

UNITED CHURCH of GOD

Home Office Weekly Update

January 2, 2025

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We are all family, living in so many different places and with so many different cultures, but all bound together as God's family by His Spirit and His truth.

A New Calendar-Year with Unique Challenges

Greetings brethren around the world,

The beginning of the new year, according to the calendar used around the world, got off to an ominous start yesterday. In the United States, two deadly terrorist attacks rocked the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana and Las Vegas, Nevada, breaking a period of relative peaceful and calm since the November elections.

Yesterday's terrorist attacks resembled a December attack in Germany, where a terrorist drove his car into a crowded marketplace, killing several people.

Are these attacks a sign of what lies ahead in the coming year, as the United States and the world enter into a new era which sharply differs from the governmental styles and ideologies of the past several years?

The world is in a state of change, and events are moving forward to fulfill the prophesied events and world alignments the Bible shows will be in place before and at the return of Jesus Christ.

Despite the circumstances, we do not fear but turn more and more to God, placing our trust and faith in Him, "coming out of this world" as He commands.

We also remember there is the commission He gave to His Church, which we His people around the world must accomplish.

European conference

Last week, from Dec. 22–26, the Church held a training, planning and discussion conference in Zandvoort, The Netherlands where more than 65 ministers, deacons and leading members of the Church in Europe attended.

Representatives from France, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, even a church couple who now live in Spain, and the Baltic/Scandinavian areas were there (along with those of us from the United States). We all came together to discuss the future of Europe, how to more effectively

preach the gospel to a continent that figures so prominently in Bible prophecy, and how we can best serve the people of God in these areas.

The conference brought together people speaking many different languages, but we were all united by God's Spirit and His truth. It was a beautiful and inspiring event to be part of this week and we trust the unity of spirit of brotherhood will extend to all the Church.

Without going into too much detail, I believe I speak for everyone who was present, that we see the future: how God and Jesus Christ would have us begin, earnestly and fully, the commission of preaching the gospel "in all nations" in a way that hasn't been done in Europe for decades, and something that must be done now.

Serving the Church around the world

It occurs to me that over the last year we have had the opportunity to meet so many of the ministry and members around the world. We still have people to meet and places to go over the next year, but as we do, we are learning what needs to be done and we are committed to serving God's people all over the world. We are all family, living in so many different places and with so many different cultures, but all bound together as His family by His Spirit and His truth, which "sanctifies us" and sets us apart from the world.

Brethren, please pray even more fervently for God's Kingdom to come and for His will to be done. Ask Him to guide us all and establish our steps each day. Let us be grounded in and committed to His truth, following Him and His Church as we walk in all His ways.

You are all in our thoughts and prayers, and are prominently in our plans, as we in the home office administration begin preparing strategic plans and budgets for the upcoming fiscal year and beyond.

In Christ's service,
Rick Shabi

British Isles: London Open House Sabbath Service

The United Church of God in London, England welcomed Rick Shabi for a visit on the Sabbath of Dec. 21 as he and his wife, Deborah, travelled through on their way to the regional European conference in The Netherlands.

The opportunity was taken to host an "open house" for members of the wider Church of God community to come together in worship, unity and fellowship and to additionally take part in a Question and Answer session hosted by Mr. Shabi.

For most Sabbaths, the London congregation is usually around 30–40 people, but for the open house the numbers swelled to a little over 100—with at least five different "churches of God" represented, as well as a number of brethren who do not currently associate with any particular organization.

Mr. Shabi's sermon reminded everyone of Christ said in [John 17:17](#)—how we are all bound by His Spirit and truth—in a message titled "Set Apart by Truth." For some, the singing of the old and well-known Church of God hymns, including "O Come and Let us Worship Him" and "We are God's People," was an emotional reminder we are indeed all God's very own special people, called out of this world to be sanctified and prepared for service in the soon coming Kingdom of God.

Following the service, everyone enjoyed a buffet meal while brethren old and new met or renewed acquaintances. Some brethren had not seen each other for decades and it was a remarkable opportunity to see other members of the Church of God and to be strengthened—being reminded that God is active in the lives of all His children.

After the food and fellowship, Mr. Shabi answered questions from the congregation. Many positive comments have been received and brethren from various Churches of God appreciated the openness, friendliness and opportunity to see faces old and new.

Our sincere thanks to all those who worked so hard to arrange such a special and encouraging occasion.

—David Elliott, elder, London, England

Update to UCG.org Sermon Library

We've heard your comments and have made an important change regarding sermon accessibility on the UCG.org website.

The login requirement for most sermons will be removed, making it easier for all visitors to access content. This will function similarly to how sermons were designated on the old UCG.org sermon pages.

Thank you for your feedback as we continue to make adjustments and improvements.

WFW 2024 Photos and Introducing "UCG Photos"

We're excited to announce the launch of UCG Photos, a new Facebook group designed for sharing photographs from official UCG events—like the Winter Family Weekend—as well as local congregation activities.

This private group is a space for members to connect and share moments that bring us together as a church. We encourage you to upload photos from your own congregation or church events and enjoy seeing moments shared by others across the UCG family.

To join the group, simply click www.facebook.com/groups/ucgphotos and select "Join Group." We look forward to seeing your photos and celebrating the stories of our church together!

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