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United News™

News of the United Church of God, an International Association

Vol. 13, No. 9

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November 2007

News At a Glance

Ministerial Transfer Announced

Tim and Valerie Waddle (currently in West Virginia) have been assigned to replace Arnold and Ann Hampton in Maryland. It was previously announced that Mr. Hampton will be replacing Roy Demarest as the pastor of the congregation in West Palm Beach, Florida. Mr. Waddle is currently the pastor of Athens and Marietta, Ohio, and Morgantown, West Virginia.

The actual move will not take place until sometime after the first of next year (2008). Mr. Waddle's circuit will consist of Columbia and Cumberland, Maryland, and Lewistown, Pennsylvania.

Lyle Welty, regional pastor for the Great Lakes Region, will serve as the interim pastor for Athens, Marietta and Morgantown. A new pastor will be assigned sometime during the spring.

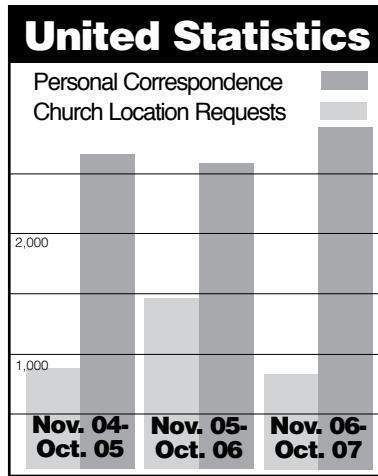
Treasurer's Report

The United Church of God continues to receive God's blessings in the financial realm, making possible the carrying out of the Church's mission. We thank God for His continuing provision.

We budget and report on income for the Church in three categories. Category One includes regular tithes and offerings. Category Two includes Holy Day offerings. Category Three represents miscellaneous items that tend to be seasonal in nature, such as donations to the Church's youth camps, ABC student tuition, donations to the Festival Fund and interest.

For the portion of the current fiscal year that began July 1 and ended Oct. 24, Category One and Category Three have grown by 2.4 percent and 4.0 percent, respectively, compared to the similar portion of the previous fiscal year. The year-to-date change for Category Two (which

See "News at a Glance," page 2



United Brethren Enjoy Feast at 62 Sites

More than 20,000 attend 62 sites on six continents.

"We have heard very encouraging reports from all over the world," said President Clyde Kilough. "I'm still spiritually drawing from the great Feast of Tabernacles. Dec and I were able to spend with the 660 brethren in Antigua, Guatemala, and 550 in Acapulco, Mexico."

Altogether at the 62 sites around the world, 20,476 attended the Feast with United. This was up slightly from attendance last year (up 38 people or 0.2 percent). In addition 720 shut-ins received



Young people rejoice at the Feast: Above, children's choir in Singapore; right, stuffed animal giveaway in Escondido, California



recorded Feast messages from the home office, and a maximum of 307 connections were made to the Feast webcasts from three sites. "Some of these connections represented many individuals watching on one connection," said Aaron Booth, Internet managing editor. "So the actual number of individuals watching the webcasts could be over a thousand."

Positive comments were heard from hotel staff members and the local press, including: "The best group we have ever had," said

Pamela Robinson with the Coconut Bay Beach Resort in St. Lucia.

The *Freeport News* reported on the Feast in the Bahamas with a detailed description of the Church's beliefs and mission. The article included, "The week's activities climaxed yesterday with a riveting sermon by Kingsley Mather, pastor of the United Church of God. Pastor Mather noted that thousands of families within the United States and across the world observe biblical festivals each year which include the Feast of Tabernacles." The Church was also featured on the evening news.

For Feast highlights, see page 9. UN

News-of-the-Work Video Set for Members' Site



Clyde Kilough interviews UYC Coordinator Larry Greider for first "About Our Father's Business" weekly video

by Clyde Kilough

I am happy to announce that we are launching two new tools that will improve our ability to communicate to the entire Church.

First, we are launching a new Web site specifically for members of the United Church of God—members.ucg.org. This will help us make our Web site, UCG.org, a better "first contact" tool for the general public and give us a new location to post items that are truly more appropriate and applicable to the Church

membership. This new Web site will provide a central location for Church news/announcements and an event calendar, provide biblical resources and make it easier for members to find important information. The members' Web site will continue to be developed and enhanced with new material over the next few months, and we know you will want to visit it often in order to stay connected with what is happening in the Church.

Second, the main feature on this members' site

See "members.ucg.org," page 7

Council Moves Forward With Strategic Planning

Committee talks to three companies to find the one that can best help the Council map out a plan to do our work more effectively and develop the physical skills to bear more fruit.

by Robert Dick

Oct. 15 and 17 members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) met to interview potential strategic planning facilitators to assist the Council of Elders in creating a fully updated Strategic Plan for the United Church of God. (See "Council Pursues Blueprint for the

See "Strategic Planning," page 7

United Youth Camps Team Plans for 2008

by Dave Myers

Enthusiasm abounded at the home office from Oct. 22 to 24 as the United Youth Camps team convened to review the 2007 camp season and plan for 2008. UYC Coordinator Larry Greider opened the ninth annual conference by congratulating the camp directors for doing another excellent job this past season.

"It is rewarding to see our teens developing a clear vision of the need for the return of Jesus Christ and the value of developing a better relationship with God, adults and peers," said Mr. Greider.

Each camp director gave a brief summary report of how camp went this past year. The reports were positive and uplifting as each director described both the successes of this year and lessons learned to improve the program for next year.



Camp team members (above) and many of their wives met in Cincinnati Oct. 22 to 24 (photos by Dave Myers)

Other topics for discussion included financial reports (the camp program finished under budget again this year!), updated standards from the American

Camp Association, a review of our UYC poli-

See "Camp," page 7

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News At a Glance

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includes the four fall Holy Days) is a 3 percent decrease. It is helpful to analyze that number. The first two Holy Day offerings (Trumpets and Atonement) actually increased over last year, by a combined 1.6 percent. The last two fall Holy Day offerings decreased by a combined 7.6 percent. Based on reports we have received from various Feast sites around the world, we have noted that there was an increase over last year in offerings from U.S. members on Tabernacles and the Last Great Day in various international sites of almost the same amount as this decrease collected in the U.S. Feast sites. More U.S. members transferred to international sites, and more of their Holy Day offerings were collected in those sites.

So, overall, the income of the Church is growing this fiscal year at a rate, more in line with the historical growth rates of the last 10 years (between 2 percent and 4 percent). We pray that if it is God's will, the income will pick up in the coming months to closer to the 7 percent growth rate of the last two fiscal years. The needs are always great, and we know that it is in God's power to provide more than we even ask. But we must ask, for we are told that "ye have not, because ye ask not." The prayers of the members along these same lines are much appreciated and needed.

Tom Kirkpatrick, treasurer

Elder Ordained

On the Feast of Trumpets, Sept. 13, Grant Chick was ordained an elder. He and his wife, Kim, serve in the Durban, South Africa, congregation.

Richard Rand Retires

A special presentation was made during Sabbath services on Oct. 13 in West Palm Beach, Florida, to Richard Rand, who is retiring from the full-time ministry after more than 38 years of service to God's



Jim Franks presents plaque to Judy and Richard Rand Oct. 13

Church. Jim Franks, Ministerial Services operation manager, presented Richard and Judy with a beautiful clear crystal plaque to honor their many years of faithful service to God's people.

Mr. Rand thanked everyone for the kindness and consideration shown in this special recognition. He added that he was

See "News at a Glance," page 32

Member Profile: Dottie Seifert

Dottie Seifert grew up in a small Ohio town, and was very involved in the Presbyterian church. She even played piano for services and youth choir when she was in grade school! "From the time I can remember, I wanted to be a missionary," she said.

She married young and "grew up being a housewife and mother."

A Calling Full of Surprises

In 1967 she remembers her dad telling her about a religious program with no prayers or organ music, and she was intrigued.

"I still clearly remember asking, 'Do you suppose they are preparing for the second coming as John the Baptist did the first?'" From then on she and her husband, Dave (who died in May 2006), began listening to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast and ordering all the literature that was advertised.

"We worked diligently on the correspondence course, and when we got to the lesson on baptism, Dave decided he wanted to be baptized, but I wanted

to see what we were getting into, since I felt it could mean our lives. So, since we knew of no minister in the area, in 1968 we headed out to Pasadena, camping in our Apache trailer.

"We found out that without counsel Dave could not be baptized nor could we attend services, but we were excited to find there was a church in Columbus, Ohio. We were so impressed that we came back through Big Sandy."

When they arrived home, they wrote to ask for a visit from a minister, and "waited and waited and waited. Finally, in 1969 we were invited to services.

"I remember our daughter, Debbie, asking, 'Is there anyone in this town that believes like we do?' To our boys John and Mike's surprise, they found a classmate at the door greeting them at our first service."

A Life of Service

Since the ministers had seen her piano on their visits, Dottie almost immediately began playing for ser-

vices and has continued for the 38 years since.

She has also contributed her musical talents at the Feast and to the UCG hymnals, which have included two hymns she composed.

"Uppermost in my mind has been the question I asked my dad 40 years ago, so preparing the way [for Christ's return] has been a top priority in my life. When the home office moved to Cincinnati, Dave and I loved being able to be involved in the work. Since Dave died a year ago May, it is still uppermost in my mind. I love to go to the office and be involved, especially in the GN mailings and ABC."

Looking over the years, Dottie Seifert realizes that her early dream has come true. "I truly have become a missionary, an ambassador for Christ."

Words of Appreciation

Linda Stiver, wife of Randy Stiver, pastor of the Columbus and Cambridge, Ohio, congregations, said: "We first met Dottie Seifert at a Feast in Bend, Oregon, several years ago. Now that we are



Dottie Seifert

serving in the Columbus and Cambridge congregations, we have had the opportunity to get to know her even better.

"What a joy to work with such a positive, multitalented individual, always serving wherever needed from locally to the home office. It seems Dottie doesn't need sleep—she's so energetic for God's work. And she's a family lady too—she always keeps tabs on her extended Church and personal family." UN

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

FORWARD! Translating Desire Into Service

by Mike Bennett



What a wonderful Feast! We are so thankful that God gives His people the rejuvenation and the renewal of our vision that we need to withstand the harsh realities of our present world. Reports from around the world point to a refreshing Feast, clearly picturing the times of restoration Peter and

all the holy prophets proclaimed (Acts 3:19-21). Many of the reports you'll read in this issue also highlight the spirit of service felt at Feast sites around the world. People pitched in to help in whatever way they could to help make it a joyous Feast for everyone.

One thing about service, though. Some of the most-needed types of service require special skills that not everyone has. Such service opportunities fall to those who have

prepared in advance. We see this in our summer camps, where first aid, lifeguarding and other key skills are in high demand. We see it in our congregations, where those who can find their way around a sound system or a piano are sorely needed. And we see it at international Feast sites, where skilled linguists perform an invaluable service.

Those of us English-speakers who have visited our brethren in non-English-speaking countries know the bond of the Spirit that transcends languages and borders. But many of us also know the frustration of wanting to communicate at a deeper level than *buenos dias*, *bonjour* or *guten Tag*. That's when we beckon those amazing people who've made the effort to learn another language.

My hat is off to those servants who have pushed themselves, stretched themselves and expanded their ability to make a difference by doing the hard work involved in mastering another tongue. I am particularly amazed by those willing to take on the Herculean mental gymnastics involved in simultaneous translation of church services. Many Feast sites could not function without interpreters,

but that doesn't make their feats any less amazing.

Joel Meeker, who serves the French-speaking areas of the world, learned his French in school and through the immersion of being sent to serve in France. He tells of his first time interpreting for services, when he was asked, not to translate a sermonette, but a sermon—and by fast-speaking, long-preaching Gerald Waterhouse, no less!

Though Mr. Meeker, and the other international Feast coordinators, sometimes stretch their translators, they try not to stretch them that much!

Who will help brother communicate with brother at the Feast next year? Who will be the interpreters at the Feast in five years? Who will help preach the gospel to all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues before Christ returns? Will it be you, your children or grandchildren?

Learning a language may not seem like a spiritual endeavor. But planning ahead to prepare to serve more in the future is certainly a godly approach.

Blessed are the prepared, for they will be ready to serve. UN

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

President: Clyde Kilough

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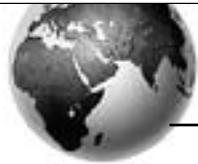
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News From **Around the World**

Australia Has Record Increase in *Good News*

by Ruth Root

The 2006/2007 fiscal year was a record year for media efforts in the United Church of God in Australia. We were able to add 17,536 new *Good News* subscribers to our mailing list, representing a 168 percent increase over the number of subscribers added the previous year, and a 54 percent increase above our projected maximum number of new subscribers planned for in the year.

The increase was made possible by some very cost-effective advertising, which brought in subscribers for a record-breaking low cost of \$3.99 (Australian) per subscriber.

Naturally, this number of new subscribers also meant a significant increase in the workload at the Australian office. The timely employment of a media assistant in June of 2006 and additional part-time help in the mailing department enabled the office employees to cope with the additional, but encouraging, increase in workload.

Every Household Reached

During 2006/2007 some form of print advertising was distributed to every household in Australia and, because over 11,200,000 advertisements were distributed, some households would have received more than one print advertisement offering *The Good News* magazine and a booklet. We are sowing these advertise-

ments throughout Australia and, with the help of your prayers, God will according to His will, grant *the increase* by opening the minds of those whom He is calling (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Visits to the Australian Web site also increased by 83.6 percent for the year, with nearly 300,000 people visiting the site in 2006/2007.

Advertising to GN Readers

One of the most important target audiences for advertising and development are those who have already come into contact with the Church. A comprehensive subscriber development plan has therefore been developed.

• *Monthly literature offers*: For the past year we concentrated on maximizing the impact of our monthly literature offers that are mailed with every magazine and booklet. Some of these ads were rewritten to make them more effective and, beginning in June 2007, we began to test the use of color monthly literature ads.

• *Bible Study Course*: Another goal for our *Good News* readers and for those who visit our Web site was to encourage their enrollment in the *Bible Study Course*. We did this by advertising the course to *The Good News* subscribers twice a year on the address sheet when it was mailed. For those who visit our Web site, we developed and advertised an interactive *Bible Study Course* quiz that attracts an average of over 200 visits a week.

• *Bible Study Course renewals*: In 21 months we have been able to increase the *Bible Study Course* renewal rate after the third lesson from 19.1 to 26.7 percent. Some of the strategies employed to accomplish this included a test with every lesson of the *Bible Study Course* that was mailed as a hard copy, referring Web visitors to the interactive test on our Web site and following up those who did not renew after the third lesson with an additional renewal reminder and an offer of sermons on audio CDs. **UN**

Australian Media Statistics 2006/2007

New <i>Good News</i> Subscribers for 2006/2007	17,536
GN Distribution as of June 30, 2007	35,700
New subscribers, 2006/2007 compared to 2005/2006	168%
Web Site Visits (July 2006: 13,904; June 2007: 25,523)	83.6%
Over 11,200,000 households were reached with print advertisements. (With 6.5 to 7 million mailboxes in Australia, some households would have received more than one ad.)	

Details for Stirling, Scotland, Feast 2008 Announced

The Feast site for Stirling in Scotland 2008 is nearly full. We will start a waiting list for later applicants so if you have not yet visited www.ucg.org.uk/feast2008 and registered, please do so immediately (including those who initially e-mailed their details). You should receive an e-mail confirming that the initial sign-up process for registration was completed successfully.

Before the end of February 2008 you will need to (1) book your accommodation and submit the details, and (2) transfer the recommended registration fee of £20 (US\$40) per adult of 18 years old and above. The fee will be used to cover Festi-

val expenses such as the hire of the Albert Halls and other facilities. Those unable to give as much may give less, and those able to give more will make up for them.

After February we will contact those on the waiting list to see if they would like to come, replacing those who did not complete the above two-part process.

Accommodation Options

Services will be held at the Albert Halls, Albert Place, Dumbarton Road, Stirling, FK8 2QL. We have been able to arrange some good discounted prices with the management of a couple of hotels nearby. Bookings should be made directly with

these hotels quoting the "United Church of God" conference.

There is a variety of self-catering apartments, guesthouses, bed-and-breakfasts, hostels or other hotels that may be booked through the local tourism organization "Visit Scotland." Please see its Web site www.visitscotland.com or telephone +44 845 22 55 121. Visit Scotland charges a £3 (US\$6) booking fee for all bookings that it makes. Other holiday accommodation Web sites may also be found by searching on the Internet. The Youth Hostel is cheap, has a lovely view and is five minutes from

See "Scotland," page 21

Australia Holds *Good News* Bible Lectures

Another successful round of *Good News* public Bible lectures was held in New South Wales, Australia, thanks to the prayers and team effort of the brethren.

A letter was sent to those who became subscribers to *The Good News* before 2007. The subject was "Does Humanity Have a Future?" In the address Bruce Dean explained the wonderful, inclusive plan of salvation that God has for all humanity, as symbolized in the Holy Days.

The first meeting was held in Canberra on July 28. We sent out 333 letters and welcomed seven visitors.

The second letter was sent to 840 people. The lecture in Newcastle was held

Aug. 4, while the presentation in Gosford was Aug. 12. Ten new people attended the Newcastle lecture (two more attended the follow-up Bible study) and six *Good News* readers visited us in Gosford.

Upon arrival each visitor received a welcome pack that included the booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *God's Holy Day Plan*, information about the Church and literature available, the pastor's business card and two handouts.

The one-hour meeting included a short PowerPoint presentation with photographs giving an overview of the Church. It included church life and activities, youth camps, how other congregations around

the world are supported and the international scope of the Church.

The plan is to present these lectures in Wollongong and in several other locations in Sydney over the next nine months.

Ambitious Public Bible Seminar Planned for Brisbane

Also on the drawing board are more extensive public Bible seminars with international guest speakers. This is planned for Brisbane around June 2008, and Melbourne is also being considered.

The tentative plan is to advertise the seminar widely to *GN* and *WNP* subscribers and to also target the general public. **UN**

International News At a Glance

Trips and Internet Ads in French-Speaking Areas

Joel Meeker returned safely from a long pre-Feast trip through the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Cameroon and Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire). Problems with Air Ivoire (his reservation was inexplicably canceled) prevented him from making his planned visit to Togo to visit brethren there. One new member was baptized in Ivory Coast.

Future travel plans for Mr. Meeker include visiting the brethren in Martinique at the end of this year, making another long trip through Africa, including more leadership training seminars, in January-February and visiting our brethren in French Europe during the Spring Holy Days.

We are currently adding approximately 100 new subscribers to *Bonnes Nouvelles* (the French title of *The Good News*) each month using an advertisement for the French version of the booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* A second ad is currently being prepared based on the booklet *What Happens After Death?* which was printed just before the Feast. The ads are specifically targeting France, Belgium and Switzerland, though French-speaking people all around the world have access to the *Bonnes Nouvelles* Web site.

Members in Sweden to Distribute 2,000 Brochures

The three members in Sweden wanted to do something to help preach the gospel, so after discussing this with their pastor, Victor Kubik, and with Media and Communications Services employees Peter



Kira and Paul Spenser place brochures advertising Church literature in mailboxes in their area of Sweden

Eddington and John LaBissoniere, they decided on distributing brochures in their local areas.

Two thousand "Are We Living in the Time of the End?" brochures were available and promptly sent to them from the home office by Greg McCloud. A cover letter was written and translated into Swed-

ish and put inside the brochure offering a translated *Good News* article on the end time by Gary Petty, the Swedish booklet *Vägen till Evigt Liv (The Road to Eternal Life)*, as well as the *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* booklet and a subscription to the English *Good News*.

A large percentage of people in Sweden can read English, especially those under 40, but the letter and translated literature are designed to reach those who cannot.

The members have just started to place the brochures in mailboxes in their areas (an accepted method of distribution in Sweden), and prayers are requested for the success of this effort.

Paul & Kira Spenser and Solveig Hammar

Elder Ordained in Canada

David Campbell, a member of the Vancouver, British Columbia, congregation, was ordained into the ministry of Jesus



David Campbell, center, was ordained Sept. 27 at the Feast in Kelowna. From left, elders Rainer Salomaa, Joe Sheperd, Mike Erickson, David Campbell, David Palmer, Dennis Luker and Don Hooser

Christ on the opening Holy Day of the Feast in Kelowna. Mr. Campbell, at age 41, is one of the youngest ministers in Canada and will serve as an elder in the Vancouver and Vancouver Island congregations.

He was born in Bellshill, Scotland, and raised in Vancouver. He attended Ambassador College, graduating in 1989. He attended the Leadership Workshop at the home office in 2005. He currently works as a consultant for a marketing company.

The Campbell clan has a 43-year history in the Church of God beginning in Scotland. His father and mother were original members of the first Radio Church of God congregation in Scotland in 1964.

David Palmer

3.75 Million Australian Households to Receive *BSC* Offer

During the next six months, the United Church of God-Australia plans to offer the 12-lesson *Bible Study Course* to 3.75 million households in Australia. This will be the first time the *BSC* has been offered as "first contact" material in Australia.

The course will be offered on the Internet, through card decks, a Yellow Envelope drop, member letterbox drops, a *Reader's Digest* ad reaching 954,000 and a coupon ad that will reach 2 million households.

Conservative estimates are that between 7,000 and 7,500 people will enroll.

President Visits Congregations in Zambia and Malawi

by André van Belkum and Morgen Kriedemann

"Can this really happen?" "Do you think he will actually visit us?" "Why would our president want to visit with us in such remote, out-of-the-way places?" These were some of the comments made by members when it was announced that UCGIA President Clyde Kilough would be visiting congregations in Zambia and Malawi.

In August the visit became a reality, creating a great deal of excitement among members in these countries. During the 13-day tour, the president visited all the congregations in Zambia (except one extremely distant church), and the two congregations in Malawi, traveling many hundreds of miles by road in order to reach remote congregations in rural areas.

The visit began Aug. 14 when Mr. Kilough landed in Johannesburg, South Africa. The next day Morgen Kriedemann, pastor of the Johannesburg church, and his wife, Joleen, took the president on a tour of Pretoria, the capital.

That evening Mr. Kilough conducted a Bible study for the Johannesburg congregation. There were 72 in attendance. "Are we ready to rule?" and "What will we teach?" he asked. He gave examples of complex problems facing areas such as Bangladesh and sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab-Israeli and Irish conflicts. These are some of the issues we will confront at Christ's return, and there will need to be solutions. Learning to live God's way now will be one way we will be equipped to face and solve these challenges in the Millennium, he said.

Visiting Zambia

The next day, Aug. 15, we took an Air Zambia flight to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Mr. Kriedemann and André van Belkum joined Mr. Kilough on the flight and for the visit to both countries. There to meet us at the airport were a number of members, including the regional pastor for Zambia, Kambani Banda, and his wife, Shirley. Members presented each of us with a colorful bouquet of flowers, making us feel welcome to their country.

From the airport we proceeded directly to the home of the Banda family, where a Bible study had been planned. The theme of Mr. Kilough's study focused on an unstable world filled with sorrow, waiting for the children to come to its rescue. At this time we are pilgrims, but once a pilgrim puts his roots down in this world, he is no longer a pilgrim. After the study we sat around in the garden and enjoyed a sumptuous meal prepared by the ladies.

We were joined a little later by Mike and Primrose Mukarati who manage our office in Zimbabwe. It was a joy to see them as we were able to discuss the perplexing circumstances our members are facing in that country. We were also able to hand over relief funds collected by the congregations in South Africa, which will be used to assist the members there. They continue to face hardships most of us can hardly imagine.

It was interesting that, on the same day Mr. Kilough arrived, presidents from countries of SADC (the 14-member Southern African Development Community) gath-

ered in Lusaka for their annual conference. Armed soldiers were stationed about every quarter of a mile along the route from the airport into the city. As soon as one of the leaders arrived, the entire route was blocked off and all cars ordered to stop next to the road. Earlier in the day Shirley Banda waited about an hour for one of the heads of state to pass.

Friday morning we managed to reach the main shopping complex, only to be delayed for over two hours when the main access and exit points to the main road were blocked off. When we noticed police vehicles with sirens blaring and blue lights flashing, we realized a head of state was on a mission somewhere.

However, after our delay we visited two Church families in their homes. The first was a widow, Rebecca Chipembele, and her granddaughter, Alice Banda. Their home was located in a suburb where roads formed a narrow track of deep potholes and ruts, a challenge to both vehicle and driver. We were ushered into her home,



Left, visiting Rebecca Chipembele and her granddaughter, Alice Banda, in Lusaka. Above, Clyde Kilough speaking in Mufulira, Zambia, with a translator on his right. Right, André van Belkum, Kambani Banda and Cherry Pringle in the office where Mr. and Mrs. Pringle manage the distribution of *The Good News* and handle the incoming and outgoing mail for Zambia



and resignation in their eyes.

On arrival at Nalubanda, we were greeted with a song of welcome, sung with

which consisted of a living room, kitchen and a bedroom. Our conversation was about the Church and how she managed to get to services on the Sabbath. Outside in the street a loudspeaker blared away, making it difficult at times to hear.

From there we visited another family, Lynos and Brenda Ngwenya and their children, Nathan, Amos and Leah. The whole family stayed in one room, the bedroom separated by a curtain hung from the ceiling. It was an honor for us, more than for them, to be in these members' homes and hear their dedication to the ways of God under the most trying of circumstances. On our way to our next destination, we were sobered as we contemplated the commitment and devotion of these members.

Sabbath in Mumbwa

Sabbath day dawned, and we departed to visit congregations in the Mumbwa province. Combined services for Kasumpa, Nalubanda and Nalubanda North churches had been arranged. First we stopped at the village of a member and headman of that area, Jerrison Shacoonga, his wife, Nice, and their seven children. Then we visited a newly completed church hall sponsored by the Good Works program.

After visiting Lloyd Chifwepa and family and a widow, Mrs. Maninga, we left for services. Along the way we stopped at a clinic and handed over medicine supplied by LifeNets. This clinic helps our members in the area, as only qualified medical

personnel are allowed to administer certain drugs. LifeNets supplies the medicine and when members get ill (especially with malaria) the clinic staff members administer the medication. We noticed patients in the wards curled up under blankets, staring at us, some with looks of sadness

members. On arrival at the hall, members greeted us with the usual welcome song and lined up to greet the president. The hall was a mud structure with a thatch roof. Attendance was 78.

Mr. Kilough emphasized 1 Peter 2:9 stressing that as we are a holy nation, we

Along the way we came across the wrecks of five accidents.

We went to the home of Derrick and Cherry Pringle, who manage the distribution *The Good News* and handle all incoming and outgoing mail of the Church in Zambia. Much appreciation was expressed by Mr. Kilough for the voluntary work the Pringles and others like them from around the world perform in serving the Church.

That evening we enjoyed the hospitality of the Pringles and sat down to a delicious meal prepared by Cherry Pringle.

The next morning we attended the Mufulira congregation. It is located in the Copper Belt, referred to as such because of the copper mines located there. Along the way we came across the usual taxis, many with religious slogans printed on the rear window, such as "Only God knows" and "Each man for himself, and God for us all." The attendance was 78.

are required to live every day as the people of God. He also referred to James 2:5, showing that God decided to choose the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the Kingdom He has promised to those who love Him.

After services and fellowshiping, we traveled a short distance to visit members in their homes. First we visited three widows who are regarded as successful farmers. They showed us this year's crops of maize and cotton. Their village consisted of thatched bungalows that served as bedrooms, a separate kitchen for meal preparation and structures for chickens, goats, sheep and pigeons. We noticed that none of the sleeping quarters had doors but merely a cloth strung in front of the opening. Crime is not a problem in the area.

After visiting the village of another member, we returned to the village of the leading member, Jonathan Katapya. We sat under the shade of a mulberry tree and enjoyed a meal of stewed goat meat, braised guinea fowl, maize meal and vegetables. We left Mapoko with members singing and waving farewell. We returned along a road that was badly eroded and potholed. Fortunately it was only for eight kilometers until we reached the main road to Lusaka, which had been resurfaced with financial backing from the Swedish government.

Mufulira and the Copper Belt

Next morning we left Lusaka on a five-hour drive to the north of Zambia in order to visit the congregation at Mufulira.

The road was rather busy especially with trucks transporting equipment to and from the copper mines in the region.

Mr. Kilough mentioned that human governments over the centuries have not solved the problems people face, nor provided stability or hope. However, God's Kingdom will not only last forever, but provide the solutions to human problems (Daniel 2:44). He mentioned that every day we have an opportunity to live righteously and allow God to train us for a position of rulership in His Kingdom. One of the main reasons people fall away is that they lose the vision of the Kingdom, and we should not be distracted from our goal of entering the Kingdom of God.

On our trip back, we met the usual police roadblocks (which are numerous on the roads of most African countries). However the police were civil and courteous.

Most of the day Wednesday was occupied with a meeting of 10 men from the local Church. Mr. Kilough covered various aspects of leadership in the Church. He stressed that any position in the Church should not be for personal gain but for service to others. Allow God to use you in whatever niche He places you, even though the spotlight may not be on you, he said.

Thursday we departed on our return journey to Lusaka.

Traveling to Malawi

On Friday, Aug. 24, we departed for Lusaka airport and checked through customs and immigration, only to be told that the flight to Lilongwe, Malawi, was delayed.

While waiting at the airport we noticed an airport staff member reading *The Good News*. A broad smile spread across his face

See "President," page 5

United Youth Corps: International Projects for 2008

United Youth Corps Projects for 2008!

All United Church of God young adults (high school graduates and older) are welcome to apply to serve and tour in these unique areas of the world! Dates and approximate costs are included below. Be watching for announcements in your local congregations in December for detailed fact sheets about the projects and an application. Be sure to visit the United Youth Corps Web site at www.ucgyouthcorps.org for details about the United Youth Corps—its mission and goals, past projects and future plans!

Amman, Jordan/Israel Project

The summer of 2008 we plan to sponsor a six-week program for up to 12 qualified young adults to serve at a youth camp in Jordan, tour Israel and participate in an archaeological dig in Israel for four weeks. This will be a great opportunity to learn about the Middle East, serve and experience a part of the world that makes the Bible come alive! This United Youth Corps project will last six weeks (mid-June through July) and cost each participant about \$4,000.



Ghana Youth Camp

In the late summer of 2008 the United Youth Corps will help sponsor four qualified young adults (two men and two women) to help staff the summer camp in Ghana. All UYC volunteers will serve as activity instructors in conducting a youth camp for older UCG teens. Experience on staff of United Youth Camps is preferred. Meals and lodging will be provided. Some travel time before or after camp for sightseeing and visiting brethren will be scheduled. Yellow fever vaccination, use of antimalarial medication and a medical examination will be required. The project will run from Aug. 6 to 20 and will cost each participant approximately \$1,500.



Nigeria Youth Camp

In the summer of 2008 the United Youth Corps will help sponsor up to four qualified young adults to help staff the summer camp for teens in Abeokuta, Nigeria. All UYC volunteers will serve as activity instructors, and the activities will include volleyball, soccer, rock climbing, computer appreciation and crafts. Experience on staff of United Youth Camps is preferred. Meals and lodging in Lagos and at the summer camp will be provided. Yellow fever vaccination, use of antimalarial medication and a medical examination will be required. The project will run from Aug. 11 to 27 and will cost each participant approximately \$2,000.

Kenya Youth Camp

In the winter of 2008 the United Youth Corps will help sponsor up to four qualified young adults (two men and two women) to help staff a camp for older teens in Kenya, East Africa. All UYC volunteers will serve as activity coordinators and assist as counselors. Experience on staff of United Youth Camps is preferred. Meals and lodging will be provided. All participants will stay in tents at the camp. No vaccinations are required but the use of antimalarial medication and a medical examination will be required. Participants will have an opportunity to visit some of the local congregations of UCG and enjoy a two-day African wildlife safari. The project will run from Dec. 10 to 24, 2008, and will cost each participant approximately \$2,300.

Philippine Youth Camp

In the early summer of 2008 the United Youth Corps will help sponsor four qualified young adults (two men and two women) to help staff the Philippine summer camp. The camp will be held at Eden Nature Park in Davao, Philippines. All staff and participants will be staying in tents and meals will be provided at the camp. UYC volunteers may choose to arrange to tour parts of the Philippines before or after the camp. The camp will run from April 27 to May 11 and will cost each participant approximately \$1,200.

"President," continued from page 4

when Mr. Kilough showed him his name in his American passport and also pointed out his name in the *GN* staff box. We took a photograph of Mr. Kilough sitting next to this individual. What made this situation more unusual was that the *GN* was originally sent to a subscriber in Indiana.

Wherever we met with the members, they expressed their appreciation to Mr. Kilough for taking time to visit them, especially in the far-flung, more-difficult-



Left: "Imagine my surprise to walk into the small airport waiting room in Lusaka, Zambia, and find a man reading a copy of *The Good News* magazine," Mr. Kilough wrote. Airport employee Ben Makungu was eagerly reading the magazine someone had passed on to him, and was also quite surprised to meet Mr. Kilough. Above, Mr. Kilough meets brethren in Blantyre, Malawi.

was most successful, and we experienced few problems and difficulties along the way.

Malawi Leg of the Trip

That evening our 50-seater prop air-

plane touched down in what is described as "The Warm Heart of Africa." The people of Malawi are exactly that: Warm and friendly and nowhere more so than in the Church.

A relatively small country (118,484 square kilometers) with a population of 12 million, Malawi is the eighth poorest country in the world. Unemployment is high. The average income of a laborer is \$50 per month; and that of a civil servant, \$150. Here we find brethren, dedicated and supportive of the work of God, faithfully paying tithes every month from the little they have.

We were met at Lilongwe airport by elder Gladstone Chonde and driven by

ambulance (supplied by LifeNets) to our accommodation.

Lilongwe is the capital of Malawi. There on Sabbath morning Mr. Belkum and Mr. Kriedemann accompanied Mr. Kilough to services held in the clinic run by Gladstone Chonde and built by LifeNets. Fifty-seven were in attendance. After the customary song of welcome by the congregation for him, Mr. Kilough presented the message centered not only on seeking God's Kingdom, but also seeking His righteousness now in our lives. He quoting from the hymn: "I have held back my feet from the ways of this world."

Early the next morning, we were driven by Sam and Esther Chilapora in another ambulance donated by LifeNets (by this stage we were questioning whether we were ill but unaware of it) 352 kilometers south to the city of Blantyre where our other congregation is situated.

Along the way we stopped off at the Balaka Medical Centre attended to by Dr. Chilapora and his wife, a qualified nursing sister. This clinic, too, was donated by LifeNets and opened by Victor Kubik on Oct. 7, 2003.

That same Sunday afternoon, after six hours of travel from Lilongwe, a Bible

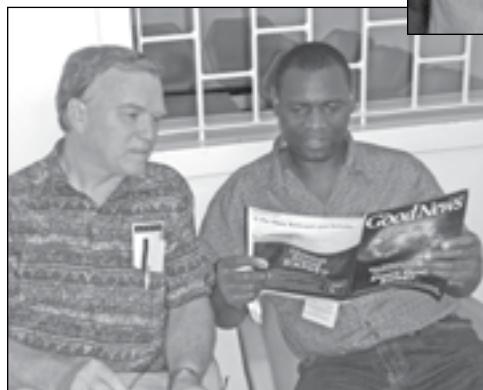
study was conducted, attended by 71. Mr. Kilough was welcomed at the door in the typical, warm Malawian fashion; presented with a bunch of flowers by a young girl and a boutonniere by one of the young boys.

Again, Mr. Kilough's message focused on the miracle of our calling, God's coming Kingdom and the vital need to maintain a strong vision of it in the forefront of our minds (Proverbs 29:18).

At the end of the study, one of the members, Tielmans Chirwa, on behalf of the Blantyre members, presented Mr. Kilough with a fine painting of an African village. This was given, it was said, as a reminder of where he had been and an invitation to come back again soon.

Next morning we departed to the airport to fly back to Johannesburg, South Africa. At the airport Gracious Mpilangwe said that Malawi had been greatly blessed by Mr. Kilough's visit. We were equally blessed, if not more so.

So ended 12 days of travel through Zambia and Malawi. It was tiring and exhilarating, eye opening and humbling to share in the faith and dedication of our brethren in this part of Southern Africa. **UN**



to-reach locations. The visit to Zambia, even though tiring and strenuous at times,

United's Financial Statements Again Reflect God's Blessings

■ Independent auditors give financial statements a clean bill of health. The fiscal year saw the mortgage on the home office paid off and expenditures for preaching the gospel increased 17 percent.

by Tom Kirkpatrick,
Treasurer

We have included on this two-page spread the audited financial statements of the United Church of God, an International Association, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007, along with the auditors' report and a summary of key financial indicators, taken from the statements.

The audit firm of Clark, Schaefer, Hackett and Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio, once again performed the audit, and issued an "unqualified" opinion, which is the desirable kind to receive.

These statements reflect another year of operations during which the Church has been blessed with stable income and sound operational control of expenditures.

During this year, the Church paid off the 15-year mortgage on the home office facility in Cincinnati (after five years). At the same time, the Church has now maintained its reserve position, as mandated by policy.

Expenditures for preaching the gospel grew by 17 percent, in a year when total income increased 7 percent.

We are grateful to God the Father and the Head of the Church (Jesus Christ), giver of all good gifts, for providing these increases and results. Our gratitude and appreciation, of course, also extends to the faithful members of the Church and others who support its work through their faithfulness in giving tithes and offerings.

As always, we solicit the prayers of all who support the Church, that God would give wisdom in the managing of its financial affairs. **UN**

Clark, Schaefer, Hackett & Co.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
BUSINESS CONSULTANTS

Independent Auditors' Report

Council of Elders
United Church of God,
an International Association:

We have audited the accompanying statements of financial position of United Church of God, an International Association (a nonprofit organization) as of June 30, 2007 and 2006, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Church's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of United Church of God, an International Association as of June 30, 2007 and 2006, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements taken as a whole. The Schedules of Functional Expenses on pages 10 and 11 are presented for purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the basic financial statements taken as a whole.

Clark, Schaefer, Hackett & Co.
Cincinnati, Ohio
August 29, 2007

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association		
Statements of Financial Position		
June 30, 2007 and 2006		
	2007	2006
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 7,313,322	7,120,528
Cash designated for retirement fund	1,080,768	865,927
Total cash and cash equivalents	8,394,090	7,986,455
Prepaid expenses	56,807	49,173
Property and equipment, net	3,160,628	3,278,836
Other assets	20,000	-
Total assets	11,631,525	11,314,464
Liabilities and net assets:		
Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	285,436	203,907
Accrued payroll and vacation pay	768,150	724,293
Payroll taxes withheld and accrued	1,936	1,209
Accrued matching thrift plan obligations	56,063	58,240
Accrued insurance obligations	125,843	139,390
Mortgage payable	-	1,314,181
Total liabilities	1,237,428	2,441,220
Net assets:		
Unrestricted	9,298,350	7,989,835
Unrestricted - designated by Council of Elders	1,080,768	865,927
Temporarily restricted	14,979	17,482
Total net assets	10,394,097	8,873,244
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 11,631,525	11,314,464

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
- 2 -

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association		
Statements of Activities		
Years Ended June 30, 2007 and 2006		
	2007	2006
Unrestricted net assets:		
Revenues, gains and other support:		
Contributions - individuals	\$ 15,307,157	15,014,738
Contributions - local congregations	1,188,569	490,383
Holy day offerings and festival fund contributions	6,037,814	5,720,836
Estate/personal property donations	252,532	139,004
Dividend and interest income	373,738	195,349
Other income	160,781	133,430
Net assets released from restrictions:		
Satisfaction of restrictions	48,097	213,726
Total revenues, gains and other support	23,368,688	21,907,466
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Field Ministry / Local Congregations	9,577,702	9,500,424
Festivals	997,723	1,019,933
International	1,977,780	1,987,070
Public Proclamation	5,071,989	4,334,081
Total program services	17,625,194	16,841,508
Management and general:		
Council of Elders / Home Office / Insurance & Benefit Plans	4,158,260	3,931,597
General Conference	61,878	63,381
Total management and general	4,220,138	3,994,978
Total expenses	21,845,332	20,836,486
Increase in unrestricted net assets	1,523,356	1,070,980
Temporarily restricted net assets:		
Contributions	45,594	74,505
Net assets released from restrictions:		
Satisfaction of restrictions	(48,097)	(213,726)
Decrease in temporarily restricted net assets	(2,503)	(139,221)
Change in net assets	1,520,853	931,759
Net assets at the beginning of period	8,873,244	7,941,485
Net assets at the end of period	\$ 10,394,097	8,873,244

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
- 3 -

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association		
Statements of Cash Flows		
Years Ended June 30, 2007 and 2006		
	2007	2006
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Change in net assets	\$ 1,520,853	931,759
Adjustment to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Depreciation	160,773	157,815
Effect of change in operating assets and liabilities:		
Prepaid expenses	(7,634)	(4,350)
Other assets	(20,000)	-
Accounts payable	81,529	(66,341)
Accrued payroll and vacation pay	43,857	156,255
Payroll taxes withheld and accrued	727	27
Accrued matching thrift plan obligations	(2,177)	4,924
Accrued insurance obligations	(13,547)	30,796
Net cash provided by operating activities	1,764,381	1,210,885
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Purchases of property and equipment	(42,565)	(211,715)
Net cash used by investing activities	(42,565)	(211,715)
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Payoff of mortgage payable	(1,314,181)	(78,831)
Net cash used by financing activities	(1,314,181)	(78,831)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	407,635	920,339
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	7,986,455	7,066,116
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	\$ 8,394,090	7,986,455
Supplemental Cash Flow Disclosures:		
Interest paid	\$ 73,581	85,178

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
- 4 -

	Fiscal Year 2006-7	Fiscal Year 2005-6
Cash and cash equivalents	\$7,313,322	\$7,120,528
Total assets	11,631,525	11,314,464
Total liabilities	1,237,428	2,441,220
Unrestricted net assets	10,379,118	8,855,762
Total income	23,368,688	21,907,466
Change in net assets	1,520,853	931,759

Financial statements continue on next page

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association
Schedule of Functional Expenses
Year Ended June 30, 2007

	Program Services				Management and General		Totals
	Ministerial Services/Field Ministry/Local Congregations	Festivals	International	Public Proclamation	Council of Elders/ Home Office/Insurance & Benefit Plans	General Conference	
Salaries and related benefits	\$ 5,618,661	626,202	-	998,355	1,392,870	-	8,636,088
Contracted services and fees	6,582	-	-	50,827	183,381	5,910	246,700
Broadcast media and advertising	-	-	-	1,090,707	-	-	1,090,707
Print media and advertising	13,644	3,888	-	1,010,736	10,375	1,481	1,040,124
Postage and shipping	29,145	4,271	-	915,888	26,253	3,841	979,398
Building and equipment lease/rental	5,980	133,299	-	9,614	84,196	249	233,338
Telephone and utilities	65,469	655	-	5,318	83,821	825	156,088
Supplies	84,545	3,713	-	36,875	52,680	5,435	183,248
Travel, mileage, meals, and lodging	1,247,822	44,007	-	34,261	169,814	42,753	1,538,657
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	160,773	-	160,773
Grants and charitable support:							
International support	2,745	111	1,977,780	906,494	349	-	2,887,479
Domestic support:							
Assistance to the needy	849,482	109,740	-	-	-	-	959,222
Allocations to local congregations	1,594,892	-	-	-	-	-	1,594,892
Insurance and health care	-	-	-	-	1,882,721	-	1,882,721
Other	58,735	71,837	-	12,914	111,027	1,384	255,897
Total expenses	\$ 9,577,702	997,723	1,977,780	5,071,989	4,158,260	61,878	21,845,332

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association
Schedule of Functional Expenses
Year Ended June 30, 2006

	Program Services				Management and General		Totals
	Ministerial Services/Field Ministry/Local Congregations	Festivals	International	Public Proclamation	Council of Elders/ Home Office/Insurance & Benefit Plans	General Conference	
Salaries and related benefits	\$ 5,728,038	638,603	-	961,372	1,484,073	-	8,812,086
Contracted services and fees	3,815	965	-	40,464	106,760	4,785	156,789
Broadcast media and advertising	-	-	-	500,246	-	-	500,246
Print media and advertising	11,579	10,211	-	1,105,572	20,260	1,016	1,148,638
Postage and shipping	26,552	5,680	-	763,455	20,203	3,304	819,194
Building and equipment lease/rental	-	157,736	-	8,822	96,379	-	262,937
Telephone and utilities	66,201	883	-	6,016	87,249	1,274	161,623
Supplies	56,052	2,116	-	35,665	71,044	4,307	169,184
Travel, mileage, meals, and lodging	1,050,623	47,233	-	33,839	204,721	47,431	1,383,847
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	157,815	-	157,815
Grants and charitable support:							
International support	6,128	2,549	1,987,070	857,902	237	273	2,854,159
Domestic support:							
Assistance to the needy	925,897	101,145	-	-	-	-	1,027,042
Allocations to local congregations	1,550,529	-	-	-	-	-	1,550,529
Insurance and health care	-	-	-	-	1,619,162	-	1,619,162
Other	75,010	52,812	-	20,728	63,694	991	213,235
Total expenses	\$ 9,500,424	1,019,933	1,987,070	4,334,081	3,931,597	63,381	20,836,486

Challenger II Staff Plans Wind River Expedition for Next Summer

Plans are being made for a program next summer for young adults in the Wind River area of Wyoming.

by Paul Luecke

Plans for future Challenger II sessions were mapped out during meetings at the home office on Oct. 25. United Youth Camps coordinator Larry

Greider conducted the meetings with Challenger II team members James Capo, Randy Schreiber, Randy Stiver and Paul Luecke, who was appointed as Challenger II program coordinator.

Challenger II is a leadership training opportunity for young adults in the Church (high school graduates to 30-something, single or married). This program is based in wilderness or other adventure settings and is designed to be both physically and spiritually chal-

lenging. It is intended to take a small, select group (approximately 12 to 15 per session) of young adults, who are already firmly committed to God's truth and Church, and who desire to move to the next level of spiritual growth and service to others.

The next Challenger II session is the rock-climbing program this December, at Mt. Lemmon, Arizona. (This session is already filled.) In the summer of 2008 will be a new opportu-

nity—an expedition in the Wind River wilderness of northwestern Wyoming. Wind River is a vast Rocky Mountain wilderness that includes 48 mountain peaks exceeding 12,500 feet, and over 2,000 lakes and ponds. This Challenger II experience will include backpacking, orienteering, camping, rock climbing and fishing in a majestic high-mountain setting.

All Challenger II program venues center around a close mentoring

dynamic with a small group of ministers and other mature staff members. Participants are expected to implement lessons from the program in their lives and local congregations after they return home from the program. Stay tuned for details on next summer's Challenger II—Wind River Expedition! **UN**

Paul Luecke is pastor of the Bethlehem, Philadelphia and York, Pennsylvania, congregations.

"Camp," continued from page 1

cies and guidelines, an update on our preteen camp program, staff training materials, integration of all our youth programs in the Church, planning for the 2008 camp video and magazine and approaches/themes for our Christian Living instruction.

Several home office personnel also

addressed the group. President Clyde Kilough showed slides of summer camp in Zambia and expressed how the focus of all of our camps around the world is the same—teaching our youth God's way. Director of Ministerial Services Jim Franks thanked the team for their hard work and expressed how much he enjoyed attending the camp in Texas this summer. Director of Education Programs David Regis-

ter instructed the team on educational models and outcome-based planning.

On the final morning, home office Information Technology personnel Richard Kennebeck and Paul Wasilkoff led the team through sessions on computer security and a tutorial on the new online registration system being implemented for the 2008 season.

Mr. Greider summed it up by stat-

ing, "It is heartening to see the growth and development of God's camp. A huge thank you to the camp team and the administration for all the effort to create the 'Zone' environment for our youth." **UN**

2008 Camp Dates Set

Hye Sierra, California	June 29 to July 6
Woodmen, Alabama	June 29 to July 6
Davidson, Oregon	July 6 to 13
Pinecrest, Missouri	July 27 to Aug. 3
Carter, Texas	July 27 to Aug. 3
Heritage, Pennsylvania	Aug. 10 to 17
Winter Camp, Wisconsin	Dec. 30 to Jan. 4, 2009

"members.ucg.org," continued from page 1

will be a regular, online news-of-the-work video titled *About Our Father's Business*. We announced

before the Feast that we would be revising our Compass Check presentation, which had simply been a video of the home office staff meeting. *About Our Father's Business*, which will be produced weekly in

the media center studio beginning Thursday, Nov. 1, will be aimed specifically at all Church members around the world. It will consist of home office and general Church news, announcements, interviews,

brief biblically based messages and anything else of a timely nature. Since it is directed to the Church, and not the general public, it will be aired on the new member Web site mentioned above.

All you need to do to stay connected with the news and work of the United Church of God and to watch the weekly video *About Our Father's Business* is type in this Web address: **members.ucg.org. UN**

"Strategic Planning," continued from page 1

Future," September/October issue, page 1, for more background.)

At its August meeting the Council of Elders appointed a three-member Search Committee to begin a candidate search with the hope that interviews could be held just before or after the Feast of Tabernacles.

Three strong candidates from firms in Cincinnati, Milwaukee and Atlanta were selected, and all agreed to meet at the home office in mid-October.

Vic Kubik, Larry Salyer, Dave Register, Roy Holladay, Clyde Kilough, Bob Dick and Search Committee members Jason Lovelady, Dee Kilough and Linda Register were present for half-day interviews with the three candidates.

Request for Proposal

Each candidate was initially sent a formal document, referred to as the Request for Proposal, which outlined who we are and what we were seeking. Clearly outlined in the five-page document was the fact that we came into existence to preserve our doctrines and practices at a time they were being abandoned. It was further explained that members of the Council of Elders had in multiple cases more than 40 years of dedication to these beliefs and practices, and our desire was to more effectively carry out our mission of preaching the gospel and preparing a people.

Candidates were given a copy of our mission and vision statements and a general census of our physical size as a church and the scope

of our work to acquaint them with who we are.

Work More Effectively and Bear More Fruit

In an introduction to each interview, as chairman of the Council of Elders, I explained to each candidate that our beliefs and practices are deeply rooted and closely held, resulting in a highly focused organization in terms of our mission and our vision.

While many organizations may hire a facilitator to help them better understand their mission, that is not our objective. Our search is for a person who can help us map out a plan to do our work more effectively and develop the physical skills to, in our terminology, bear more fruit.

Presentations and Negotiations

With an understanding of our needs, each candidate put forward a proposal on how their organization could help us. At our request, proposals focused on coaching the Council of Elders in the development of an updated strategic plan with measurable results.

One of the requests made of each candidate in our Request for Proposal was to assist us in, "developing a strategic plan that will help administration identify, prioritize, measure and assess our key programs and outcomes that are critical to successfully accomplishing the Church's mission and strategic plan."

Interviews ended mid-afternoon, Wednesday, Oct. 17, and the committee members spent the rest of the

day comparing candidate strengths and rankings. Jason Lovelady was asked to further negotiate with the preferred candidate on customizing their proposal to better fit our needs.

Next Steps in the Process

On Nov. 1, as this article is going to press, the committee will be meeting by teleconference to see if there are any last-minute changes to be considered before entering a formal contract.

Once one of the three candidates is formally selected, the committee will begin to work on arranging meetings and interviews with Council of Elders, home office staff and others as we work together on a new strategic plan to be presented to the General Conference of Elders. **UN**

Media At a Glance

Media Meetings Show Strategic Promise

"The past couple of weeks have indeed been busy, but also filled with promise," said Larry Salyer, Media and Communications Services operation manager. He was describing the Media Steering Group meetings in mid-October that were held the same week as the interviews with strategic planning consultants (see page 1).

"These two different projects were quite compatible in that the media group has come to the place of trying to organize all of our previous brainstorming and analysis into meaningful direction for our media efforts. The ideas and proposals presented will eventually make their way into the media plan and the overall Strategic Plan of the Church."

Mr. Salyer said he sees promise in the commitment to improve "our effectiveness in doing the work we have been called to do. There was a great deal of energy and enthusiasm in both [sets of meetings]. Change takes time, of course, and we want to be thorough and wise in whatever steps we choose to take.

"I just read in *Newsweek* that their major overhaul of their Internet presence took them nine months, many meetings and much disputing. We are looking at upgrading our own Internet identity, knowing that it may be a long-term project. Other elements of our media plan will come along more quickly."

Beyond Today production meetings with presenters and staff were held at the home office at the end of October. This year, some of the time was spent considering "various approaches to all of our video products, including television," Mr. Salyer said.

"Your prayers are really appreciated, as Christ is the one who will give us success in these ventures as we submit to His will."

Good Neighbor Helps Advertise Good News

On Sept. 1, 2007, distribution of 320,000 *Good News* "take one" subscription brochures began on 2,000 attractive Good Neighbor literature 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 are:

Arizona	90	Missouri	78
Arkansas	1	Nevada	16
California	81	New Hampshire	3
Colorado	45	New Jersey	60
Connecticut	18	New York	53
Delaware	11	Ohio	73
Florida	1	Oregon	38
Illinois	377	Pennsylvania	279
Indiana	186	Rhode Island	1
Kansas	9	Tennessee	3
Kentucky	2	Texas	120
Louisiana	14	Vermont	6
Maryland	87	Virginia	8
Massachusetts	14	Washington	48
Michigan	172	West Virginia	2
Minnesota	33	Wisconsin	71

There is also an outlet in Washington D.C.

During the past few years, brochure distribution on supermarket displays has proved to be one of our most effective advertising efforts.

This year, four new subscription brochures are being offered, including *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, *What Happens After Death?* and *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. 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 important ad campaign are much appreciated.

"The Debt Trap" Program Featured on Debt Site

A debt consolidation Web site has a link to the *Beyond Today* program "The Debt Trap" on YouTube (www.3debtconsolidation.com/videos/debt/the-debt-trap.html).

"These kind of links happen a lot with our *Beyond Today* videos, but this one is rather interesting in that exact quotes from our program are highlighted," said Peter Eddington, *Beyond Today* director. "Good advertising for *Beyond Today!*"

Another Newspaper Runs an Article on BT

The religion page of the Aug. 30 Richfield, Minnesota, *Sun-Current* included an article about the *Beyond Today* program. Titled "New Cable Program," the article described the program as "Bible-based" and gave the dates, times and channels on

In Our Community, With Our Community, For the Community

RELIGION

Richfield Lutheran

Richfield Lutheran Church, 9 W. 40th St., Minneapolis, will begin a 40-day series Sunday Sept. 24 that will "bring the community" through a number of events. The church will hold small-group activities and personal devotional time as well as serve the communities of Richfield and south Minneapolis in various ways. Last spring the congregation spent six days focusing on the question "What are God's will for me?" This year the group will ponder "What are God's will for us here?"

All are welcome. Info: 612-862-2888 or www.richfieldlutheran.org.

Alpha Course scheduled

The Alpha Course, a practical introduction to the Christian faith, will be offered by Hope Presbyterian Church, 1101 Portland Ave. S., Richfield. Class will begin 7:00 p.m. Wednesday Sept. 26. A one-year program is available at www.alpha.org.

master's degree in parish education and administration at Concordia University in St. Paul. She has served parishes in Illinois and Minnesota as well as Lutheran Youth Services, Minneapolis. She has taught as an adjunct professor at Concordia University. Address: 612-862-1356.

New cable program

A new cable television program that explores "Bible-based" perspectives on issues begins airing tonight (8:30 p.m.) on Cable Channel 13.

"Beyond Today" addresses subjects such as marriage, the Bible, faith, evolution, "The End Times," terrorism and the Ten Commandments.

The show runs twice weekly at 8:30 p.m. Thursdays and 12:30 p.m. Sundays on Channel 13 in Richfield, Edina, Eden Prairie, Hopkins and Minneapolis.

Upcoming programs include: "In the Spirit World Real?" during the week of Sept. 5; "The Bible in Your Life" the week of Sept. 16; and "The Debt Trap" the week of Sept. 24.

Beyond Today featured in Richfield *Sun-Current* which *Beyond Today* can be seen in the area. It also listed the program titles for September.

The article was submitted by local sponsor Barbara Lee, and included a phone number and the Web address for *Beyond Today*.

Beyond Today Reaching 100th Week

Nov. 11-17 will mark the 100th week of airing the *Beyond Today* video program. The program to be broadcast that week will be "European View of Prophecy" hosted by Darris McNeely.

There are currently 152 Church member sponsors who supply *Beyond Today* video programs to 186 cable-access channels across the United States. The total number of responses so far is 16,617 (through Oct. 13).

Contributors: Peter Eddington, John LaBissoniere

Tour of Greece Planned for 2008 Spring Feast

During the 2008 Days of Unleavened Bread, the education travel program will offer a biblical study tour of Greece. We will focus on the travels of the apostle Paul and his letters to the Corinthians, examining the meaning and symbols for the New Testament Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

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

via a Thursday departure. Members have the option to extend their stay in Athens to observe the final day of Unleavened Bread.

Director of Education Programs David Register and Ambassador Bible Center instructor Gary Antion and several other elders will accompany the 10-day study program.

The tour will begin in Corinth where we will observe the Passover, weekly Sabbath, Night to Be Much Observed and the first Holy Day. The second

half of the stay in Greece will provide opportunities to see Sparta, Olympia and Athens.

The daily schedule will feature morning orientation talks, special sessions on history and background, on-site lectures, scripture readings, guided tours and application discussions.

Participants will stay in superior first-class hotels and travel via motor coach. In addition to Paul's teachings, the travelers will learn about the Hel-

lenistic world of the first century and Greek language and its cultural influence on the world today.

Other educational highlights of the trip include: geography of Greece, in-depth study of the city of Corinth, Greek and Roman ruins, architectural museums, the Peloponnesian Peninsula, the rise of Alexander the Great, the Peloponnesian wars, Olympia and Greek mythology and the history of Olympic games.

The following hotels are reserved

for the trip: Kalamaki Beach Hotel-Corinth, Best Western Hotel Europa-Olympia and Divania Palace Acropolis-Athens.

We will need a minimum number of participants to operate the tour and the extension. More information on cost and the extension will be announced soon. To obtain more information call (800) 858-6999, e-mail your request to Info@travelgallery.com or visit www.travelgallery.com.

David Register

"Winter Family Weekend," continued from page 32

ball, volleyball, speedway, rock climbing, indoor tennis, indoor swimming, flag football, cardio center and weight room, organized children's games, dances and two musical jam sessions.

There will again be a family fun fair with games and rides such as fire truck slide, first down, mechanical bull, moon bounce, obstacle course, putt-putt, twin spin, Velcro wall, zing swing, and many more. A family novelty Olympics will also be held. Cards and board games will be available for checkout at the sports facilities.

Due to the increased attendance, we have added a brand-new, state-of-the-art basketball facility to our venues this year. This will allow for many more volleyball courts as well as basketball courts. Please note that the volleyball will be held at Mid-America Sports

Center while the basketball will take place at HOOPS, a separate facility. We will be using two other sports facilities for additional activities as well as the Clarion Conference Center for even more.

Dances

This year's teen dance theme is "City Nights," a night out on the town. The dance is for ages 12 to 19, and the dress is semiformal wear.

The theme of the young adult (ages 18 to 39) dance is "Black, White and Bling." The dress for this dance is semiformal or formal. Cost for the dance is \$6 and can be paid in advance or at the door.

The theme for the family dance this year is the '80s. Prizes will be given to those who come dressed in their best '80s outfit. Nothing offensive or immodest, please, and no shorts or tank tops. If you do not come dressed

in '80s style, the dress is nice casual—nice jeans or better.

On Monday night you can take in or participate in a bluegrass/country jam session or a rock-and-roll concert. This year the rock-and-roll jam session is being upgraded to consist of already rehearsed groups playing a set of music. If you have a band, or a group of people who can put together some songs between now and this event, contact Mark Winner at mark_winner@ucg.org. You will be asked to submit a list of five to 15 songs you would like to play, along with the band members' names and possibly a demo tape. **The deadline to sign up for this is Dec. 10.**

Registration Needed

As always, we need you to help make this a successful event. **Please take time to register in advance at www.ucg.org/familyweekend.** This helps us plan for each activity, as well as gives

us volunteers to make sure we have all the help needed at each venue.

For those participating in sporting events, the early registration fee is \$15 per person or \$45 maximum per family of four or more. The deadline for early registration is Dec. 14. Any registrations after that date can be taken, but the fee will be collected at the door and is \$20 per person or \$50 maximum per family of four or more. Anyone who cannot register online, please pick up a copy of the online registration form from your pastor.

The venue for wall climbing is a separate fee of \$10 per person for a four-hour time block.

After much discussion, we have decided to share the cost of the referees for the men's basketball games this year with those participating in the games, so anyone participating in men's basketball will have an additional fee of \$5.

Hotel Reservations

The main hotel and conference center is the Clarion. Our secondary property is Holiday Inn Hurstbourne (same exit).

- Clarion (\$40 + tax) (866) 246-2021 or (502) 491-4830.
- Holiday Inn (\$45 + tax) (502) 426-2600. This property will hold your reservation with a **nonrefundable** one night deposit.

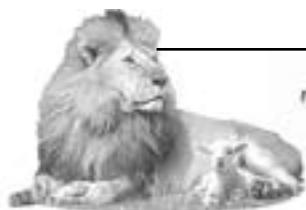
If you haven't already, call now and make your reservations.

For more information on "Singles in the Middle" activities, please contact John Dean jdeanpe@yahoo.com or (828) 243-6669.

We do encourage parents not to send their teens without appropriate supervision for their own safety and protection.

Continued updates can be found at www.ucg.org/familyweekend.

Mark Winner



The Feast of **Tabernacles**

More Than 20,000 Celebrate the Feast With United

Feast Attendance

Argentina.....	485
Australia	
Caloundra, Queensland.....	345
Devonport, Tasmania.....	75
Merimbula, New South Wales..	198
Bahamas	386
Barbados	64
Bolivia	34
Brazil	58
British Isles	123
Cameroon	42
Canada	
Collingwood, Ontario.....	247
Kelowna, British Columbia..	384
Moncton, New Brunswick.....	30
Regina, Saskatchewan.....	71
St. John's, Newfoundland.....	45
Chile	220
Colombia	87
Congo	33
Estonia	40
Fiji	9
France	106
Germany	217
Ghana	700
Guatemala	674
Guyana	36
Italy	362
Ivory Coast	33
Jamaica	351
Jordan	103
Kenya	215
Malawi	133
Malaysia	31
Mauritius	20
Mexico	565
New Zealand	140
Nigeria	118
Peru	217
Philippines	
Baguio City.....	121
Davao City.....	394
Iloilo City.....	138
Portugal	110
Rwanda	80
St. Lucia	114
Singapore	95
South Africa	
George.....	139
Uvongo.....	154
Sri Lanka	30
Togo	73
Tonga	24
United States	
Anchorage, Alaska.....	680
Bend-Redmond, Oregon....	1,137
Branson, Missouri.....	1,425
Cincinnati, Ohio/N. Kentucky....	616
Escondido, California.....	833
Jekyll Island, Georgia.....	1,335
Kerrville, Texas.....	720
Lancaster, Pennsylvania.....	1,129
Panama City Beach, Florida...1,681	
Steamboat Springs, Colorado ...	704
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin...1,398	
Zambia	310
Zimbabwe	39
Total Attendance	20,476
Shut-ins who received Feast tapes from the home office....	720
TOTAL	21,196

Argentina

Mendoza

It was almost a “United Nations” Feast of Tabernacles in Mendoza, Argentina, with 12 flags represent-

land, the United States and England. They enjoyed perfect weather for the entire eight days, along with miles of pristine beaches on the coast of eastern Australia. Many had accommodations with sweeping views of the



Mendoza, Argentina (photo by Rodrigo Valenzuela)

ing 12 different nations on the wall behind the stage at the Hotel Ejército de los Andes. Members came from Spanish-, English- and Portuguese-speaking nations, but the presence of a shared Spirit helped us all surmount the language barriers and build some wonderful friendships. Most services were held in Spanish. The highest attendance, on the first Holy Day, was 485.

Speakers included Saul Langarica, pastor of the congregations in Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil; Jaime Guíñez, an elder who works in the office in Santiago, Chile; Braden Veller, an elder from Florida; and ABC instructor Ralph Levy. The Feast video was shown in Spanish, with an English translation.

The weather was cool to warm through most of the Feast, providing a beautiful backdrop for all the activities, including two dances, an excellent talent night, an evening of delicious Argentinian barbecue, a ladies’ breakfast and a visit to a winery.

A tour of the city of Mendoza included a visit to the La Cabaña chocolate factory, where brethren spent some of their Festival tithes on delicious chocolates. (We took seriously the biblical command to enjoy whatever we most like at the Feast!) This Feast site is highly recommended for chocoholics—and for those addicted to great cross-cultural fellowship!

Ralph Levy

Australia

Caloundra, Queensland

The Caloundra site was abuzz with 345 excited Feast attendees from around Australia, as well as New Zea-

land, the United States and England. They enjoyed perfect weather for the entire eight days, along with miles of pristine beaches on the coast of eastern Australia. Many had accommodations with sweeping views of the

ocean where migrating whales put on a display for all to watch. In addition to being treated to the beauty of God’s creation, the spiritual food was in abundance. Sermons on God’s great plan of salvation and His intent to bring salvation to this world through establishing the Kingdom of God were themes heard throughout the Feast. Our preparation for service as the Bride of Christ in the 1,000-year period also featured prominently. David Johnson, a lecturer at ABC, and his wife, Becky, attended the Caloundra and Merimbula sites.

Activities were for all ages—seniors, young adults and families. The Family Dinner and Dance featured our own band, the “Taberwaggles,” who performed for the children. They then transformed themselves into the “Spectabernaculars” to perform dance favorites for all ages. Everyone agreed that we must have them back next year!

It was, as always, one of those “we wish it didn’t have to end!” Feasts. All left refreshed and ready to take on the next year.

Bill Bradford

Devonport, Tasmania

Wet, windy and chilly weather throughout the Feast could not dampen the enthusiasm or Festival spirit at this picturesque location on the northwest coast of Tasmania, Australia’s island state.

Seventy-five Feastgoers from many parts of Australia enjoyed eight days of fellowship in an intimate family atmosphere. The Feast was held in the meeting room of a local yacht club, a beautiful waterside location with spectacular views of the Mersey River.

Messages presented were sober-

ing, yet encouraging, with a focus on our personal responsibility as teachers-in-training for the world tomorrow and our preparation for this truly “new world order.” Sermons during the Feast pointed to the need for humility, the importance of maintaining a right perspective and the need to train up children with a firm foundation in God’s way of life.

The Last Great Day messages emphasized the necessity for reconciliation of those in the second resurrection to God and to each other; and the fact that judgment is on Church members at this time. God is watching to see our progress in developing the justice, mercy and forgiveness we will be teaching.

Many opportunities to break bread together were incorporated into the Feast activities, which included two potlucks, a games night with dinner and a mystery bus tour, as well as communal meals on the two high days.

A highlight of this year’s Feast was the first ordination in Tasmania for many years, when Tom Korrelvink of Hobart was ordained as a deacon.

Elizabeth Burchard

Merimbula, New South Wales

When members gathered in



Merimbula, Australia: Left, Brianna Mihalec with a native rainbow lorikeet that visited her balcony regularly during the Feast; above, Susie Watson with Micah Leihn on the jumping pillow at Family Day

the Last Great Day celebration with his final message on our future relationship with the Father.

Martha McQueen

Bahamas

Freeport

The Feast of Tabernacles returned to the Bahamas in 2007, with around 400 international and local brethren gathered at the Westin Hotel at Our Lucaya Resort in Freeport, Grand Bahama. It was the first Feast to be held in the Bahamas under the United Church of God, even though the Feast was held here for many years prior to 1995.

On opening night, some 286 persons were in attendance to hear the first message from Jeff Baker, assistant Festival coordinator.

During the first day of the Feast,

Festival coordinator Kingsley Mather, who is also the regional pastor of the Caribbean, gave a resounding sermon on the world tomorrow. Later that same night, the Ministry of Tourism in the Bahamas held a welcome reception for attendees at the Weston Hotel. Carmeta Miller, senior manager at the local tourism office, welcomed the delegates to the islands of the Bahamas. International brethren got a taste of Bahamian music and dancing, along with Bahamian finger foods.

On Friday night, the second day of the Feast, a good number of young-

was hot and sunny with only the occasional shower.

The members attending represented the Caribbean islands of St. Kitts, St. Thomas, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, as well as members from Canada and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pinelli from the United States. The highest daily attendance figure was 64 on the Last Great Day.

The Feast went very well with Mr. and Mrs. Pinelli spending the first half with us. As the only minister in Barbados, Mr. Pinelli had more than his share of speaking. He gave the inaugural

60 miles north of La Paz, the capital.

The hotel is an excellent facility with nice rooms, beautiful gardens and several swimming pools. The facilities we had this year only show a small part of what God will give us when He establishes His Kingdom on this earth.

Physical food was very abundant, with every meal buffet-style. Because of the tropical weather of the region we also had all kinds of fruits available.

The hotel is located between two mountains, next to a river of crystal-clear waters. In this paradisaical place God put His name to keep the Feast. The group was small and very united and harmonious.

From the beginning of the Feast we all felt God's blessing and protection. For example, the climate for the place is very hot under normal circumstances, but during the Feast the weather was very comfortable. Another example is that the road that connects Coroico to La Paz used to be a dirt road, but just before the Feast it was paved!

It was also very inspiring to know that we had a person for whom this was his 42nd Feast, and we also had a baby girl who was 42 days of age.

A couple from Australia took three days of different flights to get to the Feast site. In spite of such difficulties getting to the Feast, everyone had very

Most of the brethren attending the Feast were from the village. However, we also had a family who came from Guyana to keep the Feast with us. That was a wonderful event, since we do not have many visitors because of distance.

The United Church of God gave us the funds to rebuild the roof of our meeting hall, which we did before the Feast, so we had the blessing to have our meeting hall renewed.

This year we also noticed a lot of interest in the Church of God among more members of the community, which shows the kind of good example the members of God's Church are showing to the community in general. Some of the attendees mentioned their great desire to become members of the Church of God through baptism.

We had a very profitable and happy Feast. The group was very united and satisfied with the messages. We had social activities every day after services where all had the chance to participate.

We hope more brethren can visit us for the Feast next year.

Roberto Mathews da Silva

British Isles

Shorefield

Lights, cameras, action! These were the buzzwords that greeted the 123 brethren that attended the Feast in the British Isles. We were encouraged to be *lights* to the world in Shorefield Holiday Park and beyond. *Cameras* reminded us that as we took our pictures, God was also watching and recording as He makes up His family album, the Book of Life. *Action* represented everything we did for the duration of the Festival.

The particularly spiritually rich and encouraging sermons were complemented by a variety of special music and two Bible studies. One study for the young adults on the subject of relationships was presented by our main speaker, Paul Suckling, visiting from the United States. The subject for the second study was



Paul Suckling speaks in Shorefield, England

the throne of David, presented by Tonbridge member David Jardine who has enjoyed unique access to the House of Lords. The study was accompanied with pictures showing how our identity as Israel is literally

woven into the fabric of British government buildings.

We also were provided with a wealth of tours to places of interest in the surrounding area. These included Salisbury Cathedral and Portsmouth with its historic dockyard, which includes Admiral Lord Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory*. Also available was a trip to the Isle of Wight, with a visit to Queen Victoria's residence, Osborne House. The weather was kind, mainly dry and mild.

Socials (with opportunities to perform fun show items) and a children's party completed a full package of activities and fellowship opportunities.

A great Feast, both spiritually and physically, was enjoyed by all, with the hope that a future return to this exceptional venue will be made soon.

Frank Jarvis

Cameroon

Douala

This year 42 people attended the Feast in Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon. Thankfully there were no rains heavy enough to perturb any Festival activities, contrary to what one would expect in Douala during September and October.

Brethren came from different regions of the country, including Bélabo, Nkoteng, Eséka and Yaoundé. Several brethren from outside Douala were not able to attend due to health or family problems. We were able to get excused absences for the students, so that they were all able to participate in the whole Feast.

Most brethren stayed in the church hall complex, where we have several new dorm rooms built for this purpose. This expansion has been made possible thanks to local participation, and to help from the Church internationally. We listened to MP3 sermons sent to us specifically for the Feast, and we were able to view the Festival video as well.

Sunday night we had a talent night, which was preceded by a Bible quiz prepared in two parts, one for children and another for adults, under the supervision of Messrs. Mabout, Bikoé and Ndjock. Among other numbers, the talent show included skits and tra-

ditional Cameroonian dances. Thanks to our brethren elsewhere who sent us the assistance to make possible this wonderful Feast of Tabernacles celebration!

Moïse Élisée Mabout



Freeport, Bahamas

sters attended the teen Bible study conducted by Bill Johnson from North Carolina.

The highest attendance at the Feast was recorded on the weekly Sabbath, Sept. 28, when 386 persons were counted. On Sunday, members watched the Feast video, and later that afternoon, a planned snorkeling trip had to be postponed due to inclement weather. The weather was not too cooperative during the first half of the Feast, as it rained just about every day. The rain eventually tapered off during the latter half, and the brethren were able to resume all planned outdoor activities with beautiful sunshine.

Sunday night also saw a number of individuals getting together for the young adults' Bible study.

On Monday night, members enjoyed a very entertaining and enjoyable Talent/Fun Show. Many commented that it was the best fun show that they had ever attended.

Tuesday, after services, Feastgoers enjoyed the Family Fun Day on the beach at the hotel where youngsters and adults alike participated in a number of events and games.

On the Last Great Day, Thursday, Oct. 4, two services were held, and many brethren were able to enjoy a group luncheon together between services.

A lot of the brethren commented that they truly enjoyed the Feast here in the Bahamas, both spiritually and physically, as there were many inspiring messages. Some members even stated that they would return if the Feast were held again in the Bahamas.

Daniel McKinney

Barbados

This year the Feast in Barbados was held at Southern Palms Hotel on the picturesque South Coast. The weather

message as well as the main messages for the first four days of the Feast and added the offertory message on the first Holy Day for good measure. All of the messages were applicable, thought-provoking and inspiring.

Festival Youth Instruction booklets specially prepared for the different age groups were handed out at the Feast.

The two main activities were both well attended. One was a scenic bus tour of the island, with a number of stops for those who wanted to take pictures or just enjoy the scenery. The Family Day picnic was held at Dover Beach with a specially catered meal for those so desiring and the remainder of the time spent swimming in the sea, lying in the sun, playing in the sand or sitting in the shade of a tree watching the sea.

Since the Pinellis attended the rest of the Feast in St. Lucia, our messages for the second half of the Feast consisted of MP3 sermons, the Festival video and two days where we joined the Jekyll Island Feast site for the webcast.

On the Last Great Day everyone attending enjoyed the specially planned midday meal at the Feast site hotel.

All of the comments on the Feast were positive, with attendees saying they had a great time and some stating that they were already planning to come to Barbados next year. Overall God blessed us with a fantastic Feast—great messages, great physical blessings and especially great attitudes. We truly were one family.

Stephen Crosby

Bolivia

Coroico

This year 34 brethren, including children, kept the Feast in the beautiful Rio Selva Resort in the small town of Coroico, in the district of Nor-Yungas, Bolivia. The town is located only

Coroico, Bolivia

happy faces when they arrived and during the whole Feast.

The spiritual food was very balanced and abundant. To me, the amazing grace of God is so great to give the spiritual success in all Feast sites at the same time around the world. That is really inspiring. God is always fulfilling His promise to put His name in the places He chooses. Because of that, it is only logical that we as His instruments do our very best to collaborate with our God to make a success of every Holy Day.

Fermin Nain

Brazil

Maloca de Moscou

This year 58 brethren, including children, kept the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day in Maloca de Moscou, in the northern part of Brazil, near the border with Guyana.

Again we kept the Feast in the same facilities built by Church members to keep the Sabbath inside the reservation the Brazilian government gave to our community.

Canada

Collingwood, Ontario

The Feast was held in a new location at the Georgian Manor Resort nestled between the colorful Blue Mountains and beautiful Georgian Bay. The resort served the 250 in attendance perfectly, with the auditorium just the right size (the room temperatures were too hot, too cold and just right!). Access to the various meeting rooms gave us flexibility for other activities and helped things move smoothly.

Brethren came from several U.S. states and Canadian provinces and territories. About 35 percent of our attendees were American brethren,



Collingwood, Ontario: Staffing the information table on Youth Day (photo by Robbie Guzman)

and about the same percentage were in Collingwood for the first time.

The weather was picture perfect and the warmth of the people was evident throughout the Feast. An added touch this year was the Feast of Tabernacles, Collingwood 2007 buttons designed and made by one of our local members. Many wore them into town, giving the locals a glimpse of what we were there for.

Activities were well attended and our annual boat luncheon cruise was a great success again this year. The Family Day barbecue enabled time off site to relax and enjoy a game of volleyball while the kids enjoyed the playground and treasure hunt. There was time to fellowship and get to know one another a little better. Our seniors' lounge was a big hit, providing our "Gold Members" an opportunity to fellowship over a cup of coffee/tea and muffins on several mornings before services. One of the ladies from the Ottawa, Ontario, congregation made some lovely cards that were signed by as many as possible and sent back to those unable to attend this year's Feast.

The children enjoyed this year's theme of "Seek First the Kingdom." The lessons taught by the ladies gave added meaning and excitement to their Feast experience.

The messages were inspiring and encouraging, as we were given a snapshot of God's coming Kingdom. The special music and choir were uplifting and the children's choir stole the show as always.

Donations to the local Salvation Army food bank gave us the opportunity to share God's blessings with the less fortunate in the area for the Canadian Thanksgiving weekend.

The Last Great Day buffet lunch was at full capacity and gave us all one last chance to fellowship before leaving for our separate destinations later that evening. Everyone left for home with a renewed focus on God's way of life as we anticipate the future fulfillment for all mankind.

Dennis Horlick

Kelowna, British Columbia

Situated in the moderate climate of Canada's Okanagan Valley, where apple orchards and grape vines dot the landscape, Kelowna, British Columbia, was once again a UCG Feast site for 2007, with a high attendance of 384 of God's people.

The theater stage was embellished with beautiful decorations including towering white pillars encircled with lights, wonderful flower arrangements and a projection screen for the lyrics to the hymns, as well as PowerPoint presentations for some of the messages.

One of the highlights of the opening day was the ordination of David Campbell who will serve as an elder in the Vancouver, British Columbia, area.

Each of the messages reemphasized the importance of living God's way now, with a vision of the future when Christ returns and sets up God's Kingdom on this earth.

Youth day once again had a special theme, "living water" (John 7:37-38), and dozens of stuffed animals added to the setting. The animals were given to young children after services.

Sedro Woolley, Washington, pastor Don Hooser and Howard Davis of Portland, Oregon, not only provided the songleading during the eight days, but also closed the Feast with very meaningful messages on the Last Great Day.

This year's Feast video presentation from the home office, "Threshold of a New Age," received extremely positive response.



Kelowna, British Columbia, children's choir

Kelowna is also one of the Feast sites that webcasts services, and we had a number of individuals and groups that connected to us from various parts of Canada and the United States.

Special music, including the Kelowna Festival Choir under the direction of Jim Brandenburg of Calgary, Alberta, made the Feast even more special.

Activities included a seniors' luncheon, family dance, Family Day consisting of a penny carnival plus a

potluck meal, Festival Youth Instruction, young adults' seminar and activity at a local orchard where they had a lunch and were given a wagon ride through the orchard, a ministerial dinner, a teen bowling/pizza evening, a volunteer reception, a collection for the local food bank and a teen study.

David Palmer

Moncton, New Brunswick

A joyful Feast of Tabernacles was held again this year in Moncton, New Brunswick. Thirty people gathered from the Maritime Provinces, the New England states and three from western Canada. Although we were small in number, a special warmth among the brethren was evidence that Christ was among us just as He promised in Matthew 18:20. We also enjoyed warmth outdoors as the weather was unseasonably warm, and we had only one morning of rain.

We were pleased to have Mr. and



Moncton, New Brunswick, get-acquainted meal

Mrs. David Metzel from the Cincinnati, Ohio, area keep the Feast with us. Mr. Metzel spoke to us on three occasions. He encouraged us to build our relationship with God by walking with Him each day and to develop a change in heart available to us under the New Covenant. For the remainder of the sermons, we joined the webcast from Jekyll Island, Georgia. Having them welcome us certainly made us feel a part of their Feast.

As a little group, we soon became as one big family and spent a great deal of our time together, sharing home-cooked meals and building a bond of brotherly love.

Our activities included a boat trip into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including a meal on the boat. We saw two bald eagles and had our boat visited by many inquisitive seals. Near the Bay of Fundy we watched the surging 21-foot tide cover the ocean floor at The Rocks. We toured a local winery, tasting the different grapes on the vine, learning the wine-making process and sampling the finished product.

The ladies gathered for an afternoon tea at the home of one of our members. We were encouraged to share our thoughts on having a year of growth, encouragement and food for thought.

Everyone offered to help throughout the Feast, and we all worked together.

As one member said, "We talked all the way home about how great the Feast was physically and spiritually. Our Feast was the 'best Feast ever' in many years."

Gary Steeves

Regina, Saskatchewan

Regina is a remarkably clean, expansive city standing squarely on the great grassy plains of Saskatchewan. It can be cold in winter, but was remarkably sunny and warm throughout the eight days of the Feast. Much desired rain came the day after the Feast, as we were leaving.

This year 71 brethren enjoyed close-knit company in a relaxed atmosphere, with good humor spicing the entire Feast. The Regina Festival Chorale provided music every day and led us in the hymns.

Messages covered a wide range of subjects, from catching the vision to why there isn't a secret rapture, from longevity to wisdom and from reluctant Jonah to the remodeling of Adam in psychedelic pink plasticine!

This year we cut back on the activities and had more fellowship time with the use of the hall 24 hours a day. We did our traditional early Thanksgiving meal on Saturday evening, with turkey and all the trimmings. After the meal a Chilean group came in and did five

dances from the various regions.

The seniors' activity was at the Regina Floral Conservatory. George Carter read a poem and Ken Graham did a short study on the word *immediately* and how it fits into our lives.

The last group activity was the meal between the two services on the last day. Lunch of soup and sandwiches was set up for us at one end of the hall, so we just got up and walked to the other end of the hall, ate and fellowshiped.

A special treat again this year was the blessing of children. Tracy Bertram had a baby boy just before the Feast.

One of the visited sites was the new



Regina, Saskatchewan: Lloyd and Helen Teetaert at the RCMP Heritage Centre

RCMP Heritage Centre just opened this summer. For the past 134 years, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

has been an integral part of Canada's historical and cultural landscape, helping to form and protect this great nation and playing a significant role in creating the Canadian identity.

We sang the song "God Be With You" at the end on the last day, due to the meaning in the song and how it fit the occasion.

Lloyd Teetaert and George Carter

St. John's, Newfoundland

The 2007 Feast in St. John's was a success from beginning to end. With a top attendance of 45, a family atmosphere prevailed all the way through. God's hand was evident in the fellowship, the speaking and all the other activities. A spirit of unity and cooperation was evident from the opening service to the afternoon service on the Last Great Day.

The weather was cloudy and cool during the first half, but during the final four days we were blessed with sunshine and warmer temperatures. People who have experienced many Feasts commented that it was the best Feast ever. All activities were well attended, with good fellowship every day. The staff members at the hotel were very cooperative, and were pleased to have us there again this year. The staff gave a gift of \$50 to LifeNets, which was increased by donations from Feast attendees.

The St. John's site was blessed to have people from several U.S. states, a couple from mainland Canada and



St. John's, Newfoundland

eight people from London, England, as well as local brethren.

Those who were visiting the St. John's area for the first time couldn't seem to get enough of the beautiful scenery around the coastline and were amazed at the friendliness of the local people with whom they came into contact. Many feel that it is a unique place to hold the Feast.

Four elders and other speakers gave very inspiring messages that were thoroughly appreciated. The sermons and sermonettes consisted of very relevant topics such as learning to fear God, reasons for keeping the Feast, self-worth, encouragement to not look back, how to have peace of mind in an anxious world and many other words of encouragement.

Sam Parsons served as director of the 10-member choir, which sang two pieces. A few individuals contributed special music as well.

Family Day was well attended. A lunch of sandwiches and soup was served, after which most people took

advantage of a sunny afternoon to explore the coastline. Afterwards, a sing-along was held followed by a delicious roast beef dinner. After dinner, a dance was enjoyed by many.

The video was considered by many to be the most inspiring ever.

A variety night was hosted by Mr. Parsons, who did a good job of getting each person off to a fine start. It was a fun time and well attended.

Overall, in the opinion of this writer and of many who attended, the Feast in St. John's was a physically and especially a spiritually rejuvenating time.

David Smith

Chile

Lican Ray

In the Lake District of southern Chile and in the shadow of the snow-capped Villarrica volcano, 220 brethren gathered to celebrate the Feast this year in Lican Ray.

The Feast was held in the facilities of the tourist complex El Conquistador, where the brethren stayed in charming wooden cabins with chimneys situated among the greenery of the native trees and the sound of the local fauna.

Though temperatures oscillated between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit, we were blessed with sunny skies and the warmth of the brethren.

Under the coordination of the pastor Saul Langarica, who was there with his wife the first half of the Feast, the brethren were spiritually recharged by the messages on topics such as the Millennium, family relationships, prayer and lessons from Solomon, among others.

Services were enhanced by the special music provided every day by solo performers and choirs, including one composed of children and another of senior citizens. The Feast also provided



Lican Ray, Chile (photo by Rene Figueroa)

an opportunity for the brethren who live in more isolated regions to fellowship.

At the end of the first Holy Day, we were treated to a lively and colorful *esquinazo*, a truly festal welcoming with folkloric dances and songs sponsored by the local brethren

We also enjoyed a trip to the Vergara thermal baths, one of many in the Villarrica National Park. Other activities included a boat ride on Lake Calafquen, a family dance, a party for the children, soccer games (which Chileans are passionate about) and a talent show where local dances and music took center stage.

The senior citizens were honored with a special tea party, and the women over 24 years of age were honored with a special breakfast. The members of the Spokesmen's Club also honored the ladies with a formal dinner and inspiring speeches in one of the restaurants in town. Every afternoon, families invited each other to their cabins to an *once*, a customary gathering to share tea, pisco sour, food and good conversation.

One of the highlights of the Feast was the opportunity to welcome into the Church of God five new brethren, who were baptized by Jaime Gallardo, an elder who serves the brethren in the south of Chile.

The Feast site in Chile had a lot to offer: history, folklore, lakes, volcanoes and beautiful scenery. But it's most wonderful ingredient was the warmth, friendship and hospitality of the brethren. We highly recommend Chile as a Feast destination, but this recommendation comes with a warning: You can't be allergic to hugs and kisses. The Chilean brethren take to heart what Mrs. Langarica likes to say: If you are coming to Chile, you have to "let yourself be loved."

Eloy and Gladys Valdes

Colombia

It was a very inspiring Feast in a nice family environment. Our highest attendance was 87. This is less than in other years because our Ecuadorian brethren, who used to come here, went to Mendoza, Argentina, this year.

Eduardo Hernandez

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kinshasa

For the second time in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, new members of the United Church of God observed the Feast of Tabernacles. This year 33 people attended the site at the Santa Maria au Banc site on the outskirts of Kinshasa, the nation's capital. With God's help we spent the Feast together in brotherly love and friendship.

We appreciate the assistance given to us to allow us to observe the Feast once again. Each day we listened to sermonettes and sermons on CDs. These helped us to better understand the plan of God. We also had extra time for prayer and to meditate on the things we were learning.

The ladies prepared the meals in the common kitchen, and we enjoyed the physical abundance as well as the spiritual.

On the Last Great Day an Antonov 26 airliner crashed shortly after take-off into a crowded market and on some houses in the Kisangani neighborhood only three kilometers (less than two miles) from us, killing at least 51 people and burning many more. This was the seventh deadly plane crash this year in the DRC, which has account-

ed for half of all African plane crashes in the last decade. The brethren were very saddened by this accident, but also thankful for God's protection, and for the comforting knowledge we have of His plan for humanity.

Jacob Pempelongo, Justin Tshikuma-Manenga and Joel Meeker

Estonia

We kept the Feast in two locations in Estonia. The first half was in Estonia's second largest city, Tartu, where we've usually held the Feast. The second half was on the largest island in the Baltic Sea called Saaremaa.

Our high attendance was 40 people who came from Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, England, Scotland and the United States. The weather was unseasonably warm, with the fall colors reaching their peak. It couldn't have been nicer. On Saaremaa we stayed at a spa hotel where we had access to pools, spas and massages. We ate there as well as held our services.

Sermons were given by Johnnie Lambert, Victor Kubik and Paul Spenser. Sermonettes were by Bryant Lambert, Michael Kubik, Gail Allwine, Howard West and Paul Spenser. Every day we had special music that



Estonia: Above, the Robert Schultz family from Smiltene, Latvia; right, Alyssa Kubik checking out the menu at a Georgian restaurant

was organized by Karen Allwine.

Several commented about the depth and biblical content in the Festival and its content as it related to the history of Europe.

Our only disappointment was that one of our Karen refugee families that has been resettled to Finland from Thailand was not allowed entry into Estonia at the last moment because of a change in laws regarding refugees traveling. They had not had personal contact with any members in two years.

In all the sermons and sermonettes we focused on God's coming Kingdom and our need to be prepared.

Our small attendance helped us all get better acquainted and bond with one another. The Feast in Estonia was a wonderful event—some commented that it indeed was the best one in content, inspiration, scenery and fellowship.

We were very happy to welcome a new family of six in Latvia who have just started keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days. They came for the first and last days of the Feast.

With the continuing growth of read-

ership and new contacts in Scandinavia, we may be moving the Feast in the Baltic region to Sweden in two years.

Victor Kubik

Fiji

Suva

The small group of UCG members in Fiji—comprised of four baptized adults and five preteen children—kept this year's Festival in Suva, the capital city of this small South Pacific island nation.

Services were held daily at the Sarita Flats, where two of the three families that make up Fiji's UCG member-



Suva, Fiji, group

ship were accommodated. Our highest daily attendance figure was nine.

Unlike previous Feasts where families were accommodated separately, staying together at the Sarita Flats this year provided an excellent family environment where we were able to fellowship, cook and share meals, as well as do many things as a family.

For the children, the accommodation arrangement added great excitement to their Feast experience as they had eight straight days to enjoy each other's company, play, joke and share exciting activities together. They especially enjoyed going through the preteen Sabbath instruction program. It was encouraging to realize some of the things they now know about God and His wonderful plan for mankind.

The absence during the Feast of one of our beloved members—Mrs. Walesi Tolo who died April 28—was

obviously felt by all of us. In memory of her service to the Fijian church, the group took a trip to her burial site on the morning of the Last Great Day. While we stood around her grave, in the midst of thousands of other graves, I briefly shared with our small group God's wonderful plan and promise of the resurrection. We all came away uplifted, knowing that we would meet our loved ones again in God's Kingdom.

The highlights of the Festival were, of course, the meaty messages that were brought to us through the sermon CDs. Without exception, all messages were very stirring and encouraging. To God's small family in Fiji, Clyde Kilough's Last Great Day message titled "I Must Be There" struck a very personal note. The recent loss of someone dear to all of us and our trip to the

cemetery early that morning provided the appropriate environment—mentally, emotionally and spiritually—to soak in and absorb the encouraging message of hope from God on that day. What a great way to end a great Festival.

We all must be there!

Emori Tolo

France

Collonges-la-Rouge

One hundred six brethren from seven countries observed the Feast in Collonges-la-Rouge, named one of France's most beautiful villages. Celibants lodged, dined and attended church services and Festival activities on the all-inclusive site. Bucolic surroundings, warm fellowship and pleasant weather gave a welcome foretaste of the world tomorrow.

Highlights of the Feast this year included encouraging and stimulating sermons and sermonettes, including a much-appreciated Last Great Day sermon by Church treasurer, Tom Kirkpatrick, on the exciting symbolism of the day.

During Family Day, many visitors learned how to play *pétanque*, a southern-French ball game perfectly suited to fellowshiping, and French members from the Caribbean island of Martinique shared *martiniquais* hors d'oeuvre pastries and tropical drinks they had specially prepared.

Coach excursions visited historic and cultural sites, such as the medieval towns of Rocamadour and Sarlat la Caneda, the prehistoric cave paintings at Lascaux and the picturesque villages of Beaulieu and Curemonte. A local folk-dancing troupe performed one evening, and the talent show was an especially high point of the Feast.

The francophone members held their annual association meeting one night, and participated in two evening Bible studies prepared especially for them, taking full advantage of their rare moments to all be together.

This site in Collonges-la-Rouge



Collonges-le-Rogue, France: French-speaking brethren at one of the Bible studies

has been reserved once again for the Feast of Tabernacles 2008. Why not join us?

Joel Meeker

Germany

Schluchsee

The Feast in Schluchsee, Germany, this year was a wonderful time of rejoicing and looking forward to

God's Kingdom. There was a record attendance of 217 people from 14 countries all gathered together in the Black Forest region of southern Germany. Following the festive opening service, the youth handed out refreshments to everyone.

The activities included a children's party and ninepin bowling, go-karting for the teens, a film evening (*God Doesn't Gamble*), a dance evening with music provided by Enrico & Mario, a ladies' brunch and a farewell party the evening of the Last Great Day. There was a seminar titled "Be Mindful to Entertain Strangers." A youth outing to ride the "Rodenbahn" down a nearby mountain was a great hit—imagine sliding down a railed track at 40 to 50 miles an hour for 2 miles of twists and turns!

Most of the spiritual food centered on the positive future God's government will bring to humanity. German-language brethren appreciated the opportunity to speak to a Council of Elders member, guest speaker Robert Berendt, in their native language. The translators enabled everyone to



Schluchsee, Germany: Paul Kieffer speaking

receive and understand the messages very clearly.

The sightseeing trip this year was to Rottweil—the oldest town in southwestern Germany. It is a small town of about 25,000 that was founded by the Romans in A.D. 73 with traces of human settlement going back to 2000 B.C. From there we went to Burg Hohenzollern. We had a guided tour through the Hohenzollern Castle, which is the ancestral seat of the Prussian kings and German emperors as well as the Swabian branch of the princes of Hohenzollern.

Most days saw a morning fog in the valley clear off to allow clear, sunny days. The local people were friendly and polite, making visitors feel comfortable and welcome.

All in all, the setting in Schluchsee was millennial with its peaceful beauty, only outdone by the warmth of the brethren sharing their hope for the whole world's future.

Dan and Fern Berendt

Ghana

Sunyani

As Australians visiting the Feast in Ghana, my wife, Ruth, and I sum up our experience as very enjoyable and challenging.

Ghanaians are a very friendly, peaceable people, and they are generous even with limited possessions. It is

not hard to imagine them really fitting in well in God's Kingdom.

We had the Feast in Sunyani, eight hours by car from the capital, Accra.

Ghana is experiencing a rising level of prosperity and the best government it has enjoyed in its modern history. However, there are many challenges facing the government in cleaning up corruption and providing law and order with wisdom and justice for all people (Isaiah 9:7).

There is a feeling of stability, and we felt safe walking the streets and on the beach. But even though life is better, it is still very stressful and challenging for our brethren.

The Church helps subsidize the costs for faithful members and others who want to attend the Feast. This year brethren in America personally put together handmade children's Bible books, sets of colored pencils, sharpeners and coloring books, which the children and their parents really loved and appreciated. Ghanaian children are so beautiful. The memory of them tugs at our heart strings.

Melvin and Diane Rhodes have been serving our brethren in Ghana since the late 1970s. They have taken on the challenge over three decades, experiencing famine, times of shortages, malaria and other debilitating sicknesses. It was apparent to us that they have a deep love, affection and unselfish dedication to serving God's people in Ghana.

We came to see firsthand the challenges they face, and we were very saddened to say good-bye to our brethren and the Rhodes at the end of the Feast.

It is especially wonderful how God is calling and inviting many people in Ghana to take on the challenge of repentance, growing in grace and



Sunyani, Ghana

knowledge and becoming a converted son or daughter of God.

They, like all in the Church, long for the return of Jesus Christ and His glorious government to this suffering earth.

Ken Murray

Guatemala

Antigua

Each year, we say "this was my best

Feast." And surely it was for all of us who had the opportunity of being at Antigua, Guatemala. The highest attendance was 674.

The weather was fabulous, with much sunlight and little rain, and the fellowship was the ingredient that seasoned all the activities. We had a "Family Dinner" where we happily shared food and the beginning of the Sabbath with all the brethren.

We also had a ladies' breakfast, with more than 200 women who enjoyed a pleasant and varied program. Other activities included a "golden age" breakfast, a Family Day barbecue, Ladies' Night and a very folkloric Talent Show.

But what motivated us more were the sermons and sermonettes, focused on the Kingdom of God, and the special music with the participation of groups of all ages.

Clyde and Dee Kilough shared the first half of the Feast with us, and Leon and Reba Walker attended the second half of the Feast at Antigua.

At the end of the Feast there were tears, smiles of happiness and best wishes to be strong and to look forward to the next Feast of Tabernacles, at the place that God will choose.

Luis Mundo Tello

Guyana

Lethem, Rupununi

Totaling 36 in number, brethren from Guyana, Brazil, Dominica and the United States assembled in humble surroundings to give praise to God on the first day of His Feast.

The visiting members from the United States and God's faithful deacon from Dominica, Max Victor, truly added an international flavor to this year's activities. It was most heartwarming to gather like this, and even the heavy downpour of rain during the lunch break did not dampen the warmth that was being shared.

Each day was eagerly anticipated. The spiritual food was rich and greatly appreciated. The sermons and ser-



monettes were inspiring and uplifting with one special one reminding us that we "must be there." There was an abundance of fellowship after each service and lots to eat. The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves and could not decide which day was the best.

The fun day was an immense hit with all involved. Chess, Pictionary and computer games were all going at once. The ring toss, however, proved to be a delight to all who tried it for the first time.

The visitors were instrumental in

facilitating the teen Bible study and the preteen Bible study, which the children all appreciated. One fact that stood out was the sharing and serving attitude shown by the youths.



Lethem, Guyana (photo courtesy Tim Joyner)

The highest attendance was 36 and on the Last Great Day we had 32 present. The weather was good throughout, with some cooling showers for the first three days.

Having visitors to Lethem from international areas is one way God showed everyone that we are truly one Body and of one Spirit. This made for a truly memorable Feast for not only the local brethren but for those who chose to observe the Feast in a smaller area.

Gary Atkinson

Italy

Sabaudia

Brethren from the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands,



Sabaudia, Italy

Australia, South Africa, Nigeria, Italy and Latin American countries gathered for the eight days of the Feast in Sabaudia. The highest attendance was 362 (including children).

We were a small but enthusiastic group of God's people enjoying heartfelt sermons, delicious food and Christian fellowship with one another. We were living proof that language need not be a barrier to getting to know and love one another in Jesus Christ. We are already looking forward to next year's Feast with many other brethren visiting us from abroad. Your Italian brethren would like to express their heartfelt thanks to all those who celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with them in Italy this year.

During the Feast, God added two members to His Church, one from the United States (Sally Wright) and one from Italy (Manuel Finazzi). We give them our warmest "welcome" to the family of God.

During the eight days of the Feast, the weather was wonderful. We participated in cultural tours to famous historical places like Pompeii, Rome and the Vatican museums. It was history coming alive before our eyes. We also had memorable social activities like the talent show, the Family Day on the beach and the evening dance for the enjoyment of all Feast participants in Christian fellowship.

The *Arrivederci* section of the Feast was very moving. Many brethren from outside Italy have already written to us in appreciation. Yet we are the ones

who have to sincerely express our gratefulness for your brotherly presence, friendship and support. There are not adequate words to thank all the non-Italian brethren who have served and contributed in various ways to make the Feast truly memorable to God's glory and honor. And of course, we thank all Feast participants for their generous offerings to help us in publishing the truth in Italy a little more widely. We give a heartfelt thanks to all indeed.

Carmelo Anastasi

Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire)

La Mé

This year 33 people observed the

Feast in the little village of La Mé in Côte d'Ivoire. The Feast was truly wonderful. Not only did we rejoice physically, but the spiritual messages, the sermonettes and sermons that we heard on MP3 CDs were very strong meat and

helped us to discover different aspects of the wonderful world tomorrow and to better understand the attitudes we need to have. Our offerings totaled 21,850 francs (about \$40).

Thanks to help from our American brethren, we were able to eat all our hearts desired. On the menu were mutton, rice, fish and couscous, to name just a few dishes. The children were delighted to receive their presents on the first day of the Feast, including some candy.

We were saddened that Bertine Oulai could not be present since her younger sister died just the day before the Feast. Bertine had to travel to be with her family in the time of mourning.

Sunday during the Feast, the young people played a friendly game of maracana (local name for soccer/football). Team A beat team B by four goals to two.

We say "thank you" to all our brethren who helped us make this a well-organized and abundant Feast.

Paul Tia

Jamaica

Montego Bay

Once again Jamaica's second city and acknowledged tourism capital, Montego Bay, hosted the Feast of Tabernacles at the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort. There over 350 brethren from Antigua, Barbados, Canada, the United Kingdom, St. Kitts-Nevis, the United States and, of course, Jamaica, gathered to experience a foretaste of God's millennial Kingdom. The highest attendance was 351 on the first day.

Our heartfelt thanks go to both local and visiting pastors who provided a rich panorama of life in the Kingdom through their inspiring sermons and sermonettes, lavishly illustrated with personal experiences and anecdotes that brought home the messages so realistically. The Feast video was also well received, as Europe continues to play a critical role in prophecy, which



Montego Bay, Jamaica: Elders and wives Vernon and DeLee Hargrove, Paul and Sandra Fisher and Leeford and Carol Burke

is of great interest to the Church as we watch and pray.

Special music from the 32-strong Festival choir, a youth ensemble, a children's choir, a duet and a solo enhanced our worship. Then there was a young adult Bible study, a teen Bible study and a "tiny tots" instruction class to supplement the lessons for the period.

Scheduled group activities included the family fun day, which was almost rained out, but proved quite successful as the hotel staff arranged indoor games until the rain abated. The teams of Judah and Israel resumed their "rivalry" with beach games, ending with volleyball and a win for the house of Judah.

The evening before, the young adults held a dinner-dance, which, from all accounts, was a success. Another event was the family fun or talent show—one of the favorites of all age groups. This year showcased a variety of songs, poems, instrumental pieces and a skit, giving lots of laughs.

The weather held for the trip to Ocho Rios, which featured the not-to-be-missed Dunn's River Falls. The last day of the Feast climaxed with a catamaran snorkeling cruise through Caribbean waters, ending in time to begin the Sabbath.

The Last Great Day was made even more special by the lunch hosted by the overseas brethren. Then there was the closing service preceding tearful good-byes and promises to continue new friendships formed between

people who already share a common and eternal destiny.

Madge Thompson

Jordan

Just over 100 "Ambassadors for Peace" enjoyed a fun-filled, educational and spiritually inspiring Feast in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Jordan site had a real international flair, with the following countries represented: Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. The millennial-themed messages enhanced the biblically significant landscape of this site and the mission to be "Ambassadors for Peace" in Jordan, to the world and for God's future Kingdom.

The Feast featured a number of new additions to the itinerary that were very popular with the Feastgoers. Most popular was the addition of two nights in Aqaba on the beautiful Red Sea. Many snorkeled and scuba dived, while others just rested and relaxed at the beautiful Intercontinental Hotel located right on the Gulf.

The Feast also included a tour of the mystical and ruggedly beautiful Wadi Rum desert. The tour included aggressive four-wheel tours in the desert, a visit with the Bedouins of the area and a lunch in a traditional Bedouin tent. The Wadi Rum tour came after an inspiring day of hiking and touring in Petra and an overnight stay at the Crowne Plaza Hotel overlooking the foothills leading into the Rose Red City.

The Feast also featured two inspiring outdoor services at Pella (the place of refuge for the early Church around the time of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70) and a sunset service atop Mt. Nebo on the last day of the Feast. The messages reflected lessons



Jordan: Petra on camelback

from the biblical history surrounding these meaningful sites.

New this year was a visit to the archaeological site of ancient Sodom, known currently as Tall el-Hammam. This site is very close to the Dead Sea, where the Feastgoers had a chance to float and relax with a nice group lunch.

Every day provided a new experience and opportunity for growth as an "Ambassador for Peace." While staying in Amman, as a part of learn-

ing more about the region and what it means to serve as an ambassador, the group heard an interesting and intriguing presentation from Akel Biltaji, former personal advisor to H.M. King Abdullah II on interfaith cooperation, economic development and tourism. The presentation was followed by a robust Q&A session that would have gone on for hours if not cut short.

After the Feast, nearly 60 of the Feast participants went on to an exciting and interesting tour of Israel led by Darris McNeely. The tour included the traditionally fascinating and inspiring locations of Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee region. It also added new sites such as Masada and the plains of Megiddo, and many new sites in and around Jerusalem. We are hoping to offer an Israel II tour in the future that provides totally new locations to visit for those who have gone on our standard Israel tours in the past.

Cory and Colene Erickson

Kenya

Lake Naivasha

Imagine a beautiful lakeshore with a backdrop of distant mountains, with wading herons, diving pelicans, brilliant kingfishers and



Lake Naivasha, Kenya

hippopotami in papyrus rushes. Step back under the giant canopy of majestic yellow acacia trees alive with monkeys, fish eagles and stunning multicolored birds. Fill the grassy shade with 75 tents and the buzz of 200 of your brethren, and you are most welcome here at the Feast in East Africa!

Located on the lush and lively coastline of Lake Naivasha, Kenya, the Feast this year was our most special Festival yet. Eight internationals joined members from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda for the most inspiring and enjoyable Feast that any of us can remember.

The messages were inspired and activities included daily services, Bible studies, seminars, cinemas, swimming, outdoor games, a tour of a unique geothermal-electric plant, a hike to an authentic Masai village, a visit to Joy Adamson's *Born Free* home and a walking safari among Africa's great animals.

Our brethren experienced their first time tenting in true "temporary dwellings" and enjoyed it thoroughly. God provided us with perfect weather, great food and excellent evidence of the fruits of His Spirit. Next year's Feast will be held here as well. For

complete details, send an e-mail to Kenya@ucg.org.

John Elliott

Malawi

A month before the Feast, President Clyde Kilough visited Malawi,



Malawi (photo by Timothy Kamiyala)

and his message on focusing on the horizon (Christ) stirred the brethren and set the stage for the wonderful Feast to come.

When the Festival kicked off with 113 campers at Nkopola Lodge on the palm-dotted Malawi lakeshore, a tropical breeze fanned the memorable spiritual banquet.

Malawi pastor Morgen Kriedemann opened the Feast saying, "We rejoice in Christ's salvation," and he emphasized the fact that we "will teach the world when God's Kingdom rules the earth."

Daily attendance increased, reaching its peak of 133, including 33 children, on the fourth day.

The local weekend paper published Blantyre elder Elizafazi Salawila's interview about the Feast.

Mr. Kriedemann gave a sermon on "Africa in Bible Prophecy." Julius Kachali, who with his wife, Patricia, kept the Feast alone at their northern Malawi home for seven years, summarized the sermon this way: "The minister encouraged us, 'continue obeying God.'"

The children's choir prompted Mr. Kriedemann to comment: "Children's choir is a contribution we always appreciate. Their innocence touched my heart."

At a talent show, three youngsters (ages 11 to 13) recited the entire chapter of Zechariah 14. Mr. Kriedemann also expressed appreciation for their effort.

Mr. Kriedemann and his wife, Joleen, left for the Uvongo, South Africa, Feast site after four days in Malawi.

Goat meat tasted delicious at an evening barbecue. A group also took an outing by bus and viewed crocodiles.

In a sermon, Mr. Salawila elaborated on tithing principles. Later he hinted that, for better convenience,

a neighboring Mlangeni resort will host the Feast in 2008.

The brethren in Malawi received greetings from well-wishers including Mr. and Mrs. Bill Jahns, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Kubik and cards from children and brethren from several areas.

The Kriedemanns also delivered a consignment of children's clothes donated by a family in South Africa and distributed their toys.

Elder Gladstone Chonde passed on greetings to Malawi from widowed Mrs. Winnie Ross (who left Zimbabwe, and is now in South Africa).

Exuberantly, the pilgrims returned to their respective homes in hired buses and cars.

Nicholas Mbicholo

Malaysia

Semporna, Sabah

"Happy Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day!" was the usual joyous greetings echoed from the happy faces of the Feastgoers in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia, as they celebrated God's commanded festivals in their own area.

Semporna is one of the most remote towns in Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim country. Semporna is located 563 kilometers from Kota Kinabalu, the capital city of palm oil rich Sabah, the eastern state of Malaysia.

Semporna is the home of a small group of members of the United Church of God under the care of Florante Siopan, the pastor in the Visayan region of the Philippines.

This year six families from Semporna and other nearby towns of Sabah came to fellowship, worship and praise God together. The highest attendance was 31.

The brethren enjoyed the Family Day outing. The weather was perfect, and everybody seemed excited to go



Semporna, Malaysia: Family Day at Madai Forest Reserve (photo by Ian-ian Bernal)

to Borneo Paradise Resort, 127 kilometers away from the Festival site. The resort is known for its exquisite view of nature, and fishing highlighted the day.

The next stop was at Madai Forest Reserve, a tourist attraction maintained by the Malaysian government. The brethren enjoyed seeing some large, 300-year-old trees. Everyone was excited to pass through a hanging rope bridge tied to the trunks of trees

30- to 50-feet above the ground. Our Family Day outing ended with a visit to an exciting waterfall.

The brethren in Sabah were blessed with many children; four babies were born in the months before the Festival.

By the end of the Feast they were spiritually blessed and greatly encouraged as they all learned the important meaning of the celebration and looked forward to the day when what the Feast foreshadows becomes a reality.

Raul Villacote

Mauritius

This year was the first official Mauritius Feast site for the United Church of God. Last year the Mauritian brethren stayed together in a self-



Mauritius

catering apartment and kept the Feast by watching sermons on DVD. They were all very excited to have a hall, visitors and an official site this year.

There were 20 in attendance on average and Peter Hawkins, UCG coordinator for the British Isles, was the Festival elder. Visitors traveled from America, South Africa, New Zealand, England and the neighboring island of Reunion. Services were held in English, with a couple of recorded French sermonettes. There was also a small Mauritian choir. We were glad to preview the wonderful future ahead through sermonettes and sermons. The Feast video added sobering thoughts of dangers ahead, but also helped us to appreciate our brothers and sisters living in Europe.

Mauritians are very warm and friendly, usually smiling, chatting freely and making you feel like an old friend—and even more so the brethren. Most people on the island speak very good English, with their first language being French and/or Creole. The weather is wonderful at Feast time—warm, but not too humid, with the occasional brief cooling shower.

Highlights of activities at the Feast included a day tour around many sites on the island, a visit to the famous Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens, a shopping trip to the commercial hub and the market at Port Louis, a dinner at a hotel where we all ate together,

snorkeling in the crystal clear ocean and exploring the beautiful endless beaches. Other available activities included viewing marine life in glass-bottom boats, underwater submarine trips, sailing, paddle-boating, water-skiing and many more. I especially enjoyed a six-course lunch hosted by some of the Mauritian brethren.

The brethren on the island are so few in number, but they have an urgent desire to preach the message of hope to the 1.2 million people on this tropical Indian Ocean island. They hope that God will call new members and open doors for getting *The Good News* magazine to as many as possible. We would love to return again to the warm people of Mauritius.

Claire Gordon

Mexico

Acapulco

God did it again! Acapulco, Mexico, 2007 has to have been our best Feast ever! The warmth and love among the brethren was evident. Daily Bible studies and services were held for a total of 565 brethren from Mexico, the United States, Canada, Chile, Guatemala and other international areas. As a visiting member from New York put it: "Both the children's and adults' Bible studies before services every day kept the scriptural midnight oil burning."

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Walker attended the first half of the Feast in Acapulco and, although they are no strangers to the members in Mexico, their visits are always very much appreciated.

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Kilough arrived for the second half, thus making this year's Feast in Acapulco an extra spe-



Acapulco, Mexico: Left, Leon Walker speaks; above, Larry Roybal and talent show participants

cial occasion. Members enjoyed the opportunity of meeting the Kiloughs and were very impressed to hear Mr. Kilough conclude one of his messages in Spanish. Members enjoyed taking pictures with them and expressed how honored they all felt with their visit.

Sermons were very inspiring. Many brethren particularly enjoyed this year's Feast film. They were especially encouraged by the faith and diligent work displayed by our European brethren and ministers.

Special music from the musically

talented brethren was especially good this year. A unique bilingual choir was formed where language barriers were lost among harmonious notes and voices. However, in spite of the many talented brethren's best efforts, they were unable to compete with the Mexico City children's choir, which captivated our hearts as they sang about the creation while lively cartoon images were displayed in the background. What a joy it was for all of us to see, hear and learn from the mouths of babes.

Some Feast activities included a family dance, a day at a water park, a children's day with a dolphin show, a women's tea and conference, a senior citizens' sing-along, a talent show, a dinner-dance activity for the youth and a visit to the famous Acapulco divers—a dinner show that many visiting brethren said proved that men in Acapulco really can fly.

Next year Acapulco will once again host the Feast. Both Mexican and international brethren will be staying together at the Crowne Plaza Hotel where, no doubt, God will once again make it our best Feast ever!

Larry Roybal

New Zealand

Taupo

A record number of 140 brethren from New Zealand, Australia and the United States held the Feast of Tabernacles in Taupo. Services were held in the recently refurbished Sun-court Conference Centre, located near the shore of Lake Taupo in the center of the North Island.

The day before the Feast the active volcano Mount Ruapehu, situated about 45 kilometers (about 30 miles) from the Feast site, erupted. Although the eruption was minor, traces of the lahar (mudflow) were visible on the snowcapped cone of the volcano.

Ken Giese's opening night message covered an overview of many millennial prophecies, setting the tone for speakers that followed. This included an excellent PowerPoint presentation by Phil Sandilands about God's creative power as reflected in the universe, contrasted by some of the smaller and more unusual creatures on planet earth.

Activities included a popular youth and young adult Bible study and a well-attended Saturday night dance. This was followed by a Feast dinner in the fittingly named Millennium Resort overlooking the lake. A "50 years and over" luncheon held in a winery restaurant near the Huka Falls was also very well attended.

Many visitors took the opportunity to visit the nearby town of Rotorua, renowned for its geysers, boiling mud pools and thermal activity. Some of the more adventurous teenagers and young adults braved the country's highest bridge bungee jump, dropping 80 meters (260 feet) into the

Mokai Gravity Canyon, while a few others went skydiving from Taupo Airport.

The early spring weather varied from mild days of brilliant sunshine to a few days of cooler temperatures with showers. Judging by the comments from our Australian and American brethren, the location and the venue of the Feast, combined with the inspiring messages and warm fellowship, made the Feast an outstanding event.

Art Verschoor

Nigeria

Aiyetoro, Abeokuta, Ogun State

The Feast of Tabernacles 2007 in Nigeria was anticipated with even more enthusiasm than usual because of two special blessings God provided: 1) Members would be together for 10 days, including the weekly Sabbath after the



Aiyetoro, Nigeria: First UCG wedding in Nigeria.

Feast, and 2) the first wedding in the history of the United Church of God in Nigeria would take place during the Feast!

The Feast site was at Afobaje Hotels, located in the quiet, picturesque rural town of Aiyetoro (which translates as "A Peaceful World") on the outskirts of Abeokuta in the southwestern part of Nigeria and capital of Ogun State, 74 kilometers (46 miles) north of Lagos.

On the morning of the first Holy Day, attendance was 100. This increased to 115 by the third day as members delayed for various reasons were able to join us. The highest attendance was 118.

The brethren heard very inspiring messages. The messages encouraged us to continue enduring till the end, focusing on the true vision, that in spite of our "Moses moments"—periods when we allow our weaknesses and doubts to come to the surface—we can overcome. God Almighty is working in our lives to equip us for the work He has called us for, as we yield to Him. We are awaiting the time when Christ will bring peace to this troubled world, removing corrupt leaders and blessing all who have been faithful to become sons and daughters of God! Brethren also heard a very encouraging and inspiring sermon on "Africa in Prophecy—the Glory to Come!"

We received almost two dozen

greetings from Feast sites around the world, and that greatly enriched the feelings of being part of the family of God. Services were also enriched with special music by the Festival Senior and Children's choirs with their inspiring and uplifting songs.

God blessed us with excellent weather, sunny days and cool nights, with a little rain to cool the weather on some days when otherwise it would have been too hot. The setting was ideal for fellowshiping. On the family fun day, we had talent shows, a "rope bridge" activity, volleyball, soccer and a Bible bowl for preteens, teens and adults!

One of the high points of the Feast



was the wedding of Olu-dayo Daniel Ogundipe and Funmilayo Kudirat Raji on Sept. 30, performed by the Nigerian elder, Oludare Akinbo. It

was the first wedding since UCG started in Nigeria.

Fred Kellers, the senior pastor, kept commenting on how peaceful the Feast was this year. At the end of the Feast, members were sad indeed that they would be going back into the harsh realities of daily life in Nigeria, but were encouraged by the mes-

sages and joyful with the extended fellowship and for being given the opportunity to have a foretaste of the Millennium.

Oludare Akinbo

Peru

Huanchaco

The picturesque seaside village of Huanchaco, located on the Pacific some 350 miles north of Lima, was again this year's Feast site for the Peruvian brethren. Although the weather was cooler than expected, the warmth and hospitality of the Feastgoers and the meaningful spiritual food (not to mention the excellent physical feasting) kept everyone in a joyous mood.

The highest attendance during the Feast was 217; and everyone, from the oldest to the youngest, was able to participate in most of the activities, whether scheduled or spur-of-the-moment. One baptism added another member to the Body during this year's Feast.

Very informative and apropos sermons were delivered by Manuel Quijano, Wilfredo Sáenz, Gerald Kliever, David Nunn and Guy Burke. Equally effective sermonettes were given by men representing the Lima, Huaraz and Arequipa congregations. Beautiful special music offerings were presented by choral groups or soloists, also from the above-named churches.

Activities included two dances, a children's party, a beach party, a talent show and the Peruvian Night. Other hosted events were dedicated to the ladies, the seniors and the teenagers. Unofficial but well attended additional activities included tours of local pre-Inca archaeological sites, walks along the seawall and beach, general sightseeing and shopping forays into town for leather goods, jewelry or alpaca sweaters.

The management and staff of Hotel Bracamonte—the venue for the Feast—were very attentive to the needs and comforts of those attending. As a result, a very friendly and family-like relationship developed between the attendees and hotel staff, which made the Feast that much more enjoyable for everyone.

Great sermons, warm fellowship and a looking forward to God's Kingdom were hallmarks of this year's Feast in Peru. As we headed home spiritually rejuvenated, some were wondering how next year's Feast could possibly top the 2007 *Fiesta de Tabernáculos* in the Land of the Inca.

Alec Surratt

Philippines

Baguio City

Baguio City once again was one of



Baguio City, Philippines: Above right, young dancers in the Festival Show

three UCGIA Feast sites in the Philippines. For the seventh consecutive year, it was held at the conference hall of the Ang Ating Tahanan grounds of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines.

The opening night message was delivered by the pastor for Baguio and Dagupan City, Eriz Dizon. We were once again expecting a lower than the previous years' attendance of only about 80 to 90 for this year due to a number of families of brethren transferring to other Philippine Feast sites. But we were very pleasantly surprised to see the number exceeding our expectations again, as the attendance reached its highest on the fourth day of the Feast at 121!

Quite a number of those keeping the Feast with us for the first time turned up at the Baguio Festival site. Some were new people attending the Feast for the first time and some were from our former association.

This year's Festival video featuring our brethren in prophetic Europe was well appreciated by the brethren. This has strengthened their faith in

the scripture that says "we have also a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19, King James Version).

The Festival Show this year was held on the fourth day of the Feast. It featured folk songs and folk dances from different areas around the world, like Israel, Latin America, Hawaii, Hungary and Italy, as well as a good number of Filipino songs and folk dances. Native Filipino music was again performed by our small *rondalla* composed of a number of brethren playing native stringed instruments similar to the mandolin called *bandurias* and *octavinas* and accompanied by a guitar.

Because of the rains, most of our activities were held indoors, but hardly anyone was bothered by the rains as the activities were enjoyed by young and old alike.

Among the other Festival activities were the youth day and Family Day, as well as the seniors' night where, for the second year, the teens and young adults organized themselves to serve a special dinner for our seniors. There was also a film showing and a "videoke" in the evening after the Family Day.

With all the fine fellowship, enjoyment and the spiritually inspiring messages we



received during this Feast, everyone present felt they experienced a greater degree of unity among the brethren at this Festival site. Indeed, this Feast stood out as the best so far in many years.

Rey Evasco

Davao City

The Davao City Festival site hosted 400 attendees this year, including 20 overseas guests from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Included in this count is John Cafourek (and his wife, Sandra) from Salem, Oregon, who volunteered as guest speaker for two Philippine Festival sites this year.

Starting with the opening night service featuring the Festival video, the momentum of spiritual messages and other activities moved on to inspire and edify, even as we were blessed with bright and good weather throughout the Feast.

Afternoon activities included tours, livelihood workshops on

various trades, fun-filled activities for children, challenging events for youths and singles, a relaxing seniors'



Davao City, Philippines: Children receive gifts during Youth Day (photo by Cheryl Rogers); above right, international visitor Bridgette Sexton joins the girls' team during Youth Day (photo by Meryl Macaraeg)

social, an eventful family sports day with appetizing fruit festival and an enlightening Bible study with Q&A on the Sabbath afternoon.

Other evening activities included a fellowship and acquaintance night, a family dance night, a Church leaders' dinner (in appreciation for their help in serving the 17 active congregations scattered in Mindanao) and a colorful and entertaining variety show. New and much-appreciated features this year were the Practical Christianity Seminars, with an evening each devoted to married couples, singles and youths.

Due to some generous donations, this Feast again featured special blessings such as a free daily lunch for all, with roasted calf on both the first and last day, breakfast food items distributed to all families and individuals twice, and children's coloring books and other gift items given away during the course of the many activities.

Our list of spiritual highlights included the blessing of three infants whose parents live in remote regions and the baptisms of five individuals: Ricardo and Daisy Gapanaga, Teresita Zayas, Ramil Bartolaba and Geruel Ortega. We also had five ordinations for deacons and two for deaconesses—Manuel and Betty Valdez, Gem and Sarah Nagtalon, Merlito Tonog, Osias Eturnalde and James Presbitero.

Most say that the Feast this year was again blessed by God to be their greatest thus far. One overseas guest who attended in Davao this year wrote: "Just want you to know that I had one of the best Feasts ever, and there have been 38 in [my life]."

Edmond D. Macaraeg

Iloilo City

This year, 138 people, including children, attended the Feast at Punta Villa Resort, Iloilo City, Philippines.

For eight days the brethren experienced a glimpse of the world tomorrow when the mean-



camaraderie and food—including a whole ox that was roasted and shared by everyone—were much appreciated. The entertainment during the Family Dance Night was a double treat, as performers gave their best talents for the enjoyment of the audience, after which everyone shared the floor for a night of dancing.

United Church of God members continue to reap praises from the resort's management and employees for their orderliness and good behavior for the whole Feast.

This year's Feast was one of the best Feasts ever for God's people in the central part of the Philippines. The brethren eagerly look forward to next year's festivals.

Florante Siopan

Portugal

Costa da Caparica

The picturesque and quaint little fishing village of Costa da Caparica was the scene of the Feast of Tabernacles in Portugal. The United States, Australia, England, Italy and Portugal were among the countries represented by the 110 who attended this year's Festival.

Inspirational messages included the meaning of the Feast as a time when God will heal and restore all things, our relationship with God, humility and our necessary preparation to one day be able to inherit God's Kingdom.

Brethren were able to enjoy the sights and sounds of the surrounding area of Lisbon. A night of typical Portuguese food and music (known as *Fado*) was enjoyed by all. An afternoon tour through Lisbon, Sintra, Cascais and Estoril showed Portugal at its best. Our stop in Cascais proved to be both scenic and fun as members had the opportunity to view *Boca do Inferno* ("Mouth of Hell") and to shop at a handicraft

ing and significance of the festivals were explained thoroughly by assigned speakers discussing the events that are still future but sure to come. Given much focus was the coming Millennium when the Kingdom of God will be established by Jesus with His saints, people He has called, chosen and who have remained faithful until the end. The picture of the world tomorrow was vividly portrayed from the Bible.

We were privileged to have John Cafourek, a pastor from Oregon, visiting for the Feast. He gave three Festival messages and a Bible study on the afternoon of the Sabbath. The Festival video, *Threshold of a New Age*, was greatly appreciated by the brethren. That video gave the brethren a clear idea of what to expect in



Iloilo City, Philippines: Family Dance and Entertainment night

the near future as much of the Bible prophecy discussed is being fulfilled right before our eyes.

Many of our visitors who attended and experienced the Festival for the first time in Iloilo came from as far as New Zealand and the United States. Some have families in the Philippines whom they invited to share in the rejoicing with God's people and also to learn the wonderful truth and plan of God for mankind.

Different uplifting activities were held in the afternoons except for the Sabbaths. Activities like the Family Day and the Youth Day were especially enjoyed by all the brethren. Games,



Costa da Caparica, Portugal: The Portuguese brethren

market. Our last tour included a trip through the Arrabida Mountains. Castle viewing, wine tasting and

observing the manufacturing of tiles were among the highlights of the afternoon.

Senior citizens enjoyed a private lunch in a typical local restaurant with fresh fish and other delicacies. Later in the afternoon the families and children enjoyed a number of fun races and sand castle building on the beach.

“Just a perfect site; you get to know everyone,” remarked Hiroumi Mirigan. “A wonderful Feast; really enjoyed the tours,” said Mike Cook. “Loved the serving attitude of people, the ladies’ breakfast and the flowers,” added Jan Cook.

We all gathered on the beach, after the final service on the Last Great Day, to watch a beautiful sunset and to say our good-byes. John Fox reminded us of the scripture about how the whole world will be full of God’s knowledge, as the waters cover the sea.

Viva Portugal!

Kathy de Campos

Rwanda

Muhazi

Thanks to generous help received from our brethren, the Rwandan brethren spent a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles 2007 in Muhazi. Attendance was 80. We had everything we needed to rejoice! Upon our arrival on Wednesday, we were warmly met by the government administrator who had signed the authorization for us to keep the Feast here. The administrator happens to be the brother-in-law of our deacon, Mr. Sibobugingo: a very positive start!



Muhazi, Rwanda

The spiritual food was rich. Mr. Sibobugingo and Mr. Mundeli, the elder in Rwanda, gave translations of Festival sermons that had been sent to us previously on CDs. Especially appreciated were the opening message by our pastor, Joel Meeker, and other sermons Mr. Meeker had given on “they shall not learn war any more” and his Last Great Day sermon on “the importance of reconciliation.”

Festival activities included our annual meeting of the United Church of God–Rwanda association, a family day during which each father gave a news update about what had happened in his family during the past year and a talent show that included a poetry reading by Mrs. Etienne Rutamujyanye and a demonstration of how to knit and crochet by Mrs. Pélégie Mundeli.

At the close of the Feast, the military commander of the region honored us with his visit and volunteered his aid to help us find an even more affordable Festival site for the future!

Jean-Marie Mundeli

St. Lucia

Scott Smith, an usher at the Feast in St. Lucia, commented to Arnold Hampton, Festival coordinator: “First, let me thank you for a job well done. My family and I had a most enjoyable Feast. The quality of the messages was the most significant part for us. The lack of a ‘hurry up and wait’ agenda left more time for



St. Lucia

spiritual messages and to get to know our brethren. The facility was A1, the staff friendly and professional.”

The exotic location at the southern tip of the island, the family-oriented atmosphere and the daytime supervised facilities for kids made Coconut Bay an ideal site for the Feast.

Brethren attending the Feast here included 11 from St. Lucia and 12 from Barbados, with the remainder from the United States. Attendees came from as far north as Massachusetts, as far south as Florida, as far east as North Carolina and as far west as Washington state. Attendance varied from a low of 96 for the first service to a high of 114 on the fifth day.

Mr. Hampton opened the Feast Wednesday evening with a message about the sanctity of the Feast. He continued the spiritual aspect of the Feast by speaking about Isaiah’s vision of the world tomorrow on the first Holy Day. On the third day David Jackson spoke about our calling, admonishing that Satan is out to destroy us because he knows what God has in store for us.

The Feast video featuring end-time Europe in prophecy was played on the fourth day. Other speakers contributed messages on topics such as our relationship with God, not being conformed to this world and dwelling in unity, with some messages directed at the age range of preteens and young adults. On the sixth day Richard Pinelli explained how the Millennium will grow on the world and gave the final sermon on the meaning of the Last Great Day.

Tricia Merring, from the Orlando,

Florida, congregation, taught the preteens about friendship using the example of David and Jonathan. The eight preteens made friendship bracelets and Feast cards. She also taught a two-part lesson on the Ten Commandments. The teens helped the preteens with all their activities including the preteen choir, which performed on Youth Day, Oct. 1.

One of the two scheduled activities for the Feast included a five-hour boat cruise from Soufriere to Castries and back. Brethren enjoyed the breathtaking beauty of the twin Pitons World Heritage Site in Soufriere and an hour of snorkeling. The other activity was a land tour back to the Soufriere area.



Singapore

interesting places: Little India, China Town, Botanical Gardens, the colonial district and Arab Street.

One group walked along a wetland nature trail in northwest Singapore, observing water monitors, tropical birds, snakes and other wildlife in a natural mangrove swamp. Another group toured the local Tiger brewery, followed by an Asian-European banquet and karaoke evening.

Since most Asian brethren meet for services just once a year in this region, it’s a special time for catching up with friends and meeting international brethren. They share life experiences and become spiritually rejuvenated for another year in their scattered areas. Eating, laughing and fellowshiping—sometimes late into the night—is truly a highlight of the Singapore site.

Sermons by visiting minister Bruce Gore and other elders encouraged everyone to envision the challenges and realities of actually establishing the Kingdom of God on the earth. During the last service of the Last Great Day, Mr. Gore encouraged us to be exemplary and courageous Christian soldiers in our spiritual lives over the next year in the nations where we reside.

Jeff Caudle

South Africa

George

This year 139 brethren from four continents enjoyed a happy and prof-



George, South Africa (photo by Steve Serfontein)

itable Feast in George. Meetings were held at the Moreson Children’s Home Conference Centre, giving

brethren the opportunity to make a very generous donation toward the disadvantaged children residing there. The Children’s Home houses 100 children ages 3 to 18 years who have been placed there by the Magistrates Courts because their home environment is either dangerous or abusive. The staff members were most grateful toward the brethren and invited us to come again next year.

Situated at the foot of the Outeniqua Mountains, the conference center provided just the right atmosphere for fellowship and services. Church children, of which there were a record number this year, were able to play safely on the lawns under the trees before and after services.

The guest speaker, Britton Taylor, gave everyone much spiritual food for thought. Once again the Feast experience focused us all on the wonderful future God has in store for mankind. Organized events after services were most enjoyable and a credit to the organizers.

Daily attendance at services was most encouraging and remained constant right until the closing prayer on the Last Great Day. At the farewell *braai* (barbecue) an atmosphere of reluctance to return home was quite evident.

Stan Botha

Uvongo

An inspiring Feast of Tabernacles was once again experienced at Uvongo on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Approximately 150 brethren from around South Africa, Zimbabwe and Canada celebrated the eight days, focusing on the coming Kingdom of God.

The average attendance for the eight days was 142 with the highest attendance being 154.

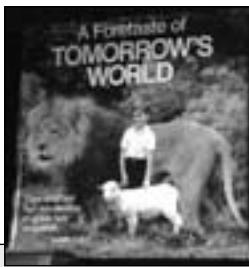
The overall theme was “A Foretaste of the World Tomorrow” and remaining faithful through a clear vision of the coming Kingdom of God.

Neil Becker gave two sermons before leaving for the George Feast

site: “Pioneers in the Millennium” and “Humanity Will No Longer Be in Bondage.”

We were blessed to have as guest speaker Britton Taylor and his wife,

Donna, from Fort Worth, Texas. They were able to spend the first few days of the Feast in George and the final part of the Feast in Uvongo. We appreciate their contribution to a spiritually rewarding Feast of Tabernacles. Mr. Taylor's sermons focused



Uvongo, South Africa

on being "Called, Chosen and Faithful" and on the Last Great Day a very moving sermon, "If You Didn't Get to Say Good-bye."

Morgen Kriedemann and his wife, Joleen, arrived on Monday evening from Malawi where they had kept the first few days of the Feast. Mr. Kriedemann's sermon gave a graphic account of "Africa in Prophecy and the Glory to Come."

Many of the brethren commented on the exceptional Festival video, "Threshold of a New Age." All agreed that it was very timely, captivating and well presented.

All too soon it was time to say our good-byes and return home to digest all that we had learned during the eight days of the Feast.

Neville Smith

Sri Lanka

Beruwela

Members from Sri Lanka once again kindly hosted brethren from



Beruwela, Sri Lanka

around the globe, including India, Kuwait and the United States, to celebrate the Feast.

The location was the Club Palm Garden Hotel, located in Beruwela, which is 35 miles south of the capital city, Colombo. Beruwela is located on the southwestern coast of Sri Lanka along the beautiful, soft-sanded shoreline of the Indian Ocean. Thirty attended, several for their first time ever.

The Club Palm Garden is a lovely, very reasonable resort hotel on the ocean front, with fine and friendly service and delicious assorted foods. Members dined together, with meals including fine varieties of Sri Lankan favorites, along with Indian, Italian, French, German, British and American foods. Flavorful fresh fruits, and a wide assortment of delectable desserts were also

offered. And, of course, an item Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) may be best known for around the world, fine tea, was always available. In fact, tea and other tasty snacks were also provided in the meeting hall each afternoon.

Members shared a feast of fellowship, being together for most parts of each day, and growing together as part of God's family. That was indeed one of the greater joys of being together as a small group, and interacting with each other on such a regular basis.

Family Day was held out on the warm, sunny beach, with brethren sharing their skills in balancing fresh limes on the spoons adroitly held in their mouths, attempting to avoid losing the ocean water held in sponges that were passed over their heads or between their legs as teams tried to fill soda bottles with whatever remained at the end of the line, and tugging or being tugged "in peace." The warm ocean waters were also enjoyed by many.

Other activities included a fun family dance, with local and international music, and a talent show in which members from each family participated. Quite a few also joined together for a karaoke night.

The spiritual feast included messages focused on God's awesome plan here on earth, the Kingdom being established by Jesus Christ and our awesome calling to serve Him in doing so. It also included messages on staying focused on what the

Feast is all about, lessons we can learn from Israel's 40 years in temporary dwellings, the Holy Days and harvest seasons, what the family will be like in the world tomorrow, preparing for the Kingdom of God and the way to death and the way to eternal life.

As the Feast ended, the members felt closely bonded together, looking forward to the time when all would be brought back together again.

David Evans

Togo

Kpalimé

This year 73 people from Togo and Benin celebrated the Feast at a school complex in Kpalimé, Togo. The Feast was problem-free in every way, with none of the complications that can happen so easily in this part of the world.

Each morning we had church services that included sermons recorded in MP3 format especially for the Feast. During the eight days, we also had several Bible studies, Bible games and a cultural and folklore evening. Our opportunities to fellowship were most enjoyable. That we could eat until full three times a day for all eight days was a wonderful physical feast for us. The offerings were very good this year, reaching a total of 78,500 francs (about \$150).

Thanks to our brethren in other parts of the world who sent us the assistance we needed to be able to observe God's Feast under good conditions.

Kossi Fiaboé

Tonga

Mu'a

This year 24 brethren attended the Feast of Tabernacles in the Kingdom



Mu'a, Tonga

of Tonga. "Teamwork" was the main emphasis of the Feast this year, which led to a very successful and blessed time for everyone.

We were blessed with wonderful weather throughout the Festival. The services were blessed by powerful and inspiring sermons along with some great activities that everyone participated in and enjoyed.

The ladies stepped up this year and hosted most of the activities, including a rare opportunity to watch our children perform our traditional dances.

It's always a highlight of the Feast when we have our Feast 'umu (which involves cooking our food in an underground oven). We also had a Family Day, held at one of the beautiful beaches on the island. We all had a great time, especially the children.

This was one of the most memorable Feasts that we have ever observed. Not only were we blessed physically, but we also grew spiritually.

Heamasi Ta'ufu'ou

United States

Anchorage, Alaska

After a three-year break, Anchorage was once again host to the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Local brethren from the Alaskan congregations welcomed almost 700 people to their state of natural beauty and incredible wildlife. God provided a number of days of beautiful weather, enabling the brethren to enjoy the spectacular fall mountain scenery while benefiting from a great spiritual Feast of inspiring sermons and Christian fellowship.

While a number of attractions and restaurants were open during this "late season" for Alaska, a highlight for the group was the Alaska Railroad trip. This chartered tour train furnished the Church with lunch and a snack bar during a six-hour train trip from downtown Anchorage through the Turnagain Arm to the majestic Spencer Glacier. The trip was enhanced with sightings of bald eagles, beluga whales, Dall sheep and moose along the way!

At the annual family dance, the brethren were treated to a 45-minute presentation on the aurora borealis by one of the premier Alaskan photographers who has dedicated his life to the pursuit of documenting this unbelievable phenomenon.

There were also opportunities to visit Martin Buser's (three-time Iditarod champion) dog-training center, take a personal tour of a native Alaskan Heritage center, hike at any of several glaciers that surround Anchorage

and even take a plane ride around the Chugach Mountains, Knik Glacier or the 20,320-foot majestic Mt. McKinley!



Anchorage, Alaska: Train tour of the Turnagain Arm and Spencer Glacier; above right, Becky Horchak and Heidi Hanisko flying over Chugach Mountains

All in all, returning to "the Last Frontier" to observe God's special Feast of Tabernacles was a wonderful experience for all—and we look forward to returning in 2010!

Douglas Horchak

Bend-Redmond, Oregon

This year's attendance was the largest since the first two years that the Feast was held in Bend/Redmond. Attendance was steady and consistent (peaking at 1,137 on opening day) despite cooler than average



Bend-Redmond, Oregon: Lost leopard returns! An announcement was made when this stuffed animal went missing. Imagine this little girl's joy when she woke up to find him back!

temperatures and the threat of rain that never materialized.

The weather forecast called for rain throughout the week, including an 80 percent chance of a major storm on Sunday with a half inch of rain. We asked everyone to pray about the weather, and during services on Sunday watched a live satellite picture of a large storm front heading toward us that moved to the north less than 20 miles away and bypassed the Feast site. One weather forecaster remarked that despite rain all around, it was like there was a large protective "bubble" over Central Oregon.

We logged from 50 to 100 cybercast connections daily, including a connection viewed by a group of 33 members in Phoenix, Arizona.

Many commented that the messages were especially good this year. The Feast video also received many favorable comments.



A wide range of activities was available for teens, singles, young adults and seniors.

Our family dance and fun show were very well received and attended by more than 500. We were also treated to a special western concert by the popular Boohar Brothers, well-known to many

Feastgoers from their performances at the family's now-closed Diamond B Chuckwagon. Family Day was held at a children's museum, which had many hands-on activities, and a fun center with go-karts, miniature golf, bowling and indoor games.

About 800 pounds of food and \$1,700 cash were donated to the local food bank.

Larry J. Walker

Branson, Missouri

Excitement was in the air as Church members gathered in Branson for the Feast of Tabernacles. Everyone seemed to be anticipating a very inspiring Feast, and they weren't disappointed. Messages were very powerful, painting a clear picture of the Kingdom of God while emphasizing a sense of urgency in our commission. The Feast video was generally considered as the best yet.

The weather was beautiful, with moderate temperatures allowing all to appreciate the beautiful surroundings in the Ozarks.

Attendance remained exceptionally strong throughout the Feast. Our high attendance was 1,425—virtually filling the auditorium. Average attendance for all 10 services was more than 1,350—over half of those being transfers from another Feast site. Brethren dwelling together in a wonderful spirit of cooperation and peace added to the success of this Feast.

In addition to regular services and the Bible study, we had four seminars on marriage and family that were also popular. The children were very enthusiastic about the Festival Youth Instruction.

The Senior Citizens' luncheon, always a big draw, was attended by 370 people. Teens were able to enjoy a beautiful afternoon at Table Rock State Park with activities such as flag football and volleyball, as well as pontoon boat rides. Singles took advantage of several opportunities to get together in the afternoon and evenings.

Members were very excited to get their personal copies of the new hymnal. You could see people eagerly leafing through it to see what "new" hymns were added. At this Feast, there was an outstanding spirit of excitement, support for the work of the Church and contentment among all of those attending.

There were at least three other groups meeting for the Feast in and around Branson, so we had visitors throughout the Feast. This Feast was, once again, one of the best—thanks to our Father in heaven.

Mike Blackwell

Cincinnati, Ohio/Northern Kentucky

The most frequent comment heard from our members during and after the Feast in Northern Kentucky was, "This Feast exceeded our expectations."

This was the second year God's Feast of Tabernacles was held in the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky area, with over 600 in attendance this year. The weather was warm throughout the Feast, and the warm and enthusiastic atmosphere among the brethren was described by many as "electrifying." Fellowship was lively, and members were willing and eager to be involved in serving.

A number of enjoyable activities added to the joy of the Feast. Again this year members took advantage of the opportunity to tour the Church's home office. The Family Day activity

was held at the Cincinnati Museum Center, where several options were available to choose from, including the Cincinnati History Museum, the Natural History and Science Museum, a special display about "Real Pirates" and an Omnimax Theater film with breathtaking scenery of the Alps. A senior citizens' lunch was well attended, and teens and young adults toured the newly opened Creation Museum.



Cincinnati, Ohio/Northern Kentucky

Another popular attraction during the Feast was the opportunity to see the musical *My Fair Lady* at the Aronoff Center in Cincinnati. It was exceptional!

The highlight of the Feast was the excellent sermonettes, sermons, Bible study and seminars we were given. God's inspiration was evident each day as we received instruction from His Word. Some of the staff at the Drawbridge Inn (the facility where services were held) took the opportunity to sit in on some of the services. They mentioned to me that they were impressed with both the messages and the speakers. The staff also told me that the Church people were the nicest group they have worked with, and they commented that they loved seeing the little children all dressed up.

The children who were present profited from the Festival Youth Instruction and shared their experience by displaying their Festival artwork, which depicted examples of how life in today's world will be drastically changed in the world tomorrow. Members delighted the children by donating enough stuffed animals to cover several tables, allowing each child to choose a favorite animal to take home from the Feast.

The special music was beautiful and uplifting; and as always, the children's choir was a delightful addition. Many commented on the fact that even the congregational singing was especially spirited. Our supply of new hymnals dwindled quickly as members eagerly took advantage of the opportunity to receive a personal copy.

God greatly blessed our Feast, and members returned home spiritually uplifted and rejuvenated.

Lyle Welty

Escondido, California

This year 833 brethren assembled together in the lovely Performing Arts Center of Escondido to hear encouraging and uplifting messages regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

Larry Greider opened the Festival by encouraging us to "Enter Into the Rest" of God's plan and way of life as portrayed by this festival. Jim Tuck encouraged those assembled to appreciate their calling as pioneers called at a special time. Randy Schreiber shared a two-part series on the importance of "Connections" within the Body of Christ, both to God and man. Robin Webber concluded this year's Festival experience by encouraging the audience to "Forever Surrender to the Everlasting Gospel" (Revelation 14:6-7).

The special nighttime Bible study featured Jim Tuck addressing the subject of biblical prophecy regarding the Antichrist and related events preceding the second coming of Christ. Mr. Webber conducted a two-part afternoon *World News and Prophecy* seminar on "Jerusalem—Past, Present and Future."

The Escondido Feast site experienced eight straight days of gorgeous autumn weather, with the temperature hovering around the high 70s. This city lies in an interior valley of Northern San Diego County. Within 30 to 40 minutes of each direction, you can either be headed into pine-clad mountains, on a sandy beach, touring the major attractions of San Diego or walking through the vineyards of nearby Temecula. Each year

nearly 40 to 50 percent of our people stay in the nearby beach com-



Escondido, California: Song service; inset, stuffed animal giveaway (photos by Steve Ferguson)

munities of Oceanside or Carlsbad and commute to services.

While metropolitan San Diego has world-class attractions, the primary attraction at the Escondido Feast site rightfully remains the Festival activities themselves and the brethren, who plunge in to "keep the Feast" in all its aspects. Throughout the course of the week, our people were able to experience young adult and teen drop-in socials, a teen beach party at Oceanside and a senior citizens' banquet.

The most popular event continues

to be the old-fashioned Family Day picnic at nearby oak-shaded Felicita Park that brings all the brethren of God's family together, no matter how



Jekyll Island, Georgia: Webcasting in progress

old or young, to experience in type the peaceful harmony of the wonderful world tomorrow.

Robin Webber

Jekyll Island, Georgia

Jekyll Island was the scenic, peaceful location for some 1,300 brethren who enjoyed messages that focused on the positive changes to society that will occur during the coming Kingdom of God.

The high attendance was 1,335 on the weekly Sabbath. For the first time, we provided a webcast of services, and there was a high of 170 Internet connections.

Attendees had a full slate of activities including a Bible study for adults, one for young adults, one for teens, Festival Youth Instruction, a slide presentation of last year's bib-

Although the weather turned windy and rainy toward the end of the Feast, we were able to successfully complete all of our scheduled

outdoor activities. The winds calmed down and the sun came out on the Last Great Day. Weatherwise, it was a great ending to a great Feast.

David Treybig

Kerrville, Texas

This year 720 brethren kept the Feast in the beautiful hill country of Kerrville, Texas. We were blessed with gorgeous fall weather and pleasant sunny days that enhanced all the outdoor activities. Many of the brethren stayed on site at the Inn and enjoyed fine meals, additional fellowship and an easy walk to services. The conference center lends itself to informal fellowship, so many brethren came early and stayed late getting acquainted and sharing experiences.

The hill country is an outstanding setting for outdoor and family activities. Brethren staying in rented homes were able to host groups informally. All who attended the Church-sponsored Family Day barbecue and the country-and-western dance evening commented on the fun of being together in a relaxed atmosphere. The Festival Choir and the Children's Choir provided outstanding music this year, along with special instrumental and solo selections.

The sermon speakers focused on the themes of family and leadership. Many of the brethren commented that the messages were helpful and right on target. Jim Servidio's opening night message on the Psalms of ascent and his last sermon on "doing something with what we have heard" made great "bookends" for the other messages.

Gary Petty spoke about wrestling the "beast inside us" and Ken Treybig talked about specifics of godly leadership. Tom Damour discussed the majesty of God's voice in the universe. Bill Jahns encouraged us to plan for the days ahead. Roger Foster described the Millennium from the book of Isaiah. Jack Hendren spoke on writing the law and why God will resurrect the "rest of the dead." Don Ward's Last Great Day message addressed personal responsibility and leadership.

The Feast in Kerrville was outstanding this year, and we all left with gratitude for God's blessings.

Jack Hendren

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

The Willow Valley Resort and Conference Center played host to the Feast in beautiful Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The beauty of the Pennsylvania Dutch Country provided a millennial setting for the brethren, with beautiful autumn weather throughout the eight days. A representative of Willow Valley welcomed the Church prior to the opening night's message.

The spiritual food was fantastic, as many of the sermons captured the



Lancaster, Pennsylvania

essence of the Feast, and our great potential and responsibility after the return of Jesus Christ. The teen and young adult Bible studies centered on relationships and how they are established first in the family and carried outside the home later in life.

Services were held in the Palm Court of Willow Valley, and the resort contained two fine restaurants that made it convenient for the brethren, especially the seniors, to extend fellowship without leaving the facility. The vast majority of the brethren lodged at Willow Valley. The attendance during the Feast remained steady, with the highest figure being 1,129 on the weekly Sabbath.

As far as activities, our Family Day was a huge success. We were blessed with a beautiful day and spent the afternoon at D.F. Buchmiller Park, which was entirely rented to the Church for four hours. Children's games, volleyball, face painting and other activities were enjoyed by all. That evening, the Church gathered together in Palm Court for the Family Dance. All ages were again represented, and Don McCoy played a wide variety of music and even included party games such as musical chairs.

Over 600 brethren once again made their way to the Sight and Sound Theatre, this time to see the production of *In the Beginning*, featuring the events of the creation week including the creation of Adam and Eve. Another tour to New York was also heavily attended as Feastgoers viewed the Broadway show, *Mary Poppins*. Willow Valley also provided free bus tours of the area, and each tour date was filled to capacity.

Several other highlights at the Feast included receiving the personal hymnals, and signing cards that would be sent to brethren unable to travel to the Feast. Long lines of excited brethren waited patiently to receive their hymnals and to sign over 50 greeting cards.

With all that Lancaster and Willow Valley have to offer, many verbalized their desire to return to the location in 2008.

Todd O. Carey

Panama City Beach, Florida

The Feast this year in Panama City Beach, Florida, went exceptionally well in spite of a "Bike Rally" that was in town for the first half of the Feast. There were some complaints about the noise level at times, but overall things went very well. This year marked our eighth year to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the tropical setting of beautiful Panama City Beach. The weather was picture perfect, with clear skies, emerald-green waters and sugar-white sandy beaches.

Almost 1,700 brethren were fed an outstanding spiritual banquet about God's soon-coming Kingdom and how we will finally

be rescued from Satan's world. This was one of the "best Feasts ever" in terms of "meat in due season." There were many favorable comments this year about the Feast DVD. The subject was so timely and appropriate; many said it was the best presentation they had ever seen. The special music was exceptional and the performance on Youth Day of the



Panama City Beach, Florida (photos by Don Daugherty)

56-member Children's Choir was delightful.

We had 165 youth attend the bowling and skating activity for our teens and 212 seniors attended the luncheon held in their honor.

We all left Panama City Beach spiritually and physically rejuvenated.

Harold Rhodes

Steamboat Springs, Colorado

This year was one of our warmer years for the Feast at Steamboat Springs. It snowed twice, both times during the night, but mostly on the mountain behind the Steamboat Grand Resort Hotel, which hosted the Feast. Those Texans who wanted to play in the snow only needed to drive 15 miles up to Rabbit Ears Pass, and

they could throw all the snowballs they wanted!

The auditorium was crowded, as it usually is. High attendance came on the first Holy Day, with 704. A bit of sickness brought the number down through the week, but it never



Steamboat Springs, Colorado: Festival Youth Instruction (photo by Scott Ashley)

dropped below 618. Opening night was 562. Spirits were high and everyone seemed very responsive and supportive, even more than the norm. A number of comments were made in appreciation of specific messages delivered.

The fun show was a big hit once again, but the family dance was also quite popular. We added a barbecue in the park before the fun show this year, and it was attended by about 300. Howelson Park was a beautiful location for this, and Howelson Lodge, a rustic and historic venue, was able to seat two-thirds of the group. It didn't matter on that particular day because the weather was beautiful.

Since potential mountain weather problems make it difficult to have a regular family day, we planned both ice skating and bowling for the teens. And the preteens had their bowling day as well. It's great to watch 4- and 5-year-olds with a bowling ball. The gutter guards helped a lot!

The seniors always seem to enjoy the lunch and activity. This year there were 113. They enjoyed a bit of entertainment, followed by a helpful address from Wilbur Berg.

The eight days zipped by, as they always do, but we left Steamboat Springs with high spirits.

Larry Neff

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

More than 1,300 brethren enjoyed inspiring messages, wonderful music and beautiful weather during the Feast of Tabernacles in Wisconsin Dells. Temperatures remained in the 70s throughout the Feast, with a little rain only in the late afternoon or evening hours.

High attendance was on the first Holy Day with 1,398 attending services. The spiritual food was excellent and included messages focusing on Christ's perspective on the Feast, the vision of the Feast, the importance of healthy marriages, the refresh-

ing rain pictured by the Feast, three important questions for youth, waging peace, how Christ is the Light of the World and what the Church needs to know about judgment.

Throughout the Feast, brethren had the opportunity to sign handmade cards that were sent to more than 80 shut-ins unable to attend the Feast. Brethren gave generously to help fund scholarships for youth camps in the Philippines and Latin America and to provide assistance to Youth Corps volunteers working at summer camps in Africa by donating at the Good Works concert featuring the Myers Brothers.

Hundreds of brethren enjoyed the big band sound of live music at the Family Dance and, as an entry "fee" to the dance, contributed food for the local community Food Shelf.



Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin: Signing cards for shut-ins; right, at the Family Dance (photos by Joe Jacoby)

God truly blessed us with a joyful Feast of Tabernacles in Wisconsin Dells.

Michael Hanisko

Zambia

Nalubanda

In 2007, we moved back to Nalubanda because Paray's Game Farm, where we kept the Feast for the last



Nalubanda, Zambia: At the sports day, men try to thread cotton through the eye of a needle as part of a relay race

two years, increased their charge by an astronomical 57 percent.

Attendance was a record 310, a 104 percent increase over last year. This number increased because of the large group of people that came from our former association in late 2006. We all ate together and stayed in tents. Feeding 300 people from one kitchen was no small challenge, but surprisingly we managed.

André van Belkum, the chairman of the South African national council, and his wife, Elize, spent the last four days of the Feast with us and delivered inspiring sermons describing and pointing members to the Kingdom. He lost his voice on the Last Great Day. After the morning meeting Mr. van Belkum and Kambani Banda blessed 32 infants between them! Members appreciated Mr. and Mrs. van Belkum's presence because of the difficulties they put up with.

The highlights of the Feast were a baptism and the Family Day.

On the second day of the Feast, cattle rustlers stole seven animals (financed by LifeNets) from our Church members. This kind of depressed the mood at the Feast, and a prayer request was made. Happily, just before the Last Great Day, God intervened and the animals were recovered, some 60 miles away.

Wilson Nkhoma

Zimbabwe

Lake Chivero

The Feast of Tabernacles in Zimbabwe was once again held at the Lake Chivero National Park, 25 kilometers outside Harare, capital city of Zimbabwe.

The Feastgoers were picked up from a designated place in Harare by a bus that was hired for them by the Church. The meeting was characterized by warm greetings and hugging. At the Feast site there were some more greetings and hugging with those who had not come in the bus but had found their own way to the Feast site.

The weather was very good, with occasional cloud cover and on one occasion there was a shower at night. Breezes blowing across the lake added to the cooler weather throughout the Feast.

The minister responsible for Zimbabwe, André van Belkum, was there, accompanied by his wife. He gave very encouraging sermons the first four days of the Feast, after which he proceeded to Zambia where he and his wife spent the rest of the Feast.

In Zimbabwe the economic situation is very difficult, and because of that there is scarcity

of many things. Shops are characterized by some empty shelves. The brethren are not spared from these hardships. However, the Feastgoers were greatly blessed by voluntary contributions from brethren in South Africa and from Hobart, Tasmania, on the other side of the world. With these donations the Church was able to purchase two sheep and three goats that were slaughtered for the Family Day and the daily consumption of the brethren.

There was also the challenge of electricity being switched off all day and then switched back on at about 9 or 10 at night. This resulted in Church DVD messages not being played at all. The last two days were the worst, with electricity not coming on at all

until the end of the Feast.

All these setbacks did not dampen the spirits of the brethren. One day the brethren spontaneously started singing "His Mercy Never Fails" just before the start of the church service. A few days later it was interesting to watch little children with hymnals in their little hands imitating the adults, singing "His Mercy Never Fails"!

One of the highlights of the Feast was the baptism of three people by Mr. van Belkum. They are Tendayi Mawire, Matilda Gorondo and Onesimo Maraza. There were two visitors from Zambia, James Mfula and his 16-year-old son, David. Mr. Mfula gave a very uplifting sermonette and would have given another one had he not been forced



Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe

to return to Zambia midway through the Feast due to his son's persistent illness. A phone call revealed that only Mr. Mfula attended the rest of the Feast in Zambia. David did not

recover enough to attend the rest of the Feast with his dad.

The highest attendance was 39, as compared with 32 the previous year. The offering on the first day was

Z\$5.3 million and on the Last Great Day it was Z\$9.6 million.

This year some brethren went fishing on the lake and caught quite a lot of fish. Even though many of the fish were relatively small, they added to the enjoyment of the Feast and supplemented their food supplies.

In many ways this was indeed a very happy and blessed Feast, and our most sincere and heartfelt thanks go to our brethren in South Africa and Tasmania for their donations that went a long way in making our Feast that much more enjoyable. Please join us in praying for our country, for God to improve the economy.

Harris Hlazo

Letters

New Hymnal

I am really impressed with and grateful for the new hymnal, as I'm sure you are. Many, many thanks to the lyricists, composers, arrangers and all the many people that contributed to the selection, reviews, design and publication of the songs, including Steve Myers heading up the big team. Thank you to United Church of God for doing this and providing us with such a wonderful hymnal.

I'm pleased with everything about it—the choice of selections, the beautiful layout and printing of each page, the cover, the thorough communication at the bottom of each page making it clear who composed the music and the source of the lyrics, the verse at the top, and... I was surprised and greatly pleased to see that it has several different types of indexes—interesting and very helpful!

Don Hooser
Sedro Woolley, Washington

Thanks for Cards, Calls, Tapes, etc.

I truly want to thank so many for making my stay-at-home Feast time so pleasant. The cards, phone calls and the giant card with so many messages.

The sermon tapes were all excellent.

I could never let everyone know

how I was blessed by them. There were notes, etc., from most states.

Ruby Seale
Texas

Feast Brochure; Parenting Articles

Thank you for the Feast brochure. Even though I have grown up going to the Feast of Tabernacles and love doing so, the articles were very helpful. I appreciated the one on appropriate tips. In order to be lights in the world at the various sites we go to, this will be a great tool to have as a Christian.

Thanks again for all the preparation and time the coordinators and others involved do to make it so nice for everyone.

Thank you for putting Nancy Capo's articles in both *United News* and *The Good News*. They can hopefully be a help to parents, aunts, grandparents, etc.

Colorado

"Lessons From a Bridge"

Thanks for the superb article from Gregory Dullum on "Lessons From a Bridge" [September/October 2007 *United News*, page 11]. Lots to think about!

Michigan

The New Covenant Booklet

As surprising and pleasant gift came in the mail, *The New Covenant*—180 plus pages, nine chapters. We have passed

it around to all of us in the family.

My mother would get booklets on very important subjects like this decades ago before the 1986 death of Mr. Armstrong.

All the workers there are in our prayers. We know all of the members of Christ's Body are in your prayers.

Alabama

World News and Prophecy

Regarding *World News and Prophecy*, I really enjoy "This Is the Way," but all the articles are interesting and helpful. It's good to have a nonpolitical, biblical perspective on news items and to see where current events fit in prophecy.

England

Researching Christmas

I just wanted to write to tell you that your magazine is wonderful! I found it online by accident. I was doing some research on Christmas being a pagan holiday when I came across an article about the same thing in your magazine online. I was glad to see that there were people publishing the "truth" about the holidays that we all grew up with generation after generation.

My mother thought that I had lost my mind when I told her, almost two years ago, that I would no longer decorate my house for Christmas. She had just about forgiven me for not wanting my son (who

just turned 6) to have an Easter basket. Now I tell her that I am denying him a Christmas tree? It was like she thought that I was abusing him by denying him Christmas. Then she thought, are you a Jehovah's Witness? I said of course not, but I am following the word of Christ, so you should support me.

Long story short, she doesn't give me a hard time much anymore, but she still does not understand it. All around me professing Christians are participating in pagan rituals, and they see nothing wrong with it. I had a conversation with a friend of mine who is a Christian and proud of it. Even she is reluctant to let go of the silly traditions that we do that are actually against God's Word because they were made for other gods.

But the power that tradition has over some people is really scary. They would rather risk being disobedient to God than be "different." But we are supposed to be different. I feel like even though I have only had my eyes opened in the last three years, that no one else is seeking the truth. And sometimes even when the truth is there for them to see, they would rather rationalize it away.

Now I don't want to sound like I think that I am the perfect Christian, because I am not. But I just wish there was some way to help others to be able to accept the truth and stand strong in it. Your magazine shows me that there are

others out there telling the truth even though it is not favorable. Thank you.

Internet

"Amazing Discussions!"

I absolutely love this Web site. A friend and I lead a Bible study for some of our fellow high school friends. This Web site has been a great source for us. We have had amazing discussions! Thank you so much for making all of this available to the public!

Internet

Sabbath and Evolution

I'm a science teacher (biology and chemistry). After reading many *Good News* magazines, I was shocked to find out I have followed and practiced ungodly practices. Now my main worry is which day one has to observe based on the Fourth Commandment. Should I also continue teaching my students about evolution as the syllabus requires?

Internet

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

"Scotland," continued from page 3

the hall (www.scottishhostels.co.uk).

In Stirling city center, the first two hotels are within walking distance of the Albert Halls. These rates are not available through their Web site booking form.

1. Stirling Highland Hotel

This four-star hotel with leisure facilities is within walking distance of the bus and train stations and the Albert Halls; it is located on a sloping street just below Stirling Castle.

Address: Spittal Street, Stirling, FK8 1DU; phone: 01786 272727; fax: 01786 272829; e-mail: stirling@paramount-hotels.co.uk; Web site: www.paramount-hotels.co.uk.

For the period of the Feast, rates are:

- Bed-and-breakfast package, double occupancy, £69.50 per person per night.

- Bed-and-breakfast package, single occupancy, £127 per person per night.

- Dinner, £15 supplement for adults and older children.

- Children under 12 can select from the children's menu with charges as taken.

- No supplement for children added to a room; but there is a £15 supplement for the family rooms as there are only four of them.

2. Golden Lion Hotel

This three-star hotel is also within walking distance of the bus and train stations and the Albert Halls; it is a gentle walk to the Albert Halls and is located close to shops and restaurants in the city center.

Address: 8-10 King Street, Stirling, FK8 1BD; phone: 01786 475351; fax: 01786 472755; e-mail: enquiries@the-goldenlionstirling.com; Web site: www.thegoldenlionstirling.com.

For the period of the Feast, rates are:

- Bed-and-breakfast package, double occupancy, £90 per room per night (i.e. two people).

- Bed-and-breakfast package, single occupancy, £65 per room per night.

- Dinner £10 supplement for adults and older children.

Please ensure that you check that the hotel is giving you these rates, as at the time of writing we do not have the quotation in writing.

3. Stirling Management Centre

This three-star hotel, part of the University of Stirling, is set amid 300 acres of beautiful parkland and is a short bus journey from Stirling city center.

Address: University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA; phone: 01786 451666; Fax: 01786 449940; e-mail: smc.sales@stir.ac.uk; Web site: www.smc.stir.ac.uk.

For the period of the Feast, rates are:

- Bed-and-breakfast package, double occupancy, £45 per person per night.

- Bed-and-breakfast package, single occupancy £75 per person per night.

- Dinner £22 supplement for adults and older children; bar suppers from £7.

4. The Dunblane Hydro Hotel

This hotel is certainly impressive in its facilities and in its setting. It is about 7 miles from the Albert Halls, and the management is prepared to arrange buses at the times needed for travel to and from services. Alternatively you may use your own transportation, bus, train or taxi.

Address: Perth Road, Dunblane, Perthshire, FK15 0HG; phone: (+44) 1786826643 (when calling, quote "UCG"); e-mail: Reservations@dunblanehydrohotel.com; Web site: www.dunblanehydrohotel.com.

There are 206 bedrooms at £65 per person per night, which includes dinner, bed and breakfast, based on double or twin occupancy (£50 single supplement and a minimum length of stay of five nights).

How Do I Submit My Registration Fee?

The recommended £20 per adult may be sent using credit or debit card at www.charity-choice.co.uk to United Church of God—British Isles. Just click the red "search" button, and enter either the charity number 1079192 or the name "United Church of God." We are looking into providing a PayPal account as another facility.

Additional information about tours will be sent in a few weeks by e-mail to those who have registered. UN



From the Word

Overwhelmed With Grief: Losing My Only Son!

■ Nothing seems good about grief or the trials that bring it on us. But in the midst of a horrendous loss I began to see the connection between grief and love—and God.

by Allen Stout

My son was a chip off the old block, so to speak. I had loved to explore and had spent time in Alaska and thought about homesteading up there—an aunt and uncle and grandfather did just that.

As a boy, Michael was always exploring, building tree houses, learning to shoot, hunt and fish. He loved to be out hiking, swimming, canoeing, water skiing, ice skating, downhill and cross-country skiing, and he loved flying when I would take him up in Ambassador College's Piper Cub in Big Sandy, Texas, where I worked.

He was not so inclined when it came to school and church, but neither was I growing up. But he was never openly rebellious—he just had other priorities that were more important to him. He had acquired some health problems growing up—chemical toxicity due to exposure to formaldehyde fumes from building materials in a new home we built—which probably favored the outdoor lifestyle that he loved.

At my encouragement, he tried some community college studies, but when an opportunity to take a survival training camp came along, Michael jumped at it. He made much of his own survival gear.

After his mother died, he decided to head north to Alaska. He landed at Wrangell in the southern panhandle area to explore and practice his survival skills. Michael made friends and picked up various temporary jobs, including working on a fishing boat, which he said almost sank because most of the crew was drunk.

He was faithful to write home and to others about his experiences. He applied for a job with the Forest Service and was planning to buy land and settle in the area.

Michael also began to spend more time studying his Bible and began to ask many questions in his letters. I began to think about taking a trip up to visit him the coming summer of 1995.

Missing!

But in February, I received a call from the sheriff's office in Wrangell, Alaska, notifying me that Michael was reported missing in the Alaskan wilderness, and that they were sending out a search party to find him. He had been out practicing survival skills in the wilderness. I was deeply concerned and asked many to pray for his safety.

A friend of Michael's, who took supplies and mail to him at a wilderness cab-

in every month or so, had reported him missing on his trip out in February.

The friend, a Forest Service employee, had gone to the cabin where they were to meet. He searched for him, but did not go out to Michael's survival camps. Some of Michael's letters gave accounts of close encounters with huge Alaskan brown bears that had raided one of his camps, so this was of no small concern.

Bad News

I was praying that he would be found safe, but when I heard back from the Wrangell sheriff's office about a week later, the news was not good.

The search party had found him some distance from the cabin deep in the frozen snow-covered woods in a clearing on a hill overlooking a beautiful river valley. He had been there for over a month. I will spare the details, as it was difficult to impossible to determine exactly what had happened.

I was overwhelmed with emotion and grief, such as I had never felt before. I was fully expecting to hear good news, but I also knew the chances he was taking exploring and trying to survive on his own in the Alaskan wilderness in the winter.

He was my only son, almost 27 years old, just beginning to reach for his dreams and also seeking to understand God's Word. I was especially hopeful to be able to be a spiritual guide to him in his quest to know God.

Grief is an intense emotional feeling of distress and suffering of the heart for someone you love. It is only natural to grieve for those you love and over such a loss, especially close family, children and friends you want to share the future with or share in the joys of their happiness and success.

Going Through Grief

The grievous news of my son's death came as I was beginning to prepare for the Passover that spring. In my grief I sought to understand and console my feelings as I was reviewing more deeply the meaning of the spring Holy Days and of God's sacrifice of His only Son for us.

As I considered my love and concern and the grief I had for my son, my only son, I began to realize that we don't grieve for those we don't love, and the more we love someone, the more we grieve. True mature love (Greek *agape*) is a sincere, deep outward concern for others. Grief,

whether outward or inward (not all show their grief outwardly), therefore, could be considered a measure of our love.

I considered the one who has the greatest love, which is, of course, God. "For God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16)! Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Considering also, if we grieve for those we love, how much more does God grieve for us, whom He created to be His own children to share His love with (Hebrews 2:5-11; 1 John 3:1-3)? And how much more does God grieve when we go astray and when we suffer (Hebrews 2:9, 14-15, 17-18; 4:15)? Parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin

that Jesus came to demonstrate God's love for us:

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, because that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

We love God only because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Some might ask, why then doesn't God prevent us from choosing the way of sin and death? Why did God allow Adam and Eve and that generation before the Flood to be tempted by Satan and to choose the way of evil and death?

The answer, of course, is that the only

way God could create godly character in His children was to give man the freedom of choice. But God is not negligent to teach man the laws of life and blessings or to warn mankind of the consequences of sin and evil (Genesis 2:16-17; Deuteronomy 5:31-33; 6:1-9; 7:7-15; 8:1-20; 28:1-2,15; Ezekiel 18:4).

Character has to be tested and proven; therefore God allows men to be tested, even deceived, and to

choose, disobey and suffer the consequences of sin to prove for themselves that God's Word and His laws are true, righteous and absolute (Genesis 3:1-6; Deuteronomy 4:8; 30:1-20; Jeremiah 17:10; Matthew 5:17; Romans 7:10-12).

God is grieved when we choose the way of evil, suffering and death (Genesis 6:5-6; Deuteronomy 30:15-20). But God will not take away our freedom to choose and suffer the consequences. However, God, in great love for us, planned before the foundation of the world that Jesus Christ would come down and give His own life to redeem man from sin and death (1 Peter 1:18-20).

So how much does God love us? Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

The apostle Paul wrote, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

"...having now been justified by His blood, we [and our loved ones] shall be saved from wrath through Him.

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:7-10).

Because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for the sins of mankind, all will have a chance for salvation in a resurrection (1 Peter 1:13-21; Romans 5:6-11; John 5:21, 25, 28-29; Revelation 20).

Jesus Christ's Example of Love

When Jesus (from the Hebrew *Jehoshua*, meaning "the Eternal who saves") came to this earth as the Son of Man, He saw the grief and emotional pain of others and had great empathy and expressed grief and wept for them (John 11:30-36; Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:15). If you have lost a loved one, know that God also grieves with you. I learned from my experiences that God felt my pain and grief, and He gave me much comfort through His Word and Spirit (John 14:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Jesus was "despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..."

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised [Hebrew *daka*, "beat to pieces, break, bruise, crush, destroy, humble, smite"] for our iniquities; the chastisement [Hebrew *musar*, "punishment, correction, discipline, instruction, chastisement"] for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:3-5).

As an example of His love for us (Matthew 5:17-19; John 13:34; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Peter 2:21), Jesus greatly humbled Himself by giving up His power and glory with God the Father to be born as a human, and became obedient to death, even the most humiliating death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:9-11, 14-18; 12:2-3), that we and our loved ones could be reconciled to God and raised up again to life in a resurrection (Acts 24:15; Romans 6:5, 23).

And when He was suffering on the cross, He prayed to God for those who had forsaken Him and those who were crucifying Him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

How great is God's love and the grief He has for us to offer His only begotten Son to suffer and die for us to pay for our sins (Colossians 1:19-23; Hebrews 2:9-10)! And how great is Jesus' love to give Himself as a sacrifice for us (Hebrews 2:14-18)! **UN**

Allen Stout attends the Portland, Oregon, congregation.



The author and his son, Michael, with a trophy Michael won for his homemade kite in a kite-flying contest in Big Sandy, Texas, in 1977.

and the prodigal son reveal feelings God has toward us. "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

"But the father said... [when his lost son returned repentant], 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf... and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and now is found'" (Luke 15:7, 22-24).

How Much More Does God Grieve?

If I was overwhelmed with grief for my only son, how much more did God the Father grieve when He allowed His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer and be crucified and die for our sins? God the Father has loved Jesus Christ for all eternity (Luke 1:30-35; 3:21-22; Ephesians 3:14-19; John 1:1, 14; 3:16).

As I began to consider how much greater God's love is than mine, I began to understand how much more He loves my mother, my wife, my son and daughters and all mankind—and me—than I ever could. The apostle John revealed

The Problem With Victory

■ Today's ambitious pursuit of excellence can be a double-edged sword. There's much we can learn from a man Jesus considered great.

by Steve McNeely

Consider the natural human response to the pursuit and overtaking of excellence. Even Ben Franklin recognized the danger when he wrote:

"In reality there is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as Pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself. For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."

In America we are obsessed with bigger, better, faster, farther, more, more, more! As we stoke our ambitions, strive to reach our full potential and grow, the big question is: How will we handle success?

There is a proper sense of pride that should ride along with accomplishments that come from sacrifice and hard work: pleasure, satisfaction and suitable self-respect.

The opposite, dark side is all too familiar in people who become arrogant, haughty, lordly, insolent, conceited, overbearing, disdainful, pompous, contemptuous, patronizing and scornful.

These are not talents God is looking for in His servants. Fortunately, God left us with positive examples to temper our quest. One is found in the story of a man who was called the greatest.

His Name Was John

Before his birth, John's parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, had accepted their fate to be childless. Zacharias was a priest and, according to the ancient practices, rotated from his home to serve in the temple. While alone in the temple performing his priestly duties, Zacharias was visited by the mighty archangel Gabriel.

Zacharias was afraid with good reason. Not many humans receive legitimate heavenly visits. Gabriel calmed Zacharias' fears, eloquently prophesied the miraculous birth of John and foretold of John's special, divine mission. Gabriel also gave instructions that John was to be separated from birth, likely as a Nazirite (Luke 1:15; Numbers 6:1-21).

John's destined greatness in the sight of God was to begin when he was sanctified, filled with the Holy Spirit even from Elizabeth's womb.

Zacharias remained unconvinced, so Gabriel struck him mute.

Apparently this helped Zacharias' unbelief, so he went home after completing his duties at the temple and soon after his aging wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant. For Zacharias and Elizabeth, as with Abraham and Sarah, this was a miracle.

In due time, Elizabeth gave birth to a baby boy. At the ceremonial eighth-day circumcision, Zacharias followed Gabriel's command and confirmed his son's name. Immediately his tongue was loosened so he could speak, praising God. People, as people do, wondered what these strange happenings meant and what was in store for this infant whose entry into the world was so peculiar.

No doubt remained in Zacharias. He clearly understood his son's mission in life to be a prophet of the Most High sent in advance to prepare the way for the Messiah (Luke 1:76). John was surely taught this diligently by both parents from the time he could understand.

Not much is mentioned about John's upbringing. Perhaps John's elderly parents died when he was young and, being different, he wanted to separate himself further. However it happened, John was led to avoid civilization and ignore his birthright duty to begin serving in the temple. Instead he lived in the desert.

It is here we must focus on a vital point about John's life. Even though he knew he had been called specifically by God for some special purpose, John waited in the wilderness until clearly told what to do. It was not because John was afraid to act. We shall see that his courage got him killed. John simply refused to take upon himself something that was not ordained to be, or to move before God's time was right. Yet John continued in a state of perpetual preparation. He grew in the desert and became strong in the spirit (Luke 1:80).

John's patience and diligence were rewarded. God's infinite wisdom, taking into account the cascading waterfall of events that would flow from a single drop in time, knew the perfect minute to call John to action. Somebody brought the word of God to John. Perhaps Gabriel returned and gave him instructions from the Almighty God.

It is also notable that John did not come up with his own doctrine. A messenger from God taught John to baptize with water for the remission of sins (John 1:33). The lesson for today is that humans should be very careful about claiming a divine assignment or revelation. History shows that even those with legitimate calls approached with caution and in most cases had to be convinced to take the job.

When called to act, John's ministry became very successful. His practical preaching resonated with

the common people as he powerfully admonished young and old, rich and poor, weak and powerful without favor or fear. John built a large following and his message continued to reverberate for years after his untimely death (Acts 18:24-28).

Yet John embraced his role and position knowing from the beginning that "he was not the one" and that he was destined to decline (John 3:30). Lacking what we today would dub the essential "competitive spirit," John rejoiced in the ascendance of his "Cousin." John didn't let his rigorous self-discipline deteriorate into self-righteousness, nor did he become proud of his humility.

Like his countrymen, John looked for the Messiah who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). John's faith was rewarded when he fulfilled all righteousness by baptizing the Son of God.

As Jesus stood up and the river water streamed down His back, John saw the Holy Spirit fly down upon the Christ like a dove. Then he announced, "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

Yet John was human. From prison he sent emissaries to enquire of Jesus if He was, indeed, the Savior. It would be understandable if John felt that things were not turning out as he once imagined, for a weak ruler had tossed John into prison for offending his second wife with the truth.

The villain, Herod Antipas, was the son of an evil king, Herod the Great, who divided his kingdom into four parts. Herod Antipas was placed over Galilee while one of his half-brothers, Philip, inherited the northeast part of his father's kingdom. Somehow, Antipas got embroiled in a sinful affair with Philip's wife, Herodias, divorced his first wife, and remarried this new woman.

John, true to his consistent, outspoken, relentless pursuit of truth, openly chastised Herod and his bride for their unlawful marriage. We may borrow from a phrase and say, "Hell hath no fury like a woman rebuked in public."

Herodias' malevolent heart was not appeased when Antipas threw John in the dungeon, and she patiently waited for an opening to wreak her vengeance. Herod must have secretly known John was right, but he feared his wife. By and by a birthday party and the folly of a drunken king gave her the opportunity she coveted.

At once dull with alcohol and stimulated by the exotic dance of

Herodias' daughter, Herod foolishly promised to give anything in return for her sensual entertainment. The alluring dancer ran to seek her mother's advice.

"Tell him you want the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter," replied the mother. This request jolted Herod out of his drunken revelry, but saving face in front of notables, for him, outweighed righteous judgment. John was beheaded by a royal executioner. The gruesome trophy was presented on silver while John's headless body sprawled in the cell where ended his divine ministry.

News of John's death deeply moved Jesus who offered high praise in eulogy: "He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light" (John 5:35). "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28). That is the ultimate greatness we seek.

How Will We Handle Success?

The ambitious pursuit of excellence is double-edged. On one side



we should prepare to lead by continuously developing character and reaching for precious potential in this life and the life to come. The other edge is just as sharp: Handle success with extreme caution.

Like many chosen heroes of the Bible, John the Baptist's fate was a violent, bloody, untimely death. This is not the American dream. Too often the human response to success sprouts even in the Body of Christ: bigger, faster, farther, more, more, more!

How can we find the balance to sharpen both edges of the blade? Perhaps there are frontlets we

should bind before our eyes to temper our relentless pursuit. Perhaps we should always ask ourselves hard questions and not shy away from truthful answers about our own ambitions. Victor Hugo wrote in *Les Miserables*, "Who knows how easily ambition disguises itself under the name of a calling, possibly in good faith, and deceiving itself, saint that it is!" We must not deceive ourselves.

• Can you and I prepare with all our might, seek excellence and simultaneously be still and serene knowing we might not get to apply everything we've learned right now?

• Can you and I develop a patient perspective that lets God's peace overcome any frustration? There is a great sense of calm that accompanies diligent effort tempered by the humility to wait on Christ.

• Can we resist the temptation to set ourselves up as teachers—even if we are qualified and see an opportunity to seize (James 3:1; Hebrews 5:4)?

• Can you and I, for the sake of unity, take a back seat even when we think we are qualified to drive the bus? Much honor is reserved for those few—and regrettably it is difficult to name but few—who assist in elegant transitions to their own hurt.

• If we think we have discovered new knowledge, do we have the temperance, the forbearance, the restraint to wait on God?

• When—not if, but when—someone makes a mistake, do we have the self-control, fortitude and courage to purposely allow ourselves to be defrauded and thereby imitate Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:7)?

Napoleon Bonaparte said that great ambition is the passion of great character. Machiavelli rightly observed that ambition is so powerful a passion in the human breast, that however high we reach, we are never satisfied. Healthy ambition can spur us toward right goals.

Conversely, unsatisfied, purely human ambition will dull our blade and blunt our spiritual growth. We should take inventory of our pride and humility. If the ledger shows we are focused on ourselves and what we want—beware, pride and unhealthy ambition are at the door. If our heart, like John's, is humble, we will say, "Not my will, but Your will, Father, be done!"

So seek God's help to prepare diligently. Build godly, righteous character. Seek to fulfill your unique, precious, God-given potential. But remember, victory can beget human problems, so handle success with extreme caution! **UN**

What Baptism Has Meant to Me

■ How can you know you are being called? How can you know if you are ready for baptism? Here's my story and what I've learned.

by Ron Kelley

For most people, March 15, 1973, was just another day. I know, some of you were not even born yet, but I doubt even those who were alive then recall any events of that day. But I certainly do. It was to be the most important day of my life.

I didn't know it, but I began preparing for that day back in June 1966. That was when my parents first took me to church services in Charleston, West Virginia—on a Saturday afternoon! My life was to change forever after that time, but when I was still 12 years old, I had no idea how profoundly different my life would be, nor did I know what March 15, 1973, would mean to me then.

Yes, things were certainly quite different in my life. We drove two hours one way to church each week on Saturday. I had to drop out of band because I couldn't go to the football games on Friday nights. I had to go without eating on a strange sounding day called Atonement, and immediately after that, my parents took my sister and me on a vacation unlike any vacation we'd ever been on before. We went to church every day—with 10,000 people—in a tent! No more pork chops, no Christmas, no bread for a whole week in the spring! Yes, my life was certainly changing!

But underneath all these exterior things, there was something else going on in my life that I was completely unaware of at first. However, as I grew older into my teenage years, I realized this was no longer just the church Mom and Dad took me to; it was becoming *my* church. It was important to *me*. The commitment to this way of life was becoming stronger all the time.

I made the decision to go to Ambassador College because I knew it was where God's way of life was taught and practiced, and I needed to be there. As I entered the second semester of my freshman year, I began counseling for the greatest commitment of my life. I had made the decision to be baptized, and the date for the event was to be March 15, 1973.

The Phone Is Ringing

That's my story. God had called me through my parents. I once heard a minister use the analogy of how the call from God was like a phone ringing over and over again. In my life, the phone was ringing, and I had to answer it. When it comes right down to it, there are only two responses to that call: yes or no. Some people think they can simply put the caller on hold and not answer the question now. However, a "not now" response can often become the same as "no."

If you are still reading this, there is no doubt you've had the phone call. The question is, How will you answer the call? I don't think any of you have already said,

"No thanks, I'm not interested." So, that leaves us with three categories. 1. Those who are not of responsible age yet to make a decision. 2. Those who have said "yes." 3. Those who haven't responded yet, but plan to make that definite commitment "someday."

All of us need to understand the process, the steps that one who has dedicated his or her life to Christ must follow. Once we have been called and have decided to answer yes, there must also be a process of repentance, baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Acts, we see the beginning of the New Testament Church. These were people who knew the basics of what you and I believe—Sabbath, Holy Days, clean meats—but there was a lot they didn't understand. Most of that revolved around accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior, the Son of God, and having an opportunity to be part of the family of God for all eternity. When they began to understand, what did they do?

Acts 2:37-39 says: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'"

How did they know they were ready for baptism? How do *you* know when you are being called to baptism? The answers have to do with the definition of repentance.

Repentance

I would say you are ready for baptism when you know that God's way is right, and you sincerely want to surrender to Christ. You're ready when you know you can't overcome your sinful ways on your own. You're ready when you feel a strong desire to be totally forgiven of your sins. You're ready when you feel so strongly that you want to change, you want to be a new person. When you have those thoughts, you are experiencing the Spirit of God drawing you to Jesus Christ.

Did these early New Testament Christians feel all these things? Remember, they were "cut to the heart." Have we ever been really "cut to the heart"? What happens when we hear a really inspiring sermon? Are we "cut to the heart"? Are we motivated to *do* something as a result of hearing that sermon? Do we actually make a change in our lives? Or do we just kind of set it aside spiritually and say, "I'll get to that later?"

One who is "cut to the heart" (or shall we say "converted to the heart") will say: "How can I apply this to me? I need to change *now*! How can I use what I've heard today to improve my life spiritually?" It all comes down to attitude! Is our attitude about hearing an inspiring sermon or reading an inspiring article that of a converted Christian? In other words, do we have a longing inner desire to apply that inspired sermon or article to ourselves? Do we have that strong desire to continually grow and change

and improve spiritually? Does it really matter to us? If we are converted to the heart, it will!

Repentance is about realizing that we need help from God to overcome. We feel the need to be forgiven. We come to realize that we personally are responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—He had to die because of the way we've been living our lives contrary to the law of God.

God sees you responding to His call to repentance. He sees you have a repentant attitude of mind—you want to change! You have a broken spirit, a humble seeking for forgiveness and mercy. He will truly honor your attitude if you are willing to turn from what the Bible clearly labels as sin. True repentance requires a permanent change of direction. It is a total commitment to a course from which there is no turning back.

King David wrote about his personal experience with repentance: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:1-4, New International Version).

Note David's heartfelt words. However, don't be too caught up in worrying about the emotion of repentance—feeling that you need to work up some overwhelming feeling of sorrow and remorse. Repentance mainly has to do with change.

Remember, there are only two paths on which to walk in this life. One leads to death and destruction for all eternity, and the other one leads to eternal life in the family of God (Matthew 7:13-14). If you're not yet baptized, at some time you are going to have to decide what path you're going to follow. And until you make the decision to follow the path to eternal life, you are automatically already walking the path to death and destruction. Most of mankind is on that path.

You are different because you've had that phone call that has informed you that you are on a very dangerous path and you've been given an opportunity to change paths. Most of the world doesn't have that opportunity. They've not had the phone call yet. Repentance simply means that you want to be taken off the path to death and placed on the path to life—and you realize that you can't do that by yourself. When you've reached that conclusion in your life, that is the time to call your pastor and begin to counsel for baptism. It's time for you to make that commitment in your life.

Baptism

Baptism is an outward ceremony that shows that we have accepted the blood of Christ for our sins. It pictures the death of our former way of life in a watery grave. As Jesus was resurrected a spirit being, so rising out of the baptismal water symbolizes our new life—a life led by the Spirit of God. Because we understand the true meaning of repentance and conversion, we should realize baptism is much more than just

a symbol; it becomes a profound, life-changing event.

Sooner or later, we have to change our lives and get on the path to eternal life. Either we put the old man or woman to death in the grave of baptism, or we end up in the grave of the baptism by fire—eternal death.

God shows us these two choices in Deuteronomy 30:19: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." The stakes are very high. God wants us to choose life, not death!



Victor Kubik and Johnnie Lambert baptize American Vello Saar near his birthplace in Saaremaa, Estonia, during the Feast this year

We don't come to church just because we enjoy each other's company. We're all there because God put us there for the purpose of preparing to help Jesus Christ administer His government when He returns to rule this earth. We're the first to learn it so we can teach others.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

In the book of Romans, Paul clearly defines the two ways of life. "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. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:5-9).

Clearly, receiving God's Spirit is an essential step on the path to eternal life. If we are baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit, notice our new relationship with God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (verses 14-17).

What would it be worth to you to know you have a guarantee to be a coheir with Jesus Christ? Are you interested in being

like God? Is that too religious sounding to be of interest to you? We need to stop and analyze where we are and what opportunity we've been given.

Way back in 1973, I committed to this way of life; I was baptized and received the Holy Spirit. What has that meant to me personally? How has my life changed? I can describe what my life has been like in one word: Peace. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

When we have God's Spirit, and we are therefore sealed as children of God, why should we worry about anything?

All the promises of the Bible apply to each of us personally!

God promises to heal me when I'm sick, He promises to feed me if I'm hungry, He promises to protect me from danger. (Of course, we know that God's promises don't take away our personal responsibilities or encourage us to tempt God, as Satan tried to get Christ to do in Matthew 4:6-7.)

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Psalm 23:4). Even if God allows me to die, I have an absolute guarantee that in the next instant of my consciousness, I will be resurrected to meet the returning Christ in the air as a spirit being with all the power and glory of the universe! How can it get any better?

God doesn't promise an easy life. In fact, we're also promised to have trials and persecution, but still we can have the peace of mind that the rest of the world simply does not have. That's how we face the trials and difficulties of this present, evil world. We can have complete and total *trust* in God, and therefore, complete and total *peace*.

That's what repentance and baptism have meant to me. Reflect on what God has given to you. Appreciate how awesome it is that God has called you out of all the billions of people on earth and shown you that there is another path you need to be walking on. If you've already started down the path to eternal life, thank God for it. If you haven't made the commitment yet, listen closely—I think you may hear the phone ringing. **UN**

Ron Kelley is pastor of the Asheville, Greensboro and Hickory, North Carolina, congregations.

Treasure Digest

A Soft Answer

Sometime back, I was coaching an angry client. She interrupted, argued and progressively got agitated. Nor was I immune. As an old minister friend would say, I could feel my human nature crawling up my back!

Then I remembered Proverbs 15:1 that says in part, "A soft answer turns away wrath." So I lowered my voice and made my reply calmly. Another eruption; in repeating my counsel, I deliberately lowered my voice under hers. One more eruption. Once more I softly repeated the same answer.

Suddenly, she stopped and laughed. I thought "Aha!" The rest of the story? She quietly took my advice, and I gave it without antagonizing her.

Having once been an angry person, I found this marvelous! The Bible came alive. I saw what Proverbs 15:1 looked like!

Let's finish the verse: "But a harsh word stirs up anger." What does that look like? Picture my client with clenched fists, grimaced face and shrill words.

How can we bring Proverbs 15:1 to life?

1. *Under duress, valve the stress.*

Lowering one's voice brings calm and peace when communications become strained. Opposing viewpoints naturally occur, such as between husbands and wives, different personality types, employers and employees, etc. Truth is in the eye of the beholder: both can be dead right and dead wrong.

So we need to hit the pause button, as Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, says. We should lower our voice, valve our stress and try to see the right in the other person's view. We need to ask God to help us choose to be righteous instead of being right (that's another article for another day).

2. *Don't interrupt—zip it up!*

As much as I dislike being interrupted, I still struggle with this bad habit, especially if I slip and

allow myself to become emotionally entangled. Yet with God's help, I have made progress over the years, and you can, too.

And we must! For when we interrupt, we are devaluing the other person. We may as well hold up a big sign that proclaims, "My thoughts are more important than yours." This completely selfish gesture violates God's law of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Besides, only God has the right to say in effect, "My thoughts are higher than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Besides, love is never rude—the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 speaks to this.

Another minister friend taught me a valuable principle: God's way of life is focused all the time on what is good for the other person. That's a tall order! None of us can do that alone. But Jesus Christ in us can. And He left us the perfect example. The God's Word translation of 1 Peter 2:23 makes this plain: "Christ never verbally abused those who verbally abused Him."

I needed this reminder, for Satan is angry. The world is angry. Remember, anger is just one letter short of danger. Next time you face an angry situation, remember Proverbs 15:1: valve the stress and zip it! Soft words turn away wrath.

John Fox

Salt Lake City, Utah, congregation

Teaching Doctrine Through Bedtime Prayers

It is bedtime, and after the usual "I'm thirsty" routine, Patti gets on her knees beside her young son's bed and encourages him to do the same. She pulls him close with one arm around him and begins to pray.

"Father, you are very wonderful. You made the sun, the moon and all the stars. You are very good and you love us..." She continues on with a short but passionate prayer and then asks her 5-year-old to pray as she listens. Not surprisingly, he begins, "God, you are very wonderful. You made the sun, the moon, and all the stars." He mirrors his mother's awe in his own words.

So the bedtime routine continues. Night after night, year after year, parents transfer their knowledge of God to their child through bedtime prayers. It is not the only method they use to teach their children about God, but it is a very effective one.

The routine is simple. The end result is profound. A young mind begins to grasp that there is an invisible Being known and highly valued by Mom and Dad in a family relationship framework—they call Him Father. This Being is the Creator of the sun, moon, stars and all the wonderful things we see in our world.

Another night, the bedtime prayer includes, "Thank you, God, for sending us the rain today so our garden will grow." An impressionable mind takes in the belief that this great invisible Being provides the rain so food can grow. Later in life, he will come to rely on this great God who is not only the Creator but the Sustainer.

Bedtime prayers are an excellent tool with which to teach doctrine. Brevity is important. One small truth at a time is sufficient.

Repetition is essential. Prayers should differ night by night but come back to basic truths again and again.

And one more powerful secret is this. When you cuddle close to your child in prayer, you create in him a sense of security, love and relationship that he will come to associate with God, his heavenly Father.

Debbie Jo Bates

Bakersfield, California, congregation

A Picture Paints a Thousand Words

You may have heard the saying, "A picture

paints a thousand words." This expression came true to me recently during a visit to a secondhand shop. While strolling through the store, my eyes fixed on an amazing painting. When I looked at it, I immediately knew exactly what it said.

The painting had the most awesome table that seemed to go on for miles. It was set with the finest china and crystal. The dawn was just breaking into a beautiful sunrise that cast beautiful light upon the table. Without a word I knew what the painting was all about. This was a painting of a future event that I had read about in Matthew 22:2-3.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king [God the Father] who arranged a marriage for his son [Jesus], and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding."

Revelation 19:9 also describes this event: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"

I bought the painting and quickly hung it on a wall where I can see it daily. No matter how difficult life is, this painting will remind me that, if we endure to the end, I will, and you will, have the honor of sitting at the table with Christ and all the saints who have endured and died before us.

In the painting the seats are empty because they are yet to be filled at Christ's return. At the bottom of the painting there is a scripture, Luke 14:17: "At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready'" (New International Version). In the same context it says, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:15).

Yes, pictures do paint a thousand words. I did not have to look at the scripture to know what the painting was all about.

Every time I look at that painting I will be reminded that nothing in this life, good or bad, will compare to what God has in store for His saints who endure to the end.

Janet Treadway

Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregation



Turning the Hearts . . . Teach Your Children About Mercy

Consistency is an admirable trait when disciplining our children. Children feel more secure when they know what is expected of them and when discipline is applied when they do not meet the standards or keep the rules of the home or the laws of God.

However, there is another lesson to teach children along with being consistent in the way we handle discipline. That lesson is one of mercy and forgiveness. To help children grow up with an appreciation of the grace and forgiveness of God, it is essential that we teach them the quality of mercy.

Children learn primarily through behavioral methods when they are little. As they grow, they learn from example and positive instruction, which involve their cognitive or thinking abilities.

The best way to teach mercy is to employ mercy in their lives. Consider this hypothetical example.

You have asked your son Johnny to do his chores, but find that Johnny has only done one of his three chores. Instead, you find him playing video games on his Gameboy. When you remind Johnny that he did not finish his chores, he is genuinely sorry and promises to get right to them. (Remember, children are not yet converted and may not have the "deeper" repentance that we may expect of baptized persons.)

Instead of inflicting some form of appropriate discipline upon him, you as the parent tell him that you see that he is truly sorry that he forgot to do his chores and that you are going to forgive him this time. He still needs to finish his chores, but you will not punish him for forgetting this time. He will breathe a sigh of relief and learn a valuable lesson of mercy.

This helps model what God does for us. When we mess up and repent to God, we know He will forgive us upon true repentance. If the family knows of our mistake or sin, we may share with our families how glad we are that God is a forgiving God. This example will aid our children in realizing our God is not just waiting to discipline us, but is merciful (Psalm 130:3-4). He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18).

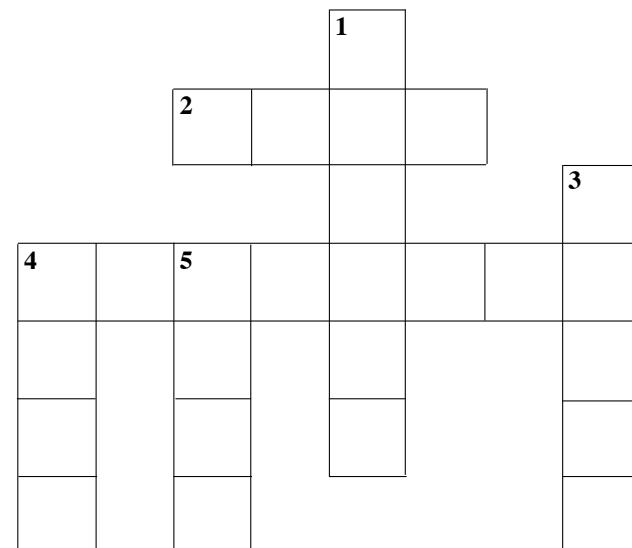
To lead our children to our loving Father, we must also show our children mercy so they may respond to God when they are older (Proverbs 22:6).

Remember Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Please help your children learn the quality of mercy by applying it to them occasionally and by being examples of those who truly appreciate it in their lives.

Gary E. Antion



Children's Corner Thanksgiving Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. He kneeled and gave thanks three times a day (Daniel 6:10).
3. He took a cup and gave thanks (Matthew 26:27).
4. He gave thanks to God for His "in-describable gift" (2 Corinthians 1:1; 9:15).
5. She gave thanks when she saw the baby Jesus (Luke 2:36-38).

Across:

2. He bowed and thanked the king (2 Samuel 14:22).
4. He gave thanks he was not like other men (Luke 18:11).

Which of these scriptures is not a good example of giving thanks? _____

Shelby Faith, St. Louis, Missouri

What Is Faith?

What is faith? Obviously it is something beyond what we can describe in physical terms. Faith is trust in God, but to what level? Is it the faith when we first come to the knowledge of God's truth? Is it the faith we come to when we are pushed beyond our comfort level in matters of health or jobs or obedience to God's law? Is it faith to know completely that we are in God's hands, no matter the outcome of any given situation?

You may have heard the story of the man who fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. According to the story, the following conversation ensued:

"Is anyone up there?"
 "I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe Me?"
 "Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can't hang on much longer."
 "That's all right—if you really believe, you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch."
 A moment of pause, then: "Is anyone else up there?"



We can laugh at situations such as that because we are not the man hanging by the branch on the side of a cliff.

In Hebrews 11:1 we are told that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." None of us has seen God directly, but as the years increase in our walk with God, we do see Him, don't we? We see Him in healings, in strength for keeping God's Word, in the peace of mind and trust in Him that we gain in our everyday lives.

In 1 John 4:18 we are told that perfect love casts out fear. Humanly speaking, we want that fear to be gone now! And yet, it is obvious as well that we don't have perfect love. Faith is also staying the course so God's love in us can be perfected and fear can be diminished.

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life.

All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

Faith is not merely your holding on to God—it is God holding on to you. He will not let you go (Deuteronomy 31:6).

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Each week we can grow in faith. Each trial can add to our trust and reliance in God. Each year we should be able to look back and see God's hand guiding, supporting and encouraging us.

The answer to my earlier questions is "yes." Faith is all of those things and more. Faith is allowing God to live in us to change us into a son or daughter of God—no matter what this physical life brings.

Dan Dowd

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

Sweet Peaches or Sour Lemons?

Once upon a time, there was a peach pit. Someone had eaten the peach one hot summer day and tossed the seed into the nearby woods. The soil was dark and rich, and the seed harbored itself there as it slowly grew into a slender, young peach tree, bearing few but delicious fruits.

How many times do we unknowingly plant seeds from the fruits of the Spirit? Maybe someday we'll

find they have grown into strong, sturdy young trees! More important, are we planting seeds from sweet peaches or sour lemons?

Though I personally believe in thinking positive, how about we think of a few biblical lemons? There was Nabal, first mentioned in 1 Samuel 25:2-3 where it says, "Now there was a man in Maon... and the man was very rich... The name of the man was Nabal... the man was harsh and evil in his doings."

Later in the story God "struck Nabal, and he died" (1 Samuel 25:38). God clearly does *not* like such sour lemons. But let's remember some good that came out of the story of Nabal. In verse 3 it says, "and the name of his wife [was] Abigail.

And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance." How did a girl like that get stuck with a guy like him? Perhaps at some point the lemon looked a lot like a peach!

But let's also note that lemons can become peaches, like in Acts when Saul the persecutor was converted and became Paul the apostle—talk about a really good peach!

But what if we have a personal lemon? In Revelation 3:12, Christ promises us, "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God... I shall write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem... And I will write on him My new name." What a time to look forward to while we "overcome" our personal lemons!

We need to toss peaches into the world, not lemons. We are told in 1 Timothy 4:12 to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." You never know who is watching, but we do know God sees all things.

Psalm 1:1-6 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

What seeds do you leave behind—sweet peaches or sour lemons?

Amanda Rupp

Youngstown, Ohio, congregation

My Baby Thief

My unborn baby has taught me spiritual lessons already. One of these is about anticipation and faith.

I never realized that the most difficult part of the whole pregnancy would be the last couple of weeks, and not necessarily because of the aches and pains. But not knowing when our little one will appear has been exhausting.

You see, there have been signs for weeks—I have been having contractions for 19 days now, the baby has dropped into the right position, and the midwives have said many times, "any day now." My husband and I go to bed thinking surely the baby will come in the night, and wake up every morning eagerly anticipating our new arrival that day. The rollercoaster ride of excitement and uncertainty has tired us out.

And we have discovered a new danger—getting overly excited too soon can leave us without the energy when the time actually



comes. Yet, the bags must be packed and ready in the car, the cell phones kept by our sides at all times, and we no longer venture more than 30 minutes from the birthing center—just in case.

What spiritual lesson has this taught me?

I am reminded that we all are eagerly anticipating Christ's return and all the joy that will bring (after some necessary "childbirth pains"). We have seen signs that the times are coming, but we cannot know exactly when. He will come "as a thief in the night" (Matthew 24:42-44; Luke 12:35-40).

In the meantime, we must balance our zeal and excitement with being in it for the long haul; we must metaphorically have the bags packed and in the car, always on the ready, yet living our lives day-to-day the best we can while we wait. We must go to bed every night and wake up every morning with that same hope and prayer—and yet not lose faith or energy when it doesn't happen yet.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, Paul writes that Christ will return as a thief in the night *and* as suddenly as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and that we should not let this event overtake us unaware. My husband and I cannot wait to meet our little one, who surely is coming soon; even more should we be eager to meet our Savior!

Kirsten Nelte

Tacoma, Washington, congregation

Covetousness Lurks on the Wal-Mart Shelves

There are so many items in a Wal-Mart store that people see that make them say to themselves, "I need that! I want that!" This leads them to try to find a way to get the items, even if they don't have the money.

Exodus 20:17 says, "You shall not covet." But people go as far as to use the money that should be set aside to pay their bills, and that shouldn't be done.

Luke 12:22-24 reminds us that God provides us with our needs. Jesus Christ also said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

This world is filled with all kinds of things to want. We will have to say no to many of them. God wants us to learn contentment and not fall into the trap of covetousness. When we find something we really want, we can carefully consider it, plan and save and then buy it without regrets—or covetousness.

Joel Fritts

Springfield, Missouri, congregation

How to Stay in the Faith

Forty years ago this July, my wife and I were baptized into the Body of Christ. Many of the people there, friends and ministers alike, are no longer in the faith. They have chosen to give up on God's way and rejoin the world. Some of you have also stayed the course as long or even longer. What can we pass along to those who have come into the faith later and who are wondering, "What has kept you faithful?"

I was asked this very question and three points came to mind:

1. Keep your eyes on the Kingdom.

Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:31-34).

Early on, I heard a sermon about how we can block out the sun with a dime if we hold it close to our eye. Likewise, we can allow problems, which compared to the Kingdom of God are minuscule, to block out the vision of God's Kingdom. The gospel is of the Kingdom. The Sabbath and Holy Days point to—and our hope and the hope of the whole world is—the Kingdom. Nothing, no offense, no problem, no trial, no doubt can be allowed to block that vision.

2. Keep your hand on the plow.

Jesus said that no one who puts his hand to the plow

and turns back is fit for the Kingdom (Luke 9:57-62). We must be doing the work, having our hearts, our prayers, our tithes and offerings in the work of the Church, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world and serving in the local congregation. If we are an active part of the local church, we build that sense of belonging, community and family that binds us together. Like a threefold cord, we are not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

3. Keep your feet planted firmly on the Rock.

Never forget, Christ is the Head of the Church. People have problems—always have, always will. Christ will always work it out. The work will succeed. As He took care of things in the past, so He does today. Those who rely on Him, trust in Him and stand on Him will not be moved. We must build our house on that Rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

Jesus told us in Revelation 3, "I know your works... you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name... Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial... *Hold fast what you have*, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more" (Revelation 3:8-12, emphasis added).

We *must* keep our eyes on the Kingdom, our hands on the plow and our feet planted firmly on that Rock.

Knute Josifek

Los Angeles, California, congregation

Renew Your Membership

When Cindy turned 40, her sister gave her a special gift, a membership to a health club. She did want to get her body back in shape, after all. She had tried working out at home in her living room watching workout videos, but it was too easy to get distracted or put it off. Cindy knew that she needed the help and encouragement of the staff and other members to keep her on track.

At first Cindy was gung ho, went three times a week, lost 10 pounds and even started cycling with some of the friends she made. When the gym changed management, two of her friends got a better deal at another gym, and a third bought a Bowflex. Cindy didn't feel as motivated to go anymore.

She would show up once or twice a month just to appease her conscience. But she didn't go out of her way to get involved, take classes or meet more people. The weight started creeping back on.

Even though she often felt better after her workout, she usually didn't feel like making the extra effort. Life got busy and excuses came easy.

How many of us have signed up to be members in God's Church only to lose interest after a while?

We need to be involved and active in our membership like a member of a gym needs to be:

- Just because you're a member of a gym doesn't mean you'll become fit and lose weight. You have to actually go and exercise.
- You can't just show up and watch other people work out and expect any results.
- It takes active participation and sometimes effort.

The Church is essentially our spiritual health club. We are all members of the Body of Christ, *fily joined together*. When a hand goes missing, the whole body feels its loss. The missing member loses out because she doesn't fulfill her potential or fulfill her role as an inspiration and example to others.

As I've watched several Cindys slowly let their memberships expire, it occurs to me that the hole they each left behind was never filled. I've experienced phantom pain from the loss ever since.

We are all needed by our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. If we're not available to help each other, we're not fulfilling our roles as members. If we don't relate our tests, trials, blessings and miracles, we're not building the bonds that hold the body together.

So, let's renew our membership!

Jennifer Hoyer

Columbia, Maryland, congregation



Local Church Updates

Flint Celebrates 40th: How Good and How Pleasant

The Flint, Michigan, congregation celebrated its 40th anniversary July 21. Members from the Saginaw and Lansing, Michigan, congregations joined in on the celebration, and 135 attended in all, with some brethren coming from as far away as Arizona.

The Sabbath day began with worship and songs of praise. Gary McConaughy, pastor of the Grand Rapids and Cadillac, Michigan, congregations, gave the opening message on Hebrews 2:1-3, explaining that "we must give the



Members who attended in Flint 40 years ago plus pastor Steve and Evelyn Shafer (photo by Ken Lockheart)

more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?"

Melvin Rhodes, pastor of the Lansing congregation, who was the pastor of Flint in the early '90s, gave a very informative sermon on "Children Are a Blessing." Everyone delighted in the abundant portions of spiritual food that were given.

We were also blessed with an elegantly catered meal that followed afterwards. During the meal a slide show was provided by Corbin Rose and music by Kyle Davis. The Flint choir concluded this 40th anniversary celebration by singing a series of special hymns.

The collaborated effort to make this a very special occasion brought to mind Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Lynne Burton

Zimbabwe Members Tour Kariba Dam and Power Station

On June 3, 2007, seven members living in the tourist town of Kariba, Zimbabwe, had the significant privilege of touring the Kariba hydroelectric power station.

While visiting the dam wall itself is a fairly easy matter, only requiring routine clearance at the border post, touring the power station is somewhat of a privilege as the facility is a high-security area. Prospective tourists have to make

advance application and must be thoroughly vetted before being granted permission—a process that may take up to two months.

The Kariba Dam was designed by French engineer Andre Coyne and was constructed by an Italian consortium, Imprest, between July 1956 and December 1959. The dam and power station were officially opened on May 17, 1960, by Queen Elizabeth II.

The Kariba Dam, which is jointly owned by the governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe, formed what was for many years the largest man-made lake in the world. It now ranks fourth after the Hoover Dam in the United States, another in Russia and the Aswan High

Dam in Egypt. The lake is 280 kilometers (175 miles) long and averages 18 kilometers (11 miles) wide.

More than a million cubic meters of concrete was used in the dam. It stands 128 meters (416 feet) high, and its crest length stretches 617 meters (2,000 feet) across the Zambezi River.

The power station on the south bank in Zimbabwe has six generators that can produce 125 megawatts each. The four generators on the north bank in Zambia can produce 150 megawatts each. The generators are housed in two machine halls carved out of rock 152 meters (nearly 500 feet) below ground level.

Constructed nearly 50 years ago, Kariba Dam still remains a testimony to mankind's creative ingenuity. It is a notable civil engineering wonder.

Dennis Sawona and Mike Mukarati

Upstate New York Congregations Visit CMOG

On Sunday, July 22, the upstate New York congregations gathered at the Corning Museum of Glass for a day of fun and exploration.

The day started at 10 a.m. at the museum, where 24 people from all over upstate New York were able to go through the glass museum and see wonders and hot glass shows. They were able to see an exhibit of botanical wonders in the Harvard glass flowers from the mid-1800s to 1900s.

After the museum, everyone traveled to Lanrik and Carrie Kester's home for a picnic that included almost 50 people. The picnic included a scavenger hunt, where teams of all ages followed clues around the property and ended with a candy prize. The winning team was Georgianna Borgna and her son, Brandon. The men enjoyed some skeet shooting and others played volleyball, badminton and bocce.

Scott Lord

Houston Hosts Preteen Camp

For more than 20 years, Houston, Texas, has been the host for a preteen camp, which was held this summer from June 3 to 6. The combination of a nice facility, beautiful weather with low humidity (which is rare for Houston in June), an excellent staff and very enthusiastic campers set the stage for an exciting four days. The energy and excitement of the adult and teen staff was perfectly matched to the more than 50 campers.



Houston preteen campers enjoy canoeing, swimming pool basketball and other outdoor games



Participation in the vast array of activities gave every camper the opportunity to be a part of this positive environment. A favorite activity this year was swimming, with the highlight being "swimming pool basketball," which always included the staff teamed up with campers to make for some very exciting games. Canoeing was added this year and the campers, along with the staff, did a great job of keeping the canoes upright!

Aside from the welcome break from the heat, campers were very excited about arts and crafts and music. We had a great variety of crafts, plus the music activity always kept the campers enthusiastic as they prepared for the annual talent show. It is always a delight to see the creativity of each dorm!

Christian education fulfills its role of keeping the campers aware of God in their surroundings. Many of the lessons learned are used in recreation when campers are mixing together and learning to rely on each other as a team in outdoor activities.

Field Day was held on the last day of camp. The campers found out how far they could throw a softball, how many free throws they could make, just how wet a water balloon really is, how fast

they could run in the 50-yard dash, who could hula hoop and jump rope the longest and just how low they could go in the limbo. This was an exciting morning for all of the campers, as brother and sister dorms competed against each other.

Elisa Hees

Northwest Preteens Learn to "Bear All Things"

Nestled in the foothills of majestic Mt. Hood in Welches, Oregon, Camp Arrah Wanna hosted the Northwest preteen summer camp in August 2007. Towering green trees kept the summer temperatures comfortable as 67 preteens and 34 staff gathered for the greatest summer camp experience ever!

Preteens and staff came from as far away as California, Colorado, Nevada, Ohio, Utah and New York to experience our unique camp. Camp director John Cafourek and his wife, Sandy, scrambled to organize activities for young campers as this was our first year in a new location.

Preteen campers enthusiastically applied the camp theme for 2007 from 1 Corinthians 13, "Love...Bears All Things." Bears showed up everywhere at camp, from the camp banners to the orientation meeting, in sports classes and at campfire where a very large bear showed up one evening. Themes from other years have been "God Is There, and God Is There for You"; "Challenge Yourself"; "Bee All You Can Bee"; and



"Love Bear" visits campfire and makes dorm G-1 girls Sarah and Jane laugh; dorm G-2 floating on the cold Salmon River (photos by Kandy Goodrich)



"F.R.O.G. — Fully Rely on God."

Girls and boys enjoyed the brand-new swimming pool, honed archery skills, slogged through the mud pit, hiked, created arts and crafts projects, played miniature golf, participated in sports and dance classes and floated down the cold Salmon River. Enthusiastic Audry Bauer from Ohio led young campers in lively activities and songs at campfire each evening.

Lodging was at a premium this year. Since there were more girls than boys,

G-3 girls and counselors actually camped out in tents to ease the dorm situation. There may have been a few chilly nights, but no complaints were heard.

Kathy Foster from Oregon taught a Christian living class showing campers how important it is to learn about God and His promises to us so they will be able to trust Him in difficult circumstances.

Bill Grinnell from California helped the campers understand the meaning of bearing each other's burdens. The campers were the Amalakites and the Israelites, on each end of a tug-of-war rope. When "Moses" (Andy Gann's) arms began to lose strength and lower, the Israelites began to lose the war. When Aaron (Bradlee Rosenberry) and Joshua (Jonathan Little) helped Moses keep his arms up, the Israelites prevailed.

Archery instructor Carl Kinsella taught the campers about the compass of life. If you do certain kinds of things, the compass swings to the wrong way of life. If you do good things, the compass swings to the right way of life.

Donna Foster from Washington state taught a lesson defining love as taken from 1 Corinthians 13.

Staff and campers worked together, played together and bonded together. We encouraged one another to follow God's way of life and build strong relationships with those of like mind. Staff from the teen camp (which occurred at the same time) praised the preteen camp. They said the results of preteen camp experiences and training were apparent at teen camp as younger teens were already "in the Zone."

Staffing preteen camp requires a mature and dedicated group of volunteers. Working with younger children is labor intensive—but the results are well worth it. Summer camp is a place where positive teaching and positive peer pressure can help children make right choices. Working together to turn the hearts of our children toward God while they are still in their formative years is a great goal.

The Northwest preteen camp in 2008 will be at Camp Arrah Wanna near Welches, Oregon, Aug. 3-6, 2008. Parents and teens are welcome to apply as staff. If you would like to send a preteen to camp, send your requests to camp director John Cafourek, P.O. Box 5965, Salem, OR 97304, or e-mail him at cafourek@comcast.net.

Kathy Foster and Sandy Cafourek

Sherman Youth Present Pentecost Play

All the symbols and history of the day of Pentecost were well represented

May 27 for the Sherman, Texas, congregation and all their guests. The youth presented a play for us in the morning service called "Covenant at Mt. Sinai." The setting consisted of three palm trees and a small brown tent, huge rocks



Zachary and D.J. Cartwright play Moses and Aaron as the Sherman youth perform "Covenant at Mt. Sinai" (photos by John Lusk)

and boulders, then a tall Mt. Sinai.

With programs, the audience followed the two acts of the play, including joining in with the children of Israel when they sang "Praise God's Name." The first act was Exodus 15, when Moses and Israel thanked the Lord for deliverance from Egypt after crossing the Red Sea. Miriam, played by Jessie Brock, led all the women in a beautiful circle dance while everyone sang. The other women were portrayed by Makenna Brock, Mara Efimov, Rhianna Cartwright, Kate Ledbetter and Kaela Pierce. Zachary Cartwright did an excellent job in his part as Moses.

Act two was Exodus 19 and 20 when Israel was camped in the wilderness of Sinai. Aaron (D.J. Cartwright) reminded his sons Nadab, Eleazar and Abihu (Cooper Pierce, Braydon Brock and Wiley Brock) of the lessons God was teaching His people.

Joshua (Justin Brock) told everyone to "remember" these important Holy Days. Aaron spoke of obedience to God's voice and keeping His covenant.

Moses prepared the people, and they stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai, hearing sounds of loud thunder and all heard the Lord's voice (read by Bill Cooksey) from Exodus 20:2-17 and 19:5. After this, Moses returned from the mountain carrying the Ten Commandments on tables of stone. Then the Israelites shouted together, "All the words the LORD has spoken, we will do!"

Many displays were placed around the meeting room, including two wheat loaves, pictures, maps, scripture handouts, harvests and festivals charts, fruit baskets with fruits-of-the-Spirit posters and various bright blue flower arrangements.

For the younger children, there was a display of Pentecost pictures to color, Moses books to look at and small stuffed animals to select from. Several puzzles, covenant and commandment lists were available for the older children to choose from.

For special music, 10-year-old Ginny Morris from Dallas played a wonderful

piece, "Whirling Leaves," on the piano. Our attendance for the day was a record-breaking 108, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the children's play, the fine sermons and messages, the happy fellowship and confirming the promises together from our wonderful Father and His plan for us!

Pam Chambers

North Carolina Bids Farewell to the Haeffeles, Welcomes the Kelleys

At the end of August and into the first of September, three congregations in North Carolina have had to bid farewell to longtime pastoral team Mr. and Mrs. Jim Haeffele, and they have then welcomed to their first pastorate, Mr. and Mrs. Ron Kelley.

The Haeffeles first came to North Carolina when they were transferred to the Greensboro congregation in 1989. Following the formation of the United Church of God in 1995, Mr. Haeffele started congregations in Greensboro and Hickory, North Carolina, and Roanoke, Virginia. The circuit was eventually changed to include the three congregations in the western half of North Carolina: Asheville, Hickory and Greensboro.

Each of the three congregations in



North Carolina congregations say good-bye to Jim Haeffele (above) and welcome Ron and Nancy Kelley (right)

North Carolina bid a special and heartfelt farewell to Jim and Lois Haeffele, thanking them for their love, service, instruction, encouragement and friendship. Following the final Sabbath of Aug. 25, the Haeffeles moved on to southern Florida where Mr. Haeffele will serve as the regional pastor for Florida, as well as pastor of the Miami and Fort Myers congregations.

Following right on the heels of the Haeffeles' departure was the warm welcoming of Ron and Nancy Kelley. Each congregation carried out potluck socials to allow everyone a chance to meet and become acquainted. The Kelleys, from Ohio, brought their exuberance and kindness, and Mr. Kelley got to work right away by playing piano accompaniment for the song service and by encouraging everyone to use their strengths and talents to build on the foundation previously established.

Lee Dolby

"Making the Right Choices for God Today" Women's Seminar Held in Oregon

Ladies of all ages and backgrounds came together on March 15 to 18 to attend the 2007 Women's Retreat outside of Canby, Oregon. The group filled the rooms of



Creating 145 blankets for the Project Linus charity; special music at the Women's Retreat in Oregon

the Riverfront Lodge at Canby Grove Christian Camp and Conference Center, a hall that was conducive to much laughter and fellowship and gave the weekend a Feastlike atmosphere.

Friday night began with a satisfying dinner and good conversation at the nearby dining hall where friendly staff were attentive to every need. Afterwards, the group assembled for evening seminars examining the lives and lessons of Eve and Mary, and the contrasting effect of their choices, which were led by Dyanne Dick and LeeAnn Luker respectively. Throughout the weekend, the messages focused on lessons we can learn from Old Testament women and the choices they made.

The Sabbath weather was beautiful—filled with abundant sunshine. At a morning church service, Dennis Luker gave the first split sermon on lessons from Proverbs 31 and Robert Dick gave the following message about choices. An ensemble of ladies sang an uplifting piece for special music.

Breaks in between meals and messages gave ample time for visiting, perusing the table of favorite photos each woman was asked to bring, resting and/or exploring the grounds. Becky Homor led an afternoon

seminar relating the story of Hannah and how each of us can deal with depression in our own lives or in the lives of our loved ones. An afternoon table discussion inspired interaction and critical thinking about how each of us can make the right choices for God in our present society.

The evening panel presentation, which included some moving personal stories shared by Nicole Graham, Lila Lumpkin, Sharon Browning and Patty Sexton, was a highlight for all. Each woman described a pivotal point from her past that changed her life and perspective forever. Crafting, card making and lots of chatting filled the rest of the evening and extended well into the night.

Sunday began with a continental breakfast and a video presentation from the home office.

The rest of the morning was filled with a children's blanket project for the nonprofit organization known as Project



Linus. Under the direction of Terri Werner, groups of women collaborated to cut, tie and organize the creation of 145 blankets for charity.

After all that hard work, everyone sat down to a delicious brunch and the last round of shared stories and conversations before the cleanup and the good-byes began. Although it was a whirlwind weekend, it was also a refreshing one as bonds of friendship were built and strengthened.

Debbie Werner

Five Generations Attend Dayton

Betty Wagle's story began in 1953 when her late husband, Victor Wagle Sr., started listening to Hebert W. Armstrong on WCKY. Mr. Wagle put a piece of tape



Standing: Suzie Grady, Victor Wagle; seated: Betty Wagle, Adrianna Sue Hutchison and Amanda Hutchison (photo by Carolyn Pacleb)

on the big clock in the living room. He wanted their children to know exactly when it was 8 p.m., the time for everyone to gather each night to hear Mr. Armstrong's radio broadcast.

The family started attending church in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1963, and Mr. and Mrs. Wagle were baptized in March 1964. Their son, Victor Wagle Jr., went on to raise his own family in the Church. Their granddaughter, Suzie Grady, also raised her son, Ben, and daughter,

Amanda, in the Dayton, Ohio, congregation.

Amanda has been performing vocal solos for special music since she was a little girl. And now she has given Mrs. Wagle another reason to rejoice. The new bundle of joy, great-great-granddaughter Adriana Sue Hutchison, arrived Nov. 29, 2006. She weighed 7 pounds 11 ounces and measured 20½ inches long. So begins the fifth generation!

Carolyn Pacleb

Congratulations, Graduate!

Caity Kovatch

Parent: Christy Kovatch
Congregation: Canton, Ohio
High School Accomplishments: Caity



Caity Kovatch

was on the Honor Roll and participated in Key Club for two years, International Club for two years and choir for four years.

Church Activities/Hobbies/Interests/etc.: Caity enjoys attending summer camps every year (Camp Heritage and preteen Camp Buckeye). She likes sports—especially tennis, softball, swimming and soccer—summertime, working out, running, music, guitar and piano.

Plans After Graduation: Caity's plans are to attend college this fall, majoring in business and/or marketing, and to attend ABC in 2008.

Favorite Scripture: "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21, New International Version).

Volunteer Firefighter Talks to Sabbath School Class

On Aug. 11, Oconee County, Georgia, volunteer firefighter Neil Boss gave the Jefferson, Georgia, Sabbath school class a demonstration in fire safety. He explained to the children what to do in case of a fire and asked interactive questions.

Since small children might be afraid, he helped local teen James Mann dress up in his fire suit to show them what a real firefighter looks and sounds like. He then gave out stickers and coloring books.

Neil Boss, who attends with his parents and siblings, has been an outstanding example both in his community and his local congregation.

Judi Mann

Artist Discovers Late-Blooming Passion

Peggy Montano, a member of the Huntsville, Alabama, congregation, was featured in an article in *The Huntsville Times* on March 28 by Gregg L. Parker. The article began:

"While many artists first became interested in art during childhood, Peggy Montano discovered art as her passion when she was left with an empty nest.

"After her children left home, Mon-



Huntsville artist featured in paper

tano took lessons from talented instructors, studied books and videos, and visited museums and galleries to learn 'how these creative people made their inspiring art.'"

The article mentioned that she was the featured artist for April at the Clay House Museum.

"The Huntsville Art League, Huntsville Museum of Art, Leeds Art Center, Wind River Artists' Guild of Dubois [Wyoming], and the Red River Watercolor Society juried show in Fargo [North Dakota], have displayed her work. 'Huntsville Sketch Book,' sponsored by Huntsville Botanical Garden, includes a painting by Montano.

"Recently, she had a painting accepted in the Energen... Art Competition." Though she was not one of the top five winners, her oil painting titled "Paint Rock Valley" was purchased by one of the company's vice presidents to be displayed at Energen Plaza, the company's headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama.

"To view her artwork, visit www.artistcolony.net/peggymontano."

Peggy Montano and her husband, Joseph, a deacon in United, have been married 57 years.

Joyce Dunscombe

Fort Worth and Coleman Teens Take Trip

The Fort Worth and Coleman, Texas, teens recently took a four-day trip to San Antonio, Texas. They, along with their chaperones (Dave and Lori West and Brian and Laura Anderson) arrived at the Alamo KOA Campground Sunday afternoon and set up camp. After dinner we got off to a great start with a series of get-to-know-you games.

The next morning started off bright and early with breakfast, prepared by the teens, which was followed by a Compass Check presented by Dave

West titled "Expanding Your Circle of Friends." After the Compass Check, it was a short drive to Six Flags Fiesta Texas, which is both an amusement park and a water park. It was a full day of fun for all and was capped off that evening by a laser light and fireworks show.

The next day the Compass Check was presented by Brian Anderson on the subject of "Spending Your Time Wisely." Then we set off for a second full day of activities at Six Flags Fiesta Texas. Thanks to a 30-minute down-pour, which cooled things off and caused a large number of people to leave the park, we enjoyed our remaining time and left exhausted and ready for a good night's sleep.

The final day of our trip the Compass Check was presented by Dave West on the importance of not judging others before getting to know them. After packing up our belongings, we drove to Austin, Texas, to visit the state capital. We ate lunch at the oldest German restaurant in Austin and then walked to the capitol building for a tour.

After the guided tour of the capitol building, we were encouraged to stop by the visitor galleries of the Senate and House of Representatives chambers. We were taken by surprise when we stepped into the House of



Fort Worth and Coleman, Texas, teens visit state capitol building in Austin (photo by Brian Anderson)

Representatives just in time to witness the governor of Texas, Rick Perry, giving an introductory message as Phil Wilson, the new secretary of state for Texas, was about to take his oath of office.

As soon as the ceremony concluded, we finished our exciting four days of activities by driving safely home. In addition to having a wonderful time, the teens in the group made some new friends, strengthened existing friendships and came back with lots of exciting stories to tell.

Laura Anderson and Dave West

Bismarck Helps With Third Annual LifeNets Triathlon

The North Dakota Chapter of LifeNets sponsored the third annual LifeNets Triathlon, held at the Mandan Community Center on Aug. 26, 2007.

The night before the event the Bis-

marck, North Dakota, United Church of God held a dinner at the Pizza Ranch Restaurant, where LifeNets president Victor Kubik showed his thanks for their efforts in the planning of the event and for the volunteers who would be at the triathlon the following



Tracey Freije, Victor Kubik and Pam Redline with cake; right, July 4th LifeNets float



day. The congregation is 29 strong, but with prayers and hard work, all helped in some way to make the event a success.

Church members Tracey Freije, Barb and Vern Hoover, Gladys and Levin Rieger, Dave Fisher and Lee Aljets helped to man the concessions and grill hamburgers and hot dogs. With over 80 participants there that day, as well as family members, the concessions stand was busy throughout the day. Members from the congregation also made baked goods to sell at the concessions stand. Lyla Van Orman provided her voice for singing the national anthem to begin the race.

Member Rod Freije helped in traffic control at one intersection for the bike route to ensure the safety of the participants. Along the running path were members Ralph and Pam Redline and Mark Halverson. Pam also handled participant registrations with the help of Barb Schulz, as well as riding the bike path with the younger children who took part in the event.

Younger members Marie Freije and Britton Redline helped to patrol the transition area as well as run the results to the command center of the race so that the times could be compiled.

Mr. Kubik and Bismarck pastor Herb Teitgen teamed up with a lady serving on the triathlon committee to participate in the Olympic distance triathlon team event.

It was a busy day, but a very gratifying day as well. This year's event grossed \$3,900, with the net proceeds going to LifeNets projects locally and internationally.

Next year's triathlon will take place Aug. 17, 2008.

Tracey Freije

Inland Northwest Ladies Have 10th Retreat

A record number of ladies gathered together, once again at Camp Gifford on beautiful Deer Lake, Washington, for the Inland Northwest Ladies Educa-

tion Seminar. There were at least 70 who attended on the Sabbath, May 19, and slightly less for the rest of the weekend. This was our 10th retreat! The caretakers, who serve us at the camp, presented us with a cake in honor of the occasion.

This year's theme was "Fruitful Branches," and we had a number of good presentations by the ladies. On Friday evening we were given a list of various interests of each of the attendees, with the goal of figuring out who went with what interest. It was a great way to get around and meet everyone.

Saturday, Dennis Luker gave the sermon on the Proverbs 31 woman, bringing in the spiritual perspective on the subject.

In the afternoon, Joyce Iiams presented an interesting speech on our spiritual growth and spoke on the

spiritual potential we all have and how it develops in different ways throughout our lives. She used a comparison of the care and nurture of grape vines to show these concepts.

Val Deininger presented a warm talk about going to our sister when we have a personal problem with her and the best ways to deal with the situation.

Bev Pronishan discussed the path to spiritual growth and how we need to take time out to think about these things and meditate on just where we are spiritually.

Once again we had a tea party and tea cup exchange for our Saturday evening meal, followed by a fun game designed to help us all get to know each other better.

Sunday morning we heard from Nancy Corbett, Kristina Crane and Nancy Czech on the things that have happened in each of their lives to help them develop spiritually. Our final speaker was LeeAnn Luker, who used the story of Cinderella to show us how to prepare to be brides of Christ.

Many ladies brought their homemade items to display, and we had a good showing of different talents. Even though the weather was cool, it was a pleasant and warm gathering for all who participated and, as always, we look forward to next year.

Nancy Czech

Cobie Visser: 90 Years "Young"

Jacoba Kamminga, known to family and friends as Cobie, was born Nov. 14, 1917, in the province of Friesland, Holland.

In 1938, on June 7, she married Martin Visser and they had four children, Anneke, Janneke, Berend and Jimike, who were all born in Holland.

The Visser family emigrated to South Africa in 1953 where Martin Visser was employed as a fitter for SASOL. The family relocated to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1959 where Martin worked for a large cement factory on the outskirts of Bulawayo. He managed a "small-holding" where the family lived, grew vegetables and kept a few cows.

Martin then purchased a dairy farm in the Queens district northeast of Bulawayo and in 1964 their son Berend answered an advertisement in the *Personality* magazine for *The Plain Truth*. He received the magazine regularly and passed it on to his parents, who also became subscribers.

In 1967, daughter Anneke and her husband, Oliver Bean, attended Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, England, where they were also able to expand their musical talents.

Then in 1968 Martin and Cobie attended the Feast of Tabernacles for the first time at Scottburgh, on the south coast of Natal, South Africa. Two years later they were baptized in their farm reservoir.

The farm was sold in 1980 and they managed the farm of a Church member, Keith Keogh, at Nymadlovu, northwest of Bulawayo.

Cobie has faced many trials during her life, and she remembers in particu-



Cobie Visser, pictured here at the Feast in Uvongo, turns 90 this month

lar being attacked on two occasions in the farm store. Although the store came under fire and was riddled with bullet holes, she escaped unharmed.

Once she was confronted by a highly venomous Mozambican spitting cobra that spat venom into her eyes. This was an extremely painful experience, but after being anointed, she recovered with no damage to her eyes.

In 1993 Martin and Cobie returned to South Africa to have access to better medical facilities.

Cobie has been widowed for some years now and lives with her daughter Anneke, also a widow, at Ramsgate on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Their home is close to the Uvongo Feast sites, so she is still able to celebrate the Feast each year.

Cobie is still in good health and is proud of her 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Jubi Jones and Reg Brink

Sabbath School Classes in St. Louis Area Enter "the Zone"

On Sept. 8, children in the Sabbath school classes in the St. Louis, Missouri, area entered "the Zone." Invitations were sent out to each child

See "Local Church Updates," page 31

Announcements

Births

Aaron and Linda (Aguilar) Farnon of the Stockton, California, congregation are happy to announce the birth of their second child, Noland Aquila Farnon. He was born on Oct. 7, 2006. Noland weighed 9.2 pounds and was 22 inches long. Big sister



Noland Aquila Farnon

Dalyce is enjoying teaching him a few baby signs along with nursery rhymes. Noland enjoys music, especially drumming on toys, and playing with wooden puzzles.

Kirk and Kristine (Williams) Talbott of the Garden Grove, California, congrega-



Victoria Talbott with big brother Addison and big sister Zoë

tion (soon to be Austin, Texas) are ecstatic to announce the birth of their fourth child, Victoria Tegan Talbott. "Tori" was born Aug. 20, 2007, and weighed in at 8 pounds even and 20 inches long. Grandparents Jean Talbott of Dallas, Texas, and Richard and Marty Scholz of Worcester, Massachusetts, are looking forward to seeing their new grandchild soon. Her brother Addison and sister Zoë had high hopes for a younger sibling, and so far neither have been disappointed.

Thad and Kim (Hemsley) Roemer, along with their son, Nathaniel, are very happy to announce the birth of Emilia



Emilia Paige Roemer

Paige. Emilia was born March 19, 2007, weighing 6 pounds 7 ounces and measuring 18 inches long. She is happy and doing very well. Emilia is the third grandchild for both sets of grandparents, Dave and Pat Hemsley from Dayton, Ohio, and Earl and Carol Roemer from Anchorage, Alaska.

Maribel and Charlie Larkin of the Williamsburg, Virginia, congregation are very happy to share the joy of the birth of their



Ian Sebastian Larkin

first child, Ian Sebastian. Ian was born on Dec. 31, 2006, weighing 7 pounds 1 ounce and measuring 20½ inches in length.

He is the first grandchild of Alfonso and Consuelo Herrera Alonso of the Lima, Peru, congregation and Charles and Jane Larkin of Westerly, Rhode Island. Ian is a very happy and curious niño who takes great pride in keeping his parents up late at night.

Ron and Lori (Lambert) Holloway are pleased to announce the birth of their second child, Mason Joe Holloway, born Feb. 1, 2007. Mason weighed in at a healthy 8 pounds 10 ounces and was 21 inches long. Big brother Jackson is Mason's biggest fan. The family attends the Elmira, New York,



Mason Joe Holloway with big brother Jackson

congregation along with proud grandparents Johnnie and Hazel Lambert.

Jeffery and Tzintziki Kramer are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Johnathan Justus Kramer. Johnathan was



Johnathan Justus Kramer

born on May 1, 2007, weighing 5 pounds 15 ounces and measuring 19½ inches long. The family lives in Phoenix, Arizona, and attends the Phoenix Northwest congregation. They are enjoying every minute of their first child.

Brian and Rebecca (Olmstead) Babcock are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter, Rylie Claire, born July 6, 2007. Rylie is the fifth grandchild of Audrey and the late William Babcock of the Huntsville, Alabama, congregation and the ninth grandchild of George and the late Carol Olmstead of the Chicago,



Rylie Claire Babcock

Illinois, congregation. The Babcocks attend the Minneapolis, Minnesota, congregation.

José Roberto and Barbara (Nickels) Parada of Auburn, Washington, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, Hannah Jordan Rose Parada. Hannah was born June 7, 2007. She weighed 6 pounds 11 ounces and was 19 inches long. Hannah is the first grandchild of proud grandpar-



Hannah Jordan Rose Parada

ents José and Teresita Parada of San Salvador, El Salvador, and the second grandchild of Shirley Nickels of Battleground, Washington, and the late Richard Nickels. Hannah has a gentle spirit and loves meeting new people. She is fourth generation in God's Church on both her mother's and father's sides of the family.

Mike and Amy Wood of the Terre Haute, Indiana, congregation are very happy to announce the birth of their second grandson, Beau William Mishler. Beau was born Aug. 30, 2007, and he



Beau William Mishler

weighed 8 pounds 3 ounces and was 20½ inches long. Proud parents are Bryan and Amanda (Wood) Mishler. Beau is their

second child. Luke, age 22 months, is now a big brother.

Weddings

Dale and Twila Yates of Zephyrhills, Florida, are pleased to announce the May



Stephen and Stefanie McNeely

20, 2007, marriage of their daughter, Stefanie Ruth, to Stephen David II, son of Steve and Mary McNeely of Hawkins, Texas. Set against the backdrop of a beautiful blue lake and the sculpted Hollis Gardens, the outdoor ceremony was co-officiated by the bride and groom's grandfathers, Jack Fike and Melton McNeely, both elders in the United Church of God. The maid of honor was Stefanie's longtime childhood friend, Ashley D'Antonio, also of Zephyrhills. The best man was Stephen's high school friend and former bandmate, Mark Demiglio, of Denton, Texas.

After an elegant reception and dinner hosted by the Yates in the stately Magnolia Building, the couple was off to Cozumel for a relaxing week of honeymooning. Stephen and Stefanie currently live in Tyler, Texas, where they both work while finishing their degrees in teaching and nutrition respectively.

Anniversaries

Hugh and Gloria (Aguirre) Harden met at college and were married in Fallon,



Hugh and Gloria Harden

Nevada, Aug. 25, 1957. Their children and the Boise, Idaho, congregation celebrated their 50th anniversary with an hors d'oeuvres reception Aug. 25, 2007.

Gloria spent 24 years in the elementary education field. Hugh worked for General

Electric as a mechanical engineer until 1962 when they moved to the Boise area to assist Hugh's father in his well-drilling business. They bought out the well-drilling business in 1972, and Hugh and Gloria still run it. They have always worked together as a team.

Hugh and Gloria were baptized in 1968 and have attended and faithfully served in the Boise congregation ever since. They love their church—and all the people who work so diligently in serving in that area—very much.

They have four children: Lorinda and Jim Springer and grandson Jim C. of Sacramento, California, and granddaughter Kimberly and her husband Kyle Mullen of Corvallis, Oregon; David and Lorrye Harden and grandson Brandon of Bonney Lake, Washington; Becky and Mike Bennett and granddaughters Heather and Erica of Loveland, Ohio; and Talitha and Steve Ulsberger and grandsons Ryan and Jared of Bonney Lake, Washington.

They are very proud of their children and grandchildren. They appreciate all the love and kindness shown by their family and wonderful friends.

Bob and Janice Wilmoth were married on June 22, 1957, in Newport, Kentucky.



Janice and Bob Wilmoth

The Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation surprised them with a cake and punch social to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary.

They moved from Kentucky to Warren, Michigan, in 1960 when Bob hired on with Remington Rand Univac. He worked on large-frame computers for 35 years.

Bob worked the afternoon shift and listened to Mr. Armstrong on WCKY radio on the way home each evening. They began studying the literature that was offered and requested a visit from the ministers. They were invited to church and were baptized together on Jan. 29, 1967.

Bob was ordained a deacon in 1971 and Janice was ordained a deaconess on the Night to Be Much Remembered in 1977.

Bob and Janice had one daughter, Linda Sue (deceased), and three sons, Robert (Shawn), Joseph (Joanne) and Matthew (Michele). They have 14 grandchildren.

Irene Ferguson, Janice's mother, was a member of God's Church for 31 years. She died in April 1999.

On Sabbath, June 30, 2007, the Elmira, New York, congregation was pleased to honor John and Carolyn Stachina for their

50th wedding anniversary. The Stachinas were married on June 29, 1957. The congregation gave them a card and a beautiful cake to recognize their years of wedded



John and Carolyn Stachina

bliss. The Stachinas brought in a photo album of then-and-now photos marking their wedding and a party that their children had given them.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Norrod of the San Antonio, Texas, congregation celebrated their 60th anniversary on April 4, 2007. On March 31 most of Bill and Mary's family were able to make it from California, New York, San Antonio and Austin, Texas, to help them celebrate this special occasion.

After services Gary Petty presented them with a beautiful oil lamp, a gift from the congregation. And everyone enjoyed the delicious cake baked by Ruth Miller and finger food prepared by ladies of the



Bill and Mary Norrod

congregation. For special music Roy Peer sang "How Great Thou Art."

Obituaries

June M. Myers of Spokane, Washington, died at the age of 75 on Aug. 2, 2007, after a long battle with heart disease and COPD. Born June 5, 1932, June was raised in Caribou, Maine, with eight of her siblings. She lived in many places teaching ballroom dance for various Church of God groups for over 40 years. She is survived by one brother, Edward Bouchard, age 71, of Caribou; and four children, all in the faith: April Nelson of Spokane; David Overstreet of Tampa, Florida; Drew Overstreet of Sacramento, California; and Shawn Weisser of Wytheville, Virginia. She had many grandchildren who she loved very



June M. Myers

much and they loved her. She remained a faithful member of God's Church over many years. We will miss her.

Doyle Reid Smith, 84, of the Greensboro, North Carolina, congregation, suffered a stroke on April 4, 2007—during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Although he experienced some ups and downs, even returning to attend church services for a time, he never fully recovered. He died on Sunday, Sept. 30, 2007—during the Feast of Tabernacles.

His life began in 1922 in Golden, Mississippi, in a family of tenant farmers. He served during World War II in England, France, Germany and Austria. He survived a spent bullet in the front of his helmet and bullets all around when he was removing mines from the road for the tanks to get through. He believed

that God was saving him for a special purpose.

After his discharge, Mr. Smith graduated from Auburn University with a degree



Doyle Smith

in industrial management, and he was offered a job in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. There he met his wife of 48 years, Janice. They were married in 1959.

Later in life he went back to school and received a second bachelor's degree, this one in social work.

Mr. Smith received God's calling in 1969 and was baptized in 1970. He was ordained a deacon at Pentecost in 1998 and served God and the Church faithfully and tirelessly. He was involved in many Church activities and, with God's help, remained ever faithful to his calling.

In lieu of a formal funeral, the family hosted a Celebration of Life in his honor at the VFW hall in Winston-Salem on Oct. 7. The celebration featured many of his favorite things, including Big Band music, champagne, chocolate chip/pecan cookies, mixed nuts and his very favorite thing he did so well, white chocolate-covered pecans.

Mr. Smith is survived by his wife, Janice; his two daughters, Tracy Gurley of Austin, Texas, and Wendy Smith, of Rocky Mount, North Carolina; and one sister, Nina Jean Tidwell, of Meridian, Mississippi. He is also survived by his two foster-daughters, Margie DeSoto of Connecticut and Mary Velasco of San Francisco.

Jody F. Haas, age 90, died quietly at home Sept. 25, 2007, after a prolonged ill-

ness. A native Texan, Jody was born Jan. 6, 1917, in Flatonia, Texas. Following graduation from high school, he was employed as a butcher for Joe M. Huffington's JMH Supermarkets. He served his country as an Army staff sergeant in World War II, in charge of food preparation on troop trains.

In 1943, he married his wife of 64 years, Geneva (Jenny) Millet, returned home to Houston and, with two partners, purchased JMH Supermarkets. Jody served as president of the company and, for many years, Jody and JMH were well known in West University for hometown appeal and personal service. He also helped run a cattle ranch in Sealy, Texas, which supplied beef for the store's meat counter.

Jody and Jenny's two children, Jack and Beverly, formed the focus and center of their lives. Jody served as a deacon in the Church for many years, with service and generosity becoming the hallmarks of his family's involvement in the Houston area congregations.

Jody was preceded in death by his parents, Joe and Lillie Haas; his three brothers, Walter, Ervin and George; and his daughter, Gale Haas La Fleur. He is survived by



Jody F. Haas

his loving wife, Jenny; his son, Jack; his grandchildren, Beverly and Joe La Fleur, and Joe's wife, Elaine; and son-in-law, Gerald W. La Fleur.

Graveside services were held Sept. 28, 2007, at Memorial Oaks Cemetery.

Mel Williams, a member of the Church of God since 1955, died Sept. 22, 2007. His first love was serving his fellow brethren. A deacon since 1968 and an elder since 1976, he served in Long Beach, California; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Kingman, Arizona.

He and his wife, Patricia, moved to Pahrump, Nevada, in 1993. They were married for 51 years.

Also surviving him are sons, Jim and his wife, Debi (Dennis), of Pahrump; Michael and his wife, Jeannette (Fricke), of Mabton, Washington; daughters, Julie Buettner and her husband, Marcus, of Lakewood, California; Angelea Wackett and her husband, David, of Pahrump; son-in-law, Scott Hamrick; 14 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and brother, Marv Williams.



Mel Williams

Preceding him in death were daughter Eva Lyn, brother Kenneth, sister Virginia and parents Cecil and Evelyn.

No services were held, as he is waiting to see all his friends and family with a real celebration in the Kingdom of God.

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*.

"Local Church Updates," continued from page 29

and the kids were invited to find "the Zone" at church services on Sept. 8, the first day of the new Sabbath school year. Church services are held each Sabbath in Shrewsbury, Missouri, and Fairview Heights, Illinois, pastored by Vince Szymkowiak. Letters were sent out to the parents prior to the start of classes explaining that the theme for Sabbath school this year is "Entering the Zone."

The concept of "the Zone" has been used at UCG camps for our teens for a number of years. In the letter Mr. Szymkowiak sent out to the parents, he stated, "Briefly, the Zone is the opposite of the temptations and negativity that our young people face in today's world. The Zone is 'what we perceive the World Tomorrow under Christ's leadership would entail.'"

As the first classes came together,

Mr. Szymkowiak asked God's blessings on the classes and Mrs. Carol Szymkowiak explained to the children what the Zone is, adding that the Zone

Each time classes are held, all levels come



Fairview Heights, Illinois, Sabbath school: front row: Lindsey Barnes, Ava Helwig, Ethan Burrow; middle row: Tegan Groom, Trishton Morgan, Noah Helwig, Bethany Holman, Clark Burrow, Liam Groom; back row: Emma Groom, Jeremy Barnes, Gabe Helwig, Mallory Burrow

is to also be "a safe place for friendships in the Church to develop."

goes to its classroom. The children were all given an "I'm in the Zone"



St. Louis, Missouri, Sabbath school: front row: teachers Dianne Bonfili and Debbie Indelicato, Zack Poole; middle row: Aaron Ehlen, Alex Poole, Ronan Adkins, Mikaela Gannon, Heather Goodwin; back row: volunteers Breanna Ehlen, Stephanie Moonier and Chrissy Hallows, Bradley Schlosser, Ethan Adkins, Katie Adkins, Molly McCoy, Eli McCoy, Mr. Szymkowiak

together for prayer and then each class

button and a Zone membership card, plus a tote bag and notebook to use for their classes.

The children are very excited about

entering the Zone, and it looks like a very promising year for the Sabbath school classes this year here in the St. Louis area. We expect that the Zone will be a great place for our kids to learn about God and His Son, Jesus. Maybe our children will carry the Zone with them and it will expand and expand and expand!

Shelby Faith

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*.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

retiring, but not going into seclusion. He will remain in the area and offered to help in whatever way he could to continue to serve the Church. He stated that it has been an honor to be involved in God's ministry for the past 38 years.

The Rands' warmth and friendliness have been much appreciated by the members of the West Palm Beach, Miami and Fort Myers congregations. We wish them well in this new phase of their lives and thank them for their fine examples of Christian living.

Roy Demarest

Home Office Relocation Update

President Clyde Kilough wrote in the Oct. 25 *Ministerial Services Newsletter and Journal*: "We are currently in the midst of a feasibility and due diligence study on a property for possible purchase in the north Denton, Texas, area. As with all such studies, it involves collecting a large amount of information, ranging from environmental to engineering reports, and working with city and county planners. Once completed, we will be able to give the Council of Elders a thorough report in mid-November so a decision can be made about going ahead with the purchase. We will keep you updated as to the progress."

Ski Weekend Set for Jan. 19 to 21

Once again, the Salt Lake City, Utah, congregation will host its annual Winter Ski Weekend over the Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, Jan. 19-21, 2008.

Come and enjoy warm, family-oriented fellowship, a beautiful bracing environment and experience some of the greatest snow on earth at historic Park City, Utah.

The weekend begins Sabbath morning with two seminars from 10 a.m. to noon. Light refreshments will be served between

sessions. Attendees are responsible for their own lunch, and many local restaurants are within 2 to 3 miles. Sabbath services will begin at 2:30 p.m., to be followed by a potluck meal provided by the congregation. After skiing, another potluck meal will be provided Sunday evening.

All events will be held at the same location as in years past, the Cottontree Inn in North Salt Lake City: 1030 North 400 East, North Salt Lake, Utah; reservations: (800) 662-6886; phone: (801) 292-7666; fax: (801) 296-9664. The motel is located off the Woods Cross exit on I-15 (exit 315), just north of the 1-15/1-215 intersection.

The room rate at the Cottontree is \$73.76 including tax—the regular rate is \$99. This includes two queen beds and a fabulous continental breakfast. The Cottontree will also allow multiple people, i.e. sleeping bags, in the room.

The skiing event will occur Sunday morning. At this time, we are still working to confirm group pricing for lift tickets. You can count on approximately \$65. Be prepared to make payment Saturday evening. Skiers will also be responsible for meals while skiing.

As always, the earlier we hear from you—and the more people we have sign up—the better rates we can lock in.

For more information and/or to register, please contact Jon Pinelli, the pastor of the Salt Lake City congregation, by e-mail at jon_pinelli@ucg.org.

Dallas to Host Young Adults' Presidents' Day Regional Weekend

Dallas, Texas, will once again be host to the young adults' regional event to be held over Presidents' Day weekend from Feb. 15 to 18, 2008. The theme for next year's event will be "Men and Women—Being the Best You Can Be!"

Events will include a Friday evening mixer, seminars for both men and women featuring special guest speakers on Sabbath and Sunday morning, a dance on Saturday evening, as well as other activities on Sunday afternoon.

Details—including a registration form—can be found on the Web at www.ucg-dallas.org/ya. Please check this site often as more information will be updated



What's New on the Web?

■ 2007 Feast Sermon Video.

If you were not able to watch the Feast video "Threshold of a New Age" or would like to watch it again, it is available online at www.ucg.org/sermons/

■ Archived Feast Sermons.

Listen to archived 2007 Feast messages from Jekyll Island,

as we finalize plans. For questions or comments, please send an e-mail to sandilands@tx.rr.com.

Doug Horchak

Dec. 15 Deadline for ABC 2008 Applications

Ambassador Bible Center is still accepting applications for 2008. The deadline is Dec. 15, 2007.

As of Oct. 23, 32 students have been accepted. Because of lack of facilities, we will not accept more than 60.

We currently have accepted twice as many men as women. That is a first for ABC! Normally, we have more women than men apply.

The changes we made last year will continue this coming year. We added the Foundations of Faith class that covers the proofs of God's existence, the proof of the authority and origin of the Bible and the basics of salvation and faith. We have also added an optional speech class for public speaking and confidence development.

Orientation will be Sunday, Jan. 6, 2008. The first day of classes is Monday, Jan. 7.

If you need an application or more information, you may write: ABC, P.O. Box 54992, Cincinnati, OH 45254-0992. Or simply go to www.ucg.org/abc and download an application. You may e-mail us at Gary_Antion@ucg.org with

Bend, Kelowna and Panama City Beach by visiting <http://feast.ucg.org>

■ Booklets in Audio Format.

The following booklets are now available in MP3 audio format: *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Visit www.ucg.org/booklets/ to access the audio Web page links.

■ UCG Weekly Commentary.

any questions you may have. Or you may call (513) 576-9796 and ask to speak to David Register (director of Education Programs), Ralph Levy (registrar) or Gary Antion (admissions officer) about any ABC-related information.

Please hurry, because the Dec. 15 deadline is approaching quickly. We look forward to hearing from you.

David Register

Caribbean Cruise Planned

The Los Angeles, California, and Chicago, Illinois, young adults and singles have arranged a four-night Western Caribbean cruise aboard the *Celebrity Century*.

The cruise will depart Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008, from Miami, Florida, with two ports of call—Key West, Florida, and Cozumel, Mexico—along with a full day at sea to enjoy the group activities on the ship. For more information, call Travel Gallery at (800) 858-6999 or visit the Web site www.travelgallery.com.

Rick Johnson

Calendar of Events

Nov. 5-7: Regional pastors' meeting, home office.

Nov. 10-11: Twin Cities Women's Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota (www.ucgstp.org/womensconference).

"Droughts, Floods and Wildfires: What Should We Do?"

"National Memorial Days for Slain Peace Officers"
www.ucg.org/commentary/

Featured Link

■ *Beyond Today*.
www.beyondtoday.tv



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

Nov. 11-13: Northwest Region ministerial conference, Portland, Oregon, area.

Nov. 17-18: ABC continuing education classes in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Nov. 17-18: ABC continuing education classes in Spokane, Washington.

Nov. 26-29: Canadian National Council meeting, Toronto, Ontario.

Dec. 1-2: ABC continuing education classes in Oakland, California.

Dec. 3-4: Senior pastors/associate senior pastors annual meeting, home office.

Dec. 11-13: Council of Elders meeting, home office.

Dec. 21-25: Winter Family Weekend, Louisville, Kentucky (Friday evening through Tuesday late night).

Dec. 23-30: Challenger II—Rock Climbing program, Tucson, Arizona.

Dec. 23-25: ABC continuing education classes in Portland, Oregon.

Dec. 24-25: ABC continuing education classes in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dec. 27-Jan. 1: Winter Camp, Montello, Wisconsin (gary_black@ucg.org).

Jan. 19-21, 2008: Winter Ski Weekend, Park City, Utah (jon_pinelli@ucg.org).

Jan. 18-20: Women's Enrichment Weekend, "Becoming Women of Courage and Compassion," Garden Grove, California, area, www.ucg-gg.org (look under events-photos).

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

Feb. 15-17: Young Adults' Presidents' Day Regional Weekend, Dallas, Texas (www.ucg-dallas.org/ya).

Louisville Winter Family Weekend Adds Seminars and Sports Venues

Make plans to set aside Dec. 21 to 25 and join 2,000 of your closest family and friends for four days of education, fellowship, fun and games. We're excited this year to once again offer affordable housing and excellent sporting venues for what promises to be another memorable Winter Family Weekend. It all begins with a Bible study on Friday evening (Dec. 21) at 7:30 followed by a dessert reception and it ends at midnight on Tuesday night (Dec. 25).

"Building Godly Relationships," Plus ABC and WNP Seminars

The educational theme of this year's weekend is "Building Godly Relationships." No less than 25 U.S. pastors will be giving presentations throughout the weekend. Resident ABC faculty will also be giving two full days of continuing education and we will be offering another day of *World News and Prophecy* seminars, a first for this event. Both babysitting and Sabbath school classes will be provided on the Sabbath during the seminar time frame.

Sports and Activities

This year you can choose to participate in any of the following sports and activities: basket-

See "Winter Family Weekend," page 8



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additional mailing offices