

---

# **Home Office Weekly Update**

*from the UNITED CHURCH of GOD*

---

December 31, 2025

---

## **A Work of Truth and Light**

As we conclude the calendar year, there are noteworthy reflections to consider as we continue our work on the journey towards the Kingdom of God.

The annual spring and autumn feasts of 2025 were very well attended and received offerings that exceeded previous levels. Also, a member survey was conducted in which suggestions were given for enhancing aspects of the Church's operations. The feedback collected has been carefully considered and many ideas are in the process of being implemented in next year's Strategic Plan.

Amidst a summer of church activities—that included successful United Youth Camps and other church events—new administrators filled vacant posts at the home office. *Beyond Today* TV and our media department is working to update various media initiatives, Financial Services is restructuring its systems for fiscal best practices, and Ministerial and Member Services is enhancing management for its services to the ministry, members and our international entities.

Sadly, this past summer our previous president, Rick Shabi, died unexpectedly. As the family grieved privately, Mrs. Shabi later informed me that Rick had specifically said he didn't want a big funeral and it was their family tradition to have a small private family gathering. The family's intention for Rick's friends is to provide an online "Memorial Board" for viewing and for making comments. Rick's photo hangs in the president's office alongside those of all of the presidents of the United Church of God, plus Herbert Armstrong.

The gospel message continues to thrive, albeit with increased resistance from hearts and minds that are busily navigating elsewhere. Spiritual growth in the Body of Christ is reaching new heights even as societal influences seek to distract and weaken it.



Portraits hanging in the president's office, from top left: Herbert Armstrong, David Hulme, Leslie McCullough, Roy Holladay, Clyde Kilough, Dennis Luker, Victor Kubik, Rick Shabi and John Elliott.

## Darkness and truth-less holidays

There is a distinct night-and-day difference between God's Church and society. God's Church is a unified Body that God is working with to grow into a temple (Ephesians 2:21) through "speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—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 4:15-16).

Meanwhile, around us, society's truth-less holidays fill dark winter solstice days in the Northern Hemisphere. The festivities' foundations are imagination, whimsy, spirits, magic, mythical creatures, dreamlike stories, fantastical designs, tales and imaginary-lit displays to impress in darkness. Unlike God's purpose-driven Holy Days with eternal potential, imaginary holidays are inconsequential and devoid of any significance. Yet they spread globally like an invasive counter culture of artificial reality. Their "value" is to increase emotion-based spending for giveaway products that ultimately end up in the trash.

Many biblical passages use "darkness" as a metaphor for a societal mindset that stumbles around without the light of God's truth. Metaphorically, unbelievers "grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight" (Isaiah 59:10).

In contrast, we like David, fully realize that "You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord shall enlighten my darkness" (2 Samuel 2:29). When Jesus said that we are to be the light of the world like He is, we can only be that light if the Spirit of Christ is flowing through us.

Humanity relentlessly pushes ever-changing ideals that fail to bring meaning to their lives. Its very foundations are devoid of truth, built on pillars as fake as the signature holidays that help define it. “Traditional holidays significantly define societies by shaping cultural identity, driving economic activity, influencing daily life from commerce to personal values. But they also evolve, blend with other traditions, and become more commercialized, reflecting a diverse and changing society even as new, hybrid celebrations emerge” (AI Overview).

## **Society shifting into biblical lawlessness**

Over the decades, news articles this time of year have pointed out that Christmas is not what it claims to portray. Paddy Roberts got fame with his song, “Merry Christmas You Suckers” which told it like it is. The most recent airing of *Beyond Today*’s TV broadcast, “Quitting Christmas,” had the lowest response of any program in 2025. Simultaneously, people busily trash their home’s decors and exteriors with cheap ornamentation, imbibe more than normal, and in the moment say, “peace on earth.” But, “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59:8).

We are witnesses to society’s rapid drift into biblical “lawlessness,” the distancing of people from connection with God and His rules for living. “In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood” (verse 13). Societal laws in many countries are even increasingly hostile to God’s truth, labeling it hate speech. This is not new, “For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey” (Isaiah 59:14-15).

Consequently, our media content can collide with various national laws that forbid quotes from certain parts of Scripture. While interest in our biblical content is heartening, and we work in hope of reaching interested minds, a plethora of other voices including AI-generated answers too often thwart efforts to attract hearts and minds to the truth.

## **Trim your lamp of godly wisdom**

God’s Word is a unique source of light in a world of metaphorical darkness. We are readily available sources of it as reflections of Christ’s light. It’s important that we each trim our lamps and make it our goal to make that light recognizable in our lives, like Daniel became to king Belshazzar. “I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you” (Daniel 5:14).

So, let's strive to be recognizable as having the light of godly wisdom by all those we come in contact with. And let's forge ahead together with love for God and "as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

With deep love and respect for you in Christ's service,



John Elliott, President

---

## From Ministerial and Member Services...

### ANNOUNCEMENT: Changes in Pastoral Leadership

Ministerial and Member Services is pleased to announce a change in pastoral leadership.

Brent Fogelson has been hired into the full-time pastoral ministry and will now serve as Associate Pastor alongside Scott McKeon, who will assume and maintain pastoral oversight of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Phoenix Northwest and Northern Arizona, Arizona.

We extend our sincere thanks to David and Laura Meidinger for their many years of faithful service to the Albuquerque congregation. David will continue to serve as an elder in the congregation and serve as able with Jorge de Campos in the Portuguese work.

Additionally, we extend our gratitude to Randy and Kay Schreiber for their service during this transition.

We greatly appreciate your continued prayers that God's Spirit and wisdom guides each of these ministers and their families in their new responsibilities.

### Death of Renee Kellers

Charlotte Renee Kellers, wife of retired pastor Fred Kellers, died the morning of December 25, 2025 at the age of 87, just hours after being placed in hospice care due to progressive complications resulting from Guillain–Barré syndrome (GBS).

Renee steadfastly professed her faith in God as she quickly declined, and God mercifully gave her the rest that she desired. Mr. Kellers is thankful and relieved that she didn't suffer for long and is now asleep and says, "She is going to awake to her eternal husband," but of course he mourns and has already shed many tears. Thank you to our faithful brethren who prayed for Renee, and who continue to pray for the family.



Charlotte Renee Kellers

A memorial is planned for Renee in Dayton, Ohio on January 17. The memorial service will be at 2 p.m. and Sabbath church services will be at 11 a.m. beforehand.

Renee Kellers Memorial: 5 Rivers Church, 1450 E. Dorothy Lane, Dayton, OH 45429

—Steve Myers, Operation Manager, Ministerial and Member Services

---

## 60th Anniversary: Church of God in the German Language Region

After church services on December 20, 2025 UCG-Germany celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church of God in the German language region. The meeting halls were decorated festively and special cakes and champagne were served. After services a video presentation highlighted the history of the Church in the region. Here's a summary:

- In the late 1950s, German emigrants in the U.S.A. translated the first WCG publications.
- From early 1960 to 1972, the radio program *Die Welt von morgen* (*The World Tomorrow*) was broadcast on Radio Luxembourg.
- In August 1961, the first foreign-language edition of the *Plain Truth* magazine was launched: *Die reine Wahrheit*.
- On June 18, 1962 Herbert Armstrong wrote that the London, England office could no longer manage the work with the circulation of the German edition already at 5,000 copies. An office was being opened in Düsseldorf and a German-born Ambassador College student from Pasadena, California will manage the new office. A post office box in Düsseldorf was also procured, as readers are reluctant to write to England.
- On December 25, 1965 the German language Church had its first Sabbath service in Frankfurt, Germany. Soon regular services were conducted in seven cities.

- The *Die Welt von morgen* broadcast on Radio Luxembourg reached people in East Germany. A small group was called behind the Soviet Iron Curtain. A member in Poland was also called.
- The Feast of Tabernacles in East Germany was often difficult. In 1971, the Stasi interrupted church services and the visiting minister was asked to leave East Germany.
- To help brethren behind the Iron Curtain keep the Feast of Tabernacles, a Feast site was set up in neighboring Czechoslovakia: first in Karlsbad, later in Brno.
- In 1968 circulation of *Die reine Wahrheit* reached 70,000 copies, later rising to nearly 100,000. The title was changed to *Klar & Wahr* and four-color printing was now used. We advertised in newsstands and train station bookstores. In Berlin, Munich and Vienna 15,000 copies were distributed monthly at newsstands from 1975 to 1977.
- At the end of 1974, the Church office was relocated to Bonn.



Regional Director, Frank Schnee, with East German brethren in the mid 1970s.

When the WCG Pastor General announced in 1995 that the Sabbath was not holy time, it was time for a change.

The first meeting of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, in Germany took place on August 12, 1995 in Dormagen. By the end of 1995, church services were being held in Bielefeld, Hamburg, Dormagen, Darmstadt, Stuttgart and Switzerland.

- A sermon cassette program was launched in February 1996. In January 2006, the cassette program was replaced by sermon CDs distributed every two months with eight sermons.
- On April 5, 1996 the founding meeting of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes e.V. (UCG-Germany) takes place in Dormagen. On August 13, 1996 the Church was officially registered.
- In 1997 the *Gute Nachrichten* and *Intern* magazines are published bimonthly along with many booklets and the Bible correspondence course.

- In January 1998, we placed our first print ad in *Das Beste* (German version of "Reader's Digest"). It brought 2,000 orders.
- A small UCG Church office was opened in August 2003. It also serves as a warehouse for 10,000 booklets.
- In 2005 we began advertising with Google "keywords," resulting in 15,570 new subscribers by December 2025.
- The new UCG hymnal was distributed at the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles. The 1:1 reproduction of the English hymnal contains 17 additional German hymns.
- In 2014, the first *Beyond Today* television program in German was produced, initially dubbed, later with original German audio thanks to the help of the home office media team.
- With the revamp of the "Gute Nachrichten"-website at the end of 2022, a weekly newsletter was introduced. We conducted two webinars as a test in 2025.

Our stats as of December 2025 are the following:

- 8,627 current *Gute Nachrichten* subscribers.
- 744 *Intern* subscribers.
- 25,873 former *Gute Nachrichten* subscribers.
- 34 booklet titles.
- 12-lesson Bible correspondence course.
- 1,531 articles online, accessible individually.
- 154 long-form videos and 96 "shorts" on YouTube.

Last but not least: We should pray for more workers for the harvest. Forty-six people from German-language countries studied at Ambassador College, 13 didn't return, 9 people remained faithful, 5 of whom now live in the German language region, and 4 of whom are with UCG-Germany. We should pray for more workers to help with the harvest—workers who remain faithful and continue to help reap the harvest.

—Paul Kieffer, Editor, UCG-Germany publications



## ***United News—New Monthly Format***

In our ongoing effort to stay current and share timely updates, we're pleased to announce an exciting change to *United News*. Beginning in January 2026, *United News* will move to a new publication schedule with increased frequency—10 issues per year, instead of the previous timeline (once every two months). Issues will be released monthly, with combined editions during the spring and fall Holy Day seasons.

Beginning with the January 2026 issues, this new format will feature fewer pages to adjust for the frequency while continuing to focus on engaging articles and meaningful news from brethren around the world. As always, *United News* will be available online, allowing you to read it even before the printed issue arrives in your mailbox. You can also download the latest PDF version of *United News* by scanning the QR code in this announcement.



We appreciate your continued readership and support as we move forward with these improvements.

—Heidi Braun, Managing Editor, Internal Publications

---

## **SAVE THE DATE: UCG Atlanta Ski Trip Jan. 31 to Feb. 1**

We will be in Knoxville, Tennessee for Sabbath services on Jan. 31, and in Gatlinburg, Tennessee at Ober Mountain for skiing on February 1.

Block off the first weekend in February on your calendar and get ready for another year of fun, fellowship and enjoyable activities on the slopes in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee.

The cost for this year's activity includes equipment and lift ticket: \$144 for skiers, \$154 for snowboarders and \$87 for lift ticket only.

For more information about the ski weekend, you may email Bob McCurdy at [ram19@bellsouth.net](mailto:ram19@bellsouth.net).

—Philip Aust, Pastor, Atlanta and Buford, Georgia

---

## Upcoming Events

Jan. 23-25	<a href="#">Women's Enrichment Weekend</a>	Brea, CA
Jan. 31-Feb. 1	UCG Atlanta Ski Trip	Gatlinburg, TN
Feb. 13-15	<a href="#">East Texas Regional Family Weekend</a>	Big Sandy, TX
Feb. 13-16	<a href="#">Wamatochick Young Adult Weekend</a>	Prescott, AZ
Feb. 27-Mar. 1	<a href="#">Women's Enrichment Weekend</a>	La Conner, WA
Mar. 13-15	<a href="#">Women's Enrichment Weekend</a>	Franklin, TN
Mar. 14-15	<a href="#">Midwest Team Prom</a>	Berlin, OH
Mar. 14-15	Southwest Missouri Women's Enrichment Weekend	Ozark, MO
Mar. 20-22	DFW Regional Family and Prom Weekend	Dallas, TX
Apr. 17-19	Women's Enrichment Weekend	Fairmont Hot Springs, BC
Apr. 23-26	Mammoth Cave Camping Weekend	Mammoth Cave National Park, KY
May 15-17	Women's Enrichment Weekend	Deer Lake, WA

Upcoming activities may be sent to [weekly\\_update@ucg.org](mailto:weekly_update@ucg.org). Additional calendar information is available on the [members' website](#).

---

### STAY CONNECTED:

[Weekly Update Back Issues](#)

[United Church of God Email Updates](#)

[United Church of God Members Website](#)