

UNITED NEWS



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MAY-JUNE 2016

America: The Time Is Now!



Photo by Mitchell Moss

Gary Petty in Nashville giving his presentation at the America: The Time is Now! campaign.

by Peter Eddington

Six events have now been completed in the *Beyond Today* live series of events titled *America: The Time Is Now!* Since last October seminars have been held in Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas; Nashville, Tennessee; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Columbus, Ohio.

Results

The event in Nashville, Tennessee, on Sunday, Feb. 21, drew 152 total people, with 45 of those being new guests who were invited to attend via ads in *Beyond Today* mag-

azine, *BT* subscriber letters, online advertising, e-mail advertising and Pandora radio ads.

The home office team then visited Indianapolis, Indiana, on Sunday, March 20. The seminar drew 96 total people, with 55 of those being new guests.

Then the event in Columbus, Ohio, on Sunday, April 10, drew 71 total people, with 24 of those being new guests.

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Location	Date	Time
Chicago West, Illinois	Sun., June 26	3 p.m.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Mon., June 27	7:30 p.m.
Cleveland, Ohio	Sun., Aug. 14	3 p.m.
Dayton, Ohio	Sun., Aug. 21	3 p.m.
Raleigh, North Carolina	Tues., Sept. 20	7:30 p.m.
Greensboro, North Carolina	Thurs., Sept. 22	7:30 p.m.
Charlotte, North Carolina	Sun., Sept. 25,	3 p.m.
Tampa/St. Petersburg, Florida	Sun., Feb. 19	3 p.m.
Orlando, Florida	Mon., Feb. 20	7:30 p.m.
Kansas City, Missouri	Sun., March 19	3 p.m.
St. Louis/Troy, Missouri	Mon., March 20	7:30 p.m.

Beyond Today is now available on Amazon Fire TV!

by Tom Disher and Peter Eddington

You can watch your favorite *Beyond Today* videos on Amazon Fire TV. The *Beyond Today* app is a great new way to access full episodes from *Beyond Today* television, *BT Daily* and *Beyond Today* Bible studies. Amazon Fire TV is one of the leading producers of set-top boxes available, with millions of units sold.

From the Amazon.com Website:

“Amazon Fire TV is a tiny box that connects your HDTV to a world of online entertainment . . . With over 3,000 channels, apps and games, Amazon Fire TV gives you access to all your favorite subscriptions and streaming services.”

Amazon has sold over 5 million Fire TV devices in the past year, and it’s quickly becoming one of the largest names in online streaming. This gives *Beyond Today*

the chance to reach more of the world with the gospel message.

How to Install

Navigate to the apps section on your Fire TV, choose the Lifestyle category, and select “*Beyond Today*.” Or go to the website below, go to the installation page and send it to your device: <http://amzn.com/B01DOJEH8O>.

More Coming Soon!

We’re working hard on rolling out new *Beyond Today* channels on Roku (an updated, premium version), Samsung (and many other smart TVs), Apple TV and other devices very soon. You will be able to watch *Beyond Today* on your favorite device, any time of the day. **UN**



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BY THE NUMBERS

247

The number of new attendees at all America: The Time is Now! live events

Southwest Regional Ministerial Conference

by Victor Kubik

On March 27-29 United Church of God held the final conference of the current series of ministerial conferences. It was held in a beautiful, natural setting at the Temecula Creek Inn in Temecula, California. The ministry from the mountain states with those in the Southwest region combined for the conference. There were 73 attendees.

The theme was “Creating an Environment for Growth.” Live presentations and remarks were presented from Victor Kubik, Bob Dick, Chris Rowland, Robin Webber, Larry Darden and Randy and Kay Schreiber. Recorded presentations were shown from Merna Eppick, Scott Hoefker and Randy Stiver about alcoholism and addictions, pornography and doctrinal challenges. We had interactive time for discussion and questions.

Some highlights revolved around us, as a ministry, living up to the Ministerial and Council of Elders Codes of Ethics that include the following points:

- Consider the well-being of the Church and contribute to the needs and growth of the Church.
- Give honor and respect to all people, be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving of one another as instructed in God’s Word.
- Maintain the highest standards of personal and professional conduct and competence; be careful not to demean others in word or deed.
- Denounce divisions and schisms as a means of resolving differences.
- Work within established procedures and processes of the Church



Photo of those who attended the conference in Temecula, California. There were 73 in attendance.

for any grievances or any desired change in either governance or leadership in the Church.

We value the current period of peace in the Church and need to constantly remind ourselves it is only in this environment we can have of the growth and forward movement we all desire.

Discussed at the conference was the increased functions of the new regional pastor structure, which now has six rather than three serving the United States. The geographic area is now more reasonable for the regional pastor to oversee. The hope is for regional pastors to get to know all the pastors, their workloads and schedules. This will help us better assess what manpower we need in our congregations.

There were breakout sessions with discussions on how to improve processes of how to help engage people who are interested in attending and becoming part of the United Church of God.

Chris Rowland spoke about what

makes the Church spiritually engaging. This tracks with the Church’s vision, mission, guiding principles, positioning statements, goals, objectives, critical success factors and strategies. These have been developed by the Council of Elders and are available for all to see in the United Church of God 2015-2016 *Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and Budget* at <http://tinyurl.com/jh6aphv>.

Veteran and recently retired elder Bob Dick spoke about his reflections on 50 years in the ministry and his experience and contributions on the Council of Elders. All appreciated his informative, inspiring and even sobering insight into how the United Church of God is governed and what has been learned. He also cautioned about actions and words that have led to “collateral damage”—suffering of the membership due to actions of those in positions of leadership. He spoke about how carefully the Council has been able to build the governance process we

currently have.

There were discussions on training future leaders and the continuing need. Four new ministerial trainees will be hired this year. We have several training programs we will be streamlining into a curriculum for training new pastors and giving enrichment to all elders. There is a lot of training content through programs such as an online training program, the pastoral development program, and the Labor in the Word initiative. There are also events such as the Labor Day Weekend Leadership Workshop and regional conferences. There are those whom God is calling to a life of pastoral service. Along with *Beyond Today* media and God’s work in individual lives to bring people to repentance, I’m confident the future of the United Church of God is bright.

These are just some of the topics we talked about at the conference. It was not only an educational experience, but a bonding one as well for the ministry. **UN**

Annual ABC Charity Auction Raises Money for Brazil Youth

by Linda Merrick

On Sunday, April 3, 2016, the Ambassador Bible College class of 2016 hosted the annual ABC Charity Auction. Nearly 100 members of the Cincinnati East congregation and visitors joined in the fun for the evening. The auction was to raise money for the LifeNets youth projects in Brazil. These projects help fund a United Youth Camp and provide scholarships for the young people to go to school.

This year the ABC students put together a spectacular show filled with singing, dancing, skits, comedy, short videos, and even some dancing ninjas. The theme was “Ambassador’s Got Talent,” with a game show format that brought audience members forward to “spin the wheel of auction” to learn which performance or skit would appear next.

In between the acts ABC students and MCs Melody Hausmann and Ethan Hawkins auctioned off an array of donated cakes and desserts.



As part of the annual Charity Auction tradition, ABC students put on a variety show in between auctioning off cakes and other sweet treats. Here are some of the current ABC students in the last act of the show.

Held in another room was a silent auction where those participating could bid on donated items and gift baskets. The amount raised at the auction was \$4,655, and more donations are expected to come in.

Organizing and presenting the charity auction is the largest activity that each ABC class puts together. While it takes a great deal of work, the benefits go far beyond just raising money for a good cause. The students strengthen their rela-



Helpers from the audience came up to spin the game show wheel. Ethan Hawkins was one of the MCs of the evening.

tionships, their skills, and their character in the process of overcoming the many challenges involved in a project like this.

Overall, the ABC 2016 charity auction was a success, and those who came out said it was an enjoyable evening. **UN**

Photo by Linda Merrick



PETER EDDINGTON
Media and
Communication
Services Operations
Manager

by Peter Eddington

The promise of forgiveness should compel us to confess our sins to God. But we sometimes let sin dwell for too long in our lives. The burden of guilt is felt upon our conscience as we delay true repentance.

Let's more fully understand how deep God's mercy and forgiveness is for those who seek Him. By doing so, we may be more encouraged to ease the burden of guilt much sooner.

A Merciful God at Heart

Notice this passage from the book of Exodus. It's the time when God miraculously carved out the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. As you may recall, Moses ascended to Mount Sinai with a second set of stones, like the first ones he smashed, for God to re-do the Ten Commandments tablets.

"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I

Forgiveness: Mercy for Thousands

will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets *which you broke...*' So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone. Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him here, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*'" (Exodus 34:1, 4-7, emphasis added throughout).

This is a powerful announcement of God's gracious mercy—forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin—extending that *mercy to thousands*. And, no doubt, forgiving Moses for breaking the first set of Commandments. It's a pronouncement of *who God is*—His very nature. *He's a merciful God at heart*.

It would seem that King David knew of God's incredible mercy and forgiving will, if only he would turn to God. The kings of old were commanded to personally read the law of God, to study the ancient Scrip-



Rembrandt's (1606–1669) *Moses Smashing the Tablets of the Law, 1659*

tures. David would be familiar with this pronouncement at the beginning of Exodus chapter 34.

Receiving God's Forgiveness

Notice what King David wrote in this regard:

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From The COUNCIL



by Rex Sexton

After being delivered from slavery in Egypt and crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel wandered through the desert for five weeks following the pillar that led them. In the pillar was the God whose presence is so glorious and bright it would blind or kill any human, so it was covered in a cloud. Israel arrived at the base of Mt. Sinai as God had earlier directed Moses. According to Exodus 19:1, this was on the first day of the third month of the year: "In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day [first day of the month], they came to the Wilderness of Sinai."

God called Moses up to meet Him on the mountain and pronounced a summary of the covenant that Israel was to agree

Pentecost and the Mystery of the Ages



to: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

Moses then relayed the message, and the people of Israel promised to do everything that God said. "So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to

the LORD" (Exodus 19:7-8).

Three days later would be the Day of Pentecost, the first time that events occurring on that day are recorded in Scripture. God told Moses to have the people prepare to hear His voice pronounce the words of the covenant. "And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Exodus 19:11).

On the third day all Israel gathered at the base of Mount Sinai, and their God descended on it glory and power. "And Moses brought the people out of the camp

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Our Spiritual Adventure

by Lewis VanAusdle

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

An adventure awaits us if we are willing to answer the invitation. We are called to a journey through life, an expedition to a wonderful destination! Like Abraham before us, we are called by God to travel through the peaks and valleys of life to a “city . . . whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). We are called to walk in the footsteps of the Son of God, who taught with both words and actions (1 John 2:6, Luke 6:40).

Once we make the commitment to be part of God’s expedition to the Kingdom, there is no hesitation in the beginning of our journey. Much of our preparation is done along the way. Each of us is called at different times and from different life situations, when God is ready for us, and

not when we are ready for Him. Some travelers are more prepared for the trip than others, but for all of us there are certain essential pieces of equipment we are going to need to help ensure we have a successful adventure.

Essential #1: Knowledge

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

In preparing for an expedition we need to study the terminology. We need to have knowledge of what we can expect to come across as well as what skills we will need to succeed on our journey. We also need to have the knowledge about the possible terrain and where we are going. For Christians, this knowledge is found in our

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Alex Wong/Unsplash

Never Fear

by Mitchell Moss

I recently had a profound realization. It came to me after one of those chilling moments where I was alone in the house at night, and I heard a creak. Usually that doesn’t bother me, but this time it gave my heart a jump. Then my mind started to race, thinking of all the demon stories I’ve ever heard. And I had that feeling of desperately trying to calm my nerves, half-running, half-walking toward my bedroom or wherever I thought I would be safe and could turn on the lights.

Later I was thinking about that experience, and I wondered what that silly episode looked like in the spirit realm. It called to mind scriptures that depict God’s Spirit and the manifestation of the Spirit as light—Jesus Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12); there are golden lamp stands that represent God’s seven spirits (Revelation 4:5, compare Zechariah 4); the description of the New Jerusalem shows Jesus Christ will be the source of light (Revelation 21:23); God led Israel with a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21); for examples. That’s when I had the realization: In the spirit realm, because I carry God’s Spirit within me, I am a light walking around amongst darkness.

A minister told me a story once about a disturbed woman who waited around for him after Sabbath services. He walked her out, and as he turned to leave, she told him, “I’ll say hello to your Father for you next time I see Him.” Stories like this

give you the chills, but consider what the spirit inside the woman would be looking at when it saw that minister: God’s Spirit dwelling inside him.

Having this realization profoundly changed how I regard my place in the world. My frame of reference is completely colored by my intimate knowledge of my own shortcomings, failures, embarrassments, and probably most of all, my fears. Whether or not I feel confident usually has to do with my mood, my knowledge of what to expect from the situation I’m in, how I feel about how I look, how well I know the people I’m around, and so on. But reframe things and instead of obsessing over how you look or feel physically, picture yourself as someone carrying God’s Spirit of power, and that changes everything. The dark basement isn’t somewhere to fear; even if there were an evil spirit around, he’d fear you. There’s no reason to feel at a disadvantage around people who might seem smarter, cooler, more important or more successful than you; you have a power that transcends it all.

Thinking this way can also make the power scriptures so many of us look to (Philippians 4:13—“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” for instance) not just ones we think about when we’re feeling weak and insecure, but ones that become empowering forces, foundational aspects of how we look at and engage with the world.

Wielding Power Doesn’t Feel Like Wielding Power

Once we reframe our perspective, what’s the next step? Besides having the profound and life-altering ability to look around and know we have the most powerful force in the universe inside of us, how do we shine that light? How do we wield that power?

Jesus basically said it in one sentence: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). It’s thinking a certain way, interacting with people a certain way, and doing things a certain way that bring about positive results in your life and in the lives of those around you. Paul called it the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. It’s the great paradox of God’s way—wielding power doesn’t look like wielding power, it looks like serving.

I was reminded how big of an impact you can have even by expressing just a small, seemingly insignificant amount of the fruit of the Spirit when I was at my high school reunion last summer. In high school I kept to myself for the most part and had just a small group of friends who were I guess what you’d call academics. I was happy, though, and liked being nice to everybody, trying to get along with everyone. My graduating class was very small, even for the size of our high school (62 graduated my year). Although we



Jeremy Thomas/Unsplash

didn’t have those hardcore, calcified, brutal cliques, we still had different groups of friends who stuck mostly together. My junior and senior years I started branch-

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Parenting From Heart to Heart

To parents of teens and teens: Welcome to this new series of articles written with you in mind! These “hot topic” articles will specifically address current cultural issues and the challenges you may be facing as a family—and most importantly how to deal successfully with them in light of the Bible. United Youth Camps directors, along with other experienced staff, will share biblical principles that we hope will be helpful and encouraging to you as parents and your teens. Please let us know what topics you would like to see addressed in future articles by e-mailing us at compasscheck@ucg.org.

by Steve Nutzman

Studies have shown, and my wife and I experienced this with our own three children, that many children make a decision about a commitment to God before age 13 or even as early as the age of 9. It's surprising how early young people learn about God's way of life and begin to develop their personal relationship with God. This is exciting, and it also brings to focus that each day, each Sabbath and each month are precious in our bonding with and teaching of our children—each a precious gift from God!

I would like to share some lessons learned and give encouragement to devoted parents (of teens in particular) who are giving love and care to your children. And as a long-time pastor and father of three grown Gen X and Millennial children, I would like to cover some basic biblical instruction for parents from the Bible.

Parenting teens in our modern ungodly world is not easy. It behooves us to depend on God for His wisdom and to invoke His instructions when it comes to working with and raising children. God is our refuge when it comes to rearing children. Many mothers and fathers have cried out to God for His reassurance during trying times. But our wonderful God is good. He will never let us down if we seek Him. Parenting is an act of faith, day in and day out. Not only do our children grow before our very eyes, but we do as well.

If there is one overarching must as a parent, it is to wholeheartedly pray to God every step of the way. Seek God always for His constant inspiration.

Children—a Heritage From God

Children are a blessing and gift from God. Psalm 127:3-4:3 says: “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.”

Each child is given the miracle of life by the Almighty God, and each child has the potential to be born into His eternal fam-

ily. In this sense, children are “on loan” from God. He is their life-giver, and He is the one who will bring them into His eternal family. This helps us frame our accountability to God in how we treat our children—they are His children too. Also, this should help us treat our children with even more respect and consideration, and to parent them “in the Lord,” since they are His. Our precious ones grow up, move out and move on. Yet we will always be their mom or dad. Enjoy these years together and build bonds with them that will last for eternity.

Share Your Personal Relationship With God

It is vital that parents share their personal relationship with God and help to mentor their children on how to seek God and come to know Him and Jesus Christ better. Children should be learning the basics at home, with God's Church then adding to this through sermons, youth camp and literature.

It is also important to teach your children that God wants a personal relationship with them—individually—and they are being called to be a part of His Church. This will help them to know this is their Church and they are an important part of it. In day-to-day living (Deuteronomy 6) make God the center of your lives by praying often for needs, reading the Bible together and talking about God.

Deuteronomy 6—Parental Instruction

The most influential relationships in a teen's life are with his/her parents. Fathers and mothers, God has put you in this most important position of loving, teaching and being a role model. You are the on-site, walking and breathing example for them to follow.

This may seem a stark way of stating this but it is nevertheless true—if we, as parents, neglect the teaching of our teens, Satan and his culture will not. The dangers and worldly pulls to youth are clear



Benji Aird/Unsplash

and constant. But as negative as our present culture is, God is far, far stronger. In the end, we know God wins. Do not lose hope. Stay positive with your kids.

A parent cannot teach or live what they do not know. Our source of inspiration must be higher than ourselves. Our personal spiritual habits are paramount if we are to pass on the precious truths of God. The spiritual ABCs of daily prayer and Bible study are the building blocks in our own lives.

This section of Deuteronomy is to teach parents so they can teach their children. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 states: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

Parents, make it a point each day to pray with your youth and teen. This can be done around the dinner table as well as in the bedroom. One of the most moving and bonding experiences each day at United Youth Camps is easy to do: Before lights out, the counselors will ask their dorm to get in a circle and join hands, and each camper can ask a prayer. The prayers are very moving and show the hearts of the teens. Dorms begin the day in prayer, and they end the day in prayer.

This leads to our 24-7 example to our teens as found in Deuteronomy 6:6-9: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between

your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” God instructs parents that His laws and ways “shall be in your heart.” This is where parental teaching begins—in our own hearts and minds.

At camp, teens tell staff they wish their parents would share more personal stories with them about how God has worked in their lives. These personal stories are very impactful to teens and to preteens. Share, share, share. God nurtures parents so they can nurture their kids.

Your children are of profound importance to God. He will not forsake them. The parable of the prodigal son teaches us this. At the end of the day, the father of the prodigal son never gave up hope that his son would return to his senses, repent to God of wrong living, and come back to him. If our beloved son or daughter temporarily forsakes God or us, and disappoints us, let us seek the example of God our Father and never give up, and love them with unconditional love. Where would we be without our forgiving Father and the sacrifice of our High Priest, Jesus Christ?

Let's remind ourselves that God does not expect perfection from any of us as parents. In the entire history of the world there has never been a perfect parent, including the fine role models of Abraham and Sarah or Mary and Joseph.

Youth are forgiving when they observe that their mother's or father's heart is with them. As in every relationship, we should always ask forgiveness of our teen when we miss the mark with them. Open up,

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Marijuana and the Growing Drug Culture

by Gary Smith

In recent years in the United States, marijuana (“pot” or “weed”) has come to the forefront as an issue with legalization in the states of Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Colorado and the District of Columbia. The trend toward legalization continues, as voters are likely to consider the matter in Massachusetts, Minnesota, Maine, California, Nevada, New York, Vermont, Connecticut, Maryland, Rhode Island and Delaware. The trend is toward legalization throughout our nation.

There is no lack of material covering the dangers of this substance on the Internet. But there is also much advocating the use of the drug. The drumbeat that marijuana poses no threat has been beating since the 1960s. The only difference today is that the drumbeat is louder than ever and growing in intensity. With legalization an accomplished fact in four states and the potential of more states voting to legalize in 2016, it is vital we address this issue from a biblical point of view and not from human reasoning.

Does Society Consider Marijuana Morally Acceptable?

The Barna Group, widely considered to be a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture, conducted a nationwide online study between Jan. 28 and Feb. 5, 2014. Their report, “Legalize It? A Majority of Christians Say No to Recreational Pot,” was published online May 13, 2014 (www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/667-legalize-it-a-majority-of-christians-say-no-to-recreational-pot#).

The report states: “Those who believe pot is morally acceptable are still in the minority, but the current numbers represent a significant increase over the past decade. In 2001, Barna Group asked practicing Protestants and Catholics if they believed non-medical use of marijuana was morally acceptable. Just 9% of Protestants approved, compared with 19% in 2014; 17% of Catholics approved in 2001, compared with 33% today. The general population has shifted, as well. In 2001, 25% of adults said non-medical pot was morally acceptable; by 2014, that proportion increased to 47%.”

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group and director of the study, said: “There is a clear trend toward greater cultural acceptance of recreational marijuana, even among many practicing Christians. National surveys are a great way to find out what people think and how their perspectives have changed over time. But why those changes are happening is more difficult to pin down through conventional polling.

“What we can conclude is that America continues to shift from a culture that

values abstinence to one that focuses on experience. Marijuana use fits within a larger trend of liberalizing views and behaviors when it comes to activities like gambling, pre-marital or extra-marital sex, and drinking. As attitudes toward temptations shift, Americans increasingly define the ‘pursuit of happiness’ to include personally invigorating or even escapist experiences.”

As society around us becomes more accepting of marijuana, it is imperative that, as members of God’s Church, we are not influenced by the culture around us.

The Dangers of Marijuana

Although the acceptance of marijuana has increased over the past several years, the truth is that marijuana poses many short-term and long-term dangers. One way to know this for sure is to look at the impact of the legalization of marijuana. In 2010, Colorado legalized medical marijuana. In 2012, Colorado legalized recreational marijuana.

Various groups have quantified changes in the state of Colorado that occurred around this time period. For example, traffic fatalities involving operators testing positive for marijuana have increased 100 percent from 2007 to 2012. In addition, hospitalizations related to marijuana have increased by 82 percent from 2008 (4,441) to 2013 (8,070) (Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, “The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact,” Vol. 2, August 2014).

Clearly, the increase in marijuana use brings along with it increased risk to the safety of the community. One possible reason for this is that, over time, the potency of the psychoactive ingredient in the drug (tetrahydrocannabinol or THC) increases. In Colorado, the THC potency has risen from an average of 3.96 percent in 1995 to an average of 12.33 percent in 2013 (*ibid.*). This increase in potency increases the likelihood of adverse effects of marijuana.

Even if the use of marijuana does not lead to driving under the influence or hospitalization, it does cause immediate changes in brain function that result in changes in behavior. Marijuana users show decreased short-term memory, ability to remember to complete future tasks, attention, judgement, motor skills and reaction time (Laurent Karila, Perrine Roux, Benjamin Rolland, Benyamina Amine, Michel Reynaud, Henri-Jean Aubin and Cristophe Lancon. “Acute and Long-Term Effects of Cannabis Use: a Review,” *CPD Current Pharmaceutical Design*, 2014).

Long-term Marijuana Use

One researcher, Dr. Daniel Amen, has looked extensively into the subject of

drugs on the brain, including marijuana.

Dr. Amen is a physician, double board certified psychiatrist, television producer and nine-time *New York Times* bestselling author. He is the founder and medical director of Amen Clinics in Newport Beach and San Francisco, California; Bellevue, Washington; Reston, Virginia; Atlanta, Georgia; and New York City.

Amen Clinics have the world’s largest database of functional brain scans relating to behavior, totaling nearly 90,000 scans on patients from 111 countries.

By taking brain scans of healthy brains and brains exposed to drugs one can see a difference. The vacant spots look like holes on the brain images, and they show that the brains of those using pot are not fully functioning in the pre-frontal cortex area.

From his experience with brain scans, Dr. Amen drew this conclusion: “After doing this work there’s no way you could get me to do marijuana, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, LSD, PCP, inhalants or any more than a glass or two of wine or beer. These substances damage the patterns in your brain, and without your brain you are not you” (Amen Clinics, Inc., “Brain Pollution and the Real Reason You Shouldn’t Use Drugs”). An article with similar information can be found at www.ucg.org/character/vertical-news-teen-marijuana-use-and-memory-damage.

Supporting Dr. Amen’s findings, one study assessed individuals at 13 years old (before any marijuana use) and 38 years (Madeline H. Meiera, Avshalom Caspia, Antony Amblere, HonaLee Harrington, Renate Houts, Richard S. E. Keefe, Kay McDonald, Aimee Ward, Richie Poulton, and Terrie E. Moffitt, “Persistent Cannabis Users Show Neuropsychological Decline From Childhood to Midlife,” July 30, 2012). Those who did not use marijuana showed a slight increase in IQ between the two ages, whereas those who used marijuana regularly throughout their life showed a significant decrease in IQ (they lost about six IQ points). Those who used marijuana, but did not use regularly, showed a small decrease in IQ (around one point). In addition, tests that measured specific deficits in brain function showed that regular marijuana users experienced decreases in attention, planning and processing speed. This study also showed the age when users began using marijuana affected their outcomes: Those who began using before age 18 showed greater IQ decline over time and were more likely to be diagnosed with marijuana dependence (addiction to marijuana). The research shows marijuana is a dangerous drug that can impact the user in a lasting way.



The healthy pre-frontal cortex.



18 year old—three year history of four times per week use. Underside surface view shows decreased pre-frontal cortex and temporal lobe activity.



28 year old—10 years of mostly weekend use shows underside surface view with decreased pre-frontal cortex and temporal lobe activity.

Marijuana and Christians

Legalization or acceptance by society does not provide a justification for anyone, particularly a Christian, to use pot. The Bible, while not specifically addressing marijuana, gives us concrete principles, which must guide our decisions concerning drug usage.

First of all, why does a person smoke marijuana? The purpose is to get high. This high is very similar to the mental state of someone who is drunk from alcohol. Does drunkenness matter for us as Christians? God is clear about His position on drunkenness: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1

Please see next page

Photos used with permission from Amen Clinics, Inc. www.amenclinics.com

Corinthians 6:9-11). God states here the drunkard will not be in His Kingdom.

Christians are expected to do even more than avoid drunkenness. We have a responsibility to strive towards perfection as we wait for Christ's return. We cannot do this while under the influence of drugs: "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

A second point for us to consider is that our bodies, and minds are precious to God. Clearly marijuana can negatively impact our minds and our thinking. Knowing the damage that is done to our bodies why would anyone indulge in the usage of any drug that pollutes the temple of God's Holy Spirit? Here are three passages that give us insight into the way that is pleasing to God.

In the first passage in Ephesians 5:17-18 we read: "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." He is saying don't get drunk since drunkenness leads to dissipation, a pointless and empty life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit and yield to It so you can discern the path pleasing to God.

In the second passage Paul addresses how important our bodies and minds are to God: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are

God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Finally, the apostle Paul addresses "the works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21. One of the words mentioned by Paul is sorcery. The word sorcery in the Greek language is *pharmakeia*, and it pertains to the use or administering of drugs, poisoning, sorcery, magical arts, and is often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it. "Sorcerers" would use drugs to open their minds, which would be a pathway for demons to affect the mind. As Christians, we want to be in control of our minds. We are told in 2 Corinthians 10:5 to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Also review Revelation 9:20-21.

It is extremely important to always be in control of our minds. When we do, we can control our senses and our actions. God is clear in the Bible: The recreational use of marijuana or other drugs does not edify Him, and it leads to serious destruction of our godly character and our bodies, in particular our brain. God desires us to have a spirit of love and of a sound mind.

Resist Negative Peer Pressure

Learning to resist negative peer pressure is an important part of growing in God's way of life. Don't give in to what others are doing. God advises us all, including young people, in Proverbs 1:10: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent."

As a young person, surround yourself with positive examples who don't tempt you to sin. Choose friends wisely, and don't keep company with those who are not good examples.

Escape From What?

Why is it so many individuals around the world are tempted by the effects of marijuana? As humans, we experience stress and emotional pain. God gave us

God wants us to learn to deal with pain, stress and challenge by relying on His design and following His instructions. In this way we allow Him to help us grow in character.

the ability to deal with these negative experiences in our brain and body. And He gives us instructions in the Bible for how to cope successfully with difficult experiences. However, when we do not listen to His instructions and we don't know how to cope, some turn to drugs such as marijuana as an escape from reality and the hurt in their world. It's as if we are trying to hide from what is inside us. THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, activates the same system in the brain that God built to naturally respond to stress. In this way, using marijuana short-circuits the system, and your brain gets used to having this extra boost. Over time, the use of marijuana inhibits your natural ability to deal with stress successfully.

What is inside us is the emptiness, the angst and the anxiety that stems from

the fact that inside every one of us has a deep-seated need for a personal relationship with our Creator God. The more we run from God and try to find out the answers to life's complex issues without Him, the more some turn to drugs as an escape. This escape can also be in the form of the lust for money, illicit sex, pornography, addictive gambling, eating binges or alcohol abuse. In the end we end up still empty, still searching.

God wants us to learn to deal with pain, stress and challenge by relying on His design and following His instructions. In this way we allow Him to help us grow in character. God is our Healer and the One who desires to fill the emptiness inside us all (John 6:35). Through God's Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we can be filled with righteousness, and there is no greater blessing.

What We Can Conclude

It appears the trend toward legalization of pot and its use is going to continue across the United States. Moral values are continuing to be eroded in our American culture as it is in many others.

Using marijuana is not healthy for us and can negatively impact our minds, and more importantly, it can affect our godly character.

Being familiar with the Word of God, we can make wise choices about what we allow into our bodies. We can reject overtures to partake of this dangerous substance. As we reject the dangerous path of drug usage, we are taking a positive step toward a lasting relationship with God. **UN**

God's Desire for His Church's Growth

by Kevin Greer

Initially the New Testament Church grew and multiplied rapidly. What characteristics are given that explain growth, and what is our role?

Seeing someone new at church is always exciting. We want to learn more about them, what they've experienced, and what brought them to services that day. It could even provide the opportunity to share some of Christ's gospel with them. Being blessed with Church growth is a good feeling.

God isn't silent on the matter and gives us an outline for Church growth within the pages of the Bible. Recorded in Acts 9:31 is this statement about the first Christian congregations: "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."

What two aspects described these churches that rapidly increased in membership?

1. They walked in the fear of the Lord.
2. They walked in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Let's focus on the second part, and examine what it truly means to walk in the "comfort of the Holy Spirit" by investigating the comfort God provides, the holiness of His people, and the meaning and various attributes of God's Spirit.

God's Warm Embrace

"I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?" (Matthew 6:25-27, New Living Translation). God doesn't want you to live a life full of worry. Worrying about things outside of your control is pointless. Everything is in God's hands.

To walk in God's comfort means to embrace it, not reject it. Do you turn to God in a time of need? Do you fret about Church issues or place them before His throne? David wrote that God is our "shepherd" who more than provides for



Image Source Pink/Image Source/Thinkstock

us with abundant blessings and zealously protects us from evil (Psalm 23).

In the same manner, we should seek to reflect God's comfort to newcomers in the faith. What example do you set in times of crisis: one who turns to God or one who rejects Him? Pray for those in need, and lend an empathetic, listening ear when others need it. Scripture says that by the

comfort God provides, we can comfort and support "those who are in any trouble" (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

What Does It Mean to Be "Holy"?

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [God's] own

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The Faith of Valdur Vesingi

by Johnnie Lambert

This is the story of Valdur Vesingi, who was released from the maximum security prison in Tartu, Estonia.

Sentenced to 21 years in prison, Valdur would serve 14 years before being paroled. During the 14 years, his life completely changed in ways he could not have anticipated.

Pere Raadio (Family Radio), along with founder Jim Carlson, conducted a prison ministry. In conjunction with Pere Raadio, *All the World* sponsored radio advertisements for United Church of God literature, which was being translated into both the Estonian and the Russian languages. Early in 2005, Valdur requested the literature and, strangely enough, he wanted his literature in English. His English preference raised some questions.

Later in 2005, it became apparent that Valdur was “getting it” when he wrote a letter asking if he was correct in perceiving that the Bible emphatically contrasts with doctrines being taught by “other churches.” The starkness of the question intensified when we subsequently discovered that Valdur knew nothing about God or any churches when he was incarcerated.

In late December of 2005, prison chaplain and head of Annemõisa House halfway house, Olavi Ilumets, arranged for us to conduct a Sabbath Bible study inside the prison. About 50 men attended. Valdur was one of those men. It was at this Bible study we met Valdur in person for the first time.

While Valdur was imprisoned, Olavi conducted weekly Bible studies. Valdur was a regular at those studies, usually presenting a different point of view about the truth of the Bible. The consequences were frequent “lively discussions.” Olavi nevertheless patiently served his prisoners to the best of his ability.

Following the initial Bible study, in 2006, we began personal visits with Val-

dur. Prisoners could have a maximum of one personal visit per month, and two persons could visit at a time. Being in Tartu for a month at a time four times per year, I visited Valdur on every trip. These visits continued for 10 years. Sometimes other persons would also visit.

In the beginning, Valdur expressed his feelings: He never wanted to leave the prison. Rooted in the belief prison is where God changed his life, he perceived he could best serve God for the rest of his life from that venue. In a unique way, he was ministering to his fellow prisoners. There were conflicts over his beliefs. First the prison authorities rejected his determination to observe the Sabbath and later the laws of clean and unclean meats. Valdur stood firm in the face of harassment and potential additional penalties. Eventually, the prison authorities relented.

A different motivation manifested itself in Valdur. With Olavi’s assistance, he began to translate United Church of God literature into Estonian. We accepted his first translation, fearing the quality and doctrinal correctness. In editing *Why Does God Allow Suffering*, resident Estonian expert Toomas Schavak delivered the following evaluation: “I could not have done better myself.” Valdur translated several more booklets, and the developing sense of purpose was therapeutic for him.

Olavi helped to make translation possible for Valdur by arranging four to five hours a week on a prison computer. When a translation was completed, Olavi e-mailed the Word file to us. Valdur’s work would have been “bottled up” if Olavi had not helped out.

Valdur was spiritually transformed by doing this work. He was convinced he was best able to serve God inside the prison and that a new seed was germinating. Could it be possible he might be a more effective servant on the outside? For a while Valdur struggled between these

two ambitions. After 12 years in prison, Valdur was now thinking about the possibility of parole.

Doubting the possibility, Valdur nevertheless decided to apply and let God make the decision. There were two requirements for making an application for parole.

The first requirement to make an application was that the prisoner needed to have the promise of a job. With the help of Valdur’s niece, Monika Joost, Tõnu Aigro, CEO at the specialty glass manufacturing plant Marepleks, agreed to hire Valdur, complete with all necessary Sabbath day work accommodations. Tõnu certified this in a document to the prison authorities.

Also, prior to making any application, every prisoner must establish he has a place to live. Valdur had no immediate family with whom he could live. The faithful chaplain, Olavi, had the solution. Olavi made it a work of his ministry to acquire a home into which such prisoners could live after parole. We contacted Olavi, and Olavi agreed to reserve a room for Valdur. With that commitment from Olavi, Valdur was at least able to make an application for parole.

Nothing could be guaranteed by making an application. The application would go before the court for a decision. There were concerns. Valdur could be considered a problem prisoner because of his Sabbath and dietary conflicts. Valdur decided to let it be in God’s hands. Many people were praying for the outcome.

Valdur was paroled in May of 2015 after 14 years in prison. Robert Schultz of the Smiltene Baptist Church, Monika and her daughters Madli and Maaria, met Valdur and Olavi at the prison gate. Valdur could only take those same clothes he was wearing when he entered prison. They had been in mothballs for 14 years. Unlike many of us with our clothes after that amount of time, he could still wear



Valdur with his niece Monika and her two daughters, Madli and Maaria.

them. The church in Smiltene, out of their own liberality, collected all the things necessary for Valdur to begin a new life on the outside, including all apartment furnishings, and all personal clothing and other items. Without this help, Valdur had nothing.

Valdur only needed to live in the prison house one month before finding another accommodation. But having the accommodation reserved was critical to his release.

Recognizing the value of what was being done by chaplain Olavi Ilumets and his ministry, LifeNets was inspired to support Olavi’s efforts for the coming year with 100 euros (\$110) per month for 12 months. There is sizable work to be done in order to keep this “halfway house” in operation.

We first met Valdur 10 years before his parole. None of us could foresee the ultimate outcome of his circumstances. We walk not by sight, but by faith, as God directs our paths. Olavi Ilumets and his halfway house were monumentally important to what God was doing in Valdur’s life.

Priceless faith was built by all of those who participated in this continuing 10 year commitment. **UN**

Never Fear

Continued from page 4

ing out and got to know a few people outside my typical group. I didn’t spend a lot of time with any of them outside school, but it was nice to have some friends in most of my classes. We all graduated, moved on, and mostly lost touch (except for the occasional Facebook post).

Move forward to the summer of 2015, and I’m with my wife at my 10-year high school reunion. My core group of friends from back then? None of them were there. But a few of those other people I had gotten to know those last couple years in school were. And it turned out to be awe-

some. After the reunion wrapped up, a group of us stayed out later into the night catching up and having a blast. And in the course of our conversation, two of those friends said, “We didn’t know who would show up tonight, but we both agreed you were the number-one person we wanted to see.” Whoa. Really? Me? I was astonished that they’d say that. My perception of my high school self was unspectacular, unmemorable, boring. But it turns I had made such an impression on them just by being nice, that I was the number-one person they hoped to see.

Just our base-level interactions with people can shine a light even if it doesn’t feel like we’re actively trying to—that is, if our base-level behavior reflects godly love and outgoing concern for others. God’s

Spirit is something that you can yield to or you can ignore. Do you try and give people the benefit of the doubt? Do you smile and react positively even if you’re not feeling well? Do you ignore and deflect insults and meanness, or respond in kind? These are the basics, yet even these basic gestures shine God’s light. And as we do these, we grow in spiritual grace and love. The fruit of God’s Spirit goes beyond just responding to our circumstances positively. It ultimately means actively engaging our world, seeking to shine the light of God further than just inside our comfort zone. “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world,” wrote James (James 1:27).

Our Father has given us the greatest power there is. “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul,” said Jesus (Matthew 10:28). Not only do we not have to fear, but we can boldly power through even the most intimidating circumstances in faith. The power that is with us is greater than the power that’s in this world. Yield to the Spirit of God, and “may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, *make you complete in every good work to do His will*, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20, emphasis added). **UN**

Announcements



Otniel Clark Reynolds

Born Nov. 6, 2015



Richard B. Bennett

Feb. 10, 1934 - Feb. 7, 2016



Elmer Brill Jr.

Dec. 2, 1928 - Feb. 18, 2016



Clarence and Jane Call

Clarence: Aug. 16, 1923 - Feb. 3, 2016
Jane: Jan. 2, 1929 - Jan. 16, 2016

Births

Otniel Clark Reynolds

Joshua and Tamara (Crow) Reynolds of Rancho Cordova, California, are happy to announce the birth of their third son, Otniel Clark Reynolds. He was born on Nov. 6, 2015, at 2:41 p.m., and weighed 8 lbs., 3 oz. Otniel is the sixth grandchild of Fred and Sue Crow of San Jose, California, and the ninth grandchild of Wilda McGaughey of McKinleyville, California. He is welcomed to the family by his big brothers, Yoshiyahu and Azariyah, and by his big sister, Alona. Otniel is an adorable, happy little boy, and his family is delighted with him!

Obituaries

Richard B. Bennett

Feb. 7, 2016, just days before his 82nd birthday, Richard Bennett died in his apartment in Auburn, Washington.

He was born Feb. 10, 1934, and grew up in Brinnon, Washington, on the Hood Canal. He served in the Army in the Korean conflict and returned to marry Janice Marie Van Kuren on March 17, 1956. They were married nearly 52 years until Janice died of cancer Jan. 2, 2008.

Richard and Janice had three children: Rose Marie Carter, Richard Michael Bennett and Russell William Bennett. They had four grandchildren: Heather Cole, Erica Bennett, Bob Carter and Jennifer Carter.

Richard was baptized in the Worldwide Church of God in January of 1969. He has been part of the Tacoma congregation of the Church of God for 47 years, the last 20 years with the United Church of God.

Over his years in the Church he grew to have a great love of people and a great zeal to share the Bible with others.

He loved God, loved his family and loved those in need. He loved the outdoors and took the family hiking in the Cascades and Olympics.

Richard was preceded in death by his wife, Janice; his parents, Richard and Mary; and by his sisters and brother, Ruth Bennett, Adaline Christian, Dolly Priest

and Robert Bennett.

A memorial service was held for him in Auburn Feb. 14, and he was buried in Brinnon.

Elmer Brill Jr.

Elmer Brill was born in Port Huron, Michigan, to Elmer Brill Sr. and Stella Fye. He enlisted in the Army as World War II was drawing to a close, and served with the 82nd Airborne Division as a Military Police Officer, Private 1st Class.

Elmer married Ana Mendoza, the love of his life on April 7, 1970, in Tampa, Florida. They moved to Gordon's Well, California, in 1975, then to Yuma, California, in 1996. He is survived by his wife, Ana; sons, Eugene, Randy, Jay R and Jay B; daughter Rogin; 12 grandchildren and multiple great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; his son Brad; granddaughter Erica and sister Macy.

Elmer was very passionate about his country and took pride in serving this great nation. He loved spending time with his children and grandchildren. He took great pride in teaching them about motorcycles and how to shoot.

Clarence and Jane Call

At the beginning of 2016, the Church of God lost a lasting example of faith, love and commitment. Clarence and Jane Call, of Spirit Lake, Iowa, married for 60 years, passed away just 18 days apart. Clarence and Jane were outstanding and loving servants, baptized together in 1968 in the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, congregation and later ordained together as deacon and deaconess. Their story is told best by their granddaughter, Jennifer Aakhus:

"Once there was a dashing young man, a former Military Marine Police Officer, and recent Kansas State graduate named Clarence. Jane was a beautiful and talented music teacher living and working in her home state of Kansas. The two met on a blind date. It was love at first sight... And their fondness for each other only grew. The two were united in marriage in 1955.

"Clarence and Jane had four adorable children. First Christine (the queen bee), next was John (the boss), then Elizabeth

(sweet, sweet Elizabeth), and finally David (the baby, and probably the favorite). Jane had decided to end her job as a music teacher and stay home to care for her children.

"Jane's family and faith were of utmost importance. The family settled in Spirit Lake, Iowa, where Clarence supported his family by working as the district soil conservationist for Dickenson County. The family lived in a beautiful two-story home painted white with black trim.

As the children grew, so did the love Clarence and Jane had for each other. It was said by their children that they never saw their parents fight. These parents had created a warm, loving environment for themselves and their children.

As the years went on, the family only continued to grow. Christine married Greg, John married Brenda, Elizabeth married Homer, and David married Donna. Five grandchildren were born: Jenny, Lisa, Amber, Ashley, and Anna (or as Clarence would refer to them—as Punky-runt-nuts).

"The family spent as much time as they could together celebrating birthdays and holidays, caring for the little ones, giving piano lessons, attending the grandchildren's school functions, and attending church activities.

"Jane was the advocate for health and well-being of her family and would often keep them in check. You might have heard her sternly ask 'Clarence, what are you eating?' Clarence took time to grow fresh fruits and vegetables for his family. He was an avid gardener and took pride in his harvest. Life was good for the family, for they all knew they had each other with wonderful parents leading it all.

"The Call family still had their fair share of heartache with the loss of an infant granddaughter, Melanie, and later the loss of their sweet daughter, Elizabeth. Clarence and Jane never lost their faith. They found strength through God and each other.

"Clarence and Jane influenced more than just their family. Virtually anyone who met them was positively impacted either through Clarence's keen sense of humor and wisdom or Jane's sweet smile

and musical talents.

"It was told Clarence would go out of his way to befriend the friendless. And Jane, would welcome everyone who came to her house with a kiss and hug. The couple enjoyed bringing happiness to others.

"As Clarence and Jane grew older, the couple stayed in their own home for as long as they could, taking care of one another. Before long, their grandchildren had children of their own. The family get-togethers were becoming larger and louder. Clarence and Jane loved it. They were always so happy to see everyone. But, as the years went on, Jane grew too weak and needed additional care.

It was decided she would move into a nursing home. Clarence did the only thing that made sense at the time—he moved in with her. Clarence lived in an assisted living apartment attached to the nursing home where Jane stayed. The assisted living area was elegant. But Clarence didn't care about that. He just wanted to be with his wife. Even though the nursing home was not as elegant and charming, Clarence would spend most of his time there with his bride. Jane knew how lucky she was to have such a wonderful husband who would not leave her side. They were together for better or for worse.

"A few years passed, and Jane grew even more weak and frail. Her time was coming to an end. She asked her family to come and say good bye. Clarence and her children sat with Jane and held her hand until she took her last breath.

"Jane's funeral was nice. Her granddaughters were pallbearers, and Clarence wore his best suit. He was able to visit with many friends and family members that day. He even cracked a few jokes even though his heart was aching.

"Clarence grew very tired after the funeral. It took a great deal out of him to bury his bride of 60 years. A piece of Clarence's heart crumbled that day, and a few days later, his body followed.

"Clarence and Jane had an extraordinary kind of love. A love I've only heard of in fairy tales. And in the end, together they will live happily ever after in eternal life."

Announcements



Robert W. Cole

April 24, 1950 - March 25, 2016

Robert W. Cole

Robert W. Cole was a member in Beloit, Wisconsin, since 2011. He now awaits the resurrection after being on the heart transplant list for some time. He was veteran of Vietnam, serving in the U.S. Marines for two tours. He served on the Rockford Police Department, retiring after 30 years. Then he was employed by the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department for several years. Later in life, he found God's truth and grasped the vitality of God's way of life with his whole being. His sense of humor in times of great stress was most memorable to his family and partners in law enforcement.

Along with his family and local church members, there were over 200 police and police family members attending his memorial service. Included was a Marine bugler for taps, a Veterans of Foreign Wars rifle squad offering a gun salute, a police color guard, and Flag Honor Guard. All present were deeply respectful of "Bob's" new beliefs in his final years.

Robert had been with us for just over five years and was a consistently spiritually dedicated, hopeful and inquisitive member of the Body of Jesus Christ. He was deeply and actively concerned for the brethren, showing his friendship and brotherhood to all he met.

We will miss Bob very much as an example of a Christian who endured to the end. We look forward to being reunited in serving with him in God's Kingdom.

Lois Irene (Hoy) Essen

Lois (Hoy) Essen, 91 of Longmont, Colorado, died peacefully and of natural causes on Jan. 7, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband Howard (1977), her seven siblings, her daughters-in-law Paula Essen (2010) and Judy (Barker) Essen (2015), a granddaughter René Tennison (1970-1990), and a grandson Sean Essen (1975-2007). She is survived by her four children: Howard Jr., Drew, Claudette Matthews (Ron), Roma Tennison-Camerata (Joe); 11 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren; and five great-great-grandchildren. She was born April 3, 1924, the second child to William "Bill" and Alice (Wood) Hoy. She grew up on the Hoy farm outside Rhodes, Iowa.



Lois Irene (Hoy) Essen

April 3, 1924 - Jan. 7, 2016

Lois was baptized in Iowa in 1956 by the traveling Worldwide Church of God baptizing team. Following her baptism she spent several years faithfully following God's laws alone without a church in Iowa. Every evening she would sit in the car listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio—the only place she could get a good enough reception for the broadcast. She traveled annually to Chicago, Illinois, and Wichita, Kansas, to keep the spring Holy Days and Big Sandy for the Feast of Tabernacles. In 1961 the family moved to Longmont, Colorado, where she was able to attend services in Denver, Colorado. Throughout her years she spent time in Wichita, Kansas; Dallas, Texas; Loveland/Ft. Collins, Colorado; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Robert Edmund Fahey

Robert Edmund Fahey (Bob) was born Jan. 15, 1940, in Cleveland, Ohio, to Mildred (Bower) and Walter Fahey. After his parents divorced when he was 2, he moved many times around the country with his mother, often in less than ideal circumstances. The two eventually relocated back to Cleveland to be near Bob's grandmother, Elizabeth Bower, and his aunts and uncles, Evelyn (Bower) and Charles Delamater, Stan and Louis Bower, and Jim Bower.

After finishing high school in Cleveland, Bob entered General Electric's Management Apprenticeship Program. He worked for G.E. for three years, and in 1961, the direction of his life was changed when he enrolled in Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, to pursue his newfound interest in biblical studies. In 1963, he was transferred to Ambassador's British campus in Bricket Wood, England.

In a single month in 1965, he graduated, was ordained into the ministry, and married Evelyn Thomas from Kalamazoo, Michigan. The couple's first pastorate was Glasgow, Scotland. In 1966 the Faheys were transferred to Melbourne, Australia, to pastor the congregations in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Joanna Marie and Jonathan Thomas were born in Melbourne in 1966 and 1968 respectively.



Robert Edmund Fahey

Jan. 15, 1940 - Sept. 28, 2015

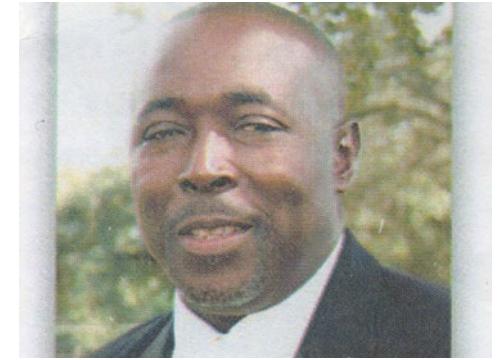
In 1969 they were transferred to Johannesburg, South Africa, where Bob became regional director of Southern Africa. In 1972 their third child, Robert Benjamin, was born in Johannesburg. From 1976 to 1978, Bob served as regional director for all of Africa.

Other assignments included regional director of Canada in 1980, executive assistant to Herbert Armstrong, pastor of four congregations in and around New York City during the mid-1980s, and regional director of Australia and Asia in 1986. While serving in Australia, he also cared for the congregation in Hong Kong. In 1990, Bob and Evelyn returned to their Midwest roots, pastoring the Chicago congregation for the last 25 years.

Many have commented that Bob was larger than life, a true extrovert with a full social calendar, exuding energy and determination. He loved to study business management, history, human development and more, but his passion was studying the Bible. Through the years he developed extensive studies on most of the books of the New Testament, as well as many biblical studies with general life applications.

In June 2015, the couple was honored with a special church tea to note the 50th anniversary of Bob's ordination as an elder. It was a meaningful time for the couple, and they fondly reminisced on their many travels and the friends they had enjoyed together through the years. The following week on July 3, 2015, Bob hosted a celebratory dinner for his bride and their family to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

On Monday, Sept. 28, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Robert died unexpectedly at 75. He was recovering at home from a heart stent procedure, completed less than two weeks prior, and all indications were that he would make a full recovery. This was the first Feast he had missed in 54 years as he was resting and attending to Evelyn, who was four weeks into her stay at a rehabilitation facility following surgery to repair a broken hip. He had been visiting her twice a day before his heart procedure and was working diligently to help her gain strength so she might have an opportunity to return home.



Frank Lemar Jackson

Sept. 9, 1959 - Oct. 27, 2015

Robert dedicated his life to preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God and helping others towards that goal. He trusted God and lived in faithful anticipation of the resurrection to eternal life. His example of steadfast service and forward momentum despite many obstacles encourages those who follow along behind him—he was a husband, father, grandfather and teaching pastor who will be greatly missed.

Frank Lemar Jackson

Frank Lemar Jackson of Mobile, Alabama, was a loving, serving disciple of Jesus Christ. After attending Sabbath services for at least six months and baptismal counseling, he was baptized on Passover day, April 13, 2014.

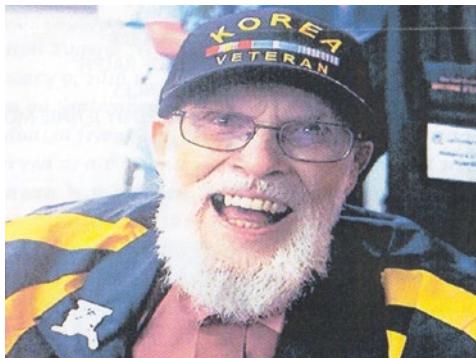
On Tuesday evening, Oct. 27, 2015 after providing a ride for a friend, he suffered a major stroke and was rushed to the hospital. Two days later, he unexpectedly died. His memorial service was held on Nov. 7, 2015, at the Highpoint Baptist Church in Eight Mile, Alabama, where Jerold Aust gave an encouraging message that included the resurrection of Frank Jackson.

Frank was a very giving, sharing and loving man. He would help anyone who needed assistance.

Frank was born Sept. 9, 1959, in Montgomery, Alabama, and he graduated from Jeff Davis High School in Montgomery. The Mobile, Alabama, brethren were blessed to know him a few months before the Passover of 2014. Almost immediately, his love for God and the truth illuminated an already close-knit church in Mobile. Frank stood out with his personable and engaging personality, enriched by his driving desire to honor and obey God. His fellowship was highlighted and characterized by His love for God and God's marvelous plan for all humankind. Less than two months before his death, Frank served as a greeter at the Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City Beach, Florida.

Everyone loved Frank. If you were down, he was there to encourage you and stir you up. This is why his premature and unexpected death was such a surprise, even a shock, to his Mobile brethren. For a few months after his passing, the church

Announcements



Ralph Eugene Nix

Sept. 9, 1931 - Jan. 9, 2016

deeply felt his absence. It simply didn't seem possible that Frank was taken from us. Still we know that God knows what is best for His saints, and we all understood that we would see Frank again in the first resurrection, a time of glorious reunion.

He leaves to cherish his memories a loving and devoted wife of seven years, Beverly Maxine Jackson, who out of respect for her husband, attended church with him as often as possible.

Frank Jackson is greatly missed by his Church family and we look forward to seeing him at the return of Jesus Christ in the first resurrection!

Ralph Eugene Nix

Ralph Eugene Nix, 84, passed away at home on Jan. 9, 2016, in Anchorage, Alaska. Ralph was born on Sept. 9, 1931, in Cleveland, Texas. He graduated from Sam Houston High School in 1950. He served as a corporal in the Marine Corps and was a Korean War Veteran. Ralph moved to Anchorage in 1976. He attended the University of Alaska. Ralph retired from industrial sales and refrigeration work in 2009. He was a member of the United Church of God. Ralph was a beloved member of the community and in particular had a heart for his fellow veterans, having served on the board of directors of the Alaska Veterans Support Group. Ralph is survived by his wife Carol Nix;



Eugene Joseph Post

Oct. 27, 1928 - Nov. 20, 2015

his son Johnny Nix and his wife Dawn; his grandson Jacob Moser; his daughter Jamie Nix and her husband Aaron Aguilar. Ralph was faithful to God to the very end and was married for 40 years to Carol.

Eugene Joseph Post

Eugene Joseph Post died peacefully during his post-breakfast nap on Friday, Nov. 20, 2015.

Gene was born Oct. 27, 1928, and had just turned 87 in October. He is survived by his wife of 15 years, Mary, and five stepchildren: Sharon (Jerry) Berg, Bud Kindrick, Jim (Betty) Kindrick, Joseph (Dawn) Rose, and David (Lisa) Rose; eight step-grandchildren; and five step-great-grandchildren. Gene was preceded in death by his younger sister, Gloria.

After graduating high school, Gene served in the Wisconsin Army National Guard Signal Corps for 12 years. He held various jobs throughout his career, retiring as a custodian for an office complex.

Gene was baptized into the Church of God in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, during the late 1960s, moving to the Seattle area in late 1998 where he then met his wife of 15 years.

Gene was a long time member of the church choir in Milwaukee and Seattle, during the Feast of Tabernacles, as well as 15 years in the Redmond Senior Chorus. Gene had an intense love for learning



Eleanor M. Hudson

May 12, 1926 - March 9, 2016

and especially loved to read and study the Bible.

Those who knew him knew he was devoted to God and His way of life. He set a good example for all who knew him with his generosity and love of God.

Eleanor M. Hudson

Eleanor M. Hudson, 89, of Topeka, Kansas, died Wednesday, March 9, 2016, due to complications from Alzheimer's disease.

She was born May 12, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of Mafalda and Chris Magnabosco. Mrs. Hudson was a longtime member of the United Church of God and attended the Kansas City congregation with her husband Dwaine, an elder.

Eleanor and her sister grew up in Chicago, she graduated from Fenger High School in 1945. They often spent wonderful summers with friends in Michigan.

Dwaine served with the U.S. Navy stationed at the University of Chicago in 1942 and met Eleanor through her mother. Remembering Dwaine's birthday later in May 1943, she sent him a card that was forwarded to him while serving aboard a ship in the Aleutian Islands. After several years of correspondence and visits to Chicago when granted leave, they continued their friendship.

After six years, with Dwaine's naval

enlistment expiring in 1948, he proposed. They were married on April 24, 1948. Stationed in San Diego, California, with six months obligatory duty, they spent time enjoying California.

They then returned to Dwaine's home state of Nebraska in October 1948. Dwaine soon found employment with the Santa Fe Railroad, where he remained employed for 37 years. In that time the Hudsons made many moves to maintain employment. They eventually settled in Topeka, Kansas, in 1960. Dwaine was ordained an elder in 1976, and he and Eleanor faithfully served the brethren.

Other survivors include: two sons, Michael A. Hudson (Judy) and Dennis D. Hudson (Janice); three grandchildren, Zachary Hudson, Heidi Brown (Shane) and Dustin Hudson (Sarah); nine great-grandchildren; and one sister, Dolores Hudson. Dolores was married to the late Keith Hudson, a brother to Dwaine. She was preceded in death by her mother and stepfather, Edwin Orton.

Eleanor had a deep reverence for God and love for others, and this was obvious to all who had the privilege of knowing her. She enjoyed being a homemaker, gardening and spending time with her grandchildren.

Dwaine often referred to Eleanor as his "girl" and looks forward to an incredible reunion in the future with the love of his life.

Announcements: Send us announcements from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to UN@ucg.org. We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please double-check the spelling of names, and include the author's and photographer's names. **E-mail is preferred**, but we will also take physical mail as well! Please include a self-addressed envelope if you'd like photos returned.



Up and Coming

Youth Card Project: Get Your Artwork on a Greeting Card!

Some of you may have noticed greeting cards being sold at your Feast of Tabernacles site this past year. You may have wondered, "What is this Youth Card Project all about?"

We are a group of young adults and teens committed to building community within the Church, and we just happen to do this by selling greeting cards. We hope to strengthen local communities by providing high-quality cards that Church members can write personal notes on and give to their friends and family. Additionally, we hope to promote community

regionally and nationally by showcasing artwork produced by Church members—artists who you know! Finally, we seek to strengthen community internationally by funding LifeNets service projects around the world.

So how can you help? Send us your original artwork! We need high-quality artwork that we can showcase on our greeting cards. All artwork is attributed to the artists that produced it (if the artist is under the age of 12, only their first name is disclosed). We accept art in the form of paintings, drawings, photographs, illus-

trations, and any other form that would work well on the cover of a card.

Please scan or photograph your artwork and e-mail it to YouthCardProject@gmail.com, along with your name and where you are from by July 15. Thank you all for your support!

Keith Lippincott





Young Adults Growing in the Faith

Western/Bible Family Social



Members of the Seabrook congregation enjoying the Western/Bible family social.

The Seabrook, New Hampshire, congregation hosted a Western/Bible family social on Feb. 27. The theme was “A Heart After God’s Own Heart.” The evening began with a Country-Western themed potluck. After sunset, the church hall transformed into a Wild West of games for our lovely young children. There were plenty of cowboy hats and kerchiefs for all of our little cowboys and cowgirls to wear.

To start the fun, each one colored pages with Bible lessons and received a “treasure map” guide to the games. There was the “Enter by the Narrow Gate” game. Here, the children learned to choose the narrow path to life and not the wide path of the world. In the “Snakes on the Loose” game, the kids used chopsticks to pick up

snakes with “bad” character traits. Then they placed the snakes caught with the chopsticks into a cowboy boot. At the “Pin the Badge on the Sheriff” game, they rehearsed the Ten Commandments. There was much more biblically based fun! The teens and young adults served by helping out at each of the eight games around the room.

The evening ended with a creative “campfire” right in the church hall. Around the campfire the whole congregation sat, talking about the evening’s activities and sharing something for which they were thankful.

It was a heart warming night of fellowship, food and fun for all ages!

Becky Del Signore

Portsmouth, Ohio International Night



Daniel and Dawn Evans created food hailing from the Netherlands for the international night in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Approximately 75 adventurous brethren from Portsmouth, Ohio, participated in the first international food night after services on Feb. 20, 2016. Booths were set up with traditional food dishes, clothing, photos, videos, and more. Participants were given a fork to carry as their “passport” before traveling south to Mexico and Guatemala, east to Jamaica and Barbuda, across the Atlantic Ocean to the Netherlands, Germany, Greece, and Jordan, before heading to Japan and finishing in Fiji. The travelers braved foods such as goat soup, plum wine, and musakhan rolls during their trip around the world. The evening concluded with the travelers ready to visit 10 new countries next year!

Kevin Call



A group shot of many of the young adults who attended the young adult weekend in Minnesota.

Excitement ran high over Presidents Day weekend, when 52 young adults from 21 states gathered for the Growing in the Faith event near Rochester, Minnesota. The seminars and workshops were the focus of the extended weekend and were well received.

On the opening night, Brian Shaw led a discussion on the current challenges our young adults are facing in their lives. Responses included situations faced at work, school, family and in the Church. Presenters then tried to address each of these in the seminars that followed throughout the weekend. On the morning of the Sabbath, Dan Dowd showed how we know the Bible can be trusted and that it is not simply a collection of interesting stories with no relevance in this modern age. Of all of the ancient historically preserved works of literature, only the Bible comes down through the ages intact—accurately preserved historically. We can be confident that the Bible has been preserved accurately.

Sunday morning, Frank Dunkle led a discussion on how interpersonal relationships can strengthen or weaken our faith. He stressed the idea of making intentional decisions regarding who we spend time with and with whom we allow ourselves to make bonds. Brian Shaw then led everyone through the importance of fortifying the mind with spiritual principles

and godly wisdom. Using the metaphors of walls and gates, he showed how we can be open-minded without leaving ourselves exposed and how what we build to protect can also enslave. Dave and Jolinda Schreiber then presented how Christians come out of the world and yet at the same time go into all the world. They described how a Christian can be in the world but not of it, and our responsibility is to be a light and an example to it. The final workshop on Monday morning gave the young adults a chance to practice answering questions about their faith to those who might ask. They learned the importance of discerning the motive behind the question in order to respond appropriately.

On the Sabbath, the young adults joined the Southern Minnesota congregation for their annual youth day service and participated in song leading, sermonettes and special music. The country and western-themed potluck and pie contest was enjoyed by all. Then the group enjoyed extreme snow-tubing, line-dancing and a bonfire. Another dance topped off the weekend on Sunday night. The schedule for the weekend allowed for plenty of fellowship time throughout each day and was one of the highlights. The friendships forged over the weekend will, no doubt, last a lifetime.

ReNae Shaw

Local Church Updates: Send us news and events from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to UN@ucg.org. We’re looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please double-check the spelling of names, and include the author’s and photographer’s names. **E-mail is preferred**, but we will also take physical mail as well! Please include a self-addressed envelope if you’d like photos returned.

Elegant Wine and Cheese Night in Columbus, Ohio



about to sample. They would then sample the items, enjoy some conversation and listen to tasteful music performed by individual musicians, which added atmosphere to the evening. The completion of the musical selection signified it was time to move to the next table and repeat the process with a different wine and cheese pairing.

As each guest left the table they also sampled a palate cleanser that assured they were ready to taste the next wine without interference from the previous one. Astounding pieces of art, created by some of the members (including photographs, paintings, sketches, pottery and jewelry), lined the perimeter of the room which gave a platform to display an amazing talent that some had never expressed before and transported everyone into a more sophisticated state.

Also worthy of mentioning is the fact that this was an all-ages event with sparkling cider at each table for those underage or anyone who preferred not to sample the wine. This event was an excellent setting for growing as a Church family, and we hope to extend the family feel next year with any who wish to attend this new, elegant evening in Columbus, Ohio.

Micah Gunn

The Columbus, Ohio, congregation held its first annual Evening of Elegance: Wine and Cheese Night on Feb. 27. Approximately 52 people attended, enjoying eight different varieties of wine and cheese in a “round robin” format that assured lively conversation between everyone.

Each attendee walked into a completely transformed, elegant church hall and took a card that directed them to their first table, out of the eight they would be visiting. Attendees read an information card describing the wine and cheese they were

Discussion Group in Portsmouth Congregation



The Portsmouth discussion group have their discussion on Acts 17:11.

Eating good food and discussing the Bible—two of our favorite things are combined in Portsmouth, Ohio, the last week of each month. At least 45 brethren regularly join together after services for food and discussion. Our theme scripture is Acts 17:11: “Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Participants share a meal, then sit

together in a family-style, round-table discussion group where anyone can participate. Topics thus far have been self-examination, the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and we’ve taken nine months to go over the fruits of the Spirit. Young and old join together to sharpen each other through discussion. Iron sharpens iron, and we are thrilled to be able to learn more about each other as well as encourage each other through spending time together.

Kevin Call

Year of Giving



Ashleigh Call and her box travel-size toiletries she will donate to the Homeless Families Foundation in Columbus.

Portsmouth, Ohio, young people, ages 12-25, were challenged to participate in a “Year of Giving” in our local area. Each one of them chose a month and a charity. They will coordinate a service project involving our local congregation to serve the chosen charity in the chosen month.

Ashleigh Call was responsible for the first month. She coordinated collecting travel-size toiletry items for the Homeless Families Foundation in Columbus, Ohio.



Erica Call with one of the shelter workers.

Brethren donated 467 items, which were sent on to the shelter.

Erica Call coordinated the March project, which consisted of donations for Sierra’s Haven. Approximately 75 pet items were collected for this local animal shelter.

Many people participated in making this a success.

Kevin Call

Northwest Indiana Winter Socials



Left: Connie Sipes is host of the Price is Right during the Munster, Indiana game show night. Kathy Merrick spins the wheel.



Right: Zach Phlaum plays a game at the game show night in Munster, Indiana.

When winter sets in and the sunsets get earlier, it’s time for activities and socials for the Elkhart and Munster, Indiana, congregations! Here is a short overview of the activities we have had this winter.

Elkhart had its first ever bowling night on Jan. 23. Around 30 people of all ages showed up to knock the pins down and enjoy an evening of fellowship.

Game night in Elkhart was on Feb. 27. After a delicious potluck, everyone played their favorite games and spent time together. It was a fun night.

Munster had lots of fun activities going on as well. The 21st annual fun show was held on Saturday night, Jan. 2. A lot of participants shared their skills, from playing the piano to singing, and showed off

their funny side with skits and jokes. It was an entertaining show!

Later in the month, Tim and Connie Sipes, from Cincinnati, came up to Munster to host the game show night. Last year, they brought it to Elkhart. It was a hit then, so they made the five-hour trip to Munster to host it again. It was great fun, and we’re all very appreciative to them for bringing all of their equipment up for the social!

Munster’s annual bingo night was held on Feb. 20. Everyone brought some prizes and had some laughs. It was a great night!

It has been a fun season of activities, and we’re all looking forward to more in the coming year!

Emma Cortelyou



Women's Enrichment Weekend Portland, Oregon

Southwest Missouri Women's Weekend



Some of the attendees at the weekend listening to a seminar.

The Springfield, Missouri, Women's Enrichment Weekend was held from Feb. 12-14, 2016. Kick-off activities for the weekend, themed "Bloom Where You're Planted," began on Friday evening, Feb. 12, with a light meal and fun get-acquainted activities. On Sabbath morning, men, women and children gathered for a hymn sing, followed by Sabbath services. The sermon was presented by Council of Elders chairman Robin Webber. Mr. Webber encouraged members with a sermon titled "Looking at the Future Through Eternal Eyes."

Sabbath afternoon approximately 45 women gathered for the event and heard from speakers on the theme for the weekend, with Susan Webber starting off the program. Other presenters covered United Youth Camps, growth through trials and loss, a family legacy, coming to and returning to the knowledge of the truth, using the talents you have, and transplanting as a part of the growth process. Presenters were Susan Webber, Pam Redline, Darlene Ramey, Kim Nunn, Cynthia Stewart, Karen Allwine, Dollie Schuster, Joan Ott, Rhonda Lopez and Verna Simkins. Throughout the weekend, women

enjoyed uplifting and inspirational music presented by many in the area and coordinated by Dorothy Schmidt.

Once again, participants brought handmade crafts and other items for the silent auction. This year, the proceeds from the silent auction were donated to United Youth Camps, and over \$1,000 was raised. As in years past, women from various church areas donated food for the meals! This service was provided by the Springfield women, the Kansas City church women, and from women attending from Alabama and Georgia. Snacks were provided by the women from Tulsa and Oklahoma City. These donations of love help keep this weekend low-cost and affordable for the majority who choose to attend.

Truly those in attendance met the goals for Women's Enrichment Weekends as outlined by Women's Services and the home office, including sharing life lessons, making meaningful connections, spiritual conversation, and supporting a service project. Comments about the weekend centered on getting to know some new friends and renewing former friendships, the sweet fellowship, a deeper understanding of other sisters in Christ, getting out of your comfort zone, sharing and encouragement.

Added value to the weekend this year were activities for the men, with a bonfire and chili dinner at a local member's farm, ending with brunch on Sunday morning for those who wished to attend. The men enjoyed getting together, learning more about one another, and attending a question-and-answer session with Mr. Webber.

Please consider joining us next year, Feb. 17-19, 2017, on President's Day weekend.

Amber Duran



The choir singing special music at Sabbath services during the weekend.

Ninety-nine women from Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho and Maryland attended the Women's Enrichment Weekend in Canby, Oregon, on Feb. 26-28, 2016. The brochure that was made for the weekend stated: "The purpose of this event is to encourage and strengthen the women of God's Church—both younger and older alike—to help one another grow to greater spiritual maturity and to fulfill our unique role as women of God." The theme of the weekend was "Living a Selfless Life in a Selfie World."

Patty Sexton gave a presentation called "Yours and Mine." She illustrated how perspectives can change outcomes in people's lives. She showed how Joseph and Esther did not rely on their own perspectives. God used each of them to save their people. They were great examples of selflessness.

On the Sabbath Roc Corbett gave a sermon on selflessness. He reminded us that Moses' mother risked her own life to save his life. He exhorted us to be a "mother" or a "sister" to someone who can use support. He showed Christ's sacrifice is the ultimate example of selflessness.

Nancy Corbett gave a presentation called "Simple Acts of Kindness." She said, "We need eyes to see, ears to hear and a

heart that is soft," and that we should look for ways to be kind and selfless. She shared Proverbs 31:26: "She opens her mouth with wisdom and on her tongue is the law of kindness."

Leanne Luker gave a presentation called "Gratitude: An Antidote for Selfishness." She gave all the ladies a gratitude journal. She said that being thankful for friendships, good health, God's calling, etc. helps us to be selfless.

Aimee McNally, Katlyn Wynaucht, Shannon Light and Robin Wojcik gave presentations on their personal experiences with the challenges of becoming selfless.

Saturday night there was an auction that raised \$1,044. The money will be donated to the United Church of God and the Good Works program. Also, the attendees donated 41 blankets that will be donated to Project Linus, which benefits children in need in the Portland, Oregon, metro area.

On Sunday Sandy Cafourek led a workshop on team-building. Also the ladies took group photos together instead of taking selfies. Many of the ladies said that the weekend was very uplifting spiritually and emotionally, and they look forward to attending next year.

Carmella Weis

Footprints and Lights—Puget Sound Women's Weekend

"Let your light so shine before men . . ." The vibrant daffodil fields of Skagit Valley welcomed the 69 attendees of the Puget Sound Women's Weekend in La Conner, Washington, this year. The ladies met ready to share, listen, and connect on this year's theme of "Footprints"—focusing on how we can make a positive impact in each other's lives and in our communities based on the exhortation found in Matthew 5 to be a light to the world.

The presenters this year focused on examples of how they've used their time and skills to serve with various community projects and service organizations and the impact that service had on

them personally, as well as in the lives of those they served. Working with Special Olympics participants, the Oso Landslide Relief, community healthcare outreach, the Union Gospel Mission, and volunteer teaching in the community as well as abroad were some of the examples shared.

But not everyone has a medical background or can take a year off to volunteer abroad or has the time to teach at a local school. The question quickly became obvious: "How can I fulfill Matthew 5:14-16 given my life circumstances?" The question was tackled in facilitated breakout discussions. Participants shared barriers they felt prevented them from serving,

such as mobility issues, finances, young children and busy schedules. The group then brainstormed solutions, examples of which included baking desserts for local soup kitchens, putting resources and service opportunities in the Sabbath bulletin, and rotating monthly mommy breaks so mothers could go out into the community and serve.

Bolstered by food and fellowship throughout, the ladies enjoyed many opportunities to learn, grow and give. The sermon expounded on the importance of being profitable servants and a practical application of the parable of the talents. The presentations demonstrated relatable



Some of the attendees at the weekend.

examples of being a light in this world, and the service project provided food for the local food bank. Laughter was shared, memories were made, and a profitable weekend was had by all!

Chelsea Murphy

Trip Report: Mumbwa, Zambia, Africa

On March 25, 2016, Felicia, my wife, Muhau and I took a trip to visit United Church of God congregations in Mumbwa. Prior to our trip, we were advised to use Nangoma road instead of branching off at Situmbeko to Kasumpa because that road was bad.

As advised, we drove straight to Nangoma where we found a route to Kasumpa. When we entered the gravel road we thought it was a good road. However, after driving for a few kilometers we discovered the road was not good as earlier thought, and we had to drop the speed of the car to 20 kilometers per hour!

The road was muddy and eventually we got bogged down, and the four-wheel drive would not work either. Felicia and I had to try to push the vehicle out of the mud. Nonetheless, the vehicle would not move. We were there for some time, until I heard Felicia calling, "Jesus help us to push the vehicle!" I ignored her; we tried and failed. She asked me to pray to ask God to help us, but I did not listen to her. We tried and tried and failed. Felicia continued to ask Christ to help, and she said that I must give a short prayer for help. I conceded and prayed.

I called her to come and push again and told Muhau to start the vehicle. With very little effort the Ford moved out of the bog! That was a sure miracle; we would have spent the night there otherwise. God is always present in any situation. Inwardly, I asked myself why I did not pray right from the start.

We moved on until we reached Kasumpa with no trouble. We met with deacons Armstrong Maninga and Willard Katapya. When we were going to leave for Nalubanda, the deacons advised us that we could not reach the area due to impassable roads. They suggested we go to Mumbwa. We left Kasumpa and spent a night in Mumbwa, at the Lodge.

The following morning was Sabbath and we went to Mapoko to attend services with 36 brethren. Muhau donated some clothes to the youth in both Mapoko and Kasumpa. At Mapoko we found there was a funeral for a Church member who was a young lady and lived with her grandfather. We later attended the funeral, and we encouraged her grandfather. He was very thankful that we visited with him.

The purpose of the Mumbwa trip was to check on the Church membership and their projects.

On our way to Lusaka we stopped in Situmbeko to see some Church members. We visited with the Tembo family, the Silwiimba family and Judith Chewe. We were not able to see all the members. We left Situmbeko knowing all was well with the Church. We arrived in Lusaka late in the night.

Finally, congregations requested that we visit them regularly and that they were happy to see us. We wish you all the best during this Holy Day season.

Major N. F. Talama.



Top: A group shot of the congregation in Mapoko. Behind them is the church building the brethren built.

Bottom: Inside the church building on Sabbath.

First Annual Cincinnati Young Adult Weekend

"Unlocking Your Desire to Serve" was the theme of the young adult weekend held April 8-10, 2016. The main concept of the weekend, just like the theme says, was to inspire young adults to serve. The entire weekend was planned and implemented by a group of young adults: Cody Martin, Stella Helterbrand, Alyssa Archer and David Browning. Many others helped by volunteering for specific activities, seminars, heads of service groups for the service projects, and many other roles. There were about 80 attendees at the weekend. Not only did most of the young adults in the Cincinnati area and other parts of Ohio attend, but also many from various other states such as Massachusetts, North Carolina, Michigan, Florida, Tennessee, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

The weekend started off with a panel of young adults who served at various projects around the world. The majority of the projects presented were part of the United Youth Corps projects. The open panel gave other young adults an opportunity to hear about the projects and then ask questions and have a quick discussion about each project. After the panel

everyone enjoyed desserts, donated by young adults, and a bonfire. Everyone spent quality time talking and getting to know old friends better and meeting new friends.

On Saturday morning there were four seminars. These seminars were presented by Steve Myers and young adults from the Cincinnati area: Josh and Lizzy Creech, Cody Martin, Zach Williams, and Rudy and Judy Rangel.

After seminars, Sabbath services in Cincinnati and dinner at the home office, young adults took part in games put together by David and Prisca Kovalchick. These games were not your ordinary relay games or board games. These games focused on allowing each individual to have a chance to meet and get to know everyone a little better. No one had a chance to be exclusive. Everyone had a chance to move around the room and talk to almost everyone who attended.

On Sunday morning everyone was split into small groups to take part in service projects. These projects directly helped serve the brethren in the Cincin-



Sunday afternoon young adults served at various members' homes as part of a service project.

nati area who needed extra help with yard work or de-leavening. After the service projects, the weekend ended with a lunch and two more short seminars presented by Jonathan Magee and Dan Preston. The weekend went well and exceeded expectations.

Linda Merrick

Little Rock Fun Show



After services and a potluck meal on the evening of Feb. 20, the Little Rock congregation sponsored a fun show. The show included skits and songs performed by folks from age 8 and up and lasted about an hour. The entertainment was enhanced by our MC, Lonnie Blankenship, who provided jokes and humorous tales while transitioning between acts. The photo is of Josh Farnsworth, who sang a couple of "oldies but goodies." His dad, Bill Farnsworth, also sang for the fun show, as did Liz Harris and Lamie Pie. It was an enjoyable evening of food, fellowship and fun!

Jean Howdeshell

Why Isn't ABC an Online Program?

by Frank Dunkle

Since joining the full-time faculty of Ambassador Bible College, the question I most often hear has been, “Does ABC have online classes?” Along the same line, people wonder if ABC wouldn't be just as effective as an online program. The simple answer to both questions is “no,” but explaining exactly why is a bit harder to do.

Let me make a quick comparison teens in the Church should readily understand. Hundreds of young people attend our summer camps each year. For those who cannot, could we create an online summer camp? I don't know if anyone has ever seriously proposed doing that, but it turns out much of the teaching that is done in the various Christian living classes could be shared through the Internet. So could the instruction for various camp activities.

It just wouldn't be the same though, would it?

For camp, this is an easy point to make. No one believes playing sports or singing

songs together can be done online. To go beyond those obvious points, we should consider that attending summer camp is a unique and special experience. To borrow a phrase from the tourism business, it is an authentic experience. No simulation can measure up to the real thing.

I believe the same is true for ABC. Attending is an authentic experience that cannot be simulated, nor can it be represented virtually. Let me go a step further and say that participating in the ABC program is meant to be a transformative experience.

The goal of ABC is to provide students an understanding of the Bible so the great truths it contains will never cease to prevail within the minds of God's people. Graduates should not only know what the Bible teaches, but they should be able to explain it to others. Admittedly this is a very ambitious goal. In some cases we have been more successful than others, and we never claim to have perfectly accomplished it. I do strongly believe, however, we fulfill our mission much bet-

ter as a residential program than we ever could online.

Surely you have heard or read advertisements from various universities promoting their online degree programs. The idea is that knowledge is knowledge, and the means by which it is conveyed does not matter. Compare it to picking up a gallon of milk at the grocery store instead of having it delivered to your house (which was how it was done only a few decades ago). This works well for commodities, and can work for knowledge, but it does not work so well when it comes to giving someone an experience—especially one that affects who and what that person is.

ABC is about more than gaining knowledge. The process by which the knowledge is gained is also important. Doing a thorough study of the entire Bible in nine months is challenging, and the process affects a person in a way that spreading it out over more time does not. The unity of the Bible and God's direct inspiration become quite obvious. The intensity of the program helps students become more

proficient at “putting line upon line and precept upon precept,” as Isaiah 28:10 tells us to do.

Of course that does not address the enormous impact of being part of a special group of people who are going through the experience together. Most students form strong and lasting friendships, and the group dynamic is a vital part of the ABC experience. I have joked that being an Ambassador student is special—there are only a few of them, but being an Ambassador graduate is no big deal—because there are lots of them! That is partly true. It is special to be an Ambassador student. It is something I wish every young person in God's Church could experience. However, it is also pretty special to be a graduate. We are proud of those who have completed the program and are sustaining God's Church and supporting His work.

If you would like to learn more about ABC and/or are interested in applying, please visit our website at abc.ucg.org, or call or e-mail our faculty. **UN**

Forgiveness: Mercy for Thousands

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“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit” (Psalm 32:1-2).

David then contrasts the joy of being forgiven with the *misery of hiding a sin*. Psalm 32:3 shows that it took David a little while to reach this point—to remember that, as Exodus 34:6-7 reads, God is “... *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands.*”

“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (Psalm 32:3-4).

David did not find joy in God's mercy when he tried to pretend that *his sin hadn't happened*. And this heaviness may have gone on for months before he finally acknowledged his sin. Many scholars believe King David wrote this psalm, along with Psalm 51, after finally acknowledging and repenting of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.

As *The Nelson Study Bible* states: His “silence was a stubborn resistance to admitting guilt, a hope that in time the sin and its penalty would go away. The more David delayed his confession, the more he suffered. David realized it was not just his conscience or his feelings that were assaulting him, but the *heavy hand of God*” (note on Psalm 32:3-5).

And then we see David acknowledge the solution. When David did at last confess in repentance, God forgave him.

“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

Repentance and forgiveness are the starting points of a relationship with God—or of restoring a relationship with Him.

Removing the Weight

King David came to remember the great mercy of his God. This is a great reminder for us during the Passover and Unleavened Bread season. It's all about turning to God in repentance, receiving forgiveness, and receiving mercy—having the heavy weight of sin lifted. And none of it is possible without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins and our new life as brothers and sisters of His.

You and I incurred a debt because of our own sinfulness. But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to be washed clean and the debt paid. We are forgiven upon repentance. Don't let the weight of guilt stay on your shoulders, because we deeply know that “God is *merciful and gracious...keeping mercy for thousands.*”

He is *very merciful*. It's in His nature. Take on the new person and walk in newness of life—with the risen Christ living in you through the power of the Holy Spirit. **UN**

God's Desire for His Church's Growth

Continued from page 7

special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The word “holy” means set apart, chosen, or sanctified by God for a special purpose. God says you and I, as members of His Church, are holy—we are set apart from the world to be priests in His Kingdom.

God gave ancient Israel specific instructions for the holy anointing oil to be used in their worship of Him. He concluded these directives with this statement: “It is holy, and you must treat it as holy” (Exodus 30:32; NLT). Likewise, we are holy, and we are to treat ourselves as holy! We do this by obeying God's law in our thoughts, actions, and intentions. This includes the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) as well as the two great commandments that Jesus emphasized: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40).

If we expect growth in the Church of God, we should act in accordance with His guidelines. By submitting to and acting on God's expectations for us, we must treat ourselves and our fellow brethren as holy.

The Spirit of God

God's Spirit is His power. It is by His power—His Holy Spirit—that the mem-

bers of His Church are made holy. The Holy Spirit has many meaningful attributes that Christians need to understand.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). God's Spirit helps us combat fear by giving us power and inspiring us with courage. This power can help us overcome both personal and congregational obstacles to growth. His Spirit is the Spirit of love. Selfless, righteous love should be the underlying purpose of all of our actions. The Holy Spirit gives us a sound mind so we can wisely and accurately understand the Bible as God's Word. It allows us to be self-disciplined and be clearheaded in a variety of situations.

“Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control” are all listed as fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). When you evaluate your life for results, these things should come out on top. If that's not what you see, take action, and especially ask God to help develop each of them in you. Pray to God to pour out His Spirit on you, that it may guide your thoughts and actions, and help you discern the right thing to do, then fruit will be produced. Let His power be your guide.

To walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit requires faith in His comfort, obedience to His Word, and growth via His Spirit. God's Church, excelling in these actions and by His authority and blessings, will be prepared for God to multiply it. **UN**

Planned Giving and Supporting Specific Projects

by Rick Shabi

At the home office, we regularly receive inquiries from members and donors asking how they can include the Church in their will or trust, or how a donation of stock, mutual fund, real estate, IRA disbursement, or other asset can be made to the Church. We appreciate those who consider making such a “planned gift” to the Church when they are reviewing their last wills and estates, or reviewing their portfolios.

This type of giving, separate from tithes and other offerings, is called “planned giving.” The term generally refers to gifts made to the Church from the assets one accumulates during his or her lifetime. Such gifts are planned and designated during life, but are in many cases distributed to the Church after the end of life.

If you would like more information on this subject, or how you can make a “planned gift” to the Church, simply go

to ucg.org, type in “Planned Giving” in the search box, and an article and brochure will appear.

Another recurring question is how to donate to designated areas of the work, such as international areas, Good Works, media, or a building fund. One easy way to do that is to make your extra donation through the Internet. Simply click on the “Donate” button located at the top left of ucg.org. There you will see the various funds to which you can

make your donation and a brief description of how donations to that fund will be used. You can check current and ongoing Good Works projects at goodworks.ucg.org.

Whenever you have a question regarding planned giving, donation of assets other than cash, or how to donate to a specific area of the work, feel free to write us at plannedgiving@ucg.org or direct your questions to the treasurer at treasurer@ucg.org. **UN**

Pentecost and the Mystery of the Ages

Continued from page 3

to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice” (Exodus 19:17-19).

The Israelites heard the voice of God thunder the Ten Commandments and became so fearful they asked Moses to be their intercessor. Moses then went up the mountain to hear God for them and relayed the additional words of the covenant to them, and all Israel promised again they would obey and keep the covenant (Exodus 24:3). There were offerings given and blood sprinkled to signify the agreement (Exodus 24:6). Moses again read all the words of Exodus 20:1-23 to them, and Israel a third time promised to obey (Exodus 24:7).

Next, in what is likely a type of the coming wedding supper of Revelation 19:9, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel went part way up the mountain and shared a meal. The God of Israel appeared to them in a reduced power form, with the shining glory that surrounds Him appearing only under His feet (Exodus 24:10).

What was all this leading up to? What was the intent or purpose of all these incredible events?

The Purpose of the Tabernacle

The answer is given in Exodus 25:8: “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” God clearly intended to dwell among the people of the covenant who were obeying Him and living according to His laws.

After giving instructions for the tabernacle and priests, God added: “I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them

up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God” (Exodus 29:45-46).

Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments written on stone by the finger of God. While he was gone, terrible sin occurred. Moses was gone many days, and Israel convinced Aaron to make a golden calf. As a result of this sin, 3,000 men who were involved in the calf worship were killed by the Levites, and many more died in a plague (Exodus 32:28, 35). Moses had to pray for Israel so God would not punish them further.

As a consequence of worshipping the golden calf, God removed His presence from Israel. The tent of Moses served as a temporary tabernacle where Moses would meet with God, and God had Moses move the tent to a place outside the camp (Exodus 33:7). The people watched as Moses went out of the camp to meet with God and the pillar of cloud descended to that tent. It was a daily reminder that God no longer dwelt with them (Exodus 33:8-11).

Moses understood that Israel could not survive without God dwelling among them. After some days passed, Moses interceded with God on behalf of Israel. This was the third time he had to pray for them to survive. His incredible prayer is recorded for us in Exodus 33:12-16. Moses knew the only way for Israel to be separate from the world was to have God dwelling among them (Exodus 33:16). God honored Moses’ request and told Moses to hew two additional stone tablets for the Ten Commandments.

Moses again spent 40 days on Mount Sinai with the Lord. With his face shining, due to being in the presence of the glory of God, Moses came back to the camp of Israel. He brought with him the new Ten Commandment tablets and renewed the covenant with Israel (Exodus 34: 30-32). According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Moses delivered the second set of commandments, and the covenant was renewed on the Day of Atonement (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906 Edition, Volume 2, page 281).

Work then began on building the taber-

nacle for the presence of the Lord to dwell in the middle of Israel. The tabernacle was finished on the first day of the second year (Exodus 40:17), and the glory of the Lord, demonstrating His presence, filled the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34).

The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem

More than 400 years later, King David wanted to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. God did not allow him to do so (1 Chronicles 22:7-8). After Solomon was established as King of Israel, he built the temple as a place for the Lord to dwell among the people of Israel. When the building was being completed, then the word of the LORD came to Solomon saying: “Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel” (1 Kings 6:12-13). God still wanted to dwell among His people who were obeying Him. After Solomon’s heartfelt prayer for God’s mercy at the dedication of the temple, fire came down as the glory of God filled the temple and His presence dwelt there (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

The glory of God stayed in the sanctuary of the temple until about the year 587 B.C. God cannot abide dwelling with sin and evil, and after many years of idol worship by Israel and Judah the Lord decided to no longer dwell in the temple. Ezekiel 10-11 record for us the glory of God leaving the temple and going to the Mount of Olives, from where it ascended back to heaven.

Babylon’s armies destroyed the temple, and the glory of God never again dwelt in a building. Even though a second temple was constructed later by Ezra and was then built into a magnificent building by Herod, the glory of God did not dwell in it. The Jews hoped it would return.

The Day of Pentecost, A.D. 31

Jesus Christ promised His disciples that He and the Father would come and dwell

in them (John 14:17, 20, 23). That promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and recorded for us in Acts 2. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:2). Those assembled there knew the glory of the Lord appeared “like fire” (Exodus 24:17) and was often accompanied by wind (Exodus 14:20-21).

Peter and the other disciples understood the Spirit of God was now being given to individuals (Acts 2:17) and that God was giving the Spirit to those who would obey Him (Acts 5:32). Not many days later Stephen told the Jewish Council this new profound truth: “The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48). They stoned him for saying that and showing that they were as guilty as their forefathers. The Jews of the first century, along with almost all of mankind since, never understood the mystery.

What Mystery?

God the Father and Jesus Christ now dwell in the hearts of converted people. This is the great mystery of all time, understood by a few because it has to be revealed to a mind opened by God.

Paul emphasized it several times. “The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1: 26-27).

Our minds are now the temple where the Spirit of God lives and produces the fruit of a changed life. Our responsibility is to grow in grace and knowledge, aware that we are part of the spiritual temple God is building.

Think about Paul’s admonitions to the church in Corinth as we keep the Day of Pentecost: “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16). **UN**

Our Spiritual Adventure

Continued from page 4

Christian expedition manual, the Bible.

On our Christian expedition, we may come to a fork in the road, and it might not be clear which way is the right way, especially when others are headed along either branch of the trail. Or we may come upon situations where we aren't quite sure what to do. If we are reading the Book, gaining the knowledge and wisdom of how God wants us to handle various situations, seeking what God wants of us, then we are going to be able to make informed decisions rather than just taking a guess. We can be like the Christians in Berea (Acts 17:11) who "searched the Scriptures daily" to see what the truth was instead of just relying on what they had seen or heard or what they had previously believed.

As Christian adventurers on this journey, we must read the Bible to gain knowledge and understanding about our expedition so we can be prepared for the difficulties to come, to know what God expects of us and to have a successful journey.

Essential #2: Supplies

"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

For a spiritual adventure we need only the essential spiritual food and drink and spiritual tools that won't weigh us down.

We need sustenance for a long adventure. Just like in our daily lives we need to eat and drink daily. But the nutrition needed for a spiritual journey is different than the food we eat every day.

We need water. In John 4, Jesus used a question from a Samaritan woman drawing water from Jacob's well to teach about "living water" (John 4:10). He contrasted the physical water that the woman drew out with water good for "everlasting life" (John 4:14). The water we need on our expedition is the Spirit of God by which the Word of God is written in our minds and on our hearts. This is an essential piece of equipment for a successful expedition. Not only does God sustain us through His Spirit, He also leads us and guides us.

We need food. As we grow and mature on this trek, we move from drinking milk to eating food that is tougher to digest but that will benefit us more and take us further (Hebrews 5:13-14). We start with the basic knowledge and understanding of God's Word and then, through experience and help from God, we move onto a deeper understanding of the way we

are to walk. We learn how to eat spiritual food that will help us to continue to grow and give us lasting strength. Jesus said to His disciples in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." We follow His example of doing God's work as He has set out for us to do. We gather "fruit for eternal life" (John 4:36).

We also need only the most essential tools for our journey. We need armor and weapons to protect us from the evils we may encounter in places we have not yet been. God has spiritual armor of which all pieces must be worn if we want to be able to "withstand in the evil day" "against rulers of the darkness of this age" (Ephesians 6:13-19). We also need to develop the wisdom to properly use these tools that our Heavenly Father has given for our protection (Proverbs 4:7).

We only have room in our pack for essential supplies. If we carry too much we won't have the strength to make it all the way to the end of the journey. If we don't carry enough we won't have the energy to survive our entire expedition safely.

Essential #3: Vision

"If people can't see what God is doing,

"If we are going to reach our destination, we have to know where we are headed."

they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed" (Proverbs 29:18, The Message). If we are going to reach our destination, we have to know where we are headed. We have to keep the end of our journey in mind and be on the right path that will lead us to where we need to go.

God has not hidden from us the name of the place, the Kingdom of God, and through His Word He describes for us a time of peace and prosperity, a city that shines brightly with His glory—our eternal home (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

We have to make sure that the vision of our final destination is always on our mind. Otherwise we could get lost along the way, headed in the wrong direction; we could get distracted by things that aren't essential to reaching our goal, and we will be distracted by the cares of this life. We are told by Jesus Christ to "seek first the Kingdom of God" and our Heavenly Father will give us all the other things we need (Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:31). The vision we have is our motivation for us to get up when we fall and carry on with our journey. Hebrews 12:22 says, "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." We are headed for a better place, and if we lose our vision or get distracted we won't know which direction to go and won't

have the inspiration to urge us forward.

Essential #4: Guidance

"I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble" (Proverbs 4:11-12).

There will be times when we will head in the wrong direction or off the path even when we know where we want to end up. This is very dangerous because there is only one true pathway along this expedition that leads to everlasting life (John 14:6). There is another trail down which we could choose to go, "but its end is the way of death," and we don't want to head that direction (Proverbs 16:25).

There will be times when we do stumble and we do fall down. This is usually when we lose sight of the vision of our goal. Proverbs 24:16 says that even "a righteous man may fall seven times," but he doesn't stay down. He gets back up. God helps us to get up and dust ourselves off. He points us back to His way, to the true path that leads to life and to His Kingdom. If we want to be successful in this journey, we have to be willing to get back up and seek God's true guidance. Otherwise we will be headed in the wrong direction.

To get back on the true path we must rely on guidance from God. He gives us His Word as "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path" so we can see where the sturdiest steps are (Psalm 119:105). We are on a narrow and difficult trail with dangers on either side (Matthew 7:13-14). If we do step off and try to leave the path we should be traveling, only the guidance from God can bring us back. His guidance comes in the form of instructions in Scripture and through His Holy Spirit.

Essential #5: Teamwork

"A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Proverbs 18:9).

As we traverse rocky and unfamiliar terrain along a narrow path, we have to keep in mind that we are traveling with others. We aren't the only ones on this expedition to God's Kingdom. In Amos 3:3 we are asked a question we already know the answer to: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" When we journey with others, we must be careful not to offend each other. This goes both ways.

There are times when we will have to confront others but we have to watch what we say and how we say it, choosing our words wisely and knowing when to speak up and when to hold our peace (Proverbs 11:12). The apostle Paul was a good example of someone who strove to use his words to build others up and not offend them saying, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful," and teaching us that we should seek the well-being of others (1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 32-33). These are lessons he learned from

Jesus Christ, our ultimate example of how to live and how to love.

We are responsible for the words that come out of our own mouth, but we cannot control the tongue of another. We can, however, control our reaction to what others say. In the book of Ecclesiastes we are warned to "not take to heart everything people say" because we too have been guilty of offending others (Ecclesiastes 7:21-22). Not being easily offended by the words of others is part of how we show love to one another (1 Corinthians 13:5), using patience and kindness instead of being led by our reactions and hurt feelings.

God has invited us to begin a journey that is life-changing and adventurous. If we truly want to have a successful expedition to His Kingdom, we must be constantly developing our skills in utilizing the essential equipment that is necessary for us to stay on the true path and be more sure footed on difficult terrain. This is a journey that will require knowledge and guidance from God, only the most essential spiritual supplies, and a clear vision of where we are headed alongside one another. [UN](#)



Pastoral Transition for UCG-Canada

We would like to announce that John Elliott has been named the pastor of the Vancouver and Vancouver Island congregations in British Columbia, Canada. He will be reporting to UCG-Canada. John and his wife, Merrie, will serve these congregations from their home in the United States for the present time.

We would like to thank John on behalf of the entire ministry of the United Church of God for his many long hours of service to help drive the "Labor in the Word" project to completion as the Information Coordinator for the Ministerial Education Program.

Mr. Elliot will continue as senior pastor for East Africa, and since he will be away periodically, David Palmer will work closely with him as an associate pastor for those congregations.

Victor Kubik

Beyond Today Live in Africa

by Aaron Dean

Beyond Today Live is leaping the Atlantic this October. We have an active audience for the *Beyond Today* program in Africa. Steve Myers, *Beyond Today* presenter and Ambassador Bible College dean of faculty and his wife Kathe will be keeping the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful subtropical seaside town of Margate on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, South Africa. ABC break starts two days before Atonement, so the extended break can accommodate the Myers' extended Feast trip.

Since the *Beyond Today* program is broadcast in Johannesburg and Capetown, it was determined that having a presenter in Africa presented an opportunity we cannot overlook. The campaign will take place in each of those cities prior to the Feast.

It will be the usual format of our events except there will be only the one presenter, Steve Myers, and not all three. It will be advertised in a bottom banner during the regular program as well as being advertised in a mailing to the magazine subscribers in those communities. Having an actual presenter come to South Africa should be a real drawing card for the United Church of God.

Please pray for the success of the events as well as the safety of the Myers and the members in South Africa who will be setting the venue for the campaign. **UN**

America: The Time Is Now!

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Once again invitations to attend were sent via ads in *Beyond Today* magazine, *BT* subscriber letters, online advertising, e-mail advertising and Pandora radio ads.

Goal

The campaigns are an additional tool designed to provoke our *current magazine subscribers and television viewers* to make an effort to visit us *face to face*. By shaking hands with a pastor in their city, or by personally meeting our *Beyond Today* presenters, we hope to add personal contact and engagement with our most interested followers.

The bulk of our advertising and outreach for them is directed at our current subscribers and donors. They are the group that is most ripe for a greater relationship with the Church. After reaching them with multiple communications, we then also reach out to the general public and invite them to attend.

Topics

Beyond Today hosts Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty each presented a segment of the program—which lasted about 70 minutes. The multimedia event included video, music, theatrical lighting, slides and the three lectures. Our presenters explained:

- Why we have issues in the world and our personal lives—sin.
- That the solution is repentance and



Steve Myers giving his presentation in Indianapolis, Indiana.

realizing your potential as God's literal child.

- And the next critical steps: following Jesus' example in everything, including Sabbath observance and baptism.

The messages were intended to be both uplifting and challenging for our guests, some of whom were experiencing this message of the Bible for the first time. But many attendees represented our current subscriber base, who have been reading and watching our content for years. We hope this represents a new step in their engagement with the work of the Church and in their spiritual growth as individuals God is calling for His purpose.

The three hosts were accompanied and assisted by Church president Victor Kubik and Media and Communications Services operation manager Peter Eddington, along with a crew of four home office employees. Equipment for the events was also provided by the home office and traveled along with the technical crew.

Follow-up

Each location announced follow-up

Sabbath service, and the seminar program handed out at each campaign included pastoral contact information. There is also the bi-weekly Bible study webcast at the home office that was advertised to the seminar attendees.

Thanks

Much thanks has to go to the pastors and members of each congregation for their help in making the tour such a success. The membership of all three congregations provided support for the events in the form of planning assistance, ushering and greeting. It would not have gone as well without their help.

Future Plans

There were many requests for seminars to come back to Tennessee and Indiana for follow-up events, and there have also been requests to take the *America: The Time Is Now!* program to other cities in the U.S.

Plans are underway to do 11 more live *Beyond Today* appearances over a 12-month period to cities that are within a day or two drive of Cincinnati. **UN**

Parenting From Heart to Heart

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admit the fault, tell them you will try harder, ask their forgiveness, and reassure them that you love them very much. It is important to not cover up. Ask for their prayers as you face situations so they observe your own personal growth as a child of God.

Ultimately, children need to see the love of God reflected in their mother and father. Our role model is Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:10), which in turn, we strive to reflect toward our children. Only with God in us, through the power of God's Holy Spirit, can we reflect His godly image.

JOMO or FOMO?

Here is a practical suggestion from parents in our local area about a "JOMO" weekend, which is enjoyed twice a month in their family. JOMO stands for "Joy of Missing Out." It is the opposite of the

media-driven FOMO or "Fear of Missing Out," defined as apprehension that one may be missing out on an opportunity for social interaction or a satisfying experience. This media-free weekend by all the family members means that all electronic devices are put away and ignored. Talk about freedom. Their preteen and teens have all learned to enjoy this. At first there were some "you have got to be kidding" comments, but now the family looks forward to these "family-first" weekends. You can implement this in your family. Take charge of those time-stealing electronics by pulling the plug and reconnecting with one another by having your own JOMO weekends.

Youth Are Called, but They Need to Answer

Many of God's youth are responding to their calling from God to have a relationship with Him in their lives now. From the United Youth Camps camper 2014 survey—95 percent of the campers responded "yes" to the question: "I believe God is calling me into His Church."

God is fulfilling His promise of working

with "all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). The minds of the youth are open to God's way of life in action. We see this at camp all the time. It is a joy to interact with the next generation of servants.

Because of God in the lives of His youth, we have the great blessing of teaching Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth."

While it is biblically correct and a blessing from God that youth are called by God the Father to have a relationship with Him now, not all young people will answer that calling. At the end of the day, each person is accountable to God for "answering" the call to salvation. Adam and Eve made their lives so much harder by rejecting God, and they suffered the consequences for it. It never pays to ignore the calling from our Heavenly Father.

This is quoted from pages 12-13 of the United Church of God study paper "Are Our Children Called?" (www.ugc.org/members/study-papers): "What about children who choose not to respond to God's calling? Are they head-

ed to the Lake of Fire? Can they pursue God at a later time? Those who do not respond to God's calling now have not necessarily forfeited their only opportunity to receive eternal life. Only God knows the heart or mind of each individual and when each person has had sufficient exposure to and understanding of His way of life. Since God does not treat people unfairly (Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, 1 Peter 1:17), those He deems to have not received an appropriate opportunity for salvation now will assuredly receive one later. Jesus Christ is the One who will perfectly decide such matters (John 5:22)."

As found in Matthew 6:10, we can ask God that His "will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Ask God in believing faith for His will to be done each day in your family, and ask God to direct you each day with inspiration, strength and love according to His will. Ask God to supply your daily needs as a mother or father—be specific—ask in detail. God will not let His parents down if we ask in faith and follow Him. God will give us His heart of love to parent our children. **UN**



What's New In MEDIA?

BEYOND TODAY

Television Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
<i>The Mystery of the Mind</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What you Believe?</i>	May 1-7
<i>The Hidden Agenda</i>	Gary Petty	<i>Is the Bible True?</i>	May 8-14
<i>What Is the Time of the End?</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Are We Living in the Time of the End?</i>	May 15-28
<i>What Is a Saint?</i>	Gary Petty	<i>The Church Jesus Built</i>	May 22-28
<i>Who Is the Antichrist?</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Who Is the Antichrist?</i>	Mar. 29-June 4

SEARCH AND YE SHALL FIND, AT UCG.ORG!

With the relaunch of the new mobile-friendly UCG.org a year ago, a number of menu items have been consolidated and rearranged to ensure that the Church's website is accessible via mobile devices. Half of our traffic now comes from mobile users, and at some times of the year it is as high as 90 percent!

So in order to be user-friendly, our menus have been greatly simplified. And here is the best advice we can give you when looking for content on UCG.org that you cannot immediately find: search! Use our website's powerful search function. It is powered by Google and is an excellent tool for you to use when looking for specific content or articles by subject.

For example, if you can't immediately find the Church's booklet on our Fundamental Beliefs, simply do a quick search for "fundamental beliefs," and you'll have the result in 0.31 seconds. That's much faster than searching through the Bible Study Tools booklet tab!

Google has now indexed 186,000 pages of content at our UCG.org domain. So the quickest way to find what you need is to search.

Peter Eddington

Media and Communications Services

LIVE WEBCAST

To find a live webcast for Pentecost or a Sabbath service please go to the link below to get a list of the congregations who webcast.

<http://www.ucg.org/webcast/all>

UNITED NEWS



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Are you a graduating senior? Do you know a senior who is?

Send in a bio and photograph to be featured in *United News*

We are going to feature the class of 2016 in the July-August *United News*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by **June 8**. Please keep it to 250 words maximum! Also include your phone number or e-mail address to use to confirm spellings, etc. (they will not be printed). Please send with a recent photo (conforming with biblical standards of modesty) of the graduate by **June 8**. Digital photos should be at least 800 pixels in their smallest dimension to print sharply. Send by e-mail to linda_merrick@ucg.org, or send by mail to United News, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. We may edit for clarity and/or length to meet the 250-word maximum length. Thanks and congratulations!

Here's what to include:

Graduate's name

Parents' names (if high school grad)

Congregation

School, work, internship, co-op or other accomplishments

Interests, interesting facts about yourself, Church activities you're involved in, hobbies, unusual skills, etc.

Plans after graduation

Additional comments (favorite scripture, favorite quote, motto, advice, poetry, wisdom, etc.)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 14-16: Annual Meeting of the General Conference of Elders, Cincinnati, Ohio

May 17-19: Council Meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio

May 20-22: Spokane Women's Enrichment Weekend, Washington

June 12: Pentecost

June 20-24: ABC Continuing Education, Cincinnati, Ohio

June 23-28: Youth Camp in Santander, Colombia, South America

June 24-30: Camp Pinecrest, Camp Cotubic, Camp Woodman, Camp Hye Sierra

June 26-27: *America: The Time is Now!*, Chicago, Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin