



United Church of God
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News At a Glance

316 Baptized Around the World

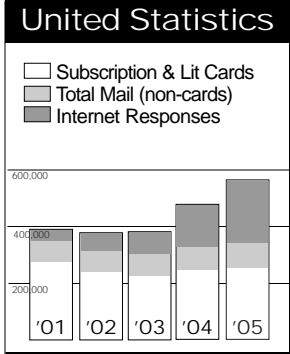
In 2005, at least 316 new members were baptized around the world. This compares to 368 reported last year. Here are the baptisms reported at press time:

Argentina	1
Armenia	1
Australia	13
Bolivia	2
Canada	20
Chile	14
Colombia	1
El Salvador	2
Estonia	2
Germany	1
Guatemala	6
Italy	1
Ivory Coast	6
Jamaica	2
Malawi	4
Mexico	14
Netherlands	2
Nigeria	3
Peru	4
Philippines	23
Rwanda	5
South Africa	8
Spain	1
Sri Lanka	2
United States	171
Zambia	2
Zimbabwe	3

Johnnie Lambert, an elder in New York who helps serve the Church in Estonia, told about the two members baptized in Estonia this year:

"Imbi Kuusksalu has attended services now in Tartu for four years. She is an English teacher in the public schools in the Tartu area. She was called to attend with us when we needed a translator in order to be able to conduct weekly Sabbath services. Imbi has served almost without absence from that time until the present, and also during the Holy Days. Imbi was baptized

See "News at a Glance," page 2



United's 4 Millionth Booklet Printed

■ Along with booklets, income and the number of donors and coworkers are reaching new levels.

by Scott Ashley

In December we passed another major milestone in the work of the United Church of God—we printed our 4 millionth booklet!

It took us over four years to print our first million. This year alone we've printed 740,000—our largest number yet,

surpassing our previous high of 690,000 last year.

The largest single number of booklets printed was our new *Marriage and Family* booklet, with 140,000 copies printed. Yet demands for our other booklets remain strong. We reprint most of our booklets once a year as supplies run low. However, demand was so great for four booklets—*Why Does God Allow Suffering? Are We Living in the Time of the End? The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Creation or Evolution*—that we ran out far earlier than anticipated, and we ended up printing them twice this year.

We printed 60,000 to 70,000 of each of those four titles this year.

In round numbers, we currently distribute an average of about 25,000 of each of our 32 booklets every year.

We appreciate the generosity of our members that makes it possible for us to reach so many people with these truths.

Other Milestones

In his chairman's letter before the December Council of Elders meeting, Bob Dick highlighted a couple of other key statistics. "We are currently on track to pass a milestone by the end of the fis-

cal year, reaching the \$20-million mark for income," wrote Mr. Dick.

"Speaking for myself, the most inspiring fruit so far is the ever-growing base of donors and coworkers who now number just under 10,000 and who provide nearly 10 percent of the gross income of UCGA. I can't help but be inspired in a forward-looking sense by the scriptural adage in Matthew 6:21, 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' As some of these men and women continue growing spiritually, they will find their way into the Church of God." UN

1,550-1,700 Enjoy Winter Family Weekend



Miniature golf at the Family Fun Fair; King Finlay hams it up with Belinda Epps (photos by Scott Lord)

"This is awesome!" "There was something for everyone of all ages." "This keeps getting better and better every year!" These were just some of the comments heard over and over at Winter Family Weekend 2005. Attendance at this year's event in Louisville, Kentucky, was somewhere between 1,550 and 1,700, with Sabbath service attendance of 1,430.

It all began Friday night, Dec. 23, with a Bible study by Akron and Youngstown, Ohio, pastor Dave Myers titled



"Snakes! Spiders! Scorpions!" This was followed by a dessert reception that resembled the story of the fishes and loaves—the dessert tables seemed to be producing more goodies every few minutes. Sabbath morning everyone could choose to hear seminars from 16 different speakers. The afternoon Sabbath service included four pieces of beautiful special music and the sermon by Council mem-

See "FWF," page 15

Second Challenger II Program Planned for Arkansas

■ Another young adult leadership program is being planned, this time on a wilderness river in Arkansas.

by Doug Horchak

Conviction. Courage. Commitment. These are the qualities of leadership and character we will be emphasizing at the Challenger II Canoeing Program for Young Adults, which will be held June 6 to 12 on the Buffalo River in northern Arkansas.

Challenger II is designed for young adults who are looking to challenge themselves both physically and spiritually. Older teens and young adults age 18 to 30 who want to stimulate their spiritual growth and understand faith and



Another Challenger II: Young adults will canoe on Arkansas' Buffalo River

commitment to the greatest cause on earth—and challenge their leadership development in doing the work of the Church—are invited to take part in this wilderness/adventure program.

Key questions we will address are: What will you do with your life? How do your experiences and accomplish-

ments today relate to a bigger purpose? How can you "connect the dots" of your life to that greater purpose of God?

Previous canoeing or paddling experience is not required. Those who have participated in canoeing, white-water or kayaking will be able to test themselves.

We will focus on many facets of paddling skills, rescue skills and protocols, all within the "team concept." Each day we will be setting and striking camp as we paddle the Buffalo. Depending on ability, participants will be exposed to lead canoe skills, river reading and canoe-party management responsibilities.

All participants will be expected to take responsibility for various aspects of the program, from equipment safety and maintenance to food preparation. Team-

See "Challenger II," page 2

Ambassador Bible Center Begins Seventh Year

Ambassador Bible Center is about to begin its seventh year! We will welcome what appears to be our largest class! We have accepted 59 so far, and last-minute applications continue to come in. We have accepted eight international students this year, and 51 from 15 different states. Applicants range in age from 17 to 67.

This month we welcome Dave Register and David Johnson to the ABC staff and the home office. We have restructured the administration of ABC with a team that includes Clyde Kilough (president), Jim Franks (operation manager of Ministerial Services), Dave Register (director of education programs), Gary Antion (admissions and student affairs officer), Ralph Levy (registrar and academic officer) and David Johnson (alumni affairs and Continuing Education). We have had several constructive meetings to prepare for the class that we will welcome on Jan. 8, with our orientation. Classes begin Jan. 9.

We have also decided to change the name of the ABC Mini-Samplers to ABC Continuing Education. This new title better describes what we are offering in the local churches—continuing education for our membership. We plan to continue this part of our ABC program with three or four Continuing Education sessions in various locations around the United States and Canada in the summer and fall of 2006.

Dave Register

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News At a Glance

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by David Baker in New York during a visit to the United States last February. "Aleksie Matvejev first encountered



Aleksie Matvejev and Imbi Kuuskalu were baptized in Estonia in 2005

the Church online. He is a Russian native living in Estonia whose English is excellent. Aleksie had already acquired a substantial understanding of our doctrines before he contacted us.

"He has worked as a translator in the past, so we employed Aleksie to translate our 12 Bible lessons into Russian. Ten are now completed and six are in publication. Aleksie expects to complete the other two early in the year. Aleksie asked to be baptized before the Days of Unleavened Bread last April."

Kansas City Hosts Memorial Day Weekend Event

The Kansas City, Missouri, congregation is once again hosting a Memorial Day weekend event. Singles ages 20 to 50 and married couples of all ages are welcome to attend. The theme will be "Building Spiritual Friendships," focusing on developing spiritual friendships with all of our Church brethren, regardless of age, sex or marital status. All guests attending will again be asked to fill out an online questionnaire prior to the event, and the results will be shared during the weekend.

UCG President Clyde Kilough will be the featured guest speaker. Separate seminars for the single men, single



Hyatt Regency Hotel lobby, site of the welcoming reception of the Kansas City Memorial Day Weekend

women and married couples will again be a part of our triple-breakout session. Sunday's seminar will be an interactive discussion session.

Other activities include an evening at

See "News at a Glance," page 16

World News and Prophecy Seminars Bring in New People in Arizona

by Darris McNeely

Successful *World News and Prophecy* seminars were held in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona, on Dec. 3 and 4. New attendees in both locations were the highest of any previous seminar conducted by the staff.

One *WNP* subscriber, attending for the first time, commented, "Absolutely the best, most-informative seminar I have ever attended. How great of you to sponsor this!"

In Phoenix on Sabbath, Dec. 3, Cecil Maranhville, Darris McNeely, Melvin Rhodes and Robin Webber presented four lectures on a variety of biblical topics. Mr. Rhodes gave an overview of prophecy based on

Daniel 7. Robin Webber talked about the mark of the Beast, Darris McNeely presented "A Place Called Megiddo" and Cecil Maranhville discussed "The Coming Impact of Islam." Mr. Rhodes and Mr. McNeely gave split sermons in the morning to the combined Phoenix and Northern Arizona churches.

In Tucson on Sunday, Dec. 4, the four lectures were repeated.

Direct Mail and Radio Draw New Attendees

What was encouraging was the number of new attendees at both locations. In Phoenix, 27 subscribers attended the event, out of 995 *Good News/World News and Prophecy* sub-

scribers who were invited by a direct mailing.

In Tucson, 21 new attendees came from a total of 548 invitations to subscribers.

In addition to the direct mail, there were one-minute spot ads advertising the seminar run on two local radio stations. In both Phoenix and Tucson some of the new people came back to services the following Sabbath. Several also filled out cards indicating they would like further contact with a minister.

Taking *WNP* on the Road

Seven *WNP* seminars have now been held since 2002. The editorial staff decided to take *World News and*

Prophecy on the road to local churches in these special weekend seminars. The goal is to give a congregation a focus on prophecy and world events in a special Sabbath format. Congregations have the option to invite *Good News* subscribers to the seminars.

These seminars allow the audience to meet the writers and allow the writers to understand the makeup and needs of the audience. Since the majority of the *WNP* circulation is a non-UCG audience, the turnout of new people to the Arizona seminars indicates an increasing interest from the larger audience.

On March 18 a seminar will be held in Akron, Ohio, and on March 19 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. UN

"Challenger II," continued from page 1

building and mentoring under the guidance of ministers and members experienced in our youth camp paddling programs will be a highlight of Challenger II. Young adults who think they may like to serve on staff at one of the United Youth Camps summer programs at some point will find participating in Challenger II particularly helpful.

Buffalo National River

The Buffalo River is one of the few remaining unpolluted, free-flowing rivers in the lower 48 states offering both swift-running and placid stretches. The Buffalo National River Park encompasses 135 miles of the 150-mile-long river. It begins as a trickle in the Boston Mountains 15 miles above the park.

The Buffalo cuts its way through massive limestone bluffs traveling eastward through the Ozarks and into the White River. This national river has three designated wilderness areas within its boundaries.

The U.S. House of Representatives declared in 1972, "Because it is a pure, free-flowing stream which has not been significantly altered by industry or man, it is considered to be one of the country's last significant natural rivers. It is not one single quality, but the combination of its size, its completeness, its wild qualities, and its associated natural, scenic and historic resources that makes the Buffalo worthy of national recognition."

Paddling the Buffalo in June should offer temperatures in the 70s and 80s—with a chance of rain or thunderstorms. Participants will be pack/tent camping on river's edge or sandbars in a wilderness setting—with "leave no trace" environmental impact expected. Nighttime temperatures should be in the 60s.

Spiritual/Leadership Focus

The wilderness-challenge environment is a proven, effective way for building and mentoring skills for leadership and spiritual growth. The Youth Education Team said Challenger II is "for the purpose of helping older teens and young adults mature in their rela-

tionship with God by a wilderness or specialized camp that will challenge them both physically and spiritually. Goals would include familiarizing this group with the doctrines of the Church and true godly values to be used in guiding their faith and commitment to a life of service and leadership in doing the work of the Church."

Participants should be in agreement with the intended goal of Challenger II, and should desire the kind of spiritual growth possible from working with a relatively small group (approximately 12 to 16) of like-minded young adults. A specialized series of classes and discussions is being developed for the program, emphasizing the qualities of courage, character and commitment in spiritual maturity and leadership.

Requisites for participating in the Challenger II program are:

- Minimum of 18 years of age, and a high school graduate.
- Good physical health.
- Desire to be challenged both physically and spiritually.
- Previous UYC experience is helpful, especially in a camp with a canoe

or paddling program, but is not required as long as physical ability to participate is demonstrated.

• The applicant's pastor's recommendation.

• \$225 program fee.

Applications for Challenger II will be available Jan. 15 at www.ucg.org/challenger/challenger2river.htm, and the deadline for applying will be April 20. The program is expected to fill early.

The camp will be directed by Doug Horchak, pastor of the Dallas and Sherman, Texas, congregations and former supervisor of the canoeing/white-water program at the Teton Challenger Camp. Mike Blackwell, pastor of the Springfield and Joplin, Missouri, congregations and director of the canoeing program at Camp Pinecrest, will be assisting.

Also assisting will be Britton Taylor, pastor of the Fort Worth and Coleman, Texas, churches, and Allen Hirst from Spokane, Washington—both of whom have been on the canoeing staff at the Teton Challenger Camp. Further questions can be addressed by writing to doug_horchak@ucg.org. UN

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

President: Clyde Kilough

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News From **Around the World**

Canadian National Council Meets in Abbotsford

The Canadian National Council convened for its latest round of meetings on Tuesday evening, Nov. 29, in Abbotsford, British Columbia. The Council heard reports of each Feast of Tabernacles site across Canada. All agreed that the messages seemed to be especially inspiring this year.

Following the Feast updates, Edwin van Pelt gave a short synopsis of the financial side of the work along with some interesting statistics. One very encouraging fact is that the Canadian office had already added more subscribers to the list (with a month left in the year) than they did during the entire 12 months of last year.

Some of the office staff had attended a law seminar for nonprofit organizations in early November. Anthony Wasilkoff had a handout for the Council that summarized many of the issues discussed at that seminar.

Media Plans Include Magazine Ad and Radio

The Media Team's report presented some interesting plans for the coming year. An across-country ad in a magazine is planned. For the first time, United is anticipating the possibility of testing a radio program in Canada. Some details will be worked out before determining which station will be used, but several are being discussed prior to choosing what will be best at this time. Please pray for God to open the right doors for this project and lead those responsible to those doors.

The second portion of the Church's mission is to feed the flock. The Ministerial Services Team has been busily

working on upcoming plans to further this mission. In the report to Council, Robert Berendt said the team has been working on a five-year plan. Currently, outlines for Leadership Development and Ministerial Development programs are being worked on.

On Wednesday, Bill Stephaniuk talked to the Council about human resource policies. Mr. Stephaniuk has been working free of charge to help the Church in Canada audit its current policies. He left a sample policy and relevant procedures for the Council to see. His presentation gave Council members much food for thought as to how to combine the values of the Church with the needs of legal documentation.

Thursday morning started out with the Strategic/Finance Committee report. Larry DeLong, on behalf of the committee, proposed dates and places for Council meetings for next year. Following that, the Task Force for Conflict Resolution presented their research and suggestions. This project was then given to the Canadian Ministerial Services Team to create the policies and procedures needed.

Preparing for the Canadian National Conference

Robert Berendt reported on the work of the Governance/Ethics/Pastoral Committee. They proposed and Council approved some changes to the Rules of Order for the Canadian National Conference. The National Conference will determine next spring if these changes are acceptable.



Canadian National Council meets in Abbotsford, British Columbia (photo by Ed van Pelt)

Each year the National Council must prepare a Strategic Plan, Operations Plan and balanced budget to present to the National Conference. Earlier in the year, the Strategic Plan had been finalized. The Operations Plan and budget were thoroughly reviewed and finalized. If approved in March, these plans and the budget will guide the Canadian work during the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

Another duty the National Council is charged with is preparing an agenda for the annual National Conference meeting. This time, it will be a teleconference and is scheduled for Sunday, March 5, 2006, at 11 a.m., Eastern Time.

This round of Council meetings ended on a happy/sad note. It was the last face-to-face meeting that Glen White will attend. When Glen and Connie White moved to Montana earlier this year, he agreed to finish off his term on the National Council. That term will end in March.

The National Council gave them a small token of appreciation for serving in Canada on the Council and in the ministry for almost six years. Mr. White took the time to give a short farewell address. They will be missed!

Linda Wasilkoff, secretary

Minister Visits the Dominican Republic

For the second year, the United Church of God sent a minister to visit a group of members and prospective members in the Dominican Republic, a Spanish-speaking nation in the Caribbean. Ralph Levy, a minister who teaches at Ambassador Bible Center and who is fluent in Spanish, was in the country from Dec. 1 to 7, 2005.

Dr. Levy arrived in Santo Domingo on Thursday, Dec. 1, and was met by member Zoraya Diaz and her husband, Orlando Gabriel. They kindly drove him to his hotel in the capital, where he was to stay for the following six nights.

On Friday, Dec. 2, Dr. Levy held an interactive Bible study in Orlando and Zoraya's home. Eight people were present, including Juan Núñez, a member from Mao, Valverde (a four-hour bus ride north of Santo Domingo), who had come to the capital for the weekend.

The questions were different from those of last year, and seemed generally less urgent, as matters of the Christian way of life. Subjects covered included cities of refuge in the Old Testament, and

the meaning of "the law," as used in various New Testament passages.

The group of members and prospective members were asked about their Feast of Tabernacles, which had been observed via electronic connection, and it seems things went well. The ladies and Zoraya's two boys had stayed in a rented house on the beach west of Santo Domingo, and watched the services from Mexico via a laptop computer and an Internet connection.

Because of a storm warning, they left the beach house two days before the end of the Feast, and returned to Santo Domingo, where they viewed the remaining services in Zoraya and Orlando's home. It turned out the storm never materialized! They all expressed satisfaction with the Feast and the messages, and said they had learned a lot.

On the Sabbath, Dec. 3, there was another Bible study, this time at the home of Altagracia Melenciano. The theme of the study was the three resurrections, and differing characteristics of each, which was the subject they had

expressed interest in last year. We had a few more Bible questions after the formal study, and adjourned at about 5, after which a delicious dinner was served.

On the remaining days there were more opportunities for fellowship, including a visit to historical parts of the city of Santo Domingo. On Tuesday night, Dec. 6, Dr. Levy was again invited to the home of Altagracia for dinner with her and her two daughters, as well as two of the other ladies.

Our small group in Santo Domingo comprises a nucleus of four ladies who study the Bible together twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sabbaths. Additionally, there is a larger group of some eight to ten total (including the four), who come to hear the recorded sermons on the Sabbath in the home of Zoraya and Orlando.

It was good to see the interest of this little group, and to have the chance to encourage them in the faith. Plans call for this to be an annual visit to this beautiful Caribbean nation.

Ralph Levy

International News At a Glance

New Language Versions of Booklets Produced

The Portuguese language version of the *Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God* booklet has been printed, and the Spanish language version of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* has also been completed.

A number of translations have also been completed in Eastern European languages, and are posted on the Web at www.ucg.org/litlibrary/easteuropean. The languages are Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian and Russian. We hope to provide more details on this in a future issue.

Vancouver Letter Draws 11.3 Percent Response

At the end of November, the Vancouver, British Columbia, congregation hosted an open house. Along with the letter of invitation to the open house, readers received offers for a booklet and a CD message. At press time 11.3 percent of the approximately 170 readers responded requesting either or both of the offered items. "We did not have any new people attend on the specific day, but did have one new lady, a *GN* reader, attend a week later," said David Palmer, pastor.

Feast 2006 Set for York, England

For the year 2006, the United Church of God—British Isles will hold the Feast of Tabernacles in the historic city of York, North Yorkshire. We are extending an invitation to our overseas visitors to join us for the autumn festival.

The city's history goes back to Roman times, when it served as the northern capital of Britain. Four main gates protected the walled city in medieval times and they still exist, as does most of the wall enclosing the city.

Below is a list of a few key points of interest the city offers the visitor, both young and old, with most of the attractions in York within walking distance of the meeting hall:

- The Castle Museum, illustrating Yorkshire life during the past 400 years.
- The Richard III Museum in Monk Bar (medieval fortress gate).

- The Jorvik experience dealing with Viking life in York.

- York Minster, the largest gothic cathedral north of the Alps, with option to climb its 275 steps.

- The National Railway Museum, the world's largest and a mecca for railway enthusiasts.

- The Scarborough Flyer, an 84-mile round trip by steam train.

- Clifford's Tower, a fantastic panoramic view of York from the 13th-century tower (144 steps).

- The Merchant Adventurers' Hall, Europe's finest medieval guildhall.

For more information on what else York offers, please visit the Web site of the York Tourist Office at www.york-tourism.co.uk.

The Church is also planning officially guided coach tours to the Yorkshire Dales. This is James Herriot country, described in the beloved books about his life as a country veterinarian. This tour visits some of the places mentioned in his books.

We will also arrange officially guided walking tours of York's important points. The city center of York has numerous restaurants, cafes, tearooms, pubs and many shops, all within walking distance from the Tempest Anderson Hall, where services will be held. There is a vast variety of accommodation available, much of it within walking distance of the services.

From the city of York, Edinburgh is less than 2½ hours away by train, and the nearest international airport for York is Manchester. If you are interested in attending the Feast in York, e-mail feast@ucg.org.uk or write to UCG-BI, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD19 6FZ, United Kingdom, to request more information.

Peter Hawkins

British Isles Reports November Circulation

Highlights from the UCG—British Isles circulation report for November, which covers all literature distributed by the Church from Britain, include:

- 916 letters and other responses.
- 265 *Good News* requests.
- 85 *Bible Study Course* requests.
- 471 requests for 1,169 further items of literature.

As of Nov. 30 there were:

- 6,460 subscribers to *The Good News*; of which 4,928 are distributed within the United Kingdom and the Isle of Man.

- 518 students of the *Bible Study Course*.

- 311 subscribers to *United News*.
- 568 subscribers to *World News and Prophecy*.

- 232 subscribers to *Vertical Thought*.

Pastor Makes Fall Festival French-African Trip

by Joel Meeker

Our brethren in French-speaking Africa are generally doing well under often trying circumstances. In September and October I was able to visit most of them.

Meeting the Members in Mauritius

My first stop on this trip was Mauritius, a 12-hour flight from Paris. This beautiful island lies some 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. My last visit had been more than 18 months earlier, so I was eager to see them again.

We now have five members of United in Mauritius. During the course of my stay, I was able to have individual visits with our brethren, anoint several with health problems and counsel one for baptism.

Surendra Proag gave me an update on the operations of the small Church office located in his house. He and other members work together to handle the mailing list and the actual mailing process of Church literature to over 500 Mauritians (in both French and English). This is quite a labor of love, and we appreciate their faithfulness.

We spent a Sabbath together, during which I gave a sermon in French and after which we watched some videos

away). To be able to access the phone's coverage zone, he must climb to the top of a nearby mountain, which he does at regularly scheduled times.

The problem was recharging his phone, since there is no electricity in his neighborhood. For a while he had to pay for a seat in a bush taxi and charge the phone on the cigarette lighter while the taxi made its rounds. However on my last visit we arranged to purchase a photoelectric cell to put on his roof. This allows him to use sunlight to charge a car battery in his house, from which he can then charge his cell phone, and even use a small fluorescent light—the first in his neighborhood.

From the Sibobungos' house we drove to the new Church hall, financed by UCG's Good Works Program. The building was almost finished at the time of our visit. Révérien Gatanazi, a recently baptized member who is a builder by trade, oversaw the construction, which was not without difficulty.

Other churches in the area were not happy about a new church building going up, since they viewed it as competition. The local brick maker, as is not uncommon, required us to pay in advance for the bricks we would need. But then after being paid and after making the bricks, he sold them to someone else, probably at the urging of someone who didn't want to see our building completed (we have since taken the brick maker to court to get our money back). Révérien had to scramble to find other bricks that could be used, which slowed but did not stop the building.

Located in a calm area high on a mountainside, the Church building has a lovely view of surrounding mountains

and progress in the group, as well as plans for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Friday evening we had a Bible study in Kinshasa, attended by about 20 adults. I answered questions about baptism, dating and marriage. Then I started an interactive discussion about how God's plan of salvation is revealed in His Holy Days. We shared a meal of rice and beef and fellowshiped after the study.

Since we were meeting outdoors on the Sabbath, we had services early to avoid the heat of the day, which can be stifling in Congo. I spoke on the meaning of the Day of Atonement, which was only five days away.

After services Justin Tshikuma-Manenga and José Osemi-Kahindu came to see me. They had already married some months earlier according to the local customs, but they were waiting to live together as husband and wife until a minister of the Church could ask God's blessing on their union. We read through the scriptures on marriage, and then knelt and I asked God's blessing on their union. As you can imagine, they were very happy.

I was also happy to give them a wedding present. The local official was requiring a "gift" in order to sign the papers and officially register couples as married. Sadly, this kind of corruption is omnipresent in this part of the world.



Above, four of the members on Mauritius: Surendra Proag, Clency Montezuma, Ramesh Jugbundee and France Chamary; right, Révérien Gatanazi, elder Jean-Marie Mundeli and deacon Jean-Baptiste Sibobungo in front of the Church hall in Giti, Rwanda; far right, group in Kinshasa, Congo



showing news of the work in other parts of the world.

Trumpets in Rwanda

Sunday, I started the long trip to Rwanda, which had me changing planes on Reunion Island and in Johannesburg, South Africa, before arriving rather late that night. The next day I met with Mr. Mundeli, our elder in Rwanda. We finalized plans for the Feast of Trumpets the next day, as well as the Feast of Tabernacles.

On the Feast of Trumpets we started out early for the 2½ hours' drive up to the village of Giti, where one of our congregations meets. We stopped first at the house of our deacon, Jean-Baptiste Sibobungo. He was happy and thankful to show us the photoelectric cell on his roof. To allow him to keep in contact with Mr. Mundeli, we have provided Mr. Sibobungo with a cell phone (there is no landline service in his village, and Mr. Mundeli lives over three hours' drive

and valleys. Our brethren in Giti are thrilled and thankful for this new gift from God, which, in addition to providing them with a fine meeting hall and room for growth, will also facilitate United's ability to obtain official recognition from the state.

After this encouraging visit, we drove back down into a valley to Lake Muhazi where we had services. After the morning service, I held a Q&A Bible study and we shared a meal. Then we watched a video of my last trip through Africa, which had included a stop in Rwanda.

Meeting With an Interested Group in the Congo

The next day I started my trip to Kinshasa in the Congo, via Nairobi. Jacob Pembelongo met me at the airport and drove me into town where we met with Victor Amsini-Mapoli and Justin Tshikuma-Manenga, two other leaders of the small group seeking affiliation with UCG. We discussed the situation



The official set the price at \$50 (a small fortune for them), one plastic chair and one bottle of whisky! I gave them enough to cover the cost of these things, so that they could be legally recognized as married.

During my stay in Kinshasa, we also made arrangements for Jacob to travel to Togo for the Feast of Tabernacles. Since the Holy Days are still relatively new observances for them, it was helpful to have one of their leaders keep the whole Feast in an established site.

Cameroon for Atonement

When the Cameroon Airlines flight arrived, four hours late, it turned out to be a chartered Nigerian SLOK Airline plane. SLOK had been shut down by the Nigerian government in 2004 for non-compliance with aeronautical regulations. . . There was supposed to be a stop in Libreville, Gabon, but the pilot announced that he was skipping Libreville and going straight on to Douala. The joys of African air travel!

Monday in Douala we had a Bible study in the new Church building, which is partially finished. This building is also a Good Works project, and greatly appreciated by the brethren in Cameroon. They asked me to express their appreciation and heartfelt thanks to all who participated in fund-raising for this project.

On the way back to my hotel in a local taxi, we had quite an experience. In a very secluded and poorly lit stretch of street, we came upon a police checkpoint. Police corruption has reached terrible proportions in much of Africa, and particularly in this country. Not content to extort bribes, some corrupt policemen are resorting to outright robbery at gunpoint.

The taxi driver and Mr. Mabout, our deacon, immediately recognized the danger of the situation. The only reason to have a checkpoint in this isolated place was so that no one else would be able to see what happened there.

Before I could say anything, the taxi driver slowed as if to stop at the armed officers waving flashlights, then at the last minute, floored the accelerator. The shouting policemen jumped out of the way, and almost immediately one of our tires blew out, probably punctured by the police. The driver kept the pedal to the floor, and we raced away on three tires until we got to a more public, better-lit area where we could replace the tire.

Thankfully these policemen did not have a vehicle, so there was no pursuit. This might be an appropriate time to again thank those of you who pray for the safety of Church elders who travel and serve in the developing world.

The next day we had a Spokesman Club meeting at the new Church hall, and I also had several counseling sessions with a number of members. That night we were stopped at a police checkpoint, this time in a well-lit, more public area. They went through my passport in minute detail trying to find something wrong so they could levy a "fine," but finally gave up and let us pass.

On Atonement we had an afternoon service and viewed some Church videos and fellowshiped until the sun set, then shared a meal prepared at a restaurant/catering service named The Promised Land, which seemed appropriate as we approached the Feast of Tabernacles.

Ivory Coast

The next day I flew to Abidjan in Ivory Coast. It took a day to be able to contact our brethren there. Mail service is not good and the phone system also has numerous problems, but I finally was able to reach the village of La Mé, where our six baptized members and about 20 other people meet.

In our discussions about the Feast of Tabernacles before the drive to La Mé, our contact man, Paul Tia, asked if it would be possible to have a little assistance for the Feast of Tabernacles. Some assistance was planned already, but I was curious about what they would request, so I asked him. He said, if possible, they would like to have a large sack of rice, some frozen fish, and a little oil to cook it all. That was all they needed to celebrate the Feasts for eight days.

So on the way to La Mé we bought a 50-kilogram (110-pound) bag of rice, 20-kilogram (44-pound) block of frozen sardines and oil. I was happy to be able to add a CD player for sermons, coffee, tea, a few liters of wine, candy for the children, powdered milk and chocolate

and about 5 kilograms (11 pounds) of sugar among many other things.

When we arrived at the bamboo church hall and gathered the brethren, Paul explained what they were receiving and showed the foodstuffs to them. As each item was announced, they broke into spontaneous applause and thanked God. When the sugar, which is a rarely-purchased treat, was lifted out of the box, one woman broke into a joyful dance and sang a song of thankfulness to God. They also asked me to send their thanks to all those who have helped make this Festival assistance possible.

We had a Q&A Bible study and discussed the organization and keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles. We also sang some hymns together (they were happy to show me they are learning songs from UCG's hymnal). We enjoyed fellowshiping until it was time for me to go the airport.

On TV in Togo

My last African stop was in Togo. The Festival site this year was the village of Tsévié, about an hour from Lomé. Brethren from Togo and Benin gathered here in two rented houses, which served for lodging and services. Some members brought their Festival tithe in the form of produce from their subsistence farms.

The evening before the first day, I had the chance to present a one-hour, live telecast on a local Christian television station. I spoke about the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth at the return of Christ.

As I was leaving, several of the preachers waiting their turn outside the studio asked for a copy of the Church's booklet on that topic, which I had offered at the end of the program. One



The group at the Feast in Tsévié, Togo

commented that most Christian churches just don't put enough emphasis on the Kingdom of God, to which we readily agreed! After the telecast, we gathered with our brethren at the main house and had a brief meeting and prayer to get the Feast off to an appropriate start.

On the first Holy Day, we had a morning service, shared a meal prepared by the ladies and then had a Q&A Bible study and time for lots of fellowship. Conditions were not luxurious at the site—no running water, cooking over charcoal stoves, sleeping on mats on the floor—but there was an abundance of good food, harmony and joy, and God's presence among them, as they celebrated the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Taking my leave that night, I flew to Paris then Nice to keep the rest of the Feast at the French site. UN

Good News Circulation Around the World

Country/Territory	Eng.	Fren.	Ger.	Ital.	Span.	Total	Country/Territory	Eng.	Fren.	Ger.	Ital.	Span.	Total	Country/Territory	Eng.	Fren.	Ger.	Ital.	Span.	Total	
Albania	6					6	Guatemala	22					2,002	Portugal	9					13	22
Algeria	17	8				25	Guinea	2	1				3	Qatar	7						7
Angola	3	5				8	Guyana	130				1	131	Reunion		1				1	
Anguilla	2					2	Haiti	8	13				21	Romania	73		3	2		78	
Antigua & Barbuda	19					19	Honduras	8				160	168	Russia	37					37	
Argentina	10			5	650	665	Hong Kong	129					129	Rwanda	7	7				14	
Armenia			2			2	Hungary	25		2	4		31	San Marino					2	2	
Aruba	11					11	Iceland	5					5	Saudi Arabia	53					53	
Australia	20,700		5	12	23	20,740	India	2,162					2,162	Senegal	2					2	
Austria	25	3	50	6		84	Indonesia	214	2		2	1	219	Serbia-Montenegro	26	1	2	2		31	
Bahamas	1,031	1				1,032	Iran	108	1				109	Seychelles	9					9	
Bahrain	12					12	Iraq	11					11	Sierra Leone	5					5	
Bangladesh	13					13	Ireland	117					117	Singapore	580					580	
Barbados	3,384					3,384	Isle of Man	55					55	Slovakia	9				1	10	
Belarus	6					6	Israel	60				5	65	Slovenia	9					9	
Belgium	9	16	4			29	Italy	118	1	5	2,793	8	2,925	Solomon Islands	11					11	
Belize	29				2	31	Ivory Coast	12	10			1	23	South Africa	11,741	4	3		1	11,749	
Benin	7	5				12	Jamaica	784					784	South Korea	8					8	
Bermuda	28					28	Japan	21				4	25	Spain	46	1	2		35	84	
Bolivia	9	1		2	200	212	Jordan	11					11	Sri Lanka	81					81	
Bosnia & Herzegovina	5					5	Kazakhstan	2					2	St. Kitts & Nevis	525					525	
Brazil	80		2	4	397	483	Kenya	837					837	St. Lucia	497					497	
British Virgin Islands	10					10	Kuwait	26					26	St. Martin	4					4	
Brunei	2					2	Kyrgyzstan	4					4	St. Vincent & Grenadines	117					117	
Burkina Faso		5				5	Laos	2					2	Sudan	1					1	
Burundi	2	2				4	Latvia	11		1			12	Suriname	1					1	
Bulgaria	18				1	19	Lebanon	8					8	Sweden	125		6	2	1	134	
Cameroon	80	65				145	Liberia	2					2	Switzerland	33	3	92	7		135	
Canada	6,306	62	1	5	13	6,387	Libya	12			1		13	Syria	7					7	
Cape Verde	1					1	Lithuania	8		10			18	Tahiti	1					1	
Cayman Islands	18					18	Luxembourg	4		6			10	Taiwan	13					13	
Central African Rep.	1					1	Macao	3					3	Tanzania	118					118	
Chile	32		2		3,107	3,141	Macedonia	13					13	Thailand	50					50	
China	38		1			39	Madagascar	4	2	1			7	Togo	12	35				47	
Colombia	3				323	326	Malawi	701				1	702	Tonga	1					1	
Cook Islands	3					3	Malaysia	311	1		1	1	314	Trinidad & Tobago	1,507				3	1,510	
Costa Rica	26				140	166	Mali	1					1	Tunisia	1					1	
Croatia	21			1		22	Malta	23				1	24	Turkey	36			1		37	
Cuba	1				45	46	Martinique	2	2				4	Turks & Caicos	4					4	
Cyprus	11					11	Mauritius	501	70		1		572	Uganda	48					48	
Czech Republic	7		2			9	Mexico	26		1		5,001	5,028	Ukraine	20					20	
Dem. Rep. of Congo		2				2	Moldova	14				5	19	United Arab Emirates	61					61	
Denmark	47		1			48	Mongolia	1					1	United Kingdom	5,770	3	3		5	5,781	
Dominica	390					390	Morocco	7					7	United States	366,309	25	34	33	1,593	367,994	
Dominican Republic	19			22		41	Myanmar	52					52	Uruguay					39	39	
Ecuador	10			16		26	Nepal	17					17	U.S. Virgin Islands	250					250	
Egypt	66					66	Nauru	1					1	Uzbekistan	2					2	
El Salvador	4	2			1,785	1,791	Netherlands	600		5		3	608	Vanuatu	9	1				10	
Eritrea	134					134	Netherlands Antilles	25				3	28	Venezuela	42				91	133	
Estonia	10					10	New Caledonia	1					1	Vietnam	27					27	
Ethiopia	457	1				458	New Zealand	1,577					1,577	Yemen	5					5	
Finland	28					28	Nicaragua	4				150	154	Zambia	727					727	
Fiji	250					250	Nigeria	7,237	1		1	7,239	2	Zimbabwe	1,813					1,813	
France	73	28	2	1	2	106	Niue Island	2		8		2	20	TOTALS	453,294	396	3,546	2,894	18,400	478,530	
French Guiana	3	1				4	Norway	50				2	60								
Gabon	4	2				6	Oman	20					20								
Gambia	58					58	Pakistan	269					269								
Georgia			3			3	Panama					120	120								
Germany	145		3,282	5	3	3,435	Papua New Guinea	510					510								
Ghana	1,842					1,842	Paraguay					20	20								
Gibraltar	2					2	Peru	35				2,400	2,435								
Greece	45		1		1	47	Philippines	9,890			1		9,891								
Grenada	18					18	Poland	39	2	4		1	46								

Includes all language editions and versions as of December 2005.
 Eng.=English; Fren.=French; Ger.=German; Ital.=Italian;
 Spn.=Spanish

UCG-British Isles National Council Meets in Gloucester Dec. 11

The National Council of the United Church of God—British Isles met in Gloucester on Sunday, Dec. 11.

Circulation report: Jan Schroeder reported on the figures to the end of November and noted a slight decrease in the circulation of the *GN*. There was a significant increase in the circulation during 2005, primarily due to UCGIA Web site advertising, but subscriptions are now leveling out. There will be a further reduction due to the ongoing renewal program and less Internet advertising.

Financial report: The Council accepted the independent auditor's statement of accounts for the year ending June 30.

Child Protection: In a review of Child Protection issues, the possible need for recruitment of additional volunteers was highlighted as was the need for policies for the protection of vulnerable adults.

Feast of Tabernacles 2005: Regarding the Feast in Winchester this year, Peter Hawkins highlighted a significant increase in the cost of the hall over 2004, and also the fact that requests for Festi-

val assistance were in excess of the Church's Festival Reserve Fund, meaning that some Festival support was provided from normal operating funds.

Summer Camp: There are uncertainties regarding the availability of older children, teenagers and young adults for a U.K. camp in the summer of 2006. The Council concluded that the Church would not provide a summer camp in 2006, although it is expected that one will be held in the summer of 2007.

In response to a suggestion from one

of the young adults, the National Council agreed to support at least one young adults' leadership weekend during 2006, to be organized by the young adults themselves with input and assistance from the Church and the ministry.

Media and Internet: Peter Hawkins and Brian Greaves highlighted an initial suggestion for the redesign of the UCG-BI Web sites and proposed to use the services of a Church-member professional for implementing the work.

Strategic Planning: The committee's

report to the National Council regarding the Church's mailing operations highlighted a potential health and safety issue concerning mailing activities undertaken from the Northwood office. A considerable weight of stocks is carried up and down stairs at risk to office staff.

The Council authorized the chief executive officer to take all necessary steps to eliminate this potential hazard, which will most likely be achieved by relocating the office to more suitable premises in the same general area. UN

Council of Elders Completes December Meetings

by Don Henson

Following a day-and-a-half of Council committee meetings, Robert Dick opened the final Council of Elders session for 2005 Dec. 9 at 1 p.m. Due to a snowstorm the previous night, the Council met at the Holiday Inn Eastgate instead of at the home office.

As he opened the meeting, Mr. Dick reminded the Council of its responsibility to provide proper leadership and organizational direction for the Church. He quoted writer Peter Drucker, who stated that the difference between management and leadership is that "management is doing things right, leadership is doing the right things." Mr. Dick pointed out that the Council's challenge is to determine what the right things are and to make them the highest priority.

Mr. Dick introduced Clyde Kilough, Church president, to begin his quarterly comprehensive operations report to the Council. The Friday afternoon meeting focused on a financial update generated by treasurer Tom Kirkpatrick and on plans for ministerial and member education produced by Jim Franks, newly appointed manager of Ministerial Services. The comprehensive operations report concluded Sunday with reports from Peter Eddington (Media and Communications Services) and church attorney Larry Darden.

Comprehensive Operations Report

Dr. Kirkpatrick provided the Council with a detailed budget report, showing income and spending to date for the current fiscal year.

Commenting on the Church's current financial status, Mr. Kilough summarized that our fiscal philosophy remains the same—to maintain stability based on modest growth, conservative budgeting and conservative spending while sustaining cash reserves. He pointed out that it is necessary to plan to function within the growth rate of 2 to 4 percent, which we have experienced for the last few years.

More specifically, Mr. Kilough stated that the income so far in December has been strong, helping to offset shortfalls earlier in the year. Three unanticipated areas of expense have had an impact on the budget—several more ministerial transfers than had been initially planned, increases in international shipping expenses and an unexpected increase in the mileage reimbursement rate for the U.S. ministry.

Dr. Kirkpatrick reported that the four fall Holy Day offerings were almost exactly what had been budgeted. He commented that the Church's annual financial growth rate has consistently been approximately 3 percent. The budget for the current fiscal year was based on an anticipated growth of 2.25 percent.

Dr. Kirkpatrick also reported that members were very responsive to requests for donations to a Good Works Program fund established to assist members affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Those needs have been met and, as contributors were asked to agree to, the surplus will be used for other Good

Works Program projects.

After the financial update, Mr. Kilough turned his attention to the efforts of Ministerial Services. He commented that this week the operation manager responsibility officially transferred to Mr. Franks from Richard Pinelli, who held the position for some 10 years.

The balance of the Friday afternoon meeting focused on the coordination and development of the Church's education programs—including youth camps, young adult challenger camps, Ambassador Bible Center and ministerial leadership development.

Building on comments on the efforts of ABC, Mr. Kilough began to emphasize the importance of manpower development and education. He commented that there is urgent need for development of manpower and leadership in the Church in domestic and international areas. He stated that it is necessary to concentrate more on our capacity to provide for those God is calling. Mr. Kilough pointed out that Jesus Christ said we are to pray for laborers—that He was moved with compassion because the people were like sheep without a shepherd. But laborers have to be mentored, educated and trained. Education and manpower development dovetail and are part of our short- and long-term planning.

He stressed to the Council that the administration will be focusing on the importance of assessing the success of the Church's education and manpower development programs and will ask, "What can we do better?" It is vital, he emphasized, to use our current manpower resources effectively as well as to accelerate the development of those who have the heart and desire to serve.

Mr. Kilough quoted several paragraphs from Herbert Armstrong's autobiography emphasizing the need for a trained and professional ministry. Against that backdrop, Mr. Kilough asked Mr. Franks to provide the background for new education and training efforts. In turn, Mr. Franks introduced David Register and Mr. Pinelli who provided the Council with overviews of the developing plans.

In his comments, Mr. Franks gave a historical review of the ongoing emphasis United has placed on the importance of educating its members and ministry. Early in 1996 the Council established a committee to focus on education. From the outset, it was clear this would be of major importance since, as a church, virtually everything we do comes under the heading of "education." The committee divided the task into four basic education modules: general, focused, youth and ministerial.

They recommended that there be one person appointed for implementing the Church's education efforts, but the Council chose not to create such a position at that time. Instead, the responsibility for these four modules was given to the president, who then asked the Ministerial Services operation manager to organize and oversee these programs.

Mr. Pinelli assigned each of the four members of the Ministerial Services team to be responsible for one module.

As each of these programs was developed, the amount of information became almost overwhelming. After a few years, it was clear that there was duplication of effort and a lack of coordination between the various efforts. There was clearly a need for someone to coordinate and manage the Church's educational efforts.

Mr. Register, an experienced church pastor and regional pastor most recently serving in Southern California, was asked to move to Cincinnati to take on the responsibility. Mr. Franks introduced Mr. Register and asked him to update the Council on preliminary plans.

Mr. Register expressed that after just three weeks on his new job, he has learned that there is much to be done. The five education modules (including ABC) have generated a great deal of material. So much, in fact, that it can seem overwhelming to members and pastors alike.

Mr. Register focused on the need to evaluate the success of our efforts. He gave Council members two pages excerpted from a United Way manual, which emphasized the importance of measuring and evaluating the outcomes or results of an organization's activities and outputs. In other words, what we need to determine is the result of the Church's current efforts to teach and educate the members and elders. He cited New Testament passages that indicate the importance of making and caring for disciples—with emphasis on intense and thorough instruction. He stated that the best measurements of our success in educating our members are their solid foundation of doctrinal understanding and their ability to explain to others what they have been taught.

Mr. Register plans a conference with the coordinators of each of the education modules to discuss general concepts and goals as well as the development of a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of their efforts.

Mr. Franks then commented on the

new responsibility Mr. Pinelli will be undertaking—ministerial development and leadership training. To emphasize the need the Church faces in the immediate future, Mr. Franks pointed out that at its high point, United employed 125 full-time ministers in the United States. Currently there are 89 employed ministers in the U.S. field. He stated that to maintain our current ministerial commitment, the Church will need to hire an average of three or four new ministers every year—and more than that if there is additional Church growth. Mr. Franks recalled Mr. Armstrong's comments on the necessity of a well-trained, professional ministry.

Mr. Pinelli reviewed some of the efforts that have already begun. To this point, 71 men (most with their wives) have participated in the annual Leadership Workshop (a five-day seminar held over the Labor Day weekend). Nine of those who attended the workshops have been hired into the full-time ministry. Six have been ordained, and others probably will be in the near future. In addition, several ABC graduates have been identified as strong leaders in their local congregations. The survey also identified several other local members whom pastors felt could be ordained as elders and others who might be hired into the ministry in the next three to five years.

Mr. Pinelli read excerpts from a paper he recently distributed to the full-time ministry titled, "Training Future Pastoral Leadership." The paper emphasizes the need for leadership training to begin with children and teens and to continue for young adult members of the Church. He pointed out the importance of establishing a mentoring relationship with our teens and young adults to help prepare them for leadership in the Church.

Mr. Pinelli commented that a number of our congregations have an average attendance of 25 or fewer and that many of the pastors indicate there is a lack of potential leadership within those congregations. He emphasized the impor-

ance of providing pastors with more training in mentoring and in identifying potential future leaders. Plans are in the works for a two-day conference to train pastors in mentoring skills and to help them become more skilled at discerning potential leaders in their congregations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Kilough thanked the men for their reports and emphasized the value and importance of the focus on these educational programs.

Media and Legal Counsel

The Sunday meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. Mr. Dick introduced Clyde Kilough for the continuation of the media portion of the comprehensive operations report.

Referring to Peter Eddington's report to the Council, Mr. Kilough identified three important media trends. First, he cited the impact of the Church's Web sites. In recent months the two primary Web sites (www.ucg.org and www.gm magazine.org) averaged a combined total of more than 430,000 visits. Second, Mr. Kilough noted the encouraging trend of an increase in both donors and coworkers, which have increased by 16 and 12 percent respectively in the past 12 months. And third, Mr. Kilough pointed out that increased shipping expenses have led to cutbacks in some areas of the budget.

Mr. Eddington stated that economies have been accomplished to cover the unanticipated shipping expenses. He also explained that reductions in advertising efforts have resulted in the *Good News* print run leveling off at about 390,000 with the January-February 2006 edition (compared to a run of 453,000 at the end of 2005) and Web site visits dropping to about 370,000 per month (from 430,000).

The Council toured the media center and then previewed excerpts of three of the initial *Beyond Today* television programs. After viewing portions of the programs, Council comments were gener-

Edit of Media Philosophy Statement

Victor Kubik, chairman of the Media and Communications Committee, presented the Council with proposed edits to the "Media Philosophy of the United Church of God" that emphasize our belief that God has drawn us into a relationship with, and made us followers of, Jesus Christ. By resolution the Council agreed unanimously to rescind the previous version and replace it with the following Media Philosophy statement:

"Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God is a divine commission given to the Church. The Bible, from the prophets to Jesus Christ and the apostles, establishes clear principles of how to present the gospel most effectively. These principles still apply.

"The gospel message, which includes God's offer of the gift of salvation, shows His love for humanity. We must reflect that same love in the way we deliver His gospel to the world. We seek to provide the world with the message of hope for salvation, to help those who believe and repent, and to warn all of the consequences of sin.

"We must speak and write in a way that challenges our audience's beliefs in a manner that is simple to understand, engaging, convincing and compelling. We must tailor the message to fit different cultural, national, religious and linguistic groups.

"In a spiritually blind world, the deep truths of God are most effectively presented in a manner that leads from 'milk' to 'meat.' For that reason, we must present the truth of God in a way that does not overwhelm people in either content or quantity.

"The message is more important than those who deliver it. Consequently, we believe in focusing attention on the message of truth rather than on those who sponsor it. Furthermore, we believe in delivering the gospel primarily in the public arena rather than inviting people into the Church to receive it.

"We believe we are required to freely give the truth to the world. Therefore, we offer our materials without charge or obligation.

"We understand this is not the only day of salvation and that God alone can draw someone to Christ, which means we are not responsible for converting the world. Nevertheless, we are still compelled by our mission to preach the gospel with urgency to all the world and care for those whom God calls.

"We are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God and followers of Jesus Christ. As ambassadors, our message must transcend the ideologies, politics and religions of this world."

ally favorable and positive, remarking on the technical quality and professional appearance of the graphics and set. Mr. Kilough emphasized that the program production is a learning process, and there will be some changes and improvements as we become more experienced.

In January 2006 pastors will be sent a CD of the first programs so that congregations will be able to view them—and hopefully will be encouraged to make an effort to have the programs aired on additional public-access stations in their areas. A new Web site (www.beyondtoday.tv) will be available soon to provide direct access to the programming.

Mr. Kilough then invited feedback from the Council on the sermon video shown at the 2005 Feast of Tabernacles—the third in a series of Feast videos highlighting the Church and its members in international areas. Richard Thompson said that in Wildwood, New Jersey, the video was well received and that he appreciated the professional quality of the production. Tony Wasilkoff voiced his appreciation of the unifying effect of showing the same message at all Feast sites. Mr. Pinelli summarized that reports from the U.S. Feast sites were all favorable. Les McCullough commented that some members in South Africa did not feel the video adequately portrayed living conditions in their region.

In discussing the Feast video for 2006, it was suggested that more emphasis be placed on individual members' experiences and circumstances. It was also suggested that there be a sermonette-length video that would provide an update on the work of the Church and a sermon-length video focusing on a Feast theme. Several ideas for a theme were discussed. Mr. Eddington said he would provide an outline for the Council's consideration at the meetings in February 2006.

Mr. Kilough reviewed his plans to restructure the Operation Plan for the upcoming fiscal year. He emphasized the importance of assessing the results of our efforts more effectively, establishing accountability, prioritizing programs and determining goals and desired outcomes of our efforts. He intends to reduce the Operation Plan document, making it more concise and easier for the General Conference of Elders to review.

Larry Darden, the Church's legal counsel, reviewed the status of his recent activities. He summarized ongoing legal issues, including resolution of estates, contracts, camp forms, service marks and resolutions of discrimination cases involving Church members.

Shortly after the lunch break the Council went into closed session, to discuss details of the president's comprehensive report.

The Council discussed and by resolution unanimously approved job descriptions for the newly created positions of ministerial development coordinator and director of education programs (Mr. Kubik was not present due to illness).

The final order of business for the day was discussion of the need for a standard policy regarding the printing of articles in United Church of God publications

written by non-UCG members. As an example of the situation, Mr. Kilough noted requests from seven nonmembers who have expressed their interest in contributing articles for publication in Vertical Thought.

Mr. Eddington pointed out that *The Good News* and *World News and Prophecy* both state that unsolicited articles are not reviewed or returned to those who submit them. Mr. Dick suggested that we shouldn't prohibit all such articles by policy, but that the decision to publish them would rest with the president. Mr. Kilough concluded that he will discuss the matter with the publication managing editors during the January meetings and will prepare a policy statement for the Council to review.

The Council had another busy and productive day Monday, Dec. 12. In the morning, topics ranged from an edit of the Media Philosophy statement, to a report from Clyde Kilough on his recent trip to New Zealand and Australia and the opening round of what will likely be an ongoing discussion on the roles, responsibilities and relationships of the Council of Elders, the president and National Councils. During the afternoon, the Council deliberated its support of amendments proposed to be on the ballot at the 2006 General Conference of Elders and discussed the procedure for determining, for the sake of balloting on Council members, whether an elder's primary job is international. The final 2½ hours of the afternoon were spent in executive session.

President's Trip to New Zealand and Australia

Clyde Kilough gave the Council a report on his recent trip, during which he and his wife, Dee, spent five days visiting and reviewing the work of the Church in New Zealand and eight days in Australia. Mr. Kilough commented that they were warmly received and that it was a valuable opportunity to be able to meet face-to-face with the elders and wives in both areas.

Jeff and Lisa Caudle serve in New Zealand, where Mr. Caudle is the pastor and office manager. Mr. Caudle also spends a total of about two months each year traveling through Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, visiting and supporting the 35 to 40 members in those areas. There are 531 *Good News* subscribers in Singapore. A lack of manpower is the greatest challenge for the work that is being done in the region. Mr. Kilough is planning a meeting at the home office in January to discuss plans for the future with Joel Meeker, Mr. Caudle and Dave Baker (who also works in the Philippines and with other Asian nations).

Throughout the meetings and discussions, Church leaders in both New Zealand and Australia emphasized their desire to support UCGIA, the home office and Council of Elders. Suggestions were considered that would help the U.S. home office continue to work more effectively and cooperatively with ongoing efforts in both regions.

Proposed Amendments

Mr. Dick introduced Mr. Meeker, chairman of the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee. As part of the amendment

process, the Council is required each year to indicate whether it supports proposed amendments to the organizational documents. As the Council considered the two proposed amendments filed this year, there are three options:

- If the proposed amendment receives support from four or more Council members, it will be placed on the ballot for consideration at the 2006 GCE annual meeting.

- If a proposed amendment does not receive support from four or more Council members, it will be returned to the Amendment Committee, which will send the proposed amendment to the GCE. If it receives support from 25 percent or more of the GCE, the amendment will be placed on the ballot to be voted on at the annual meeting.

- If a proposed amendment does not receive support from four or more Council members, the Council by a simple majority may choose to write a Statement of Concern to express the Council's thoughts on the proposed amendment.

The first amendment considered was to the Rules of Association, Rule 4-140 "Position of Home Office and Management Team." The proposed amendment

seeks to add a paragraph expressing the authority of the president to develop, manage and maintain the relationship between UCGIA and National Councils. In discussing the proposed amendment, the Council agreed that, while it is not opposed to the intent of the proposed amendment, it would not substantially clarify or add to the president's job description nor would it facilitate his efforts in performing his duties—and could even complicate the situation. The proposed amendment did not gain support of the minimum of four Council members, so it will be returned to the Amendment Committee for determination of support by the GCE. By simple majority the Council requested that the ERR committee produce a Statement of Concern.

The second amendment considered was to the following paragraphs in the Bylaws: 7.9.2, 7.9.2.1, 12.2.2.10 and 12.2.2.12. The intent of the proposed amendment is to lower the threshold of support required from the GCE in order to place a proposed amendment that the Council of Elders did not support on the ballot.

In discussion, Council members voiced two areas of disagreement with

the proposed amendment. Philosophically, the majority of the ERR committee felt, and other Council members agreed, that for the sake of stability, the threshold for placing a proposed amendment on the ballot should not be too low. Council members also expressed that since the ballot in question can only be cast in support of placing a proposed amendment on the GCE annual meeting ballot, not casting a ballot does not necessarily indicate indifference—it may be a considered opinion that the elder does not wish for the measure to be on the GCE ballot. Therefore the number of "votes cast" may be more than the number of ballots that are returned. There was also a technical objection. Bylaw 7.9.2.1 deals with items placed on an agenda, not with proposed amendments.

Aaron Dean stated that, while he is in favor of a high threshold for changes to our documents, he was supportive of the amendment. He pointed out that the only proposed amendment not supported by the Council that eventually was placed on the annual GCE ballot garnered a "Yes" vote that indicated a high level of

See "Council," page 15

Role of the President in International Areas

Mr. Dick introduced a topic that will require a great deal of discussion. The dialogue started with the initial question: "What is the role of the president in international areas of the Church?" During meetings in August 2005 Mr. Kilough asked the Council to clarify his role. Leon Walker gained approval of the Council to discuss the matter with elders in international areas. He sent a letter and survey to all of the international elders shortly before the 2005 Feast of Tabernacles. Mr. Dick provided the Council with a four-page summary of discussions on this topic between Council members during agenda planning.

Mr. Walker began by stating that the responses to the survey went in a different direction than was anticipated and opened up even more fundamental issues for discussion. Mr. Walker wrote in an e-mail communication to Mr. Dick that confusion, "... in the international areas regarding the role of the president internationally is to some extent ... due to a lack of clarity with respect to how the Council and president should function."

There is need for a better understanding of the roles of the Council of Elders, the Church president and the National Councils and how they function together. Mr. Walker acknowledged that this issue has been discussed several times but never fully resolved. He stated that starting with defining the role of the president would be "putting the cart before the horse" and that first it would be better to define foundational concepts. Then, he said, defining the president's role will be much easier.

Mr. Walker asked the Council to consider some questions about those foundational concepts. What is the United Church of God? Are we merely an association of independent entities around the world with no overall global central administration? Are we just tied together by certain doctrines or policies, but not by a common administration?

Each National Council has its own bylaws due to legal requirements in its respective country. But does the United Church of God transcend national boundaries and legal documents? Are National Councils the supreme administrative authority for each area? Or do they recognize an authority over them? If so, is that authority the Council of Elders? Mr. Walker pointed out that we have a common vocabulary, but often don't have common definitions for our words. For example, what is the meaning of "governance," "administration," "association," "micro-management," etc.?

Mr. Walker emphasized that the purpose of the discussion today is to begin talking about the subject and then determine what steps should be taken. He pointed out that the Church is in a position now to resolve issues that we could not 10 years ago. He acknowledged that there is much work to be done on these questions and that it might take as long as a year to come to final resolutions.

A brainstorming session continued for more than an hour, during which many more specific questions were raised. The tone of the session was positive and contemplative, as the Council reviewed previous discussions, conclusions, Church documents and unresolved issues. Members agreed that as the unified, spiritual Body of Christ, the Church exists across national boundaries and is not limited by national laws and regulations that define churches in their countries.

Mr. Kilough commented that to understand how we should function together, we have to first of all view ourselves in light of the ideal of God's Kingdom and then work back from there to the way we operate today. He noted that Paul, who worked with widely diverse congregations, constantly emphasized unity. He stressed that, likewise, we should be more than just a Church that functions across national boundaries—in the spiritual sense, we should be a Church without national boundaries.

Tony Wasilkoff stated that the fear some international areas have, based on history and experience, is that the "strong arm of headquarters" will try to take control. He said it's important to coordinate with international areas, not to control them. He commented that the Rules of Association are designed to further good relationships and effectively facilitate the work of the Church. What's sometimes missing is how to do what we intend.

Several emphasized that the president's responsibilities are outlined in a statement issued by the Council in September 1999 titled "Roles and Responsibilities of the President." This document defines the president as the one who can best help to administer the Council's decisions. Mr. Walker acknowledged that the document is a good starting point, and that while the Council passed it by resolution, there was no input from international areas.

Mr. Dick pointed out that elders in the United States also have questions about the roles of both the Council and the president. There are fundamental questions about what leadership is, what authority is and who has it. Mr. Walker agreed, pointing out that some erroneously believe that the president is superior to the Council.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a resolution was passed to assign the next steps in the process of dealing with these issues to the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee of the Council.



From the Word

The LORD Goes Before—Will We Follow?

■ The pillar of cloud and fire God used to lead the ancient Israelites can have great meaning for us today.

by Andy McClain

Have you ever found yourself captivated by the clouds? Perhaps you have even drifted into deep reflection as you watched their movements in the sky. What if your survival depended on following a cloud?

For approximately two million people tasting freedom for the first time, this was the case. Four hundred and thirty years after His covenant promise to Abraham, God was bringing the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt to receive a land of their own as an inheritance. As they began their journey, God revealed Himself to them in a remarkable way.

We are reminded of this dramatic event in Exodus 13 where it is recorded: "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people" (verses 21-22).

The pillar of cloud and fire provided a tangible sign of God's presence in Israel's lives as they journeyed through the wilderness. Although God does not manifest His presence in the same fashion today, God still "goes before" us. By looking at how God worked with Israel, we can see how God works in our lives to protect, guide and give us life.

What exactly does "went before" mean? The Hebrew word translated as "went" in verse 21 literally means, "to go, come or walk, carrying the idea of movement. It is used metaphorically to speak of the pathways of one's life" according to *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*.

The word "before" comes from a plural noun that is always used in a singular sense meaning a face. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* says, "It is a figuratively idiomatic phrase substituted for the entire person." When these two words are put together, they give the sense of God walking beside us throughout our lives. As Exodus 33:14 says when God speaks, "My Presence will go with you" (emphasis added throughout).

Promise of Protection

When the children of Israel camped at the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud moved behind them as a buffer between them and the approaching Egyptians. It gave light to the Israelites, but caused darkness to fall upon the Egyptians (Exodus 14:13-

25). In this way, God provided protection to the Israelites.

In going before us, God promises us physical protection from danger and spiritual protection from distress. We may not always know *how* God protects us, but we can be certain that He does so. God told Abram in Genesis 15:1, "I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." In ancient times, a shield was a weapon of warfare to provide protection against the enemy's attack.

Henry's Concise Commentary states that "the consideration that God himself is, and will be a shield to his people, to secure them from all evils, a shield ready to them, and a shield round about them, should silence all perplexing, tormenting fears." If we put our trust in God, He will act as a buffer, protecting us from the "fiery darts of the wicked one" (Ephesians 6:16).

The Psalms and Proverbs contain many promises of this protection. Here are just a few:

"He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him" (Proverbs 30:5).

"With favor You will surround him as with a shield" (Psalm 5:12).



God is a shield of protection to His people (photo by www.clipart.com)

"But You, O LORD, are a shield for me" (Psalm 3:3).

If you reflect back in your life about various circumstances, you can probably recall instances of divine protection when God was a shield to you.

Promise of Guidance

After 40 years of wandering in the desert, Israel stood ready to enter the Promised Land. As Moses gave his last message to Israel before Joshua was to lead them across the Jordan and into the land of Canaan, Moses said, "The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you . . . Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your



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God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:3, 6).

For 40 years Israel had followed the pillar of cloud and fire, moving when it moved, and stopping when it stopped. As they faced a new set of circumstances, God was assuring them that He would continue to guide them just as He had done before.

John Gill's *Exposition of the Entire Bible* comments that God was "to guide and direct, to assist and strengthen, to protect and defend, to give success to his arms." Further, God would "not fail to give him [Joshua] counsel and direction, to afford him strength, and to fill him with courage."

God also promises to guide us. Guide means to lead the way. It gives the sense of driving cattle or flocks. A guide is someone who leads the way. God is both. In John 10:14, Jesus Christ is called our Good Shepherd. We need God's guidance to direct our steps. The 23rd Psalm paints a beautiful picture of our being guided by God as our shepherd.

Perhaps one of the most encouraging scriptures written is that God "will be our guide even to death" (Psalm 48:14). If we are humble, God will guide us (Psalm 25:9).

Promise of Life

In Deuteronomy Moses reiterated God's laws to Israel. He reminded them of their choice: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may

obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life" (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

Israel knew firsthand the results of disobeying God. Jesus Christ, the Word, had given Israel God's law of life at Mt. Sinai, and Israel had seen the pillar of cloud and fire in front of them daily to remind them of God's presence. However, during their sojourn in the wilderness, Israel repeatedly disobeyed God.

"But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness" (1 Corinthians 10:5). Israel did not have the Holy Spirit. They were rebellious, hard-hearted and did not follow God's way, and eventually they rejected Him (Deuteronomy 5:29).

God also promised life to us if we obey Him. When Jesus Christ came in the flesh, He offered the same promise of life. In John 10:10, He said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." He offered Himself as the Lamb of God so that we could have life through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is called the "forerunner" (*prodromos* in Greek) for spiritual Israel today (Hebrews 6:20). In his *Daily Study Bible Series* on John 14, William Barclay describes a forerunner:

"One of the great thoughts of the New Testament is that Jesus goes on in front for us to follow . . . One of the great words that is used to describe Jesus is the word *prodromos* (Heb. 6:20) . . . There are two uses of this word which light up the picture within it. In the Roman army the *prodromoi* were the reconnaissance troops.

They went ahead of the main body of the army to blaze the trail and to ensure that it was safe for the rest of the troops to follow.

"The harbour of Alexandria was very difficult to approach. When the great corn ships came into it a little pilot boat was sent out to guide them along the channel into safe waters. That pilot boat was called the *prodromos*. It went first to make it safe for others to follow. That is what Jesus did."

When Christ presented Himself before the throne of the Father, He presented Himself as the perfect High Priest. He was also the wave-sheaf offering, making Him the first of the firstfruits that will follow (Hebrews 8-10). As a result, we have the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit, come before the throne of God the Father and live a life with God's laws written on our hearts and minds (unlike ancient Israel).

God went before the Israelites to give protection, provide guidance and offer them life through His Word. God goes before us in the same way, offering the same promises. Even with God's presence clearly seen in the pillar of cloud and fire, Israel had difficulty following Him.

Today, we do not have the pillar of cloud or fire. Yet God still goes before us. Jesus Christ tells us, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

Jesus Christ has gone before us to prepare a place for us in His Kingdom. Will we follow? UN

Andy McClain attends the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation.

How Real Is God to You?

by Gregory Dullum

How real is God to you? Today? Right this minute?

Our lives are busy with work and school and recreational activities. What part does God play in our lives?

Take a few minutes to pause and answer this question: One thing God has done for me is . . . and fill in the blank. Can you name at least one specific thing God has done for you?

There are two things God did for me as a teenager in the Church of God that I'd like to share with you because they impressed my mind with God's power and ability to intervene—not in someone else's life—but in my life. These are things the great God who made the universe did for me.

Flight Gets Off the Ground

Deuteronomy 14:22-26 talks about saving second tithe and spending it on "whatever your heart desires" at the Feast of Tabernacles.

When I was a senior in high school, I had worked for about a year at my first job in an ice cream parlor and had a sizable amount of second tithe—for a 17-year-old. What did my heart desire to spend it on?

When I was 8 and 9 years old, my dad worked for Braniff International Airways, and our family flew from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Washington, D.C., and Dallas, Texas, and Denver, Colorado. I fell in love with flying.



When I was 17 I finally had the money to fly again . . . The flight from Madison, Wisconsin, to Minneapolis was only about 45 minutes. But it was my dream. It was the only thing my heart really desired. But there was one catch . . .

But then we came into the Church. Dad left his job with the airline (in order to keep the Sabbath), and I was grounded. For years I longed to get back into the air.

When I was 17 I finally had the money to fly again. With my second tithe I could buy one-way airline tickets for my brother, a friend and myself to fly home after the Feast in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin. The flight from Madison, Wisconsin, to Minneapolis was only about 45 minutes. But it was my dream. It was the *only thing* my heart really desired.

But there was one catch. Dad no

longer attended church at that time, and Mom did not want to drive the five hours home from Wisconsin Dells by herself. She had planned to take an elderly couple from our church to the Feast and back. But then the couple decided, for health reasons or whatever, *not* to go to the Feast. Mom said if they did not ride with her, then my brother and I could not fly home from the Feast.

My plans were ruined. My hopes were dashed. The one thing I really wanted to do was taken away from me.

So I turned to God and prayed. I begged God to help that couple change their mind and go with Mom. I told God how I really wanted to fly.

While I was still on my knees, I heard the phone ring. Through the bedroom door I could hear Mom talking to that older couple—and they had changed their minds. They would go to the Feast with Mom after all!

I could not believe how fast God had answered my prayer. The words were barely out of my mouth when the answer had come.

Accident That Didn't Happen

The second incident happened a little earlier in my life. It was the middle of a Minnesota winter and a thick layer of snow blanketed the countryside.

The church sponsored a '50s sock hop for its teenagers one Saturday night after the Sabbath, and a group of us slicked back our hair, donned sun-

into the path of that oncoming car.

Panicking, David jerked the steering wheel to the left. The car veered off into the shallow snowbank on the left side of the highway. We were out of the path of the oncoming car. But we were not safe! Still moving downhill through the snow, we were headed straight for a road sign.

David yanked the wheel to the right. We slid uncontrollably across both lanes of highway and ended up in a snowbank on the right side of the road. We slid sideways down the hill. As I looked out my window, I could see another highway sign on a collision course with my door. If we didn't stop, it was coming right through my window and it would be all over for me. I didn't have time to pray a full prayer. All I had time for was "Oh, God!"

God heard. I believe it was He who stopped the car a few feet short of the sign. Our engine had died. We were stuck in deep snow. After a few moments of silence, David said, "Well, we're alive." The car and its passengers were miraculously unharmed.

Almost immediately there was a rapping at the window. Another motorist had stopped and offered to help us push the car out of the snow bank onto the highway. He made no comment about our '50s look. He appeared so suddenly and offered help so quickly that later we wondered if he were an angel.

These two incidents in my life showed me that God was very real. Since then I have had many prayers answered—but not always so dramatically.

I know God is real because of what He has done for me! There is a scriptural basis for this: "The goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

Again, I ask, what good thing has God done for you? Something as simple as changing someone's mind—or as dramatic as saving your life?

Unanswered Prayer

There are times when we pray to God and He doesn't seem to answer. Does that mean God is not real? Not at all. It means sometimes, just like our physical parents, God answers with a "No."

Do our physical parents give us everything we ask for? I know my oldest daughter didn't get everything she asked for. When she was 8 years old, she asked for an allowance—of \$10,000!

James gives us a clue as to why God doesn't always give us what we think we need: "Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

God expects us to ask Him for what we need! It is no excuse to say, "Well, He already knows what I need." We need to ask.

Even when we ask, we don't always get what we ask for. Why? James explains, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3). Sometimes we ask for the wrong thing.

We also need to be close to God. James writes, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. There-



We came to the top of a long hill. We started down and noticed a pair of headlights staring up at us from the other lane. Suddenly we hit an icy patch on the highway . . .

fore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:6-8, 10).

Here are two keys to making God more real in your life:

Ask God to Be More Real

The first key to making God more real is to ask God. Pray for His intervention in your life. What you pray for should be a real need, not just to satisfy your desire for pleasures. (However, not all pleasures are bad. God answered my prayer about flying home from the Feast—this was based on a desire to fulfill Deuteronomy 16.)

We need to draw near to God in prayer. How?

When we pray to God, how do we picture Him in our mind? Is He some old, bearded, distant, unreachable being?

Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). God is our Father, even if we don't have one. If we are orphaned or if our father has died, God is still there for us!

I was almost 10 years old when my whole family first came into the Church. Six years later, Dad quit coming. I was left a spiritual orphan! I could expect no more *spiritual* guidance from him.

One scripture gave me hope: "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation" (Psalm 68:5). I went to God and reminded Him of this promise, and He has helped me through many trials in my life.

God is everything good that our physical fathers are—and more! He is our protector and provider and helper. Notice how God is described in this same psalm:

"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him . . . As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God . . . Blessed be the LORD, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah Our God is the God of salvation; and to God the LORD belong escapes from death . . . O God, You are more awe-

some than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people" (verses 1-2, 19-20, 35). Don't you find these verses thrilling?

Study the Bible

The second key to making God more real is to study the Bible and Church literature. Read about God—what He's like, what He can, and will, do for you.

Paul told the Romans, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). We build our faith by reading the examples of God's intervention in the Word of God. If God intervened for people in the Bible, He can intervene for us today.

God does not treat people differently. The apostle Peter said, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34). James tells us God answered Elijah's prayers, and he was human just like us (James 5:17-18). We can be inspired by reading the accounts of God's intervention in the Bible.

God Saves Three Young Men

One dramatic biblical account where God intervened in the lives of three young men is the true story of Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They trusted God and He saved them from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3).

These were not old, learned men who had obeyed God for decades. These were young men, probably in their late teens or early 20s. They humbled themselves before God. They probably prayed quick, silent prayers. God was very real to them!

God can be real to us too.

Conclusion

God can be very real if we remember these two keys:

1. Pray to Him. We don't need some type of preprinted prayer. Just talk to Him. He likes to hear from us. Praying is simply talking to God.

2. Study. When we read God's Word, that is God talking to us.

By building this two-way conversation, God will become real to us. And He will be there to help us, no matter what fiery trial we may face. UN

The author is a member in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

A Forgotten Hero: Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986)

■ At New York City's Family Christian Club July 31, 2004, the speakers were assigned to speak on a forgotten hero. The author chose Herbert W. Armstrong, who was born on that day, and who died 20 years ago this month.

by Johnny Kretz

My hero—forgotten by some, not forgotten by others—needs no introduction. How many of you remember: “Well, greetings, friends around the world. This is Herbert W. Armstrong bringing you the good news of the world tomorrow?”

Mr. Armstrong was born July 31, 1892, in Des Moines, Iowa. He gave lifelong service to God's Church and died in January 1986.

Mr. Armstrong's 20 years of experience in advertising and journalism prepared him for a media readership of millions in nearly every country on earth. *The Plain Truth* circulation was over 8 million, exceeding those of *Time* and *Newsweek*. *The World Tomorrow* was telecast on close to 400 stations worldwide.

But starting out, back in 1910, he sold newspaper want ads for rooming-house apartments. His salary was \$6 a week. Not having gone to college, he worked in the day and studied at night, and over time formulated his seven laws of success.

Would Never Be the Same

From the autumn of 1926 onward, Mr. Armstrong's life would never be the same. One day a Mrs. Runcorn, an avid student of the Bible, and his wife, Loma Armstrong, did a Bible study together for about an hour.

After reading a number of biblical passages, in amazement Mrs. Armstrong exclaimed to Mrs. Runcorn, “Why, do all these scriptures say that I've been keeping the wrong day as the Sabbath all my life?” Mrs. Runcorn replied, “Don't ask me whether you've been wrong—you shouldn't believe what any person tells you, but only what God tells you through the Bible.”

Mrs. Armstrong rushed to bring the



Mr. Armstrong had assumed that most denominations of traditional Christianity had received their beliefs and doctrines from the Bible. He had stated, “I simply can't understand the Bible.” But now his marriage was at stake, and he threw himself into it. He discovered that the teachings and revelations contained in the Holy Scriptures were



not known or taught by any religion he knew at that time.

As months of 12- to 16-hour days of study progressed, the real truth began to emerge. With the enlightenment of truth, already known error—including the theory of evolution—had to be rejected.

Herbert W. Armstrong with Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kolleck; with former first lady Nancy Reagan; with Prince Mikasa, brother of the emperor of Japan (photos courtesy Aaron Dean)

He came to understand that the Creator, God Almighty, exists and rules the universe. He discovered many proofs of the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible. In addition, the cause of all the world's ills, as well as the solution that will come, were brought to light.

The missing dimension in knowledge came alive: What man is, why man was put on the earth, the purpose for which we were made. He also came to understand the way to peace, happiness and abundance. It all made sense!

Here were revealed the answers—which neither science, education, government or religion had—to humanity's troubles. The very gospel brought to the world by Jesus Christ had largely been rejected or ignored for 18½ centuries.

Like a Grain of Mustard Seed

Seventy years ago, in February 1934, *The Plain Truth* magazine started with 250 copies and eight pages. With God's blessing, this tremendous work grew and prospered, in spite of starting with no financial capital! Like the proverbial grain of mustard seed, it had double-digit growth for more than 30 years.

Mr. Armstrong founded a liberal

arts, character-building college with three campuses—in California, Texas and England. These institutions stressed moral, spiritual and ethical values as well as feeding the intellect.

Because you cannot affix monetary value to spiritual truth, Mr. Armstrong didn't sell the biblical literature he produced. He believed in the biblical principle, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23, King James Version; see also Matthew 10:8).

Personal Impact

How did I come in contact with God's Church? What impact did it have on my life?

In 1968, at 1 o'clock in the morning, my father listened to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast over WMCA



“Blow the Dust Off Your Bible”; “Purify the Bride”; “Hold Fast”: Remembering Mr. Armstrong

by Aaron Dean

Twenty years after Herbert W. Armstrong's death, I am still trying to do what he told everyone. “Blow the dust off your Bible and prove it for yourself. Don't believe me, believe the Bible.” He clarified so many truths with Scripture that it became too easy for us all.

His death was the single most momentous moment in my life. I remember no part of it from birth, education and marriage that he didn't play a role in.

For 12 years I watched him deliver messages to heads of state and royalty around the world, but at his death, his desire was still for truth, and the spiritual Body of Christ—the Church.

“Help purify the Bride” was my last order from him after 12 years of direct service to this special patriarch. I never realized how perplexing it would be to even attempt to carry out this order beyond his grave. It was hard to think the truth would take a backseat to the desire to be like the world. I had not as clearly separated the corporation from the spiritual Body as he had.

When he said “half of you don't get it!” it seems he was being generous. God is proud of those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Herbert W. Armstrong influenced all of us who have remained faithful to God's Word to do just that, and his legacy in us who believe is written in heaven.

His books and articles still ring in my ears and my heart. My most prized possession is a large print Bible he could no longer use, even with a magnifying glass, that he gave to me with a “Here, you read it.” Indeed I read a great deal of it out loud to him the last few months of his life.

He realized that the true value is spiritual, not physical, so he really didn't worry about death. I still miss him, but the foundation he gave me was rock solid. May we all continue to build on the truths set before us, and realize the gospel message he proclaimed is closer than ever.

If he were alive, he would be saying, “Hold fast!” I pray we all do. UN

Aaron Dean served Mr. Armstrong as his personal aide, a vice president, board member and in many other capacities during the last 12 years of Mr. Armstrong's life.

radio. He subscribed to *The Plain Truth* magazine in my mother's name. I read it with an open mind, and eventually read *The Good News* as well. Then I took the *Bible Correspondence Course*.

I had a strong desire to acquire this new knowledge and understanding. After exposing some of it to my parents, my dad called me “Martin Luther.”

After Mr. Armstrong's death, toward the end of the 1990s, I became disillusioned with our prior association's teachings. In my congregation, 80 percent of the brethren voted for Sunday observance. With the organized confusion of syncretic doctrines, I wished to return to the trunk of the tree. I found the United Church of God's beliefs made sense, and in January 2001 I became permanently affiliated with United.

One final note: Shortly after my forgotten hero's death in 1986, U.S. President Ronald Reagan sent this note to the Church:

“Mr. Armstrong contributed to sharing the word of the Lord with his community and his people and with the people throughout this nation. You can take pride in his legacy. Our prayers are with you. God bless you.” UN

Johnny Kretz, now lives in Hawaii.

Our Finest Hour

■ Winston Churchill's famous speech during the darkest days of World War II also applies to us today.

by Ewin Barnett

In the summer of 1940, Britain stood alone against Germany in the war, and Germany seemed almost unstoppable. One by one, the great powers of Europe had fallen to the German military. It appeared that Britain would be invaded, as soon as Hitler could finish the demobilization of Britain's small air force.

The United States, in an effort to stay out of the war, had maintained a policy of neutrality. Britain was the only thing stopping Hitler's advance.

In those dark days, on June 18, 1940, the prime minister of Britain, Winston Churchill, gave a speech to the country. In steeling his nation's resolve to never give up, he said:

"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty, and so bear ourselves, that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

Churchill had a keen knowledge of history, and he was proved right. It was Britain's finest hour. This speech also turned out to be one of Churchill's finest hours.

But how does this apply to us, as we seek to put on Christ today and every day?

Above and Beyond the Call of Duty

How would you define the term *finest hour*? I would say it is the moment when your actions speak for your character and values like no other action in your life. It is the moment when you choose to do the right thing. If God would only record one detail of your life for all time,

would this moment be it?

Once had the opportunity to talk with a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, which is the highest military decoration of the United States. It is awarded "for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty, in actual combat against an armed enemy force."

For many of these recipients, the event that was cited was their finest hour, the event that defined their lives. Yet, of the 3,460 medals that have been awarded, 14 of these men received two separate medals for two separate actions.

The event for which they were awarded the medal the first time may not have been their finest hour. As gallant as the occasion that qualified them for their first medal award was, for these men there was another occasion of gallant courage on another day, on another field of battle.

When Will Our Finest Hour Be?

This brings me to my central point. Churchill, with his vast grasp of British and world history, could see that Britain was about to have her finest hour. But not one of us knows when our finest hour will be.

We may have had several finest hours over our years, yet we could find our finest hour is yet to occur in any of the myriad of events of life in the future, events that we cannot even speculate about now.

Maybe our finest hour will come this afternoon on our drive home when we give lifesaving help to the victim of an auto accident, or next month in a private moment when we finally conquer a personal fault that has plagued us for years.

Scripture is full of people being remembered by God at their finest hour.

Who cannot but be touched with the sense of both history and destiny at Mordecai's question to Esther, "Yet who



"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty, and so bear ourselves, that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'" —Winston Churchill

knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)?

Consider Stephen, a man first mentioned in Acts 6:5, but in only a few verses. His finest hour was recorded in Acts 7, when he was stoned for preaching the truth.

Consider how many people in the New Testament rated only a single, brief mention, yet it was of their finest hour, the event that describes their Christian character, that God records, even if only in just a handful of words.

Finest Hours of the Faithful

Hebrews 11, the chapter describing the finest hours of some of the faithful, says:

"By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God

must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:4-6, New American Standard Bible).

All these died in faith, as it says in verse 13.

Resuming in verse 32: "And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight" (NASB).

This is a chapter full of the finest hours that the people of faith went through. They became strong, and did exploits, just as the last phrase of Daniel 11:32 says: "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (King James Version).

Are not exploits the acts of people in their finest hour?

Exploits Don't Have to Be Earthshaking

But exploits don't have to be earthshaking events. Consider what we will remember the Good Samaritan for: showing compassion to someone in dire need, not in some spectacular public way, but in a quiet, almost private, way.

Consider the account in Acts 9:36 of Tabitha who fell sick and died, and as Peter came, all the widows wept over her and showed tunics and other garments she had made for them (verse 39).

Contributing to the Body

We are warned, also by a multitude

of witnesses in Scripture, to be careful with our attitudes and our lives.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:10).

Paul was clear that God knows our strengths and weaknesses. He is building His one body from many members, each with an important function.

If the whole body were an eye, how would it hear? If the whole body is made up of people who only have spectacular public exploits, does it have any room for the widow whose strength is in her continual prayers? Does it have any room for a person who knows how to extend help and charity to those in need?

"But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:24-26, New International Version).

Paul ends this section with the simple admonition in verse 31: "But eagerly desire the greater gifts" (NIV).

All these greater gifts come when circumstances place a choice in front of us: to act or not to act. To speak out or not to speak out. To hold the truth precious or to be careless with it. To teach or not to teach. To help or not to help. To pray or not to pray. To do the right thing or to waver.

Please allow me to adapt Churchill's words to the Church: As events leading up to the return of our Lord unfold ever more quickly, let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves, so that future Christians will say, "This was their finest hour." UN

Ewin Barnett is a member in Columbia, Missouri.

The Good Samaritan and Eternal Life

■ Let's take a deeper look at this famous parable.

by Tim Groves

We are familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan. We know that this Samaritan helped the stranger. But what can we learn from this parable, and what does it have to do with eternal life?

First, let's notice the context, which starts in Luke 10:25. A lawyer approached Christ to test Him, asking what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Christ then asked the lawyer what was written in the law (verse 26).

Notice the lawyer's answer in verse 27, "So he answered and said, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

Christ then told the lawyer that he

answered correctly, and by doing these things he would have eternal life (verse 28). But now comes the rest of the story. Now we can see what the Good Samaritan and eternal life have in common.

In verse 29, the lawyer asked Christ, "And who is my neighbor?" Why did he ask this? He asked that "wanting to justify himself." Why did he want to justify himself? Because he wasn't loving all people as himself!

The entire point Christ was emphasizing in the parable that followed was that everyone is our neighbor, and we are to treat them the way we want to be treated! Then, if we practice this in our lives, we will have eternal life. Let's now look at this parable and see how we measure up.

A man (most likely a Jew) is traveling down the road and gets robbed and beaten half to death. There he lies in terrible need. A priest and a Levite come down

the road and see him. They *deliberately* cross over to the other side of the road so they will not have to confront him (verses 30-32). These two people—being representatives of God—should have gladly helped the man. After all, they could probably tell he was a Jew, just like them. But they avoided him. Why?

How Do We Treat People in Need?

Do we avoid people in need? Do we think, "Someone else can help?" Do we make excuses not to help? Do we think, "I don't have time to stop." "It might be a trap, I could get robbed." When we think this way, we are thinking like the world, not God (though, of course, God wants us to use good judgment).

Notice 1 John 3:17-18, "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us

not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

James 2:14-17 says, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

While traveling back from the Feast this year, we stopped at a restaurant. When we returned to our vehicle, a man and woman stopped us asking for some food to eat. Trying to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove, I offered to go with them inside and buy them something to eat, rather than just give them money they might use for something else. We talked while we waited inside, and when I paid for

their food I proceeded to leave.

When I got to the door another person inside the restaurant stopped me and told me that this couple does this frequently, and they were just getting a free meal. So, if I did get taken, was it shame on me? Would it be better to be taken for a few dollars, and the couple be filled, or to deny someone who was genuinely hungry?

The reality is, sometimes we will get taken advantage of. Is this reason to not help? Christ said to give to those who ask without turning away, and to pray for those who despitely use you (Matthew 5:42, 44). We must not be like the priest and Levite who passed by on the other side. We must stop and help, as the Samaritan did.

Moved With Compassion

Continuing the parable in verse 33,

See "Samaritan," page 13

Treasure Digest

Stand on the Rock!

It was a glorious morning in Maui. Sunrise was breathtaking. Pink clouds were airbrushed like cotton candy against dawn's pale blue sky. Gray-green waves laced with foam crashed onto the beach made up of jet-black rocks.

And standing just out of reach of the surf on spindly legs was a lone white heron, seemingly oblivious to the tide that kept surging in, nearly overtaking it. Suddenly, the bird hopped up onto a rock. It then stood there staring, impassive, imperious to the incoming waves.

Life's waves are real. But so is our Rock.

In Mark 4:35-39 the disciples were journeying with Christ in a boat. A storm arose that threatened them. Christ was asleep, so they woke Him and He rescued them. From this, we can learn three lessons.

1. *Waves are a normal part of life.* Some are calming. Others are deadly, like the Indian Ocean tsunami. God will not keep us from the waves, because He wants to glorify Himself in us through the waves, good or bad.

Some trials come in waves, rolling in one after the other, crashing into us, threatening to swamp us. Whether it be in our health, family, job, church or relationship with God, waves can rock our boat, leaving us exhausted. We can become fearful, not faithful.

2. *Christ was right there.* When the waves arose, the disciples panicked. Yes, Christ was asleep, but He was not far away, as Acts 17:27 reminds us. If God seems far away, then we are to blame; for as Psalm 121:4 says, the God of Israel never slumbers or sleeps.

3. *We need to talk to Him.* If God seems far away, we need to rise and pray, as Jesus instructed His disciples the night before His death. Diligent Bible

study, fervent prayer and occasional fasting allow us to move closer to God. He becomes real to us, even during the waves. And in His time, He moves to bring peace and calm the storm.

So let's remember that lone heron, standing on its rock. And let's internalize these three lessons from Mark 4. God and Jesus Christ can help us enjoy the calm waves and calm life's big waves. Life's waves are real—but so is our Rock. Jesus Christ will lead us, His modern disciples, to the completion of our spiritual journey, if we allow Him to.

John Fox

Salt Lake City, Utah, congregation

When Things Look Desperate

My great-grandson, Chris, and I, mighty explorers that we are, took a trek through the woods next door. He is all of 4 years old, and I am—well, I guess you don't need to know everything.

The property next door was sold recently and the previous week the surveyors were marking the property boundaries. I wanted to see where the line was. Chris saw me over in the woods, and he wanted to come along.

Chris is about two and a half feet taller than a grasshopper and I—well, I'm just a few feet taller, and I could see my house over the blackberry brambles.

We trudged through blackberry vines, vine maple, blackberry vines, alder, twigs and more blackberry vines. It was harder to walk through than I thought it would be, but we kept going.

Poor Chris—all he could see was the around, and he thought we were hopelessly lost.

"We'll never get out of here!" "I'll never get home!" "I'll never see my mommy again!"

I comforted him the best I could and told him, yes, we would make it home, and he would see his mommy.

I started thinking about the times I had faced problems that seemed insurmountable, thinking the problem would never end and that there was no way out.

But I need to remember God sees the big picture, and He is in control. He can see over and around the problems to see the solutions.

When I think of this, a few scriptures come to mind:

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

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

We must have walked about 150 feet down the line through lots of stuff. We both fell and, of course, when I fell Chris laughed.

I could see our property about 12 feet to my left, so we started off that way. Chris couldn't see it until we were about two feet away. Then he said, "Oh you brought me to my property!" He was happy (I was too).

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

Ethel Johnson

Sedro-Woolley, Washington, congregation



Pillars of Wisdom: The Fear of God

King Solomon spent much of his life pursuing happiness in every form. In the end, he concluded that the most important aspect of a man's life was to "fear God, and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

What does it mean to fear God? Does it mean that God wants us to cower in terror when we come before Him in prayer? Does it mean that we are to live in constant anxiety that God is waiting for us to slip up so that He can punish us?

Points to Build On

As human beings, we naturally fear anything that is physically or emotionally threatening. We also tend to fear anything that is greater than we are or different from ourselves.

Human beings can develop irrational fears. Fears can grow until they control our lives with irrational thoughts and emotions. Psychologists call these fears phobias. Some common phobias are: acrophobia, fear of high places; claustrophobia, fear of closed places; and xenophobia, fear of strangers.

There are literally hundreds of phobias people

suffer from, including "school phobia," fear of water, fear of the dark, etc. These aren't emotions based on normal respect for danger, but overwhelming emotions of anxiety and irrational fear.

People have become so overwhelmed by fear of everyday life that they lock themselves in their homes and refuse to leave. Some have a phobic fear of God. They feel that God is vengeful, just waiting for them to sin so He can punish them. Although the proper fear of God is predicated on His great majesty and power, it isn't a phobia.

In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus gives the Parable of the Talents. He tells the story of a master who gives different responsibilities to three servants and then goes away for a period of time. When the master returns, he finds that two of the servants have done well but the third has hidden his talent because of fear and laziness. The master rewards the two profitable servants but punishes the unprofitable.

If fear of punishment is our only motivation for obedience, then we will fail to develop a healthy relationship with God as our Father.

The proper fear of God is based upon an overwhelming awe and reverence of His righteousness, holiness, creative genius, love, mercy, His eternity, His transcendent qualities to possess all power and all knowledge, and His ability to interact with His creation.

It is also a realization of the destructive results of sin, which is defined by God's law. Solomon sums up this understanding in Proverbs 8:13: "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil."

Application

The proper fear of God is almost nonexistent in today's society. Because of this lack of awe and respect for their Creator, people's lives are filled with all kinds of fears, anxieties and phobias. God desires us to experience a life of peace, not one filled with irrational fear.

Proverbs stresses the importance of the proper fear of God:

Proverbs 15:33: The fear of God is the foundation of wisdom.

Proverbs 22:4: By it come riches, honor and life.

Proverbs 1:7; 9:10: It is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs 10:27; 14:27: It prolongs life.

Proverbs 19:23: It makes life more abundant.

Proverbs 16:6: By it men depart from evil.

Proverbs 14:26: It is strong confidence.

Dedicate your life to learning to have a proper fear of God. Study His Word, explore His creation, meditate on His instructions, learn to hate evil and live a life founded on the reverence, awe and respect for this Great Being who created and sustains the universe.

Gary Petty

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

Turning the Hearts . . . Do You Still Love Me?

As I watched a portion of the movie *Stepmom*, the dad was explaining why he was divorced from the children's mom. He said they no longer were in love; they fell out of love. The response of the children was, "Can you fall out of love for your children?" The dad's response was that would never happen.

That section of the movie brought an issue to mind that is very important for marriages and families to thrive. The vital issue is expressing love on a regular basis in the family.

One person I counseled confided to me that her husband has not expressed affectionate love to her for years. She wondered if he still loved her. I wonder too!

I suppose we could say "I love you" to our spouses when we are first married and not say that phrase again for the rest of our lives. It may hold true through the years, but who doesn't appreciate hearing those words over and over again? Children also need to hear that they are loved by their parents.

In a survey conducted in the 1990s by a writer for *Psychology Today*, one of the eight basic expectations of both sexes was **affection**. And both sexes were more interested in "cognitive and emotional signs" than physical or sexual ones. The need for a loved one to feel loved is crucial for a relationship to be truly satisfying.

When we care, we show it by our manner of dealing with our loved ones. They will feel loved if they hear it and feel it coming from those who love them. The apostle John said in his general epistle that we need to love not only in word but in deed (1 John 3:18).

Remember the story about Isaac and Rebekah trying to hide the fact that they were husband and wife? But Abimelech, king of the Philistines, saw Isaac in a private moment "sporting" (King James Version) with his wife. The king knew they were husband and wife by the love gestures they exchanged.

Husbands are commanded to love their wives; and older women are to teach the younger ones to "love their husbands" (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4). So we have scriptural endorsement to love and show it to our spouses and family. Love involves a giving, caring attitude directed toward those whom we love.

Notes of appreciation, calls just to say "I love you," occasional flowers or boxes of candy, unexpected gifts and affectionate gestures (like hugs) send powerful messages of thoughtfulness and love.

If our spouses or children would ask the question "Do you still love me?" I hope we would each answer with a resounding "YES!"

Gary E. Antion



Be Ready to Give an Answer: What Does the Bible Say About Fossils of Prehistoric Men?

First, we should understand that projections of the age of fossils based upon archaeological findings often include speculation (archaeologists might say, "educated guesses") and that the common approach of overlaying them with the theory of evolution corrupts their value. We deal with these subjects in our booklet *Creation or Evolution*. Some fossils that are considered ancient may actually be more recent.

The Bible records the history of mankind from the creation of Adam and Eve. It does not deal with what we might call "manlike creatures" that lived on the earth before the creation of mankind, as we know it. Without divine revelation, there's no way of knowing what these creatures were or what purpose they served.

Twice, Adam is called "the first man" (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Clearly, Adam and Eve were the first human beings God made "in His own image" (Genesis 1:27). Their descendants have a spiritual component, called simply "the spirit" in Ecclesiastes 12:7 and "the spirit of the man" in 1 Corinthians 2:11. The joining of this spirit with the Holy Spirit of God is what makes conversion possible (Romans 8:16). Further, it sets humans made "in the image of God" off from prehistoric man.

For More Information, see *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*



Local Church Updates

Beloit Sponsors Sixth Annual Clothing Giveaway

Many "thank yous" were heard on Nov. 20 from appreciative individuals who attended the sixth annual clothing giveaway sponsored by the Beloit, Wisconsin, congregation.

During the three-hour event, 535 people arrived at the Head Start building to gather clothing, household items and toys that had been donated by local agencies and brethren. Refreshments were also served by the brethren. It was wonderful to see so many people receive free clothes of all kinds that they or their family could use.

Joe Jacoby, Judy Buroker and other brethren organized the event and sent



Beloit's sixth annual clothing giveaway drew 535 visitors

information to dozens of local social agencies asking for their help in donating clothing as well as publicizing the

giveaway. We made many good contacts with these agencies that will be helpful for future use.

About 40 brethren spent the evening before setting up 40 tables and then placing clothes and household items on them. The next morning another 30 brethren completed the setup and the doors were opened just before noon. By 3 o'clock, most of the clothes and other items were gone. The Beloit congregation plans on doing it again next year.

Steve Nutzman

Nashville Congratulates New Citizens

Gustavo and Jorge Corsi, of the Nashville, Tennessee, UCG congregation became U.S. citizens on Sept. 22, 2005.

Gustavo and Jorge were born in Tandil, Argentina, where they began attending church in 1979 with their mother, Lidia. Gustavo was 3 years old and Jorge was only 8 months. Their mother had heard about the Church from a cousin.

In November of 1992, Jorge and Gustavo moved to Lansing, Michigan, shortly after their mother married Fred Nance. Gustavo and Jorge were 17 and

14 respectively at the time of the move to the United States.

Neither brother knew English at the time. Their stepfather, Fred Nance, who



The Nashville congregation honored new U.S. citizens Gustavo (left) and Jorge Corsi (right), shown here with their mother, Lidia Nance, and their grandmother, Hazel Nance (photo by Jim Robbins)

had studied Spanish in high school and at Ambassador University taught them English pronunciation. But a majority of their English was learned by immersion into work, school and everyday life. The language barrier and cultural differences were difficult at first for them in this unfamiliar country.

They quickly overcame the differences and in the late 1990s, moved to Nashville, Tennessee. Jorge moved in 1997 and Gustavo moved in 1999. Both came to Nashville to study automobile technology at Nashville Auto Diesel College. Since the move, both have been a part of the Nashville congregation.

Gustavo and Jorge liked America and planned to stay here, so they decided they wanted U.S. citizenship. Additionally, they have family still in Argentina, and being Americans makes it easier for them to travel back to

Argentina to visit.

They are happy and proud to be Americans. The Nashville congregation is also proud of them and held a reception in their honor on Sabbath, Sept. 24, 2005.

Gustavo and Jorge both love anything that has to do with cars, whether it is repairing them or enjoying a sport like NASCAR racing. How American is that? We welcome and congratulate them wholeheartedly.

Michele Franke

New South Wales Holds Women's Focus Weekend

This year the New South Wales Women's Focus Weekend was held in the lovely coastal village of Corrimall Sept. 9-11. "Stimulating," "excellent," "relevant," "one mind" and "understanding" were among the descriptions of the event by the nearly 30 women who participated.

Proverbs 2:1-11 inspired the theme of this year's Women's Focus Weekend: "Reaching Out With Understanding." "We, the Church," said Jeanette Dean, "are good at doctrinal integrity, but we need to improve the way we commit our hearts and minds to loving one another."

Participants from Queensland and Victoria joined with those from New South Wales, sharing cabins at the tourist park and sharing experiences, great fellowship and good food.

The Sabbath began with prayer and

Bible study by pastor Bruce Dean, who gave a very insightful discussion about the relationship Christ had with the very different personalities of Mary and Martha.

After lunch, Jeanette Dean gave a presentation on strengthening understanding and love among brethren in the Church.

Sandy Montcalm spoke on reaching out to serve others in the Church happily. We are family, she stressed.

Dawn Goodger spoke on reaching out to family. Family is neither a timetable nor a project we can run on our own terms, she said.

Mavis Stucci discussed reaching out to strangers, making liberal use of anecdotes, including personal experience, to illustrate her talk.

Jenny Huthnance gave a lively account of the Bible's real definition of women. She covered the influence of our society on the way we think, including the current problems of gender identity.

Kim Mihalec gave the last address of the afternoon, titled "A Quiver Full of Arrows." Children are a blessing from God and have the same spiritual potential as their parents do.

After dinner, Ruth Root gave a fascinating interactive session discussing the effects of age and history on the various categories of women in the Church.

On Sunday, a panel comprised of Lynn Sandland, Sue Williams and Barbara Turner discussed "Loving Your Adult Children."

The final presentation was given by Dr. Maryke Boers and Dr. Marguerite Prakash, professional counselors with expertise in the area of addictions.

Mavis Stucci

"Samaritan," continued from page 11

the Samaritan saw the man in need and had compassion on him. How much compassion do we have? Peter tells us to be compassionate and tenderhearted (1 Peter 3:8).

The Gospel accounts are full of Christ being moved with compassion. Some of the good works Christ did because He was moved with compassion include casting out demons, raising dead loved ones to life again, feeding 5,000 people and healing diseases, to name a few. In fact, we are told in John 21:25 that all the things that Christ did could not be written down in all the books in the world! How many of these things were done out of compassion?

Compassion can be spontaneous. One doesn't always plan to have compassion; sometimes it just happens. The actions that follow are based on that compassion. The Samaritan saw the man in desperate need, had compassion and acted.

It is interesting to note that the Jews despised the Samaritans. And the Jewish religious leaders would not help their own, but it took an enemy to come and offer assistance. Christ said in Luke 6:35-36, "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great,

and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

The Samaritan then bandages the wounds, places the hurt man on his animal (which means the Samaritan walked), took him to an inn and stayed with him (verse 34).

Think for a moment. The Samaritan was on a journey, saw a need and stopped to help. The help he gave interrupted his journey. He lost at least one day helping this man. The Samaritan made sacrifices.

Do we think we don't have time to help? If we are the lights of the world, what will these people remember when their eyes are opened to the truth? Will they think highly of us for helping when we didn't have to, or will they remember that we did not help? Christ commanded us, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). How are we doing?

The next day the Samaritan gave the innkeeper money to help take care of this recuperating man (verse 35). The parable says he gave two denarii. A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. So the Samaritan gave two days' wages for the continued care for this man. Apparently

the Samaritan was known to be good on his word, as he told the innkeeper that any extra spent he would repay.

Are we afraid to spend our money on a complete stranger? Do we forget that God can make all grace abound toward us, that whatever we spend God can and will bless us more (2 Corinthians 9:8)? What excuses do we come up with to keep from helping others? It's easy to help a friend, but why do we hesitate to help strangers?

"Go and Do Likewise"

In verses 36-37 Christ asked the lawyer which of these three were the man's neighbor. The lawyer answered the one who showed mercy; the Samaritan. Christ then answered, "Go and do likewise." Remember, this parable is about actions needed for eternal life, specifically loving all people as yourself. This is why Christ said, "Go and do likewise."

The man in need was a complete stranger to the Samaritan, yet he helped him. God told ancient Israel that, "The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34). Paul encourages us to do good to all people when we have oppor-

tunity, as this will lead us to eternal life (Galatians 6:9-10).

We do need to be careful about who we help. There are people who pretend to be needy, only wanting money to support their drug or alcohol habits. There are two principles in this parable that can guide us in helping others.

The first point is, *You help someone who cannot help himself*. The injured man was in desperate need when the Samaritan arrived. Many people hold signs asking for help, when they can help themselves if they would only try.

The second point is, *Help as you are able*. The Samaritan was strong enough to lift this man on his animal. If the Samaritan was elderly, he could have gotten help for him. Today, cell phones make this even easier. Help can also include buying some groceries for a family having a hard time making ends meet. Help can be fixing someone's vehicle that they could not normally afford to do. Help can be buying a winter coat for someone. We are able to help in many ways if we don't limit the possibilities.

Caution does need to be used when stopping and helping someone broke down. Look at the situation. Does anything look out of place? Many times trusting your gut feeling is the

best thing to do. Try pulling up beside their vehicle with your doors locked, and ask them through the window what help they need. Ask for God's protection as you stop to help. Don't be afraid to help, but use wisdom.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is about a way of life. We are to love everyone that we come in contact with—friends and strangers—and treat them the way we want to be treated. We are to help in whatever way we can, including sacrificing our time and money if necessary. We are to do this all the days of our lives. God promises that He will not forget the good we show to others (Hebrews 6:10).

When Christ returns He will separate the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). The sheep are the ones who saw needs and took care of them, like the Good Samaritan. The goats are those who did not help others, like the priest and the Levite. Let's be the ones fulfilling the two great commandments—loving God, and loving our neighbor. Let's be the sheep on Christ's right hand, and let His words be said to us: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." UN

Tim Groves is from the Jefferson, Georgia, congregation.

Announcements

Births

Brooklyn Carreiro Brandt was born Aug. 3, 2005, to Tracy and Jason Brandt in Columbus, Ohio. Brooklyn was 6 pounds 2 ounces and 18½ inches long. Grandparents Tony and Edie Carreiro of



Brooklyn Carreiro Brandt

the West Palm Beach, Florida, congregation and Carl and Yvonne Brandt of the Columbus, Ohio, congregation are thrilled with the new blessing.

Andrew and Chantelle Teague of West Monroe, Louisiana, are the proud parents of Christopher Mason Teague. Mason was born July 20, 2005, weighing 6 pounds 14 ounces, and was welcomed into the family by his sister Camellia, age 3.

The Teagues are members of the Ruston, Louisiana, congregation. Grandparents are Chris and LaDonna Teague,



Christopher Mason Teague

also members of the Ruston congregation, and Michael and Michelle Grovak, members of the Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Great-grandparents are Charles and Victoria Morton and great-great-grandmother is Irene O'Neil, all of West Monroe. Mrs. Morton and Mrs. O'Neil also are members of the Ruston congregation.

Thad and Kimberly (Hemsley) Roemer of Seattle, Washington, are happy



Nathaniel Montgomery Roemer

to announce the birth of their first child, Nathaniel Montgomery. Nathaniel was born Sept. 19, 2005, weighing 7 pounds 3 ounces and measuring 20 inches long. Earl and Carol Roemer of Boise, Idaho, and Dave and Pat Hemsley of Dayton, Ohio, are each thrilled to have their third grandchild.

Bryndan Li Taite, born Li Si Qi on Jan. 16, 2003, in Tuanfeng, Hubei Province, China, joined her forever family on Sept. 5, 2005, when her mom, Karen Bradley traveled to China, along with big sister Micah, to bring her home.



Bryndan Li Taite Bradley with family

Bryndan now has two big brothers, Kevin and Clay, and two older sisters, Micah and Daryn, all of the Phoenix East, Arizona, congregation. Bryndan's grandparents are Tim and Mary Ann Hazelip, of Port Richey, Florida.

Hansel and Rachele New of the



Evan Daniel New

Eugene, Oregon, congregation are very happy to announce the birth of their second child, Evan Daniel, born on July 14, 2005. Evan weighed 8 pounds 14 ounces and measured 20½ inches long.

Big sister Emily Rose; grandparents Daniel and Gracie Miller of the Salem, Oregon, congregation; and grandma Rose Long of Ontario, Oregon, are happy to welcome this new little one to our family.

Philip and Tammy (Johns) Charles are happy to announce the birth of their third child, Justin Daniel James. He was born July 7, 2005. He weighed 10 pounds 6 ounces and was 22¾ inches long.

He was welcomed home by big brother Nathan (5) and big sister Leah (17 months), as well as proud grandparents Dan and Jeanette Charles, of the



Justin Daniel James Charles with Leah and Nathan

York, Pennsylvania, congregation, and Jim and Sue Johns.

E.B. and Sherry Haney of Chattanooga, Tennessee, are delighted to announce the birth of their second child, Shane Colton Haney. Shane was born April 24, 2005, on the First Day of



Shane Colton Haney with Reno

Unleavened Bread. His older brother Reno was born in 1999 during the Feast of Tabernacles. Cheers for Holy Day babies! Proud grandparents are Jim and Jean Rickard and E.W. and Bess Haney, all of Chattanooga.

Engagements

Leigha Elisabeth Riley, daughter of Martha and the late C.W. Riley, members of the Wichita, Kansas, congregation, and Arnold Mendez Jr., son of Arnold and Janie Mendez of the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation, are excited to announce their engagement. They were engaged on Oct. 16, 2005, before the Feast. A June 24 wedding is planned in Houston, Texas. Both currently attend



Arnold Mendez Jr. and Leigha Elisabeth Riley

the Houston North congregation.

Susan Fike of Orlando, Florida, and Joel Falardeau of West Lafayette, Indiana, are pleased to announce their engagement. Susan is the daughter of Michael and Nancy Fike of Zephyrhills, Florida. They attend the Tampa and St.



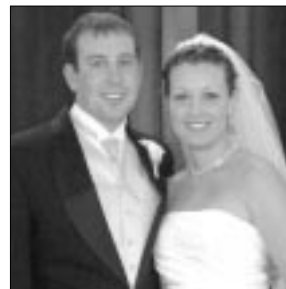
Susan Fike and Joel Falardeau

Petersburg churches. Joel's parents are Michael and Michelle Grovak of the Lafayette, Indiana, congregation, and Michel Falardeau of Danville, Illinois.

Susan and Joel met at the 2004 Feast in Panama City Beach, Florida. They plan a July 2, 2006, wedding in Georgia and plan to live in Orlando.

Weddings

Ralph and Cheryl Bean of Lebanon, Tennessee, would like to announce the marriage of their youngest daughter, Rebecca, to Brent Baker, son of Howard and Sarah Baker of Hawkins, Texas. Brent and Rebecca were united in mar-



Brent and Rebecca Baker

riage on June 26, 2005, in Brentwood, Tennessee.

The wedding party included Greg Baker, Eric Breedlove, Tina Cason, Jason Cook, Jake Flynn, Karen Ha, Jason Kelley, Caroline Luck, Hannah Luck and Isaac Powell.

Brent and Rebecca currently reside in Sulphur Springs, Texas, and attend the East Texas congregation.

Anniversaries

Burkley and Edna Stacy celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in Mount Vernon, Ohio, on Nov. 16, 2005. They were married on that date in 1945, shortly after Burkley finished his service with the U.S. Army in Europe, and after Edna's work experience in the Navy



Edna and Burkley Stacy

Yard at Norfolk, Virginia.

Upon being congratulated on how nice they looked, Burkley held out his black necktie, saying, "This is the tie I wore the day we got married—and it's the only thing I can still fit into!"

The couple cut a cake of congratulations and shared it with the family and friends who came to honor them on a very special day.

In a short ceremony at Sabbath services on Dec. 10, 2005, the East London, South Africa, congregation witnessed a first in its 31-year history when



Sydney and Muriel Banks

Sydney and Muriel Banks renewed their wedding vows made exactly 50 years previously. After the service they cut a cake together and shared it with the congregation over a cup of tea.

Sydney and Muriel had four children (of which three survive) and they have eight grandchildren. Their faithfulness during 50 years of marriage and 31 years in the Church of God has been a wonderful example to all who know them.

Obituaries

Wilmer H. "Pop" Beyer, 93, of Coldwater, Michigan, died Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2005, at home. Born in Fort Wayne,



Wilmer H. Beyer

Indiana, he was a former resident of Van Wert, Ohio, and Tekonsha, Michigan. He and his wife, Gerri, have been members of the Church of God since the early 1960s, and attend the United Church of God in Fort Wayne.

In his late teens he placed sixth in the world in a speed roller skating competition held in Chicago, Illinois. He retired as co-owner of Beyer's Van Wert Roller Rink in 1975, and also retired from Dana Plant Security after 19 years, in 1975.

He is survived by his wife of 75 years, Geraldine "Gerri" Parker; son, Laron (Marla) Beyer; daughter, Sharon (Charlie) Stemen; sister, Clara Adair; six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by two brothers and one sister.

Burial is in Monroeville Memorial Cemetery, Monroeville, Indiana, and preferred memorials are to Southern Care Hospice, 437 Fern Ave., Jackson, MI 49202.

Mr. Beyer's dry wit and sparkling, open personality will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him.

Myrtle A. Mitchell of Green Acres, Washington, a member of the Spokane, Washington/Coeur d'Alene, Idaho congregation, died peacefully at her home Nov. 26, 2005, after a five-year bout with multiple myeloma.

She is survived by a sister, Shirley



Myrtle A. Mitchell

Fisher, of Newman, California; her daughter, Kimberley Garr, of Green Acres; two sons, Curtis Ankerberg, of Medford, Oregon, and Keith Ankerberg, of Longview, Washington; and six grandchildren. All but Curtis and two of the grandchildren were by her side at the time. None are members of the Church. Also, a very close friend, Arnold Egbert, was at her side at the time.

Her husband, Ray Mitchell, had died in 1997. The children are from a previous marriage.

She was a very outgoing person, always doing things for people. Several times she made it possible for someone to attend the Feast. One person wrote, "She was an absolute delight to every one that had the pleasure of meeting her,

and her beautiful smile made her welcome everywhere."

She had attended the Feast in a number of different places, but the one that took her heart was St. John's, Newfoundland. She would have liked to have gone there again, but due to her health, she stayed in the United States this year. She was able to attend the Feast in Escondido, California, and saw one of her grandchildren in California as well as friends she had grown up with.

She has been a faithful, serving member of the Church since 1987. A memorial service was conducted on Dec. 1 by Mark Mickelson.

Carmel Mullen, a beautiful, loving and faithful wife, mother, sister and friend to many, was peacefully taken too soon from us on Nov. 26, 2005, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Carmel served and attended congregations in Portland, Oregon, for the past 30 years. Her interest in the truth began in 1968, when she and her husband moved to Canada from Ireland after they were married. In 1973 she was baptized shortly after attending in Edmonton, Alberta.

She is survived by her husband, Gerald; six sons, Corey, Aaron, Kieran, Shaney, Kyle and Orin; sisters, Catherine Wallace, Eileen Wallace, Josephine Garrivan, Angela Gavin; and her brother,

Patrick Sheehan.

To see her online obituary, watch the tribute video or sign the online guestbook, feel free to visit edwardsmemorial.com. Her family would also like to extend their deepest appreciation for everyone's support, cards, thoughts and prayers in the past months. We really appreciate all of your encouragement and the reassurance for the hope we all



Carmel Mullen

hold for the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Helena Keisel, 88, of Fulton, Illinois, died Oct. 15, 2005. She was a member



Helena Keisel

of the Beloit, Wisconsin, United Church of God, although her health had prevented her from attending church for several years. She was a faithful member of God's Church since the 1960s.

She will be remembered for her warm hospitality, love of life and laughter. She treasured God's truth and the beauty of His Creation. Even as Alzheimer's took its toll on her mind, she expressed appreciation for friends and family.

Survivors include two sons, Darrell (Janet) Keisel of Oglesby, Illinois, and Roger (Marlene) Keisel of Erie, Illinois; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; one sister; and one brother. She was preceded in death by her husband, Emmett. Steve Nutzman conducted the funeral service on Oct. 19, 2005.

"WFW," continued from page 1

ber Joel Meeker titled "Join the Resistance."

On Saturday night, activities ranged from two different dances to swimming

in the indoor pool. By Sunday the sporting venues were in full use and that was followed up by a huge Novelty Olympics competition Sunday night and another dance for the "singles in the middle."

Monday and Tuesday were also full days of various sporting activities, and the evenings kept everyone busy with the Family Fun Fair, two different musical jam sessions and a final evening of dancing at the family dance. If one of the

goals of this event was to wear everyone out, the mission was accomplished. The owner of one of the sports venues (Mid-America Sports Center) said after it was all over that we are the absolute best group they rent to in every way.

"I can't wait until next year" was heard throughout the hotel on Wednesday morning as we all packed up. Indeed we hope to see everyone and more at Winter Family Weekend 2006.

Mark Winner

"Council," continued from page 7

support. His point was that some elders vote in favor of a proposed amendment even if they did not vote for it to be placed on the ballot. He was also concerned about rejecting the proposed amendment based on a technicality without first finding out if the writers had been directed by the Amendment Committee to include paragraph 7.9.2.1 as part of their proposal.

After discussion, the proposed amendment did not gain support of the minimum of four Council members, so it will be returned to the Amendment Committee for determination of support by the GCE. By simple majority the Council asked the ERR committee to write a Statement of Concern.

Turning to another matter, Amendment Committee member Ed Smith's term has expired. By resolution the Council unanimously agreed to select Mr. Smith to serve another term on the committee.

The final item of business in open session was a discussion of Bylaw 8.3.1, which states that an elder who serves as an international representative on the Council of Elders must do his "primary work outside the United States." The question placed before the Council was, "Who will decide whether an elder's primary work is outside the United States?"

Mr. Kilough felt that there needs to be specific standards to make the determination. For example, would "primary"

be judged by the number of hours spent working internationally? Or by the importance of his international responsibilities? Or by the amount of time spent out of the country?

Speaking on behalf of the ERR committee, Mr. Meeker acknowledged that while some of the matters to be considered are objective, the ERR committee felt it was not possible to determine a specific list of criteria that would fit every situation. He also expressed that it would be an extremely rare circumstance that did not warrant a drawn out and complicated effort to establish such a list of criteria.

Mr. Meeker proposed a resolution that "petitions for inclusion on the list of 'international elders' made by elders residing in the United States shall be directed to the president, who, after consultation with Ministerial Services, shall make a recommendation concerning the petition to the Council of Elders for its decision." The resolution was passed unanimously.

The Council spent the final two hours of the afternoon in executive session and completed its work for the day at 4:55 p.m.

The final day of this session of Council meetings, Dec. 13, was called to order at 9 a.m. In the morning the Council completed its final review of the doctrinal paper "The Biblical Role of Women" and a doctrinal policy statement on polygamy. This statement was prepared due to a need to deal with the issue in

areas where polygamy is part of the culture. Following the doctrinal discussions, the Council went into executive session to discuss ordinations, credentialings and personnel matters.

In the afternoon the Council teleconferenced with Ken Giese, during which initial plans were put into motion for the 2006 annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders. Mr. Dick polled each Council member as to his preference for the theme of the conference. All agreed that the theme "Effective Leadership—Mentoring Leaders for the Future" was relevant and motivating. The Council also agreed that elements from other proposed themes could also be combined with the subject of leadership.

The Council concluded its executive session business following the discussion of the 2006 GCE. Tuesday's session ended with the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee business and planning for the February Council meeting.

Mr. Dick asked each committee chairman to submit a list of possible agenda items for the February meetings.

The last item of business was to discuss the location for the February meeting. Charles Melear was asked to look at the feasibility of San Antonio, Texas, again for this year's February meeting. The Council calendar calls for a meeting from Feb. 22 to March 1, 2006. Mr. Dick adjourned this session of the Council of Elders at 3:45 p.m.

For complete Council reports, see www.ugc.org/about/council/updates.htm.

2005 Statistics at a Glance

For 2005, total mail received at the home office was 563,573 pieces (up 18 percent from 2004), and 559,721 pieces of literature were sent out (up 20 percent). The literature mailed out does not include *The Good News*, *World News and Prophecy*, *United News* and other periodicals that are not mailed from the home office.

Subscription requests came from many sources, including 257,961 from subscription cards, most of which were from card decks but also included 24,577 from brochures, 770 from newsstands and even 77 responses to the *Reader's Digest* ad run in June 2000!

Another 2,359 subscriptions came from calls in response to *The Good News* radio program.

Total Internet responses were up 46 percent, from 149,509 in 2004 to 217,759 in 2005.

The five language editions of *The Good News* (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) are now going into 178 countries and territories around the world, from Albania to Zimbabwe, from Chile to China. The January/February issue is being distributed to 453,294 English readers, and about 25,000 in the other languages. (See page 5 for more details.)

Below are some other statistics:

	Dec. 2004	Dec. 2005	Percentage Change
U.S. Donors	6,103	7,323	20%
U.S. Coworkers	2,678	3,055	14%
U.S. Baptisms for year	176	171	-3%
U.S. Bible Study Course lessons mailed during year	121,885	130,907	7%
U.S. BSC Graduates tapes mailed during year	46,013	34,231	-26%
United News Subscribers (worldwide)	13,981	13,854	-1%
World News and Prophecy Subscribers	30,167	38,257	27%
Vertical Thought Print Run	17,000	22,500	32%
U.S. Personal Correspondence (mail and e-mail)	2,792	2,640	-5%
Vertical Thought Personal Correspondence	841	689	-18%

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

Kansas City's historic Union Station. Saturday night's social will again include a fine meal followed by a lively mix of dancing and karaoke. Sunday's activities will include a family picnic at one of Kansas City's most beautiful parks.

Sunday dinner will be at an Irish Pub restaurant, and the evening will end with a Kansas City Symphony outdoor patriotic concert climaxing with a spectacular fireworks display. The weekend will conclude Monday with a hearty brunch at the Cheesecake Factory.

The registration fee for the three-day weekend is \$75 and is due by May 1, 2006. After May 1 the registration fee will be \$90. Payments can be made online using your credit or debit card.

For more details and to register online, visit www.kc2006.com, or e-mail coordinator Ruben Gusman at eventcoordinator@kc2006.com.

Beyond Today Now on the Air and Web

On Dec. 7 and 8 four more *Beyond Today* video programs were recorded in the new media center. This brings our total to eight programs. The next four will be videotaped on Jan. 11 and 12, with Darris McNeely hosting.

Beyond Today began airing Dec. 18 on 105 cable-access TV channels across the United States plus on the World Wide Web. In the United States, if you are interested in hosting the program on your local community-access TV station, please contact John LaBissoniere at john_labissoniere@ucg.org or by telephone at (888) 369-9940.

Our new multimedia Web site is now live at www.beyondtoday.tv, and we will be adding new programs as they are scheduled. Be sure to visit and watch the video clips! You can view broadband, high-quality clips, plus download dial-up versions if you have a slower Internet connection. Soon QuickTime files will be available for download for video i-



What's New on the Web?

On www.ucg.org

■ Compass Check

See video of home office weekly meeting.

www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/compasscheck.htm

■ UCG Commentary on This Week's News

Weekly commentaries by UCG written on world news and trends, from a biblical perspective. Read these and more: "Don't Disguise Christmas Celebrations With Euphemistic Names" "The Christmas Economy" "Germany's New Chancellor Discusses EU Admission for Turkey"

www.ucg.org/commentary/

Pods so that *Beyond Today* can be viewed while on the road!

Peter Eddington

Camp Woodmen Moved to Georgia

The United Youth Camp in the southeastern United States will not be in Alabama again, as announced last issue. It will be in Georgia, approximately 12 miles south of Forsyth or 20 miles west-northwest of Macon. The dates that were published are correct—July 2-9, 2006.

Camp Woodmen in Georgia is being constructed right now, so it will be brand-new. Hardwood and pine forests completely encircle the camp property, and it will have an 11-acre lake. It will be somewhat of a pioneer year as some activity areas may not be fully complete by this summer. This new camp facility will allow us to run our own kitchen and hopefully the air conditioning will work!

David Dobson

Atlanta Hosts Prom March 18

On the evening of March 18, the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation will be

hosting its annual prom. Teens and young adults are invited to enjoy afternoon Sabbath services and a "Bella Noche" that evening at the Gainesville Civic Center in the Grand Ballroom.

More information can be found at the www.ucgatanta.org Web site.

Bruce Gore

Winter Weekend Set for Wooster, Ohio, Feb. 18-19

Wooster, Ohio, will be the location for a combined winter weekend of activities on Presidents' Day weekend, Feb. 18-19. At noon on the Sabbath a young adults Bible study will be presented by Randy Stiver, followed by 2 p.m. services with guest speaker Richard Pinelli. Afterward a chili dinner will be provided.

On Saturday evening the games will begin with basketball, volleyball, dodge ball, activities for preteens and ice skating. Saturday evening will also feature a fund-raiser for the Good Works program. A large variety of gift baskets will be available for silent auction and many handmade crafts will also be for sale. The evening will be topped off with a casual family dance.

Sunday's activities include basketball,

volleyball, ice skating and swimming. All of the activities will take place at the Wooster High School complex, with the exception of the skating rink, which is within walking distance.

Group prices for local hotels begin at \$40 a night. Hotel rooms must be reserved by Jan. 27 to receive the group rate. There are also over 20 restaurants within 2 miles of the activity complex.

If you would like to receive a flyer by e-mail or mail with all the details of the weekend activity, please contact Mrs. B.J. Thomas at glt-bj@ispwest.com or call (330) 723-1973.

B.J. Thomas

Families for God Weekend in Twin Cities March 25-26

The annual Families for God weekend in Minneapolis, Minnesota, will be held March 25 and 26. The theme is "Turning the Hearts," based on Malachi 4:6.

The weekend includes Sabbath services, informative seminars, a concert, teen prom and more! Special guests for the weekend will be Council member Larry Salyer and his wife, Judy. Activities will be at the Marriott Minneapolis West in St. Louis Park.

On verticalthought.org

■ The new January-March issue has articles on "Christianity and Education," "Are You a Frog in a Pot?" "Paying for College" and much more.

verticalthought.org

Featured Links of the Month

■ Beyond Today

www.beyondtoday.tv

■ Good Works Program

www.ucg.org/goodworks

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



More details will be provided soon at www.ucgstp.org/familiesforgod or contact Steve or Amy Allwine at (651) 552-0136 or at familiesforgod@allwine.net.

Gale Black

Calendar of Events

Jan. 24-25: Managing editors' meeting.
Feb. 11: Family Dance, Cincinnati East, Ohio (FouchB@greatoaks.com).
Feb. 12: Ski Trip, Cincinnati East, Ohio (FouchB@greatoaks.com).
Feb. 18-19: Winter weekend, Wooster, Ohio (glt-bj@ispwest.com).
Feb. 24-March 1: Council meetings.
March 10-11: 50th anniversary, Houston, Texas, congregation (www.united-church-of-god.org or www.ucg-houston.org).
March 18: Atlanta prom for teens and young adults (www.ucgatanta.org).
March 24-26: "Hidden Treasure—The Pearl" ladies' retreat, Portland, Oregon (scruggsjr@aol.com).
March 25-26: Families for God weekend, Minneapolis, Minnesota (www.ucgstp.org/familiesforgod).
May 7-8: General Conference of Elders annual meeting.
May 9-11: Council meetings.
May 26-29: Memorial Day Weekend, Kansas City, Missouri (www.kc2006.com).

Houston 50th Anniversary Set for March 10-11

The 50th Houston Church Anniversary celebration will be held the weekend of March 10 and 11, 2006. The weekend promises to be full of fun, friendship and reflection, as many former Houston ministers and members share their memories of the past 50 years that God's work and Church have been active in Houston.

The weekend will begin with a reception Friday evening, March 10, at the Houston North church hall. A church history photo gallery and personal photo mixer will get the evening's events underway, followed by former Houston ministers sharing their memories of times long since past (including some that we probably hoped would be long forgotten).

The Sabbath of March 11 will include morning snacks and socializing, which will be followed by a special service from 2 to 4 p.m.

This commemorative service will include a Houston history presentation, special music presentation and a sermon by former Houstonian, Clyde Kilough. Following services, there will be drinks, dinner and dancing. The dance will include a local band, as well as a supplemental DJ, and the dinner will be approximately \$25 a person.

Additional details, such as local hotel listings and a dinner reservation form, will be provided in next month's *United News*. Dinner reservations and money will need to be received in advance.

For updated information, please continue to access our local congregations' Web sites at www.united-church-of-god.org or www.ucg-houston.org, or you may call Frank or Nelda Pierce at (409) 945-6256.



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