life in the pain-free Kingdom of God, and the power to help others with their trials!

Sometimes we get our eyes off the goal, and we begin thinking of ourselves and lose sight of the purpose God is working out in our lives. We need to be God-centered and less self-centered. We need to consider the lives of those who are sacrificing their time and energy to help us when we are sick or in need.

One thing I have learned from my trial was to appreciate my wife much more. Because of my physical limitations, she has learned to fix the plumbing, repair electrical fixtures, drive me around town to doctors and, above all, encourage me when I was discouraged or depressed. She had to take on my chores, in addition to her normal responsibilities.

I often felt guilty that my limitations caused her additional stress. But she always made me feel better by saying that I was the first priority in her life.

Work Together for Good

We may not always understand how God is working in our lives, but as Romans 8:28 says, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Today we see this through a glass, darkly, but in the resurrection we will see clearly. God in His wisdom does not always give us the reason for His decisions.

In answer to Paul's fervent prayers for relief from a thorn in his flesh, God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

In my trial, I thought that the weakness in my legs was all I could handle. But for some reason colon cancer was added, then a blood clot! Then I read 1 Corinthians 10:13, "God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted [or tested] beyond what you are able." So why does God allow our problems to increase? Because He knows we can handle it and He wants us to get the highest reward that He knows we are capable of receiving. God has something better in mind for us!

But let's read the last part of 1 Corinthians 10:13. God "will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

What does he mean by "way of escape"? Does he mean that we should give up and quit? No! Not at all.

Overcoming trials is a joint venture. God supplies the power, but only after we supply the initiative and the commitment to fight on. The way out of troubles is full speed ahead,

straight through the problem, with God leading the way.

God does promise to fulfill our needs (Psalm 34:9). But Paul says that he learned to suffer need (Philippians 4:12). So we see that the fulfillment of this promise is conditional on it promoting God's plan and being in our best interest, as well as being conditional on our obedience.

God does care about your pain! He knows our needs even before we ask (Matthew 6:8). But we should continue to ask God for relief. Don't let God rest until He heals you! He will heal, but He doesn't say when.

Sometimes He intervenes speedily to our request for help. Sometimes He makes us wait. In the case of Daniel He intervened only after Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. In the case of Daniel's friends, it was after they were thrown into the fiery furnace. In Jeremiah's life, God rescued him after he was thrown into the slimy pit. In each case God could have intervened sooner.

Then there were cases like Elisha, who died of a sickness. Paul apparently was not healed before he died. All we can assume is that God will heal them and some of us in the resurrection. But we should not lose hope of being healed now.

Peter wrote, "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

Training Camp

The present life is a training camp for kings and priests in God's Kingdom. A soldier of God needs to be trained and tested before going into battle. To us, religion is not a hobby! God is not there to always make our life more comfortable. He stretches our abilities and capacity for an end-time purpose.

If we do our part, Christ will say to us, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

The following story by an unknown author sums this all up. It's excerpted from www.retirementwithapurpose.com/teacup.html and is probably based on Jeremiah 18:2-6 and Isaiah 29:16.

The Teacup

There is a story of a couple who went to England to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery—especially teacups. Spotting an exceptional cup in one shop, they asked, "May we see that? We've never seen a cup quite so beautiful."

As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke, "You don't understand," it said. "I have not always been a teacup. There was a time when I was just a lump of red clay. My master took me and rolled me, pounded and patted me over and over, and I yelled out, 'Don't do that! I don't like it! Let me alone!' But he

only smiled, and gently said, 'Not yet!'

"Then WHAM! I was placed on a spinning wheel and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. 'Stop it! I'm getting so dizzy! I'm going to be sick!' I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, quietly, 'Not yet.'

"He spun me and poked and prodded and bent me out of shape to suit himself and then... he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I yelled and knocked and pounded at the door. 'Help! Get me out of here!' I could see him through the opening and I could read his lips as he shook his head from side to side. 'Not yet.'

"When I thought I couldn't bear it another minute, the door opened. He carefully took me out and put me on the shelf, and I began to cool. Oh, that felt so good! 'Ah, this is much better,' I thought.

"But, after I cooled, he picked me up and he brushed and painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. I thought I would gag. 'Oh, please stop it. Stop it!' I cried. He only shook his head and said, 'Not yet!'

"Then suddenly he put me back in to the oven. Only it was not like the first one. This was twice as hot, and I just knew I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. I was convinced I would never make it. I was ready to give up...

"Just then the door opened and he took me out and again placed me on the shelf, where I cooled and waited and waited, wondering, 'What's he going to do to me next?'

"An hour later, he handed me a mirror and said, 'Look at yourself.'

"And I did. I said, 'That's not me. That couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful!'

"Quietly he poked, I know it hurt to be rolled and pounded and patted, but had I just left you alone, you'd have dried up.

"I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled.

"I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked.

"I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn't done that, you never would have hardened. You would not have had any color in your life. If I hadn't put you back in that second oven, you wouldn't have survived for long because the hardness would not have held.

"Now you are a finished product. Now you are what I had in mind when I first began with you."

The moral of the story is this: God knows what He's doing in each of us. He is the potter and we are His clay. He will mold us and shape us and expose us to just enough pressures of just the right kinds that we may be made into a flawless piece of work to fulfill His good, pleasing and perfect will. **UN**

Now Starring in a Supporting Role . . .

■ Grandparents can play an important role in the lives of their grandchildren—ideally a supportive role.

by Bonnie Greider

On Aug. 21, 2000, the world changed forever. Maybe not for everybody, but for our family an amazing new addition came into the world, and nothing has been the same since.

Maximilian began his life surrounded by a family who loves and cherishes him. As we have watched him mature from a baby into a little boy, we often ask ourselves what we can do to help him on his way from boyhood to becoming a potential member in God's Kingdom, and how to help him understand and relate to the love of God.

There are many responsibilities we feel toward our grandchildren. We always want to unconditionally love them and let them know we will be there for them. We want to teach them about God whenever the opportunity arises. We also want to give them understanding about family history and their unique heritage. But there is another important aspect about this unique relationship that isn't often discussed.

Snapshot of Family of God

A wise man once said that the best

gift a man can give his children is to love their mother. Throughout the lives of our children, my husband and I have striven to insure that they have witnessed our love for each other as well as our love for them.

With Max, we have an added dimension—a new family layer—and we have come to realize that Max's relationship with God could be influenced by not only the relationship he has with his parents, but our relationship with them as well. Max has the opportunity to learn what kind of support can and should be passed from generation to generation and where he fits in the family picture.

In other words, we have a unique opportunity to pass on to Max a snapshot of the family of God in a practical way that he can witness as he matures.

The world today isn't as simple as it used to be. Families are fractured, stressed, stretched and under attack. We should unconditionally love both parents, and new stepparents when this is the case, as much as we can without compromising God's laws. To support the parents is to acknowledge that they are responsible for their children, and that the rules they set for their own family are the rules we will abide by, as long as they are according to God's laws.

So, how do we show our precious grandchildren the love and support we have for their parents?

Supporting, Not Spoiling

Sometimes, we grandparents take a little joy in "spoiling" our grandchildren. I think young parents expect us as grandparents to be a little more relaxed with their children than we may have been with them—it comes with the territory.

However, as grandparents, we need to be mindful of what kind of an example we are showing our grandchildren if we knowingly and continually violate the rules of the home. Can we not expect them to see this as an acceptable way of life and be inadvertently granting permission for them to do the same? Our motives may be great, but the results could be disastrous.

Backing up the parents is not only our responsibility, but it should be expected. By supporting their parents, we are acknowledging to our grandchildren that there is a type of government in force that we recognize and support, just as we expected our children to do for us in our household.

Supporting Steps

A few concrete steps we can take to demonstrate to our grandchildren that we support their parents are:

1. *Follow family protocols.* When our grandchildren are in our care, we should know what their parents expect of them regarding diet, dress, bedtime, television viewing, etc. and provide continuity for those family procedures

when we are caring for the children.

2. *Back up the parents.* Even if we think the family rules are a little too strict or too lax, we need to positively promote the goals of the family. Sometimes grandparents may be a sounding board for the children to express their feelings. Being a good listener is a vital key, but we must always remember that the goal is to back up the parents whenever possible.

3. *Be the right example.* If our grandchildren are not allowed to watch three hours of television, for example, we should refrain from doing the same when they are in our care.

4. *Be very cautious about intervening in a family situation, especially in front of the grandchildren.* There may be a time to calmly and rationally discuss a situation with one or both parents, but this is usually better accomplished in a private setting away from the ears of the children.

5. *Talk about why you have respect for the parents.* Let the children know that you support their parents in the same way that Christ supported His Father during His physical life on earth.

Obviously, we should never condone or support physical or emotional abuse or any violation of God's laws. Sometimes it becomes the role of grandparents to intervene in such an instance if the grandchildren are at risk. But, generally speaking, our role as grand-



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parents is to be a loving and supporting presence to aid in the development of the next generation of our family.

We love our grandchildren, and we love our children. Recognizing the weaknesses of human love, we can still help our grandchildren begin to comprehend the love God has for His family by being supportive grandparents who provide continuity of that love through the care and devotion we demonstrate for their parents. **UN**

Bonnie Greider and her husband, Larry, serve the Los Angeles, California, congregation.

The Spiritual Blessings of Age

■ For converted Christians, old age is not a time of stagnation, but can be a time of accelerated spiritual growth.

by Michael Caputo

In His great wisdom, God saw it appropriate to allow human beings to go through their allotted years in preestablished stages. After birth we move through the "innocent" childhood years, followed by the "turbulent" teen years, after which we spend many years in the adult and "productive" years, until we finally enter the "sunset" years.

Unless there is an unfortunate early death, all humans go through similar stages and experience the challenges and the growth that results from them.

For many elderly people in the world, the sunset years are a time of stagnation and discouragement. People who were involved in challenging and productive work find themselves unable to use their minds and talents as they once did, thus feeling much less useful and valued. Depression afflicts some elderly people due to losses of family members and friends and the various ailments that afflict some of them.

For converted Christians, old age is not a time of stagnation, nor is it a time of chronic discouragement. The sunset years are for many elderly Christians

a time of accelerated spiritual growth and great joy and satisfaction. In fact, in many ways, elderly Christians become especially blessed, when many elderly people in the world feel empty and hopeless.

Spiritual Blessings

Having known many older Christians and having discussed their lives with them, I have concluded that there are several areas in which they are very spiritually blessed. Here are some areas:

Wisdom: Wisdom cannot be bought. True wisdom cannot be learned in colleges and universities. Wisdom requires time and experience. It is the accumulation of experimentations, foolish risk-taking, plain innocent mistakes and experiencing the consequences to the above. It is the result of years of being tempered by life and being enlightened by a merciful God. Christians over 60 possess wisdom in very large amounts. They are blessed.

Patience: Older people have seen the result of being impetuous and impulsive. They have paid for jumping hastily into things. They are calm and reflective. They are long-suffering, when younger ones are not. They can wait long and very patiently. While patience is a trait the more impulsive younger Christians long for, for many elderly Christians, patience requires little effort. They are blessed.

Kindness: Some of the kindest,

sweetest people on earth are older people. Their ways are gentle and their approach is tender. That is one of the reasons why their grandchildren love them so much. They have seen that harsh ways produce little good. They have seen how much unkind words hurt. They shun aggressiveness and meanness and use a soft touch. They are blessed.

Humility: Most older people are very humble. They have shed the pride of youth and they are framed by a realization that, indeed, as Solomon taught, "all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Most look at their life's accomplishments as having only relative importance. They can now see that what humans value is perishable, and that ultimately only what God values in them has any lasting worth. They are blessed.

No More Illusions: There was a time when older people were young and they, too, chased illusions. They made money—some, lots of it. Some traveled far and wide. Some had power, prestige and respect based on position or wealth. They tasted what drives humanity and now they see that its worth is temporal and fleeting. They are no longer interested in illusions. They are not attracted by power and prestige. Great wealth has no importance to them. They value their family, their friends and, most of all, their Creator. They are blessed.

Time to Socialize: Our senior citizens have the time to do what before they could not do, because of the stress of work and responsibilities. They can

visit leisurely with people of like mind, without any hurry. They can visit their families and spend lots of time with their children and especially their grandchildren. They can visit their Father in Heaven without hurrying. They can get to know Him with a depth never before experienced. They are blessed.

Time to Reflect: The time at their disposal gives them the opportunity to do something that is well known to increase spiritual growth exponentially: reflect, assess and repent. While before they mostly learned from prolonged experiences and, at times, repeated painful consequences, during the retirement years they have all the necessary time to dissect their whole life one detail at a time and learn what before haste or pride prevented.

Many insights that God tried to teach them before, and failed to, can now jell easily and thoroughly. The stubborn resistance of the past is no more. The hard stone has turned into soft clay, and more than ever they are responsive to God's corrections. They are blessed.

Giving: Though elderly Christians may be limited by finances and health, they have the power to contribute to the Church in a way that most younger Christians cannot: powerful and effective prayers. Most of us who have been in the Church for some time have come to recognize the wisdom of turning to our senior citizens and asking them for their prayers in times of need.

The Scriptures assure us that "the

effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Most of our elderly brethren are righteous and their prayers are sincere, fervent and effective. Their intercessions before God do avail much, and those who have asked them to partner with them in times of need know the difference that their prayers have made.

God loves the elderly in His Church. Their prayers are like sweet incense rising before His throne. He values their requests and the Church reaps the benefits of their righteousness and intercessions. They are blessed.

A Blessing to the Church

In all of God's congregations there are many wonderful and very special elderly brethren who add so very much to our spiritual family. We love them because we know they love us. We admire them because they, in many ways, are what we wish to be.

We value them because we know they have much value before God. We savor our moments with them, because they have so much tenderness, kindness and gentleness to offer us. We are honored with their presence, because we know that we have among us many future children of God who are not far from receiving their glorious crowns.

We are blessed! **UN**
Michael Caputo is an elder in the Toronto, Ontario, congregation. This article previously appeared in United News Canada.

Learning to Lead Through Character Development

■ God's way of life requires continual growth and perpetual preparation.

by Steve McNeely

A new old religion is leavening our American society. Born in the Garden of Eden, the modern form is nourished by those who think themselves to be enlightened, independent thinkers. The religion is tolerance; its devout bow down to the god of choice.

Seduced by Satan and their own intellects, these "rational" thinkers cannot understand they are unleashing a great tragedy. In simple terms, this tragedy is the return of slavery. Not the slavery of iron chains and manacles that stains our history, but the slavery of a more evil and cruel taskmaster: the greedy, unquenchable thirst of the human appetite.

When a person chooses to worship the god of choice, the only arbiter of right and wrong is the almighty self. A self left to its own devices will become enslaved by its appetites (Romans 6:16-23).

A religion that removes absolutes and leaves God out of the picture requires its converts to construct their own definitions of right and wrong. This was the ultimate "prize" that seduced Eve. This insidious form of slavery deceives the captives into thinking they are free; like an alcoholic who believes he has no drinking problem, but says, "I need a drink."

Slaves who are imprisoned and forced to serve their master with rigor have no need of self-discipline. They are regulated with the lash. This is the opposite of the agreement God the Father would have with all His children: that they would be like Him from the inside out (Hebrews 8:8-13).

To have a heart like God's requires His character. To have godly, righteous character requires self-discipline. To be exercised, self-discipline must have mountains to climb, oceans to cross and targets to hit. What should we aim for?

The Most Demanding Performance Metric

There are many important les-

sons to be learned from the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:15-30). God gives of His endowments to His servants. He divides His gifts judiciously not burdening any with more than can be handled and not expecting any more or any less than each person can give.

He measures outcomes not in terms of gross return, but in percentage gained. The servant with five talents and the servant with two talents each generated 100 percent return on investment and each heard, "Well done, you good and faithful servant." The servant who played it safe was shocked and horrified to learn that he was unprofitable and unusable; a castoff.

Therefore we see that we are judged, not by what another has been given or does, but by a much more demanding performance metric: our own potential.

What about you? What about me? Are we reaching our full potential in this life? Are we constantly moving, growing, learning and doing? The famous homespun humorist Will Rogers said, "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

The firstfruits of God—the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ—have a destiny of leadership, fame, fortune and power that eclipses the wildest imagination. It's not the leadership of the selfish, but the leadership of the servant. True, godly leadership—in any context—is helping other people reach their full potential. The definition works in a home, church, school or business. It is the antithesis of Satan's perverted *raison d'être*.

However, before we can lead others, we should be seeking God's help to lead ourselves. It is common sense to know that one of the most powerful leadership tools is *personal example*.

What others do especially influences our precious teens and young adults who are particularly vulnerable during the natural cycle of spreading their wings. For those seeking life's treasures and mysteries, newfound freedom to choose makes the religion of tolerance gleam like the forbidden fruit in Eve's eye.

Tragically, many, if not most,

of the priests for the god of choice preach from pulpits of higher education where they find an abundance of willing converts.

It doesn't help that the media machine willingly evangelizes this pseudo-religion by flaunting the escapades and excesses of the pop-culture icons who drink, snort and exchange partners from resort to resort around the globe. The powerful message is heard and internalized by impressionable youth who learn that fun is the only answer, and what matters most is how you look, not what you do.

It is the personality ethic, outside-in, plastic surgery for plastic people who are soul-sick and empty.

The relentless pursuit of pleasure flies in the face of how blind, deaf, super-overcomer Helen Keller saw life: "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved."

What Happened to Building Character?

What happened to inner beauty? What happened to morals, personal principles, rules—"lines I won't let myself cross"? What happened to restraint and self-discipline—telling myself no to something now (even something that might be good) for the sake of something better later?

The apostle Paul understood the value of the struggle. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul speaks of temperance, discipline, fighting, enslaving his body as though subduing and vanquishing an enemy. In Greek, "keep under my body" (KJV) literally means "I give myself a black eye."

Even today we understand and value the discipline required to excel in sports. Two quotes from coaching greats from a bygone, seemingly irrevocable, era nicely paint the contrast with where we have fallen today:

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are"—Coach John Wooden.

"The dictionary is the only place

where *success* comes before *work*. The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand and the determination that, whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand"—Coach Vince Lombardi.

But lives are artificially compartmentalized today and character or self-discipline in one area of life is no guarantee of finding it elsewhere.

"Bold and Arduous Project"

There was a time when building character was chic. A famous American wrote about his quest to become morally pure. See if you can guess who it is from these autobiographical excerpts:

"It was about this time that I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time. . . . As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other."

The young man then listed 13 virtues he would like to incorporate into his life. He developed a disciplined plan to measure his daily behavior against his ideals in a log book. After working on himself he said, "I was surprised to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined, but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish."

This popular and enormously influential American sought God's help to overcome. He wrote the following in his log book: "O Powerful Goodness! Bountiful Father! Merciful Guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my truest interest; strengthen my resolutions to perform what that wisdom dictates."

Do you know who it is? Is it Colin Farrell, Brad Pitt, Kobe Bryant or Paris Hilton? Not quite. It was the great founding father, Benjamin Franklin. Unfortunately morally bankrupt "stars" and their handlers are today ruining the nation Ben Franklin helped birth.

What if all people today simply tried to live Ben Franklin's virtues? His virtues square with godly principles. See the sidebar for the list from his autobiography with a little jab at our modern society for contrast.

Ben Franklin's list of virtues is not the be-all and end-all. The sharp, two-edged sword of God's Word is our complete guide. Are you and I even working as hard as old Ben Franklin to develop our character? Imbued



with the power of God's Holy Spirit, shouldn't our strivings and successes far eclipse those of mere mortals?

Years of Preparation

English orator H.P. Liddon said, "What we do upon some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline." Righteous godly character is not developed with the flip of a switch or instantly manufactured in the crucible of some cataclysmic convulsion. The five unprepared virtues could not whip up the Holy Spirit in a moment (Matthew 25:1-13).

It is said that nothing so concentrates the mind as the knowledge that one has but one month to live. How long do you suppose we have? Look around the world and do the math. The 6,000-year workweek allotted to Satan and man is about to run out. At the very least we know it is the preparation day—the day before the millennial Sabbath.

We must with great zeal and fervor perpetually prepare to lead by building holy, righteous, godly character. We must continually discover, develop and, as we have opportunity, deploy our God-given spiritual gifts. If we are called to fully use our gifts and lead now, we will be ready. If we are not in this life called upon, we will still be ready.

Either way, *when* we are called upon in the next life, we will have prepared to lead effectively because we have struggled, with God's help, to build character. **UN**

Ben Franklin's 13 Virtues (With a Jab at Modern Opposites)

Virtue	Ben Franklin's Description	Contra-Virtue	Motto
1. Temperance	Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.	Spring break	Restraint is for losers; binge 'til you vomit.
2. Silence	Speak not but what might benefit others or yourself.	Opinion	Truth is irrelevant. The shriller and louder the protest the better.
3. Order	Let all things have their places, let each part of your business have its time.	Government regulations	Common sense has nothing to do with it; there's always an exception to even the most complicated rule.
4. Resolution	Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.	United Nations	Make empty resolutions and then do nothing.
5. Frugality	Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.	Enron, Worldcom...	You can never be too rich; steal from others what you cannot earn.
6. Industry	Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.	Lotto	Sleep on. If you are breathing, you deserve something for nothing.
7. Sincerity	Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.	Politics	Is that enough said? Depends on what you mean by "is."
8. Justice	Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.	Judges	Right or wrong has nothing to do with it; it's the rules of the game.
9. Moderation	Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.	Plaintiff	No matter how moronic you are, if you hurt yourself, somebody can be sued.
10. Cleanliness	Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.	Punk, Goth	If it's skin, tattoo it; if it protrudes, pierce it.
11. Tranquility	Be not disturbed at trifle, or at accidents common or unavoidable.	Offensive driving	Reduce traffic; shoot those who cut you off.
12. Chastity	Let's go to the Bible for this one: flee sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18).	"Playboy"	Sex is merely a pleasurable diversion, but you must become obsessed with it.
13. Humility	Imitate Jesus...	Arrogance	"I am the greatest!"

"Let the Children Come to Me": Teaching Your Preschooler About God

by Nancy Capo

Phil scooped up his little daughter on his lap and asked, "Emily, who made you?"

Emily replied in her sweet, toddler singsong voice, "God."

"And where does God live?" queried Phil.

"Up in da sky!" replied Emily lifting her pudgy hands over her head and wriggling her fingers.

Such was my first lesson over 20 years ago on teaching a preschooler about God. Phil's questions didn't end there, of course, and with each question, Emily instantly and cheerfully responded with simplicity and truth. She had spent time with her daddy before, discussing where the trees, flowers, puppies and squirrels all came from. Emily knew from a very early age exactly who is the source of all life, including hers.

Step by step, the process of teaching a child about God unfolds, as the Bible teaches us to talk about God's ways "when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7, New International Version). But what does that look like in the home of a preschooler? And more importantly, what is the parents' goal in teaching their child?

Start With Love

Knowledge about God is necessary, but what does God really want from each of us? At its heart, our calling is about coming to know God, loving God and learning to obey and trust

Him with our entire being. Deuteronomy 6:7 is immediately preceded by "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts" (Deuteronomy 6:5-6, NIV).

As parents then, our goal is to influence both the heart and mind of our children toward God. The first step is letting our children know that *God loves them*. As 1 John 4:19 says, "We love Him because He first loved us." How simple is that? And it can be as easy as just saying so.

What started as a sweet game during a cuddling moment between a mother and her toddler son emerged into a lasting reminder of God's immeasurable love, and it goes like this:

Mom: "I love you..."

Son: "I love you..."

Mom: "I love you *more*..."

Son: "I love you *more*!"

Mom: "I love you the *most*..."

Son: "Oh yeah? I love you *infinity* the *most*!"

Mom: "Mmm, that's tough to beat, but you know what? God loves you even more than that, and He loved you before you were even born!"

The little boy, now in grade school, still loves that game, and while he has to concede defeat in the game, you can bet he knows you can't beat God's love. (Yes, that little boy is my son.)

With the foundation of God's love, a preschooler then begins to correctly process all kinds of information that teaches just who this loving God is. And it's up to the parents to bring that

information forward in bite-sized tidbits in a joyful and accurate way, as Phil did with Emily.

Stories, Songs, CDs, DVDs and More

This can be in the form of conversations that, with a toddler, may last all of just a few seconds, and with an older preschooler, can become quite intricate. Parents can also use age-appropriate Bible stories, songs and Bible-lesson DVDs.

A word of caution—it can be tricky finding CDs and DVDs that are completely accurate, and parents should carefully screen them for wrong concepts. Bible stories are a bit easier to work with, though these also require careful screening.

Years ago we purchased several children's Bible stories in verse that were both entertaining and astoundingly accurate except for a line or two. So with the help of "Wite-Out" and my husband's ingenious rhyming ability, we were able to delete the inaccuracies and rewrite those lines in accordance with God's Word. Those little books provided many hours of enjoyable reading and rereading with our young children (now college-age), who can recite many of the stories word-for-edited-word to this day!

If you decide to use aids such as books and CDs, it's a good idea to hire a babysitter and visit your local Bible bookstore alone so you can browse at leisure. Some Bible bookstores have a children's area where you can listen to CDs with headphones, and possibly even view sample DVDs before pur-



chasing. Alternatively, you can ask about the store's return policy so that you can preview at home, or you may be able to borrow some from your local library to preview before purchasing.

Check out UCG's Web site for additional resources on working with and teaching your children. Helpful articles and, once your child reaches kindergarten age, Sabbath School lessons, can be found at www.ucg.org under the "Youth" tab—refer to the "Parenting Resources" (especially the "How Can We Pass Our Faith on to Our Children?" article) and "Sabbath School" links.

Teaching Throughout the Day

With or without aids, keep in mind the instruction in Deuteronomy to create teaching moments regularly throughout the day.

Mornings can be started with lots of snuggles and a brief prayer of thanks

for another beautiful day—or, as the case may be, thanks for the rain to give the birds fresh bath water! A stay-at-home mom can incorporate lessons about God on a morning walk—just how do those ants know how to build an anthill anyway?

Active preschoolers who love to sing and dance can bounce around the living room to tunes with godly themes. A child can offer a lunchtime prayer, or at least say "Amen" to Mom's. He can drift off for naptime sleep with a soothing hymn of lullaby.

And when he wakes up and wanders into the living room to see you reading God's Word in the only moment of peace and solitude you've had that day, your example of looking to the Bible for guidance will be permanently etched into his mind and his heart.

A family evening dinner preceded with a prayer of thanks, a story before bedtime with Dad, and the moments of cuddles and love that only you can share with your child finish off his day with assurance that God's way is pretty good stuff. In these ways your child will absorb positive values and attitudes from you.

Next time you scoop up your child on your lap, with a tickle, a snuggle, a hug and a kiss, keep in mind how much God loves your little one. As you lift him or her up in your arms, remember how Jesus did the same so many years ago in the days just before His death. As He did then, He might say to you, "Let your child come to Me, and do not hinder him, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (based on Luke 18:16). **UN**

The Bedrock of Contentment

■ New homes and new cars are exciting, but they don't stay new. Contentment comes from a much more lasting source.

by Janet Treadway

Several months ago I was out driving and decided to travel up to a neighborhood where we once lived 25 years ago. I had not been there for several years and just thought it would be nice to see it. While driving there, I reflected back to when we first moved into the neighborhood. I can still remember the excitement I had when we moved in.

Our children were all under the age of 5 at the time. It was a perfect home for our family. The home was so nice, and so new, and far better than any home we had lived in. I felt like a queen in this home and wanted to proudly show it off. We invited people over often for dinner. This home brought me much joy and many memories.

But how things change in 25 years! As I reached the neighborhood, I was shocked! What was once such a nice neighborhood had deteriorated so much I almost did not recognize it. As I

approached the home we had lived in, I was equally disappointed.

What happened to that dream home I once was so proud of? Junk cars were parked in the yard that I once had taken so much time to plant beautiful flowers in. The porch was unpainted and the roof needed great repair. What a great disappointment!

This experience reminded me of the time when we bought our brand-new 1998 Corolla! It was so new, and I can still remember the smell of it. I would park way out in the store parking lot just so others wouldn't slam their doors into my new car.

Well, now that Corolla has lost its newness, with 240,000 miles on it and a few dings and rust marks. I no longer park way out in parking lots. Although it's still a great car, I no longer have the excitement I once had when it was new.

How hard we all work to have all these nice things. It contributes to our feelings of self-worth if we own a brand-new home or a brand-new car. And yes, we even feel ashamed if our house does not measure up to our friend's home. So because our home may not be as nice as someone else's, we may not invite as many people over.

Adult Peer Pressure

Just like teens, we as adults also face peer pressure. Now it is pressure to work harder to get nicer things. In itself this is not wrong. It is when we place our worth on these things and forget the attitude of contentment that we can find ourselves on the path of ingratitude, discouragement, jealousy and even anger because we think life is unfair.

Nothing better illustrates adult peer pressure to me than an article I read by David Hoke titled "Contentment." He paints a familiar scenario:

Our neighbor, Don Jones, drives up one day in his new Volvo. We can't help but notice. That old Ford Tempo he had been driving was a respectable, but modest car. It really made us feel comfortable. But a new Volvo is another story. This upscale car makes us feel uncomfortable.

In fact, new emotions seem to surface—envy, discontentment and the desire to "keep up with the Joneses." What shall we do? Well, we resolve the problem a few days later by driving up in a new Audi! Now we feel better.

How many of us can relate to or care to admit to feeling that way?

This came home to me recently when

my husband's inheritance was taken by a very cunning stranger. The home that we were to inherit was beautiful. Our family had been in the will to inherit this for years. We took the person to court but still lost this dream home.

As I struggled to make some sense of it, trying to understand how such a cruel thing could happen to our family, I was reminded of what is truly important. People see the things you have, and even befriend you because of them, but God sees who you are inside. That is what matters to Him.

Contentment

So what is contentment?

It is choosing to be happy with things as they are. It is freedom from the folly and frustration of unsatisfied desire. Contentment comes, not because the circumstances of our lives are "ideal," but because they are as God, in His love and wisdom, allows them to be at the moment (Philippians 4:11).

Contentment is bedrock, inner peace with God, desiring nothing but to



Fancy cars, dream homes—physical things all get old and lose their luster. Godly character with contentment brings lasting joy.

become more like God and to have the glorious privilege and honor of serving in the great work of God among men. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

I really wanted this home that we lost, but the fact is, houses and cars get old. You can't take the fancy home with you to the grave, nor can you park your cool car next to you in your grave. It is your character—what God is doing in you—that will last for eternity. This cannot be stolen from you.

Realizing that it is the inner man that matters to God, not material things, will give you peace of mind and contentment! For that is the bedrock of contentment! **UN**

Treasure Digest

Who's Watching You?

My son called me recently to relay an exciting story. Josh, my youngest son, was working for a moving company. On one of his jobs he was moving in a newly hired CEO for several companies for the Cincinnati area.

After he had worked hard all day moving this man in, the man called him over and handed him a \$100 tip. The man told him who he was and what his new job was. He told Josh that he had watched him all day and was very impressed by how hard he worked, while he thought the other workers were slackers. He noticed how Josh had to work even harder to make up for his coworkers slacking.

He went on to tell my son that if he wanted a job, he would be hired on the spot. He handed my son a business card and told him to call. When my son called the personnel department the next day, the CEO had already called ahead of time to make sure that he would be hired.

Josh had no clue that he was being watched. He had no idea that his hard work ethic had such an impact on someone else that would create a new job opportunity for him.

This example reminded me of an address that Clyde Kilough gave to the 2006 ABC graduating class. Mr. Kilough talked about being like a mirror. As a mirror can reflect light into a dark place, we, too, should shine in a darkened world by our example. Mr. Kilough handed out pieces of a mirror to all the students to remind them to reflect God's light in a darkened world by their godly example. Christ reminded His disciples that they were to be the light of the world, and we should be too.

Josh did that by his work ethic. He let his

light shine, not by preaching, but by his hard work, which had a profound effect on the person watching him.

So how do we let our light shine in a darkened world? Matthew 5:14-16 gives the answer. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Reflect a bright light with a godly example, for you never know who might be watching you!

Janet Treadway
Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation



Spiritual Attention Deficit

I was busily trying to accomplish my seemingly never-ending "to do" list, and everything needed to be done before lunchtime! Nothing was being fully completed—only partially done jobs were staring back at me.

I stopped in my tracks. Wait one minute here—is my spiritual list the same way? Do I stay focused on the priorities, or am I fluttering all over like a butterfly, not seeming to accomplish anything?

As I was pondering this, I realized that just like a mental attention deficit disorder, we can also suffer from spiritual attention deficit.

Spiritual focusing is extremely important for God's family. His chosen people must keep their focus (write your own name in John 15:16). Our priority must be entering the Kingdom to serve. We know that keys to achieving this include focusing on daily Bible study, prayer and occasional fasting. But, with the daily lists of things to do, this focus can easily slip.

Praying is essential to everyone who breathes air; unfortunately, focusing can be a problem at times (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Some may find it helpful to keep several index cards where they normally pray. One card can be a list of people who need our prayers. It is very difficult to remember every prayer request unless we write it down.

We can also include the names of the families who are serving abroad, the home office staff, the Council of Elders, ABC teachers and students, Feast of Tabernacles sites, etc. It is nice to have a "prayer cheat sheet" of names.

Another card can be used for things that come to mind to do while praying. So often when praying for an individual or an activity, we will remember to send a note or make an encouraging phone call or possibly volunteer. It can be forgotten very quickly if we don't jot it down.

You may want to pray before starting your Bible study. Ask our Great Creator to bless your focusing, reading and meditating, to place the Scriptures in your heart and to help you learn the very most with your time. Remember, our elder brother Jesus Christ walked this earth. He remembers how easy it is to flutter and not focus. He will see us through.

Trying to set a day aside for fasting can be a challenge at times. Schedule these days ahead of time so you are sure to get them in. Pray fervently for God to guide you through the fast, starting a few days ahead of the actual day. Ask God to help your thoughts to be His thoughts throughout the day (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God would love to help us with our spiritual focus by simplifying our lives and prioritizing according to His will. The list that I mentioned at the beginning, did it all really have to be done by lunchtime? Without a doubt, some of it could have waited. Ask your loving Father where you can simplify your life, what projects or ideas aren't absolutely necessary. God would love for us to take the time to smell the roses and to enjoy the creation that He has designed for our good.

God will bless us with the power to remain focused spiritually, and He will pour peace upon us when we ask.

Tina Rupp
Youngstown, Ohio, congregation

after Christ) there were no such celebrations as Christmas and New Year's. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "According to the hypothesis accepted by most scholars today, the birth of Christ was assigned the date of the winter solstice (December 25th on the Roman Calendar... January 6th on the Egyptian Calendar) because on this day, as the sun began its return to the northern skies, the pagan devotees of Mithra celebrated 'dies natalis Solis Invicti' (the birthday of the invincible sun)."

Those customs carried over in the observance of Christmas (with its many traditions and practices steeped in paganism and mythology), and the "birth" of the "new year" of the sun! This is why the Roman calendar designates Jan. 1 as the beginning of the "new year." The beginning of the year from God's perspective is several months later, with the festivals tied in with the harvest seasons in the Holy Land.

Much of the symbolism associated with New Year's today (mistletoe among others) has very definite sexual origins and meanings.

Because we live in this secular society and must operate within the Roman calendar, even as Christians we acknowledge that a new calendar year begins to be counted on Jan. 1. Yet to get involved in the celebration of such would not be appropriate. That said, one should be careful not to become too judgmental if a Christian is, for example, viewing a football game or parade at that time of year—as opposed to actually "celebrating" the "new year."

There are many resources that show the pagan origins of New Year's celebrations. You can find related material in reference encyclopedias and online research resources as well.



Images © 2006 Jupiterimages Corporation

Q&A: Are New Year's Celebrations Pagan in Origin?

Simply put, the answer is yes! In the earliest days of the Church (first and second centuries

Share Your Treasures!

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

Turning the Hearts . . . Caring for Your Elderly Parents, Part 1

Our parents have been symbols of strength and stability to us. We could never imagine them growing old. But then reality strikes.

What responsibility do we bear as their children? Especially in the Church of God, as Christians, do we "owe" them anything in their old age? How should a Church member view his responsibility toward his aging parents? What possible options are there?

In part 1 of this series, we will look first at the biblical foundation.

In the Ten Commandments, we are commanded to honor our fathers and mothers. Does this honoring cease once the child is an adult? I should say not! Christ encountered those who denied help to their parents by claiming religion as an excuse (Mark 7:10-12). Christ didn't view this excuse very favorably! Honoring those who are senior citizens is something God expects, and neglecting them brings shame (Proverbs 16:31; 17:6; 19:26; 20:20; 23:22).

Some wonderful examples are given in Scripture of those who cared for the aged of their families. Joseph was one who had a deep affection and concern for his father. Note Genesis 47:12.

Ruth set an outstanding example of one who cared for a relative-in-law. Ruth 1:8 tells us she dealt kindly with her mother-in-law. Ruth felt such a responsibility and devotion that she would not return to her own people (Ruth 1:14-16, 18). She was blessed by God for her care and devotion.

The real clincher is found in 1 Timothy 5:4, 8: "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God... But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Pretty strong words! But does this mean we ought to devote our lives to looking after aging parents? Should we bring them to live with us? Is there a right balance?

In part 2 we'll look at how the aging parents might be feeling about this.



Gary E. Antion

Children's Corner The Ten Commandments of Proper Church Behavior

A while back the Sabbath school classes of the St. Louis, Missouri, congregation wrote the following "commandments," with the note that they don't all apply to "infants, the elderly and the sick."

Class members were Ethan Adkins, Katie Adkins, Jonathon Everman, Karla Everman, Heather Goodwin, Eli McCoy, Molly McCoy, Fiona Meeker, Tatiana Meeker, Bradley Schlosser and Kaylee Schmidt. The teacher was Shelby Faith.

1. Thou shall respect the speaker by not talking too much or too loud.
2. Thou shall pay attention and not sleep during services.
3. Thou shall not eat or drink during services (except emergencies).
4. Remember to bring your Bibles and notebooks to services.
5. Honor others by trying to include them in your activities.
6. Thou shall take part in the singing (and not just lip-synch).
7. Thou shall not "horseplay" before or after church.
8. Thou shall not leave unnecessarily during services.
9. Thou shall not disrespect the Church's property or other people's property.
10. Thou shall not be late for church.



Local Church Updates

Midwest Teens Travel to St. Louis

Nine Midwest teens from six congregations gathered in St. Louis, Missouri, Aug. 13 to 15 for three days of non-stop activities. From daily Compass Checks to thrilling rides, from live theater and the St. Louis Zoo, to the sobering Holocaust Museum, it was definitely three days to remember. Following are excerpts from teens who attended.

Codi Cole wrote, "The arch of St. Louis (otherwise known as the Gateway to the West), as we all know, is large, extremely large at that, but only



Teens on St. Louis trip: back: Megan Fooshe, Brittany Unzicker, Natasha Smith, Codi Cole; front: Emily Kopps, Kevin Carter, Kayla Bryant, Summer Unzicker and Zack Wright.

when we had come within about a mile's distance of it did it really dawn on us how tremendously monstrous the monumental structure is.

"After spending 45 minutes in the Museum of Westward Expansion, it was finally time to go up into the arch. We all got into the line and moved into groups of four or five, to ride in the tiny trams. The four-minute ride came to an end, and after a few small flights of stairs we were finally there—the top of the St. Louis Arch!

"On a clear day (our day was extremely clear) you are supposed to be able to see for a 30-mile radius. Boy do I believe it, because I felt like I was literally suspended above the earth. We took a lot of pictures while at the top, both of the view and of each other, enough to have a book full of memories by the time we got home."

Kevin Carter wrote, "The first night we all went to the Muni, the largest outdoor theater in the United States, to see the play *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. The second day we went to Six Flags and Hurricane Harbor. This was one of my favorite activities of the whole weekend. We split up into several groups, and went through the entire park. By the time the day was over, we were ready for the pizza and pool party we had that night.

"On Tuesday, we went to the St. Louis Zoo and then the Holocaust Museum. Besides all the activities, just

being at the hotel at night was great. There was a large pool area where we had breakfast and Compass Checks every morning. Throughout the trip we all got to know each other better and were able to make new friends too."

Teens and parents both agreed that the trip was a great success, and look forward to a similar trip next year.

Paul Carter

Beloit and Wisconsin Dells Host WNP Seminar

The Beloit and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, congregations hosted a *World News and Prophecy* seminar on the Sabbath of Nov. 4 in Beloit. Brethren from at least eight states and more than 15 congregations attended the series of four lectures that were held after Sabbath services.

Darris McNeely and Melvin Rhodes gave split sermons at Sabbath services and Robin Webber was also a presenter at the seminar. A potluck meal was enjoyed after services.

"This was the second WNP seminar to be held in Beloit, and the interest and enthusiasm was as good or better than the first," said Mr. McNeely. "The members seemed excited by the subject and eager to learn. Their zeal was very encouraging to see."

Weeks in advance of the seminar hundreds of *Good*



Audience in Beloit, Wisconsin, for WNP Seminars; inset, presenter Robin Webber (photos by Dale Black and Darris McNeely)

News magazine subscribers were invited by mail to the seminar. At least 11 subscribers attended, but more may have attended since it is hard to identify subscribers at such an activity.

Several subscribers asked various questions of the Beloit pastor, Steve Nutzman. One couple said they really enjoyed *The Good News* magazine and *World News and Prophecy*. Another subscriber asked for a subscription to WNP.

Steve Nutzman

Kansas City Hosts Second Memorial Day Weekend

From May 26 to 29, the Kansas City, Kansas, congregation hosted its second Memorial Day weekend event.

This year's theme was "Building Spiritual Friendships." Guests from



Kansas City weekend: Ann Thomas puts the ball in play during the Sunday volleyball tournament; Eunice Ramirez in action at the Saturday night dance (photos by Ruben Gusman)

15 states converged for another exciting and inspiring event. With nearly 80 in attendance, guests came from as far west as California and east as New York and Rhode Island. Special guest speakers were UCG president Clyde Kilough and Ken Treybig.

Kansas City's beautiful Hyatt Regency Hotel once again served as the meeting place for all the seminars, Sabbath services and guest rooms.

A luxurious and spacious hospitality room with a breathtaking view of the Kansas City skyline was available for the entire weekend for guests to fellowship and enjoy a variety of delicious snacks and beverages.

Mr. Kilough delivered the keynote address and discussed the seven levels of spiritual friendships. Other seminars for the singles included "How to Become a Successful and Positive Christian Single" and "Keys to Successful Dating in the Church Today." Married couples heard about "Jesus Christ—the Key to Marriage" and "Emotions, Notions and Potions."

Saturday evening included a gourmet dinner at the historic Union Station, followed by a lively mix of dancing and karaoke. After Sunday morning's final seminar, all guests were invited to a nearby park for a family picnic. Six teams were organized

on two courts for a very competitive but fun volleyball tournament. A host of other entertaining public activities, including live music, were being held on the grounds, and the evening ended with a spectacular fireworks display in front of the Liberty Memorial Tower.

The weekend concluded Monday afternoon with a hearty meal at the Cheesecake Factory on the Country Club Plaza. Photos and video clips from the event can be viewed online at: http://kc2006.com/Event_Photos.html. There will not be a 2007 event, but it may return in 2008—stay tuned!

Ruben Gusman, event coordinator

Houston Holds Second Music Festival

The second annual UCG Houston Music Festival was held on Labor Day Weekend, Sunday, Sept. 3, 2006, on the grounds of the Houston North church hall. The festival was a tremendous success; 300 people (including 46 musicians) enjoyed a full day of live music (including rock, folk, country and blues) while visiting and relaxing.

Several out-of-town bands played at the festival this year, including Amendment 21 from San Antonio, Texas; The J. Mac a Due Band from Tyler, Texas; and the Call Me Home Band from Fort Worth, Texas.

Admission to the festival was free and funds received from sales of food, drinks and snacks at the concessions stand covered all the event's expenses. Preparation for next year's Houston Music Festival 2007 have already begun.

David Buchanan, event coordinator

Milwaukee Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Amid the elegant surroundings of the Marriott Hotel, 184 brethren from as far as Alaska assembled for Sabbath services Nov. 18, marking the 50th anniversary of the Milwaukee Church of God. The first resident pastor, George Meeker, had been invited to speak to the congregation.

The first sermon was given by his son, Joel Meeker, who spoke about how God views time. We were reminded once again that God's purpose for humans is to bring many sons into His family. God inhabits eternity, and our spiritual roots are to be planted in God and not this world.

The second sermon, given by George Meeker, was on the subject of time and chance. He explained that our calling was not just luck but was

because God has a purpose for us. God knows all His sheep by name and each of us is important as we all fit into the plan He has for us.

Fellowship followed services for about another hour and a half, then a formal dinner was served to 200. There was ample time for more fellowship and many people were able to see old friends they had not seen in many years, some even decades.

After dinner, a photo presentation was narrated by Dave Kroll and Michael Hanisko. Old photos had been gathered and organized for this presentation. We saw photos of people



Dale and Sandy Puerner (who began attending in Milwaukee in 1966) with the first pastor, George and Karen Meeker and their son, Joel Meeker (photo by Patti Kuczynski)

in many activities such as the Spokesman's Club, YOU activities, the music program, fund-raisers, baseball teams ("the purple Turkeys?") and the ever-popular potlucks. Some of the men we saw in the photos still had hair.

After this presentation the dance band began their music. They even delighted the audience with the Beer Barrel Polka.

After a long but joyous day, the event ended at midnight and people returned to their homes, happy for having the opportunity to thank God for 50 years of the Church in the Milwaukee area.

Leone Burns

Houston Area Holds Annual Fall Campout

The weekend of Nov. 10 to 12, 2006, brought the Houston, Texas, area's eighth annual campout at Lake Livingston State Park about 50 miles north of Houston. There were 280 campers from all over Texas, as far away as Corpus Christi and Dallas/Fort Worth.

The weekend started out hot and humid with a huge mosquito problem, but by about 7:30 p.m. a storm headed our way and brought gusty winds with cooler weather, which chased away the mosquitoes. A lightning show with some thunder lasted late into the night, but we escaped the rain. The wind continued to blow throughout the night testing the stability of the tents!

A park ranger told several people Saturday morning that the radar had shown the storm heading straight

for Livingston but it separated as it approached and went around the town then came back together on the other side! Houston and its surrounding areas received several inches of rain during the night, but the campers only got a few sprinkles! One person told the ranger that we were a church group and that lots of prayers had played a part in that!

Jim Servidio, Houston North pastor, presented a Bible study on the use of wind in the Bible (inspired by the night's windstorm) to a group of 351 overlooking the lake on Saturday afternoon. Amazingly, as we walked back to our campsites, the winds disappeared and left us with a beautiful, sunny, yet cool day.

Other activities included a Friday night combined dinner at the pavilion, a Sabbath sing-along on Saturday

morning, and a young adults' activity on Saturday night.

We hope to start a new tradition by having a spring campout March 2 to 4, 2007, at Bastrop State Park near Austin.

Laurie Curry

Kentucky and Tennessee Teens Enjoy Mammoth Cave Weekend

Fifty members, including a combination of teens, their families and other members, joined together for an inspirational weekend at Mammoth Cave National Park on Nov. 11 and 12. Three congregations combined for



Jacob Smith and Sage Earls walk the tunnels at Mammoth Cave (photo by Randall Foshee)

this event, including Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Murfreesboro and Nashville, Tennessee.

The weekend started with combined services in Bowling Green, followed by dinner at Mammoth Cave National Park Hotel. After dinner, an

inspiring and uplifting teen Bible study covered the topic of participation and teamwork, followed by games and fellowship.

Everyone spent the night at the beautiful Mammoth Cave Hotel, where many deer and other wildlife could be seen wandering through the

grounds all evening.

The next morning, everyone ate breakfast together and then attended a 30-minute Compass Check meeting, which focused on thankfulness and the beauty of God's creation. After Compass Check, the group

boarded a bus, which transported everyone to the start of their two-hour Mammoth Cave Frozen Niagara walking tour.

Shari Fooshe

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*.

Additional Feast of Tabernacles Reports and Photos

The following reports arrived too late to be included in the last issue, and we wanted to share more photos from some of the sites that we didn't have room to print photos of last issue.

Guatemala

Antigua

Without a doubt, every Feast of Tabernacles is unique, and this can certainly be said of this year's Feast in Antigua. Unity and joy were the common themes expressed by all our friends and brethren present.

The highest attendance was 601, with an overall average of 566 per service. The sermons inspired us to look forward to our personal involvement in God's coming Kingdom.

A breakfast honoring all the seniors really helped us appreciate the value of the more mature members in our midst. They can be compared to the best wine of the best vintage, the sweetest and the most valuable.

All the activities revolved around the family unit, and the natural expression of affection among family members was everywhere reflected in the hugs and genuine love shown toward one another.

We all dined sumptuously on the Word presented during the sermons and sermonettes. After services one day this literally came to pass: A giant cake in the form of a Bible was prepared for the congregation, and every crumb of it was eaten! This example helped us to realize the importance of the biblical instruction we received during the Feast.

Luis Mundo Tello

Nigeria

Aiyetoro

The United Church of God in Nigeria has three active congregations and members scattered all over the federation. After four years of having two Feast sites, this year's Feast of Tabernacles took place in a single site in the southwestern part of the country.

We enjoyed beautiful scenery all around and a quiet environment at a facility called Afobaje Hotel in Aiyetoro ("peaceful world"). It was in the rural outskirts of Abeokuta ("city under the rock"), about 1½ to 2 hours' drive from Lagos, the commercial center of Nigeria. The highest attendance was 126.

This site was ideally suited for fellowship and togetherness as every member was housed within the same complex and had ample opportunity to fellowship and get to know each other and strengthen the bonds of love uniting us.

The rooms all had working air conditioning units! There were running hot and cold water showers, a backup generator and an excellent staff. It was by far the best Feast site since United started in Nigeria.

The Feast provided a wonderful opportunity for all the brethren in Nigeria, who came from five widely scattered geographic regions of the country, to congregate as one big, happy family. Many met each other for the first time and others saw each other for the first time in over four years.

The Feast was enriched by the presence of three international brethren: Mark Mickelson (the associate senior pastor for Nigeria, who unfortunately was unable to have his family rejoice with us as they did two years ago) and a young couple from Cincinnati, Ohio, Cody and Bobbi Kitts, who left for Nigeria three days after their wedding. They spent their honeymoon in Nigeria and added immensely to the joy and fellowship of the Feast.

The whole Feast was a time of wonderful special music (in English and various local languages, with Mrs. Kitts surprising us and endearing herself to us all the more by joining the Festival choir and participating fully

in all the special songs rendered), fellowshiping, rejoicing, being admonished, corrected, encouraged, instructed and edified by messages under the inspiration of God.

One of the highpoints of the Feast was the combined men's and ladies' day when 62 brethren were treated to a very formal and educational three hours of speeches, table topics and feasting. Brethren from the United States sent gifts to make the club program a thoroughly enjoyable one.

There was also an excursion to a tourist attraction, Olumo Rock, about half an hour away, where younger members enjoyed an invigorating climb (the elderly ones used the elevator) to the top of the rock. Every-



Nigerian members surround American newlyweds Cody and Bobbi Kitts

one enjoyed a wonderful lunch at a fast-food restaurant, thanks to gifts from brethren from the United States.

The associate pastor for Nigeria, Oludare Akinbo, was also introduced to rappelling by Cody Kitts and Mark Mickelson. Rappelling is being planned as part of the Nigerian camp program for 2007.

We are planning to have the Feast at the Afobaje Hotel again in 2007. We would be happy to have visitors apply.

Oludare Akinbo



Announcements

Births

Bahram and Bonnie Jahangiri announce with joy the birth of their beautiful son, Malek Kianoush Jahangiri, who entered this world on June 23, 2006. Malek weighed in at 7 pounds 12 ounces and was 19.5 inches long.



Malek Kianoush Jahangiri

Malek's arrival was long awaited and greatly anticipated by big sister Natalia, 6, whose tender love and affection is received and returned by an adoring Malek. Proud grandparents are Les French and Linda French of the Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington, area. The Jahangiris are members of the Williamsburg, Virginia, congregation.

Dave and Erin Werner of the Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation would like to announce the birth of their third



Alexander Dean Werner

child, Alexander Dean, born on April 25, 2006. Alex weighed 10 pounds 3 ounces and was 22½ inches long. Alex is very welcomed by his big brother, Ethan, and big sister, Jenna, and both sets of grandparents, Harvey and Teresa Werner of the Portland, Oregon, congregation and Kenneth and Darlene Shoemaker of the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation. Everyone loves the newest addition to the family!

Engagements

Charlene Langner and John Williams of Port Richey, Florida, are pleased to announce their engagement to be married. Charlene is the daughter of Mrs. Renell Book of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the late Donald Langner. John is the son of John and Jan Williams of the Houston North congregation. Charlene and John are members of the St. Petersburg, Florida, congregation. The couple became engaged on Oct. 8, 2006, dur-



John Williams and Charlene Langner

ing the Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City Beach, and are planning a March 11, 2007, wedding in Tampa, Florida.

Weddings

Eric and Jeannie Evans of Atlanta, Georgia, are happy to announce the marriage of their son, Jonathan David to Latasha Pilgrim on Sept. 12, 2006. The ceremony took place in Hoschton,



Latasha and Jonathan Evans

Georgia, and was performed by the father of the groom, Eric Evans.

Matthew and Diana Zollner of the Fairview Heights, Illinois, congregation are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter Michelle Ann to Jonathan Curtis Brunick, son of Edward and Claudia Brunick of the Watertown,



Michelle and Jonathan Brunick

South Dakota, congregation. The wedding, officiated by Michelle's father, took place on June 18, 2006, in Forest Park, St. Louis, Missouri. Jonathan and Michelle now reside in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where Michelle works as an engineer for Northrop Grumman and Jonathan is a second year law student at Regent University.

Gabriel Colbeth and Megan Miller were united in marriage in Estes Park, Colorado, on Oct. 28, 2006. Gabe is the son of Betsy Colbeth and the late Ron Colbeth, members of the United Church of God, Loveland, Colorado, congregation. Megan is the daughter of Paul and Nancy Miller of Madrid, Iowa. The couple is residing in Denver, Colorado, where Gabe is an agent for Met Life and Megan is a school



Gabe and Megan Colbeth

psychologist at a Denver middle school.

Anniversaries

Gary and Rose Groh of Austin, Minnesota, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 11, 2006. Members of the Austin area congregation presented the Grohs with a cake after the Sabbath service, and Rose brought her wedding photo album to share with the brethren.

They were united in marriage on Nov. 11, 1956. Their union was blessed with four children. Wendy, their only daughter, was born Sept. 8, 1958. She was followed by three boys: Wayde, born Nov. 17, 1960; Troy, born Feb. 27,



Gary and Rose Groh

1962; and Chad, born April 8, 1973. Grohs are the loving grandparents of Aunica, born Oct. 2, 2003, and Ethan, born Nov. 2, 2005.

Together, Mr. and Mrs. Groh own a family construction business. Working with their sons they have restored historically significant buildings in Austin, a town of 20,000 people in southeast Minnesota. They make their home in one of 27 apartments in Austin's Lincoln school building. The building was originally constructed in 1909. It was closed by the Austin school district

in 1977, when it was going to be torn down, but Gary purchased it. He and his sons completely restored it, mostly by hand.

Mr. and Mrs. Groh are faithful servants in God's Church. They are a wonderful example of God's plan for marriage and family. The Grohs commitment to God's way of life, their family, the brethren and each other is reflected in their work ethic, warm smiles and sincere concern for others.

Obituaries

Jesus "Facho" Bonifacio Nunez, 23, of Zion, Illinois, formerly of Chicago, died Sept. 16, 2006, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Jesus "Facho" Bonifacio Nunez

Jesus was born on July 12, 1983, in Chicago, and was a 2001 graduate of Zion-Benton Township High School. He brought sunshine into peoples' lives and will be greatly missed.

Survivors include his mother, Sonia Barthel of Kenosha, Wisconsin; brother, Martin Nunez of DeKalb, Illinois; sisters, Ellie Nunez of Decatur, Illinois, and Vivian and Isabel Nunez, both of Kenosha. Also surviving are his grandmother, Rosa Quinones of Puerto Rico; and dear friend, Melissa Roberts of Zion.

A funeral service was held Sept. 19, with Michael Hanisko, pastor of the Minneapolis, Minnesota, congregation, officiating.

Albert L. Wyrout, 91, died at his home in Oldtown, Idaho, on Sept. 1, 2006, of aortic stenosis. He was a



Albert L. Wyrout

member of God's Church since being baptized by Roger Foster in the early

1980s. He is survived by one brother, Samuel Wyrout; four nieces and four nephews. He was born at Lewistown, Montana. In his younger years he worked on hay ranches. Later he had his own woods operation, cutting cedar poles and fence posts. He retired from the sawmill at Oldtown at age 61 on Social Security disability. His funeral service was in Newport, Washington, Sept. 5. Mark Mickelson, pastor of the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene congregation, officiated.

Hazel Armstrong Rea died Oct. 8, 2006, at the age of 77. She was born Sept. 13, 1929, in Carroll County, Georgia.

She attended Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, where she worked on the switchboard as an operator and in the mail room. While at Ambassador College she met and married Dr. Benjamin L. Rea on Sept. 26, 1957. Dr. Rea was to become the head of the Spanish work and founding faculty member of the Bricklet Wood, England, branch of Ambassador College.

Mrs. Rea traveled with her husband throughout South America as he developed the Church's Spanish work and moved to England when Dr. Rea became dean of faculty at Ambassador College, Bricklet Wood. When Dr. Rea died on Dec. 10, 1965, Mrs. Rea and their only child moved back to the United States where they resided on the Big Sandy, Texas, campus until 1975 when they returned to their home in Georgia.

Mrs. Rea was a warm and loving person with a fine sense of humor as



Hazel Armstrong Rea

her many friends throughout the years will attest. She maintained contact with people all over the globe who knew and loved her.

Mrs. Rea loved her family and her many cats. She loved God and trusted in the promise of the resurrection. (Revelation 21:4). She remained faithful to the truth no matter what the situation. Hazel Rea remained a fine example to all until her death.

The funeral service was conducted by United Church of God pastor Dale Schurter. Mr. Schurter traveled from Pennsylvania to Georgia to perform the service. He joined his wife, Mona, who had been with Mrs. Rea throughout her last week. The family can never express the gratitude they feel for the support from the Schurters and from all the people who loved Hazel Rea.

She is survived by one sister, Mrs.

Doris McCray; her daughter-in-law, LeAnn; and her only son, Raphael, who continues to care for her beloved cats.

Hale C. Harding, 95, a longtime Spokane, Washington/Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Church member of over 30 years and a deacon in God's Church, died Aug. 2, 2006, at his Hayden, Idaho, home.

Mr. Harding was born to Albert and Ivy Harding in Provo, Utah, on June 8, 1911. As a child he grew up on a farm and learned from his dad about the importance of good, hard work. He liked farming and especially operating and repairing the equipment. This proved to be decisive in the direction he would later take for an occupation.

As a young boy he moved to California where he took on jobs in service stations and a garage. During this time he went to night school to obtain his high school diploma.

Mr. Harding continued to have an interest in farming, which he pursued on and off over the years. At one time he was partner in a 600-acre tomato farm and a lemon orchard.



Hale Harding

In 1942 Mr. Harding was drafted and assigned to the Active Air Corps Reserve at Cal Aero Flight Academy as an aircraft mechanic. After discharge from the service, Mr. Harding worked for Ryan Aeronautical and General Dynamics. He worked on several of the missile programs and retired as supervisor over one of the engineering departments.

With Verna, his second wife, who died Jan. 21, 1997, he moved to north Idaho in the early 1960s to retire. Retirement didn't last long when they purchased acreage on Lake Coeur d'Alene and other areas in north Ida-

ho. Mr. Harding was busy developing this property into lots and building his lake home.

Mr. Harding remarried in 1998 and lived there until three years ago when he moved with his new wife, Ruby, to Hayden, Idaho.

Mr. Harding learned about God's truth in the late 1960s and became a member of the Church in 1972. He will always be remembered for his warm smile and handshake when he greeted people. Many times he was there to lend a helping hand to those who needed help in the Church.

Survivors include one son, Hale R. Harding of Citrus Heights, California; several half brothers and sisters in Utah; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and his wife of eight years, Ruby.

Mark Mickelson, pastor of the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene congregation, officiated at the memorial service.

Longtime Oakland, California, member Martha Saito died peacefully in her sleep on Nov. 4 at the age of 93. Oakland elder Mark Rorem conducted a private family service honoring Martha on Nov. 11.

The following Sabbath, Nov. 18, a special memorial was held for her after services, and brethren shared their thoughts and many remembrances of her. It was expressed that Martha was like a "flower," always smiling and always ready and



Martha Saito

willing to hear your story and pray for you. Her niece, Barbara, who attended both the Sabbath service and the memorial, was quite impressed by the messages and also touched by how much Martha was loved by the brethren.

Martha and George, her husband of

nearly 65 years, are of Japanese descent, and lived in California during World War II. She and her husband experienced the difficulties of being sent to an internment camp during this time.

She was an avid gardener and consummate cook, and shared her produce and special dishes with the brethren. She loved serving people, and was a gracious hostess. She also was a woman of great faith who loved God's truth and way of life.

She is survived by George, three children, two grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

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*.

Letters

Feast Home Office Tours

During the Feast in Northern Kentucky we enjoyed the personalized tour of the home office. We were very impressed with the practical building that meets the needs of UCG.

J.B., Ohio

Quoted Expert Responds

I came across [Ewin Barnett's June 2004 *United News*] article "Building Character Is Like Building a Successful Brand," which quotes some of my articles.

I think that your understanding of brands and how they come about is better than that of most marketers, including many of my clients. Bravo.

Jacques Chevron

Modesty

I know God inspired you to write the article "Heart-to-Heart Talk With Women and Teen Girls" [August 2006 *United News*]. It is excellent—the best I've read explaining true modesty in girls... This one just went out and said what needed to be said.

We've had a problem for quite some time with the lack of modesty in the clothing of the teen girls, young women and even occasionally other women in our local congregation (and I'm sure elsewhere too...) We've seen plenty of cleavage, thigh, etc.

I've also seen, on more than one occasion, where other people inadvertently support the way the girls dress. You can be thinking to yourself, What a short (or low-cut, etc.) dress. That isn't modest and shouldn't be worn to church. And while you are in mid-thought, someone walks up to them and says, "What a cute outfit."

I am proud of my boys. It bothers them and they try to ignore and not look at what is flaunted in front of everyone. They realize that the girls have not been dressing modestly and have made

comments like, "They dress worse than a lot of girls at school," etc.

Internet

From a Pentecostal Pastor About Christmas

Scott Ashley's article about Christmas ["The Top 10 Reasons Why I Don't Celebrate Christmas," November/December 2006 *Good News*] was well written—thank you.

I am looking for ideas that could help us celebrate some of the Holy Days that Jesus observed. How do you do it, if you do?

I will celebrate Jesus' birth, not because we are commanded to or not to, but because it is the most important birth the world has ever known! If any should be celebrated...you've heard it before.

But I am serious about celebrating some days Jesus did—great idea. And thanks for the bug in my ear.

R.B., Minnesota

Christmas or the Holy Days

I read your article "The Top 10 Reasons..." and I knew most of that stuff already. I guess I just thought it doesn't hurt anyone if I celebrate Christmas. I now have more to consider.

I looked up the Holy Days God told us to observe, but I have a question. Those days change every year, and it seemed kind of complicated trying to figure it out. How do you figure it out? Do you have them listed somewhere? Please let me know.

M.B., Internet

Reader in South China

I am truly blessed to find your Web site and request your free booklets. I am learning a lot, and I wish to continue reading and receiving the *Bible Study Course* as my guide in reading the Holy Scriptures.

God bless you all!

E.T., Macau, South China

"Like Finding a Life Preserver"

Finding this Web site has been like finding a life preserver to me. The materials I got from here have helped me in difficult times, and I just want to say thank you.

Internet

Missing or "Borrowed" Issues

Thank you for responding so quickly regarding our missing issues of *The Good News* and *World News and Prophecy*. We don't know if the post office just did not send them on to us or not, but since we have received more than one issue of *United News* at our new address, that does not seem likely.

In times past we have had mail carriers who "borrowed" our magazines. They would turn up late with grease spots and bread crumbs in the middle of the publication, but we did get them. Considering the topics on the cover of these two publications, perhaps someone felt the need to read them more in depth. If so, that is great, although we do hope they send for their own issues so that we can continue to receive ours.

B.S., Internet

Finding the Right Church

I just wanted to take this time to send you a note expressing my sincere joy and thanks for your ministry. I stumbled onto your Web site while I was seeking God about leaving my church and finding the right church to join. My wife and I have been born-again Christians now for about four years (still babes), and in those four years we have attended three churches. All started off good. It was great fellowship, good people, but yet there was always something missing.

So many churches, so many messag-

es but my deepest desire is to be in the will of God. I seek the Scriptures and I pray for God's guidance. Church now is nothing but a spiritual club. I want more. I question things like Christmas and the Sabbath, and the pastor would always give me a scripture that only supported his beliefs.

After discovering your Web site, I wanted to order every book, listen to every radio broadcast because my spirit was malnourished and I just absorbed every word.

I really would like to attend a local assembly, but there aren't any really close by. I pray you will establish a church right here in Richmond, Virginia. I would be more than glad to be a part of it.

I pray God will continue to use you all in the furthering of His gospel and many more doors will be open unto you.

L.H., Richmond, Virginia

Learning and Learning

This letter is to let you know how impressed I am with all the info you have online. I am busy with it day after day, and I am learning and learning. Most of your booklets are in my possession also. That takes study for many days.

For years I have belonged to a Protestant church, being unhappy for some years, having the feeling that something was missing.

Then one day I took some Bibles to see how many prophecies Jesus has fulfilled. I was in awe of how many there were, and for the first time in my life (I am now 75) I realized how Jewish Jesus is. So I started a study in Judaism and after doing that for some time, I started to long to celebrate Sabbath and the other [biblical] holidays.

With your help I found a local assembly that meets in the city where I live. Now I have been celebrating

the Sabbath there. I also receive your *Good News* magazine and *World News and Prophecy*.

I know this is a long epistle, but I just had to tell someone and express how very happy I am.

J.J., Ohio

Church?

I have been researching your Web site and enjoying the teachings of the audio and video programs. I have always felt the same about your beliefs of the Bible. I was raised Catholic until I read the Bible. A friend led me to a Baptist church where I liked some of the teachings, but something was missing. I looked for a UCG church in my area, but there isn't one. Do you have any suggestions?

D.L., Altoona, Pennsylvania

Likeminded Believers

I just read the booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. It confirms much of what God's Spirit has been showing me—I am just thrilled to have access to your literature. I have not been able to find a church. I've looked, but as time progressed, I had less and less in common with their beliefs. I wondered if I would ever find true fellowship—other likeminded believers! But He led me to this ministry! It is not good for man to be alone—I praise His name forever. I know it is expensive to produce and ship your booklets. I am enclosing a small amount to help pay for this "bread."

L.W., Houma, Louisiana

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

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

of the invisible waves that God has created," said one member who was not able to attend the Feast but received messages over the Internet.

An average of 184 computers were connected to the webcasts during the Feast, and some of these computers were surrounded by several people listening to the services.

The following 2006 Festival sites offer archived messages of services at www.ucg.org/feast: Bend, Oregon; Jekyll Island, Georgia; and Kelowna, British Columbia.

Another member wrote: "We felt very much a part of the Feast in every way as we sang along with you, took notes and followed the Bible references as the speakers expounded on them. This is the first Feast several of us have missed in person over many years, and we are very grateful and appreciative of the work and effort involved in sending the webcast into our homes."

Aaron Booth

Texas Young Adults' Weekend Theme Set: "Got Friends?"

The UCG-Dallas, Texas, Young Adults will be hosting their annual Presidents' Day weekend young adults' event from Feb. 16 to 18, 2007. This year the theme is "Got Friends?" It will cover how to form, grow and maintain godly friendships. All young adults, both single and married, between high school graduation and age 40 are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please visit www.ucg-dallas.org/ya for more information and to register.

Doug Horchak

Members Sponsor Beyond Today

"Our special thanks go to the 168

brethren who are currently sponsoring *Beyond Today* on local cable-access stations, some of whom are sponsoring programs on more than one channel," said coordinator John LaBissoniere Nov. 3. Since the first program aired Dec. 18, 2005, the number of cable-access stations has almost doubled from 104 to 192.

Beyond Today responses compiled by congregational zip codes can be found on the Web at www.ucg.org/btinfo.

If *Beyond Today* is not yet airing in your U.S. town and your community has cable-access channels, please contact John LaBissoniere by e-mail at john_labissoniere@ucg.org to become a sponsor.

Tampa Bay Hosts Women's Conference Feb. 24-25

"Walking by Faith," the Tampa Bay Women's Conference, is scheduled for Feb. 24 and 25, 2007.

Faithful ladies, teens to great-grandmothers, will strengthen their faith through encouraging messages, interactive forums, inspiring music and warm fellowship while enjoying the balmy, warm weather of central Florida in February.

On Sabbath afternoon, the Tampa church service at 2:30 p.m. will introduce our theme for the weekend through special music and a sermon on faith by Vernon Hargrove, UCG pastor serving in Hammond and Elkhart, Indiana.

Following the service, a bountiful potluck meal will provide a great venue for continued fellowship with the Tampa congregation. Conference attendees will then enjoy a variety of fun activities, fellowship and a wine, cheese and fruit bar from 7 to 10 p.m.

Sunday's events will begin at 9 a.m., with a keynote address by DeLee Hargrove. Panelists and audience members alike will participate in a women's symposium, followed by lunch. During the afternoon, a variety of interactive breakout sessions will help ladies internalize our theme on a personal and practical level.

"Walking by Faith" will include informative and inspiring stories of and by faithful women, helpful tips on how we may encourage one another as we journey toward God's Kingdom, beautiful music, tasty food and an



What's New on the Web?

■ **Online Donations.** Check out the new electronic donation option available at www.ucg.org/donation. This new online feature will make it more convenient for many of our members and other donors to make contributions.

■ **New Weekly Vertical Thought Commentaries.** Read thought-provoking weekly



commentaries geared toward teens and young adults each Friday at www.verticalthought.org.

■ **Article Reprints.** Access several informative and helpful articles from past issues of *United News* and *The Good News* magazine in PDF format at www.ucg.org/reprints. Topics range from alcoholism and depression to understanding which Bible translation to use.

■ **UCG Commentary** "Reflecting on Turkey" "Saddam Hussein, Justice and Fairness"

"World Crisis in Leadership" "Ending the War Over Defining God" www.ucg.org/commentary/

Featured Links

■ **Singles'** Web site for singles in the Church. www.ucgsingles.org

■ **Good News** Web site. www.gnmagazine.org

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

abundance of supportive fellowship with other women of faith.

Sabbath services and all conference activities will be held at the UCG Tampa Hall, 9595 E. Fowler Ave., Thonotosassa, FL 33592. The cost for the conference (including meals) will be \$20 for those who preregister before Feb. 17 or \$25 for those who prefer to pay when they come. Preregistration is highly encouraged to facilitate our preconference planning. Online registration forms, housing information (including nearby hotels or staying with local members) plus additional conference details are available at <http://ucg-tampabay.org>.

Checks should be made payable to UCG-St. Petersburg and mailed to: Nancy Fike, 39038 Pretty Pond Rd., Zephyrhills, FL 33540.

If you have additional housing or registration questions, please contact Nancy Fike at (813) 714-1121 or nancy-fike@hotmail.com.

Teddi Treybig

All-Ambassador Reunion Set for Dec. 23

For those who have been Ambassador students, one of the more enjoyable parts of the annual Winter Family Weekend is

the All-Ambassador Reunion. Each year graduates and those who were formerly students at Ambassador College, Ambassador University or Ambassador Bible Center gather together to renew old friendships and catch up on one another's lives.

This year's All-Ambassador Reunion is scheduled for Dec. 23, and will begin shortly after Sabbath services in the pool area of the Clarion Hotel. Past students are invited to drop in from 5 to 7 p.m. and enjoy light refreshments, a no-host cash bar and plenty of visiting with old friends and new.

We'll have Ambassador memorabilia and a few special prizes. The reunion is free of charge, though donations are always welcome.

If you were ever a student at Ambassador, make your plans to join us! Please be sure to register in advance at www.ucg.org/familyweekend so we can make adequate arrangements.

David Johnson

Calendar of Events

Dec. 8-13: Council of Elders meeting.
Dec. 16-17: Education Task Force meetings at the home office.
Dec. 22-26: Winter Family Weekend, Louisville, Kentucky (www.ucg.org/familyweekend).
Dec. 27-Jan. 1, 2007: Winter Camp, Montello, Wisconsin.

Jan. 8, 2007: ABC classes begin.

Jan. 12-14: Women's Enrichment Weekend, Garden Grove, California. Jean Updegraff (714) 546-4695 or jeanupde@sbccglobal.net.

Jan. 13-14: South Central Regional Women's Weekend; "From the Heart—Building Relationships That Matter" (ucg-houston.org/womensweekend).

Jan. 16: Youth Corps and Challenger II discussion, Los Angeles, California.

Jan. 17-18: Southwest Regional Workshop for pastors, Los Angeles, California.

Feb. 10: Family Dance, Receptions Eastgate, Cincinnati, Ohio (FouchB@greatoaks.com).

Feb. 16-18: Texas Young Adults Weekend, "Got Friends?", Dallas, Texas (www.ucg-dallas.org/ya).

Feb. 16-19: Presidents' Day Ski Weekend, Salt Lake City, Utah. (801) 495-0412 or larry_salyer@ucg.org.

Feb. 16-19: Midwest Family Weekend, Branson, Missouri (see article, November issue, page 24).

Feb. 23-28: Council of Elders meeting. Feb. 24: 40th Orange County, California, anniversary (see article, November issue, page 24).

Feb. 24-25: Tampa Bay, Florida, Women's Conference (ucg-tampabay.org).

May 5-7: GCE annual meeting, Holiday Inn Eastgate, Cincinnati, Ohio.
May 8-10: Council of Elders meeting.
Aug. 3-7: Council of Elders meeting.
Aug. 12: ABC graduation.

Two-Minute Video Commentaries and Beyond Today Programs Now Posted on YouTube

Internet managing editor Aaron Booth is now adding *Beyond Today* programming at a YouTube account found at www.youtube.com/beyondtodaytv.

There is a mix of the half-hour *Beyond Today* programs, commercials and new two-minute commentaries on the site. The first three commentaries posted are by Gary Petty on these subjects:

1. Conquering Addictions.
2. Making Life Work.
3. The Dark Cloud of Depression.

Mr. Petty recorded these commentaries as summaries of the half-hour programs he hosted at the beginning of November.

The other *Beyond Today* hosts, Dar-

ris McNeely and Steve Myers, will also prepare two-minute summaries of each of their programs to be recorded along with the half-hour programs while they are in the studio.

"These are perfect short-form pieces that work well at places like YouTube, Google Video and Yahoo Video," said Peter Eddington, Media and Communication Services operation manager.

In addition, the *Beyond Today* Web site has been revised. A new layout on the Web site includes the *Beyond Today* programs categorized into seven "channels" by topic. You can find this at www.beyondtoday.tv/channels.



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

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