

# United News

NEWS of the UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Sept-Oct 2026 | Vol. 32 No. 8

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## UYC 2026 *Follow Me*

In a world full of voices, noise, influences (and influencers) and distractions, Christ's words, "Follow Me," set the tone for a great summer camp season. We had 940 campers and 950 staff members take part in our preteen and teen camps this summer in the United States as we walked through the steps of following God and discipleship. We even had campers travel from Canada, Australia, Spain, England and the Netherlands. I encourage you to ask the teens and preteens in your congregations about their camp experience. Ask them about what they learned and enjoyed at camp. It is a great conversation starter and a wonderful way to engage with our youth.

I want to thank all of our staff who volunteer their time, energy and passion to help make our program a success. It is truly a team effort, and we are so thankful for their support and sacrifice. I also want to thank those who give financially to our camp program. Camp is not cheap, and we appreciate those who see its value and help in this way. Our amazing camp directors spend hundreds of hours each year in preparation for camp.

There are many benefits to our camp program, but one is the relationships that are built each year. Our main focus is to help the campers grow in their relationship with God. Each day is built with that idea woven throughout—from Christian living and Bible class to memory verses, campfire stories and dorm parent discussions that encourage and help the campers respond to God and follow Him.

We also focus on building relationships between the campers and staff. These are meaningful bonds that will go beyond camp, that will be there to support, encourage and help for many years to come. Camp creates an environment where youth spend significant time with each other,

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*Continued on page 4*

# Let Us *Keep the Feast!*

“Where are you going for the Feast?” is a typical question at this time of year. Home office staff are posting their answers on a hallway whiteboard, and members around the world are planning and preparing for one of the year's most anticipated Church gatherings.

The Feast offers a special opportunity to worship God, hear His Word and strengthen our relationships with brethren from around the world. For seven days at the Feast of Tabernacles, followed by the Eighth Day, we gather before God to rejoice together.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the wonderful 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ after His return. Its unusual name comes from God's instruction for Israelite families to dwell in booths—or tabernacles—during the autumn Holy Day season. This reminded them that their ancestors lived in temporary dwellings while traveling through the wilderness toward the Promised Land (Leviticus 23:42-43). We, too, are pilgrims in this present world, looking forward to the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth at Jesus Christ's return.

Leviticus 23 introduces these observances as “the feasts of the LORD” and commands that they be proclaimed as holy convocations. They are not merely our feasts or those of any religious organization; they belong to God. During the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day that follows, we gather to worship our great God and look forward to His Kingdom—a time of peace and restoration when His righteous purpose will extend throughout the world.

God commands His people to observe the Feast of Tabernacles and to assemble before Him. Fulfilling that command requires traveling to a designated Feast site. God also provides a financial system—the saving of the festival, or second tithe—to help His people prepare for and observe His annual festivals.

“You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always” (Deuteronomy 14:22-23).

Attending the Feast can require planning, travel and sacrifice. God anticipated that some journeys would be long and provided practical instructions to make attendance possible. The Songs of Ascent also reflect themes of help, peace, mercy and trust in God as worshipers traveled toward Jerusalem.

“But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household” (Deuteronomy 14:24-26).

The annual festivals observed at this time of year focus on Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Feast of Trumpets pictures Christ's return and the saints' resurrection; the Day of Atonement pictures humanity's reconciliation to God as Satan is removed; and the Feast of Tabernacles celebrates Christ's loving rule over the earth for 1,000 years.

Worldwide peace will come only through His intervention and a righteous government, ultimately fulfilling the prayer, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).



Isaiah describes that future time when the nations will go to Jerusalem to worship God and learn His ways:

“The mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Paul’s exhortation regarding the Feast of Unleavened Bread—“Let us keep the feast” (1 Corinthians 5:8)—also calls for the willing, faithful and joyful attitude we should bring to all of God’s festivals. So let us rejoice in keeping the Feast of Tabernacles this year.

Traveling to the place where God has placed His name and living temporarily away from one’s normal routine reinforce the Feast’s lesson that we are pilgrims looking forward to God’s coming Kingdom. God expects His people to make attending the Feast in person together at the place where He has placed His name a priority.

“And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice. Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you” (Deuteronomy 16:14-17).

Each of God’s festivals centers on Jesus Christ—our Savior, High Priest, King and Judge, through whom the resurrection is made possible. Zechariah 14 also shows that the nations will be required to worship the King and keep the Feast of Tabernacles during Christ’s millennial reign.

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain” (Zechariah 14:16-17). This concerns deliberate refusal to obey Christ, not those prevented from attending by circumstances beyond their control.

Scripture does not provide an exhaustive list of circumstances that may prevent attendance. Nevertheless, illness, advanced age, disability, caregiving responsibilities, confinement and other circumstances beyond one’s control can make attendance impossible.

God’s people should not remain home merely for convenience or to pursue personal interests. When serious obstacles prevent attendance, the matter should be considered prayerfully and, when appropriate, with ministerial counsel.

When extenuating circumstances prevent attendance, God’s people can register to tune into Feast messages, access Church services and other Feast-related content from home. Although this cannot replace the community and shared experience of attending in person, it helps them stay connected and focused on the Feast’s meaning.

Congregations can further support those unable to attend by staying in touch and encouraging them throughout the Feast so they do not feel forgotten or isolated.

If you are unable to attend the Feast in person this year, you can register online.

As the Feast approaches, may each of us prepare with joyful anticipation and a renewed desire to draw closer to God and one another. May this Feast deepen our vision of God’s coming Kingdom and strengthen our commitment to live by God’s values today.

**John Elliott**

President, United Church of God



but also with young adults, older adults and ministry.

The relationships that are built through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, dorm parent time, shared meals and activities are extremely meaningful and are one of the reasons our program is so valuable. Camp connects our generations through shared experiences, fun and deep spiritual discussions. It creates a true family environment.

What I value most when coming home from camp each year are the new relationships I've established. It's very encouraging when I see campers at a Feast site or at camp the next year and they come up to say hi, give me a hug and begin a conversation with me—or years later when they reach out to ask about baptism counseling or send an invitation to their wedding. Those relationships are why we keep coming back, and they are so meaningful not only to them, but also to me. They know there are adults who care about them, and are there to help and encourage them along their walk with God.

We pour ourselves into this program because it is worth it. It shows the campers that God's way works, that God is calling them, and that He loves them and wants a relationship with them. This year's theme of "Follow Me" was especially impactful. We shared five statements from Christ to His disciples that served as our daily themes: "Hear My Voice," "Come to Me," "Learn from Me," "Love Me" and "You Follow Me."

On the first day, we discussed hearing God's voice in the midst of all the noise and chaos of life. We reminded them that God's voice is there, but sometimes we have to put all the distractions away, remove the noise and listen. The more we listen, the easier it becomes to recognize His voice among all the other voices competing for our attention. (Memory verse: John 10:27)

We then discussed His desire for us to come to Him. His voice is supposed to draw us to Him so that He can help us, protect us and lead us to the Father. We discussed the relationship of disciples to their teacher often throughout the week, but also talked about the relationship of a shepherd and His sheep. God tells us that as we come to Him, He will give us rest, peace and help with the burdens of life. (Memory verse: Matthew 11:28)

From there, we talked about how we are to learn from Him. Just as the disciples spent time with Christ to learn from Him and become like Him, that is God's calling for us as well. We are drawn to Him so that we can become like Him—learning to live, think and treat people as He did. A disciple is to become like his Master so that he can live as He lived, but also share and pass on His message. (Memory verse: Matthew 11:29)

Those first three days culminated in the deeper topic of how we love Him. We have to love God and His way, and that love is demonstrated through our actions and obedience, as well as through building a deep, personal relationship with God. (Memory verse: John 14:23-24)

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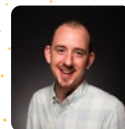
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We concluded the week with Christ's words, "You follow Me," which He spoke to Peter after His resurrection. When Peter wondered what was going to happen to John, Jesus reminded him to focus on what he had been called to do. He told Peter to focus on what had been asked of him, rather than on everything and everyone else. Following God requires that we fix our eyes on Him. (Memory verse: John 21:21-22)

We hear, come, learn, love and follow. It's really that simple, and yet we know it is difficult. So we shared this message of hope with the campers, and we built relationships with them to help them along the way. That is what our camp program is all about: pointing them to God and being there to help, guide, support, love and encourage them as we show them God's plan and love.

Our 2026 U.S. camp season will conclude with Winter Camp in December, and preparations are already underway for our 2027 season, with our annual camp directors' meeting taking place in November. We also have many international camps that take place throughout the year. Thank you again for your support of this very important program.

**Aaron Creech**  
UYC Program Director



**May 31–June 3, 2026**



**Gilmer, TX**

We are grateful to God for another successful year at preteen Camp Gilmont, located in the Piney Woods of East Texas. From May 31 to June 3, 31 preteen campers along with 25 adult and teen staff enjoyed a camp experience that was abundant with God's blessings. Storms came through East Texas one afternoon and went all around us, never hitting us directly.

Fun activities included utilizing the swimming pool and splash fountain, along with a dunking booth and water balloon fight. The kids had several opportunities to play gaga ball throughout camp. A variety of sports, water games, arts and crafts, hammock circle, Bible charades, music, line dancing, campfire and free time under the pavilion rounded out the activities. Each dorm performed its best Bible charade for the whole camp during our final Christian living class.

The UYC theme of "Follow Me" was well received and reinforced within various activities and in the Christian living classes. Campers were encouraged to explore what it means to follow God and Jesus in their everyday lives—through their actions and choices.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our adult and teen volunteers for their dedicated service at camp. Your commitment is appreciated, as camp would not be possible without your support. We're looking forward to Camp Gilmont again next year from May 30–June 2, 2027.

**Jim Moody**  
Camp Gilmont





May 25-29, 2026



Umatilla, FL



Camp Florida once again welcomed campers and staff for an unforgettable week of faith, friendship and adventure. One of the largest gatherings in our camp's history, Camp Florida brought together 172 participants, including 106 campers and teen staff and 66 dedicated adult staff members. The week was filled with excitement, spiritual growth and countless blessings.

God's hand was evident throughout the week. We were blessed with beautiful weather, safety and an atmosphere that allowed campers to step away from the distractions of everyday life and focus on building friendships, strengthening their relationship with God and having fun in a positive environment.

This year's theme, "Follow Me," invited campers on a jungle adventure focused on following Jesus Christ through every stage of life. Through daily Christian living classes, interactive skits, Compass Checks and meaningful dorm discussions, campers explored five key lessons from Christ's invitation to follow Him.

Of course, camp was also packed with adventure and excitement. Campers enjoyed swimming, canoeing, archery, sports, arts and crafts, gaga ball, water games and the ever-popular Big Swing. New this year was a fishing activity that quickly became a favorite among many campers, providing a chance to learn new skills while enjoying God's creation. One of the highlights of the week was the annual car race, in which campers raced cars they had built in woodcraft. The week also included competitions, team challenges, an energetic dance party and plenty of opportunities to build lasting friendships.

As we reflect on another successful year, we are thankful to God for His protection, guidance and blessings. We are also grateful to the many volunteers, staff members, parents and campers who make Camp Florida possible each year.

It is encouraging to see young people learning to follow Christ and let their lights shine. We look forward to seeing how God continues to work in their lives and are already excited about what Camp Florida 2027 will bring. Until then, we'll continue following the One who said, "Follow Me."



**Bert Merring**  
Camp Florida





**June 21-24, 2026**

**Allenspark, CO**



Camp Colorado was a big success this year in beautiful Allenspark, Colorado. On June 21, Father's Day, families from all over the country gathered to give our pre-teens three exciting days of growing in their relationship with God and His people. We had our largest group of campers yet, with 60 preteens and 64 teen and family staff members.

This year's theme, "Follow Me," was especially applicable to our campers. We focused on learning that we are capable of doing hard things with God's help. Each day began with wonderful food and spiritual lessons. Our kids stayed busy with activities ranging from arts and crafts, dance and slingshot to archery, hiking, field games and much more.

One of the new additions this year was a more challenging hike for our oldest campers. Known as the Three Crosses Hike, the trail gains more than 1,000 feet in elevation over a little more than two miles. Everyone made it to the top and agreed that the challenge and spectacular scenery were well worth the effort.

Every evening concluded with Christian living and a campfire sing-along, surrounded by God's beautiful creation and stunning mountain peaks. It was a wonderful opportunity for our campers to build friendships, grow in faith and appreciate God's creation in a special way.

As we look back on another incredible Camp Colorado, we are thankful for the many families, staff members and campers who made this year so special. We are already looking forward to next year and all that God has in store for us. We can't wait to see what adventures, friendships and opportunities for spiritual growth await us at Camp Colorado 2027!



**David Jones**  
Camp Colorado





**July 26-29, 2026**



**Spring Mills, PA**



In sunshine and in rain, the 90 campers at Camp Seven Mountains 2026 truly fulfilled the task of building friendships and having fun.

The mountains of Pennsylvania often make for unpredictable weather, but the few hours of rain that forced a shift in the plan did not stop the fun or cause the uplifting spirit of the camp to dwindle. And all the classic activities still got done enthusiastically with the helping hands of our incredible staff!

The kids made personalized jewelry at arts and crafts, miniature cornhole boards at woodworking and tie-dyed shirts to don on the last day of camp.

More than one gaga ball tournament was held for active fun in addition to a myriad of field sports.

The volleyball sands were filled with bare feet and bumps, sets and spikes. Kids were archers for a day as they raised arrows and let them rip at balloon-laden targets, in pursuit of that extra candy reward.

Dorms worked extra hard this year to earn the “cleanest dorm” distinction to chow down on some delicious eats from our hardworking kitchen staff first.

Teachers curated exciting lessons for the kids to learn more about Jesus and how to follow, learn and come to Him in their young lives and onward.

A camp favorite—boating and swimming—stayed high on many campers’ list as a top activity. And Grandma Rosie gave the toddlers on site with their parents their own camp experience too.

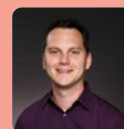
The camp culminated in a sendoff dance from our four youngest dorms and a thoughtful video of camp moments throughout the four days.

The dates are set for 2027: July 25-28. Please join us for another year of fun!



**Andy Duran**

Camp Seven Mountains



July 26-29, 2026



Delaware, OH

Preteen Camp Buckeye took place once again at Camp Lazarus in central Ohio. The facility sits on a beautiful 160 acres, providing ample space to enjoy nature and run all of our activities. The camp upgraded some of its buildings and facilities, with additional upgrades coming next year, making Camp Buckeye even more enjoyable for us.

This year we had 165 campers and staff come together for camp, and God blessed us with amazing weather and safety all week. Activities included fishing, BB guns, archery, field sports, arts and crafts, swimming, a creek walk and an escape room. We had a wonderful group of campers and staff who enjoyed the activities and grew together as the week went on. We started each day with a Christian living presentation for the whole camp, where we discussed how to become disciples as we hear Christ, learn from Him and love Him.

Two of our evenings concluded with a campfire in the amphitheater, where each dorm shared its dorm “chant.” We also enjoyed minute-to-win-it games and campfire songs. We concluded each campfire with the song “Follow Me,” written by a local Church member.

We had eleven 13-year-old staff members who served on our service crew. They assisted with a variety of needs and roles throughout camp as they learned to serve and help others during their first year transitioning from campers to staff at preteen camp. Every year we conclude camp with a short ceremony where awards are presented and service crew members are recognized for their work and “graduate” from the service crew. The annual “Hamster Dance” line dance then wraps up the week.

**Aaron Creech**  
Camp Buckeye





July 12–15, 2026



Stewartville, MN



Camp Ironwood was blessed with enthusiastic campers, teens, parents and even a few grandparents from 13 states, including Minnesota. The camp included 106 pre-teens (including 17 mini-dorm campers ages 5 and under—plus a few of our little ones under one year old!), 28 teens and 75 adults, who enjoyed four days of living, playing and working together God’s way in the beautiful country setting of Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch in southern Minnesota.

We were blessed to welcome several staff members who attended Camp Ironwood as children during its early years. They have now returned with children of their own, wanting them to experience the same friendships, spiritual lessons and lasting memories that shaped their own lives. Seeing a second generation embrace Camp Ironwood’s mission was a special reminder of God’s blessings over the past 26 years.

Each morning began with Christian living classes for three separate groups—campers, teens and adult staff—all centered on our camp theme: “Be My Disciple and Follow Me!” Through Scripture, they discovered what it means to follow Christ: to learn from His example, listen to Him and obey His teachings, and develop a lifelong relationship with Him. Our theme Scripture was Luke 9:23. The whole camp enjoyed the new Jelly video, as Jelly and Captain Finn shared their fishing adventure and taught everyone a lively song about following Jesus.

Throughout the day, campers participated in a wide variety of activities, including ziplining, horseback riding, slip-and-slide, team challenge, creek walk, field games, archery and slingshot, climbing wall, petting zoo, swimming and arts and crafts. Evening activities included a campfire sing-along, novelty Olympics, a treasure hunt, a carnival and dancing with Jelly.

We are very thankful for the support of the home office, the dedicated service of our amazing camp staff, and the many contributions and prayers from local brethren. Above all, we give thanks and praise to God for blessing us with another memorable year at Camp Ironwood!



**David Schreiber**  
Camp Ironwood





July 12-15, 2026

Prineville, OR

Greetings from Preteen Camp Ochoco, where 68 campers enjoyed the dry hills and ponderosa pine forests of central Oregon. We know that God watches over our youth camps, and we definitely saw signs of His protection. There was a small forest fire in the area, and the campers got to watch helicopters fly overhead with buckets of water before the fire was quickly contained! We're thankful to our Creator for His love and protection.

The high temperature on the first full day of camp was 92 degrees, making it easy to appreciate activities like swimming and aquatic kickball. Other activities included archery, pickleball, wilderness explorers, arts and crafts and dance. The oldest dorms got to try an exciting new activity: a climbing wall. These activities helped campers grow in a safe environment while embracing elements of "the Zone," such as having fun, being challenged and building positive relationships.

The most foundational activity was Christian living class, which focused on this year's theme, "Follow Me." The first morning of camp started with an all-camp class titled "Hear My Voice," emphasizing the importance of listening to God and following His direction despite the noise of the world. Lessons on "Come to Me," "Obey Me" and "Love Me" came next. We know that God is calling our youth, and we want them to know that too. It is our hope that these classes help instill a lasting connection with God and His people while the campers are still young.

In the evenings, campers wound down around the campfire. The whole camp joined in for skits, snacks and songs.

Our 15 teen assistants were an integral part of the camp. By helping counselors with dorms, running activities alongside staff and assisting with kitchen cleanup, our teens learned valuable lessons in service and leadership. This was part of our effort to create a family environment where we all serve one another while helping bring up new generations in God's Church.

Thank you for your continued prayers for all of our United Youth Camps and for the success of our young people.

**Jeff Richards**  
Camp Ochoco





June 28-July 5, 2026



Fredericktown, MO



God's tremendous blessings were evident at Camp Pinecrest as we celebrated our 30th summer in southeast Missouri. We praise and thank our Father and His Son for being present with us and for leading Their camp. Camp Pinecrest remains a special place to hold teen camp, as we always feel God's hand and care around us!

For the third year in a row, we held a full camp with 108 campers and 75 staff members. As always, we offer a big thank-you to the staff volunteers who give of their own time and financial resources to attend camp, setting an example by living God's way and demonstrating His love. Thank you to the campers who continually shine and make directing camp much easier. And thank you, parents! It is a joy to interact with and guide your teens!



The primary focus of the week was the Christian living theme, which started with an invitation to accept Jesus' call to "Follow Me." Campers and staff alike were challenged to consider what a committed life of following Jesus looks like. Jesus' words, "Hear My Voice," "Come to Me," "Learn From Me," "Love Me" and "You Follow Me," each served as a daily focus as we progressed through the week. Campers welcomed the opportunity, and their actions reflected the powerful way God is working in their lives.

The hot weather did not dampen the campers' positive attitudes or their enjoyment of time together. This year we added pickleball as a new activity and provided each dorm with a full activity session on "The Blob." Campers also explored the topic "Is It Gossip?" in Bible class and analyzed practical scenarios relevant to their lives. Keeping activities fresh and Bible class engaging are high priorities so our week together remains fun and Kingdom-focused.



Thank you for your many prayers for Camp Pinecrest and all the UYC camps. We know we are lifted up and supported throughout the week, and God's presence is continually felt as He leads this great program!

**Mike Phelps**  
Camp Pinecrest



June 21-28, 2026



Bellefontaine, OH

This year, 91 campers, 51 dedicated staff and 10 mini-campers gathered at Camp Cotubic for an unforgettable week focused on living in the Zone and diving deeper into what it means when Christ says, “Follow Me.” From start to finish, the week was filled with energy, encouragement and spiritual growth.

Each day began with Christian living classes centered on this year’s theme, “Follow Me.” Throughout the week, we explored what it truly means to follow Jesus Christ—not simply believing in Him but walking as He walked.

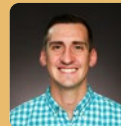
Following the morning classes, campers jumped into a variety of activities. Returning favorites like the high ropes course, climbing wall and zipline, Speedaway, Ultimate Frisbee, dance, waterfront, basketball, arts and crafts and the Amazing Race were as popular as ever. Horseback riding returned for its second year and once again proved to be one of the week’s most popular activities, giving many campers an opportunity to experience something entirely new. Forecasts called for Thursday’s “Grill and Chill” to be washed out, yet as the event began, the storm simply dissipated. Not a single drop of rain fell.

From the first day through the final dance, there was a genuine atmosphere of encouragement, respect and enthusiasm. Older campers naturally looked after younger ones, friendships formed quickly and dorms became places where teens genuinely wanted to encourage one another.

Our staff once again went above and beyond—not only in organizing and leading activities but also in mentoring, guiding and modeling what it looks like to walk with God. Every game, meal and Christian living class was intentionally designed to reinforce the camp atmosphere while encouraging teens in their walk with God.

As campers returned home, our prayer was that “Follow Me” wouldn’t remain simply this year’s camp theme, but instead become a daily decision to follow Jesus Christ at school, at home, among friends and wherever life takes them. Thank you to the parents for entrusting us with your teens for the week and to everyone whose prayers and support made Camp Cotubic possible. We’re looking forward to next time!

**Josh Creech**  
Camp Cotubic

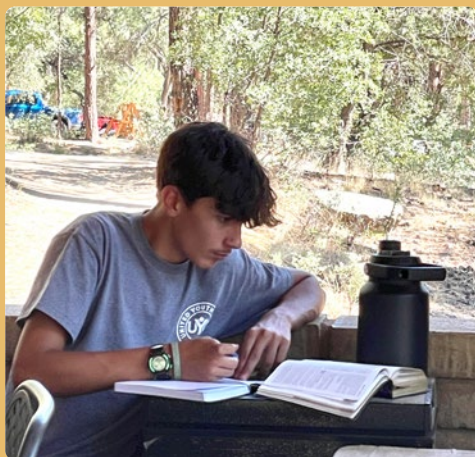




**July 5-12, 2026**



**Prescott, AZ**



Southwest Camp concluded another inspiring week with 60 campers and 50 dedicated staff members. While campers returned home with lasting friendships and wonderful memories, they also left with a renewed commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

This year's theme, "Follow Me," was drawn from Christ's invitation to His disciples and served as the foundation for every aspect of camp. Through daily Christian living and Bible classes, campers were challenged to consider what it truly means to walk in Christ's footsteps—not only during a week at camp but throughout their lives. Each lesson encouraged them to grow closer to God, strengthen their faith and develop the habits of a lifelong disciple.

Throughout the week, campers experienced "the Zone," an environment intentionally set apart from the influences of the world. Surrounded by Christian friends, caring counselors and God's instruction, they experienced a glimpse of the joy, peace and unity that come from living according to His way. It was encouraging to watch campers support one another, serve willingly and build friendships rooted in mutual respect and Christian love.

Campers also enjoyed a full schedule of activities, including horseback riding, dance, hiking, archery, kayaking, arts and crafts, volleyball, disc golf, field sports and mountain biking. Each evening, everyone had the opportunity to interact as an entire camp through open activities, a dance or a camp "grill and chill." Then we gathered around the campfire beneath the towering ponderosa pines for games, fellowship, meaningful conversations and the singing of the camp song. The week concluded with the banquet and dance.

It is our prayer that the lessons learned at camp will continue to bear fruit as these young people strive to answer Christ's invitation to "Follow Me" each day.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many staff members, parents, congregations and supporters whose prayers, encouragement and generous support made Southwest Camp possible.



**Brent Fogelson**  
Southwest Camp



July 19-26, 2026



Temple, GA

Camp Woodland was once again filled with energy, fellowship and opportunities for spiritual growth as 62 campers and 51 staff members gathered for a memorable week in northwest Georgia.

Camp ran from Sunday through Saturday, giving campers a full week to participate in activities, build friendships and grow closer to God. This year brought two new activities to the camp schedule. In arts and crafts, campers spent the first two days glazing pottery pieces. The finished pieces were sent away to be fired and later returned to the campers, giving each one a special keepsake and memory of camp. Fishing was also introduced on the lake, providing campers with a new way to enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Camp Woodland.

The activity schedule offered something for everyone, including basketball, volleyball, speedaway, ultimate frisbee, softball, high ropes and dance class. Campers also enjoyed two dances during the week, one on Monday night and another on Saturday night, creating additional opportunities for fun and fellowship.

The spiritual focus of the week centered on Christian living classes held Monday through Friday. Each day's lesson was built around one of five phrases of Jesus Christ found in the Gospels: "Hear My Voice," "Come to Me," "Learn From Me," "Love Me" and "You Follow Me." The classes were engaging, practical and especially relevant in today's world, where the biblical message can easily be drowned out by the constant noise of news, social media, influencers, entertainment and countless other distractions.

Overall, Camp Woodland was a tremendous success. Beyond the activities and memories, campers had the opportunity to build new friendships, learn valuable lessons and consider how they can better follow Jesus Christ in their everyday lives.

**Marcus Lucas**  
Camp Woodland





July 19-26, 2026



Rockaway Beach, OR



This year, 115 campers and 69 staff came together at Camp Magruder on the beautiful Oregon coast to learn more about God and His calling for our lives. Our theme this year, “Follow Me,” was well received, and many analogies and lessons from the Christian living classes led to important discussions about what God is doing in each of our lives as we grow as disciples.

Given the record-high temperatures around the country this summer, we very much appreciated the cooler weather, with temperatures in the low 60s and scattered sun-breaks in the afternoon once the marine layer burned off. We also enjoyed an evening train ride on the Oregon Coast Scenic Railway from Rockaway Beach northward as the sun began to set along the incredible vistas of the Oregon coast.

The activities this year were enjoyed by all, and our staff worked very hard to make them memorable. Our standard activities included boogie boarding and skimboarding on the beach, softball, ultimate frisbee, pickleball, dance, archery, volleyball, arts and crafts, Excellence in Living, team building and speedaway. Unfortunately, Lake Lytle wasn’t able to support waterskiing this year, but we added a hike at the beautiful Kilchis Point Reserve, giving campers another opportunity to enjoy the Oregon coast.

We were blessed this year to be joined by David Middleton and his wife, Shana, from New Zealand. Their presence, along with staff and campers from Australia, the Netherlands, Canada and the United Kingdom, added a real international flair to our camp this year. We also transitioned Northwest Camp leadership from Ben Light, who has directed the camp for the past few years, to Rob Slocum, who will direct the camp going forward.

After a few short days, it was time to leave the Zone and return to the world. Our time together was a much-needed respite. We’re all looking forward to the day when the Kingdom of God is here permanently—the fulfillment of the hope and calling of God and the journey we learned more about at camp.



**Ben Light**  
Northwest Camp



May 31-June 7, 2026



Philippines

At Eden Nature Park Resort, 49 campers, 44 staff members and nine mini-campers enthusiastically gathered for summer camp. Campers learned what it means to follow Christ during morning Christian living classes, which were reinforced with daily quizzes and service workshops. These included personality development, principles of public speaking, Bible journaling and note-taking, songleading, advanced public speaking for boys, unleavened bread making and flower arranging for girls and a dance workshop.

Outdoor sports and activities included basketball, soccer, volleyball and challenging sky rides. Campers, along with some staff and mini-campers, eagerly hiked a 2.6-kilometer mountain trail during the wilderness and forest trekking activity. They courageously crossed challenging bridges and learned how to catch and grill fish outdoors. They also participated in a selection of basic skills workshops, including cooking and baking, key-chain making, artificial flower bouquet making, bag charm making, basic sewing, basic carpentry, basic plumbing, basic car maintenance, graphic design and basic AI literacy.

During the first five days of camp, each dorm prepared sumptuous and creatively themed breakfasts for everyone. The dorms also showcased their creativity during daily dorm inspections. After dinner, during Compass Check, campers shared their experiences and the lessons they had learned that day. A question-and-answer session followed dinner on day five.

On Sabbath morning, a fun and challenging “Biblelympics” activity preceded Sabbath services. Afternoon services featured split sermons delivered by assistant camp director Bong Remo and camp director Rey Evasco. All the campers performed the chorale piece “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go” as special music. After sunset, everyone gathered for a Hawaiian-themed dinner, talent show and awards night before the campers headed back to their dorms to pack and say their goodbyes to their counselors and dormmates.

Mr. Evasco remarked, “This year’s camp with the theme ‘Follow Me’ was the most memorable UYC. The campers were keyed up with the CLCs so much so that the lessons spilled over the games and activities that followed, reflecting the lessons for each day!”

We are thankful for this important annual event for our youth in the Church.

**Richard John Macaraeg**

Camp Philippines



# GN

## The Good News

### Has the Trumpet Sounded in *Your Heart?*

Let's consider whether the trumpet is sounding loudly in our hearts and how we can work together to magnify that sound to the world through our lives.

*by Steven Britt*

Human beings are naturally programmed to look toward the source of a loud sound to assess where it came from and what it was made by. The sudden presence of noise puts us on alert, and our bodies prepare for danger as we investigate the cause. This is a matter of survival, and sometimes immediate action is needed!

The Hebrew name of the festival we call “Feast of Trumpets” is *yom teruah*, which literally means “day of great noise.” In its usage throughout the Old Testament, the word *teruah* can refer to trumpet blasts (Numbers 10:2-5), the vocal battle cries of an army (Joshua 6:5), or the sound of a great number of people (1 Samuel 4:5). Trumpet blasts in particular served various purposes—to assemble people together (Numbers 10:2-4), to announce the arrival of an army for war (Numbers 10:9), or to glorify God with music (1 Chronicles 13:8).

The Feast of Trumpets has great prophetic significance in God's plan, and the intent of this “great noise” becomes clear no matter which angle we observe from: God is going to get the world's attention with these incredible sounds! But the question we in the Church must ask ourselves at this time of year is whether or not God has our attention—has the trumpet sounded in our hearts?

#### The Battle Cry

Revelation 8-9 pictures a time when six great trumpet blasts will resound through the earth, each accompanied by terrible plagues. In Revelation 11:15, a seventh blast declares that “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

Even after the awful plagues of the first six trumpets, Revelation 9:20-21 reveals that the people who remain alive will not repent of their evil deeds. Even after so much suffering, famine and bloodshed, some will stubbornly refuse to accept the message that they must turn from their sins. And so comes the final wake-up call to mankind when Jesus descends with “the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This astonishing sound becomes a battle cry as the army of God lays waste to the armies of the world gathered against Jerusalem (Revelation 19:11-21).

Afterwards, when Jesus and the resurrected saints begin to reign, all of mankind will have heard the sound and be on alert, ready to finally investigate the source of such great calamity! They will come to realize that this worldwide disaster and unimaginable suffering were the result of sin, and they will learn God's holy way of life as they repent.

God has called us in the Church to repentance today, before the world has heard the battle cry. Have we heard God's battle cry, and are we taking action? If so, God has given us the amazing opportunity to actually join the battle cry of Jesus Christ at His return in order to lead the entire world to repentance and eternal life!

## The Call to Worship

One of the primary purposes of a trumpet blast in ancient Israel was the gathering of God's people together, either to hear an urgent message or to worship God. A long trumpet blast accompanied God's presence when He appeared to Israel to give the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:13, 16, 19). This terrifying noise drew the Israelites' attention to God and caused them to tremble and worship before His awesomeness as they heard His words.

In the prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets, all people will hear the trumpet blast and will eventually be humbled to worship before God's power. In those days, "from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:23), and "every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath" (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11). The central purpose of the Feast of Trumpets is reconciling humanity to God and bringing them into worship of Him.

If we have already heard the call to worship God, then it is important that we gather together every Sabbath and every Holy Day if we are able to do so. God's Sabbath and holy days are "appointed times" when God commands us to have "holy convocations" with each other before Him (Leviticus 23:2). In order to be sure that we are properly responding to God's trumpet call in our hearts, it is paramount that we "not [forsake] the assembling of ourselves together . . . but [exhort] one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

## Shouts of Joy

At Jesus' return, God's resurrected saints will also make a resounding joyful noise along with the angels, and "the

sound of mighty thunderings" (Revelation 19:6-8) will be heard in praise of God! The entire creation will rejoice as it is freed from bondage and turned over to "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21)—the trees will clap their hands, and the mountains will break forth in song (Isaiah 55:12).

During the 1,000 years, the world will look to the cause of these great shouts of joy: the fulfillment of God's promises to the firstfruits of His harvest, of which they are the next phase.

They will see clearly that this great sound of praise that is raised at Jesus' coming is the result of God's faithfulness and worthiness, and that they too should rejoice in the greatness of God.

If we have been called into covenant with God, then there should be a loud, joyful noise growing in our hearts today! We are called to rejoice in the hope of God's promises through faith, and our rejoicing will reach a glorious crescendo at the return of Jesus Christ that will shake the entire earth!

## Does God Have Our Attention?

This Feast of Trumpets, let's consider the *teruah*, the "great noise," that will come upon the entire world. What is its purpose, and what does it mean for those of us today who already hear it coming? It is a warning to be spiritually alert, to repent from our sins and to join the army of God. As He leads us out of captivity from sin, we must also joyfully praise God for His awesome deeds by which He has delivered us through Jesus Christ! And we must continue to gather with one another week by week, year by year, edifying each other and growing together in faith and love as we answer the worship call that the entire world will soon hear.

If we have become slack in our calling, let's take this Feast of Trumpets as an opportunity to make ourselves alert! Let's consider whether the trumpet is sounding loudly in our hearts and how we can work together to magnify that sound to the world through our lives. **GN**



# Are You Wearing Your Spiritual *Bulletproof Vest?*

Putting on a bulletproof vest is an occupational necessity for many police officers. But is there equivalent spiritual protection disciples of Jesus Christ should wear?

*by John LaBissoniere*

“I don’t think there’s anything like saving someone’s life to bring you satisfaction and happiness,” said Stephanie Kwolek, the chemist who invented Kevlar®. Invented in 1965, Kevlar® is the synthetic fiber used in bulletproof vests.



**A**ccording to the National Institute of Justice, “During the past three decades, ballistic-resistant soft body armor has saved the lives of more than 3,000 police officers.”

The Wikipedia entry for “Bulletproof Vest” states, “A bulletproof vest, also known as a ballistic vest or bullet-resistant vest, is a type of body armor designed to absorb impact and prevent the penetration of firearm projectiles and explosion fragments to the torso. The vest can be either soft—as worn by police officers, security personnel, prison guards and occasionally private citizens to protect against stabbing attacks or light projectiles.”

If wearing a bulletproof vest is an occupational necessity for police officers, what about you and me as disciples of Jesus Christ? While it’s very unlikely that we need a physical bulletproof vest, it is critical that we wear a spiritual one—described in scripture as the “breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14). Indeed, divine protection is an absolute necessity as we struggle “against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12, New Living Translation). Our real enemy is not people but Satan the devil and his demons who work relentlessly at deceiving, damaging and corrupting human beings—including brethren of God’s Church (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8).

To contend with this malicious threat the apostle Paul stated that we must “put on the whole armor of God” in order “to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Besides wearing the breastplate of righteousness, we need to be outfitted with other defensive and offensive equipment including the belt of truth and shoes of the gospel of peace. We also must have the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:13-17).

## Safeguarding Our Spiritual Lives

While it’s requisite we be outfitted in all of these divine components, let’s focus specifically on the “breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14) which we could call our “spiritual bulletproof vest.” When Paul used the term breastplate, he was referring to the main piece of a Roman soldier’s armor—which covered the front of the body from the neck to the thighs. Without wearing his breastplate, a soldier’s risk of death or serious injury in battle rose dramatically. In a divine sense it’s no different for us if we are not equipped with the “breastplate of righteousness” which God designed to safeguard our spiritual lives from deception, evil and corruption.

But what is the righteousness of which Paul referred? Psalm 71:19 gives us the answer. “For Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God,

who is like You?” (New International Version). In comparing God’s perfect justice, morality and holiness to human righteousness—which is behavior conforming to accepted societal standards of right and wrong—there is no equivalency. Indeed, as the prophet Isaiah wrote, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Because of sinful, unrighteous conduct, human beings have been cut off from God (Isaiah 59:2). But access to reconciliation with Him is possible as described in this decisive passage: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Acknowledging our unrighteousness and rejecting sinful ways is a vital step in putting on the “breastplate of righteousness.” Therefore, we absolutely need God’s righteousness since our own righteous acts are no match for Satan which only leaves us destitute, fruitless and without hope.

Besides repenting of our sins, we must be baptized, which is an outward sign of an inward change of our heart and mind. It also represents the termination of our past, futile way of life, symbolically left behind in the baptismal waters (Acts 22:16). Furthermore, baptism demonstrates that we have fully accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior through His suffering, death and resurrection. Moreover, it illustrates that we are zealous to follow His perfect, righteous example of love toward and obedience to His Father (1 Peter 2:21; John 15:10).

### Taking Fire From Satan the Devil

After performing these steps, God will provide us the vital spiritual protection we need in order to confront and repulse “the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). This is exactly what putting on the “breastplate of righteousness” is all about. When we “take fire” from Satan, the divine protective gear we wear always proves reliable under the harshest conditions and is guaranteed never to fail. “For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield” (Psalm 5:12). God’s righteousness is therefore a critical defensive measure we need in order to be protected from spiritual demise. Satan’s “bullets” simply can’t pierce our minds and hearts because we are striving to live as our Savior lived.

After putting on the bulletproof vest of righteousness at baptism and after receiving the Holy Spirit, we must keep it on at all times. Remaining committed in faith, love and hope toward God and His way of life are critical elements in dressing in divine body armor. “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Indeed, faith, love and hope go hand-in-hand



*A police officer doesn't know what physical dangers each day might hold; it's important to be prepared.*

in conducting ourselves in godly righteousness (Romans 4:3). They provide us the supreme confidence that our bulletproof vest of righteousness will stop any shots fired at us by the devil.

Of course, this doesn’t mean we won’t be sore after an encounter with him. Even as a projectile stopped by a physical bulletproof vest can cause bruises behind the impact area, so this can happen to us in a spiritual sense. As the apostle Peter explained, even as we are striving to be faithful to God we can “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (1 Peter 3:14).

Finally, just as a police officer doesn’t know what physical dangers he may face each day, the same is true for us spiritually. Therefore, we need to always be fully dressed in all the components of God’s body armor—including His righteousness—our spiritual “bulletproof vest.” Are you wearing yours? **GN**

# Breaking *Painful* Family Patterns

## *Five Steps Toward Healing*

**P**ainful family patterns can pass from one generation to the next—but through Jesus Christ, repentance, forgiveness and godly support, the cycle does not have to continue.

Some families seem to pass pain from one generation to the next. Abuse, addiction, neglect, uncontrolled anger, silence and fear may shape a household for decades. A child grows up, forms a family of his or her own and discovers that old reactions and beliefs have followed along. Today this is often called generational, intergenerational or transgenerational trauma.

The term can help describe how painful experiences influence later generations, but it should not imply that a family is trapped by an unavoidable curse. The Bible teaches that sin has consequences, while also teaching personal responsibility, repentance and genuine change (Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Ezekiel 18:20-23). Through Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven and taught a new way of life.

When I was a young girl, my grandmother believed there was a curse on our family because of the hardships we experienced. Coming from an Islander background, she tried various remedies and practices associated with the occult. As a child, I did not know how to understand what she was doing or why so much pain seemed to surround our family.

As an adult, I came to see that our family was not doomed by a mysterious power. We were living with the consequences of sin, broken choices and unresolved suffering. The natural, unconverted human mind is hostile to God (Romans 8:7), and Satan seeks to deceive and destroy (1 Peter 5:8-9). The answer was to choose God, accept Christ's sacrifice and begin learning His way.

That choice did not instantly remove every wound or repair every relationship. Following Christ sometimes changes family dynamics. Jesus taught that our loyalty to Him must come before every other relationship (Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37). He was not commanding hatred toward our families. He was showing that no person, tradition or pressure can take priority over God.

Romans 12:18 tells us to live peaceably with others as far as it depends on us. Yet pursuing peace does not require remaining in situations of repeated abuse or manipulation.

For me, the process was painful. As old family roles began to collapse, I no longer knew who I was apart from what I did for others. I lost interest in artistic pursuits I once enjoyed. At my lowest point, I thought the only way out of the pain was to take my life.

Thankfully, I am still here. God did not abandon me. With time, support, prayer, truth and difficult choices, I began to see that there was life on the other side of what I had experienced. Music became part of my healing, and I still hope to reawaken some of my earlier love for art.

If you recognize yourself in my story, do not lose hope. Deep wounds may require time, pastoral support and competent professional care. Seeking appropriate help is not a failure of faith. God can work through prayer, His Word, His ministry, supportive brethren and trained professionals.

The following five steps are not a formula, and no family story is exactly the same. They are biblical principles that helped me recognize unhealthy patterns in my own life and begin moving toward healing.

### **1. Bring Painful Experiences Into the Light**

The first step toward healing is bringing painful experiences into the light. In some families, an unspoken rule says that abuse, addiction, violence, war, loss or neglect must not be discussed. Children may learn that telling the truth is betrayal and that protecting the family's image matters more than acknowledging what happened.

The Bible encourages us not to hide sin or pretend that suffering is insignificant. It brings human failure into the light so that confession, forgiveness and change can begin (1 John 1:8-9). Truth is part of healing.

Most of my childhood was shaped by the effects of my step-father's drug and alcohol addiction. He carried severe trauma



of his own. While still in school, a prank involving a science experiment went terribly wrong, and his best friend—also his science teacher—was killed. My stepfather survived but lost part of one arm. He became an atheist and, as far as I could see, never learned to face the guilt and grief he carried.

His suffering was real, but it did not excuse the harm he caused. He failed to protect me from abuse by his friends and did not truly assume the responsibility of fatherhood. Untreated pain may explain destructive behavior, but it does not excuse it. Each person remains accountable before God (Romans 14:12).

Proverbs 22:3 says that a prudent person foresees danger and takes refuge. My stepfather chose to cope with his pain through denial, substances and anger rather than seeking help. As a result, his unaddressed suffering spilled into the lives of others.

Breaking this pattern begins with honest acknowledgment—not broadcasting private matters, but refusing to excuse evil or to blame the victim. A pastor, counselor, physician or a mature, trusted friend may help us speak the truth safely. Christ already knows our burdens and invites us to come to Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

## 2. Learn That Legitimate Needs Are Not Shameful

A second step toward healing is recognizing that legitimate needs are not shameful. In families shaped by scarcity, neglect or abuse, children may learn that asking for food, comfort, protection, attention or affection causes trouble. Later, even reasonable needs can feel selfish.

My grandmother's history helps me understand how this pattern developed in our family. She was born as a result of rape and was treated as an outcast in her community. Her mother was also cast out and had to survive largely on her own. My grandmother grew up during the Great

Depression, with very little. She taught herself to sew so she could make clothing for herself and my great-grandmother.

Her strength and resourcefulness deserve respect. Yet some of the lessons she learned simply to survive carried an emotional cost. Need became associated with shame, and depending on others felt dangerous. That guilt passed into later generations, even when the original circumstances had changed.

The Bible emphasizes generosity and sacrifice, yet it doesn't suggest that individuals lack legitimate needs. Jesus rested, accepted hospitality and withdrew to pray (Mark 6:31; Luke 5:16). Our needs do not diminish our worth or spiritual strength.

Christianity is not self-centered. Seeking first God's Kingdom and righteousness brings balance (Matthew 6:33), helping us distinguish between wants to surrender, needs to address and burdens to bring to God.

Repentance may be necessary when pain has led us to sinful coping, but it is not the same as condemning ourselves for being wounded. Godly sorrow leads to change and life, not hopeless shame (2 Corinthians 7:10). Through Christ, we can approach the Father for mercy and help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16). Learning to receive appropriate care can be part of learning to trust God.

## 3. Care for Others Without Assuming Their Responsibilities

A third step toward healing is learning to care for others without carrying responsibilities that belong to them. In a troubled home, a child may become the peacemaker, confidant, rescuer or emotional support for adults. The child learns to watch every expression, anticipate every outburst and try to keep the family from falling apart.

Because pain had never been faced in my family, I found myself carrying emotions that did not belong to me. My grandmother's exclusion from her community contributed to a belief that she was not worth much. Self-effacing habits and low confidence seemed to pass from my mother's life into mine. Those beliefs affected the relationships we accepted and how we interpreted other people's behavior.

My stepfather was physically and emotionally abusive toward my mother. At times, she smashed dishes to keep him away. In that environment, I developed a powerful belief that I had to be there for everyone. I had to be the rock. Dependability became part of my character, but I confused being dependable with being responsible for outcomes I could not control. Eventually, the burden began to crush me.

Galatians 6 provides needed balance. We are told to bear one another's burdens, yet we are also told that each person must bear his or her own load (verses 2 and 5). Christian love does not require us to assume another person's moral responsibility.

We can listen, pray, help and serve without becoming the family's savior. Jesus Christ already occupies that role.

Christ invites us to take His yoke and learn from Him because His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30). This does not mean the Christian life is effortless. It means we are no longer carrying life apart from Him or trying to do what only He can do. We can cast our cares on God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

Healing can come from pausing before automatically fixing, apologizing or absorbing blame. I learned to ask whether a burden was truly mine and whether I had acted with love and integrity. Prayer and Scripture helped me replace fearful reactions with deliberate choices. God's Spirit helps converted Christians grow in love, wisdom, self-control and courage (2 Timothy 1:7; Galatians 5:22-23). That growth enables us to serve others freely rather than out of fear, guilt or compulsion. We can care deeply without pretending to be unbreakable.

## 4. Learn to Receive Peace Without Fear

A fourth step toward healing is learning to relax when circumstances are peaceful. If good moments are repeatedly followed by conflict, humiliation or violence, the mind may come to expect disaster. Even happiness can feel unsafe.

I noticed a pattern in which my happiness seemed to provoke jealousy or drama in my family. At my wedding, my mother and sister created conflict that overshadowed what should have been a joyful day. The experience reinforced my expectation that good moments would always be interrupted. I found myself waiting for the next explosion.

For a time, I felt driven to recreate the wedding we should have had. On our 12th anniversary, my husband and I privately marked the occasion with our children as witnesses. That moment mattered to me. Yet I also learned that I could not spend the rest of my life trying to force the past to be different. I had to grieve what happened and release the demand that another event erase it.

Ephesians 4:26-27 warns us not to let anger lead us into sin or give the devil an opportunity. The emotion itself can alert us that something is wrong, but it must be brought under godly control. When another person's emotions become destructive, we may need distance and support, while guarding our own response against retaliation or revenge.

I began identifying what I was feeling rather than reacting immediately. Naming fear, grief, anger or shame helped me express myself more calmly when an old memory was triggered. Over time, that practice strengthened my confidence.

The Psalms show faithful people bringing their intense emotions to God and returning to trust. Biblical peace is not pretending nothing happened; it is the confidence that God

remains present. Philippians 4:6-9 directs us to bring our requests to Him and dwell on what is true and praiseworthy.

Healing does not require us to be carefree, but fear should not rule our peaceful moments. Christ offers peace unlike the world's peace (John 14:27). With God's help, we can learn to receive good gifts with gratitude rather than suspicion.

## 5. Acknowledge Pain and Replace Unhealthy Family Patterns

A fifth step toward healing is acknowledging our pain honestly and identifying the unhealthy beliefs and relationship patterns that developed around it. In some families, pain is minimized or turned into a competition. When someone speaks of a wound, another person may respond, "I had it worse," or, "Other people have suffered more." The result is not comfort but silence.

Other people's suffering does not make ours imaginary. Christ noticed and responded to individuals; He did not silence them because someone else had a greater problem.

In my family, I developed resilience that sometimes felt unnatural because vulnerability did not feel safe. I learned to keep functioning, but functioning is not always the same as healing. A person can appear strong while carrying grief, fear and confusion for many years.

One of the hardest patterns for me to overcome was what counselors call enmeshment—relationships in which normal emotional and personal boundaries become blurred. In my experience, it appeared in two ways. First, emotions were used to pressure me "for the good of the family." I was expected to fall in line, absorb guilt and meet needs that other family members would not take responsibility for. Second, beliefs were imposed or formed in childhood to help me survive: I am responsible for everyone; disagreement is betrayal; having needs is selfish; peace depends on my silence.

I learned to test those beliefs against God's Word. Romans 12:2 teaches that transformation comes through a renewed mind. Not every inherited thought is true, and not every intense feeling is a reliable guide. God's truth reveals what belongs to us and what must be left in His hands.

The willingness of family members to acknowledge harm and respect boundaries will determine what kind of relationship is possible. Scripture calls us to peace, but it does not require us to trust without evidence or to repeatedly place ourselves in danger. Trust can be rebuilt only where there is truth, repentance and consistent change. John the Baptist's instruction to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" expresses this principle (Matthew 3:8).

At the same time, boundaries must never become a disguise for hatred or revenge. We must guard our hearts diligently because our thoughts, attitudes and choices flow from within us

(Proverbs 4:23). That includes guarding against bitterness as well as further abuse. The goal is not punishment. The goal is to live faithfully before God.

## Forgiveness, Reconciliation and the Courage to Change

Recognizing these steps is important, but they cannot save or transform us. Our hope is in God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead. Through repentance, faith in His sacrifice and baptism by immersion, we receive forgiveness and begin a new life. Following baptism, God gives His Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands, bringing the believer into the spiritual Body of Christ (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:14-17; Romans 6:3-6). His Spirit empowers lifelong growth and transformation.

That process includes forgiveness, but biblical forgiveness is not denial. Wrongdoing remains wrongdoing. Forgiveness does not erase consequences, nor does it require immediate trust.

We don't need to wait for an apology before surrendering bitterness and vengeance to God. Romans 12:19 tells us to leave judgment to Him. Forgiveness releases our claim to revenge and refuses to nourish hatred, a choice that may need to be renewed as memories resurface.

Reconciliation is not the same as forgiveness. It requires both parties, along with honesty, repentance, safety and a willingness to rebuild. We can forgive someone who refuses to change, even if closeness may not be possible.

My healing stretched from my teenage years into my 40s. At times, I believed I had forgiven, yet I still carried deep anger. Eventually, I accepted that I might never receive closure from people unwilling to acknowledge the harm they had caused. If I waited for them to make everything right before I released my anger, I could wait the rest of my life.

I chose to forgive because God calls me to do so and because I did not want injustice to continue ruling my heart. That choice did not mean blind trust. It took courage to step away from unhealthy situations and make changes. I learned that I could forgive while maintaining appropriate boundaries. I could seek peace without pretending. I could place judgment in God's hands without falling back into the same destructive pattern.

Ephesians 4:31-32 urges us to put away bitterness, wrath and malice and to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving, following the forgiveness God extends through Christ. This is not a command to manufacture pleasant feelings. It is a call to let God reshape our conduct and character.

Professional counseling can help when trauma affects daily life, relationships or safety. It does not replace God, Scripture or pastoral care, but it can help a person understand reactions and develop healthier skills. UCG's Light of Hope can help

members find appropriate support.

Healing is often gradual. We may need to grieve, repent of our sinful responses, practice new habits and accept support. God is patient; growth is not invalidated by the time it takes.

## The Future is Not Defined by the Past

The Bible's hope extends far beyond improved family relationships in this life. Jesus Christ came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God and calling people to repent and believe (Mark 1:14-15). He will return to establish that Kingdom over all nations. The violence, exploitation, addiction, deception and family brokenness that have marked human history will not endure forever.

In God's Kingdom, humanity will learn His way of love, justice and peace. Families will no longer be shaped by Satan's influence or by accumulated sin. Those He calls now can begin living by the values of that Kingdom today.

That hope gives meaning to our choices now. We cannot rewrite our childhoods or force others to repent, but we can choose what to carry forward. We can tell the truth without cruelty, repent without accepting false guilt, forgive without abandoning wisdom, serve without trying to save everyone and establish boundaries without hatred.

I still carry memories of what happened, but they no longer have to define my identity. My identity is not "the damaged child," "the family rescuer," or "the person who must keep everyone happy." God calls His people His children and prepares them for His eternal Family (Romans 8:14-17). Through Christ, the old life no longer has the final word.

No matter what has happened in your family, the cycle of pain need not continue. Jesus Christ understands suffering. He bore injustice without becoming unjust. Through His life, death and resurrection, He opened the way to forgiveness, transformation and eternal life. Turn to God. Ask for help. Seek wise support. Take the next faithful step.

There is life beyond silence, fear and shame—life marked by healing that doesn't deny the past and by forgiveness that doesn't excuse evil. Above all, there is the sure hope of God's coming Kingdom. In Christ, our past can be acknowledged, our present transformed and our future filled with hope. **UN**

## For Immediate Help

If you are in immediate danger, call local emergency services. If you are thinking about suicide or harming yourself, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the United States or the 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline in Canada. UCG members may also contact the Light of Hope Helpline at (888) 241-6211 or [hope@ucg.org](mailto:hope@ucg.org) for confidential assistance locating mental health and addiction resources.

# Announcements

## Births • Weddings • Anniversaries • Obituaries



**Ailie Marie Showers**

July 8, 2026



**Bruce and Debbie Kieviet**

50th anniversary



**Gary and JoAnn Wendt**

70th anniversary



**Liza Kopey**

Sept. 9, 1975-Feb. 27, 2026

### Births

#### Ailie Marie Showers

Ailie Marie Showers was born on July 8, 2026 to proud parents Justin and Elizabeth Showers. She was welcomed with love by her big brothers, Cian and Rowan, of the Columbus, Ohio congregation.

Ailie weighed 5 pounds, 12 ounces and measured 18 inches long at birth. She is the cherished granddaughter of Mitch and Anita Showers and Forest and Linda Shoemaker.

### Anniversaries

#### Bruce and Debbie Kieviet

Bruce and Debbie Kieviet joyfully celebrated 50 years of marriage on June 12, 2026. To commemorate this milestone, they enjoyed an Alaskan cruise with their daughter, Angela; son-in-law, Robert; and grandchildren, Ragan and Ryan. During the trip, they renewed their vows in a heartfelt family ceremony.

On June 28, the Cincinnati North congregation honored them with a beautiful reception following services, complete with cake, punch and hors d'oeuvres.

Debbie was born to Ed and Angie Smith, who were attending the Radio

Church of God in Oklahoma City. Bruce began attending church at age seven with his parents, Ted and Wini Kieviet, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. For more than 35 years, Bruce and Debbie have faithfully served the Cincinnati congregations as elder and deaconess, offering their time, encouragement and love to God's people.

Bruce and Debbie shared that before they were married, they first chose to make a commitment to God—being baptized together several months prior to their wedding. They expressed that following God is a conscious daily choice, just as choosing each other is. Their deep love and respect for God's people continues to inspire their service.

#### Gary and JoAnn Wendt

Gary and JoAnn Wendt celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 23. The church pleasantly surprised them with a lovely cake, flowers and gift card.

Gary and JoAnn have served as deacon and deaconess in the Fargo, North Dakota congregation since the late 1960s. They were both baptized July 12, 1960 by Carn Catherwood and Roger Foster during a baptizing tour. Gary and JoAnn started Wendt Construction Co. in 1969 and continued for 42 years. They have

four grown children, 17 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. To celebrate their anniversary, the family went on a Caribbean cruise.

### Obituaries

#### Liza Kopey

Liza Kopey (50), who was loved by family and friends, suffered from a seizure on Wednesday, Feb. 25 and was in a coma until she died peacefully on Friday, Feb. 27, 2026. Elizabeth Erin O'Grady was born in Nashville, Tennessee on Sept. 9, 1975, the only child of Charles and Linda O'Grady.

Elizabeth was known as Beth growing up, and then in the early 2000s she began introducing herself as Liza. She met her husband, Basil Kopey in the late 90s and they were married in Nashville, Tennessee on May 25, 2002. She then attended Sabbath services with the Columbia, Maryland congregation for over 20 years.

Liza enjoyed singing and had a lovely soprano voice and shared her voice for special music. One of her favorite pieces to perform was a Hebrew song, "El Shaddai."

Liza's parents preceded her in death. She is survived by her husband, Basil; her Aunt Sara; sister-in-law, Tania; cousins; nephews and great-nieces and nephews. **UN**

# Local Church News

## Ready to Respond: Members Train to Save Lives



Recently, our congregation experienced a startling event when one of our speakers collapsed at the podium while delivering a message. Thankfully, several nurses were present and immediately came to his aid. Emergency services (911) were called, and he was transported to the hospital for evaluation. We are grateful to report that he is now doing well.

One aspect of this incident that caught our attention was the absence of an automated external defibrillator (AED) at our meeting location. Fortunately, an AED was not needed in this case. However, had the emergency involved sudden cardiac arrest, the outcome could have been much different.

Survival following an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest depends heavily on how quickly CPR is initiated and an AED is applied. According to statistics from the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association:

- No CPR and no AED: Survival rate is typically between 7 and 9 percent.
- CPR only: Survival rates increase to approximately 9-12 percent.
- AED applied before EMS arrival: Survival increases to about 24 percent.
- AED shock delivered by a bystander: Survival rates

increase dramatically to between 38 and 67 percent depending on how quickly the shock is delivered.

- Shock delivered within the first minute: Survival rates can be as high as 90 percent.

In light of these realities, our congregation decided to obtain an AED and to provide training for those interested in learning its proper use, along with basic life support (BLS) and first aid training.

We were encouraged by the response. Nine individuals participated in the training—five from the Lexington congregation and four from the Bowling Green congregation. The training was conducted in the basement of our instructor, for whose hospitality we are very grateful.

We sincerely appreciate those who volunteered their time to receive this training. Their willingness to prepare for emergencies helps ensure that we are better equipped to respond should a similar situation arise in the future. We are thankful for God's protection during this recent incident and for the opportunity to take practical steps to safeguard the well-being of our church family.

*Ellen Burton*

# Retirement Celebration: Mark and Barbara Welch

After over 40 years of service, Mark and Barbara Welch were honored by the Cincinnati congregations and the administration. After their retirement on June 28, they traveled to New Zealand to provide assistance there for six months.

At their farewell, the Welches shared, "Upon entering the full-time ministry in 1989, at that time it grieved us to leave our Church family in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Little did we know then how big our spiritual family would grow to be over the years, and how precious each of those family members would become to us. God has fulfilled Mark 10:30 in our lives repeatedly as our spiritual family multiplied, and we have gained so much more than we have given up. We love our large spiritual family and they have loved us back—warts and all.

"It's interesting that no matter where we live, when we go back to visit areas in which we've previously served, we don't feel like visitors because it feels like we

are home once again. As soon as we step into the church building, it's as though we are in our living room with our family. And when we leave, we return home again to more of our treasured family. We are always going home.

"Being a pastor and a pastor's wife is such an honor and a privilege. We are invited into the lives of people in a very special way. We hear their stories, share their joys and sorrows and a bond is created that never dissolves. When the formal responsibilities are over, the relationship and the love go on forever.

"The only frustration of having a big family is that we are human and there is never enough time with each family member. One of the things we look forward to the most in the Kingdom of God is eternity with our family when there will always be enough time. We are so thankful to God for this eternal blessing and the privilege of serving His precious family."

*Terri Eddington*



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- Weddings
- Anniversaries
- Obituaries

Don't forget to email us your picture!

**un@ucg.org**



# Dallas Congregation Celebrates 70th Anniversary



*L-R: Stan and Penny Martin, Don Hooser, Frank and Sonja McCrady, Barbara and Mark Welch, and current pastor Jorge de Campos and his wife Kathy*



*Tim and Cathy Cockrell*

On the Sabbath of Aug. 1, 2026, the Dallas, Texas congregation gathered to celebrate a significant milestone: 70 years since the congregation was established in August 1956. A total of 197 members and guests attended the special anniversary celebration, providing an opportunity to reflect on the congregation's history, fellowship with one another and give thanks to God for His blessings over seven decades. A highlight of the celebration was hearing from four ministers who had served as pastors in the Dallas area over the years. Each minister was given approximately 20 minutes to share memories from his time serving the Dallas brethren.

Don Hooser, who served the Dallas South congregation from 1991 to 2001, reflected on his lifelong connection to the Dallas area and his family's deep roots in the congregation. He also recalled his ministerial service during the 1990s and his involvement during the early years of the United Church of God.

Frank McCrady, who served the Dallas West and Dallas North congregations from 1987 to 2000, recalled the pivotal period in 1995 when a small group of local members began meeting independently before ultimately establishing the Dallas North congregation. Drawing from Deuteronomy 30, he also emphasized the importance of personal choice and remaining firmly committed to biblical convictions.

Mark Welch, who served the DFW congregation from 2014 to 2018, spoke warmly of the family-like bonds that developed among the Dallas brethren through love and a shared commitment to biblical truth. Drawing lessons from Abraham and Joshua, he encouraged the congregation to place a high value on family while remaining steadfast in spiritual commitment.

Stan Martin, who served the Dallas and Fort Worth congregations from 2018 to 2022, recalled how warmly he and his wife, Penny, were welcomed when they first arrived in the area. Reflecting on Psalm 90 and 2 Peter 3, he considered the brevity

of human life from God's eternal perspective and encouraged the brethren to "number their days" and cultivate wisdom. He also encouraged the congregation to maintain patience and compassion, guard against bitterness and continue supporting one another in faith.

Following the presentations, the congregation enjoyed a 45-minute video featuring photographs and memories from throughout the Dallas congregation's 70-year history. The presentation brought back memories of past events, activities, congregational gatherings and the many members who have been part of the Dallas congregation over the years. As part of the celebration, Cathy Lucas Cockrell and Ann Hohertz Wilson were recognized as the two earliest attendees of the Dallas congregation who were present for the 70th anniversary celebration.

The celebration concluded with a catered Texas-style meal featuring brisket and chicken along with a variety of sides and desserts. The meal provided an opportunity for members and guests to visit and fellowship into the evening.

The Dallas congregation has experienced many changes over the past 70 years, including meeting locations, ministers, families and individual members. Through all those changes, however, God's people have continued to meet together, worship God, study His Word and encourage one another. The anniversary celebration was an opportunity to honor those who helped establish and build the Dallas congregation, as well as the many ministers and members who have served and contributed throughout its history. It was also a reminder that today's members are part of a story that began in August 1956 and continues today. We are thankful to God for the history He has allowed us to experience and for the many people who have been part of it. We look forward to the years ahead and pray that God will continue to guide, strengthen and bless the Dallas congregation.

*Lynn Leiby*



**SCAN TO  
WATCH THE  
VIDEO**



## Women's Enrichment Weekend: Isoka, Zambia

Leaders from Kalukanya, Pulwila and Isoka met in Isoka for a women's enrichment meeting from June 30 to July 3, 2026. Pastor Patrice Sinyenga of the Isoka congregation welcomed attendees at the event's opening, and his wife Gift served as host for the remainder of the weekend.

The main theme of this enrichment conference was "Love and Unity." Bible readings were taken from Matthew 22:36-40; John 17:23; Romans 15:5; Colossians 3:13; Galatians 5:14; Ephesians 4:3 and 1 Peter 2:19. These scriptures were expanded upon throughout the event. Meetings were conducted in a similar style to a Bible study, and centered on the theme.

Attendance included 18 ladies from Kalukanya, 27 from Isoka and two from Pulwila, for a total of 47 ladies. Out of these, 15 ladies did not pay anything as they did not have the means to do so. Please note that these members are very committed to observing the Sabbath and attending church services

faithfully.

Sessions included topics such as keeping a home and meal preparation. We also had a session during the enrichment gathering to showcase various skills in home keeping and handicrafts. The purpose was to help raise funds for the ladies to support their families, and to teach ladies who would like to grow in these skills.

All the ladies who attended the enrichment meeting are very grateful for the support that came from you, the entire Church and especially Victor and Beverly Kubik, for making the meeting a success. They pray that God gives you long life and a double portion of blessings.

**Gift Sinyenga**  
Pastor's Wife





## Women's Enrichment Weekend: Verino, Zambia

UCG Zambia held a successful women's enrichment camp in Verino, Lusaka from July 2-7, 2026. The camp brought together 77 women from 14 congregations across Zambia, including Chipata, Manyinga, Mufumbwe, Solwezi, Mufulira, Nalubanda North, Kasumpa, Mapoko, Lukanga, Situmbeko, Mwembeshi, Mumbwa Town, Zambezi and the host congregation, Lusaka.

The camp theme, "Love and Unity" (Psalm 133:1), guided all the teachings and activities. Each day began with physical exercise and "Morning Glory" devotions, setting a spiritually uplifting atmosphere.

Participants received inspiring messages from various speakers on Christian love, unity, spiritual growth, the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, practical Christian living and the important role of women in the Church. Pastor Luke Banda encouraged the women to develop practical skills and use their God-given talents to serve their families, congregations and communities.

The Sabbath program included a Bible study on the signs of Christ's return, a sermonette highlighting the vital role of older women in mentoring younger women, and a sermon reminding everyone of the blessings and responsibilities of being God's children.

Practical learning was also a key feature of the camp.

Participants were trained in making earrings, bracelets and headbands, providing valuable skills that can contribute to family income while strengthening fellowship among the women.

The final sessions emphasized Christian love in action, unity within the Church and community, godly family values and faithful stewardship through tithing. Older women also shared practical biblical guidance with younger women on caring for their homes, marriages and families.

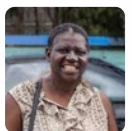
The camp provided a wonderful opportunity for spiritual renewal, fellowship, personal growth and skill development. The women returned to their congregations encouraged and better equipped to serve God, their families and their communities while continuing to promote love and unity.

The organizers sincerely thank all the sponsors whose generous support made this camp possible. Special appreciation is extended to Mrs. Kubik for her continued generosity and encouragement. May God richly bless everyone who contributed to the success of this memorable event.

To God be all the glory!

**Maureen Phiri**

Wife of Deacon, Maurice



*Jewelry made by the ladies*



# Small Site? Still *Special*

“Where are you going to the Feast?”  
This is one of the most frequently asked  
questions among God’s people.

*by Roc Corbett*

**F**or most of us there is joy and anticipation about attending the Feast at one of the larger regional Feast sites that UCG hosts every year. But not everyone can travel to the regional Feast site nearest to them. Still, we are all to keep the Feast, and to rejoice before the LORD our God. And God has blessed us with a way for more of His family to be able to attend the Feast.

## The Need and the Solution

For some older members and some lower-income families attending a distant Feast site is very difficult. The distance may be too far, health issues sometimes make traveling quite difficult or the cost is too much for them to make the trip. Satellite Feast sites help to make attending the Feast possible for many of these precious members of the Church.

About 20 years ago another elder and I presented this need directly to the leadership team at the home office. After much explaining and persuading, we received permission to establish a “satellite” Feast site for members in Montana, some of whom had not been able to attend a Feast for several years. That first Feast in Montana was very special!

This was the first satellite Feast site that I’m aware of. Several more satellite sites have since been established. Brethren, these smaller Feast sites are bearing wonderful spiritual fruit in the lives of many of God’s precious people.

Here are some encouraging principles gained through the experiences of many who have helped plan for or who have attended a smaller Feast site in recent years. These principles can apply wherever we keep the Feast.

## The Feast is for Everyone

First and always, remember the instructions and lessons in God’s Word. The Feast is for all of God’s sons and daughters, and He has provided a way for His family to take care of one another. Members who are blessed with abundance can help

those who are less able to afford to attend the Feast, or who may have special needs. God inspired these principles in Deuteronomy 14, Nehemiah 8 and elsewhere. Seeing the joy in the heart of someone who is blessed to attend the Feast for the first time in years helps us to understand more about rejoicing together before our loving God. UCG has a transparent way of taking care of receiving and distributing financial support to help members attend the Feast. Ask your pastor if you’d like to learn more.



## Plan Ahead

Start planning early and engage with your team. Even small Feast sites need planning months in advance. If a new or existing satellite Feast site has been approved for your area, please consider helping to organize it, even if you will be attending elsewhere. Realize that some of those attending will need help with arranging lodging, rides to and from and during the Feast and other special needs. Steven Britt, Senior Manager, Member Services, recently wrote, “Our goal is for every Feast site to be spiritually uplifting and physically prepared. Achieving that requires being realistic about the

people and resources needed to operate each site effectively.” He advised that we “focus on quality—making sure each site is spiritually strong, welcoming and well supported, so that we, as members of one Body, can enjoy a truly meaningful Feast together and rejoice before God!” I can say from experience that this is good advice.

Anticipate with joy the blessing of attending the Feast! If you will be attending a smaller Feast site, ask your local festival advisor who else is planning to attend there, and talk with



these people ahead of time. This can spark good conversations and fellowship for many Sabbaths before the Feast. Anticipating and planning for the Feast helps us to truly rejoice, and to give and receive the special blessings God wants to share with His family.

Make your plans early and enjoy the process, especially if you are older, or have special needs. Think about the major details and ask for help if you need it. Where will you be staying? Do you need a ride? What do you need to take? Are there bills to be paid before you leave? This type of planning reduces stress and helps us to rejoice more fully during the Feast.

## Participate Fully

Once the Feast begins, participate in the worship services as fully as you can. Attend Church services each day if possible. God wants us to worship together, in song, in prayer and in hearing the preaching of His word. Attending each day provides the blessing of fellowship. Even if the services are received by webcast, we need to be together. The Feast is about fellowship, too, and the time together for services each day is an essential part of our rejoicing as the household of God.

## Share with Others

During the Feast, find ways to share meals with others. Scripture emphasizes that sharing meals together is a major part of rejoicing before God. Maybe you can invite others to share a meal in your lodging, or in a larger setting if one is available. Everyone could bring a “takeout” dinner of their choice from a nearby restaurant or prepare a meal and bring it. This allows everyone with special dietary needs to select their own food and is less labor-intensive than a potluck.

Some members who are abundantly blessed, even if attending at a different Feast site, have hosted dinners for those who attend at one of the smaller satellite Feast sites, and this has brought joy to everyone there. This follows the principle in Nehemiah 8:10-12, when God’s people were told to rejoice at the Feast.

There are many opportunities to rejoice together in casual ways, too. There are opportunities to help plan activities for families, seniors, young adults and teens, and to attend with them if you can. Something as simple as a walk in a park or sharing a meal at a restaurant gives time for the kind of fellowship God wants us to share. Make sure everyone is included if possible. And be sure to thank everyone who helps others to have a wonderful Feast.

## Keep a Feast Focus

Throughout the entire experience, remember that God intends that we participate in the Feast of Tabernacles in such a manner that we genuinely rejoice before Him. The Feast is about our hope for the future with Jesus Christ as spirit-born children of God and for the nations that live in the Millennium. God wants us to know about that future, and to have an enduring hope that motivates us to seek all that He has promised. His expectation is that our relationships are filled with good measures of joyful conversations, fun activities and mutual rejoicing as part of our worship of Him as the LORD our God.

By the end of the Feast, we’ll have more close friends, and it will be hard to say “Goodbye.” But we’ll be filled with good spiritual food and our cups will be running over. [UN](#)

# Reach Out, Welcome In!

No one should be lonely at the Feast.  
Make this the year you look out for  
others and include them!

*by Joy Porter*

**T**he Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day are quickly approaching and many of us have already made our travel and hotel arrangements. Perhaps you have other “Feast goals” such as spending time with special family members, daily Bible study or serving at the Feast. Another important goal for the Feast is to reach out to others. When you see someone sitting alone, make sure that you take time to say hello and get to know them. If it is possible, try to include them in some of your plans.

There are many instances where someone may be at the Feast solo. There can be brand new brethren attending the Feast alone for the first time. Perhaps they were the only one of their family who was called. There are times where due to a divorce or a death, a spouse is attending the Feast alone when they used to have someone with them. There are also single parents, and there are young adults who are looking forward to making new friends.

No one should be lonely at the Feast, yet sometimes this can happen. One new member to the Church described her first Feast: “Attending the Feast of Tabernacles solo is hard. Seeing so many cheerful, large Church families is bitter-sweet—constantly observing (always as an outsider) the

joy of multi-generational friend and family reunions. I also want to honor these special moments and memories without intruding.”

Psalm 68:6 says, “God sets the lonely in families” (New International Version). We know that the greater fulfillment of this is in the Kingdom of God. But at the Feast of Tabernacles, we are rehearsing the Millennium. This is a wonderful time to reach out and include others. You can start by saying hello to those seated around you. Take time to scan the church hall for those who are sitting alone. Perhaps bring small gifts that you can hand out to people you meet. Could you set up a casual lunch at your Feast lodging after services? Or perhaps inviting someone to a restaurant for lunch would be fun. Many Feast sites have tourist attractions. Consider someone’s age and interests and see if there is an activity they might like to join.

What if someone you invite says no? That’s okay. What’s important is that you have reached out and included them. As the Feast nears the end, exchange contact information. A weekly text or phone call can be a lifeline for those who are lonely. Many volunteer duties at the Feast are assigned in advance, but reaching out to the lonely is a job we all can and should be doing at the Feast! **UN**



Fethi Benattallah/Unsplash



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Website: [ucg-singapore.org](http://ucg-singapore.org) | [info@ucg.org.au](mailto:info@ucg.org.au)

## ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 | Fax (513) 576-9795 | Website: [ucg.org](http://ucg.org) | [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to: **United News**, Box 541027,

Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

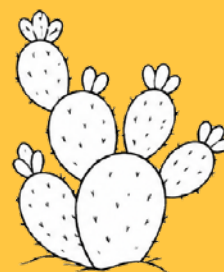
# CHILDREN'S CORNER

## Search and Find

This activity is designed to work in conjunction with this year's Children's Festival Activity Booklets. If you've registered for the Feast, you will receive a copy of this activity book on the information table when you arrive at your selected Feast site. Otherwise, you can download a digital copy at the provided QR code.



Look for the following pictures in your Festival Activity Booklet. Once you've found each of them, check them off or color them on this page. Have fun!



# *Watch the new Jelly video!*

A feisty fish draws Jelly into an ancient story of fearless faith and following Jesus!



In this episode, kids will learn:

- What Jesus meant when He said, “Follow Me.”
- Why Peter, Andrew, James, John and Matthew left everything to follow Jesus.
- That following Jesus means trusting Him more than our plans.
- That God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

