



Council of Elders Confirms John Elliott as President

by Peter Eddington and Michael Snyder

CINCINNATI, Ohio—Completing its established process for leadership selection, the Council of Elders of the United Church of God, an International Association, appointed long-time minister and administrator John Elliott as president on May 7, according to Tim Pebworth, Council chairman. Mr. Elliott formally began his three-year term on May 8 and succeeds former president and treasurer Rick Shabi.

“The Council was fortunate to have fully qualified and experienced ministers to consider for this important position, and we look forward to Mr. Elliott now leading the day-to-

day operations of the United Church of God toward greater growth and service,” Mr. Pebworth said. “The Council also expresses its appreciation to Rick and Deborah Shabi for their prior years of service.”

Emphasizing respect and collaboration, Mr. Elliott noted that he will bring a leadership focus of “helping team members feel valued for their ideas and input” both at the home office in Cincinnati and in Church offices and operations worldwide.

Reflecting the statement by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:2, Mr. Elliott stated: “On my own I am nothing. I look forward to relying on God, Jesus Christ as the living Head of the Church, the Council of Elders, and operational



John and Merrie Elliott

leadership and staff to encourage collaboration and effective decision-making towards fulfilling the Church’s Matthew 28 directive as declared by Christ.”

Ordained in 1976, Mr. Elliott brings multiple decades of ministerial and administrative experience to the position of president. He and his wife, Merrie, have served

in pastoring congregations, Feast sites and youth camps in the United States, Canada and East Africa.

“In addition to his ministerial and related administrative work, Mr. Elliott’s experience includes a broad spectrum of communication, marketing and community service,” Mr. Pebworth said. “During his time in Pasadena, California, Mr. Elliott worked in the Ambassador television and radio production departments, where the *World Tomorrow* television programs were recorded, produced and distributed in the preaching of the gospel.”

In addition to work for the Church, Mr. Elliott also presided

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General Conference of Elders Holds Annual Meeting

by Heidi Braun



CINCINNATI, Ohio—The United Church of God held its annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders (GCE) on May 3-5, 2025. This year, 335 elders and wives attended and focused on the theme, “A Legacy of Service and Faith.”



Elders and wives enjoyed a welcome reception Friday evening, followed by a group breakfast on Sabbath morning. This was followed by a Bible study, led by Victor Kubik, covering lessons learned from the conditions that led to the formation of UCG. Sabbath services were held in the afternoon and included a performance from the

Ambassador Bible College chorale and sermons by Bob Dick and Tim Pebworth.

That evening, members of the GCE and home office support staff enjoyed further fellowship over dinner. After the meal, Randy and Kay Schreiber led a series of special presentations featuring the backgrounds of, and comments from, some



of the founders of UCG. Afterwards, council member John Elliott presented a tribute to deceased elders and wives, a ministerial recognition ceremony and employee recognition. The presentation included introductions for 10 new elders and their wives and featured ministerial recognitions for up to 50 and 60 years of service. Finally, Council chairman Tim Pebworth expressed appreciation for Mr. and Mrs. Shabi and their service.

Balloting and Financial Report

While the ministerial wives enjoyed breakfast and a workshop, the Sunday morning GCE sessions commenced with the approval of last year’s minutes, some opening comments from the chairman Tim Pebworth, and the balloting process led by secretary Frank Dunkle.

Filling in for the treasurer, Aaron Dean presented the finance report. He reflected on how God had provided for His Church, even in tough financial times, and expressed his thanks to Rick Shabi and Barry Korthuis for their work as treasurers for UCG. Including projected in-

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2 UCG Thanks Rick Shabi for Three Years of Presidency

In March 2025 the Council of Elders made the decision to transition to a new leader to serve as president of United Church of God (UCG). The Church would like to thank Rick and Deborah Shabi for their service to the Church during his presidency.

Mr. Shabi served as UCG treasurer for eight years prior to his role as president. Ordained an elder in 2000 while serving in the Indianapolis church, he and his wife relocated to northern Florida in 2004 and served in that area until he moved to Ohio to serve as president. Now that he has completed his term, he will be returning to assist Richard Kennebeck in pastoring the Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida congregations.

During his tenure as president, Mr. Shabi contributed much to the work of the Church, including his video series, *A Biblical Worldview*, and numerous international conferences, helping connect our brethren and leadership around the world.

One of these international visits, which focused on helping the Italian brethren rebuild after a recent division, was particularly memorable for the



L-R: John Elliott and Rick Shabi

members in that country, who wished to share comments of appreciation, several of which we feature here.

Enzo Alfieri and Margherita:

“Your mission in Italy, with the help and important participation of Michael Caputo and Aaron Dean, was of great and valuable LOVE, both human and spiritual . . . whenever you and your wife Deborah want, you

will always be . . . our welcome guests.”

Giovanni Troisi:

“We cannot forget the commitment, dedication, sacrifices and love that you have poured into rebuilding the work in Italy. You were a man of your word, completing what you proposed, until the end, despite all the difficulties, but fully confident in God’s inspiration, and in the gift that He has given you to un-

derstand and empathize with people.”

Giovanni, Grazia and Jessica Faraone:

“It is a common feeling in Italy and I also confirm it: you were the right man at the right time. God worked through you to keep God’s Church in Italy alive.”

Cinzia Lavagnolo:

“I would like to express all my gratitude to you and your wife, whose silent but active support I have greatly appreciated, for the loving commitment you have had for our Italian church.”

Beatrice Masullo:

“President Shabi is an excellent president and has played an important role for the Church in Italy. We are immensely grateful to God for putting him in the right place at the right time, because as God’s people we have been heard.”

Monica Orhian and Raoul:

“You are for us a great example of faith and dedication in

our spiritual journey, as well as your very kind wife and our sister Deborah. We hope to be able to hug you again; to have the great gift of seeing you again if you have the opportunity to return to Italy.”

Giacinto Ferrisi:

“I also wanted to thank you especially for all the sermons and Bible studies, which you have done for the whole Church. They have opened my eyes and made me understand many things, especially about the prophecies of the last days.”

Lucrecia Petrich:

“I thank the Eternal Father for the time in which President Shabi guided the people of God through the Holy Spirit, for all the help and support he gave us especially in the most difficult moments. We will continue to pray for you and your wife.”

The home office staff wish the Shabis all the best as they transition to a new chapter in their lives, and United Church of God thanks Mr. Shabi for his service as our president. **UN**

Beyond Today TV Recording New Episodes

Production has commenced on new *Beyond Today* video content. These will air on broadcast television, YouTube and social media channels. With an updated format and style, and with each program being just 13 minutes long, we believe these will perform very well.

Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty have produced their first round of scripts, and Mr. McNeely and Mr. Myers have already recorded two programs

each. Gary Petty will be back in Cincinnati to do his very soon.

Once the new format is tried, tested and settled upon, if all goes as currently planned, we will hold screen tests and choose three new *Beyond Today* television presenters—to be mentored by Darris, Steve and Gary, who will then phase out of production. The list of those men currently interested in presenting has grown to almost 20. We will narrow the list down con-

siderably and then hold screen tests, hopefully later this year.

In addition, timely content is being produced weekly to address breaking news and social issues of biblical relevance. The episode from June 13 by Steve Myers, “Time Is Running Out: What Iran and Israel’s Conflict Means for You,” has already generated almost 70,000 views and 165 comments.

*Peter Eddington
Assistant to the President*



Council Confirms John Elliott as President

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over a startup media-driven advertising agency in Cincinnati.

In addition to his and his wife Merrie’s Ambassador College studies, Mr. Elliott holds a master’s degree in archaeology from the University of South Dakota and studied biblical archaeology at the University of Cincinnati. They have three adult daughters who are mar-

ried to elders, along with eight grandchildren.

Mr. Elliott’s appointment as president also opened a position on the 12-person Council of Elders, where he served for five terms, including a term as deputy chairman. Peter Eddington, a long-time minister serving as operation manager for the Church’s Media and Communications Services department, has filled that Council position as balloted during

the May annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders. Given his broad and established experience, Mr. Eddington was asked by Mr. Elliott to take a new senior position as personal assistant to the president, which Mr. Eddington accepted.

“We on the Council of Elders anticipate good success from this collaborative leadership focus,” said Mr. Eddington. **UN**



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Ministerial and Member Services



Santana and Ellen Reyes



Martin and Ailsa Braun



Carl and Kathy Kinsella



Rick and Deborah Shabi

We're happy to announce that on May 24, 2025, Santana Reyes was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Ellen, serve the Fort Worth and Dallas, Texas and Lawton, Oklahoma congregations.

We're also pleased to announce that on June 1, Martin Braun was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Ailsa, serve the congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina.

At the beginning of June, Rex Sexton retired from the employed ministry; he continues to serve on the Council of Elders

and as an elder for the congregation in Portland, Oregon. Carl Kinsella now pastors the Portland and The Dalles, Oregon congregations.

After completion of his term as President in May, Rick Shabi has transferred to serve as an assistant pastor for the Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida congregations alongside pastor Richard Kennebeck.

Just as a harvest needs workers, God's work requires faithful laborers to preach and teach the gospel. Jesus said, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers

are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

But not everyone is called to go—some are called to pray, work and support in other ways. That's no less important. The apostle Paul told the Philippians, "both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace." (Philippians 1:7). Their prayers and support were vital to Paul's work.

When you pray for God to send, strengthen and guide His ministry, you are part of the same

mission as Christ "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Your faithful prayers help carry the load. As Paul wrote, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Thank you for being an active part of the harvest. **UN**

Ministerial Milestones

Years	Name	Country
10	Rod and Tammy Foster	United States
10	Tom and Jody Adams	United States
10	Vivien Botha	South Africa
10	Graham and Heather Cowley	South Africa
10	Gabriel and Andrea Garcia	Mexico
10	Ben and Shannon Light	United States
10	Arlindo and Iracema Lima	Brazil
10	John and Peggy Yule	United States
10	Todd and Susie Herridge	United States
25	John and Vicki White	United States
25	George and Helen Carter	Canada
25	Len and Julie Martin	United States
25	Frank and Valerie Fish	United States
25	Daniel and Fern Berendt	Canada
25	Rick and Heather Berendt	Canada
40	Keith and Amy Haab	United States
40	Neal and Linda Kinsey	United States
40	Charles and Jacque Melear	United States
40	Gary and Kim Petty	United States
40	Barry and Sue Williams	Australia
40	Sal and JoAnn Cimino	United States
40	Larry and Vicki Sharp	United States
50	Darris and Debbie McNeely	United States
50	John and Peg McClain	United States
60	Roy and Norma Holladay	United States

Steve Myers is the Ministerial and Member Services manager for UCG and an elder who serves in the Cincinnati, Ohio area. He can be reached at steve_myers@ucg.org



The following individuals have reached milestones in their service in the ministry or as employees of the Church. Ministers' wives are listed alongside their husbands in appreciation for their part in caring for the congregations.

Employee Milestones

Years	Name	Role	Country
10	Gary Beam	Church Pastor	United States
10	Kevin Call	Church Pastor	United States
10	Andy Diemer	Church Pastor	United States
10	Bill Dimovski	Treasurer and Accountant	Canada
10	Denise McClean	Office Administrator and Editorial Support	United Kingdom
10	Paul Moody	Church Pastor	United States
10	Tim Pebworth	Church Pastor	United States
10	Craig Scott	Church Pastor	United States
20	Dan Dowd	Church Pastor	United States
20	Frank Fish	Church Pastor	United States
20	Moises Mabout	Church Pastor	Cameroon and DR Congo
20	Skeets Mez	Church Pastor	United States
40	Joe Dobson	Church Pastor	United States
40	Gary Petty	Church Pastor	United States

by Terri Eddington

“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

The following individuals were honored at the annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders for their many years of ministerial service. Wives of those serving were included in this recognition for their service alongside their husbands. Included is a synopsis of the personal reflections shared with their fellow elders and wives. **UN**

A LEGACY of SERVICE AND FAITH



John and Peg McClain
Church Elder

“On April 2, 1975 a grand adventure began when Ed Smith ordained me. We

have had experiences, met people and gone places we never otherwise would have. We have enjoyed serving three congregations and 15 different pastors and learned a fantastic amount of biblical and personal relationship knowledge from our pastors.

“As a non-salaried elder and wife, our outlook has always been: ‘Our pastor, our friend.’ That has worked well for us. We have striven to help our pastor and his wife in support roles. In high school, I played second chair trombone in the band and so I am comfortable in that second chair role! Juggling time for God, family, the congregation, my engineering job and Peg’s teaching job was challenging. We prayed for God’s help daily to do it all and we were blessed.”

When asked about his most memorable experiences over his 60 years of service, John McClain replied:

“Feeling inspired by seeing God’s miraculous healings after hundreds of anointings, witnessing members’ faithfulness and outstanding examples of courage which increased our own faith, hosting 240 baptisms in our basement, feeling honored to have supervised the Sabbath School (the future of our Church) for 18 years, being thankful for the special music that played a big role in my Church life: local and Feast choirs for 20 years, scheduling special music for 42 years (30 soloists and three choirs in the final 22 years).”

John McClain shared the following advice from his 50 years of experience:

- All members who serve are volunteers; most have full-time jobs, so don’t overload anyone.
- Sometimes the most urgent thing is to rest.
- Work to avoid conflicts. Pass on helpful information, both good and bad.
- Everyone is fighting a spiritual battle; be sure to love and encourage all. Those we sought to encourage, in the end encouraged us.
- Gardening is a hobby; from it I’ve learned:

You reap what you sow.
We each have our own row to hoe.
Some problems are perennial.
It is okay to be a late bloomer.
The delicious vegetables are a bonus.



Darris and Debbie McNeely
Coordinator, International
Education and Services

“God said to Jeremiah, ‘If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses?’ (Jeremiah 12:5, New Living Translation). For more than 50 years Debbie and I

have run with the horses. It is the life we chose. We would do it all over again.

“We did not know it would be this way when we started. Two young people met on a late summer evening in Pasadena. Three years later I asked her to join me as a minister’s wife. I could not promise much. She said yes. God delivered the payoff. We decided to run with the horses.

“In our first year we met the challenges of training and the excitement of learning how to serve God’s people. People overlooked our youth and respected the office. They gave us a hand up in making a home and they invited us into theirs to share simple meals and deep faith. To visit members, we learned to drive long hours, walk muddy paths and cross shaky bridges. We carried babies with diaper bags and Bibles with inspired margins. Those babies grew into two fine men.

“In living rooms, on front porches and across kitchen tables we talked about the Bible and God’s calling. On visits we learned to love the people. We willingly drove every long mile across the years knowing at the end of the drive would be waiting a group of God’s elect. We were running with the horses.

“The path wasn’t always easy. Along the way we met a few the Bible would classify as tares. I don’t think a person starts out, nor intends to be, a tare. Greed, envy, pride and a dose of disappointment can create a problem. Expecting the best in people and believing everyone is in the Church for the right reason, is the best approach for an elder to take. But as the Bible tells us, some are in the Church for other reasons. Patience and wisdom on our part keep the ship stable while God reveals motives and Christ guards the sheepfold as a true shep-

herd. Working with those who oppose quickens the pace for those learning to run with the horses.

“Christ brought us this far together. But He also put within our path good friends. Some of our friends have been with us for more than 50 years, others for less. All are dear to us. We have friends who are peers, friends whom we have trained and mentored, and friends of the heart. Friends have kept us straight, helped us grow and shared our laughter. Without a brotherhood in the ministry we would not have succeeded. Our glory has been the band of brothers God placed around us.

“It has been a good journey. By God’s grace we will travel many more miles. We give thanks to God and His Son Jesus Christ for the journey. We are not finished. We see the city ahead and know there will be more to learn. Together we will run with the horses.” **UN**

Honoring Service on the Council of Elders



Mario Seiglie

The Council of Elders would like to thank Mario Seiglie for his seven terms of service on the Council. He was ordained an elder in 1976, and he and his wife, Caty, serve the congregation in Orange County, California as well as in the Spanish-speaking areas of South America. He holds degrees in theology and Spanish from Ambassador College, which he attended in both Big Sandy, Texas and Pasadena, California.



John Elliott

The Council of Elders would like to thank John Elliott for his five terms of service on the Council, including a term as deputy chairman. He was ordained an elder in 1976 and he and his wife, Merrie, have served in multiple church offices and congregations both in the United States and internationally. He holds a bachelor’s degree in theological and ministerial studies from Ambassador College and a master’s degree in archaeology from the University of South Dakota.



Roy and Norma Holladay
Church Elder, U.S.A.

“In 1959, Norma and I came to Ambassador College. In the summer of 1962, I went on a nationwide baptism tour. We baptized over 140 people that summer and counseled 500+ people. In 1963, Norma and I married and were

assigned to assist in Pittsburgh, Akron and Toledo. Like most of the men at that time, we had already been serving in ministerial functions before ordination. We had 10 days to drive to Pittsburgh after we were married. We stopped along the way to visit with Norma’s family. My parents and family had never met Norma and so we stopped to visit them and made it to our assigned area on the 10th day of travel.

“In the early years of our marriage, Norma would accompany me on our visits and she would often drive. Once Arthur was born, we put a porta crib in the back seat of the car and put him down to sleep between visits.

“We loved serving and helping God’s people. We worked in 11 states and pastored 20 churches over the years. Most were many miles apart. The first church circuit we had was a four-hour drive. We would often arrive home well after

midnight and the Sunday paper would have already been delivered. Many nights I would conduct a Bible study, spokesman’s club or schedule visits—and by the time I arrived back home, our children had already gone to bed.

“In the 60s, it wasn’t unusual to receive many prospective-member visit requests. For example, when we first moved to Pittsburgh there were 90 letters requesting pastoral visits. It was decided to do a baptizing tour to visit all these people. We invited over half of them to attend church services and started baptism counseling with them. The others we counseled and revisited all of them again. We moved every four years to a new church area.

“Having a godly, converted wife is one of the greatest blessings you can have. Norma loved all the members wherever we served and helped me to be a better minister with her feedback. Ever

caring, she has written and sent over 10,000 letters to members over the years!

“I have learned many lessons over the years from many difficult Church situations and splits:

- Power can corrupt.
- Ego and pride lead to rebellion.
- If you begin to think you know better than anyone else—beware!
- Remember: any office is an opportunity to serve and help others.
- Don’t forget to teach the fundamental doctrines of the Bible.
- Always be willing to serve in lesser positions.
- Stay close to God in prayer and Bible study.
- Be willing to admit when you are wrong.

“Norma and I have made thousands of friends over the last 64 years. We deeply love all of you and respect your service to God.” **UN**

Local Church News

Chattanooga Congregation Honors Holladays

The Chattanooga UCG congregation honored Roy and Norma Holladay for over 60 years of service in the ministry on Pentecost, June 1, 2025. Mr. Holladay was ordained on Pentecost in 1964, and he and his wife have faithfully served the brethren for over 60 years of ministry and continue to serve even in retirement here in Chattanooga. There was a slideshow presentation showcasing the Holladays through the years. Mr. and Mrs. Peter and Terri Eddington visited from Cincinnati to make a special presentation to the Holladays on behalf of the General Conference of Elders. Everyone enjoyed a cake reception and potluck afterward.

The Holladays have served

in congregations throughout the United States, including in Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Illinois, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee.

Roy Holladay was instrumental in the founding of the United Church of God, serving on the transitional board and later on the Council of Elders for nine years (acting as chairman for four-plus years). Mr. Holladay was the United Church of God president for three years (May 2002-July 2005). Over the years he was an ABC instructor and was a festival coordinator for nine years.

Mr. and Mrs. Holladay also celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary two days later on June 3, 2025. They have



five sons and 13 grandchildren. They currently reside in Ooltewah, Tennessee.

Brian Krueger



L-R: Terri and Peter Eddington, Roy and Norma Holladay



L-R: Len Martin, Nissa Hall, Ryan Hall, Tim Peabworth

May Council of Elders Meeting

The Council of Elders held its May meeting from May 6-8, 2025. On the Tuesday immediately following the General Conference of Elders meeting, the Council met at the Holiday Inn, with several interested elders and their wives attending. On the following days, meetings moved to the home office. All 12 Council members met in person, along with Church administrative staff. Additionally, Council member-elect, Gary Petty, attended.

Although the meetings in-

cluded the usual reports from chairmen of the Council’s standing committees and review of the General Conference of Elders that had just occurred, a major item of business was to complete the process for selecting a new president of UCG.

When John Elliott took the office of president, he was required to resign his seat on the Council. Peter Eddington took that seat, as the nominee next in line according to the balloting during the recent GCE meeting.

The Council also gave at-

tention to an educational paper on marriage, to ordination requests and to a report on compensation.

At the end of the meetings, the Council formally thanked departing members John Elliott and Mario Seigle for their service, as well as Ryan Hall, who concluded three years of service as council reporter. A final item of business was to populate the Council’s standing committees in preparation for the coming year of conducting business.

Frank Dunkle

by Lena VanAusdle

In May 2024, Good Works received a request for funds to deepen an existing borehole well, provide a reserve water tank and help install an irrigation system in Zimbabwe. The family was facing water scarcity due to an ongoing drought, resulting in food insecurity. With the ability to access more water, they anticipated being able to irrigate their farm as well as supply water to members of the village.

Now that the work has been completed, the farm is seeing excellent results, with bountiful crops and water for the farmers and their community.

From Douglas Kachilima (a farmer in Zimbabwe):

“We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the support provided by Good Works for our borehole deepening project. The funds availed to us have been instrumental in transforming our farming endeavors and improving access to clean water for our family and village.

“Our initial plan was to deepen the borehole (from 40 meters [131 feet] to 80 meters [262 feet]), install additional panels for our 0.75 HP pump, reserve tank and stand installation, sprinkler irrigation installation and casing for the well. Upon assessing our water needs for commercial farming, we realized that our existing 0.75 HP pump (which pumps 1,700 liters per hour) would not be sufficient. We decided to upgrade to a 2HP pump



A farm building



A promising start



Construction underway



A field watered from the enhanced well



New growth on the farm



A basket of fruit

that can pump 6,000 liters per hour and has the ability to supply eight sprinklers.

“We initiated corn farming, aiming to irrigate our crops. The pump is working effectively, and we are currently establishing vegetable gardens and expanding the fruit tree orchard, which now has 216 different fruit trees.

“The abundant water supply has also brought new opportunities; a company involved in contract farming for mangetout (French for ‘eat all’ or specially snow peas) and sugar snaps for export to Europe has con-

sidered partnering with us pending fulfillment of certain requirements, such as fencing and drip irrigation. This development has the potential to further our farming endeavors and economic prospects.

“Our next step is to install a pressure tank, pressure gauge and switch for automatic pump control, enabling the pump to switch on and off when taps are turned on.

“My family and community appreciate the support Good Works gave us. Your contribution has made an impact on our community.” **UN**



Children getting water from the well

Do You Have An Idea for a Project?

Did you know that you can submit an idea for a Good Works project?

If you have a great idea for a project, please follow these steps:

1. Gather all relevant information.
2. Get approval from your local pastor.
3. To submit a proposal, fill out this form: forms.gle/z5KBRs48FuUFe76F
4. Proposal deadlines are November 30 (for projects taking place between February and September) and May 31 (for projects taking place between October and March).

When choosing projects to support, we adhere to the following prioritization:

1. Improving living conditions/quality of life for brethren. This will include projects that provide water, food, housing, disaster relief, long-term income opportunities, and need-based leadership training.
2. Stipend for essential volunteer travel.
3. Buildings and vehicles for international congregations in need.
4. Start-up funding for international camps.
5. Community outreach.

Contribute today by sharing your project idea!



Dallas-Fort Worth Family Regional Weekend



This March, the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas congregations hosted the Family Regional Weekend with the theme, "Choose Life." Over 320 brethren from 15 states and Canada gathered to cultivate meaningful relationships, deepen their faith and enjoy memorable moments together.

The weekend kicked off with a service project at Feed My Starving Children on Friday afternoon, followed by a scrumptious charcuterie and dessert social. On the Sabbath, teen and young adult hospitality hours preceded interactive preteen, teen, young adult and general Bible studies related to Deuter-



onomy 30. Jorge de Campos facilitated the general Bible study on "Our Choices and Our Heart;" Jay Ledbetter, the young adult study, "Do This and You Will Live;" and Brian Hoselton, the teen study, titled "Death and Life are in the Power of the Tongue."

After lunch, Gary Petty's sermon, "Choose Life," expounded

further on the personal sacrifices and rewards of following God's Way. Musical highlights included hymn accompaniment by a multigenerational instrumental ensemble and special music by teens and young adults from various states. Graduating seniors were honored in a slideshow presenta-

tion. Attendees also interacted more with all four speakers in a discussion panel after services.

The Vintage Hollywood themed prom was attended by 70 teens who enjoyed a catered dinner, photo booth and dancing to music with Matthew Puckett serving as DJ. Meanwhile, 29 young adults were bussed to a house party for a cookout, games and dancing. The remaining brethren dined together and socialized or danced while preteens enjoyed different activity stations. On Sunday, brethren gathered to fellowship and play volleyball and basketball.

Thank you to all who attended and whose service helped make the weekend such a success!

Mark your calendars for next year's DFW Regional Weekend, scheduled for March 20-22, 2026!

Pedro and Jeannette Reinoso

Two Celebrations Honor Youth and Graduates

The St. Louis, Missouri congregation recently celebrated the youth and their accomplishments.

On April 29, 18 children were awarded certificates for participating in Sabbath school. This was followed by special music as they sang "Books of the Bible" with Jelly. Afterward a cupcake reception was enjoyed by all.

On May 31, seven high school and college graduates were awarded gift certificates in honor of their achievements with a cupcake reception following. Katie French is a homeschool

graduate. Naomi Abraham graduated from Cape Central Senior High School. Lance Sheets graduated from Clayton High School. Lauren Sheets graduated from George Washington University. Lindsey Barnes graduated from Southeast Missouri State University.

Unable to attend were Elaina Robbins who graduated from the University of Colorado Boulder and Dani Robbins who received her diploma in biblical studies from Ambassador Bible College.

Sherrie Giddens



Teen Service Project

A dedicated group of teenagers from the North Canton, Cleveland, Youngstown and Pittsburgh congregations came together to help senior families in need through two service projects. These projects focused on spring cleaning and yard work. The teens were divided into two teams to work on the projects in two different states simultaneously.

One project took place in Pennsylvania, while the other was in Ohio. Collaborating to assist our senior members was not only fulfilling but also provided a wonderful opportunity for fellowship.

Ryan Hall



come through July 30, there has been a 5.8 percent increase in fiscal income this year, and we will end with a 4.2 percent increase in total income over last year. In fiscal year 2024 we added seven Church buildings to those owned by UCG, bringing us to a total of 20, with three more planned for 2025. Mr. Dean closed with Colossians 3:1, reminding everyone that more importantly than money, we should focus on “those things which are above.”

Address from the Chairman

The balloting was followed by a presentation by Tim Pebworth, reflecting on some of the things he’s learned so far in his year of service as chairman of the Council of Elders. He shared that: (1) The Council of Elders is made of different committees that the Council itself cannot overrule, (2) We operate as an international association, (3) Our system relies on a GCE that is engaged and (4) Despite every effort to be fair, thorough and careful, a decision can still be challenging. Tim Pebworth concluded with a Q&A session, moderated by Mike Phelps, taking questions from Menti.

Special Video Presentation

In honor of UCG’s 30th anniversary, a video presentation—former president Dennis Luker’s final address to the Council—was played for the GCE. After giving this presentation on Feb. 25, 2013, Mr. Luker became very ill and was hospitalized; he died 17 days later. Over a decade later, the Council felt this message would be valuable for the elders to review.

Dennis Luker gave seven reasons why he believed UCG would thrive in the work: (1) Because we love God with our whole heart, and God’s love never fails, (2) Because we look to Jesus Christ to lead and guide us, (3) Because we are totally committed to doing the work of God, (4) Because we strongly desire to love one another as Christ commanded, (5) Because of the fervent prayers and faithful support of thousands of brethren around the world, (6) Because of our incredibly faithful pastors and elders who are steadfast in serving the brethren and (7) Because of an incredibly dedicated and talented home office staff.

Address from Ministerial and Member Services

In his address, Steve Myers encouraged elders to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,” quoting Hebrews 10:23. He then shared some statistics about the ministry. There are 430 congregations and 396 elders around the world. There have been six retirements since last GCE and 12 new ordinations, six of which became hires to balance the number of retirees.

A recent project has been a new pastoral development program. On the pastoral dashboard, we’ve added several helpful articles which now include a quiz at the end to ensure articles are being read. We’ve held seven international con-

ferences around the world since the last GCE. Only 30 percent of visitors use a desktop computer to visit the site, while the other two-thirds are through a smartphone. Over the past year, the Church’s social media presence has been greatly enhanced. We are seeing an increase in followers, and we have multiple channels through which to reach people, including Facebook, X and Instagram.

Address from Media and Communications Services

Next, Peter Eddington provided updates on developments in the Media Department. He began with some current statistics on the work being accomplished. The team currently includes 29 employees and four contract workers.

One trend that has become quite noticeable is the shift in how people access UCG.org.

content will be available in this app, in addition to regular *BT* programs. The app will also become available on an increased number of platforms; it was formerly available only on Roku and Amazon Fire.

The final item discussed was the development of two or three more booklets. Although Scott Ashley is officially retired, he is volunteering his time towards working on these projects. We hope to announce more details in the next year or so.

Peter Eddington concluded this presentation with a Q&A session about media topics, moderated from Menti by Scott Delamater.

Special Founders’ Presentations

Hosted by Steve and Terri Buchanan, the special founders’ presentations shared reflections from those who had been a part of UCG from the beginning. After the Buchanans’ presentation, memories from Jerold and Mary Ann Aust; Steve and Melania Nutzman; Stan and Penny Martin; Paul and Jacque Smith; Larry and Karen Walker; Wayne Dunlap; Rainier Salomaa; Don Hooser; Greg and BJ Thomas; and John and Merrie Elliott were shared with the elders in attendance.

The special presentations concluded with everyone singing the hymn “United We Stand.”

Ballot Results

After these presentations, Frank Dunkle reported the results of the morning’s balloting.

- Strategic Plan—Passed
- Operation Plan—Passed
- Fiscal Budget—Passed
- Amendment 2.1.21 to Fundamental Beliefs—Not Passed
- Amendment to Bylaw 7.2.2; 7.8; 7.8.3—Passed
- Amendment to Bylaw 8.4.2—Not Passed
- Amendment to Bylaw 8.9.3—Passed

The individuals elected for the international and United States Council positions were:

- Jorge de Campos (International)
- Darris McNeely
- Gary Petty
- Rex Sexton

After a concluding prayer, Sunday finished with a group dinner and dessert reception.

International Reports

On Monday morning, a series of international reports were presented to the GCE.

New Zealand

Mike Fike provided a report on the work in New Zealand. There are two main islands in New Zealand, and about 1,000 miles of scattered brethren. Members come from a variety of cultures and countries: South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Myanmar, Holland, Tonga and Fiji, to name several. The majority don’t share English as a first language. UCG has three congregations—Auckland, Hamilton, and Christchurch—and a Bible study group in the small town of Wahii. Some people live six to seven hours away from Sabbath services. We also provide sermons for a small group of 15-20 people we call “the Forest Church.” They’re not officially part of UCG, but they’ve been keeping the Sabbath for 13 years and are learning about the Holy Days. The people are hungry to learn, and each year they send their leader to the Feast of Tabernacles with UCG. In addition to these groups, we have members in Tonga who tune in to livestream Sabbath services each week, and who try to join us for the Feast in Taupo, New Zealand.

Mike Fike recounted a Passover to remember in 1968—the first to be held in New Zealand. There were a series of mishaps that nearly prevented the service from taking place, but God intervened mercifully. The bread and wine were stuck in an elevator that quit working halfway between floors. The electrician who came to work on it got electrocuted and had to go to the hospital. So, people opened a little hatch at the top of the elevator and sent someone to climb down to bring the bread and wine up. That same year, members from the South Island faced challenges with travel. They were on a ship which hit a reef, ripping off the propeller and causing the ship to sink. Grant Chick’s grandmother was on that ship, and she survived. She caught the last lifeboat off the ship and made it to Passover in time!

The New Zealand congregations have a very close association with Australia. The Australian office sends assistance to



Council chairman Tim Pebworth addresses the GCE

ferences around the world since the last GCE.

United Youth Camps has been very successful as well. Our program currently has over 1,400 campers around the world (over 920 of those are in the United States, and the rest are international).

Congregational care has been another focus over the past year. We have been producing more educational resources for children and families, including homeschooled families. Young adult initiatives have included further developing our young adults webpage, a new SMS Bible study program and a young adult weekend playbook. Women’s services have included over 40 enrichment weekends in international areas. For every part of the Body to do their share, everyone has to be involved.

Next, Steve Myers opened

Only 30 percent of visitors use a desktop computer to visit the site, while the other two-thirds are through a smartphone. Over the past year, the Church’s social media presence has been greatly enhanced. We are seeing an increase in followers, and we have multiple channels through which to reach people, including Facebook, X and Instagram.

The upcoming year will focus on several new projects. First, we will be rolling out a new style and format of *Beyond Today* programs. We’re planning a shorter program length (13 minutes) that will optimize them for YouTube, while still allowing us to meet the time constraints for TV, by airing programs in pairs of two. Long-term, we will be examining the possibilities of bringing new presenters on board.

Secondly, we are working on a new *Beyond Today*/UCG streaming app. UCG sermon

New Zealand and allows members to use resources from their office. A year and a half ago, Darris McNeely came to the Feast in New Zealand and gave three *Beyond Today* presentations, one in each of the congregations. We now have peo-

the years. Visits to prisons and nursing homes, radio and other broadcasting efforts have really grown in this country. Trinidad and Tobago hosts another congregation weekly on Chaguanas Island, Trinidad. Guyana, the only English-speaking country



Dr. Daniel and Fern Berendt attending one of the GCE seminars.

ple attending because of these presentations. A year afterwards, Steve Myers came and gave follow-up presentations. He was able to participate in the baptism ceremony for one of the people who came initially because of Darris McNeely's presentation. Other outreach efforts include a weekly airing of the *Beyond Today* program, personal responses to phone calls and a new website and landing page. Despite the challenges with serving scattered brethren, the New Zealand congregations continue to grow.

Caribbean

Representing the Caribbean work, Chuck Smith presented updates and a special video presentation for the region he pastors. In the Caribbean, there are currently 10 congregations, some brethren on scattered islands (including Grenada and Dominica) and two South American countries. The brethren are passionate about serving God.

In the Bahamas, particularly Freeport, the brethren have survived many storms. This year, they will host a Feast site for the first time in years. Jeff and Alisa Lockhart oversee the three congregations in Jamaica—a country which also hosts a Feast site. St. Lucia has grown in their preaching efforts over

in South America, joins their brethren through Zoom for church services. In this country, Good Works has helped build a reservoir to serve the brethren. As a country, Guyana's future is looking brighter, as they are now pumping more oil than Saudi Arabia.

Haiti is an area that faces tremendous struggles for the brethren. Chuck Smith took extra time to update the GCE on a truly perilous situation the brethren were undergoing. Just three weeks prior, the brethren had fled as gangs overtook their city. They took just the clothes on their backs. Church leaders were able to run money to them, while they remained in hiding, so they could buy some food and survive. At long last, with the help of the Good Works program and the results of answered prayers, we were able to put together a program to get the brethren to safety. Housing was secured and supplied with food, and in a few 5.5-hour trips, members were driven to one of the two safe zones in the country. (At the time of writing this, we are happy to provide the update that all the brethren made it safely to their new location). Following this report, Chuck Smith led the GCE in prayer for the brethren and the success of their journey.

East Africa

Next, Monte Knudson spoke about the work in East Africa—which includes Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. He began with a brief history of how the Church rebuilt in this part of the world over the past 30 years. In 1996, members of UCG visited to restart the efforts begun under Worldwide Church of God. There were about 30 in attendance for the Feast of Tabernacles that year. This was followed up with a Passover visit in 1997. When further division challenged the work, members kept the Feast themselves in three locations. Despite setbacks, they rebuilt with help from senior pastors and elders from the United States. The current senior pastor, Monte Knudson, was mentored by John Elliott, who served for many years in this region, spending as much as three weeks at a time on each trip.

The area has 189 baptized members, 29 congregations/Bible study groups, six elders and nine church halls owned by the Church (with help from Good Works). Attendance in 2025 ranged from 712 to 833. This year, we'll have one Feast site in Rwanda, three in Kenya and three in Burundi.



John and Merrie Elliott reflected on their experiences 30 years ago.

We have two people in school learning English and two others learning during the day on the job. There are a number of Church groups that want to learn more about us. MMS has been given approval to visit and teach those groups. One of the groups is on the radio once a week, making a public proclamation of their own. They keep the Sabbath and Holy Days, and while they're still learning

about tithing, they want to be a part of UCG.

Particular attention has been given to reaching out to the brethren in Burundi. The poorest country in the world, this nation is one in which very little transportation is available. Most people get around by taking a ride on the back of a truck. Fuel is only occasionally available at gas stations, and when it is, it costs about \$13 a gallon. Inflation is so high that 1 USD is equivalent to nearly 3,000 Burundian francs. UCG has collaborated with Living Church of God to meet with some of their members who haven't been visited in three years. Despite challenging circumstances, a recent baptism and a leadership meeting held in Burundi are evidence of growth in this country.

Latin America

Mario Seiglie presented next, providing updates about the Church in Latin America. We have 650 brethren in 10 countries, and 10 ministers and five deacons serving in the Spanish-speaking area. We serve 33 congregations and Bible study groups around Latin America. We have recently been working to connect brethren

of members in Latin America. The LifeNets scholarship program has awarded 40 scholarships to students from this area. Good Works and LifeNets also helped in Acapulco when a hurricane hit. Brethren live in houses with tin roofs that are easily damaged, so Hurricane Otis resulted in 10 billion dollars' worth of damage. Deacon Jesse Api, who is a licensed contractor, led the restoration project, reforming and reinforcing roofs and helping provide structure for seven families. He helped members select better materials for their homes. A year later, another hurricane hit. Jesse Api drove over 3,000 miles in his utility truck with a trailer behind it. All the construction stores had been sacked in the aftermath of the disaster, so he brought all his own tools. He worked from March 2024 to March 2025, with some help from deacon Aaron Dominguez (from Denver, Colorado), who spent two months on the project. They built eight roofs, and the work is continuing with the support of local members.

In other news, the Spanish-language website has seen 80,000 unique visitors. We have also been developing YouTube shorts to reach more people. God has truly been blessing His Church in this part of the world!

Baltics, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia

James Ginn updated the GCE on the work in the Baltic, Eastern European and Scandinavian regions. Brethren in this part of the world are scattered geographically, so much of the effort over the last six months has been to find ways to connect them. We have a new virtual Sabbath service for those who are four to eight hours apart. We also serve members through quarterly in-person visits. We've met several people who had been quietly observing God's way of life while isolated from others of the same faith. Members come from many different countries—including Latvia, Norway, Finland, Sweden and even close to the Arctic Circle!

One of our biggest projects has been to translate Church materials into the various languages of these regions. Monica Ohrian and Ludmila Wolf, both

across country borders by using Zoom to host men's and women's clubs. A regional spokesman's club meets at the office in Mexico City and welcomes additional attendees online. Youth camps are held each year in Colombia, Mexico, Chile and Guatemala. Regional conferences were held in both 2024 and 2025, including 101 people.

Good Works and LifeNets have covered many of the needs

Coping with Stress in an Increasingly Stressful World

by Dr. Roy Fouch and Steve Myers

Understanding Stress: Causes and Effects

Stress is a natural reaction to the challenges and perceived threats you encounter in life. In many cases it serves an important purpose—it can motivate you to take action, solve problems and even ensure survival in dangerous situations.

Stress can stem from external events and circumstances, such as work demands, financial pressures or unexpected life changes—things often beyond your immediate control. It can also arise from internal factors, including your thoughts, perceptions and emotional responses—areas where you do have some measure of control. How you choose to interpret and respond to these events plays a major role in the level of stress you experience.

While short-term stress can be helpful in motivat-

To reduce the risk of stress-related health issues, it's important to cultivate healthy lifestyle habits.

ing you to act, chronic or long-term stress can take a serious toll on your physical and mental health. Over time, it may contribute to health problems like heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure and depression.

Long-Term Stress and its Impact on Health

To reduce the risk of stress-related health issues, it's important to cultivate healthy lifestyle habits. Here are a few key practices that can help manage stress and support overall well-being:

- **Prioritize sleep:** Aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night. Proper rest is essential for emotional regulation, brain function and physical health.
- **Stay active and spend time outdoors:** Engage in at least 30 minutes of exercise, three to five times a week. Physical activity boosts the production of serotonin and endorphins, brain chemicals that naturally combat anxiety and depression.
- **Eat well:** A balanced, nutritious diet supports brain chemistry and improves the coping mechanisms in the brain. Nutrient-rich foods help stabilize mood and energy levels.
- **Avoid addictive behaviors:** Unhealthy coping mechanisms—such as pornography, excessive alcohol consumption, illicit drug use, gambling and compulsive shopping—may offer temporary relief but often worsen stress and lead to long-term harm. Seek healthy ways to process and manage emotional challenges.

Navigating Difficult Times

How do you bring peace and calm into difficult situations? In times of stress and difficulty, it's essential to cultivate a godly mindset—one that stands in contrast to the anxiety-driven attitudes promoted by the world and our adversary, Satan the devil. Developing spiritual habits rooted in faith can help bring genuine peace, even in the midst of life's storms.

Seven Ways to Find Calm in Times of Stress

Here are seven ways to bring calm and clarity into challenging situations:



Ron Lach/Pexels

How do you bring peace and calm into difficult situations?

1. Trust in God

Place your confidence in God's power, wisdom and timing. Remember that He is in control, even when circumstances feel overwhelming. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

2. Focus on the present moment

Avoid getting lost in regrets about the past or anxiety over the future. Jesus taught not to worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). Staying present helps reduce fear and increases awareness of God's constant care.

3. Seek God's peace

God offers a peace that surpasses human understanding (Philippians 4:6-7). Take time to pray, be still and ask Him for the calm that only He can give.

4. Develop a grateful attitude

Practicing gratitude shifts your focus away from problems and toward the blessings in your life. Thankfulness nurtures contentment and renews the mind. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:15)

5. Let go of burdens

You're not meant to carry everything alone. Cast your cares on God (1 Peter 5:7), trusting that He cares for you and will provide the strength you need.

6. Meditate on God's Word

Scripture is a source of truth, comfort and direction. Reflecting on God's promises helps realign your thinking with His perspective, especially in stressful times. "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways" (Psalm 119:15)

7. Find support in the Church

You are not alone. Lean on your spiritual family for encouragement, prayer, and practical help. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Reframing Your Thoughts: The Power of Faith in Reducing Stress

Anxiety often arises when your brain perceives a threat—whether real or imagined. The body's stress response is triggered either way. That's why learning to reframe your thoughts—to see challenges through a lens of faith and truth—can be so powerful. By intentionally replacing anxious thoughts with positive, faith-filled thoughts from God's Word, we can reduce or even eliminate stress, strengthening both our emotional and spiritual resilience. **UN**

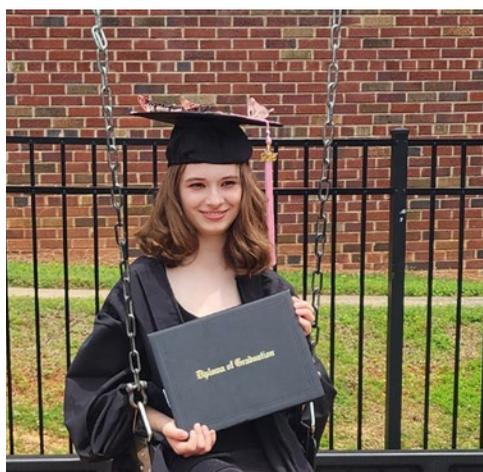
Light of Hope Helpline



Aamir Suhail/Unsplash

If you are struggling to cope with stress in your life and need additional guidance, please know you're not alone. You can contact the Light of Hope Helpline at (888) 241-6211 or email us at hope@ucg.org.

This confidential resource, provided by the United Church of God, connects individuals with licensed mental health professionals within the Church who are ready to offer support and help you find constructive, godly ways to address your challenges.



Erika L. Ewing-Barry



Theron Baughman



Bella Grace Benedict



Juliana Beohm



Adam Joseph Dupuis



Mara Hayes



Astrid Held



Georgia Held

High School Graduates

Erika L. Ewing-Barry

Erika Ewing-Barry of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, daughter of Shawna and Matthew Barry, graduated this year. She is an ambitious and dedicated scholar. Her passion for learning is only matched by her enthusiasm for her future career in cosmetic dermatology.

From an early age, Erika has exhibited exceptional artistic talent, spending her free time drawing. This creative outlet served as a form of self-expression but also reflects her attention to detail and appreciation for aesthetics—qualities that will benefit her in her future endeavors.

Erika is not only focused on her academic and artistic passions; she is also a devoted equestrian. She enjoys riding her Friesian horse, which provides her with a sense of joy and connection to nature. The responsibility and dedication required in caring for her horse have instilled in her a strong work ethic and a commitment to excellence.

Rooted in her faith, Erika expresses a profound love for God, which has played a significant role in shaping her values and guiding her. Her spirituality serves as a source of strength and inspiration, motivating her to pursue her dreams.

As Erika prepares to embark on the next chapter of her life, her combination of creativity, dedication and a strong moral compass poise her to make a meaningful impact in her future.

Theron Baughman

Theron Baughman, son of Philip and Stephanie Baughman, from the Dallas, Texas congregation, graduated from Laus Deo Academy. Theron achieved the rank of Eagle Scout after a 12-year scouting career. Theron enjoys volleyball, calisthenics, participating in young adult activities with the Church and playing video games with friends. Along with friends, Theron has begun a clothing line with a focus on Christian-friendly design which he hopes to expand. Theron intends to pursue a business degree and aspires to own his own business.

Bella Grace Benedict

Bella Grace Benedict, daughter of Troy and Tammy Benedict, graduated from Rockwall-Heath High School with honors and a 3.67 GPA on May 28, 2025. She received recognition for her GPA and for her participation in two years of dual credit and AP courses, health occupation courses and advanced fine arts (choir).

After applying to over 50 schools, and receiving over two million dollars in scholarship offers, Bella is choosing to continue her education close to home. She wants to further her service to her local Dallas, Texas congregation, and chose her school based on total cost of attendance and proximity to Dallas.

After graduation, Bella plans to pursue her passion for nursing, leveraging the strong foundation she's built through

dual credit and AP courses. She will complete the remaining prerequisites next year, then join the Registered Nursing Program at Trinity Valley College.

Her dedication and hard work will undoubtedly serve her well as she embarks on this exciting journey. In her spare time she enjoys singing, traveling, spending time with her family and volunteering in her congregation and the UYC camp system.

Juliana Beohm

Tom and Rachel Beohm are pleased to announce the graduation of their daughter, Juliana Beohm, from Evergreen High School in Vancouver, Washington this June. Jules graduated with a 4.0 GPA, in the top 10% of her state, and received an AP Scholar award. Though she worked hard in all subjects, her favorite part of the school day has always been the choir. Jules also loves singing in choir for church services in the Salem, Oregon congregation.

During her senior year, Jules attended a technical academy part time in the Culinary Arts program and earned several certifications, including ones in food safety and hospitality. She plans to attend culinary school in the future after taking a gap year to work in a restaurant. She loves to bake treats for family and friends, experiment with new recipes and practice her chopping skills—don't get in her way!

In addition to cooking and singing, Jules loves dance lessons and joined her high school dance team. She volunteers

at school with tutoring and new student orientation. At church, Jules enjoys the many teen activities, Bible studies and service projects the Salem congregation organizes and she serves at preteen camp Ochoco every year. She's looking forward to attending Northwest Camp this summer. You will find her on the dance floor!

Adam Joseph Dupuis

Adam Joseph Dupuis of Greensboro, North Carolina, son of Jason and Rebecca Dupuis, graduated from high school this spring. Adam has been home-schooled the past two years and attended HPHE (High Point Home Educators) for classes. He enjoyed playing basketball with NC Heat. After graduation he plans to pursue a career in welding.

Mara Hayes

Mara Hayes, daughter of Adrienne and Terrance Hayes, graduated on the honor roll, with her certificate of biliteracy and as a certified nursing assistant. She attends the Spokane, Washington congregation and loves attending the Oregon women's weekend.

Mara is interested in medicine and plans to double major in chemistry and biology as a pre-med student. She hopes to get her PhD-MD degree, and would like to attend ABC sometime in the future.

Continued on next page



Max Hoselton



Karson Morales



Melody Porter



Lance Sheets



Jordan Warrington



Lydia Ruth Weaner



Gloria Williams



Hannah Wubben

Continued from page 9

Astrid Held

Astrid Held, daughter of Jon Held and Christina Nell Roemer, graduated from homeschool with dual enrollment in Delaware County Community College. She was on the DCCC President's List from fall of 2023 onward.

Astrid attends the Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania congregation. She serves as a counselor for Camp Seven Mountains and occasionally gives Bible studies for the little kids in her congregation.

Astrid's interests include crocheting, reading and fencing. She also juggles and can almost juggle four balls at once.

After graduation, Astrid plans to attend Willamette University in Salem, Oregon this fall.

Georgia Held

Georgia Held, daughter of Christina Nell Roemer and Jonathan Held, graduated this spring. She was homeschooled and took dual enrollment classes at Delaware County Community College, where she has been on the President's list since 2023.

Georgia attends Church in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania and enjoys baking for church and counseling at Camp Seven Mountains. Georgia enjoys reading, playing piano and fencing. She plans to attend Willamette University in the fall.

Max Hoselton

Max Hoselton, son of Dr. Brian and Carole Hoselton, of the Fulton, Missouri congregation, graduated from high school. Over the past four years, Max had the opportunity to run track, in which he ran sprints in the 100-meter, 200-meter and 400-meter—finishing this year with school records and competitive times. Max also achieved the MVP Award for track this year and graduated with Magna Cum Laude and an honors diploma.

This fall, Max will be attending Moberly Area Community College (MACC) online for one year to achieve his associates degree. Afterwards, he will be attending Ambassador Bible College in the fall of 2026.

Max enjoys singing and collecting watches—he has 15 watches in his collection so far! He also enjoys songleading at church, working hard to stay close to God daily, as well as working out to take care of his health. Finally, he enjoys working on an at-home online Amazon business and his own personal auto-detailing business year-round.

After graduating from Ambassador Bible College, Max will attend college at Liberty University and complete his bachelor's degree in business. He hopes to pursue a career in business management, specifically in the area of either advertising or marketing; just a strong job to build a family and be successful and happy.

Karson S. Morales

Karson S. Morales, son of Jon and Rebecca Davies of Buford, Georgia, graduated from high school. He received the academic honors diploma with distinction and cords awarded for science, technology and fine arts. He has received the Hope Scholarship and SCAD Scholarship. His hobbies include drawing and digital art. Karson's plan is to attend the Savannah College of Art and Design at Savannah.

Melody Porter

Melody Porter, daughter of Clint and Joy Porter, and granddaughter of John and Linda LaBissoniere, graduated Magna Cum Laude from West Clermont High School on May 24, 2025. She was able to take part in dual enrollment throughout her high school career in order to finish her first year of college at the University of Cincinnati while still in high school. During her high school years she participated in many United Youth camps, and also served as a counselor at preteen Camp Buckeye. She also taught Sabbath school for four years.

She completed four years of the Cincinnati East Congregation Teen Speech Club, serving for two years as the club secretary. She participated in the school track team, as well as a church volleyball league. She also worked part time for all four years of high school, as well as teaching piano lessons in her home. She loves to sing, and to create and sew her own dress designs. This fall she will

be attending Ambassador Bible College. She is a delight to her family and we look forward to seeing God's path for her.

Lance Sheets

Lance Sheets, son of Dennis and Joan Sheets of the St. Louis, Missouri congregation, graduated from Clayton High School on May 21, 2025. Lance was involved at CHS in the Robohounds Robotics team 4500 as a builder, played Varsity Lacrosse for two years and JV Golf for two years. He played the viola in the CHS Concert Orchestra. He was selected by the Mayor of Clayton to be on the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. He received his Boy Scout (Scouting America) Eagle Award in May 2025. Lance has been a member of the St. Louis Curling Club for eight years playing recreationally in the adult league. He has attended UYC at Pinecrest, Cotubic, Southwest and Winter Camp. He was previously a lifeguard for two years for the City of Clayton and currently works for Waterway Car Wash.

Lance intends to become a commercial airline pilot and is working on his private pilot's license now. He intends to complete his bachelor's degree in college after finishing his Certified Flight Instructor license. For anyone who knows Lance, his great love is Formula 1 racing and tracking exotic cars.

Jordan Warrington

Jordan Warrington, son of Alan and Montse Warrington, graduated from

high school with honors. He earned certifications in Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop and got a head start on university due to dual enrollment.

Jordan attends the Atlanta, Georgia congregation. His hobbies include reading, studying and applying God's Word the Bible; basketball; graphic design; video editing; video games and hiking.

Jordan is going to take his talents to Kennesaw State University where he will be majoring in Mechanical Engineering. Jordan shares, "I plan to shine my light at KSU and hopefully spread the gospel."

Lydia Ruth Weaner

Lydia Ruth Weaner graduated summa cum laude from Gettysburg area High School. Lydia is the daughter of Alan and Christina Weaner. She attends the York, Pennsylvania congregation and often plays cello for hymns. She participated in a regional youth symphony and received her high school's Director's Award for Orchestra.

At the state competition for the Technology Student Association, she won an award for Computer Aided Design Architecture. She placed in the top 10 for architecture projects in the past two years. She began a semester-long archi-

tecture internship at a local firm, and received her drone flight license.

Lydia also enjoys crochet, reading, playing the cello, riding her bike, doing architecture and participating in school clubs. She enjoys camping and hiking with family and friends. She really enjoyed being a camper at Woodland, Winter Camp and Cotubic, but also has great memories as a preteen counselor at Seven Mountains. Attending the Midwest teen prom, Winter Family Weekend and the Portsmouth dance are other highlights.

After a full summer of travel, Lydia plans to attend Penn State Main Campus this fall with a major in architectural engineering.

Gloria Williams

Gloria Williams, daughter of CJ and Tina Williams of the Seattle-Bellevue, Washington congregation, is a dedicated and accomplished student who graduated in June 2025 from Cedar Park Christian School in Bothell, Washington. Gloria ranked in the top 10 percent of her class as well as in the entire state of Washington, and exemplifies academic excellence, leadership and service.

Gloria has been an active member of the National Honor Society from 2022

to 2025, consistently demonstrating her commitment to serving her community. She also participated in HOSA—Future Health Professionals, preparing for a future career in dentistry.

In pursuit of hands-on experience, Gloria has been enrolled at WaNIC Skill Center, where she became a certified dental assistant. She also holds certifications in CPR/First Aid and Basic Life Support, reflecting her preparedness and passion for healthcare.

Throughout her years growing up in the local congregation, she has grown from a Sabbath School student into volunteering, serving both in Bellevue and Burlington, Washington over the past few years. She has attended UCG preteen summer and teen winter camps.

Outside the classroom, Gloria has been a cheerleader for eight seasons, serving as captain for the last three years. Her leadership, enthusiasm and dedication earned her multiple awards and the admiration of her peers and coaches.

This fall, Gloria will attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she has been accepted into the Honors College. She plans to double major in dental hygiene and marketing.

Hannah Wubben

Hannah Wubben, daughter of Craig and Brenda Wubben, of the Salem, Oregon congregation, will be graduating from high school this summer. She has been homeschooled since kindergarten.

During her junior year, Hannah took a seasonal sales position at Columbia Sportswear. Following the job's end, she got a new job at McDonald's. She has been working there for about a year. She enjoyed saving money to attend the Feast in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico last year (for the first time on her own).

In her free time, Hannah enjoys playing piano, drawing/painting (she has won a couple of art awards), sewing and singing. She serves in her local congregation through singing in adult and teen choirs. She also directs the children's choir and a girls' choir. This summer, Hannah will be attending teen camp as a camper for the last time. She also plans to serve at preteen camp for the first time.

As for fall career-related plans, Hannah is currently undecided. She has lots of ideas though! In the next few years, she hopes to attend Ambassador Bible College. With God's guidance, she hopes to choose the right path forward as she enters this next stage of life. **UN**

Ambassador Bible College Class of 2025 Graduation



The Ambassador Bible College class of 2025

On Sunday, May 18, 2025, the Ambassador Bible College class of 2025 graduated. This 26th commencement ceremony included 21 students from all over the United States, one from Jamaica and six from Australia. After the graduation processional, Dr. Eric Mohr opened the ceremony with prayer. This was followed by the student discourse, given by the student body president, Matthew Kusz.

The ABC choir performed "Rejoice and Sing Praise" by Joel Raney, which was directed by Mr. Ken Shoemaker. They followed this with a farewell song, "Vienna"

by Billy Joel, which was directed by Mr. Chad Browning. Following the music, Dr. Frank Dunkle gave an inspiring message addressed to the graduating class.

Mr. Aaron Dean introduced the award presentations. Mr. Steve Myers presented the Ambassador Award for Excellence to Matthew Kusz and Sarah Jones. Mr. Victor Kubik, a Council of Elders member, presented the Council of Elders Service Award to Darius Keeney and Avery McDonald.

Mr. Darris McNeely called the graduates to the stage to receive their diplomas from Mr. Steve Myers, Dean of Fac-



L-R: Sarah Jones, Steve Myers, Matthew Kusz



L-R: Darius Keeney, Victor Kubik, Avery McDonald

ulty, and Dr. Frank Dunkle, Coordinator. The ceremony was closed with prayer by Mr. Chris Rowland.

The ABC staff and alumni honored the newly-graduated class with a celebration, including a balloon sendoff,

delicious cake and photo opportunities with their families.

If you, or someone you know, are interested in attending ABC, you can learn more at abc.ucg.org or email:

abc_admissions@ucg.org

College Graduates

Lindsey Barnes

Lindsey Barnes graduated summa cum laude from Southeast Missouri State University in May, earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, majoring in Financial Economics with a minor in Business Analytics. While in school, she attended the Cape Girardeau, Missouri congregation. She was on the President's List and Dean's List and became a member of "Beta Gamma Sigma International Business Honor Society" and "Omicron Delta Epsilon International Honor Society for Economics." She was recognized by her faculty with both the "Professional Promise Award" and the "Outstanding Economics Student Award." Lindsey was president of the "Women in Economics and Business Club" and completed an internship with Morgan Stanley. She will be seeking a career as a financial advisor.



Lindsey Barnes



Caroline Foraker



Sophie Parman



Lauren Sheets



Eddie J. Terry

Caroline Foraker

Caroline Foraker, from the Cincinnati East, Ohio congregation, graduated with both an associates in arts and an applied associate of science in business administration from Gateway Community and Technical College. She was the graduate of the year at Gateway KCTCS for being the only business student with a 4.0 GPA.

Caroline's main hobby is sewing. She can make almost any article of clothing from just a picture. She drafts her own patterns. In addition to sewing, she enjoys baking, painting, soapmaking and many other artistic endeavors.

While completing her degrees, Caroline has been working full time for the United Church of God in the mail and donation processing department. She plans to continue working for UCG, as she has been for the past six years. She hopes to use her talents to better serve her local congregation.

Sophie Parman

Sophie Parman of the Seattle, Washington congregation graduated summa cum laude from Northwest University with her bachelor's degree in communication studies. She achieved a 3.97 GPA, and won the single award for her degree, along with a certificate recognizing outstanding student leadership.

Sophie plans to stay in Washington, and is so thankful to the Church brethren for being a constant support in her life. She will be staffing at Northwest Camp in July.

Sophie is currently nannying part time, and is wrapping up an internship with The Beyond Project, a nonprofit

organization based in Los Angeles. She hopes to pursue a career in this industry, looking for a position that allows her to engage a community that provides humanitarian aid to those in need.

Lauren Sheets

Lauren Sheets, daughter of Dennis and Joan Sheets of the St. Louis, Missouri congregation, graduated from George Washington University in Washington D.C. on May 18 and 19, 2025. She received a bachelor's of science (BS) degree in neuroscience. GWU is the only school in the country allowed to hold commencement ceremonies on the

National Mall in front of the Washington Monument.

During college, Lauren's time was bookmarked by three summers of work in labs at Washington University School of Medicine (St. Louis): two summers in the biology lab of Dr. Hotchkiss, contributing towards the publication, "Temporal Changes in Innate and Adaptive Immunity During Sepsis as Determined by ELISpot," and again this past summer in the immunology lab of Dr. Diamond researching the enteric nervous system response to the West Nile Virus infection for an upcoming publication.

Lauren likes to travel, try new restaurants, do experimental cooking, watch Formula 1 racing and play her violin. She plans to take a gap year before returning to school to work on a graduate degree in a medical field.

Eddie J. Terry

Eddie J. Terry of the Columbus, Georgia congregation graduated with his master's degree in counseling. He attended the Albany State University School of Education, focusing on vocational rehabilitation counseling.

Eddie's other interests include singing, dancing and cooking. He plans to obtain employment in the counseling field and potentially to pursue a doctorate degree. **UN**

Ambassador Bible College Continuing Education 2025



The ABC Continuing Education class of 2025

The Ambassador Bible College Continuing Education Program took place from May 19-23, 2025 at the home office. Of the 33 participants, 11 attended for the first time. Students came from 13 different states.

The Continuing Education program consists of excerpts from the ABC curriculum, featuring all of the resident faculty. Additionally, President John Elliott met with the participants to take questions, and he taught a class on the Book of James. Along with the classes, participants enjoyed considerable time in fellowship, spending time with established friends and making new ones.

Frank Dunkle

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with Ambassador
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Learn God's Word
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Make friends and memories
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Prove the truth of the
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are available based on need.

Apply today at
abc.ucg.org/applications

Have you been considering Ambassador Bible College, but haven't decided when or how to fit it into your education plan? An interview with some graduates from the ABC class of 2025 reveals how this nine-month academic program is the perfect way to boost your spiritual growth, build lifelong friendships—and provide a firm footing for all your career and life endeavors!

Heidi Braun



Kade Brunick

Kade is from Garretson, South Dakota. His plan after ABC is to work as a machine operator before going to school at Dakota State University for a Cyber Operations degree.

About ABC, Kade says, “On top of being a great place to grow your spiritual life and habits, it’s also a great place to network with lots of great people in the class, faculty and surrounding areas.”



Leah Charles

After ABC, Leah’s plans include attending Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania to obtain a degree in elementary education with a certificate in special education. She hopes to work in an elementary special education classroom.

Leah shared the following about her ABC experience: “I’ve learned very helpful Bible studying habits and history. I’ve gained important skills and tools that will help me throughout life and with my relationship with God. I’ve also met so many people and made so many friendships!”

Ruth Collins

Ruth, a local ABC student from the Cincinnati North, Ohio congregation, plans to continue serving in her local congregation and assist with caring for various family members.

About ABC, Ruth says, “It is an opportunity at any age even after retirement. It is a great opportunity to start to build your foundation out of high school or at the beginning of one’s retirement years.”

Jason Earles

Following ABC, Jason returned home to Pennsylvania and plans to begin college to get a degree in civil engineering. He shares the following reasons to go to ABC: “You create so many new friendships and get to go through all of the books of the Bible.”



Andrew Holladay

Andrew is from the local Cincinnati East, Ohio congregation, where he remained after graduation. Following ABC, he got married. His next goal is to go to trade school to learn welding.

Andrew recommends that students attend ABC so they can learn about God and gain new perspectives on life.

Anthea Jennings

After spending the summer in the United States, Anthea plans to return home to Australia. She plans to get a job and explore possible career options.

Reflecting on her ABC experience, Anthea shares, “It’s a wonderful environment to build up strength spiritually, and the friends are awesome!”

Sarah Jones

Sarah is from Fort Collins, Colorado. After returning from ABC, Sarah plans to serve at some UYC summer camps, resume her job at ChickFilA and head to community college,

where she can finish some core classes as she figures out her next steps.

Sarah shares the following advice with those considering ABC: “ABC is an incredible experience for many reasons. It’s an amazing chance to study God’s Word in a way you never



have before, and probably won’t be able to again. It’s nine months of rigorous study of the Bible, being taught by numerous ministers who want to help you grow in knowledge, wisdom and faith, and all of this is alongside others of likemind. It’s a great way to help ground yourself in God’s Word, whether you’re fresh out of high school or in your 60s. One of my favorite things about classes was all the historical context behind the different books of the Bible, and the way a verse can take on new meaning once you understood what it would’ve meant to those reading it, and what it can mean for us today. You’ll form incredible friendships with those around you, and the shared experiences help bring you so close together that you’ll be like family when it’s all said and done. It’s busy, and can be overwhelming, but at the end of the day, I personally feel that it’s one of the best experiences you could have.”



Darius Keeney

After ABC, Darius returned to his home congregation in Indianapolis. He’s still deciding how to pursue his career and further education.

He shares, “It is very likely the best education program on the Bible that you can receive.

It is an incredible opportunity to make deep friendships in the faith.”

Alyssa Kubik

Alyssa’s plans after ABC include attending Indiana University Indianapolis to study psychology and human behavior. She plans to help those struggling with addiction, abuse and mental illness.

Alyssa says a reason to attend ABC is “to build a foundation in the Word so you can bring it with you into every aspect of your life, good and bad.”

Devon Leslie

After ABC, Devon plans to attend Pellissippi State Community College, a community college where he will study for an associates’ degree.

Devon shared, “It’s an opportunity to meet others and learn about God, as well as to learn how to serve in ways you wouldn’t have thought of before.”



Hannah Parada

Hannah joined her family in Des Moines, Iowa after ABC. However, her next plans involve moving to Pennsylvania and attending Elizabethtown College (the same school as Leah Charles!) and earning a doctorate in occupational therapy.

Hannah says, “ABC is about the closest you can get to the Millennium in this life, besides the Feast of course. Spending nine months with a group of classmates and faculty who all believe what you believe creates this pocket of peace that you really can’t get anywhere else. Everything about ABC is designed to help you grow and learn if you put your heart into it. I can honestly say that it has changed my life forever, but there’s only so much you can read about it before you just have to experience it yourself. Go to ABC!”

Dani Robbins

After ABC, Dani moved back to O’Fallon, Illinois in the Metro East congregation. Her next plans include getting baptized, working and attending community college.

Reasons Dani provides for attending ABC are: “You learn so much, not only about God’s Word, but you learn valuable life lessons and make lifelong friends and memories. It’s a great foundation to set before heading out on your own into the harsh world.”



Michael Taylor

Michael’s next steps include heading to Baltimore, Maryland for an electrical apprenticeship program. He also plans to serve his home congregation in multiple ways, such as giving sermonettes, leading songs and helping where needed.

He says, “ABC is an amazing learning experience diving into the whole Bible for nine months.”



Declan Watson

After ABC, Declan returned to his home in Melbourne, Australia, where he will continue studying at his university and reconnect with family, friends and his local congregation.

Declan recommends attending ABC “to learn why we believe what we believe in a structured and rewarding way.”

Next Steps

To sign up for ABC and enjoy these amazing benefits, go to abc.ucg.org/applications.



**Erik Helwig
and Patricia Iiams**

March 23, 2025

Weddings

Erik Helwig and Patricia Iiams

Kody Kinsella and Jennifer Iiams

With great joy, Mike and Joyce Iiams of Post Falls, Idaho announce the marriage of their twin daughters, Jennifer and Patricia, in a unique double wedding ceremony on March 23, 2025. Jennifer married Kody Kinsella, son of Carl and Kathy Kinsella of Albany, Oregon. Patricia married Erik Helwig, son of Mike and Karrie Helwig of Rockford, Illinois.

The ceremony took place at a wood barn venue in the beautiful Pacific Northwest, just outside of Seattle, Washington. The reception embraced a rustic theme, with subtle personal touches reflecting each couple's personality. Family and friends from across the United States came to celebrate this unique occasion. Many were surprised to see old friends they hadn't connected with in years. Looking around the room, one could feel the joy of reunion, gratitude and love from so many people whose lives had intersected with one or both of the couples—all gathered under one roof.

Jennifer and Kody now reside just north of Seattle in Lake Stevens, Washington, while Patricia and Erik call Rockford, Illinois home. This special day marked not only the beginning of two marriages, but also the beautiful bond between two sisters, who began a new chapter of life together, side by side.

Andrew Holladay and Francina Anzo

Andrew Mark Holladay (son of Mark and Lori Holladay) and Francina Collette Anzo

Kody Kinsella and Jennifer Iiams

March 23, 2025

(daughter of Thomas and Anna Anzo) got married on May 19, 2025. The couple originally met through a friend. Andrew and Francina Holladay live in Ohio.

Keith Lippincott and Elizabeth Bissessar

On May 18, 2025, Keith Lippincott and Elizabeth Bissessar were united in marriage at the picturesque Anderson Lodge in Ariel, Washington. Joined by just over 140 guests, the couple celebrated this joyful occasion with family and friends from both the United States and Trinidad and Tobago, making it a truly special celebration.

On the day of the wedding, the weather forecast predicted rain; it rained most of the morning and there was a brief shower just before the ceremony. But moments later, the skies cleared, the sun broke through, and the outdoor ceremony was able to proceed as planned—surrounded by lush greenery and chairs filled with family and friends. The rest of the evening remained clear and calm—a tangible blessing and a memorable answer to prayer on their wedding day.

Elizabeth, the bride, works in the Media Department of the United Church of God and will continue serving in this role remotely. Keith, the groom, works in the field of software consulting. The couple looks forward to beginning their new life together with Christ at the center of their home and relationship.

They plan to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Hawaii this year—their first Feast as husband and wife. The couple is very grateful to enter into this new chapter of life together.

David Styer and Hannah Del Castillo

David Styer, son of Tony and Loni Styer, and Hannah



**Andrew Holladay
and Francina Anzo**

April 27, 2025

Del Castillo, daughter of Austin Del Castillo and Marcia Collum, married on April 27, 2025. The venue was the Bibb White Bluff Civic Center in White Bluff, Tennessee.

The couple met during a young adult canyoneering activity at the 2023 Feast of Tabernacles in St. George, Utah. They now reside in Northern Kentucky, in the city of Dayton, about 30 minutes from the UCG home office.

Anniversaries

Harvey and Terri Werner

Harvey and Terri (Chambers) Werner of the Portland, Oregon congregation celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Pentecost, June 1, 2025.

The couple was married outdoors at Bush's Pasture Park in Salem, Oregon on a beautiful sunny day, with the ceremony officiated by the Salem pastor J. Richard Parker. As newlyweds they attended the Eugene congregation for a year, then the Salem and Albany congregations while Harvey earned his engineering degree at Oregon State University in Corvallis. After graduation they moved to Hillsboro and settled in with the Portland congregation.

Harvey and Terri are the blessed parents of Dave (Erin) Werner of Milford, Ohio and Debbie (Steve) Carper of Beaverton, Oregon and the grandparents of Ethan, Jenna and Alex Werner and Harry and Josie Carper. The highlight of their anniversary was the surprise cooked up by their children. Just before being taken out for a special anniversary dinner by Debbie, Dave showed up to join them (having secretly flown in). Best surprise ever!



**Keith Lippincott
and Elizabeth Bissessar**

May 18, 2025



Harvey and Terri Werner

50th anniversary

Obituaries

Jeanine Ruml

With heavy hearts but many wonderful memories, we share that Jeanine Ruml peacefully entered into rest on May 6, 2025, in Granville, Ohio. Jeanine was preceded in death by her husband Karel Ruml, who died in 2020, and her brother Armour.

Born in Chatham, Ontario, on Oct. 19, 1932, Jeanine led a life full of many adventures. Growing up mainly in Ontario, her family traveled frequently due to her father's medical profession, and position in the Royal Canadian Air Force during WWII. She had many wonderful memories from her childhood that she would share with family and friends for the rest of her life.

She was trained as a dental nurse in school, and this is how she met and fell in love with one of her patients, Karel Ruml. They were married and spent their days together until he died in the summer of 2020.

Jeanine often spent her days sewing, quilting and reading. She adored spending time with her family, church community and dogs. She was baptized on



**David Styer and
Hannah Del Castillo**

April 27, 2025



Jeanine Ruml

Oct. 19, 1932-May 6, 2025

Pentecost in 1970 and remained faithful to her calling for the rest of her life.

She enjoyed many laughs with her two great-grandsons and would often request pictures and videos that always put a smile on her face.

Jeanine will always be remembered for her faith, high energy, sense of humor and playfulness, which never left, even in her final days.

Jeanine is survived by her sister Sandra; son and daughter-in-law, Doug and Martine (Savard) Ruml; her grandchildren and their spouses (Tristan and Myka [Hermann] Ruml and Mallory and Drew Cypher); and her two great-grandsons, Hugh (2) and Henry (9 months) Cypher. **UN**

Announcements for *United News* can be sent by email (preferred) to un@ucg.org, or by mail to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Please include a color photo; if mailing in, please indicate if you would like the photo returned. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and may be lightly edited for length and/or clarity by *United News* staff.

GN

The Good News

Christ-Centered Servant Leadership

We have been called by God the Father to develop the principles of leadership that Jesus Christ modeled and taught.

by Robert Curry

We all probably question whether we even want to be a leader and face the pressure of motivating others!

The apostle Paul instructs us to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25, emphasis mine throughout). We see the Day approaching!

Every Sabbath and Holy Day is a gift-wrapped opportunity to practice Christ-centered servant leadership (CCSL). Pentecost, which we recently observed June 1, teaches that we are firstfruits (James 1:18) in training to become Spirit-born leaders serving under Jesus Christ in His millennial government and Kingdom of God—fulfilling roles such as kings (Revelation 5:10), priests (Isaiah 61:6), teachers (Isaiah 30:20-21), judges (1 Corinthians 6:2-3) and mayors (Luke 19:17).

We don’t know how to be a king or queen! But we know Psalm 73:24 promises, “You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny” (New Living Translation).

CCSL must be more than just a nice ideal. It must become a core spiritual value that dramatically changes the importance of our relationship with God and people. We need God the Father and Jesus Christ living in us through the Holy Spirit of power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7)—the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). Imagine you having such access!



We can set an unspoken example by our conduct.

Love and humility

We must regularly examine how we are living up to the definitions of *agape* love in 1 Corinthians 13 such as “love does not parade itself, is not puffed up . . . does not seek its own” (verses 4-5). This blends seamlessly

Every Sabbath and Holy Day is a gift-wrapped opportunity to practice Christ-centered servant leadership.

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

Jesus gave up His divine privileges and humbled Himself just by becoming a human!

The core values of CCSL are *agape* love and humili-

ty. Listed first among the fruits of the Spirit, love is something that no human can work up (Galatians 5:22-23). Interestingly, humility is different in that the Bible specifies “humble yourselves” and “be clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5-6). We dress ourselves! We should humble ourselves so God and others don’t have to!

Patiently give time to learn

In Mark 9:33-37, Jesus surprised the disciples by asking, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. Jesus corrected them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

At church potlucks, it’s always a powerful unspoken example when church leaders (often pastors and their wives) wait until last, even though it often means the most desirable entrees have already been dished out!

I have two excuses: It’s often difficult to get people to start through the line so organizers often call for volunteers. My second excuse is that I am always the slowest eater and don’t like to end up eating alone. Yes, these are good excuses but I know that I should wait! I must if I’m going to eat with my wife! Thank God for a powerful example of a mate, friend or member committed to CCSL. We should serve as one for others!

Matthew 20:20-28 is the go-to starting place for Jesus’ teaching about CCSL. Salome, the sister of Joseph (and so Jesus’

aunt) and her two sons of Zebedee asked Jesus to grant the sons to sit on Jesus’ left and right in the Kingdom. Jesus was always approachable—a hallmark of a CCSL. When the 10 heard it, “they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.” They wanted it too!

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

The disciples still didn’t get it. During Jesus’ final Passover with them, “a dispute [arose] among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest” (Luke 22:24). They too gave in to the same old sin,

Continued on page 18

Christ-Centered Servant Leadership
Continued from page 17

and it should encourage us that Jesus stayed patient with them.

Have you ever marveled that they would squabble at a Passover service! I never noticed before that the dispute might have flamed again because of the Roman-style triclinium they were likely using. This arrangement adopted by Jews in the first century had three couches or cushions arranged in a U-shape. Jesus was not seated in the center of the table as wrongly depicted in da Vinci's "The Last Supper" painting. The host is in the second spot in from the left side of the table. The eminent disciples lie on the left side proceeding around to the lower right to the



Christ-centered servant leadership must become a core spiritual value in our relationships with God and people.

servant's spot. It's hardly surprising that this order would start the disciples pecking! It was a commonly-used setting in the time, and if the seating was arranged this way, Jesus appears to have used it to teach His disciples lessons. Jesus exemplified the Sermon on the Mount teachings about loving enemies and forgiving others by how He seated Judas to the left of Him in the seat of honor and also washed his feet. Later in the Garden Jesus called him "friend."

"Blessed are you if you do them"

It was soon after this, perhaps partly in response to their prideful dispute, that Jesus shocked the disciples by washing their feet.

When finished, Jesus asked, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; or is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:12-16).

May we keep developing the principles Jesus lived and taught about the highest leadership that will continue to characterize eternity: Christ-centered servant leadership. **GN**

Powering Your Spiritual Dynamo

God's Spirit is a spirit of power.

by David Fendley

In Ephesians 6:10 Paul tells us, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His Might." The word "strong" is translated from the base Greek word *dunamoo* (Strong's G1412). This is where we get the English words dynamo, dynamic and dynamite. A dynamo is a generator that converts mechanical energy into electrical energy. It needs something to push through it so it will spin to create power; this could be wind blowing through a turbine or water in a dam. The process results in a product.

The second part of verse 10 reads, "in the power of His might." God's Spirit is a spirit of power (2 Timothy 1:7). To grow in God's power we must use it every minute of every day. What we see, hear and think must be filtered through it. The Holy Spirit is a powerful current to spin your spiritual dynamo.

Empowered to Change

At the laying on of hands, after baptism, we receive God's Spirit (Acts 8:17). Yet, our daily choices will impact how fast the Holy Spirit can spin our dynamo.

How will we choose to build our relationship with God? Will we humble ourselves and fast to break the burden of sin (Isaiah 58:6)? If we focus on God's precious Word, opened to our understanding through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13), and live by what we learn, then our dynamo will turn faster producing the product God wants from our lives.

Yet, our human pride fights against the working of God's Spirit in our lives. This is why the tool of fasting is so critical. God hears the humble (Psalm 10:17). If you are unable to fast a whole day due to health problems, do your best. God sees your sincere efforts. He loves us deeply, and is very merciful (Ephesians 2:4). Combine fasting with prayer, Bible study and meditation to create an environment favorable to spiritual growth.

The Holy Spirit is a truly astonishing gift! Do we treat it that way? God details the way in which a person grateful for His gift will respond. "What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

In Micah 6:8, it's stated this way: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

A Change in the Way We Think

Like a physical dynamo turns mechanical power into electrical power, a spiritual dynamo turns our physical way of thinking into a spiritual way. The critical detail for a dynamo's success is the point of contact. God's first and greatest command—to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind—serves as the spinning piece that transforms our way of thinking.

The second great commandment, to have self-sacrificing love for your fellow man, should naturally follow from our keeping of the first great commandment (Luke 10:27). In 1 John 3:14 we read, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Without self-sacrificing love, we are nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2).

The Holy Spirit produces a real change in our attitude. A spiritual transformation from the worries and cares of this life to pleasing God.

Why This Matters

What you think produces your actions. That's why it's important that we examine the purpose for which we live. God paid a heavy price for us to win this war. Are we sincerely grateful that Jesus put it all on the line for us, that He bridged the gap between us and God? (John 14:6). Do we thank Him for His God-breathed truth that we have the privilege of reading every day? (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



Are we paying attention to what God is telling us, or do we close the Bible and forget who we are? (James 1:22-25). We have been given a powerful tool, a spiritual dynamo—are we putting it to use? (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Walking in Light

God has given His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). As you exercise God's power it will spin your dynamo to create Holy righteous character, which in turn fuels your conversion into the eternal family of God. A real life-changing attitude begins when you let God's purpose become your purpose!

The more you surrender to God's leading through the Holy Spirit, the more that Spirit will flow, like water through a dam (John 7:38-39). A slowly-spinning physical dynamo would not produce enough electrical power to light a city. Similarly, a slowly-spinning spiritual dynamo is not going to produce a bright light in our lives. Christ says, "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

In Matthew 25:1-13 we read about the five foolish and five wise bridesmaids. The foolish had no oil to light their lamps. They missed out on the greatest, most exciting gift ever offered—an eternity filled with purpose and real fulfillment. It is God's pleasure to give us the Kingdom. Don't let Him down, by running out of fuel!

Let's keep our lamps powered, and our dynamos turning. None of us is righteous enough to be complacent (Revelation 3:14-22). Stay awake! A well-maintained spiritual dynamo is essential to transform your way of thinking. Power your dynamo with the gift of the Holy Spirit!. **GN**

Comfort for Deep Sorrows

The Bible has many wonderful scriptures about how God comforts us and wants us to comfort one another.

by Don Hooser

We who understand God's plan of salvation do not "sorrow as others who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We know that Jesus Christ will return to earth, resurrect the saints, give them glorious eternal life in His Kingdom, and will later resurrect all the rest of the dead in the second resurrection. This knowledge gives us great comfort!

Yet, we also experience times of intense sadness. Most of us and our families and friends will suffer heart-breaking grief. Some grief is relatively short-lived, while some grief remains for all of one's life.

We all eventually have the heart-breaking experience of losing a dear loved one. To "lose" a loved one usually means a death. But we need to be conscious of the fact that there are many types and degrees of personal "losses." First, we need to be spiritually and mentally prepared for our own losses. And we need to be prepared and dedicated to lovingly comfort and help others when they suffer losses.

This article has two main purposes. One is to give added understanding and comfort to the brokenhearted, and the other is helping everyone to better know how to help those who are grieving.

Refuting some harmful beliefs

First, let's dispel a terrible superstition that has persisted since the beginning of time. It is the idea that suffering is often a curse inflicted from God. Of course, God sometimes lovingly disciplines His children to steer us back to the right path (Hebrews 12:5-11). But please know that if God decides to discipline you, He will not do it by hurting one of your loved ones.

Much of what happens, even to God's people, is simply the result of physical cause and effect, such as the consequences of people's mistakes and "time and chance" (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12).

This myth is a major reason why many people have been so hard-hearted toward others. Jesus hated this mindset. See how Jesus refuted the harmful myth in Luke 13:1-5. He also shocked the populace by His example of showing as much love and even extra love toward the people neglected and rejected by that society—those suffering with leprosy, handicaps, injuries, sicknesses, poverty and premature family deaths.

Another tragic idea

Another tragic thought is that God must not be both all-loving and all-powerful because He didn't prevent a personal calamity. In fact, some of our members have left the Church because they felt disillusioned or abandoned by God as a result of a family tragedy. This is a tragic reaction. We pray that they will overcome their misunderstandings and gain a closer-than-ever relationship with God!

For a much more thorough understanding of this subject, please read our UCG study aid, *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*

Be spiritually prepared for bad things

People often make the mistake of not praying for guidance, help and protection because they just naively assume that all will go well. Instead, we should assume that problems are much more likely if we neglect to pray or neglect to obey God. Be conscious of the fact that we are surrounded by countless dangers. The worst danger is the powerful influence of Satan and the demons!



Peyman Shojaei/Unsplash

We all experience times of intense sadness.

In fact, Bible prophecy warns us that, in the end time, there will be a devastating increase in deceptions, deaths, health problems, persecution, betrayals and all kinds of chaos and tribulations. The Bible urges us to be spiritually prepared so we won't panic or feel disillusioned, as we see in John 16:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:12-17; Acts 14:22.

God has never promised paradise or a trouble-free experience in this life.

Keep in mind that God has never promised paradise or a trouble-free experience in this life. We must keep our focus on being zealously faithful to God so we will experience paradise in the next life!

God dearly loves us!

The Bible is God's love letter to mankind. The more we read and understand it, the more we will

see the proof of God's amazing grace and love for all people. God is "not willing that any should perish" and He "desires all men to be saved" (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4).

God and Jesus understand us and empathize with us because Jesus experienced all kinds of suffering during His earthly life. And He endured all of that for our benefit! Please see the recent *Beyond Today* article, "Three Levels of Jesus Christ's Great Sacrifice."

We need to be spiritually and mentally prepared for our own losses, and to lovingly comfort and help others when they suffer losses.

Many heartbreaking ways to lose a love one

Losing a loved one is often utterly heartbreaking and devastating even if you are close to God. Even the Bible calls death an "enemy" (1 Corinthians 15:26). Thankfully, the Bible also reveals the good news of how that enemy will be destroyed by the resurrection from the dead (verses 20-28).

A sudden death is devastating and a long, painful decline in health leading to death is also devastating.

When a couple has been married for many years and one of them dies, the survivor often suffers greatly. That couple has spent a lifetime being partners and "one flesh," so the widow or widower feels like one half is missing!

When someone who is relatively young dies, that seems especially tragic. All parents have a passionate desire for their children to greatly outlive them, so consider the agony of losing a child. The loss is usually devastating, whether the child was a baby, a young child, a teenager or an adult. Similarly, there is often great sorrow after losing a beloved parent, grandparent, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece or nephew.

Death is certainly not the only "enemy." Serious diseases, injuries and handicaps are also enemies. Another is seeing a loved one suffering dementia with decreasing mental and physical abilities. Another is the physical separation when one must live in a nursing home.

There are other heartbreaking family tragedies. Physical and mental abuse. Abuse of alcohol or drugs. Various addictions. Marital breakups and divorces. Religious hostility and persecution. Even long-term alienation over differing political views. Those who suffer from these situations certainly need our prayers!

Think of the caregiver of a loved one. Personal caregiving is a big subject, deserving of a separate article. The point here is that, even though most family caregivers are lovingly dedicated to their roles, caring for a suffering loved one day after day is often stressful and heartbreaking.

Clearly, there are all kinds of heartbreaking experiences in this mortal life. When one has suffered a loss or crisis, it is of course essential to make practical adjustments in one's life. Furthermore, it is

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extremely important for everyone to actively grieve and mourn for a time. In fact, serious grief often never ends. It diminishes overall, but there are many ups and downs. Thankfully, there are many helpful books and websites that explain the important benefits and processes of grieving.

What should we do?

How can we help? This article has provided some ideas. We can nurture closer relationships with our family members and friends. Then we can better understand each other. And we can ask God to guide us as to how we can best encourage, comfort and help them.

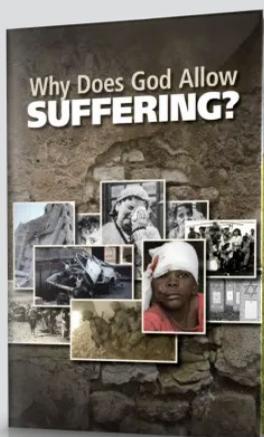
Those who suffer a serious loss often immediately receive many cards and other expressions of sympathy. In addition, let's try to remember to occasionally open the door of reminiscing together to share happy and sad memories of the past. This can be very comforting.

Much of what happens even to God's people is simply the result of physical cause and effect.

A grieving person benefits significantly when a family member or friend expresses his or her love and comfort by not only offering practical assistance, but also grieving along with them. That is what Paul meant in Romans 12:15 when he wrote, "weep with those who weep." For a more thorough understanding of grieving together, we refer you to a reprinted article of that title, "Weep With Those Who Weep."

The Bible has many wonderful scriptures about how God comforts us and wants us to comfort one another. Let's end with this one: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). **GN**

Free Study Aid



If God is truly a God of love and mercy, why does He not intervene? Some have concluded that God simply doesn't exist. The answer, however, is much more complex. What does the Bible reveal about the causes of suffering?



We believe that Satan is a spirit being who is the adversary of God and the children of God; Satan has been given dominion over the world for a specific time; Satan has deceived humanity into rejecting God and His law; Satan has ruled by deception with the aid of a host of demons who are rebellious angels, spirit beings who followed Satan in his rebellion (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 8:12; 2 Timothy 2:26; John 12:31; 16:11; Revelation 12:4, 9; 20:1-3, 7, 10; Leviticus 16:21-22; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 2:2).

Satan the Devil

Satan is not an ordinary opponent. He is an extremely resourceful and cunning adversary whose ultimate goal is to deny salvation to mankind.

from Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God

Before the physical realm, God created powerful spirit servants who are referred to in Scripture as angels, literally meaning "messengers" (Hebrews 1:7, 14). Described in some verses as "sons of God" by virtue of their creation by God, they witnessed the formation of the earth (Job 38:4-7).

There are hundreds of millions of righteous angels serving God (Revelation 5:11). But a large contingent of angels rebelled against God prior to the creation of mankind. They chose the way of vanity and selfishness instead of God's way of outflowing love for others. The leader of this rebellion is now known as Satan. He and his evil cohorts are referred to in the New Testament as unclean spirits or as demons.

Satan is the adversary of God, as the name Satan actually means "adversary" in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament renders this word as *diabolos*, from which we get the English word devil. It means "slanderer" and can have the sense of an accuser or opponent in court (compare Zechariah 3:1). Both the Hebrew and Greek terms are used in the New Testament.

The devil opposes God continually at every opportunity. He despises God's plan, particularly its objective of adding human beings to God's family. Hence, Satan also detests human beings. He is the deceiver and accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:9-10). He is a murderer and a liar and the father of lying (John 8:44). He is described figuratively as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is not an ordinary opponent. He is an extremely resourceful and cunning adversary whose ultimate goal is to deny salvation to mankind by deceiving people, leading them astray, enticing them to sin and turning them against God (Ephesians 6:11-18; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Luke 8:12).

As the book of Job demonstrates, Satan can act only within the limits permitted by God (Job 1:12; 2:6). Job's account also illustrates Satan's accusatory attitude and clearly describes him as a specific individual personality and literal being. As the New Testament shows, he later came to Jesus Christ as a literal being in an unsuccessful effort to tempt Jesus into selfish concern (Matthew 4:1-11).

Just as Satan's actions are limited by God's will, his time is also limited. He is presently "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and described as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), but his reign will come to an end at the seventh and last trumpet when Jesus Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 11:15).

Satan will then be removed and bound throughout the millennial reign of the Messiah but will be released for a short while at the end of the 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3, 7-8). After that he will be permanently removed when he is "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (Revelation 20:10), which is "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

Satan was created as an angel of high position and authority. In Isaiah 14:12 he is called in Hebrew *Heylel*, followed by the distinction "son of the morning." The Latin translation of the name here is given as Lucifer, a name for the planet Venus when appearing as the morning star, meaning "light bearer." Some versions therefore translate the words here as "star of the morning," "bright star" or "morning star" (New American Standard Bible, Revised English Bible, New International Version).

Addressed in Ezekiel 28 as the "king of Tyre," as he is the unseen power behind the throne of earthly kingdoms, this being was initially an "anointed cherub who covers" (Ezekiel 28:14-16), one of two angelic beings whose wings were stretched out over the throne of God, as represented in the earthly copy, the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 25:20-21; Hebrews 9:23-24; Revelation 11:19). He evidently had at least equal rank with Michael, an "archangel" and "great prince" (Jude 1:9; Daniel 12:1).

Lucifer was created perfect and blameless, but eventually chose the way of sin and rebellion (Ezekiel 28:12-17). Apparently a third of the angels followed him in his insurrection and with him attempted to overthrow God, but they were defeated and cast down to the earth (Revelation 12:4; Luke 10:18; Isaiah 14:12-15; 2 Peter 2:4). The kingdom of Satan is now characterized by darkness, not light, though Satan is able to deceptively present himself as an angel of light (Luke 22:53; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 11:14).

Under some circumstances, the devil and his demons are able to gain possession and control of human beings and even animals (Matthew 8:28-33; 9:32-34). Satan himself entered and possessed the traitor Judas (Luke 22:3). Christ, whose authority is greater than Satan's, cast out demons during His ministry on earth and has empowered His duly ordained servants to do the same (Mark 16:17).

Satan is referred to by different names and descriptions that denote some of his evil roles, characteristics and actions. Besides "the devil," he is also called Apollyon and Abaddon, meaning "destroyer" and "destruction," respectively (Revelation 9:11); Belial, meaning "worthless" or "wicked" (2 Corinthians 6:15); Beelzebub, the name of a Philistine god meaning "Lord of flies" (Matthew 12:24-27, compare 2 Kings 1); the great dragon and serpent (Revelation 12:9); the tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5); and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). **GN**

For this year's milestone General Council of Elders, we reviewed the history of how United Church of God formed and honored those who were instrumental in its founding.

Prior to the GCE, ministers and wives who were among the founders of UCG were asked to share some of their reflections on that time and how it helped shape UCG as we know it today. Below are some of their comments.

Most of all, we are truly grateful to our loving heavenly Father for His guidance during this challenging time and over the years of growth that have followed! **UN**

Steve Nutzman:

"The months of early 1995 were a time of prayer, fasting and faith. God's elect had been hurt, discouraged and divided, but a faithful remnant looked to Him for a place of spiritual safety, and mercifully, God heard their collective prayers.

"Truly, God was so caring and loving to do this for us in 1995 as well as over the last 30 years! It was a time then (and still is) of submitting to God and to one another, and a time to rekindle our first love.

"After United began it was so refreshing to be able to enjoy doctrinal unity among the elect of God again. One of my best memories from the December 1995 GCE was seeing an airport shuttle pull up in front of the hotel the day before the GCE began. Out walked ministers and wives from Canada who had just arrived for the conference. It was a nice reminder then, and it still is 30 years later, that the United Church of God is truly "an International Association."

Rainer Salomaa:

"There were a handful of elders from Canada who attended the December 1995 GCE in Cincinnati. This was a catalyst to help start UCG in Canada.

"One afternoon, we met for a meal at a restaurant and made plans to have an organizational meeting to form United Church of God-Canada. It was determined to have the meeting in Calgary, Al-

berta in February 1996. We met there for several days, inviting leading members from Western Canada to attend. We also had legal representation come from Arcadia to help us with governing documents. A board was established, consisting of seven ministers and two lay members. Tony Wasilkoff was chosen as the chairman.

"All of this was new to us, but the GCE of 1995 was a great help."

Bob Dick

"Roy Holladay, Victor Kubik and I are the remaining elders in United who would view Indianapolis from "the other side of the coin"—as organizers of the meeting.

"Indianapolis was announced as a meeting of regional pastors seeking a way forward after Pasadena's rejection of our plea to maintain our original beliefs. All interested elders were welcomed and 150 came. Indianapolis was like a reunion of survivors of a spiritual Titanic.

"We assembled in Indianapolis desiring to establish a structured body that would provide a safe place to meet for those who held their calling precious—none of us had purchased a spiritual 'round-trip ticket' back to where we were when called. Indianapolis gave us hope. We had all refused to abandon the doctrines upon which our hope was based.

"Indianapolis was a tremendous gathering of like-minded elders and wives; without them and the loyal elders and wives who were not able to make the trip to that meeting there would be no corporate Church, but with only them it was nothing but a corporate entity. The real United Church of God was the assemblage of deeply converted members sitting in cities around the world waiting to form again as congregations of the steadfast. They are the United Church of God; we are their servants.

"Today, I am deeply impressed by every young person who says with clear conviction, "This is my Church"—this is my future. I am equally impressed with the fine group of elders and wives who have stepped into our shoes and are doing a wonderful job of caring for God's precious flock."

Judy Erickson

"Victor Kubik was the first speaker. He mentioned we have been through some persecution, but that is the only way we will enter into the Kingdom of God! He mentioned in setting our goals, we need to do a Work again (preach the true gospel), serve the brethren and be living sacrifices, and united.

"This meeting was so wonderful, encouraging, and gave me hope God was providing a way to continue in His truth with our brothers and sisters. I went home elated and feeling so blessed that we had those who were planning and working to provide a church for God's people and Feast sites.

"My hope for the next generation is they will continue in 'the Way' God has taught us, and do it better even than we have."

Dave Mills

"In early 1995 we faced a crisis concerning the faith and convictions which we had held for many years. Several of our basic doctrines were said to no longer be necessary to observe. These included the Sabbath and Holy Days. My wife and I did not agree with these changes, and before long we heard of other ministers who also did not agree with the changes. We knew we had to do something.

"And so, a general conference of elders was planned for April 30-May 2 in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was a joy for my wife and me to be

there and see the humble attitude of fellow ministers. We weren't there out of rebellion, nor to condemn or put anyone down. No, we were there simply to preserve our biblical faith and convictions.

"It was good to see a right attitude and right spirit as the United Church of God was formed. It was an attitude of humility, collaboration and submission to one another. Now, 30 years later, let's all strive to maintain this attitude of humility and submission. And let's keep our hearts in the work of God—'Preaching the Gospel, Preparing a People.'"

Peter Eddington:

"Attending the December 1995 conference was one of the most encouraging and unifying Church events I've attended. Many commented on the spirit of excitement, enthusiasm and unity evident during the meetings.

"I was on the committee to plan the agenda with Victor Kubik, Dennis Luker, David Hulme, Steve Andrews, Jim Franks and Steve Sidars. At the home office we received many letters encouraging the ministry to move forward in unity at the conference. Here is an excerpt from one such letter:

"We desire for unity and peace and to move forward. There are so many of us out here who just want to get on with the work. We are praying and fasting for

this conference. Let's get the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God out to the world."

"Thanks to God, we left the conference with unity and overwhelming support for doing His work. The Constitution and By-laws were adopted by a 94 percent majority, and the proposed 1996 budget was approved by a 95.8 percent majority. These are the highest majorities to date of any General Conference of Elders ballot. The agreement and unity in the room was palpable.

"I pray our current and next generation of Church leaders will achieve such unity in doing the work of the Church. Let's not let our brethren down."

Robin Webber

"The events of the 1990s brought needful realization that God has called us to serve Him and not the philosophical whims of man.

"Ministry and members came together in holding dear to their baptismal vow to worship our Heavenly Father and emulate His Son—not an organization. They embraced who is the

Lord of their lives and the Head of a Spiritual Body of believers and would follow wherever His Spirit led—even if seemingly alone but, shepherded forward with the loving guidance of our Heavenly Apostle above (Hebrews 3:1).

"UCGIA was formulated from the beginning to 'grow in grace and knowledge' as

we strove to learn lessons from our past and build and continue to expand in understanding God's Holy Word and how to seek and draw upon a multitude of counsel in a transparent manner to all. An ongoing exercise yet in motion, always to be considered, lest we forget."

from Italy, help us translate into Romanian and Czech, respectively. Natallia Teague helps us translate into Russian, while Kasia Arendsen (from the Netherlands) translates into Polish. Ulf Ståhle translates material into Swedish.

The Feast site for this region is in beautiful Tallinn, Estonia. In Tartu, about two hours southeast of Tallinn, Mr. Johnny Lambert has an apartment, from which he used to send mailings to members. Today, our outreach involves using podcasts and social media to reach a secular audience and generate curiosity for looking into religious matters. UCGEurope.org is currently under development to serve members and prospective members. Also, we need your help! If you would like to contribute to the weekly virtual Sabbath service or the translation efforts, please reach out to James Ginn (james_ginn@ucg.org).

South Asia

Finally, David Schreiber shared updates on the work in India, Sri Lanka, Bangla-

can use our manually translated booklets to train AI to aid in translation to make the process quicker for the future. We still need to allocate resources and form teams to harness these tools. If you have experience with AI language tools, we encourage you to reach out to David Schreiber.

Mizoram is India's only Christian majority state. UCG has six Sabbath-keeping congregations in this country. A local man has worked to bring the congregations together, and they reorganized under UCG Mizoram and have adopted fundamental beliefs. With approval, they now translate UCG booklets into their language. Another challenge that India faces is that it does not have many local members who are able to serve. In Sri Lanka, a key challenge is an inability to formally register UCG in the country, which restricts some of our public proclamation abilities.

In Bangladesh a new couple was recently baptized. Sadly, they have been persecuted and have had to move

Despite the challenges faced in these countries, there are also many encouraging updates. One of these is the programs for our youth. Children from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka meet regularly for Sabbath school with Jelly. There

things moved quickly. By April 1995, a transitional team was formed, which eventually became UCG Australia. Beginning with just a telephone, email, old computer and monochrome monitor, a team formed congregations on the east coast and a

left behind" program to keep in contact with people and ensure their needs were being met.

From Potential to Pastor

The final session of the GCE focused on how to identify those who may be able to serve in the future and develop them on a local level. Led by Steve Myers, this discussion included Vince Szymkowiak and Stephen Bouchette—a long-time pastor, and a more recent recruit—to share their thoughts on this important process.

Vince Szymkowiak took the same approach in both of the congregations he has served. He suggested giving young men a smaller area in which to serve first, to see how they handle the responsibility. Evaluate with kindness and love as part of training, beginning with something positive, mentioning something to improve and finishing with something else encouraging. It's important not to pressure a man into a role that he doesn't feel ready to accept. We can't make the decision for others, but we can mentor and encourage them.

Stephen Bouchette admitted that he was surprised when he was first asked to serve. He didn't initially have the desire to be a pastor. He had to work through his fear of public speaking. Yet he found it encouraging that his pastor thought he was capable of serving.

Steve Myers reminded elders that they need to be a Barnabas who encourages people to serve and is willing to train a Timothy. He then led the discussion of some questions submitted through Menti, including how to handle the challenge of adequate payment for pastors, how to track service potential in ABC graduates, opportunities for additional training, and partnering with camps to recognize individuals with service capabilities.

Final Discussions

After the GCE itself concluded, a couple of small groups met separately for international and camp meetings. The 2025 General Conference of Elders encouraged elders and wives to treasure the legacy of those with whom God worked to preserve His truth, while pressing forward to continue the work of which we are each called to be a part. UN



The ABC choir performed during Sabbath services.

are also new Sri Lanka and India websites, with plans to expand the India site into a multilingual site. A leadership conference is planned for July in Sri Lanka. There will also be travels scheduled to Mizoram, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Conclusion

To close this portion of the GCE, Tim Pebworth shared some of the details of how UCG formed in various countries around the world that were also impacted by the events of 1995. For instance, in South Africa, Jorge de Campos heard rumors of impending changes as early as 1990. In the Netherlands, Wim Dekker recalls being a 25-year-old when the apostasy affected his congregation. He observed that there was only one elder in the area who stuck to the faith, so he met secretly with him to counsel for baptism. For a time, they met as an unnamed group to keep the Sabbath, until Marcos Rosales teamed up with Paul Kieffer in Germany. Although he was living in South Africa at the time, Grant Chick had communication with many of the elders who were in Australia at the time. The events in 1994-1995 mirrored those in the United States, with core beliefs being changed. Prior to these events, 51 employed elders dropped to only six, and 54 non-employed dropped to only 10. But in true Aussie spirit,

constitution. Today, we have 25 congregations in Australia, with an average weekly attendance of over 600 across all the congregations. God has truly blessed His people around the world for how they responded to the crisis with faith.

Honoring the Past—Shaping the Future

The next session of the GCE was presented in two parts. The first section focused on how we can innovate on the local level. Tim Pebworth led the discussion with Mike Phelps, Tim Martens and Lewis VanAusdler on the discussion panel. Some of the topics covered included doing livestreamed Bible studies in outdoor settings, holding a sermonette class, using multiple social media outlets and offering training in key technologies.

The second section focused more on how to serve people who are currently members. Troy Phelps and Scott McKeon shared some of the ways they have connected with each of the age groups in their congregations. In Scott McKeon's congregation, he makes sure young adults stay involved in the congregation, giving them a Bible and a job at Church as soon as they graduate. Troy Phelps described how he created a directory and initiated a "no member



Honoring 50-year service milestone of John and Peg McClain

desh, Pakistan and South Asia. He played a short video that showed how God's hand was at work in this part of the world and shared the hunger and joy for God's Word the people in this area have. Yet, religious, distance and language barriers can make preaching the gospel more difficult.

The Tomes family has provided some additional help in the region the Schreibers serve. Julia Tomes is also serving as an ESL teacher. In the age of AI, we've been able to redefine what's possible. We

from their Muslim village to a Muslim-Hindu village. They were still accused of trying to convert people to Christianity. In the face of serious persecution, God has provided for His people, and for the first time, 45 people kept the Feast of Tabernacles in Bangladesh! Pakistan has similarly faced persecution, as they are a 96 percent Muslim country. Because of persecution, a recently baptized couple had to flee their home. They kept the Feast for the first time ever in modern Pakistan.

Teens

We all make mistakes, but when we make spiritual mistakes, how can we recover and avoid them in the future?



Young Adults

How well do you know your Sword? The Word of God is a wonderful tool for spiritual growth, and this daily SMS study is a great way to boost your study time!



Students

How will your goals impact your future? Learn how setting goals can impact the trajectory of your life in this article by Kayleen Schreiber.



Couples

Is God okay with interracial marriage? After all, it's the 21st century—surely God has kept up with the times... right?



Calling All Creatives!

Do you enjoy creating artwork or writing puzzles? *United News* welcomes submissions for Children's Corner from members of all ages! The following are just a few of the kinds of activities we are looking for:

- Word games (crosswords, word scrambles, word finds, etc.)
- Coloring activities (coloring pages, color-by-number, etc.)
- Critical thinking (Bible trivia, logic puzzles, Bible math, etc.)

Puzzles and activities must have a biblical theme. Submissions are subject to review and may be lightly edited before the final version is printed.

If you have an activity or idea for one that you would like to submit, please contact us by emailing un@ucg.org. We look forward to featuring your creativity!

Families

With Christianity on the decline, especially among young people, what are parents to do if they want their own children to have a life of faith and virtue?



Singles

When loneliness hits you, how can you handle it constructively? These five steps will help you navigate these challenging times.



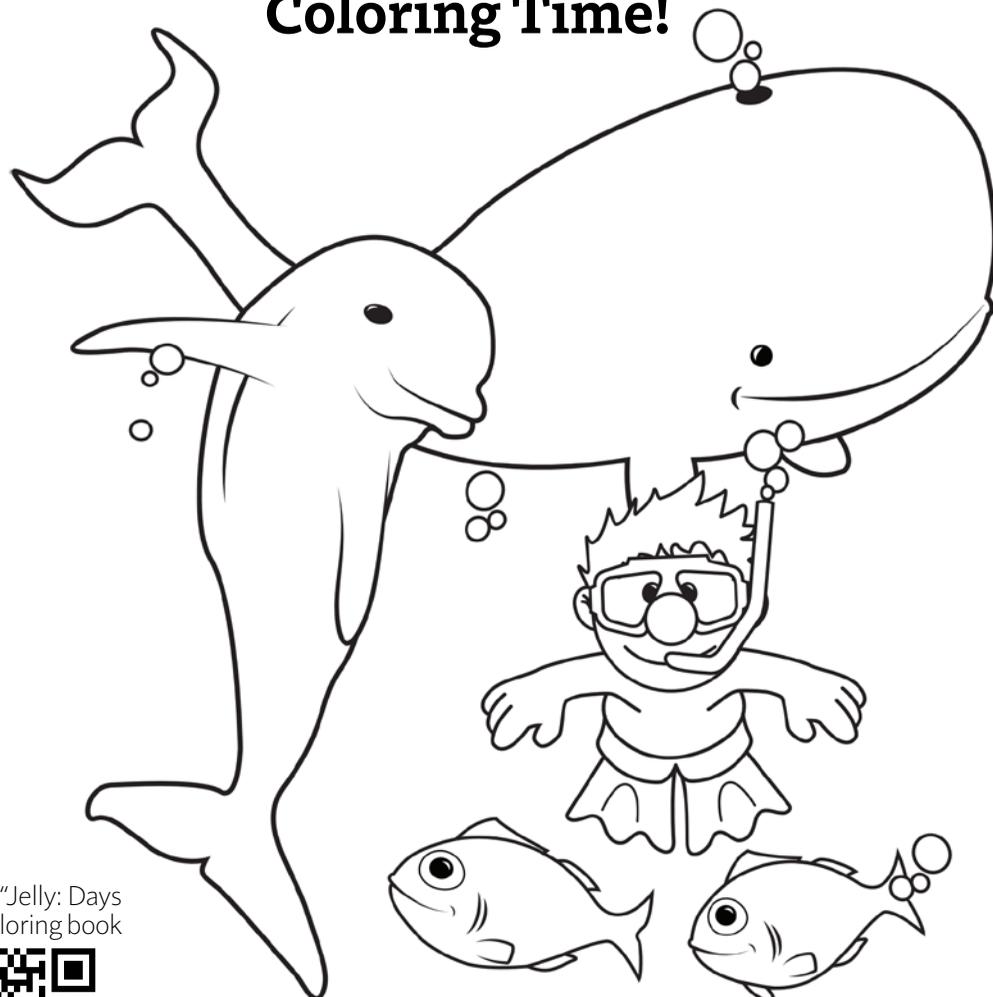
Seniors

There are women who have lived and learned much in their lives—and count their blessings. Here is a thoughtful, almost poetic, message from one of them.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Coloring Time!



Download the "Jelly: Days of Creation" coloring book



The fifth day He gave the word,
swimming fish, flying birds.
The fifth day He gave the word,
God said, "thats good!"

BEYOND TODAY

- July 6-12 | **5 Steps to Real Change, Part 3: Repentance and Baptism**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *What You Need to Know About Baptism*
- July 13-19 | **The Way, Part 4: The Life-Changing Promise of the Father**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*
- July 20-26 | **5 Steps to Real Change, Part 4: The Gift of the Holy Spirit**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *The Power of the Holy Spirit*
- July 27-
Aug. 2 | **The Way, Part 5: When a Church Dies**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *The Church Jesus Built*
- Aug. 3-9 | **5 Steps to Real Change, Part 5: Two Questions Waiting for an Answer?**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*
- Aug. 10-16 | **Is Anger Destroying Your Life?**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Tools for Spiritual Growth*
- Aug. 17-23 | **Eat Clean!**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?*
- Aug. 24-30 | **The Importance of Watching**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*



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Gear Grinder Bike Ride



The Twin Cities United Church of God invites you to participate in their 2025 third annual Gear Grinder bike ride, taking place in scenic Stillwater, Minnesota on Sept. 7, 2025. Riders can choose from either a 28- or 51-mile route. There will be plenty of food and fellowship for riders and any family members there to cheer them on. For details and registration visit:

eventcreate.com/e/geargrinder25

KNOW YOUR SWORD



How well do you **know your sword**?

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Join us for a study program with SMS notifications every Monday-Friday. Each reading is short and easy to take with you as you ride the bus, wait in line or drink your coffee—it’s a convenient way to take Bible study on the go!



Women's Enrichment Weekend



The Cleveland, Ohio congregation is hosting a women’s enrichment weekend. With the theme, “Let it Shine,” we will focus on how Jesus is the light of the world, and how we can let our lights shine in our homes, church and community. Scan the QR code to learn more!



BY THE NUMBERS

10.4 K

Followers on UCG X channel