



United Church of God
P.O. Box 541027
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
(513) 576-9796

United News™

News of the United Church of God, an International Association

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June 2008

News At a Glance

Kilough Reconfirmed for Three Years

May 22 the Council of Elders held an executive session to ballot on the reconfirmation of the president, which is required after three years.

"Mr. Kilough was reconfirmed and will be the first president to serve a second three-year term," Chairman Robert Dick said. "He had expressed to the Council how fast those three years had passed and acknowledged the significant learning curve involved in holding the office. Both current and incoming Council members expressed their support as we move forward."

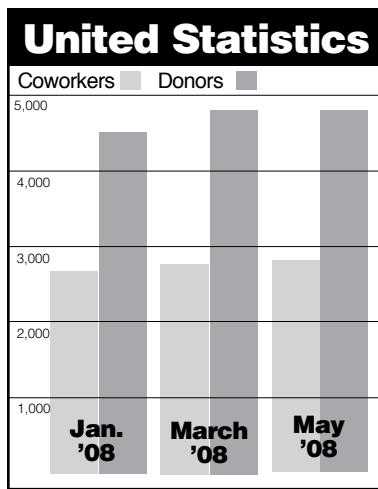
Subtitles Add Possibilities

For some time the media staff has been wanting to provide a "subtitle" or "closed caption" option to our videos for our members who are hearing impaired. They have discovered a solution that not only allows subtitling in English, but in any language. It simply takes the work of people to transcribe and translate the words.

Aaron Booth has uploaded almost all of the *Beyond Today* commentaries at www.beyondtoday.tv/subtitles and www.dotsub.com/search/?searchtokens=beyondtoday, although only a few have subtitles added so far.

We may post some of them on the hard-of-hearing section of our Web site. In addition, if someone wanted to go to the work, they could transcribe sermons, shorter sermons (for the world) and *Beyond Today* programs. The possibilities are almost endless, as are the languages. It's wiki-style, so volunteers can work right away on videos we upload. To see a video of how it works, go to www.dotsub.com and click on the

See "News at a Glance," page 2



GCE Approves New Plan; Rescinds Move Approval

The General Conference of Elders repealed its 2007 approval of the move of the home office to Texas and selected Paul Kieffer (international) and Aaron Dean, Darris McNeely and Robin Webber to the Council of Elders.

The new Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and budget were all approved, and one of five proposed amendments was approved. (For more details, see "Ballot Results," page 4, and "Strategic Plan," page 8)

Sabbath Service Heard by Thousands

The annual GCE meeting included a special Sabbath service May 17. President Clyde Kilough gave a sermon on spiritual maturity that was heard by an estimated 5,400 members. There were 197 elders and 146 elders' wives registered for the conference, and 90 congregations were on phone hookups. There were also 401 video Web connections, 53 English audio connections and nine Spanish connections.

On Sunday, May 18, the business meeting of the General Conference of Elders began with Chairman Robert Dick calling on Les McCullough to open with prayer. The theme of the conference was "Going on to Perfection: Increasing Spiritual Maturity."

Mr. Dick introduced the 14 elders of United Church of God ordained or credentialed since last year: Bill and Joanna Bradford, David Campbell, Grant and Kim Chick, Fred and Sandy Davidson, Ed and RaeAnn Dowd, Michael and Angelene Erickson, Kossi and Delali Fiaboé, Charles and Kaye Haughee, Ralph and Ingrid Helge, Bill and Ronnie Kubon, Tony and Brenda Levy, Antonio and Christine Ndung'u, Jerrison and Nice Shachoongo and Terry and Linda Swagerty.

Keynote Address

After the balloting, Mr. Dick gave the keynote address. He asked, "Is the theme 'Going on to Perfection' a platitude or a precept"—a set of marching orders? "What have I done that is worth something to God?" He gave James 1:27, Psalm 15 and Job 29:12-17 as examples of the priorities that really matter.

Mr. Dick mentioned the problem identified early in United's history, "We have not always treated one another in a godly manner." He commented on some of United's suc-



Sandra and Herchial Fisher laugh with Dave and Linda Register at GCE meeting

power in UCG offices, teen summer camp program, the long-range plan-

See "GCE," page 4

42 Tour Greece; Israel in 2009



Tour group at the Parthenon in Athens (photo by Peter Eddington)

The spring Biblical Educational Tour traveled through southern Greece, with stops in Corinth, Olympia, Sparta and Athens. Forty-two enthusiastic participants enjoyed nine days of biblical instruction and touring.

In addition to touring historical and archaeological sites and museums, the group shared the Passover, Sabbath and First Day of Unleavened Bread in Corinth and the Last Day in Athens.

Educational presentations were given by David Register, director of Education Programs; David Johnson, ABC Epistles of Paul instructor; Peter Eddington, video production manager; elders Frank Fish, Michael Machin and Charles Franke; and two deacons, Robert Carlisle and Dr. John Karlik.

Next spring a Biblical Educational Tour of Israel is planned.

David Register

Council Discusses "Where Do We Go From Here?"

by John Foster

At the quarterly Council of Elders meetings May 21 and 22, the Council crafted and unanimously approved the following announcement about the results of the GCE ballot May 18:

"We have just completed a profitable General Conference of Elders meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. Our new Strategic Plan, the Operation Plan and the budget for the next fiscal year were approved by large margins. We greatly appreciate your prayers for the overall success of this annual event.

"This announcement is to update you regarding the proposed home office relocation to Texas. As you know, a resolution to rescind last year's ballot approving the move was placed on this year's agenda. This resolution passed by 187 in favor and 175 opposed. It is clear that the two ballots on the relocation of the home office demonstrate that we are not united on this issue.

"So how do we proceed now?"

"All of us who serve on the Council

See "Council," page 5

Inside:

- Profile: Daniel and Cindy Harper; *Forward!* "Lights in the World"
- Around the World:* Australia, French-Speaking Areas; Dominican Republic, Ireland, Isle of Man, Canada
- Letters
- Treasure Digest:* Children's Corner; more
- Strategic and Operation Plans
- From the Word:* Child Out of Control?; Spiritual Survivor; God's Jewels
- Local Church Updates*
- Announcements*

Three New Council Members Chosen, One Reselected

The General Conference of Elders selected three new Council members and returned one man to the Council in balloting May 18.

Paul Kieffer, who handles pastoral, administrative and editorial responsibilities in the German-language region and the Netherlands, was chosen as the international Council member.

Darris McNeely, pastor of the Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregations, *Beyond Today* presenter and *World News and Prophecy* man-



Darris McNeely

Escondido, California, Festival coordinator, was also selected as a new Council member.

Aaron Dean, an elder who works for a small agricultural firm

aging editor, was chosen as a new member of the Council.

Robin Webber, pastor of the San Diego and Redlands, California, congregations and



Robin Webber



Aaron Dean

the next several issues of *United News* and will be posted to the Web site at www.ucg.org/about/councilindex.htm by July 1 when their three-year terms begin.

At the Council meeting May 22, Chairman Robert Dick recognized and thanked departing Council members Leon Walker, Jim Franks and Larry Salyer. **UN**

in East Texas and has served on the Council for a decade, was returned to the Council of Elders.

Profiles of the new Council members will be run over the next several issues of *United News* and will be posted to the Web site at www.ucg.org/about/councilindex.htm by July 1 when their three-year terms begin.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 1

foreign language “translate films” option on the left hand menu.

Peter Eddington

Donor and Coworker Statistics Recalculated

Beginning with the 2008 calendar year, the total number of coworkers and donors was recalculated, resulting in lower figures than we reported in the past. In the past, once a person became a donor or regular coworker, he became a part of the grand total for years to come. However, we have now instituted a “renewal” type process where a person has to continue contributing at the required frequency to stay on the coworker or donor list. For example, if a regular coworker stops making contributions, after a predetermined interval he is now removed from the total count, as are donors. See “United Statistics,” page 1, for the current counts.

Peter Eddington

Home Destroyed, Members Safe as More Tornadoes Hit

Terrible tornadoes swept through northeast Oklahoma and southwest Missouri May 10. Pastor Mike Blackwell reported, “All of our members escaped without serious personal injury. All of the brethren in northwest Oklahoma are okay and sustained no damage.

“One family in the Joplin congregation, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Werst, son Matt, daughter Tammy Martensen and two small daughters, had their home and place destroyed by [what turned out to be an F-4] tornado. As it crossed Newton County, where it killed 13 people, estimates were that it was 1 mile wide, and it is easy to believe based on the level of destruction.

“The Werst’s home was totally destroyed along with all their outbuildings. The family took shelter in a walk-in closet off the master bedroom when the storm hit without warning. They had hail bigger than baseballs, and almost immediately the tornado [hit].

“The storm came from the west/southwest. The master bedroom was on the southwest corner and should have been totally destroyed first. Instead it was the room which sustained the least damage. Doors blown off, windows destroyed, a tree limb through the wall, but God protected the family with only a few minor scratches. As you look at the property and that corner, there is absolutely no doubt that God had angels around the family for protection. . .

“Thankfully the family had insurance that will cover most of the costs of their

See “News at a Glance,” page 16

Profile: Daniel and Cindy Harper, Americans in France

From their home in Normandy, Daniel and Cindy Harper can see the English Channel. But for these young U.S. citizens, the nearest United Church of God congregation has been a long ways away. It takes almost eight hours to drive to Bordeaux to be with the largest group of French brethren, or a weekend trip to reach their English brethren across the Channel in Tonbridge, Kent.

Thankfully, in April a new monthly Sabbath service was started in Paris (see the article on page 3). Mapquest says this is only about 3½ hours away! Daniel and Cindy help organize these services.

Daniel and Cindy are 2003 graduates of Ambassador Bible Center, and they will celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary this summer. Daniel also had an engineering degree and a minor in French in college, so he was uniquely suited to the job opportunity he took last year to further his career in the nuclear energy industry in France.

A Serving Couple

At the Feast in Collonges-la-Rouge, France, last year Daniel and Cindy threw themselves into service. Daniel did his first translation from French to English, gave a couple of sermonettes in French, led songs in French and much more. Cindy, who has a master’s degree in education and has been immersed in the French language since moving to France last year, took care of the Feast flower arrangements, helped Daniel organize the variety show and myriad other responsibilities and spontaneous acts of service.

“We really appreciate Daniel and Cindy’s enthusiasm and their willingness to jump in and serve in any way they can,” said Joel Meeker, coordinator of the French-speaking areas. “They’ve driven long kilometers to spend time with their French-speaking brethren in France, Belgium and Switzerland, and their enthusiasm and commitment to the Christian way has been most encourag-

ing. They have been working on their French, which is a very challenging language, and their skills are really improving, to the point where Daniel was able to give two sermonettes in French at the Feast in France this year.”

Calling

Daniel said, “I did not grow up in the Church. I was called while in college, but my parents did not support me as I made changes to my life to keep God’s commandments. I knew that I had to put God first, though I honored and respected them. After graduating from college, I decided to attend ABC without their approval. My experience at ABC helped me strengthen the foundation of my beliefs, and I was baptized on Aug. 10, 2003.”

Cindy said, “I was born and raised in the Church, but it wasn’t until I left home and went to college that I learned to really see the value of the beliefs and way of life that I was taught.”



Cindy and Daniel Harper

Challenges

Living far from other brethren and ministers in a society that rejects the Bible and God has made Daniel and Cindy appreciate Sabbath services and Church resources more than ever.

In closing, Cindy said, “Pray for each other, think of the challenges brethren in isolated and also developing countries face in living God’s way, and make a point to transfer to international Feast sites to learn more about and encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ.” **UN**

FORWARD! “Lights in the World”

by Jim Franks



Yad Vashem is the name of the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. It is considered the premier museum for the preservation of items from the Holocaust. In addition to the main museum, there is a separate memorial located in another building—the Children’s Memorial. This memorial consists of one room. It is a large, dark room with points of light flashing all around on the ceiling and the walls.

As you stand and look at the lights, a voice reads the names of the children. You also see their pictures flashed on the wall off to the side. Even after walking through the main museum, nothing prepares you for the Children’s Memorial. You cannot help but weep for the innocent children who died in the Nazi death camps simply because they were Jewish.

Yad Vashem loosely means “memorial (or remembrance) of names” and is taken from Isaiah 56:5: “Unto

them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial [yad]... an everlasting name [shem] that shall not be cut off” (American Standard Version). The modern nation of Israel has vowed to never forget those who died during the Nazi reign. Yad Vashem is extremely effective when you walk through and look at all the exhibits. It is an experience that you will never forget.

But the most haunting part of a visit to Yad Vashem is the Children’s Memorial. There are only a few pictures and none of the real-life exhibits that exist in the main museum. That dark room with all those tiny points of light made more of an impression on me than the actual footage of bodies being bulldozed into a mass grave.

Don’t get me wrong—the film footage was graphic and those images are hard to remove from your mind. But small lights flickering all around you in a dark room gives a powerful testimony without words and without pictures. It forces you to imagine all those children, laughing and playing and then ruthlessly killed. It was effective!

The apostle Paul uses this concept in Philippians 2:15: “...become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

The Greek word for “lights” is *phostare*. It means “illuminator” or it can mean “luminary” or even “stars.” It struck me after my recent trip to the Middle East that God sees all of us as points of light or stars shining out of the darkness.

These children were special simply because they were children. Young children exude enthusiasm and light. No wonder Christ compared conversion to becoming child-like.

The Holocaust doused this light for 1.5 million children. Satan would like nothing more than to douse our light so that we would no longer be lights shining in a darkened world. He does his best to wear us down and make us weary of well doing.

The goal of Yad Vashem is to memorialize the names of those who died. The goal of each Christian is to shine as lights in the world, with the goal that God will remember us in the day of visitation when His Son returns in all the glory of the Kingdom of God. The Children’s Memorial’s 1.5 million flickering lights are an effective display. Thousands of Christians shining as “lights in the world” are no doubt just as effective to God! **UN**

Jim Franks is Ministerial Services operation manager.

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Editor: Peter W. Eddington Managing editor: Mike Bennett Copy editor: Becky Bennett
UCG/IA Council of Elders: Robert Berendt, Aaron Dean, Robert Dick (chairman), Bill Eddington, Jim Franks, Roy Holladay, Clyde Kilough, Victor Kubik, Richard Pinelli, Larry Salyer, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to United News, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

International addresses:

AFRICA & ASIA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands.

BRITISH ISLES: United Church of God—British Isles, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

CARIBBEAN: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027,

Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

EAST AFRICA (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

FUJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva, Fiji.

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France.

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035 4523573. E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius. E-mail: mauritius@ucg.org

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President: Clyde Kilough

Doctrinal reviewers: Roy Demarest, Bill Jahns, Arthur Suckling, Chuck Zimmerman

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SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535. 111 74, Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: sverige@ucg.org.

SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa. Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694.

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (02) 226076. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe. Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

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News From **Around the World**

Australia Reports Encouraging Growth Statistics

by **Bill Eddington**

The Australian National Council heard some encouraging news at its meeting in March 2008. The Pastoral Activity Report presented at each Council meeting is an aggregated report covering all of the pastoral regions and includes statistical data on new visits, new phone contacts and new Internet enquiries. All pastors are reporting regular activity in these areas, and it has translated to a significant increase in average weekly church attendance.

In the four months ended Feb. 28, average weekly church attendance increased from 567 to 648 (81 new attendees or 14.3 percent) and another 15 have been added since then.

A significant part of this growth has taken place in Western Australia where

there are now two congregations; one in Perth and one at Bunbury about an hour and a half south of Perth. Manpower limitations mean that UCG-Australia can only provide monthly visits to these far-west congregations. If, as is expected, growth continues in this relatively remote area (it is serviced from Melbourne, 3,448 kilometers or 2,143 miles away by road and four hours flying time) monthly visits will no longer suffice and consequential manpower and financial challenges will have to be faced.

Along with the increase in average weekly church attendance, Australia is experiencing an above-budget income situation. As of March 31, total income exceeded a fairly aggressive budget figure by 17 percent. As the Australian Church has recently increased its pastoral strength from four salaried elders

to five and a half-time person plus a full-time trainee, continued income growth will be important to ensure the additional recurrent costs do not impact too harshly on a very effective media and publishing program.

Australia reports very encouraging news from the Passover and Unleavened Bread period. Passover attendance increased from 505 in 2007 to 558 in 2008 (10.5 percent) and for the First Day of Unleavened Bread an increase from 673 to 737 (9.5 percent).

The offering increase was a whopping 26.6 percent (\$34,144 to \$43,225, all figures Australian dollars). These increases were not "once only," as the Last Day of Unleavened Bread produced similar results—attendance up from 600 to 697 (16.2 percent) and offering up from \$29,328 to \$36,471 (24.4 percent). **UN**

French Pastor Visits Europe and East Africa

From April 11 to 27, Joel Meeker, pastor of the French-speaking areas, visited brethren in France, Belgium and Switzerland. He held Sabbath or Holy Day services in Paris, Bordeaux and Narbonne in France and in the village of Crassier near Geneva in Switzerland. In between those Sabbaths, Mr. Meeker visited about 35 Church members in these three francophone countries of Europe, covering over 3,000 miles in two weeks.

New Monthly Church Service in Paris

April 12 UCG had its first monthly Sabbath service in Paris. Mr. Meeker gave the sermon to the 17 people who attended from the Paris area, northern France and Normandy. Daniel and Cindy Harper, who live near Cherbourg, and Mr. and Mrs. Jean-Paul Gorisse, from near Lille, are responsible for the organization of these services, which will most often include recorded sermons.

Visits to East Africa

From April 28 to 30 Mr. Meeker again visited interested members in the chaotic nation of Burundi just south of

Rwanda in East Africa. When he visited in February, he was able to go to northern Cibitoke province where most of the members of a forming church group live. This time there were security sweeps and gun battles occurring in that region, and the American embassy security officer warned him not to go. Even the capital city of Bujumbura was under periodic rocket attack by rebels. Thankfully none fell during his brief visit.

Mr. Meeker continued talks with the leaders of this group of about 150 Sabbath-keepers who are beginning to observe the Holy Days.

From Burundi Mr. Meeker flew to Rwanda for a one-week visit, arriving the same day as UCG elder Greg Swartz who again came to provide free dental care for our brethren and training to local dentists. His two weeks of work were very full and very successful. He was assisted in his work by Flavia Everman, a member from central Missouri, who traveled at her own expense, and by Rahab Muthuri, a member from Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Swartz hopes to found an NGO (nongovernmental organization) to transport and distribute dental supplies

to this small landlocked country. This project opened the door to a meeting with the Rwandan Minister of Health, Dr. Jean Damascène Ntawukuliryayo. The elders were able to mention UCG in their discussions—this is helpful since the Church is still seeking official recognition by the government.

At one point, our elder in Rwanda, Jean-Marie Mundeli who is a retired teacher, asked the minister of health a clarification question. Dr. Ntawukuliryayo looked at him closely for a moment then asked if he had taught geography in a particular area at a particular time. It turned out Dr. Ntawukuliryayo remembered Mr. Mundeli as his teacher when he was 16 years old! He mentioned that unlike the case of many of his former teachers, he had pleasant memories of Mr. Mundeli.

Tom Kirkpatrick, who has overseen the Good Works Program, also visited for several days to see for himself the fruit being born by the dental project and to see the church hall constructed by Good Works funds. Dr. Kirkpatrick gave the sermon on the Sabbath and had the unusual experience of being translated twice. Each sentence was translated first into French and then into Kinyarwanda so that everyone could understand. **UN**

United's First Passover Held in Dominican Republic

The group of members and subscribers in the Dominican Republic received another ministerial visit, from April 16 to 23.

Ralph Levy, ABC instructor and the minister who serves the area, said, "This was about the only time available for me to visit this year, because of the change in the ABC calendar, and the start of the next ABC year in September. However, it worked out well, since it allowed us to hold United's first Passover service in this beautiful Caribbean nation."

Dr. Levy arrived in Santo Domingo April 16. He made several phone calls to

members and interested parties, and talked with member Zoraya Diaz de Gabriel concerning plans for the Passover and Night to Be Much Observed.

Friday evening, April 18, they held United's first Passover service, with three baptized members in attendance, including Zenaïda Morales, a Dominican-American member visiting from New York. The following night 18 enjoyed a delicious catered dinner in the home of Orlando and Zoraya Gabriel.

Bible studies were held on the Sabbath of April 19 (with an attendance of 15), and the first Holy Day, April 20 (with 16 pres-

ent). In another first for the Dominican group, an offering was taken up on the Holy Day, and three of the young people (Madelin, Sheila and Josue) provided a beautiful piece of offertory music, playing a Church hymn on their flutes.

Dr. Levy said, "There are a number of people in the Dominican Republic who had contact with the Church in the past, and have expressed renewed interest. There are also several individuals in the group who are now showing interest in being baptized. As God calls, we hope future visits will see growth in the Dominican Republic." **UN**

International News At a Glance

First-Ever Youth Camps Planned for French Africa

In August of this year we plan to have two brief UCG youth camps, one in Togo, and the other in Cameroon. About 30 young people will attend the two three-days camps that will include sports, fellowship and educational activities.

A staff of four will come in from Europe and North American to join local members to provide these exciting first-time opportunities for our young people.

Joel Meeker

UCG-Ireland Registered

The United Church of God-Ireland has been registered and given charity status. This should enable the charity UCG-Ireland to receive 25 percent in gift aid on donations from Irish tax-paying donors, and the donors to get a tax relief on the donations.

Isle of Man Holds Annual Meeting

The United Church of God in the Isle of Man is required to be registered as a charity under Manx law. On March 29 the Annual General Meeting was held in Ramsey.

Paul Howard (chairman) reported that:

- Recent advertising has yielded a greater than 10 percent increase to *Good News* circulation in the island.

- Advertising is expected to continue quarterly as there is a need to increase the *GN* subscription level in the island.

- A single-page "advertorial" was proposed for *Manx Tails*, a publication now delivered to every address in the island, at an approximate cost of £450.

- Meetings for *GN* subscribers will continue on an occasional basis in Douglas.

The officers chosen are Chairman Paul Howard, Treasurer David Payne and Secretary Laura Payne.

Leadership Workshop Planned for Western Canada

Richard Pinelli conducted a Leadership Workshop in Toronto, Ontario, Feb. 16 and 17. A similar event for Western Canada is planned for Calgary, Alberta, on June 21 and 22. The objective is to teach

and upgrade a representative number of individuals from each of the church areas so as to develop them further in leadership roles. Because of limited space, fewer people were invited to attend than we actually wanted to extend invitations to.

The presentations will use the outlines from previous Leadership Workshops conducted at the home office. They will be tailored to the local congregational needs and circumstances.

In time the presentations will be made available to all Canadian congregations on DVD.

Anthony Wasilkoff

Results From Two Canadian Reader's Digest Ads Keep Coming In

The ad in the May 2008 *Canadian Reader's Digest* continues to pull in responses from across the country. The booklet *Making Life Work* is featured along with a subscription to *The Good News* magazine.

Among the envelopes and cards in the mail May 15 were three more responses from the November 2007 *Reader's Digest* ad. This now places the total number for that ad at over 4,000—which is nearly one half of one percent, twice the industry norm for an ad of this type! We pray that our Heavenly Father will similarly bless the current *Reader's Digest* advertisement.

Anthony Wasilkoff

Canadian Statistics Show Growth

We recently requested 15,755 copies of the May-June issue of *The Good News* for Canadian subscribers. Compared to April 1, 2007, that is a net increase of 4,063 subscribers.

Incoming mail at the Canadian office is running more than 10 percent higher than last year. We're averaging 68 items per day compared to 60 per day in 2007. Internet and e-mail requests are averaging 29 per day this year compared to nearly 24 per day last year. We've already had more Internet and e-mail requests this year than we did in all of 2004.

Outgoing mail is averaging 20,905 items per month. That compares to 17,105 items per month in 2007, an increase of 3,800 items per month. We've already distributed over 1,000 copies of two booklets this year primarily due to the responses to the semiannual letter sent in February. The booklets are *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

In mid-April we marked the 100th *Beyond Today* program aired in Canada. We are averaging 36.8 responses per week. Two thirds of the responses are from new people. We've added almost 2,500 new people to our database as a result of the TV program since May 2006.

Edwin van Pelt

343 Elders and Wives Attend GCE: "Going on to Perfection"

"GCE," continued from page 1

ning for retiree care and the relations with those of other churches.

Mr. Dick commended the Council for their work on outcomes-based strategic planning. He said we don't want to just be spending long hours working, but we want to be producing fruit. Ours is a challenging field to measure, he acknowledged, but we are making progress in measuring the more challenging area of human services.

International Reports

Five encouraging international reports were presented this year. (International regions present reports to the GCE on a rotating basis.)

Peter Hawkins reported on the British Isles, with its various ethnic groups and cosmopolitan nature. Out of a population of 60 million, our current *GoodNews* distribution is about 5,000, and there are 170 members and families attending. There are no full-time pastors, but the elders there serve diligently. He highlighted leadership training, summer camps and subscriber development.

Melvin Rhodes gave a presentation on the Church in Ghana. There are 12 congregations and 20 outlying Bible studies served by 11 pastors and 20 elders. Of the 700 who attend now, about half are children. Mr. Rhodes mentioned a man he met when he went to Ghana 30 years ago who is now in United, along with his 10 children. Ghana is doing comparatively well economically; the Ghanaian cedi is now worth more than the U.S. dollar!

Tony Wasilkoff reported on Canada, a country where the westernmost and easternmost congregations are 4,500 miles apart. Six full-time pastors serve the congregations in Canada, along with one pastor serving a congregation from the United States. There are also 18 elders. The Canadian office includes three full-time and three part-time staff members and one volunteer, and they are hoping to add more.

Nearly 4,000 *GoodNews* subscribers came onto the Canadian list through the

November 2007 *Reader's Digest* ad. Mr. Wasilkoff highlighted several families, including a family that lives a 12-hour drive north of Edmonton, the nearest congregation.

David Baker's international report was on the Philippines/Asia. Asia is home to 3.9 billion people! There are 16,449 *GoodNews* subscribers throughout Asia.

In the aftermath of the cyclone in Myanmar, several have asked Mr. Baker about the people there. There are no members in Myanmar, but the subscribers he has heard from there were not injured, though many suffered property damage.

Since 2001, membership in Asia has grown from 400 to over 800. They are planning seven Feast sites in Asia this year, including a small one in India. The greatest concentration of members is in the Philippines, where the office is. There are three full-time office employees, along with interns from around the Philippines.

Mr. Baker also mentioned working with two groups in India that had no contact with our former association. They have their own ministers and buildings and so



Clyde Kilough listens at international reception (photo by Michelle de Campos)

really have no need for us, but they want to join with United to do a work.

The Caribbean report was given by Kingsley Mather. The *GoodNews* circulation in the Caribbean region is 3,706. There are 165 baptized members in nine congregations and five monthly Bible studies, served by two full-time elders, an elder who works for the Church part-time and another elder. Jamaica and Barbados are the largest churches in the Caribbean.

The Church is going back to newspaper advertising in the region; Mr. Mather men-



Fellowshipping at Sabbath services (photo by Fred Crow)

tioned that an ad in Trinidad still received responses a year later. He also said they hope to expand the Caribbean Leadership Training program.

After the international presentations, Ken Giese gave tribute to the deceased elders and wives. Honored this year were Jo Anderson, Richard Fenstermacher and William Winner.

President's Address

In President Clyde Kilough's address, he reminded the elders about the media coverage that came last December with interviews of various elders about Christians who don't keep Christmas. These interviews were published and broadcast around the world! We couldn't have planned or paid for that coverage. God reminded us it is His work. Mr. Kilough asked, What does God have in mind in His operation plan?

Mr. Kilough said that sometimes we are problem solvers, and sometimes we must be opportunity solvers. Ministerial Services generally solves problems; Media and Communications Services must deal with many opportunities in this world of information overload. Preparing a people is more tightly defined. Proclaiming the gospel is so diverse since our audience is the whole world!

Our mission and vision are our key "drivers" to go forward. Mr. Kilough said we can't allow the unknown to drive us to anxiety. We should be "faith-based"—relying on God. We can't be rash, but we can't be timid.

Mr. Kilough thanked Tom Kirkpatrick for his years of service as treasurer. He then introduced the new treasurer, Jason Lovelady.

Treasurer's Address

Mr. Lovelady also thanked Dr. Kirkpatrick for his fiscal management and his mentoring. Mr. Lovelady said his role is a support function. He said he asks himself how he can best support Media, Ministerial Services, the president and the Council in fulfilling their first-line responsibilities.

Mr. Lovelady listed the following areas of emphasis: Conservative budgeting, strategic planning, managerial reporting and human resources and information services.

He pointed out that even after the purchase of the land in Texas, we still have more than the required 10 weeks of income in reserve. Mr. Lovelady also

gave a handout of the May 9 cash flow report and listed the salary ranges for U.S. Church employees.

Ministerial Services

Jim Franks, Ministerial Services operation manager, discussed the congregational care section of the Strategic Plan. He pointed out that in the Gospels Christ put a great deal of emphasis on training for the future, so that would have been part of the strategic plan for the beginning of the Church. He explained that United made a commitment to all the members to provide a pastor for each congregation.

Mr. Franks also gave the following statistics: There has been a 1.5 percent increase in U.S. church attendance for the year (about 200 more people). Average attendance is 11,430. High attendance was 13,374 for the First Day of Unleavened Bread. There's been a decrease of two pastors (89 to 87), and the number will likely drop to 85 soon because of retirements. At the high, United had 125 pastors.

Mr. Franks also reported on education programs such as Ambassador Bible Center, which is expanding to a nine-month program and will be featured in a video in the next few weeks. He mentioned that Ministerial Services is doing ABC, *World*



Dennis Luker and Les McCullough talk (photo by Fred Crow)

News and Prophecy, focused education and marriage seminars. Sabbath youth instruction and Festival youth instruction lessons are being rewritten. Mr. Franks also discussed the United Youth Corps and the ministerial development programs.

Mr. Franks concluded that we are seeing real growth, even if not large, and that we face an aging ministry. Christ said to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers. Pray for the zeal and passion to do the work. Mr. Franks said he appreciates the service of all the elders. He said there is no higher calling than serving God's people.

Media Report

Larry Salyer, Media and Communications Services operation manager, said he is excited about the mission we have to do. He compared the number of members to the 6.6 billion people in the world and said even 750,000 *GoodNews* magazines would be a drop in the bucket. He said that's why we saw the need to reexamine what we are doing to see how to do it better, to reach more people more effectively. Matthew 24:14 tells us the gospel will be preached, so we can have that assurance. John 4:35 tells us to lift up our eyes—it takes vision, Mr. Salyer said.

Far and away the most powerful tool for communicating with people is the Internet, he said. What would the apostle Paul have given for that?

Mr. Salyer praised the work Peter Eddington and Aaron Booth have done in producing and advertising our existing Web sites. Now we need to go further. In meetings with talented young Web professionals around the country, he is being told that we must move into the ranks of the major Internet players and become the go-to site for anything related to the Bible. We need to hone our message to cut through the noise in the marketplace. We need to train the next generation of writers.



Michael Wilkinson of Leadership Strategies gives session on Strategic Planning (photo by Janet Treadway)

Mr. Salyer quoted from Herbert W. Armstrong's editorial policy and said it is even more relevant today. The world doesn't want biblical information, but needs the solutions the Bible gives. We need to provide shorter, relevant, engaging content to reach people on the Web. For example, Mr. Salyer mentioned that prototypes of short "sermons for the world" are being prepared.

Our goal is maximum impact/maximum exposure, Mr. Salyer said, and that can only be achieved with optimism and zeal.

Monday Seminars

May 19 elders and wives were able to attend a number of workshops based on the theme of going on to perfection. All participants and home office staff members were invited to a lively, interactive presentation on "What Strategic Planning Is All About" by Michael Wilkinson of Leadership Strategies, the company that facilitated the Council in developing the new Strategic Plan.

Other workshops were "The Spiritually Mature Congregation," "Pitfalls to Godly Wisdom," "Ministerial Calling—Maturing Relationships," "Planning for Loss," "Computers: The Basics and Beyond" and "Elder's Wives Workshop."

Mike Bennett

2008 General Conference of Elders Ballot Results

The accounting firm Clark, Schaefer, Hackett and Co. oversaw the ballot counting, and delivered official ballot results May 19.

The General Conference of Elders selected Paul Kieffer (international) and Aaron Dean, Darris McNeely and Robin Webber to the Council of Elders.

The Strategic Plan was ratified with 286 yes and 73 no.

The Operation Plan was ratified with 279 yes and 80 no.

The budget was ratified with 269 yes and 92 no.

The proposed Amendment to Bylaws 7.5.4 and 8.4.3 (to have the GCE vote when an election of Council members results in a tie) was rejected with 174 yes and 180 no.

The proposed Amendment to Bylaw 8.3.1 (setting aside a Council seat each year for an elder not employed or retired from employment by the Church) was rejected with 149 yes and 208 no.

The proposed Amendment to Bylaws 9.1 and 9.2 (prohibiting operation managers, secretary and treasurer from serving on the Council) was rejected with 194 yes and 165 no. (Passage of amendments requires a two-thirds majority, or 240 in this case.)

The proposed Amendment to Bylaw 9.6 (requiring sending Council minutes to all pastors) was rejected with 146 yes and 211 no.

The Amendment to Bylaws 12.2.2.11 and 12.2.2.12 (allowing statements of support for amendments to be included with the call and notice packet) was approved with 266 yes and 88 no.

The resolution to rescind the 2007 GCE vote to relocate the home office to Texas was approved with 187 yes and 175 no.

Council Remains Dedicated to "Preaching the Gospel and Preparing a People"

"Council," continued from page 1

of Elders and in administration want you to know that we remain dedicated to our primary purposes of preaching the gospel and preparing a people. We must not allow our differences over the relocation issue to undermine our commitment to do the work that God has called us to do. All of us want the facilities which will best serve our needs.

"The initial reason for proposing the move was to address the needs of the Church, both short term and long term. The administration has the task of bringing to the Council recommendations on how we should now proceed. We will keep you informed of decisions and progress on this important aspect of God's work.

"Thank you for your continued prayers and faithful support."

Resolution to Move Forward

This announcement, read in UCG congregations May 24, was the culmination of a discussion of "where do we go from here?" after the GCE reversal of the decision on relocation to Texas. The Council also asked President Clyde Kilough to present a resolution as to how he would proceed from here.

The following resolution was approved May 22 by 11 in favor (Richard Thompson was not present due to teaching an Ambassador Bible Center class).

"Whereas, in light of the passage of the resolution to rescind the 2007 relocation decision, the United Church of God must yet address the strategic issues and questions that led to the 2007 proposal,

"Therefore, it is hereby resolved that the President bring recommendations for determining how to proceed from this point in addressing these issues and questions and,

"It is further resolved that this report will be presented to the Council of Elders at the August 2008 meeting for Council review and approval."

Masterful Meetings Workshop

Following the annual General Con-

ference of Elders meetings, the Council members and the U.S. regional pastors met on May 20 for an all-day workshop on meeting facilitation with Michael Wilkinson of Leadership Strategies.

During the Council meetings May 21 and 22, Paul Kieffer, Darris McNeely and Robin Webber were in attendance, having been selected by the GCE to serve on the Council beginning July 1, 2008.

President's Report

The Council meeting following the GCE meeting traditionally has an abbreviated report from the president, since much of the material is presented to the GCE, but Mr. Kilough did provide the Council with some additional information.

ABC starts in September with a nine-month program, which may mean a drop in attendance this year due to the transition to a September start for the next academic term. Clint Porter is preparing a video about ABC that will be sent to all the congregations. It is hoped that the video will stir more people to consider attending ABC.

There will be general Bible studies and 11 to 13 different seminars in seven of the U.S. Feast sites this year. The preteens will also receive newly revised Festival brochures.

The proposed ministerial training program has now been put together, and it was presented for Council review. It includes both short- and long-term plans for training.

To this date, the "Breaking Free" Web site has had 26,000 page views. There have been more than 4,600 first-time visitors, and the average time a person spends on that site is about 15 minutes. The most popular articles accessed are about losing weight and stories of those who are overcoming alcoholism.

Mr. Kilough offered an interesting example of the power of the Internet in preaching the gospel. Aaron Booth, Internet managing editor, found software that allows the audio of a video clip to be transcribed into English, which then scrolls along with the video. The English version of the transcription can then be translated

into scores of other languages (see "Subtitles Add Possibilities," page 1). This illustrates one possibility among many of how



Dutch subtitles of *Beyond Today*

the Internet can be used by international areas to further the gospel.

Treasurer Jason Lovelady then presented two recommendations to the Council. One, we should expand our annual budget reporting to the Council and administration to include monthly budget reports. Second, once we are able to implement monthly budgeting, we should then be able to project what our available cash balances and reserves will be each month in the year ahead. The Council was in favor of both these ideas, and so a more formal presentation of this proposal will be put forth in August.

Mr. Kilough also discussed the recently held meetings relating to Human Resources. One of the strategies in the Strategic Plan was to develop a comprehensive human resource program. In that regard, the firm of McNeely and McNeely has been engaged to help the administration in this endeavor. Dee Kilough, who has much experience in these matters, has been hired by McNeely and McNeely to assist in this process.

Mr. Kilough mentioned as well that June 30 is the target date for the administration to come up with action plans that will be added to the strategies.

Strategic Planning

Mr. Dick took time in the meeting to bring the new Council members up to date on the next step in the strategic planning process. The focus will be on

monitoring now that the plan is ratified. The Council left the strategic planning retreats knowing that monitoring was critical if the plan was to be a working tool. As a result it contracted with the facilitator to return after three and six months to oversee the quarterly review process.

Executive Summary of Survey

In order that the GCE have more information as to the findings that led to the briefing book for the strategic planning exercises, Mr. Dick proposed to send the GCE the executive summary of the survey results. The Council approved this proposal by consent without a resolution.

Review of Papers From the Doctrine Committee

Larry Salyer led the Council in a review of a study paper titled "Reconciliation and Matthew 18." This paper had been developed over the last few years by the Godly Leadership Task Force. Leon Walker stated that this paper is meant to be an explanation of the principles of reconciliation that are found in Matthew 18. It was approved by 10 Council members (Richard Pinelli was not present and Aaron Dean abstained).

Leon Walker then led the Council through a statement on swearing. The Church already has an approved statement on this topic, but the Doctrine Committee proposed a more thorough explanation. The proposed statement was approved by 11 Council members (Richard Pinelli was not present).

Letter of Support and Encouragement to China

As news reports have shown, areas of China have experienced great tragedy as a result of the recent earthquakes. Victor Kubik introduced a letter for the Council to send to Dr. Richard Liu of the Soong Ching Ling Foundation.

Frank Fish, an elder in California, was involved with Dr. Liu in making arrangements for Herbert Armstrong to visit China

in the 1980s. Dr. Liu also arranged for the Chinese Young Ambassadors to come to America as well.

In a memo to Mr. Fish, Dr. Liu had asked that the Church send a letter of encouragement to the Chinese and asked for our prayers. The Council agreed to send a letter of encouragement and, in the closing prayer of the day, Mr. Kubik asked for God's mercy to come upon those suffering.

Other Business

Two GCE members, Edward Smith and Gerhard Marx, were unanimously reconfirmed by the Council to serve another three-year term on the Amendment Committee.

The Council discussed the need to implement a regular self-evaluation process for itself. This issue of self-evaluation, and how it will take place, was remanded back to the Roles and Rules Committee and will be discussed at the Council meetings in August.

The Council reviewed the document on the role of the international Council members. Many of the roles and tasks originally envisioned for the international members are no longer applicable and their roles are the same as the others on the Council. The Council approved a resolution to rescind this document with 11 in favor (Richard Pinelli was not present).

There was also a proposal for the Council to receive regular reports from each of the international areas. Reports could be presented twice a year that would include congregations, baptisms, elders, subscription information and income statistics.

Mr. Lovelady mentioned that we could develop statistics from these figures in order to present reports detailing the total worldwide impact of United. Bill Eddington then asked the Council to consider what information could be requested for the reports coming from the international areas.

Complete Council reports are on the members' Web site at <http://members.ucg.org/council/reports/>. UN

"Strategic" continued from page 9

local congregation. Therefore, you will see that our strategies target areas to improve that environment.

Specifically, the plan calls for implementing training programs in conflict resolution, upgrading speaking skills and quality of presentations, improving the content

and reach of our educational programs for the entire Church, educating pastors on how to stimulate member involvement, improving ways to help retain our youth by developing their relationship with God, and improving our methods of assessing the spiritual growth of members and congregations.

Organization: A new arena of

focus emerged from our strategic planning retreats that we labeled simply as "Organization"—meaning, the structured part of the Church that consists of employees and elders. In this area the emphasis is centered on improving issues such as unity, teamwork and satisfaction. These are critically important matters for the general well-being of the Church.

Effective communication is always a key in any area of relationship building among humans, and especially so within the Church. That will therefore be a prime target for improvement through a systematic means. Another major step forward in coordinating projects, assessments and measurements will be in elevating the role of our Human Resources department.

We have already begun in the past few months to assess how to more effectively coordinate all areas of HR, and we will dedicate more finances, time and effort to serving organizational and employee needs.

On behalf of the operation managers and home office staff,
Clyde Kilough

Letters

Addicted to ABC Classes

I just had to write and thank you for the wonderful service you provide through the Internet. I must confess I am addicted to the ABC classes! The knowledge being passed on to me is beyond price.

I am a former member of WCG, having left in '95 after 14 years. Twelve years passed before I connected with UCG. I have been a member for over a year now and have found my home. I am 60 years of

age and use the UCG Web sites for study, inspiration, sermons, lessons, etc. It has greatly impacted my understanding of biblical principles and the study of the Bible. My spiritual growth has been enhanced beyond measure.

I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart and know this service is very much needed and appreciated. Keep up the good work! You will be in my prayers.

Georgia

Felt Like Ordering One of Everything

I watched for the first time your program on "Transforming Your Life" and felt drawn to your words.

I went on your Web site beyond today.tv and was excited about the amount of information available; I just felt like ordering "one of everything." I have children who are going through

extreme difficulties, and I feel helpless to help them. They so need believable Christian literature in simple language.

Unfortunately I did not practice my faith in my growing up years and did not instruct my children in that way. So I am not only filled with guilt about my past, but also, now, am trying to study more than ever but find myself crashing totally after each few month period. Do I

believe the devil is at work? Absolutely.
Canada

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.

Treasure Digest

How Long Is Long Enough to Pray About Something?

There are so many things that can fill our prayer time before God—health issues, jobs, finances, etc. Add to that list the needs of God's work, prayer requests and so many other things, it can become easy to forget to petition God regularly for those things that matter even more.

It is not that those prior things are bad or unimportant. It is just that our immediate needs can many times distract our focus. Our health will ebb and flow in life, jobs will come and go and, while we are in this life, there will always be something to pray about or someone to pray for.

So what is the most important thing to pray for? In Matthew 6:9-10 Christ begins to instruct the disciples on how to pray, and He focuses them first and foremost on God, His Kingdom and His will. Not only are we to pray along these lines, but we are to be persistent in prayer regarding them as well.

The prophet Daniel understood this point, and it was his focus in Daniel 9. His prayer was focused on God, His mercy and concern for the future of the nation of Israel. Daniel spent his life focused on God's calling and the future for His people.

Christ expounded upon this approach in Matthew

6:33: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

How long is long enough to pray about something? Paul answers the question in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing."

Pray for one another for deliverance from the trials of life. Pray for the work God is doing through His Church. Pray for your needs and the needs of your family. But remember to stay focused on God and His Kingdom above all else until the very end—and God will take care of the rest.

Dan Dowd

Pastor of the Milwaukee, Oshkosh and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, congregations

My Daughter's Gift of Giving

When my four children were small, life was tough for us. We were blessed to be able to put food on the table and through used clothing, garage sales and clothes given to us, we were able to clothe our children nicely. Some years were leaner than others, but God always provided.

However, I had never owned a new piece of furniture. Everything was given to us; our living room set we found sitting by the road waiting for the garbage trucks. After we cleaned it up, you would never have known that this was someone else's garbage.

When my daughter Michelle was 16, she was able to get a summer job where I worked. It was at a factory, and the work was hard. This money would help her buy her school clothes and whatever else she needed that we could not afford.

At the end of the summer Michelle announced that

she wanted me to take her somewhere since she was not driving yet. She wanted to go to a furniture place! I figured maybe she was going to buy a bedroom set with the money she had saved. Instead, and to my surprise, Michelle said, "Mom, you have never had a new living room suite, and I want to buy you a set with the money that I have saved."

I was so touched and it meant so much to her, that there was no way I could turn her down. So we proudly walked in, and I picked out the most beautiful set that I had ever owned. We had that living room set for many years.

My daughter is all grown now with a house of her own. God has richly blessed Michelle, and I have to believe that some of those blessings have come because she put her needs last so that she could brighten her mother's day many years ago.

The Bible says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). When we sacrifice to give, we become more like God who is the Supreme Giver. We first experience the joy that comes from giving, then the rewards that it brings later in our life when it comes back to us.

My daughter called the other day with the news that her husband bought her a beautiful new couch, and she was able to pick it out! It made me reflect back many years ago when my 16-year-old daughter gave me the same gift. God never forgot either. In the long run, we will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7).

Janet Treadway

Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregation

Lesson From Some Sisters

"To everything—turn, turn, turn

"There is a season—turn, turn, turn

"And a time for every purpose under heaven."

I am quoting the '60s Byrds' song I still love to hear. They were, of course, also paraphrasing Ecclesiastes 3. That is the famous chapter where God through Solomon tells us the lesson of timing.

Jesus also taught a lesson in timing. Can we call it "a time to perspire and a time to be inspired"?

When the Lord walked this earth, He was often on the road and had no place to call home (see Matthew 8:20). But there was something He liked about a home in Bethany where a man named Lazarus lived with his two sisters, Mary and Martha. Maybe Martha was a great cook. Perhaps they were wonderful hosts.

Mary and Martha were quite different from each other. It seems Mary was the quiet, contemplative type. Martha was the action-oriented, assertive type.

One day, Jesus came to their home. Martha thought it would be a good idea to make Him a meal. She went into the kitchen and started working. Meanwhile, Mary thought it would be a great opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet and hear what He had to say.

As Mary was sitting there, taking it all in, Martha was working frantically in the kitchen, growing more and more frustrated because Mary was not helping her.

Finally, she could not contain herself any longer. She came out of the kitchen, and looking down at Mary and Jesus, said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me" (Luke 10:40).

Jesus responded, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (verses 41-42).

Sometimes we can do the same thing. We can get so worked up. Like Martha, we sometimes offer activity instead of adoration, work instead of worship, and perspiration instead of inspiration.

There is a time to sit, and there is a time to move. There is nothing wrong with activity. The lesson is being thoughtful about God's presence and the opportunity for it. Think about that the next time you are tempted to miss such an opportunity.

"To everything—turn, turn, turn. There is a season..."

Stuart Segall

Pastor of the Crescent City, Eureka and Red Bluff, California, congregations

Turning the Hearts . . . How About a Date With Your Wife?

"I'll pick you up after work and let's go to your favorite restaurant for dinner. What do you say?" Your wife replies, "What about the children?" You reply, "I've arranged with the neighbor girl to watch them." So, it's all arranged for a nice date with your wife!

Too often we forget to make special time for that most important person in our lives—our spouse. Once a married couple has children, they naturally adopt roles of father and mother. They may even begin to refer to each other as "Dad" or "Mom" so that the child picks up on those words. But, any happily married couple must never forget that they were husband and wife before they became mom and dad.

Couples need to have time just for themselves. Time to talk openly, speak affectionately and discuss matters out of earshot of the children. It is commendable to want to spend most of our time rearing our children; however, if we do not push the refresh button for the marriage, we may find ourselves growing apart as husband and wife.

A date does not have to be expensive. It does need to be something that both will enjoy. Perhaps a coffee at your favorite café or dessert at your favorite restaurant? Maybe an evening at a movie theater with popcorn and soft drinks (or bottled water if you prefer), snuggled close to each other? Maybe driving to the mountains or beach and watching the sunset? The key to it all is sharing time together as a husband and wife so that you can have intimacy. By intimacy I mean sharing and caring for each other.

God tells us in Ecclesiastes 9:7-9 to "go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works... Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life."

Paul wrote that a husband needs to love his wife and to nourish and cherish her (Ephesians 5:25-29). Husbands and wives need time together to accomplish these important facets of their marriages.

What are the benefits?

- Time away from the parental routine.
- Time to be together as husband and wife.
- Time to enjoy life together.
- Time to talk about the marriage and family.
- Time to share feelings.
- Time to rekindle loving feelings toward each other.
- Time to exercise our creativity in arranging the date.

Wives have been known to also exercise their creativity by arranging the babysitter and ordering tickets to a play or by making reservations at a restaurant and then inviting their husbands to take them on a date.

So, the key is time together to enrich our marriages. The investment will pay huge dividends in a secure and happy marriage and family!

Gary E. Antion



Children's Corner

Can You Find the Names of the Original 12 Apostles?

Circle these CAPITALIZED names in the word search below:

SIMON PETER (also called

CEPHAS and BARJONAH)

ANDREW

JOHN

JAMES, son of Zebedee

PHILIP

BARTHOLOMEW

THOMAS

MATTHEW (also called LEVI)

JAMES, son of Alphaeus

SIMON ZELOTES

THADDAEUS (also called

LEBBAEUS)

JUDAS ISCARIOT

B A P Z S S T S B S B A R T H O L O M E W E T I S
T I M E D P J A A L I H M R B D R T J T B I M L M
T S T G A A B U T J A M E S E T O E U I A L S E A
H C E L M P H E D J R A O A M D K D D R R A D B T
A A C E P H A S B A A T I N F U I D A A J T S B T
D R H V I I N T O M S T G S P N D D S J O H N A H
D I D I E L D E D E R H O S C E A T Y E N O I E I
A O B I E I R O A S A E J A C A T U S M A M R U A
E T S I R P E I D H T W O M E Y R E N D H A U S S
U A B H L S W T A N M S T W I N G O R O A S T L O
S I M O N Z E L O T E S E M I O Y U M Y W K L A Y

John McClain, Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregation

The End of Cheap Food and Energy: What's a Christian to Do?

The high standard of living in the developed world and the vast world population have been sustained by cheap energy. The increasing demand and the beginning of an irreversible decline in world oil production means that the era of cheap energy and cheap food is over. Prices for oil, gasoline and natural gas can be expected to trend ever upward as demand for energy outstrips the supplies.

The 20th-century agricultural revolution was fueled by oil—to run farm equipment, to transport agricultural products and to make pesticides and fertilizers. As prices for fuel and chemicals rise, food prices will also rise.

The pressures of suburban sprawl, soil loss, pollution and climate change are only going to compound the problem. World food prices are already rising and can be expected to continue to go up.

Whether this is another signal of the approach of Christ's return or just another chapter in the long saga of human suffering, how should we as Christians react?

The two great commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). Let's use the time God gives us to draw close to God and get ready spiritually and physically for hard times (Romans 13:11-13). Proverbs 22:3 tells us that it's wise to take preventative measures before trouble comes upon us.

Knowing that home heating, gasoline and products transported over long distances will be much more expensive, we can make the choice to start using less. We don't have to be caught unprepared. The simpler our lives, the better prepared we will be to serve others.

Love must be proved in action, and our willingness to love others will be put to the test.

"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:15-17).

Paul urged the Philippians to show a deep concern for the welfare of others:

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

The Christian duty to act compassionately is clear. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9-10).

Jay Turner
San Jose, California, congregation

I Can See Clearly Now (or Can I?)

To a 9-year-old it seemed like a great miracle—to be able to see clearly.

I had been falling behind in my schoolwork. The teacher noticed a problem and moved me from a seat at the rear of the class to one on the front row. She had determined that I was not able to see the blackboard well. Next, there was a visit to the school nurse for an eye check, which confirmed a vision problem.

Dr. Cooper, the local optometrist, checked me out thoroughly and prescribed glasses. When they came, he had me look out the window of his second floor office at some trees down the road.

He then stood behind me and slipped the glasses down over my eyes.

What a world of difference! The trees suddenly had distinctly visible leaves; people on the street below had faces; the signs on the store fronts were readable! I exclaimed, "I can see clearly now!"

Much the same thing happened when God gave me understanding of His truth. Suddenly the Bible made sense. Before this, even attendance at many different denominations had not brought any real meaning to religion. It was just something you were expected to do.

When God opened my eyes, it was like having glasses given to me to see clearly what He planned for mankind. What the Bible said suddenly began to make sense. I was gaining spiritual vision!

But the vision is not completely clear. As Paul said, "Now we see in a mirror dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). He has revealed His truth and His plan up to a point, but not fully what is ahead in the world tomorrow. We understand prophecy, but do not completely understand how it is going to come about. The details will come when it does happen, but as time goes on, it becomes clearer.

We must have patience and wait for His plan to unfold. Things will become clearer, as if we are given new glasses to aid our vision. When Christ returns, we will be given new bodies and new eyes. Then we can truly say, "I can see clearly now!"

Newton Baker
Fort Worth, Texas, congregation



Where Do We Stand Before God?

As we look back on the Passover season, we have a reminder of an important process that should continue throughout the entire year—*self-examination*.

God placed the Passover at the beginning of the annual festivals (Leviticus 23:4-5). In 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, Paul urges members to examine themselves before partaking of the Passover. This doesn't come naturally. Would many of us consider self-examination without this admonition? God wants us to examine ourselves so we can see ourselves as He views us.

Examination of our lives can easily come to a halt after Passover. Webster's dictionary defines examination as "to inspect closely; to inquire into carefully; to test by questioning, to determine progress; to explore, with a view to discover the truth."

Wouldn't God want us to continue this process throughout the year? Could our outlook on God's plan become clearer and our spiritual growth deepen if we continued to use God's method for evaluating ourselves? The clear answer to both questions is yes!

To know where we stand before God, we should periodically ask our Father to reveal His perspective of us. This is in addition to our daily scrutinizing. Occasionally, all of us need a deeper and more thorough self-examination, like the exams we had at school to show our progress. A teacher can use tests to open the eyes of the students so they can better visualize where they stand. In much the same way, God wants each of us to see clearly how we look through His eyes.

Teachers evaluate their students' progress all year long to aid the students in following the objectives of the teacher and the textbook. God wants us to examine ourselves on a regular basis by following His guidelines in His textbook, the Bible.

Many textbooks are flawed, but God's is perfect! "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may

be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

By asking God to help us in determining a schedule for regular examination, each of us can obtain a proper balance.

Why does God want us to see His view? Simply, it is because His perception of us is perfect! The latter half of 1 Samuel 16:7 states, "For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Ultimately, God is our Judge; therefore, if we clearly see His outlook of us, then we will know *exactly* where we stand! When we are deceived, our vision is out of focus and our distorted view usually tends to make us look better in our own eyes. We are not to think too highly of ourselves, but soberly (Romans 12:3).

Let's use God's Word to test ourselves and prove how we should be living our lives (Romans 12:2). This process is one that we can't afford to overlook. Why should we wait until next Passover before examining ourselves again?

In learning to become God's children, it's important to allow our Father to help us in all areas. He requires us to overcome, but how do we repent of sins that we cannot see clearly? God is showing us a way!

Throughout this coming year, strive to build a better habit of self-examination. Only with God's help can we successfully see where we stand before Him. May we all continue to grow in God's grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18)!

Doug Wendt
Orlando, Florida, congregation

Gaining From Godly Correction

You have just strongly corrected your son. He was on a collision course leading to a solid brick wall! Patiently, you waited for him to correct himself. But to your chagrin, it did not happen. In the process of correcting him, you observed his emotions evolve from denial, to hurt, to anger. You prayed that his initial denial would shortly be replaced with acceptance and change. You love your son dearly, but you had to get his attention!

God's Loving Correction

If you are a parent, you are probably familiar with this scenario. Our Heavenly Father has been person-

ally involved in similar scenarios for thousands of years.

His love for us is far beyond our comprehension. But when we continually fail to make a course correction, He intervenes with loving correction. The correction can come from a friend, a mate, a minister, an article or a total stranger!

"My son, do not despise or shrink from the chastening of the Lord [His correction by punishment or by subjection to suffering or trial]; neither be weary of or impatient about or loathe or abhor His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:11-12, Amplified Bible).

Don't Despise His Chastening

Three times we are warned not to despise His chastening (Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11; Hebrews 12:5). Hebrews 12:8 tells us that if we do not receive His chastening, we are illegitimate sons! In the Roman society, an illegitimate son had no inheritance rights.

The Greek word for despise is *oligoreo*. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, it means to have little regard for. King Solomon makes a penetrating statement in Proverbs 12:1: "Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid!" This scripture is a perfect example of the Bible being described as a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).

Correction Produces Godly Fruit

Hebrews 12:11 states, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Our Father is full of mercy. He will guide us through this difficult process. Job 5:18 states, "For he wounds [corrects] but he binds up; he smites, but his hands heal" (Revised Standard Version). Isn't this just like God? Healing follows correction.

Correction Leads to Holiness

God's love is shown through correction. His correction is designed to put us back on the straight and narrow. He is deeply pleased when He sees a humble and speedy response to His correction.

If we are His children, correction will come in one form or another. God's correction is summed up beautifully in Hebrew 12:10: "For they [our human fathers] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness!"

Leon Leonard
Akron, Ohio, congregation

The Lighter Side...

by Merle Slagle



New Strategic Plan and Operation Plan Approved

■ The new Strategic Plan developed by the Council of Elders and the Operation Plan developed by the administration were approved by the General Conference of Elders May 18. Here are excerpts from the introductory letters sent to the elders, along with definitions of the terms used in the plans.

Strategic Plan: From the Chairman

The Council of Elders and home office administration are pleased to present to you our new Strategic and Operation Plans. It has been a dizzying six months going from concept to completion. As you will remember, the feasibility study took place at the August 2007 Council of Elders meeting, with the Council giving full endorsement to the project.

The initial groundwork, including interviewing and selecting a facilitator and conducting the necessary interviews to create a briefing book, took us into early January. Once these tasks were completed, the bulk of the Council's work took place in two strategic planning retreats held in January and February. Staff members have worked feverishly since, getting the plans ready for distribution.

The new plan is clean and graphic, and it flows in a logical manner from vision and mission to strategic action steps. We have included definitions of all components.

You will find the Vision and Mission Statements are unaltered from previous Strategic Plans. Guiding Principles have replaced Value Statements. While the content is fundamentally the same, they have been reworded to fit the new more dynamic planning process. The reason is simple—Value Statements only state values; Guiding Principles state principles and the action that must be taken as a result of holding those values.

Positioning Statements are new to our culture. These are broad statements about the direction and focus of the organization. As you can see, they, too, require us to take a stand on what we intend to do. The Strategic Plan ends with the statement of three major goal areas for the Church—Public Proclamation, Congregational Care and Organization, which set the stage for the Operation Plan to be presented by the president.

Again, it is our pleasure to present you with the new Strategic and Operation Plans. We expect they will be the first step in becoming more efficient, productive and accountable—all qualities we believe are important to the God we serve.

On behalf of the Council of Elders,
Robert Dick

Definitions

Vision: A picture of the “preferred future”; a statement that describes how the future will look if the organization achieves its ultimate aims.

Mission: A statement of overall purpose of the organization. Describes what you do, for whom you do it and the benefit.

Guiding Principles: General guidelines

that set the foundation for how the organization will operate.

Positioning Statements: Broad statements about the direction and focus of the organization.

Goals: Broad, long-term aims that define accomplishment of the mission.

Objectives: Specific, quantifiable, realistic targets that measure accomplishment of a goal over a specified period of time.

Objectives must be SMART—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

The performance of the organization is

graded against stated objectives.

Critical Success Factors: Major items or issues that must “go right” to achieve one or more objectives.

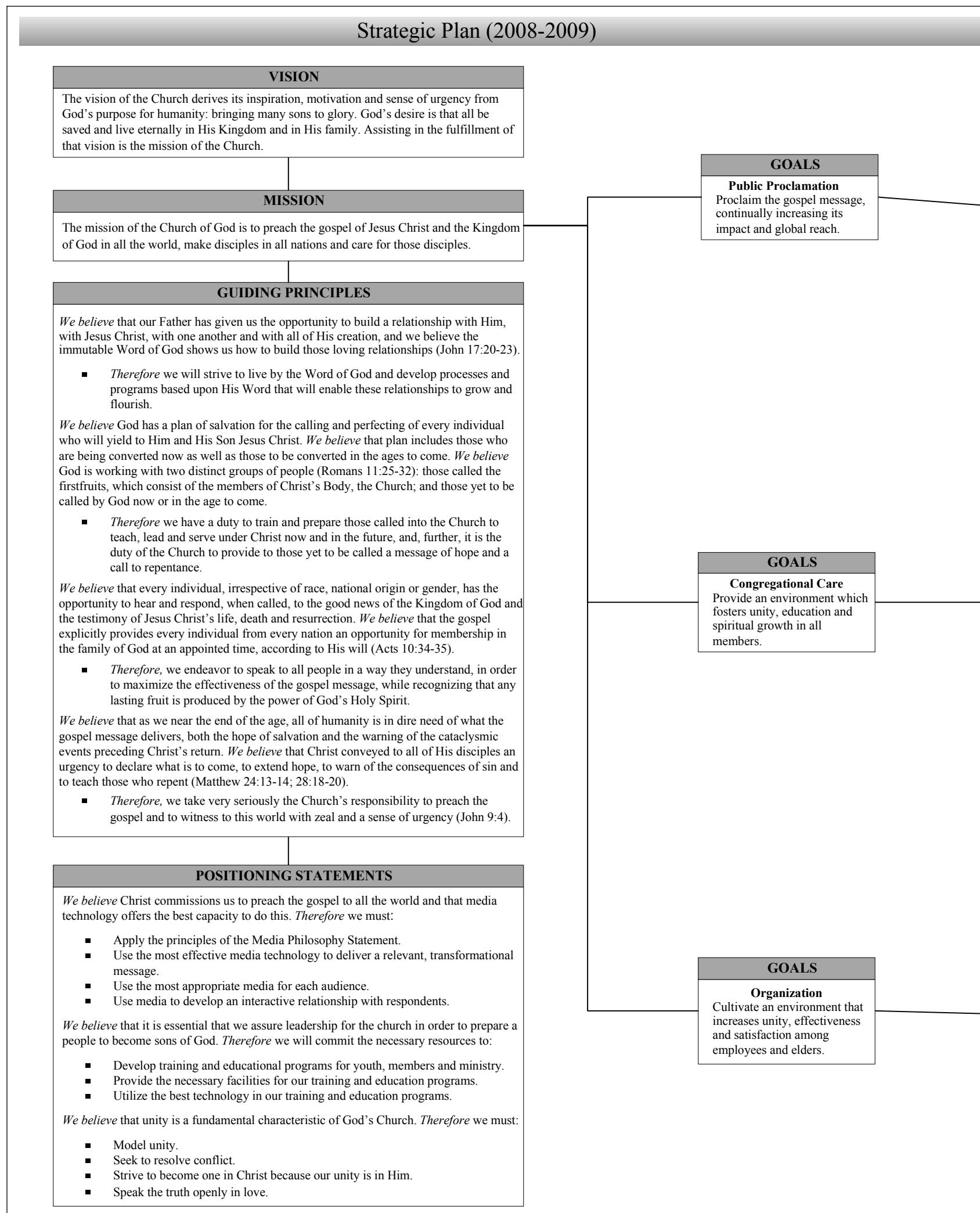
CSFs are limited to those things that can be impacted by the organization.

Barriers: Existing or potential chal-

lenges that hinder the achievement of one or more objectives.

As with CSFs, limited to those things that can be impacted by the organization.

Strategies: Broad activities required to achieve an objective, control a critical success factor or overcome a barrier.



**Operation Plan:
From the President**

In the flow of organizational planning, once the Council has established the overarching goals for the Church listed in the Strategic Plan, the ball is handed off to the administration to implement the plans necessary to achieve those goals.

During the strategic planning process

we identified scores of worthy tasks and undertakings, but attempting to tackle all of them at once would be a fruitless and frustrating exercise. This model of strategic planning requires that we identify and address the highest priority issues, rather than listing every single thing that is part of normal continuing operations.

Public Proclamation: Our highest priority for the coming year is to build a

significant presence on the World Wide Web as the primary vehicle for delivering the gospel to the world.

We have been heading in this direction for a long time, but we are specifically focused on developing a master plan and increasing the number of skilled staff capable of implementing it. In addition to technical considerations, a major challenge will be to create a variety of Web

content that more effectively engages our audience.

Our long-term intent is to increasingly communicate with our audience through the Internet—it provides many more open doors for contacting the public; it allows rapid response and opportunities for building a relationship with those who are interested; and it is far more economical.

To that end, we plan to build multiple

new Web sites in order to attract a wider audience to the gospel message. We will strive to keep our sites fresh and abreast of technology, promoting electronic literature in order to reduce print and mailing costs.

Increasing print and postage costs are plaguing all businesses, and we must strive to ensure, as much as possible, that our print material goes to a more highly qualified audience. Consistent with this priority, we will implement an annual renewal process for all periodicals to identify committed subscribers. Print circulation numbers will drop in the short term, but we anticipate that our Web strategies will rebuild and maintain these circulation levels.

We will undertake close cooperation with talented Web designers and artists throughout the Church to achieve the most effective sites, hire appropriate staff to manage and maintain these sites, and use contracted services to supplement staff as needed. We will also develop a plan to optimize search engine hits on our sites.

The *Bible Study Course* has traditionally been a major tool for spiritual development. One of our high priorities is to rewrite and expand the *BSC*, plus simultaneously develop an interactive Web version to increase its effectiveness.

In addition, another major editorial project will be to write new, more condensed, first-contact literature for all of our Web sites in order to more effectively provide a “milk to meat” approach.

This will require staff education and development programs to increase the impact of our message through a more compelling delivery in both written and video materials, which will in turn encourage return visits and loyalty.

Focusing on the Web as the primary vehicle for preaching the gospel does not negate other forms of delivery, but it does redirect our priorities in spending. For example, we will begin to limit our use of print advertising, shifting more to increasing the percentage of readers using electronic versions.

Congregational Care: In the strategic planning exercise, the Council determined that our number one internal need was for an effective succession plan for replacing our aging pastoral ministry. To accomplish this task, the priority organizational strategy for Ministerial Services must be to “develop a comprehensive training program for ministerial candidates, including facilities for the development of pastoral candidates, to meet our current and future needs to ensure that there is a pastor to care for each congregation.”

History has taught us well that the Church’s health and growth depend greatly on providing quality pastoral care in every congregation, both in maintaining a manageable pastor/congregation ratio and in serving effectively. We must ensure that we not only have the manpower to fill positions, but that they are as effectively trained as possible to meet the growing challenges of pastoring God’s people in “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4).

In addition to new manpower training, Ministerial Services has identified several other key projects to fulfill the part of our mission that addresses caring for the disciples who have responded to God’s calling. The most obvious location for “preparing people” is within the environment of the

See “Strategic,” page 5

Operation Plan (2008-2009)





From **the Word**

Is My Child Out of Control?

■ Helping our children learn how to behave in church can be challenging, but it can greatly benefit them throughout life.

by **Jeannie Evans**

You may have heard about the incident that occurred a while back aboard a plane preparing for takeoff. A Massachusetts couple had trouble with their 3-year-old daughter. She did not want to get buckled into her seat but was crying and thrashing around. She was “out of control”!

An airline representative said the crew waited 15 minutes for the couple to get control of their child. The parents did not succeed, so the airline had to ask the family to get off the plane.

Why are there so many children today who are out of control?

Some say it is caused by all the sugar and dyes in the food the children consume. Indeed, studies suggest that a poor diet can contribute to behavioral problems. However, could it be that some parents simply don't know how to handle their children or are embarrassed by the scene it could cause in public?

Could This Happen to Me?

Have we wondered, “Could this happen to our family?” Would we have been able to control our child in the airplane situation described above?

Did God intend for children to be out of control or for children to be in control of their parents?

Proverbs 17:25 states, “A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him.” Throughout the Bible we find admonition and instruction given regarding children.

Is our child out of control? Do we want to do something about it? Of course, all children act up now and then, but it is our duty to God, our neighbors, our children and ourselves to do something about it.

The Challenge of Church

There is a place where almost all parents seem to have difficulties in controlling their children. This place is church. We may not know what to do with our children at that time, and so the tendency is to let them rule us. We may be afraid to correct our children because we don't want to disturb others or be embarrassed if they don't respond to us. However, we can end up disturbing others in the way we handle the situation every Sabbath.

Even a difficult child can be taught to sit and be quiet. We should teach this diligently at home just as we should be teaching them diligently every word of God (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

With my own children I learned the importance of practicing at home during the week. There were many times I put my son down on a blanket and taught him to stay on it while I listened to the radio or TV for a certain

Catch your child being good. Don't just take the position that he or she is supposed to be good. Let your child know that you noticed him or her being good.

amount of time. You can start with a short period of time and work up to longer periods.

I gave him toys to play with and taught him that he needed to be quiet during this time. (I would give him special toys at church that he didn't play with at home so that he was excited to come to church.)

I would get his attention and put my finger to my lips and “shush” him quietly. We have to make sure we don't end up disturbing people in our attempt to quiet our child.

A common mistake many of us make is taking our screaming child out of services without gently covering his or her mouth, which can really disturb those around us.

I remember when my daughter was young and at the particular stage when she was finding her voice. She would want to let out a high, piercing scream! Sound familiar?

We were in a restaurant one time, and something had to be done fast. My husband took his hand and

held her chin up to where it closed her mouth so that she couldn't scream, and he firmly but quietly said, “No!” It took a couple of those episodes to break her from that habit.

Another mistake that we commonly make is allowing our children to feel like they are getting their way by taking them out of church services. When we take our children out, they should know that they are in trouble. They should not want to be taken out of a church service. A child should associate that with correction.

In Control

Teaching our children to be “in control” is possible! We just need to find the right methods that work with our individual child. It takes a plan, hard work (no one ever said it would be easy) and consistency. Consistency can't be emphasized enough. This is usually where we all fall

short the most because it takes time and patience.

If we really want to be in control of our children but don't know where to turn, we can ask other parents who have “been there and done that.” Many parents would be happy to share stories of how they learned to teach their children, or they can steer you in the right direction to find help.



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There are also plenty of good books on the subject of child rearing. We may be dealing with a difficult child who has learning disabilities. You can do research to find effective ways to help them. It can be challenging, I know; I've been there. But I'm happy to say that there is light at the end of the tunnel!

Another way to seek help is to pray about it. We may sometimes forget that God really cares about our situation, and He wants us to find the answers. I can't tell you how many times God came to my rescue when I asked for His help.

Another program I would like to mention is one that many pastors have

begun to offer. It is called “Growing Kids God's Way.” Consider asking your minister about it if you don't currently have such a program in your area.

Remember, having our child in control is a blessing, and it can be a blessing to others to see our child's example of a good and obedient nature.

For more on this subject, see the article “Our Children and Sabbath Services” by Doug Horchak in the November 2005 issue (www.ucg.org/un/un0511/childrensabbath.htm). **UN**

Jeannie Evans is the wife of Eric Evans, pastor of the Kingsport and Knoxville, Tennessee, and London, Kentucky, congregations.

Ways We Can Give Encouragement to Our Children

- Look for opportunities, large and small, to tell your child through word and action that you are proud of him or her. We must correct when needed, but strive to eliminate unnecessary negative comments.
- Smile often at your child! This simple effort sends the message to your child that he or she makes you happy and is appreciated and loved.
- Catch your child being good. Don't just take the position that he or she is supposed to be good. Let your child know that you noticed him or her being good. This is not only an excellent way to encourage appropriate behavior, but it also boosts a child's self-esteem to know that he or she is doing something right and you appreciate it.
- Don't overlook the opportunities to give a pat on the back, a quick squeeze or an arm around their shoulders. These are sure ways to demonstrate your approval and encouragement.

Specific Positive Statements

Here are specific positive statements that you can incorporate in dealing with your children. Realize though that children can see through insincerity. They don't like hypocrisy. They want a “straight shooter.”

Your encouragement must be sincere. If it is not, it will “ring hollow” over time. You must be sincere or these comments will not reap the rich reward they can produce. Never use these messages sarcastically or you will damage their effectiveness and your child won't trust you when you mean them. Use them often, whenever they are appropriate.

- I knew you could do it!
- You're doing a great job!
- I'm proud of the way you are sticking to this!
- I know this is hard; you're really working at it!
- You've made a lot of progress!
- Thanks for picking up those books. You are such a big helper! I really appreciate it!
- It was very nice of you to help the younger boy today; I'm really proud of you!

Children thrive on positive attention. Children need to feel loved and appreciated. Unfortunately, many parents find it is easier to provide negative feedback than positive feedback.

If You're Not a Parent: How the Congregation Can Help

Many years ago, the phrase “We Are Family” was touted within the Church. The fact is, we are family. As such, we should greatly value the blessing that little children are—to the entire congregation.

All of us as brethren in a local congregation need to be loving and patient with each other. This includes patience with the parents who are teaching and training their precious little children. Rather than criticizing or judging, *offering to help* a single mother or parents who have small children while at church can be a real service and example of love.

Doug Horchak

Britton M. Taylor

Will You Be a Spiritual Survivor? (Part 2)

■ Although this story is imaginary, what if you faced a similar scenario?

by John LaBissoniere

Janet Miller sat on the couch, weeping. Her husband Paul had just put down the phone after having invited yet another Church of God family who were urgently seeking food and shelter to move in with them. Besides their son, his wife and their three children who had joined them about a year earlier, three more people would now share their home.

"How will we feed and house 10 people?" Janet softly asked. Paul, placed his arm around Janet's shoulder and said, "Honey, God has always seen us through tough times and we can be absolutely sure He'll do so again." Indeed the Millers had endured many ups and downs throughout their 34 years of marriage and during decades as members of the Church.

Just four years previously, Paul had retired as a high school principal. The Millers lived in the same modest house in a suburb of a medium-size city where they had raised a family of two girls and a boy and enjoyed many happy times. But now, the world they had known was turned upside down.

A Daunting Challenge

The economic cataclysm that had swiftly and unpredictably engulfed the entire world was now beginning its third year. Like countless others, the Millers had been severely affected by harsh financial reversals. Their son, Jim, was also no exception. After having been terminated from his job and spending many months in an unsuccessful employment search, he found himself bereft of income and savings. As a result, Paul and Janet invited him and his family to move in with them.

Paul found that his recently reduced Social Security income and teacher's pension was barely adequate to support the new arrivals. But now, with three additional people to support, it would certainly be a daunting challenge requiring fervent prayer and deep faith.

The impact of this economic disaster was also no stranger to the other brethren of the local congregation. Attendance at Sabbath services had fallen sharply over many months. Now, due to the unrelenting financial strain, members were only able to meet intermittently on the Sabbaths in various homes.

Many brethren had lost employment and some had moved away. Sadly, a few, like their friends John and Jane Doe, had completely stopped attending services. Over many months, Paul and Janet had pleaded with them to stay close to God and put their trust in Him. But their urgings fell on deaf ears as the Does lost hope and turned away from the Church and from God.

Although this situation deeply distressed the Millers, they were personally determined to remain faithful no

matter how difficult times became. And indeed, hard times were getting progressively harder.

Growing Lawlessness

In country after country, moderate governments collapsed as citizens demanded strong central leadership to insure protection and public order. For the price of personal freedom, hard-line rulers and dictators promised they would shield citizens from danger. Yet, instability was pervasive in many nations and as a result, numerous governments had suspended constitutions and installed martial law.

Food riots and murderous ethnic clashes, fueled by uncompromising radical elements, sprang up in many countries. Even in the United States, state governors were forced by growing lawlessness, including burglary, assaults, carjackings and other violent crimes, to declare overnight curfews. National guard units were called up to help the police control unrest and patrol the streets of many cities.

And, it wasn't long before these troops required the support of regular military units, many of which had been withdrawn from worldwide outposts. As a result of the power vacuum left by large-scale global U.S. military withdrawals, ethnic and border clashes escalated in many nations.

New power blocs and coalitions formed in the Middle East, the far East and in Europe. Having abandoned former alliances, these new federations and their dictatorial leaders amassed enormous control and influence, generating antagonism and dread among rival regions.

Rumors of pending war were rampant, creating fear, apprehension and panic. Simmering tensions exploded repeatedly into armed military conflict as nations and groups of nations rose against each other.

Intense political pressures and escalating hostilities, on top of severe economic strain, set the stage for severe food shortages that quickly turned into famine in many nations. Growing starvation, combined with the lack of adequate sanitation, attacked weakened human immune systems. Often the result was the spread of epidemic diseases, with millions of people dead or dying.

Besides increases in starvation and disease resulting from human conflicts, natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods and fires, rocked the globe. Lacking adequate medical care, clean water and food, the ravaged survivors often weakened and died.

Beginning of Sorrows?

As these strenuous conditions advanced, it appeared to Paul, Janet and many other brethren, that the prophecies of Matthew 24:6-8 were rapidly being fulfilled. As they witnessed wars, rumors of wars, nations rising against other nations, famines, pestilences and earthquakes, it looked like the "beginning of sorrows" and the coming of the prophesied Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

And it wasn't just national or international events that stirred the Millers' thinking. People from all walks of life were not only suffering, discouraged and frustrated, but they were angry. Stirred by false media reports regarding the cause of their adversities, many looked for scapegoats—seeking something or someone to blame.

Those who appeared to be outside society's mainstream were often suspected of complicity in a scheme to destroy the economy and take down the government. Sabbath-keepers and others were often included in those who were suspect.

In one instance, Paul and Janet had themselves been approached by several neighborhood acquaintances who openly queried why they held "conspiratorial" meetings in their home on various Saturdays. Rumors circulated that Sabbath-keepers in other cities had literally been beaten for their beliefs and one had died as a result of severe injuries.

Yes, the Millers and other brethren were facing stressful, demanding times that they had never before witnessed or endured, with the threat of worse times ahead. Even so, Paul, Janet and their household guests were committed to faithfully handling the dangers and uncertainty with perseverance and faith. They were determined to be spiritual survivors by placing their trust in and reliance on their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Back to Today

Although the above story is fictionalized, is such a future scenario really possible? Just what lies ahead for members of the Body of Christ? Jesus Christ warned that stressful, distressing times will come at the end of the age unless repentance occurs (Matthew 3:2). "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

Christ will return in the midst of terrible destruction, death, suffering and heartache. In fact, the entire global population would be completely wiped out if it were not for loyal brethren of God's Church (Matthew 24:9).

Jesus warned that coming, traumatic times will also severely affect those very same brethren. He said persecution would grow and "then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9).

Because lawlessness would proliferate, many Christians would, regrettably, fail to continue on the path toward the Kingdom (Matthew 24:12). Jesus declared that they would "be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another" (Matthew 24:10) They would give up their crown (Revelation 3:11) and surrender their spiritual armor, sword and shield (Ephesians 6:17).

Don't Quit!

Obviously, such a result would be



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a spiritual disaster in which we would not want to participate! But what can we personally do to prevent such a result? How can we insure our spiritual survival in the face of persecution, trials and hardship?

The answer is simply that we must not quit! We must spiritually endure, carry on and persist in faithfulness. We must persevere. Matthew 24:13 says, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved." And how can this be accomplished? Only by relying on the strength, power and guidance of our Heavenly Father (Psalm 115:11).

Jesus promised that He would never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) and His faithful people would not be tried "beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Even so, *physical* protection and survival is not an absolute guarantee. The Bible explains that some of God's saints suffered and even died martyrs' deaths (Hebrews 11:37). However, *spiritual* survival was absolutely assured although some did lose their physical lives due to intense persecution (Hebrews 11:39).

But should that thought frighten us? Should we be overly concerned about our physical lives and circumstances? What did Jesus tell us? "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on" (Luke 12:22-23). He also said, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

Found "So Doing"?

Christ tells us that no matter how terrible events become, we should have

courage and faith that we will receive our spiritual reward (Luke 21:28). To be spiritual survivors, we need to pray fervently, be filled with the Holy Spirit and stay repentant and humble.

As God's people, we must be aware of the "times and the seasons" in which we live (1 Thessalonians 5:1). We must carefully guard our spiritual condition. "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:34-35).

So, we are to watch and pray (Mark 13:33) and diligently seek God's help, direction and guidance (Isaiah 55:6). We must be fully engaged in the work of preaching the gospel (Matthew 24:14). Furthermore, we must grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) and use our talents and abilities to love and serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

Will we be found "so doing" when Christ returns (Matthew 24:46)? With our spiritual survival at stake, will we be among those who quit and then lose out on eternal life?

Or will we be like Paul and Janet Miller and choose to heed the Bible's instructions to stay awake and alert (Romans 13:11) and who are determined to survive spiritually no matter how difficult times became (2 Thessalonians 2:15)?

The question is, will you be a spiritual survivor? The choice is yours and the time to choose is now! **UN**

John LaBissoniere is an elder in the Knoxville, Tennessee, congregation and an employee of the Media and Communications Services department. The first article appeared in February.

God Is Making His Jewels, and You Are One of Them!

■ When going through trials, do we first think of asking God to ease the pain or heal us quickly, or do we ask Him to finish in us what He started? For our Heavenly Father, the making of the greatest of treasures is of paramount importance!

by **Bernard J. Hongerlout**

For mine superintendent Frederick Wells, Jan. 26, 1905, ended up to be a day like no other!

The day had started like any other day of work at the mine. But when a portion of the tunnel wall crumbled, revealing a glasslike shape unlike any he had mined before, his heart started pounding. He just couldn't believe his eyes. Thomas Cullinan, his boss, would forever be grateful to him for the fame to befall him that day.

Thomas Cullinan owned the Premier Diamond Mining Company of Gauteng, in South Africa. And Frederick Wells had just unearthed a diamond weighing more than 3,100 carats, that is, more than a pound or half a kilogram. It is the largest gem diamond ever found.

(Note: A carbonado weighing 3,600 carats was found in Brazil, but it was not made of gem-quality material.)

The stone was bought by the Transvaal government and presented to British King Edward VII. It was cut into three large parts by the Asscher brothers of Amsterdam, and eventually into 11 large gem-quality stones, 96 smaller brilliants and 9.5 carats of unpolished pieces.

Cutting the diamond was considered difficult and risky. Reports say the brothers studied the diamond for three months before deciding where to make the first cut. In order to enable Joseph Asscher to cut the diamond in one blow, an incision was made, half an inch deep. Then, a specially designed cleaving blade was placed in the incision. Some say the first blade broke! But eventually the diamond was split in one heavy blow. The stone split through a defective spot as planned.

The Cullinan I—also called the Great Star of Africa—was the largest gem produced from the rough stone. It is a pear-shaped stone of a little over 530 carats, and it is the world's largest cut diamond. It is now in the head of the royal scepter in the British crown jewels.

The second largest cut diamond, the Cullinan II—the Lesser Star of Africa—is a cushion-shaped stone just a little over 317 carats and is set in the British imperial state crown.

In this physical world of ours, when one talks of jewels, he or she refers to some very precious, beautiful, rare and expensive stones, metals or pearls. It seems God has placed in us an innate desire to adorn ourselves or surround ourselves with the precious bounty of the earth in terms of splendid pearls, crystals, gems and metals of all kinds.

Spiritual Treasure

And splendor there is! The Bible speaks of treasures, of precious stones and of an incredibly beautiful jewel—the new capital of the world, the New Jerusalem to come down from heaven. And it speaks of other jewels as well, so precious and expensive that no amount of money could ever buy them, because they are spiritual in nature. They are more precious than the most valuable bounty of the earth.

The prophet Malachi wrote of such a spiritual treasure:

“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. ‘They shall be mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels’” (Malachi 3:16-17).

If we check that passage in a number of versions, it is expressed in a variety of ways, perhaps indicating that the translators had a hard time believing what God is actually saying here. From reading different versions, we discover that God is speaking here of making His “jewels” or His “special treasure.”

We usually do not think of ourselves as jewels. Yet that is precisely what God thinks of us! We are His jewels in the making—we are His special treasure. And I would venture to say that, in God's eyes, we are far more precious than the Great Star of Africa—the Cullinan I! Gems like these run in the multiple millions of dollars. Priceless. Uninsurable. But how about us? In God's eyes, we are infinitely more precious.

Incredible Potential

How do we see ourselves? It is true that God does not want us to have a high opinion of ourselves. We are to be

clothed with humility. But we also need to understand how important our life is to God—the incredible human potential.

The Bible reveals that God is making His jewels, and you are one of them! To grasp that concept is of the highest importance. Having that in mind as we go through life—especially trials—is paramount!

We are often asked to pray for one another in our trials. And indeed we need to. But we need, as well, to remember that taking a rough diamond and working with it, grinding it, polishing it with different abrasives, giving it its final brilliance and luster, with its many facets, takes time and a lot of grinding!

As any diamond in the rough that takes a lot of time and work and love, we have been specifically selected, because—like the Cullinan I—God has made us of “gem-quality material.”

Facets of Character

Once a “gem in the rough” is discovered, it takes the “gem masters” a considerable time and lots of efforts to cut the different facets. There are many facets to true Christianity. And God is working in each of us to create in us a unique gem. And for God—the Master Gemologist—to smooth the rough edges and polish us and cut the different facets of His character, it is vital that we feel like gems in His expert hands. We have to allow Him to work in us.

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

As the writer of Hebrews expressed it, “Let us run with endurance... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith... Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have



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been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:1-2, 11).

Asaph came to understand that the making of a gem requires some abrasions. He wrote:

“For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning... When I thought how to understand this [he refers earlier to the apparently good old times the wicked have], it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end...”

“Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind... Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalm 73:14, 16-17, 21, 23-24).

To glory! That's our future, our destiny! “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” (Romans 8:16-17).

Now the gems of God's special treasure are being worked on. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (verse 18).

Do we let God finish His jewels, or do we insist on our own designs? We should remember that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (verse 28).

Several Facets of God's Gems

In the spiritual gems God is working on, some facets are compulsory. We won't be allowed in His Kingdom without them for the simple reason that our God will not have another Satan in His glorious realm.

When we are going through trials, do we remember that we have to be poor in spirit, to mourn the terrible degeneracy of the present evil world, to be meek, to literally hunger and thirst for righteousness, be merciful, be pure in heart, be peacemakers and not warmongers, rejoice in persecutions, be the salt of the earth, the light of the world (Matthew 5:3-16)?

How about those facets of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22)? Neither can we live eternally without them! Do we work on these? Do we allow the Master Gemologist to work on us?

How about adding to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love (2 Peter 1:2-8)?

We are being created in God's spiritual image. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

When God's special treasure is finished, our Savior “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Never lose track of that when you are going through trials.

What Malachi prophesied is now happening. We now are God's. Today is the day the Master Jeweler is making His jewels, and you are one of them! **UN**

The author works as translator for UCG's French publications.

The Master Refiner

Not only is God the Master Diamond and Gem Cutter, but He is also the Master Refiner. The prophet Malachi also uses that analogy. Speaking of Christ's return, he says, “He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver” (Malachi 3:3).

That's what God does to us, His very special treasure. He refines us.

Consider some lessons from the silversmith.

1. *During the silver refining process, the silver has to be put in the middle of the fire where the flames are hottest to take away all impurities.*

Peter talks of our loving God who has begotten us again “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you... In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:4, 6-7).

In order for God to remove all impurities in us, He has to put us in the middle of the fire—so to speak—where the flames are hottest. Remember, God is making His precious treasure, and that is what it takes to be refined! What else?

2. *During the silver refining process, the silver must not be left too long in the fire.*

Paul writes: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As with the silver, God always makes sure that we are not in the heat too long. He lovingly watches over us. He doesn't rejoice in our sufferings. He would rather avoid them. But He knows that they are necessary.

3. *Moreover, in the refining process, the silver is fully refined when the silversmith sees his image in it!*

As it says in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

When God sees us now, does He see His reflection? Does He see His image? Only in part. If we're still being refined, it's because the Master Silversmith is still at work. And what an honor that is! I know it hurts. We all hurt to different degrees. Some of us are going through very heavy physical or mental or spiritual trials. But God is making in us something that neither Satan nor his demons will ever be. Do we realize that?

Do we see ourselves as God's special treasure or His jewels? It certainly was what Peter had in mind when he wrote: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people.” In other words, God's very special treasure (1 Peter 2:9).



Local Church Updates

Oakland-San Jose Combine for Hawaiian Evening

On March 15, the Oakland and San Jose, California, congregations had combined Sabbath services, followed by a special Hawaiian-themed evening of assorted activities. A Hawaiian dinner consisted of two main entrees: a 65-pound smoked roasted lamb and roasted salmon (prepared by Wallace and Priscilla Gans). Brethren brought complementary side dishes.

An hour into the dinner, the master of ceremonies, Jonathan Tuck, began by introducing three presentations. First was a "Sabbath Greetings from the Aloha State" presentation accompanied with music and photos showing the Hawaiian brethren and the natural beauty of the islands. This 10-minute presentation was prepared by Hawaiian member Sherry Ellis of Kona. Next came a "Hawaii, Land of Dreams" geography lesson presented by Luis de Andrade and then a



Patty and Alan Barbee receive congratulations from pastor Jim Tuck

for their 50th anniversary; inset, limbo contest (photos by Tess Washington and Sigi Calenius) "Hawaii Sea Creatures" presentation by Rachel and Daniel Keirouz.

During the evening, a special cake and congratulations were given to Alan and Patty Barbee in honor of their 50th wedding anniversary.

After sunset, the evening activities began with hula dance lessons, followed by a limbo contest that had enthusiastic youth participation. This was followed by karaoke singing. The final event of the evening was a dance.

Meanwhile, various children's activities were taking place in nearby rooms. These included pin the coconut on the coconut tree, a sand and shells art project, computer-simulated bowling and musical chairs.

The evening was coordinated by Lud and Lorraine Kiramidjian with the help of many others who contributed to make this a very enjoyable Hawaiian evening.

Lud Kiramidjian

Phoenix Northwest Has February Fellowship Bonfire

After services Feb. 9 more than 90 brethren from the Phoenix, Arizona,

Northwest congregation gathered at Cave Creek Park for Sabbath fellowship.



Mike Bose and Dan McGee roast hot dogs at Cave Creek Park (photo by Cecil Campbell)

The event included a bonfire and hot dog roast. Of course no bonfire would be complete without s'mores, and although they were intended for the children, it was the kids 35 and older who really enjoyed them.

Overall it was a relaxing day of fellowship and good food.

Holly Foster

Greensboro Welcomes President

The skies were dark and the rain was falling outside, but you wouldn't have known it from inside as brethren from parts near and far came together to welcome UCG President Clyde Kilough to Greensboro, North Carolina, April 5.

There was plenty of fellowship prior to services as we anticipated the message from Mr. Kilough. There were members from the Asheville, Hickory and Charlotte congregations, as well as members from as far away as Texas. There wasn't a spare seat in the house as we had a total of 154 in attendance.

Special music was performed by Alvin Walker of the Greensboro congregation doing an authentic rendition



Bev Underdue and Clyde Kilough share a laugh in Greensboro April 5 (photo by Beth Jewell)

of Elvis' gospel song "Somebody Bigger Than You and I."

Mr. Kilough gave a very thought-provoking sermon about Christ's warning of the yeast of Herod. It was very good food for thought to help prepare for Passover.

Following services and more fellowship, we had a huge potluck dinner. Mr. Kilough was able to join us for dinner and fellowship before he had to leave. It was a great Sabbath.

Joey Jewell

Pittsburgh Hosts Opportunity for Women's Fellowship

On Sabbath afternoon, March 22, ladies from the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, West Virginia, congregations came together and enjoyed a Sabbath afternoon gathering of faith and fellowship. Rannie Henson, wife of Don Henson, pastor, welcomed the group of about 35 ladies and introduced what we anticipate to gain in our quarterly meetings as an open circle of friends and sisters in Christ.

The fitting theme for our first meeting, "A Cup of Encouragement," was carried out beautifully and poignantly from beginning to end.

The keynote speaker, Linda Biskup, defined the central themes of encouragement, including how we are first and foremost encouraged by God and His Word, and how that love extends through each of us, enabling the power to uplift one another. She gave examples of studies that have been done showing that the amount of encouragement one receives during a



Pittsburgh women (from left): Rannie Henson, Verna Horvath, Brenda Grebur, Edwina Brians, Virginia Brians, Janine Maurer and Brenda Scarpari (photo by Lisa Kifer)

daunting task influences how positive the outcome will be.

For example, how long could you stand in a pail of icy cold water if you were all alone? Now, what if you had an encourager, someone right beside you, rooting for you to last just a little longer? The studies proved what we all know: We can go that extra mile, with a sprint to the end, in the midst of a cheering section comprised of our fellow teammates!

Various table topics were discussed, including how mere smiles have been a source of encouragement during various times in our lives, as well as how God's creation gives us a positive boost.

The theme was highlighted elegantly with red, purple and white table decorations, consisting of personal tea cups overflowing with rose petals stamped with encouraging messages and scriptures, as well as long-stemmed roses and poems to take home. In the center of each table was a cup of water with

a floating candle, as a reminder that many waters cannot quench the love that encircles friends.

The second hour of the afternoon was spent fellowshiping and further expanding upon the theme, as we enjoyed a first-class assortment of finger foods.

Lisa Kifer

11-Year-Old Gives to Locks of Love



Mariah Fooshe donates 10 inches of her hair to charity

Tennessee, Mariah Fooshe, age 11, asked hair stylist Kristen Stone to cut off 10 inches of her hair.

Mariah donated her precious hair to Locks of Love, a charity that makes wigs for needy children who have lost their hair due to a medical condition. The photos show Mariah's hair length before and after the cut.

Mariah attends the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation with her family.

Shari Fooshe

El Paso Celebrates 40th Anniversary

The El Paso, Texas, UCG congregation celebrated its 40th anniversary during services on the First Day of



El Paso, Texas, congregation: Back row, Alfonso Maldonado, Ann Tannert, Daulton Morgan, Ramon Salgado, Robert Brown; second row, Eva Melendez, Adi Lopez, Sandy Brown, Daisy Lopez, Connie Nipper, Bernarda Salgado, Aurora Salgado, Brian Lee; and front row, Albert Salgado

Unleavened Bread. Services were held for the first time on April 20, 1968, in Las Cruces, New Mexico. During the last 40 years the congregation swelled to as many as 230 members. In lean years services were held for as few as two members.

At present 13 of us live in Texas and five of us live in New Mexico; and our congregation is growing. Of our 18 members, eight are longtime baptized members and five more were baptized less than five years ago.

Orpha Wingfield, now age 98, has been a Church member for 55 years and was the first member baptized in the Las Cruces/El Paso area. Presently James Capó (pastor) and Walter Tannert make the trip from Tucson, Arizona, to serve the brethren here. In their absence, our deacon Brian Lee is always available to take care of our needs.

We were encouraged to receive many congratulations and well wishes from members and ministers who have attended here over the years, which helped make our 40th anniversary extra special.

Connie Nipper and James Capó

Los Angeles Has Second Round of Parenting Classes

The Los Angeles, California, congregation hosted a series of "Growing



The Los Angeles "Growing Kids God's Way" group receives certificates and celebrates at dinner at Marie Callender's

Kids God's Way" classes a second time, completing the class sessions on April 12.

This time 23 attended, with some repeating the class, as they found the information had been very helpful in child rearing. The text/videos are written by Gary and Anne Ezzo (www.GrowingKids.org) and offer a unique and practical approach to raising children in a morally responsible and biblically responsive way. Los Angeles pastor Larry Greider directed the classes.

The Saturday evening sessions, always followed with a delicious potluck, were encouraging, providing camaraderie and bonding as each family works at rearing their children in the way that God wants. The group celebrated finishing the classes with dinner at Marie Callender's restaurant, and each par-

ticipant was given a certificate of completion.

Cherine Berg

Oakland Children Decorate Cookies for Elderly and Shut-ins

The children of the Oakland, California, congregation held their annual Holy Day Cookie Decorating Project on April 13. The activity was coordinated by Andrea Spears.

Each year the children, ages 3 to 13, gather to decorate 123 unleavened cookies for the elderly and those who are unable to attend church services. The children also have fun



Oakland children serve the elderly and shut-ins with unleavened cookies decorating special small containers to hold the cookies.

On the following Sabbath, the children handed out the cookies to the elderly in the Church and arranged for the remaining boxes to be taken to the shut-ins of the congregation.

Everyone is looking forward to doing it again next year!

Andrea Spears

Cleveland Activity Includes Costume Parade, Cakewalk and Sock Hop

On Jan. 12, the Cleveland, Ohio, congregation was enveloped by a Midwinter Night's Dream. What started as a traditional Sabbath service and potluck was quickly transformed into a winter wonderland with snowmen, snowflakes and glittering trees aplenty.

The evening activities began with a costume parade of decked-out children, teens and adults. Among those in attendance were cute critters, board games, movie stars, musicians and Thomas Jefferson. A special guest appearance was made by Audrey Hepburn who has never looked more beautiful. We even found Waldo.

After a short break to allow parade participants to remove cumbersome costumes, the children were split into age groups for games.

The third event of the evening was a cakewalk. All were invited to walk in a big circle and perhaps win a beautifully decorated cake. How easy is that!

All joined in for the grand finale—a sock hop complete with lively music and enthusiastic dancers.

As we left our warm and cozy inside winter wonderland that evening to go

home, we saw once more that it was a less warm brand of winter outside. Although not as cozy, God blessed us with a clear, dry night so travel home was safe and easy.

Diane Webber

Cinco de Mayo Party Given for Seniors in LA

Cinco de Mayo was the theme of the Senior Citizens' gathering in the Los Angeles, California, congregation on May 4, 2008. Cinco de Mayo is a regional holiday commemorating the victory of Mexican forces over



French forces in the battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862.

The Latino brethren hosted the party for the seniors in the clubhouse at the home of Tony and Diana Garcia. There were colorful decorations and wonderful Mexican food enjoyed by the 26 in attendance. Paul Shemet provided entertainment on the accordion, playing "Blue Spanish Eyes," "Mexican



Lourdes Bricio and David Saiño danced for the LA seniors (photo by John Garms)

Hat Dance" and other songs. Lourdes Bricio and David Saiño danced several lively dances including "La Bamba," "El Coco," "Querreque" and "Jarabe Tapatio." The dancers were a great hit!

Mexican Bingo was also enjoyed, with prizes for the winners. "Señor y Señora" Larry Greider, our pastor and his wife, also attended.

Bonnie Shemet

Six Ordained in Reno and Sacramento

The Last Day of Unleavened Bread was very special for the Sacramento, California, and Reno, Nevada, congregations. At the combined services that day three men were ordained as deacons and three women ordained as deaconesses: Mark and Janelle Fike from the Reno congregation and Dirk and Kathy Trone and Drew and Lydia Trone from the Sacramento congregation.

To add an inspiring touch to the special event, the fathers of both families, Jim Chapman (father of Janelle Fike) and Dudley Trone (father of Dirk and

Drew Trone), who are both elders, were instrumental in the ceremony. After the introduction of the ordainees by their pastor, Joe Horchak, the ordination prayer was given by the respective fathers. Tears flowed and spirits were raised as these six faithful servants were prayed over by their physical fathers.

Interestingly, both Jim Chapman and Dudley Trone were ordained as deacons at the same time, almost to the day of their children's ordination, 30 years earlier.

Joe Horchak

95-Year-Old Gets Surprise of Her Life

Edna Rush, a member of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation, experienced what she described as "the sur-



Freeman Imel, Gordon Brauchla (an elder serving in the Fort Wayne and Indianapolis congregations) and Jack and Joyce Clevenger, all long-time friends of Edna Rush, pause with Mrs. Rush (center) to celebrate her 95 years of life May 3

prise of my life" when she was greeted by 27 family members, friends and members from the Fort Wayne and Indianapolis congregations in a surprise celebration of 95 years of life May 3.

Edna was taken to the Mitchell Fish Market in Carmel, Indiana, for what she thought was her traditional pre-service Sabbath brunch. There she was surprised by family members from California, Nevada, Illinois and Indiana, who had gathered to honor and celebrate her 95 years of life.

Before moving back to rejoin friends at the Indianapolis congregation of the United Church of God, Edna and her late husband, Ted Rush, were long-time members of the Auditorium A.M. congregation in Pasadena, California.

Michael A. Snyder

Tulsa Member Is Driver of the Year

On Feb. 28, 2008, the 2007 Oklahoma Professional Driver of the Year award was presented to Barry Scalf, a longtime member of the Tulsa, Oklahoma, congregation.

This award was presented to Mr. Scalf by the Oklahoma Trucking Association and the Oklahoma Safety Management Council. The award is based upon the number of safe miles driven, the number of years worked in the industry, the professional driving

attitude exhibited, the participation in driver safety activities and, lastly, in exceptional acts performed above and beyond the driver's responsibilities.

A panel of judges selected Mr. Scalf from a list of numerous drivers who were nominated by their respective companies. He has worked for Triad Transport for 19 years and has been a



Barry Scalf shows magazine cover and award he received

truck driver for 39 years. He has driven 5.5 million miles.

A recent edition of the Oklahoma Trucking Association magazine spotlighted this award and had his photo on its front cover. His employer also awarded him with a special plaque for work well done.

This is quite an accomplishment. The local Tulsa congregation recently gave Mr. Scalf recognition and a show of our appreciation for him being the 2007 Oklahoma Professional Driver of the Year. The award entitles him to be in the running for the national Driver of the Year award in the future.

Stan Hopper

Spokane Has 11th Women's Weekend

The first weekend of May was the occasion for the Spokane, Washington/Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, congregation's 11th annual Ladies' Educational Seminar, held at beautiful Deer Lake, Washington. This year saw a record number of women attending, with a high of 75 on the Sabbath. We had women from all around the United States—the farthest coming from Alabama!

The theme this year was "Women of Valor." As always, it was a great inspiration and learning experience for everyone.

Claire Clark, Lisa Repp and Diane Oliver gave opening presentations on ladies who truly showed everyday valor and impacted their lives.

Steve Nutzman was the guest Sabbath speaker and talked about people who unknowingly were a great influence on a person's life by showing love and service. This made us reflect on what positive things we can do to make a difference in someone else's life. Mr. Nutzman chose Esther and Rahab for their examples and the life-changing events they caused in other people's lives.

LeeAnn Luker spoke in the afternoon and showed what a great woman of valor Mary, Christ's mother, was.

Following Mrs. Luker, Bev Pronishan facilitated an exercise using Proverbs 31 to help us recognize different attributes of valor in everyday life experiences.

The evening included a special dinner and teacup exchange that are among the highlights of the weekend. Afterward the ladies separated into groups and worked on a service project of making no-sew fleece blankets for Sally's House, a local relief organization for abused and neglected children.

Sunday dawned bright and beautiful, and we were privileged to hear presentations from Joy Jones on forgiveness and Melania Nutzman on the courage to grow.

We all came away from the weekend with a renewed zeal and knowledge about how we can become true women of valor and, as always, we are looking forward to another great time next year!

Nancy Czech

Members Put Up Siding for Shut-in

May 4 dawned sunny and bright, just as the brethren from the Bloomington-Normal and Canton, Illinois, congregations prayed that it would. The sound of a power saw and hammering sent a clear message to the neighbors of Georgia Rice in Fisher, Illinois, that the long-awaited siding project on her house was underway. Less noise was created by the painting crew, but they were not any less enthused.

Led on by Mr. and Mrs. Mike Arnold, a crew of 20 brethren from four congregations (also including Beloit, Wisconsin, and Terre Haute, Indiana) started early and finished late. In



Brethren from four congregations serve shut-in Georgia Rice

addition to outside work, windows and blinds were brightened up and her home received a thorough cleaning inside as well.

Mrs. Rice, who is a shut-in member of the Bloomington-Normal congregation, and her two cats were very appreciative of the time and effort to dress up her home.

Patrick and Sandy Kurtas

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

Announcements

Births

Thomas and Kristie (Weiss) Rocheleau would like to announce the arrival of Titus Morgan. He was born on Dec. 4, 2007. He weighed in at 7 pounds 11 ounces and was 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches long. Big brother Thomas Edward and big sister Taylor Jean are elated with the new playmate. Grandpar-



Titus Morgan Rocheleau

ents Edward and Ardith Weiss, along with Mark and Amanda Weiss (uncle and aunt), of the East Texas congregation have graciously offered to share Titus with all the brethren. Papa and Mama Weiss now have five grandbabies and great-grandma Beulah Weiss, of the Tampa, Florida, congregation, now has seven great-grandbabies.

Jason and Monique Webster are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Tahlia Monique Webster. She was born on Feb. 6, 2008, weighing 2.95 kilograms and with a length of 46 centimeters. Tahlia is a very special blessing and loved dearly.



Tahlia Monique Webster

The family attends the Johannesburg, South Africa, congregation.

Scott and Michelle Delamater are excited to announce the birth of their first child, Braden Scott. Born on Oct. 13, 2007, he weighed 8 pounds 14 ounces and measured 21 inches in length. He is the fifth grandchild of John and Merrie Elliott and the first grandchild of Dave Delamater



Braden Scott Delamater

and Arnold and Cheri Dorsey. Braden is a healthy young boy with a vibrant personality and lots of love surrounding him.



Colter Skye Schwartzrock

Shawn and Heather (Kerr) Schwartzrock and Sophia (age 3) are pleased to announce the Feb. 4, 2008, birth of Colter Skye. He was 19.5 inches long and weighed 7 pounds 6 ounces. The Schwartzrocks attend the Beloit, Wisconsin, congregation.

Bill and Joanna Bradford are thrilled to announce the arrival of William Robert Todd Bradford on Oct 17, 2007. Bill weighed 8 pounds 6 ounces and was 21 inches long. Proud grandparents are Bill and Jenny Bradford of Brisbane, Australia, and Bob and Evelyn Fahey of Chi-



William Robert Todd Bradford

cago, Illinois. Bill was named after his two grandfathers and a close friend.

Bill and Joanna thank the many friends and family around the world for prayers on their behalf for this addition to their family, and give the credit and thanks to God who in His mercy and kindness answered those prayers. Bill, Joanna and young Bill attend the Chicago congregation.

Brad and Jenny (Bradford) Huthnance from Brisbane, Australia, are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Kaylee Arwen Huthnance, born on Dec. 20, 2007. Kaylee weighed 6 pounds 12 ounces and was 20 inches long.

Grandparents Bill and Jenny Brad-



Kaylee Arwen Huthnance

ford of Brisbane and Trevor and Les Huthnance of Melbourne are delighted with the new addition.

David, Leanne, David, Courtney and Cameron are pleased to announce the arrival of the newest member of the Holladay family and our first Aussie baby: Lleyton Roy Holladay (pronounced LAY-tun). He was born April 11, 2008, and weighed 7 pounds 8 ounces and was 22 inches long.

Lleyton is a form of the name Leighton, which has Celtic origins and means "Healer" and "Garden" and Roy is named after David's father. Grandparents Bill and Jenny Bradford from Brisbane, Australia,



Lleyton Roy Holladay

and Roy and Norma Holladay from Cleveland, Tennessee, are very blessed with the new addition.

Engagements

Sarah Zevchak (Omaha, Nebraska) and Raphaël Bernal (Bordeaux, France) are pleased to announce that a page was turned in their lives when they became engaged at the Feast of Tabernacles 2007 in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The couple met at the Feast in France 2006 and

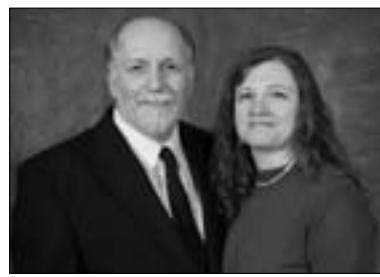


Raphaël Bernal and Sarah Zevchak

plan to be married on the beach in Florida just before the Feast in 2008. They plan to reside in Bordeaux after their wedding.

Anniversaries

Paul and Naomi (Tina) Freeman of



Paul and Naomi (Tina) Freeman

Monticello, Arkansas, celebrated their 25th anniversary on April 27, 2008. They attend services online with St. Paul, Minnesota, with Ohio's webcast and meet with the Ruston, Louisiana, congregation on occasion. They have four children, Tony, Jonah, Jacob and Grace, and two daughters-in-law, Jennifer and Emily.

Obituaries

Easter Lily Rubrecht, 94, of Houston, Texas, died March 20, 2008, at Hampton Hospice House in Houston.

She was born March 23, 1913, in Garfield, Arkansas, to Harper and Maude



Easter Lily Rubrecht

Byler. She taught school for 31 years in Arkansas and southwest Missouri. After retiring from teaching, she worked as a secretary for a sheltered workshop in Neosho, Missouri, where she wrote a monthly newsletter. She enjoyed traveling and was able to visit 12 foreign countries and 30 states.

Mrs. Rubrecht had listened to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast for many years in the 1940s and 1950s. When a campaign was held in Springfield, Missouri, she lived close enough to attend and became a charter member of that congregation. She was baptized in February 1959 by Gerald Waterhouse. She was also privileged to become a charter member of the Joplin, Missouri, congregation when it began.

After retiring (a second time) in 2001, she moved to Houston to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Frances and Dave DeHart. She attended the North Houston congregation.

Survivors include one son, August Rubrecht and his wife, Lois, of Mondovi, Wisconsin; two daughters, Frances DeHart and her husband, Dave, of Spring, Texas; Dawn Beemer and her husband, Rod, of Bennington, Kansas; one brother, Clell Byler of Billings, Missouri; one sister, Isaloy Potter of Pueblo, Colorado; eight grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held in Garfield on March 24, presided over by her sons-in-law, Rod Beemer and Dave DeHart.

Hugh Page Abrey, 91 of Coldwater, Michigan, died at his home March 24, 2008. Hugh was born in Morrice, Michigan, on Nov. 27, 1916, to Jay and Ada (Page) Abrey. He was orphaned at age 2 when his parents died in the flu epidemic. He and his younger brother were raised by

their grandmother and aunt until Hugh's 12th birthday, at which time he moved to Benton Harbor, Michigan, where he worked for room and board and continued school, graduating in 1936.

In 1939 he moved to Coldwater, working several jobs a first; ultimately working 18 years at Quality Springs as chief tool and die maker. In 1946 Hugh married Shirley McNall, and they shared 62 years in the home in which they were married.

Hugh was a self-made man and able to repair anything. He turned his God-given talent to watches, clocks and jewelry, opening Hugh's Jewelry in 1960, with his wife and partner, and retiring in 1978. Mr. Abrey was instrumental in seeing the Branch Co. clock tower constructed in downtown Coldwater, and was the clockmaker who assembled and restored the original clock, of which he was very proud.

Hugh was a scoutmaster as a young man. He started attending the Church of God in 1968 and never missed a Sabbath service for 25 years. He was a great servant in the Kalamazoo, Michigan, congregation. While in his mid-80s Hugh produced the local church bulletin, led songs and gave sermonettes. He helped other seniors become computer literate and literally fulfilled the scriptural admonition, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might."

He will be greatly missed by his wife



Hugh Page Abrey

and family and by his Church family.

Hugh is survived by his loving wife Shirley, son Daryl Abrey, daughter and son-in-law Tom and Sharon Shenefield and grandchildren: Russ and Kelly Porter; Robb and Rhonda Porter; Michael and Amy Abrey; Steve and Heather Shenefield; Mark and Jill Shenefield; and Lisa Porter. He is also survived by 13 great-grandchildren, his aunt Edith Hall and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by a brother, Phillip Abrey, and a grandson, David Shenefield, and a former daughter-in-law, Judy (Abrey) Clifford.

Funeral services were held March 27 with Gary McConaughy officiating.

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*.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

loss," Mr. Blackwell said. "The family and all the members in the area are very thankful to God for His mercy and protection."

Ken Martin reported that tornadoes hit the Macon, Georgia, area May 11. "After contacting all the brethren in the area, God's wonderful hand of protection was evident from this damaging storm system. All were okay. In addition, our normal meeting hall for Sabbath services was spared while other facilities nearby took a heavy hit."

"Please pray for all those who have been affected by the storms," wrote Ministerial Services operation manager Jim Franks in an announcement May 12.

Elder Credentialed

On Dec. 12, 2007, the Council of Elders approved the credentialing of Terry Swagerty as an elder. He and his wife, Linda, are serving in the Spokane (Washington)/Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, congregation. *United News* regrets the delay in reporting this.

Acapulco Feast Site Reminder

To those who are transferring to attend the Feast in Acapulco, Mexico, after making your reservation at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, you need to register with Pablo Dimakis at pablodimakis@hotmail.com or call him in Mexico City at (01152) 55-2621-1181 (this is the number to use from the United States).

Pablo Dimakis

Why Acapulco Attendees Are Asked to Stay at the Crowne Plaza

The Church will receive the meeting

hall at the Crowne Plaza Hotel for the Feast in Acapulco at no charge if we book 196 or more rooms in the hotel. If we are unable to book that many rooms, the Church will have to pay a specified amount, depending on the number of rooms booked. For example, if the Church books 100 double rooms, the hotel will give us a hall that seats 200 people at a cost of \$972 per day. The amount the Church will have to pay for the hall will be reduced as the number of rooms booked increases.

Therefore, it is essential that all Feastgoers stay at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Otherwise, the Church faces a space and financial problem. The Church would have to pay for a larger hall to accommodate those who do not stay at the Crowne Plaza. This means the Church would incur an additional expense even above the per-room policy of the hotel. Feastgoers who stay somewhere other than the Crowne Plaza cause the Church to pay an expense it would not have to pay if they stayed at the Crowne Plaza.

The article in the March/April *United News* stipulated a charge of \$100 per person for Feastgoers who stay at hotels other than the Crowne Plaza. We really do not want to charge members this amount, as it may be a burden on them. At the same time, we do not believe it is proper for the Church to incur a charge that is caused by Feastgoers who stay at other hotels.

Therefore, we believe that the best policy is for everyone to stay at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Please help us avoid the unnecessary cost to the Church by not staying in hotels other than the Crowne Plaza.

Larry Roybal

Tonga Feast Update

The e-mail address listed for the Feast in Tonga has changed. To contact Heamasi Ta'ufo'ou, you can use heamasi_ta'ufo'ou@ucg.org.

Jamaica Feast Site Full; Bahamas Open

The Jamaica Feast site is now closed to transfers.

We still have space at the Freeport, Bahamas, site. Interested members can



What's New on the Web?

■ Beyond Today Subtitles.

We are now beginning to offer English and other language subtitles for the *Beyond Today* commentaries. Visit www.beyondtoday.tv/programs/commentary/ to view the subtitles.

■ Holy Day Study Resources.

request a transfer application package by e-mailing kingsley_mather@ucg.org.
Kingsley Mather

Correction: Guyana Feast Contact Information

The e-mail address for the Savannah Inn in Lethem, Guyana, should be ramsaran4al@yahoo.com.

Kingsley Mather

Chattanooga Hosts White-Water Rafting Aug. 3

The Chattanooga, Tennessee, congregation will be hosting the annual white-water Ocoee rafting trip on Sunday, Aug. 3, at 10 a.m. As in prior years, the congregation will be using the services of Ocoee Inn Rafting as outfitters for the trip.

Participants must be at least 12 years old (Tennessee law) and in good health. Those with bad backs or other similar injuries should not participate due to the strenuous and jarring nature of the activity. Due to the inherently risky activity, all participants must sign a liability waiver. Those under 18 will need a parent or legal guardian's signature before they can participate.

View Holy Day study resources on the home page of the UCG Members' Web site. Online at members.ucg.org.

■ Online Booklets.

Check out the new online booklet layout for *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. You can view additional resources and watch *Beyond Today* programs related to this booklet. Online at www.ucg.org/booklets/TL/.

■ UCG Commentary.

"Stunning Natural Disasters" "Does God Pick Presidents?" www.ucg.org/commentary

Featured Link

■ Youth Web site:

Families, preteens, teens, young adults. ucg.org/youth

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



The organizers have reserved a block of rafting spots. To participate, please send a signed liability waiver and a check payable to the United Church of God, Cleveland for \$25 per person by July 10 to: Allen Dance, 9201 Cobblestone Hill Dr., Ooltewah, TN 37363.

Please clearly identify each participant, church area and a phone number where you can be contacted. It is on a first-come, first-served basis, so send it in as soon as possible. This activity takes place regardless of the weather.

To receive a waiver form or if you have any questions, please contact Allen Dance at (423) 855-0868 or e-mail him at allendance@hotmail.com.

Camping and cabin facilities are available in the area. The Church does not sponsor a group campsite, but individual families are welcome to take advantage of the opportunities to camp at their own risk if they so desire. As in past years, there will be a camp Bible study on the Sabbath in the Chilhowee Recreation Area.

Roy Holladay

Lansing Celebrates 30th on June 28

The Lansing, Michigan, congregation will be celebrating their 30th anniversary on June 28. The celebration will include Sabbath services followed by a catered meal, slide show and entertainment. More information

can be found at www.ucglansing.org.
Melvin Rhoades

Calendar of Events

June 21: Pittsburgh 50th, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (www.ucgnet.org/pittsburgh/50).

June 28: Lansing 30th, Lansing, Michigan (www.ucglansing.org).

July 10-13: Family Music Festival Weekend, near Cadiz, Ohio (www.ucgnet.org/wheeling/bluegrass).

July 17-20: Third Teen/Young Adult weekend sponsored by the Garden Grove, California, congregation (Luky2binhb@yahoo.com, Ehsjock14@yahoo.com or (714) 378-6143).

Aug. 3: White-water Ocoee rafting trip, Chattanooga, Tennessee, congregation (allendance@hotmail.com). See article, this page.

Aug. 10: ABC graduation.

Aug. 12-14: Council of Elders' meeting.

Aug. 31: Houston Music Festival (see article, May issue, page 16).

Aug. 29-Sept. 1: Singles/Couples Labor Day Weekend, Kansas City, Missouri (www.kc2008transformation.com).

Sept. 7: ABC orientation.

Sept. 8: ABC classes begin.

Sept. 27: Eugene 75th, Eugene, Oregon (see article, May issue, page 16).

Dec. 16-18: Council of Elders' meeting.

Feb. 24-26, 2009: Council of Elders' meeting.

May 3-4, 2009: General Conference of Elders annual meeting.

Ministerial Hire and Transfers Announced

Ed Dowd became the newest ministerial hire on May 19. He and his wife, RaeAnn, will help serve the Phoenix East and Yuma, Arizona, congregations as assistant pastor.

Shawn and Elizabeth Cortelyou, who began working for the Church Dec. 31, 2007, are being transferred from the Canton, Bloomington and Springfield, Illinois, circuit to the Elkhart and Hammond, Indiana, area to serve as associate pastor.

The new hires will travel to the home office for a three-day orientation in June. Both have been assigned to work with a field pastor for a year of training. John and Merrie Elliott and Vernon and Dee Lee Hargrove will attend the orientation sessions as well since they will be mentors to the two couples. In addition to the training in the local area, the men will travel to Cincinnati, Ohio, during the next ABC year for Bible classes and additional training with Richard Pinelli and Lyle Welty as part of the Ministerial Development program.

Bill and Cheryl Jahns are transferring from Houston North, Texas, to pastor the Parkersburg and Morgantown, West Virginia, and Athens, Ohio, congregations.

At the present time there are two church circuits awaiting the assignment of a new pastor: Beloit and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin (currently being pastored by Bob Fahey and Dan Dowd respectively) and Birmingham and Gadsden, Alabama (currently pastored by David Dobson). Several additional changes in pastoral assignments are anticipated this summer.



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