

# UNITED NEWS



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## Construction Underway on New Video Recording Studio

by Peter Eddington

Media and Communications Services



Photos by Peter Eddington, Jonathan Magee, & Tim Sipes



Photos of the progress of the new recording studio at the home office.

During the last week of January construction began on the Church's new video recording studio. This is an exciting time for us at the home office, and in particular for the Media and Communications Services department.

The building site has been cleared, the concrete footers (which will support the pre-cast concrete walls) have been poured, and now the steel frame is in place. In addition, the sewer line has been connected underneath our warehouse over to the new drains for the studio. The concrete walls are being manufactured off-site and will be delivered and put in place using a very large crane during the first or second week of March.

The project is on schedule and will take about six months for a July building completion date. It will then take about another three months or so to outfit the building with the new equipment, cameras, lighting and on-camera set. We are currently in discussions with professional set-building companies.

Your prayers for the ongoing work on this project are very much appreciated as we prepare for much needed space for video production capabilities in preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. We pray that our *Beyond Today* video production and output will reach a new level of professionalism and impact as a result. **UN**

## God Is Listening



Photo by Derek Thomson/Unsplash

The history of the Exodus provides us with a powerful symbolism. God listened to the Israelites while they were in Egypt and He listens to you.

by Steven Britt

The history of the Exodus provides us with powerful symbolism on the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread: redemption from God's wrath by the blood of Jesus Christ and being brought out of spiritual slavery from sin. But the rich similarities between the ancient Exodus event and our personal exodus do not end there.

There was a particular moment during Israel's affliction in Egypt when God's attention turned toward His people. God acted in response to a cry for help, being stirred with compassion: "The children of Israel groaned because of their bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God . . . so God heard their groaning" (Exodus 2:23-24). This moment was crucial: It was the first time that God's people recognized their need for a Savior, and they desperately called out!

Unknown to them, their God was listening—what an incredible revelation of His holy, righteous character! As they lifted up their voices, "God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them" (Exodus 2:25). God said, "[I] have heard their cry . . . for I know

their sorrows" (Exodus 3:7-9).

This demonstrates the deep and abiding love of God, but it also speaks to our own responsibility to recognize the need for spiritual deliverance.

### A Change in Perspective

If we fail to rely on God and do not cry out to Him, then there is no deliverance. As James put it, "You have not because you ask not" (James 4:2).

Therefore, crying out for help takes more than just learning knowledge: it requires a shift in thinking. Jesus contrasted two perspectives when He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick! I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32). God wants us to humbly discern our own insufficient spiritual state and to see ourselves as we truly are as we look into the mirror of His law. This involves recognizing not only that we have sinned, but also that we are under the power of sin and

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### BY THE NUMBERS

8,400,000+

Total number of views of all videos posted on the Beyond Today YouTube channel.

# UYC 2017 Reports

## Winter Camp

Wisconsin—Dec. 27-Jan. 2

Winter Camp 2017 was held at a new location this year in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Camp was a great success, even with some extremely cold temperatures. We had snow a few different days, which makes for a beautiful backdrop to all the fun activities, fellowship and Bible discussions.

At camp this year we had 67 campers and 39 staff, many of whom were new to Winter Camp this year. We began each day with a short compass check that introduced our daily Christian living topic to allow the campers and staff to think about and discuss it during the day. We had a variety of indoor and outdoor activities that included an escape room, field sports, tubing, a Bible class, team building, snowboarding, floor hockey, basketball, volleyball and dance class. We then had interactive Christian living classes each evening where the campers could talk and ask questions about the daily themes.

Each night we had different activities ranging from get-to-know-you games,

a first dance, Bible games, a gym night with a climbing wall, off-site snowboarding for the older campers and a s'mores night for the younger campers, as well as a final dance that included some live performances from some of our campers. The live performances during the dance were a fun addition to the final dance and allowed campers the chance to perform in a safe and fun environment.

The new facility was very nice, and we will be returning there this coming year. We didn't have as much snow as we would have liked and had to cancel on-site snowboarding and tobogganing, but hopefully next year we can add those activities as well.

Thank you for your prayers for the success and safety at camp. They were definitely answered. I also wanted to thank the campers and staff once again for their part in making camp a wonderful success.

Come join us next year for an awesome time at Winter Camp!

Aaron Creech



See more Winter Camp photos here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157688293862775>

## United Youth Camp and Ambassador Bible College Sampler, South Africa



Members who took part in both the UYC camp and the ABC sampler.

by Jason Webster

Following on from the success of the UYC camp held in 2016 the 2017 camp was planned. The 2016 camp combined preteens and teens into one camp allowing parents of preteens to attend with their young children. This also raised the idea of an Ambassador Bible College sampler being done in conjunction with the 2017 camp, allowing the parents to be occupied during camp activities as well as any other adult members wishing to attend.

No one could have anticipated the success of both a combined camp (preteen and teen) and ABC sampler all in one. Yet the week went off highly successfully.

The 2017 UYC camp and ABC sampler was held at the Amanzi Private Game Reserve just 13 kilometers north of Brandfort in the Free State in South Africa. We

had 84 registered in total, made up of 20 campers, six staff, 57 ABC attendees and one bus driver. Ten of the ABC attendees were Portuguese-speaking brethren, two from Brazil and eight from Angola.

The UYC activities and the ABC sampler were run in parallel with breaks and meals coordinated.

ABC sampler attendees enjoyed eight hours a day of ABC presentations on the book of Acts and the epistles, presented by Darris McNeely and Steve Myers. Simultaneously the UYC campers enjoyed eight hours of activities comprised of dancing, Christian living, soccer, volleyball, French cricket, art, swimming, horse riding, archery, a trail walk and game drives.

The ABC sampler attendees were also

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## Visit to Zambia



Debbie McNeely and some of the ladies from Zambia.

by Darris McNeely

For my wife Debbie and I, our first trip to Zambia last December was an entry into another dimension where God is working to prepare another group to fit among the firstfruits of the Kingdom of God. We met a group of disciples who are eager to advance the Church's work in their part of the world. We came away encouraged and renewed.

This was the second trip to southern Africa in the past 18 months to train disciples and connect them to the larger mission of the United Church of God. In Zambia we have more than a dozen churches and several hundred members scattered over a wide area—served by three elders. We were able to meet with 40 of them at our church-

owned property near the nation's capital, Lusaka.

I gave classes on the vision and mission of the Church and how to be a biblically based disciple in response to Christ's teaching that those who will be greatest will be those who serve. Doctrinal integrity was covered, as well as a session on marriage and the family.

Debbie also conducted a session with a group of the women under the shade of a great tree on the grounds. The ladies had questions about the Bible and the women's role in creating a warm and stable church environment. This group had previously held a Women's Enrichment Weekend and

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**VICTOR KUBIK**  
President

Is *forward* a noun, an adverb, an adjective or a verb?

Good question! It's never been completely clear to me. But maybe it's all of these parts of speech.

The one interpretation that I do want to use today is the verb form. In other words, as a part of speech that denotes action.

In the Bible the word *forward* comes to mind in Exodus 14: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go *forward*. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea'" (Exodus 14:15-16, emphasis added).

This was a command from God at this season of the year, the Passover and the Exodus. The nation of Israel left the oppressive world of Egypt behind them, and journeyed towards freedom, the Promised Land. What a joyous event and moment! But it was also a time for Israel's acts of responsibility and courage.

The reality was they had the Red Sea

## Forward: Noun, Adjective, Adverb or Verb?



*If we continue to move forward through the obstacles of this life we will be accomplishing God's will for us. This will is to preach the gospel and continue to move forward.*

*Yes, the United Church of God is a forward-looking church in verb mode more than any other.*

to cross. This was an impossible obstacle without some kind of godly miracle. But the charge was still to go *forward*. In the New Living Translation "go forward" is

translated "get moving," which I think expresses my sentiments more accurately.

I often think of how God directs and leads His work and accomplishes His will through us, His children—much like working with the children of Israel. He gives us a job that also has big challenges—sometimes requiring a miracle

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## From The COUNCIL



by Bob Dick

I have a question for your consideration. What do Noah, Peter, Elijah and Paul share in common apart from very special assignments? It would appear not a great deal, yet collectively their ministries can teach a valuable lesson. Let's see what there is to learn from their stories.

Noah lived a life hard to fathom even today. Our world is in sad shape spiritually and morally, but his was worse. God's assessment was bleak. Speaking of the population of that day God said, "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Everyone had

## Noah, Peter, Elijah and Paul



*If there was a biblical Guinness' Book of World Records, Peter would probably hold the record for the single most effective sermon in Church of God history—3,000 baptisms on one day (Acts 2:41). But should we be focused on the number of people who come into the church or should we be focused on the command from God that we should preach the gospel regardless of the numbers?*

sunk to the place where every thought on every person's mind every day was corrupt!

Noah spent 100 years building an ark and preaching the way of God to a deaf audience. Converts? Zero! Only he and his family were saved. Was God surprised with a zero conversion rate? No, God had already assessed that the society of that day was a loss (Genesis 6:6-8)—any converts would have been a bonus.

Peter's experience was diametrically opposite. If there was a biblical *Guinness' Book of World Records*, Peter would probably hold the record for the single most effective sermon in Church of God history—3,000 baptisms on one day (Acts 2:41). If each of those baptized represented a family of six—husband, wife and four

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## A Visitor's First Visit to a UCG Sabbath Services

by Katherine Larson

In his Nov. 16, 2017, newsletter to members, Victor Kubik asked the following questions: “We talked about the phenomenon of people coming to our services but dropping out after a few visits. Why? Are we failing somewhere? Are they repelled by our in-speak or slow integration into our church relationships?”

I believe I can answer these questions.

I walked into my first United Church of God congregation in the spring of 2016. I had no knowledge of Herbert Armstrong or of the Worldwide Church of God. God led me to the Church. I discovered the truth about the Sabbath first and after I had studied and worshiped on my own for many months, I felt a need to find God's people. The path to UCG was not a straight one. The Church was difficult to locate, even with the Lord Himself illuminating the way.

In my search for local Sabbath-keeping churches, I only found two listings, and they were both Seventh Day Adventists. I attended one for about a month until I realized that SDA had adopted the Trinity in 1985. To my surprise, most of the members were not even aware that their official doctrine now included the Trinity, nor did they understand its pagan roots. Unfortunately, I knew then that I could not remain with them, or be baptized by them. So I left the church and went in search of God's remnant. I was truly afraid I might be the only one left who knew the truth!

Since I had already searched extensively for Sabbath-keeping churches, I knew that I wouldn't find God's people that way. After much prayer, a thought finally occurred to me to do a search for “God's people.” I typed: “Where are God's People?” and hit the search button.

Since everyone's search results are different, I'm not sure what would come up for anyone else, but my results brought up a very plain black and white text page that said: “These are the characteristics of God's Church.” As I scrolled through the 30-plus characteristics, every one of them matched my understanding of the truth, and there was no Trinity! I quickly scrolled to the bottom of the page to see if I could find an author. The link at the bottom said simply: “Church of God,” and I actually laughed out loud. “There's no Church of God,” I said to myself. “Only in the Bible is there a ‘Church of God.’” But I clicked on the link anyway, and it took me to the United Church of God's main website.

I spent several hours that night on the UCG site looking at the doctrinal beliefs

and listening to a sermon or two. Everything seemed to be in line with what I knew to be the truth. So I hit the congregations link with some doubt. I figured the nearest congregation would be 300 or so miles away. But I was wrong. It was only a half-hour away! It was a Thursday night when I found the UCG website. That night and all through Friday and into the Sabbath evening, I wondered what the church would be like. I had a picture in my mind: This would be a place filled with joy and zeal. These were God's elect after all! His chosen people! I wondered if I would know anybody there. By Saturday morning, I was so excited, I could hardly wait to meet everyone. But by the time I arrived at the little building where services were held at 10:30 a.m. on Sabbath, two other emotions had emerged: fear and doubt. What if this church was just like all the others? What if they also had serious doctrinal errors. Where would I go then? I parked a distance from the door and sat in my car for about 15 minutes, watching people go into the building. Finally, I heard them singing and I mustered the courage to go inside.

Many members of UCG have been in the Church for many years, and others have grown up in the Church. I think it would be very difficult to remember what it felt like to come in for the first time. And if someone has grown up in the Church, it is impossible to explain what it is like to live in a world without the light of truth. The world has gotten much darker since Armstrong's days, and it is getting harder and harder to find the path. So when one of these lost ones finds their way to our doorstep, it is cause for celebration!

I've written this simple guide from the eyes of one who was on the threshold just a short time ago.

### Guide for Welcoming Visitors to UCG

**1) Be Welcoming:** It takes courage to walk through the doors into a UCG congregation for the first time. Most UCG buildings do not look like an ordinary church, and it's difficult for a stranger to blend in because there are far fewer people in attendance than in worldly churches. The music is unfamiliar, and the prayers and messages are unfamiliar. Referring to Bibles, taking notes and carrying briefcases are also all unfamiliar behaviors to a visitor. They may not even have a Bible with them. What they will be looking for are a people that reflect and demonstrate God's love and character. They will be looking for the fruit of the Spirit. Most



Photo by Jonathan Magee

How do you make new people at church feel welcome? Do you go up to them and introduce yourself? How do you put in-speak aside and focus on God's love in these type of conversations?

may have left large, welcoming churches, friends and family behind as God called them to the truth. So be welcoming, helpful and happy that one of God's children has found their way home.

**2) Be Gentle:** Remember that the visitor may have just recently come out from the world's deception. They may have just discovered that they have been lied to about the Sabbath, heaven, hell, holidays, the commandments of God and other biblical truths. They may still have worldly habits, language, dress, attachments or attributes. This is not a time for us to confront them about smoking, tattoos, how they dress, or whether they know about the feasts, tithing and the other requirements of God. They may be just coming to terms with the life-changing implications of the Saturday Sabbath! Placing additional burdens on them may be too much for them to bear all at once until they feel the love and acceptance of the family of God.

**3) Bring Them Into the Fold:** Listen to the visitor and share stories of how you came into the Church. Invite them to your home for the following Sabbath. Surround them with a group of people with which they might have things in common. Keep conversations light and positive. Share your joy. Give them materials to read if they ask about certain subjects. Give them a schedule of upcoming events, potlucks and social events. Give them your phone number and e-mail for contact in case they have any questions. (Do not ask for their information unless they offer it.) UCG congregations are very close groups, and it's difficult for an outsider to know how to participate. Treat them like a new



Gloria Anderson (on left) and Katherine Larson (on right). Gloria and Katherine met at the Feast this past year in Branson and became fast friends.

member of the family that has just married your son or daughter. Invite them to things, share Scripture with them, show them how to find things on our website, get them registered on the site, ask them if they have any special talents that they might like to share. Support them as they go through withdrawing from the world. And be joyful! God has just sent us another member of His family!

**4) Work With the Power of the Holy Spirit:** A new visitor has had the help of the Holy Spirit to bring them into the Church, but until they are baptized, they will not be able to overcome worldly things easily. There may be a strong desire on the part of the visitor to be baptized quickly for this very reason. Take their request seriously and remember that they will not be able to fully receive the word, nor overcome old ways, until the Holy Spirit is working within them. Your pastor will know when it's appropriate to baptize, but be tolerant and understanding of the newcomer's missteps until this is accomplished, and also after baptism.

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## The Passover and Divine Healing Christ's Role as Healer as Well as Savior

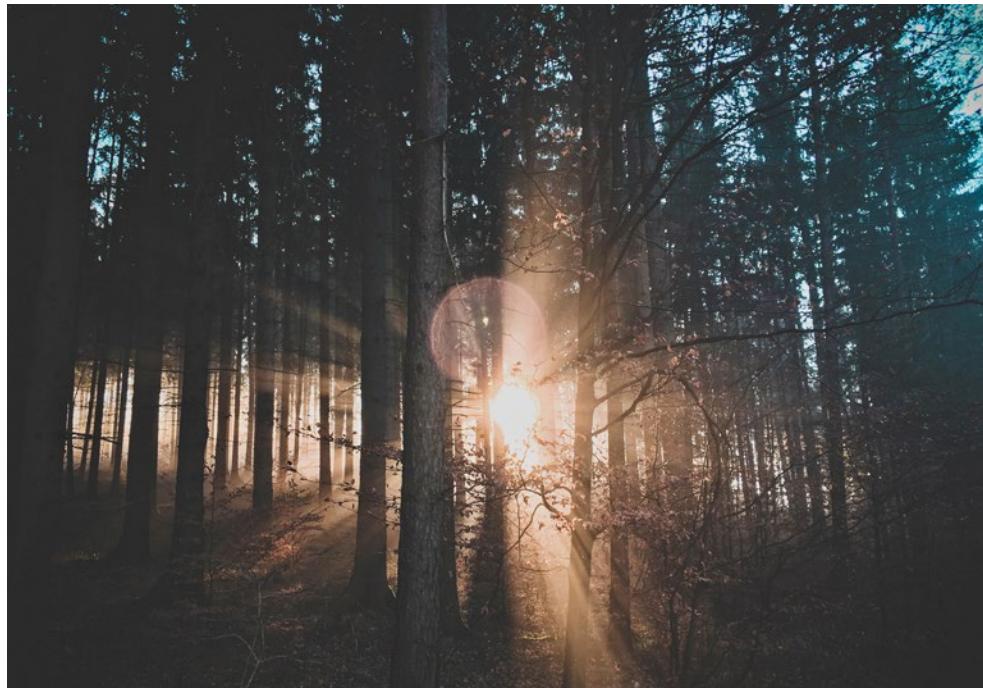


Photo by Ju On/Unsplash

Beyond God's love for everyone, He is joyfully committed to generously caring for the needs of His spiritual children!

by Don Hooser

God's gift of divine healing is a dramatic demonstration of His love, grace, compassion and generosity toward all humanity. God is especially devoted to offering healing to those He has called to be part of His Church and the children in their care—plus others whom God heals when they call upon Him in humble submission and faith.

Consider that healing was a fundamental, dramatic and inspiring part of Christ's earthly ministry and also the ministry of His disciples (Matthew 4:23-24; 8:16; 9:35; 10:1, 6-8; 12:15, 22; 14:14; 15:30; 21:14; Luke 4:40; 5:15; 6:17-19; 9:1-6, 11). And when Jesus was stating His commission to the apostles, He said one of the "signs" of the true Church would be that "they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17-18).

### Healing and the Passover

The Passover is a service of rededication. For Christians who dedicated their lives to God and Jesus Christ at their baptism, the Passover service should be a deep, sincere rededication to that commitment. That is part of the reason that the service is so significant and serious.

The most obvious reason for Christ's sacrifice was to pay the penalty for our sins so we can receive God's grace, forgiveness and spiritual healing. However, His sacrifice is also fundamental in God's plan for offering miraculous healing of physical health problems. The annual Passover service is a sobering and inspiring reminder of Christ's sacrifice and the

many benefits of God's amazing grace.

The Bible makes an important parallel between forgiveness and healing (see Mark 2:1-12 and Psalm 103:3). Every consequence has a cause (Proverbs 26:2). When God forgives, He removes the consequence of sin, which is the death penalty. When God heals, He removes the health problem, regardless of who or what caused it. (Health problems are often the combined consequence of multiple causes.) An added blessing is that if certain sins caused a sickness and God heals the sickness, He also forgives those sins (James 5:14-15).

This article is follow-up to the article "Divine Healing: God's Loving Gift of Miraculous Healing" that was published in the Sept.-Oct. 2017 issue of *United News*. In that article is this paragraph about Matthew 8:16-17: "Matthew is quoting Isaiah 53:4 which proves that one of the purposes for Christ's excruciating suffering was to take our infirmities and sicknesses upon Himself so they can be removed from us! He 'suffered for us!' (1 Peter 2:21). Further evidence of this is seen in 1 Corinthians 11:29-30."

Now let's clearly understand the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:29-30. The Modern King James Version says: "For he who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and many sleep." "Many sleep" means many have died.

What is the connection between partaking of the Passover "unworthily" and staying sick or dying?

First Corinthians 11:17-34 contains Paul's instructions about the Passover service—the proper procedure, the spiritual understanding of it and the required reverent attitudes. To accurately understand any one verse in this section, it's important to understand the whole context.

In verses 27 and 29 of 1 Corinthians 11, the Greek adverb *anaxiós* means unworthily or irreverently and is translated in the New King James Version as "in an unworthy manner." Some in the Corinthian church had been guilty of terrible disrespect toward God and Jesus Christ—irreverent conduct at the Passover and irreverent attitudes about the lessons of the Passover. They evidently did not appreciate the enormous sacrifice that Christ had made for them, nor did they appreciate the significance and seriousness of each aspect of the Passover service. They were guilty of taking Christ's sacrifice lightly and taking the Passover lightly!

Paul said each person is supposed to seriously "examine himself" and "judge" himself regarding his understanding, belief, obedience and attitudes about the lessons of the Passover service (verses 28 and 31). Furthermore, all during the year, our self-examination should include searching for the leaven of sin so we can repent of it, confess it to God and ask for His forgiveness. See 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 and 1 John 1:9.

What does Paul mean by "discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:29)? He means that we must understand and appreciate Christ's total sacrifice. He partly means that we must discern that Jesus made a two-fold sacrifice—He endured excruciating physical suffering, plus He died. His dual sacrifice is illustrated by the Passover service when we partake of both bread (representing His broken body) and wine (representing His shed blood).

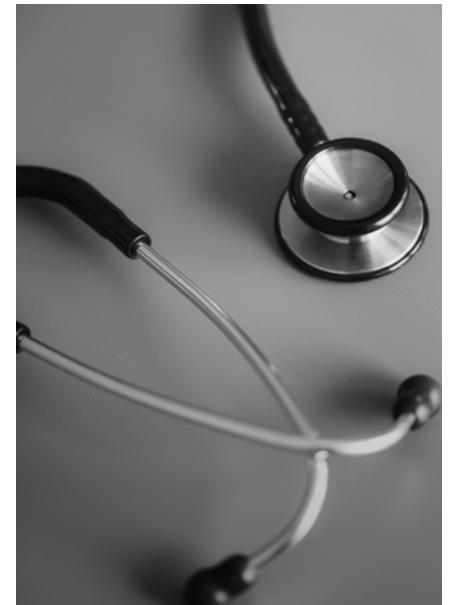
### "By His Stripes We Are Healed"

The New International Version of Isaiah 53:5 says: "By His wounds we are healed." Peter partly quotes this verse in 1 Peter 2:24 where Peter is writing about Christ's suffering for us. Therefore, although we cannot know for sure if Jesus' "wounds" were required for our sins to be forgiven, several scriptures together make it clear that part of the purpose for Jesus' excruciating suffering was to make possible the gift of divine healing!

In Isaiah 53:3-4 (the chapter prophesying the Messiah's suffering), the Hebrew

Please see page 15

## What I Think About Illness



by Allison Manning

I have experienced many illnesses throughout my life. There have been some who say it is caused by sin, by Satan, by not really being a child of God, by not praying enough, etc. I have felt God's hand on me a good portion of my life. I have had many unexplained occurrences in my life that I frequently talk about. When talking about God's amazing interventions, people find them difficult to believe! I discuss these miracles so that God's name can be glorified.

The Bible explains that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23-26). I see my illnesses among all my other trials to be the Almighty God working with me. The Bible tells me to praise God and pray that He fill me with His Holy Spirit to lead, guide, teach, protect and comfort me. I pray to God to not only heal my physical body, but my mind, heart, body and spirit.

The Bible says to count it all joy for my trials being that it leads to patience and faith (James 1:2-4). I believe that God does answer prayers. However, the answer may be yes, not right now or no, according to His will!

Some may disagree if the answer is no, but I understand that God didn't heal Paul, who was told God's grace was sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). I know that I am no greater than Paul. I am a sinner who requires continuous work. I believe that illness can occur for different reasons. However, I praise God for my chastisement, knowing this means I am not Fatherless (Hebrews 12:7-9)! **UN**

# Continuing God's Work in the Philippines With New Senior Pastor

by Noel Roy Gilos

The baton has been officially passed from outgoing senior pastor Earl Roemer to the new senior pastor for the Philippines, David Dobson.

The members of the National Council of Elders in the Philippines, along with their wives and some office staff, gathered in the conference room of UCG, AIA-Pilipinas National Office, Makati City, Philippines on Jan. 14, 2018, for the annual National Council Meeting. Those present witnessed the transfer of leadership as Mr. Roemer officially confirmed his retirement as senior pastor of UCG-Philippines and acknowledged Mr. Dobson as the new senior pastor. Mr. Dobson graciously stepped in and on behalf of the eldership he presented a plaque of appreciation to Mr. Roemer in gratitude for his devotion and dedicated service to God's people. The beautiful wooden plaque contains engraved signatures of all the elders along with pictures representing the islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Mr. Roemer was also given numerous cards and messages from the congregations in the Philippines that expressed sincere thanks from the brethren for his faithful service during his term. Though his work in the Philippines is over, he will continue to serve as an elder in Alaska and as the senior pastor for Hong Kong.

Our brethren from the islands of the Philippines are deeply grateful for the labor and leadership of Mr. Roemer as he has continued God's work in this region of Southeast Asia. During his tenure, he

was responsible for overseeing the relief and rebuilding project after Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) struck the islands of the Visayas in November 2013 with a direct hit on Leyte, where many Church members are located. Some of the members' homes were partially damaged, and some were totally shattered. It took two years for most of the houses to be restored. Some houses had to be completely built from scratch and were then awarded to the members who lost their homes. A number of brethren were provided financial help and livelihood assistance to help them get back on their feet.

Mr. Roemer also implemented the home office directive to transfer the UCG national office back to the country's capital city of Manila. The office is now located in Makati City, Metro Manila. Another exciting development has been the weekly airing of the *Beyond Today* TV program in the Philippines! The pilot episode, which officially launched June 11, 2017, aired both on free-air TV and cable channels nationwide via GMA News TV. The feedback from viewers so far has been very positive, with many requests for the free literature and *Beyond Today* magazine, as well as some inquiries about United Church of God, AIA Pilipinas.

With these developments, the brethren are very enthusiastic about the continuing progress of God's work under our new leadership. The Dobsons are not actually new to us, for they have been serving in the Philippines since 2011. Mr. Dobson has served as a visiting minister for the



Read a biography written by Noel Roy Gilos about Earl Roemer and David Dobson here:

[www.ucg.org/members/news/continuing-gods-work-in-the-philippines-with-new-senior-pastor](http://www.ucg.org/members/news/continuing-gods-work-in-the-philippines-with-new-senior-pastor)



Top: Earl Roemer with members in the Philippines.

Bottom: Mr. Dobson presents a plaque of appreciation to Mr. Roemer for his devotion and dedicated service to God's people in the Philippines.

three Feast of Tabernacles sites in the Philippines and also during the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. They have met the brethren of all the congregations of the islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao during their visits. Mr. Dobson has been very involved in planning, coordinating and overseeing the work in his role as assistant senior pastor since 2014. He continues to pastor congregations in Huntsville and Gadsden, Alabama, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, while serving as the new senior pastor for the Philippines.

As we wait for the coming Kingdom of God, the work and the commission

to preach the gospel and to prepare the people will surely be continuing in this far side of the world with the help and the will of our Almighty God the Father through His Son and our coming King, Jesus Christ. **UN**

## Senior Pastor Transfer—East Africa

In January, John Elliott completed 15 years of service to UCG East Africa as senior pastor as he announced his retirement from that position. He and his wife Merrie began serving there in 2003 and have made 36 visits to the region. During this January visit to Kenya, Mr. Elliott held two ministerial conferences, made several congregation visits, and held a two-day leadership conference with attendees from as far away as Rwanda. One of his grandsons, Zarek Dowd, was invited to accompany him on the trip, which made it extra special.

During the leadership conference, Mr. Elliott formally introduced Monte Knudson as the incoming senior pastor for East Africa, beginning Feb. 1. Mr. Knudson was connected live via video from his home in Arizona and presented a seminar. The leaders enthusiastically welcomed him and his wife Susie and ensured their full support. Mr. Elliott will continue to assist in a supporting role but can now devote more time to his responsibilities in Canada and the Council of Elders.

Mr. Elliott reflected: "Fifteen years ago I

first visited Kenya and Tanzania with the previous senior pastor. We pounded over rough, dusty roads and eventually became very ill on that trip. The previous man had made a total of six visits here, and I pondered whether I might ever make six such trips there myself. At that time there was no established church infrastructure, not even an ordained deacon. Consequently, I began making four visits a year and brought Merrie when I could.

Visits required as long as a month at a time in order to have time to anoint, counsel and baptize members across the region and work at training leaders. The rough conditions, malaria and tick-bite fever had their impact on us. The combined time we have spent there amounts to just over two years, and we are thankful to have built a house there to stay in. Our relationships with our brothers and sisters in the region developed into a closeness that we will always cherish. We know that God directed the assembling of the stable infrastructure that today serves 705 attendees in 29 congregations pastored by eight elders in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda



John Elliott with Church members in East Africa.

and Burundi. The leaders God provided are faithful, competent and good examples in developing godly character."

The senior pastors feel honored to serve the region, and Mr. Knudson will continue promoting the seeking of God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

Living conditions for the citizens in East Africa have improved in recent years. Today, there are many good roads, railways, rural electrification, education, personal loans and mobile phone service accessible to nearly everyone. These enable our Church leaders to better serve God's

people and for new people to discover the truth through mobile-first technology. Members welcome international visitors to join them for the Feast of Tabernacles each year. **UN**

A video of the visit can be viewed at this website:  
<https://youtu.be/2zQUKAVQLEw>

For more information on the Feast in East Africa e-mail:  
[kenya@ucg.org](mailto:kenya@ucg.org)

# Announcements



**Salvatore Joseph Cecala**

Nov. 6, 2017



**Dale & Donna Black**

60th Wedding Anniversary



**Jim & Melodie Mann**

50th Wedding Anniversary



**Larry & Vicki Sharp**

50th Wedding Anniversary

## Births

### Salvatore Joseph Cecala

Salvatore Joseph Cecala was born on Nov. 6, 2017, at 11:08 a.m. He weighed 6 lbs., 5 oz., and measured 19.75 in. long. His parents, Giorgio and Alison, are elated with the blessing of their firstborn son!

## Anniversaries

### Dale and Donna Black

Dale Black and Donna Ellsworth met and dated in high school. Dale enlisted in the Army Reserves while in high school and immediately after graduation began his six-month military active duty in Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Ft. Carson, Colorado. They became engaged in August 1957 when he was home on leave.

Dale was discharged and returned home from active duty in December 1957. Donna was home from her job on “winter vacation,” and they were married Jan. 3, 1958, in her parents home with family members present.

In March 1960, they welcomed the birth of their first child—Bruce Dale, who was born with Down syndrome. This was a severe trial but later proved to be part of their calling. Bruce died Nov. 15, 1964.

A second son, Brian David, was born when Bruce was 3 years old.

Brian married Charisse Wilding. Dale and Donna now have two granddaughters (Kurstin and Courtney) and two great-grandchildren (Corbin and Ava).

Dale and Donna were baptized in 1967 into God’s Church; Dale was ordained a deacon in 1976. They have been members of congregations in Belleville, Illinois; Mt. Vernon, Illinois; Rockford, Illinois; and presently in Beloit, Wisconsin.

They have attended 51 Feast of Tabernacles.

### Jim and Melodie Mann

Jim and Melodie Mann were recognized Dec. 30, 2017, at a 50th wedding anniversary reception by the Tulsa congregation after Sabbath services. Family, friends and brethren fellowshiped and

enjoyed cake, punch and light snacks. The congregation also presented them with a photo album of the reception.

Jim and Melodie were introduced through mutual friends while in Tulsa during the early 1960s. They were married on Dec. 30, 1967, at the University of Tulsa campus. Jim is an ordained deacon with UCG, and they celebrated their 50th Feast of Tabernacles in 2017.

They are parents to three grown children: Tim, Greg and Darrin, and also have seven grandchildren.

Congratulations to the Mann family.

### Larry and Vicki Sharp

Jan. 27, 2018, Larry and Vicki Sharp of Murrieta, California, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on the beautiful California Central Coast. The following Sabbath, Feb. 3, the Redlands congregation presented them with a red rose boutonniere and a rose corsage. After services they honored them with a beautifully decorated cake and sparkling cider and a lovely 50th anniversary card with well wishes from the entire congregation.

Larry and Vicki began their journey when they met at Carson Intercommunity Hospital. Larry was a nurse covering the emergency room after serving in the Air Force, and Vicki worked in the business office. When they decided to marry, Larry returned to college, attending the University of California, earning degrees in medical microbiology and biochemistry.

Three years into their marriage they attended their first Sabbath on the Day of Atonement in 1971 and were baptized in December of that same year. They attended the Torrance/Lomita church until it merged with the Long Beach church. There were over 700 people who attended at that time, so it was necessary to have an a.m. and a p.m. service. After graduating college Larry went to work for the County of Los Angeles at Harbor UCLA Medical Center in the department of cardiology as supervisor and later became the director of the department.

Larry was ordained an elder on Sept. 27, 1984. He attended the church’s Spokesman’s Clubs and later became the

club director. Vicki attended many of the club meetings as they provided the rooms to meet in for Spokesman’s Club and later graduate clubs and Bible studies. In August of 1989 they moved to Riverside County. Since living in Riverside County they have served in the San Bernardino, Riverside, Banning, Palm Springs, Sun City, San Diego, and Redlands, California, congregations as well as Las Vegas, Nevada.

Larry retired from the County of Los Angeles in September of 2001, and at his retirement party was recognized for his years of service by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Throughout Larry’s career he was given merit and productivity awards as well as cash rewards and employee-of-the-month awards.

They both agree they try to live a simple life putting God as head of their marriage, and all things are best in His hands.

## Obituaries

### Eleanor W. Allen

Eleanor Allen, age 103, a member of the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation, died Sunday, Dec. 17, 2017.

Eleanor was born in Lawrence County Tennessee, on Sept. 3, 1914, to Charles Walter Wilson and Esther Irene Skelton Wilson.

Within the lifetime of Eleanor Allen, 18 men served as President of the United States. When she was born, radio and telephones were in their infancy, and television was only a distant possibility.

She was baptized in 1964 and was one of the original members of the Church of God congregation in Nashville, which began after the Feast of Tabernacles that year.

Among her many achievements in a long and productive life, Eleanor was a retired store owner.

For several years prior to her death, she was unable to attend church services. Her attentive daughter Marzee, with whom she lived, would turn on the speakerphone each Sabbath so she could listen with the local brethren to the sermon.



**Eleanor W. Allen**

Sept. 3, 1914-Dec. 17, 2017

Another local lady would call her and other widows on a conference call to listen to sermons together during the week. They enjoyed their “hen parties!”

She continued to serve the brethren by faithfully praying for them when they were ill or going through various trials. She was always an encouragement to any and all who visited with her in person or on the phone. She was very alert and kept up with world news until the end of her life.

Mrs. Allen is survived by her two children: Gene Allen and Marzee Skelton; six grandchildren: Tina Landers, Sheila (Greg) Wilson, Darryl (Teresa) Skelton, Janice Jones, Marsha Kimsey, Susan (Roger) Robinson; and nine great-grandchildren: Nathan Skelton, Adam Jones, Carter Jones, Kiana Kimsey, Reagan Kimsey, Jessica Juarez, Kristen Buntin, Tyler Wilson and Sara Wilson.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2017, with local elder Bill Vernich officiating.

**Announcements:** Send us announcements from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to UN@ucg.org. We’re looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please double-check the spelling of names, and include the author’s and photographer’s names. **E-mail is preferred**, but we will also take physical mail as well! Please include a self-addressed envelope if you’d like photos returned.

# Announcements



**Maurice Benson**

Oct. 18, 1926-Nov. 12, 2017

## Maurice Benson

Maurice Benson died peacefully at his home in the Monroe Manor senior citizen residence in November. He was a faithful elder of the United Church of God. Now he sleeps awaiting the resurrection of the saints into glory in God's family Kingdom at the return of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Benson set an example of hospitality for everyone. He and his wife Clara (pre-deceased in 1999) were friends with all the congregation and regularly invited members to join them in their home (which was located on the Dells Feast site for many years) for a meal and fellowship. He was generous, kind, and had an easy way of flashing a smile and sharing a laugh.

He eagerly shared his life experiences and was solidly confident in God's promises. Willing to help others, he had a way of making people feel comfortable and welcome.

Mr. Benson was a reliable teacher of God's Word in regular messages from the podium. He was also a teacher of agriculture, educating farmers and anyone interested in the best ways to return the soil to health using the methods and approaches based on biblical principles.

Maurice had a love of agriculture and farming and had a varied career including teaching, selling milking equipment and as a soil consultant.

He was among the very first to use aerial thermal photography to indicate where the land had a "fever," and he developed natural ways of restoring the land to good health.

After retirement, in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, he was known as Farmer Benson, and he would educate children who visited the petting farm on how to take care of farm animals like goats and chickens.

Mr. Benson is survived by his four children, four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, three sisters, three brothers, and was preceded in death by his wife Clara, five brothers and two sisters.

He left us with quite a legacy of large family and a humble, serving work ethic.



**Richard Eckman**

June 4, 1940-Nov. 1, 2017

## Richard Eckman

Richard Louis Eckman, age 77, passed away on Nov. 1, 2017, at home surrounded by his family. He had been battling Alzheimer's disease for the past eight years.

Richard was born in Sebeka, Minnesota, June 4, 1940, the youngest and seventh child of Clifford and Dolly (Breckinridge) Eckman. He had a humble upbringing and life and lived in a total of eight foster homes since he was three months old. He lived in various towns in northern Minnesota, graduating from Walker High School in 1958. When he was 18 years old and released from foster care, his oldest sister sent him a plane ticket to Alaska where she lived. He moved to Palmer, Alaska, and as an 18 year old was eligible to vote on Alaskan statehood for 1959. He was in the Army National Guard and attended the IBEW Inside Wiremen's Apprenticeship program and continued to his journeyman's license. He became an electrical administrator for Eckman Electric which incorporated to Elect, Incorporated for 37 years, wiring many buildings in the Matanuska Valley and other parts of the state.

In the summer of 1965 he met a special young lady from Wisconsin who was in Alaska visiting her sister. Their relationship blossomed, and on June 18, 1966, he married Dorene Boese in Wisconsin. After marrying, they spent their honeymoon traveling up the Alcan, otherwise known as the Alaskan Canadian highway to make their home in Palmer, Alaska. Together they raised their two daughters in the lush, fertile, Matanuska Valley he fondly liked to call "the Promised Land."

Richard started listening to the Worldwide Church of God radio program in the mid-1960s and after marrying encouraged Dorene to listen as well. They were baptized together in May of 1970. Richard was ordained a deacon in 1974 and then an elder in 1976. Together they faithfully served the churches in Alaska for 40 years through the transition to the United Church of God.

Richard was a true pioneer and fully embraced the Alaskan lifestyle. He loved to hunt and fish and kept the freezer full



**William T. Forbis**

June 14, 1933-Jan. 26, 2018

of salmon, halibut, moose and even Dall sheep. He was actively involved in the youth programs coaching volleyball and basketball as well as spearheading fundraisers. He loved to fellowship with other members and talk about world events and how they related to prophecy. He was known to have a keen sense of humor and always had a twinkle in his eye. Richard's faith never wavered, and he eagerly looked forward to the coming Kingdom of God.

Richard and Dorene enjoyed traveling and as a result of their daughters living abroad and opportunities within the Church, they were able to visit Kenya, England, Europe and Australia. Richard lived in Alaska for nearly 60 years before he and Dorene moved to Georgia to be closer to their daughter Wendy and her family for additional support.

Richard is survived by his wife of 51 years, Dorene L. Eckman; his daughters, Wendy (Scott) Englehardt of Alpharetta, Georgia and Mandy (Scott) Jennings of Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. He was the grandfather of Lydia Englehardt and Aaron, Austin, Ashlee and Anthea Jennings. He is survived by two sisters and one brother, and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother.

A memorial service was held, Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017, in Alpharetta, Georgia, officiated by Paul Burnes, pastor of Rome, Georgia.

An Alaskan memorial service for Richard will be held on Sunday, July 8, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., at the Elks Lodge Room, 2600 N Barry's Resort Dr, Wasilla, AK 99645-9310.

## William T. Forbis

William (Bill) Thomas Forbis was born June 14, 1933, in Jefferson City, Missouri, to Everet and Ada Bell Nichols Forbis. Bill attended school in Jefferson City, Missouri, and later entered the United States Navy. After his naval service, Bill returned to the mid-Missouri area where he lived for the rest of his life and where he met Josie Batye. Bill and Josie were married on Nov. 27, 1957. The couple raised their two children, son David and daughter Janet. Bill and Josie were blessed with 60 years of

marriage and were able to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary with their local church family just this past November.

Bill became interested in God's truth when just a young boy through his mom who listened to Herbert Armstrong on KAAY in Little Rock. Bill and his mom read the Church literature, and his mom was baptized by Gerald Waterhouse during an early baptizing tour through the Midwest. In 1965, Bill, Josie and his mom all began attending church in Columbia, Missouri.

Bill was known for his sense of humor and was always ready with a story or a quip that would lighten up the room. He was also known for his generosity to both his extended family and to his Church family. He often surprised youngsters with unexpected gifts during the Feast of Tabernacles. He had a genuine love for God's people and served them faithfully through the years right up until his death.

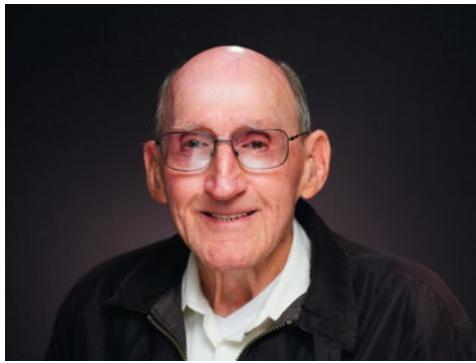
He and Josie hosted Bible studies in their home for many years, hosted meals and other activities, and have been faithful to show hospitality to all. One of Bill's favorite things was to treat brethren to a nice restaurant meal.

Bill never shied away from hard work. After his retirement from the maintenance department at the University of Missouri at Columbia, he and Josie built their own home on 28 wooded acres in Callaway County, Missouri. There weren't many pieces of earth-moving equipment that Bill didn't love. Once when Bill got a "good deal" on a backhoe, he drove it the 40 miles to their property in the frigid March weather. The only complaint he had was that his ears got so cold, he couldn't feel them by the time he got it home! In the early 1960s when he and Josie were raising their young children and when he was newly learning about following and trusting God, he worked on a construction crew, installing sewer lines. One day on the job, he was working in an 18 foot deep ditch when it caved in on him. Bill was buried alive and would have been killed except for the backhoe arm that was down in the ditch, which kept him from being crushed and suffocated. Obviously God had things for Bill to yet accomplish!

In the past few years, Bill was limited by his frail health, but his Fulton, Missouri, congregation will remember him for his faithfulness, his loyalty, his quick wit and the twinkle in his eyes when he was getting in a good tease!

Bill is survived by Josie, his wife of 60 years, his daughter Janet Neuhaus (husband Gary), son David Forbis, grandson Joseph Ball, two great-grandchildren, and many extended family members. He was preceded in death by his parents and brother, Elsworth Forbis.

# Announcements



**John R. Hull**

Jan. 2, 1925-Dec. 23, 2017

## John R. Hull

John R. Hull died peacefully, after 3 1/2 months of declining health, on Dec. 23, 2017, in Reno, Nevada. On Jan. 2 he would have been 93.

John is survived by his five children, Elaine and Bill Jacobs of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Jeanne and Brent Curtis of Smith, Nevada; Steve and Tobey Hull of Gardnerville, Nevada; Faith and Jim Rivers of Mechanicsville, Virginia; and Faye Hull of Monrovia, California. He is survived by his grandchildren: Wendy, Julie, Doug, David, Tonya, Chris, Jamie and Jenny; 20 great-grandchildren with one on the way; and one great-great-grandchild. He is preceded in death by his parents, Alvin and Elsie Hull; his siblings, Althea Eggleston, Woody Hull, Ira Hull and Mary Gick; and his wife of 56 years, Betty Faye Yoder Hull.

John was born on Jan. 2, 1925 in Gastonia, North Carolina, to Alvin and Elsie Hull. He was a quiet, gentle, industrious man. He was a Depression-reared, color-blind, high school dropout. But he knew before he was 3 what he wanted to be when he grew up—an aviator. This was inspired by hearing his parents talk about a fellow named Charles Lindbergh.

He beat the odds by diligently pursuing a career as an aircraft mechanic and pilot. He worked concurrently as an A&P mechanic with inspection authorization, a shop foreman, a flight instructor, chief flight instructor, air taxi pilot and chief pilot. He was an FAA designated aircraft maintenance inspector and designated pilot examiner. John became the general manager of an FAA approved flight school before reaching his goal as a general aviation fixed base operator.

He then worked as an FAA air-worthiness Inspector and climbed the FAA career ladder of success to become a highly awarded FAA flight standards district office manager. He also pursued a career as a freelance aviation writer. Many of his adventures have been published in aviation magazines, and he wrote and had published in 2000 his memoirs in his book *TAKEOFF*.

In 1957 his wife Betty became inter-



**James (Jack) D. Scruggs, III**

Jan. 29, 1944-Nov. 26, 2017

ested in the Radio Church of God through her mother. In 1963 she asked to begin attending church. The local minister, Richard Prince, came to visit her and asked a lot of questions, and John decided he would attend with her. Soon he became a staunch believer, and both John and Betty were baptized in March of 1964. Quoting from his book: "In less than a year, I had a crucial decision to make . . . Keep the Sabbath and stay in the church or break the Sabbath and keep my job. Until now, I would have never believed I'd give up my aviation career for anything in the world." John was "on call" on the weekends for accident standby duty. He had asked someone else to take his Saturday calls, but he got the call anyway, and Betty saying he wasn't available didn't cut it. So John explained about the Sabbath. The ultimatum was, "You will work on Saturdays or else." John began to pray about it and asked for a another way out. He had a wife and five children to support. Something within him assured him. He had always been a "worry wart," but he wasn't worrying. He read Philipians 4:6-7, and while meditating on it he recalled that, when he was at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, one of the instructors said he was looking for a district office job. John called him and asked if he was interested in swapping jobs with him. Long story short, the Hull family was soon on its way to Oklahoma City, minus the oldest daughter, who was on her way to Ambassador College. All four Hull daughters ended up attending Ambassador. John was ordained an elder in April of 1969. He loved serving the church and did so until he was no longer able.

John was also in the military in World War II. He first served in the Coastal Patrol on the coast of North Carolina when he was 17. When he was 18 he joined the Marines and served for three years in the South Pacific on an aircraft carrier.

It was a great desire of his to have a graveside military funeral. And so on Jan. 5 his family and a few close friends gathered in a small private ceremony to lay him to rest in the VA Cemetery in Fernley, Nevada. We are thankful his race is run

and his victory is won, but we miss him.

## James (Jack) D. Scruggs, III

Jack was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to James (Jack) Scruggs, Jr., and Margaret Cashion. He grew up "in the South" with his sister Linda. He loved his dog, Buttons, and he developed his love of harmonized singing in a barbershop quartet during his high school days at Chattanooga Central High School.

Jack entered the Air Force at the age of 18 and served four years near Edinburgh, Scotland, and Berlin, Germany. After his honorable discharge, he had the opportunity to join the U.S. Foreign Service, where he continued using his intelligence knowledge/experience and top secret clearance. His first embassy assignment was to Dakar, Senegal, where his first wife died from hepatitis. He was soon reassigned to the embassy in Saigon and arrived there shortly before the Viet Cong Tet offensive in 1968.

It was in Saigon where Jack met Ruby during the spring of 1969, shortly after she arrived in the country to work as secretary in the office of Vietnam Christian Service. Their friendship soon turned into love, and a whirlwind romance occurred, partly due to Jack soon to be reassigned to Paris, France. It seemed right to get married in Saigon before his transfer and to take Ruby with him, so that's what he did. He was baptized in Paris shortly before leaving for his next assignment in Vienna where he was a part of the Vietnam SALT talks. Jack's years with the U.S. State Department included two or three years living and working in Dakar, Senegal; Saigon, South Vietnam; Paris, France; Vienna, Austria;

Rabat, Morocco; Washington, D.C.; Jerusalem, Israel; Madras, India; and other countries for shorter assignments.

Jack welcomed the birth of his sons: Rodney was born a few months before leaving Paris, and two years later Bryon was added to the family when Jack was stationed in Rabat. After several years serving with the Foreign Service, the family was ready to settle down and let their roots grow in Oregon. Jack earned his teaching degree from the University of Oregon in social studies and French and landed a high school teaching position.

A few years later he received his M.A. degree in counseling from Oregon State University. Jack worked as school counselor in various Oregon schools and in Kotzebue, Alaska, as well as college advisor to Native Americans at Central Oregon Community College and at various other counseling venues.

Jack and Ruby retired from their work life and moved to Hope Village, an active retirement community in Canby, Oregon. But Jack didn't fully retire, as he continued his counseling services to many friends and referrals who requested his help through difficult and sometimes not-so-difficult times. He worked several years at Camp Hye Sierra and Northwest Camp, where he especially enjoyed introducing campers to a capella singing. He also began an a capella young adult choir at the Portland, Oregon, church, and all of "his kids" were very special to him.

Jack is survived by Ruby, his wife of 48 years; sons Rod (Linda), and Bryon (Anna); and granddaughter Chloe, who all live in the Seattle area; and his sister, Linda Fry, who lives in Montross, Virginia.

## Men's Chili Cook-off, Cincinnati East

This year the ABC class had the opportunity of hosting the chili cook-off, a social night that happens every year where men who like to cook try to win the prize for best chili. The chilis were divided in two different categories: the best hot chili and the best mild chili.

The night started with judges trying all of the different kinds of chili made, while people waited for the results. Among the crock pots there were a startling amounts of different chilis, made with beer, lamb, bacon and chicken. It was hard to decide where to start.

When the results finally came out the winners walked out with a customized handmade chef apron. Not long after that, people were all over the church hall eagerly waiting for their turn to jump in on the warm and delicious food. Full and happy are the only words that could describe the

people. All over the room people were socializing, sharing stories, smiles and being well fed and satisfied.

The night didn't end there. After a quick announcement and quick cleanup, everyone got ready for the next big event: "The Price Is Right" game show.

One student was the host, and he was very cheerful throughout the whole show. Other students presented different games like Plinko and Easy as 123. The night was filled with laughter and pictures.

Hosting the chili social was definitely a unique first time experience for most of the students, but it was something that made them all grow and learn. It helped them to develop different skills, responsibilities and how to put something together for the people they love, so everyone can grow together in serving in love.

*Michelle Macedo*

## 110 Benefit From Garden Grove Women's Enrichment Weekend

"What's Your Love Language? Discover and Unlock the Possibilities" was the intriguing theme for the 2018 Women's Enrichment Weekend sponsored by the Garden Grove, California, congregation. The theme was taken from Dr. Gary Chapman's best-selling books focusing on the five love languages—five primary ways to give and receive love (acts of service, quality time, words of affirmation, physical touch, and gifts).

This was Garden Grove's 17th annual Women's Weekend and was held Jan. 26-28, 2018, again at the beautiful Embassy Suites in Santa Ana, California.

Through an assessment and various presentations, our group of 110 ladies learned not only what their primary love language is but how to better connect and show appreciation and love to others in ways that are the most meaningful to them.

Our full weekend began with many arriving Friday and settling in to relax and meet with friends. Sabbath morning, Robin Webber, pastor of several congregations in the extended area, set the tone bringing in the spiritual overview with his message: "The Intimate Sacred

Relationship." The sermon was preceded by special music selections including a 12-member women's ensemble plus solos by Laura Roberts and Kourtney Kovanis. A special treat was incorporating a sing-along with a song by Mark Graham that he composed in 2015 in response to a request from a Women's Weekend in Ohio that year. The words of "Daughters in the Lord" captured the spirit and essence of these Women's Enrichment Weekends.

The theme was expanded on Sabbath afternoon. LeeAnn Luker gave an overview of the theme with "What Speaks to the Heart?" Five presenters followed, each dedicated to one of the five love languages: Acts of Service (Sherie Stores), Quality Time (Jean Updegraff), Words of Affirmation (Sylvia Kennedy), Physical Touch (Elaine Carlisle) and Gifts (Cindy Neumann). Shelly Thomas then explained how God speaks in all five love languages and followed with interactive discussions by tables.

The day was capped by sharing a yummy Mexican buffet. On Sunday morning, three ladies (Jennifer Garnant, Kourtney Kovanis and Christine Hendrickson)



Young women at the Garden Grove Women's Enrichment Weekend.

shared lessons learned in their lives. Deborah Barr then led an interactive discussion session focusing on practical applications of the theme in our lives.

On Sunday afternoon, a shorter speech by Marie Zelenka and the closing presentation by Jackie Horchak focused on the importance of applying these vital principles of the love languages in marriage and other relationships. Coleen Moriarty as

our moderator expertly wove the presentations together with a great dose of humor.

Some came away from the weekend with treasured donated items from our fundraising raffle that raised \$938 for Good Works and LifeNets. However, the main treasured takeaways were ladies leaving with their own "love tanks" filled and with tools to help fill those of others.

*Jean Updegraff*

## Portsmouth, Ohio, Enrichment Weekend Retreat



Members who attended the Enrichment Weekend Retreat in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Several Portsmouth, Ohio, brethren recently came together for an Enrichment Weekend Retreat Dec. 8-10 on the grounds of Butler Springs Camp. The weekend focused on numerous facets surrounding the topic of forgiveness.

Friday evening kicked off with a Bible study followed by a dessert social before everyone went off to their bunk beds in the two dorm style cabins. Sabbath morning brought two seminars before lunch, followed by Sabbath services and a game social after sunset. Mixer style games were included, which allowed us to learn more about each other. Sunday morning

brought a nature walk, as well as another seminar with a panel discussion and interaction with the participants.

There were so many positives this weekend from the abundance of delicious food, a beautiful snowfall on the Sabbath, service by so many brethren, meaningful conversation, detail to decorations and of course learning about forgiveness and reconciliation. Positive comments were heard from a variety of participants. We're looking forward to repeating this again in the future!

*Kevin Call*

## New England Hosts Pinewood Derby and International Night

In the history of church socials, perhaps never had an international foods potluck combined with a pinewood derby race. Yet, in the New England UCG, it has been done twice! It worked so well last year that we decided to do it again this year.

Brethren planned and cooked up international dishes representing countries around the world. Meanwhile, race contestants young and old crafted race cars from blocks of pine. All cars had to meet the five-ounce weight limit to compete. Parents building a Pinewood car with their kids had an opportunity to create special memories.

The big event took place after sundown on Jan. 20. Nearly 120 brethren gathered for Sabbath services followed by the potluck and the race. Steve and Kathe Myers visited from Cincinnati for the weekend. Mr. Myers gave the sermon about our personal responsibility as Church members in the last days.

Race organizers set up the pinewood derby track borrowed from a local Boy Scouts group. The four-lane track was complete with a starting gate and photo finish camera. The craftsmanship of the cars was quite creative and remarkable.

What a fun event and how well done by all those involved! The kids absolutely



Top: Children sit trackside to watch the races. Bottom: Cars lined up and ready for their turn to race.

loved it, staying close to trackside and watching their cars compete. Prizes were awarded for the fastest cars, and many other categories such as funniest, most classic and most creative. Kids and adults of all ages had a great time, eating, socializing and cheering on the cars! The New England UCG international night/pinewood derby social is a winner!

*Andy Diemer*

# Educator of the Year

Linda “Andi” Chapman has been named “Educator of the Year” for 2017 by the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners. She was honored at a dinner in Dallas, Texas.

Andi is a registered nurse who works for Heart to Heart Hospice, which has facilities in Michigan, Indiana and Texas. As their Regional Clinic Educator, Andi provides continuing education programs for nursing home administrators, nurses and social workers. She also presents educational seminars at hospitals and other medical facilities on any of more than 35 topics, such as stress management for medical staff. Her work with Alzheimer’s care staff teaches them how to communicate with their patients and how to deal effectively with Alzheimer’s behaviors without using medication or reducing the need for medicine.

All seminars Andi presents end with an evaluation. Some comments that were written are: “wonderful job and energetic speaker,” “very engaging,” “informative,” and “will change the way I provide care.”

Andi may be asked to speak to families of patients who have congestive heart failure, COPD, diabetes or Alzheimer’s disease. She helps them know what to expect in the

progress of the disease, the best ways to care for their loved one, how to help them maintain autonomy and quality of life, and how to handle critical issues including dying.

In addition to these duties that keep her on the road, Andi also writes all educational programs for Wayne State University’s medical program.

Andi came late to her profession. Even though she always wanted to be a nurse, she says she didn’t feel she was smart enough. It wasn’t until she brought a friend into her home who was dying of pancreatic cancer and cared for her until the end that she acted on her heart’s desire. She entered Mott College at age 48 and graduated with honors.

After becoming a registered nurse, she was part of a team that started A-1 Hospice. She wrote the family handbook and developed their educational programs; in 2009 they went from zero to 80 patients in five months. Heart to Heart Hospice later bought A-1. Andi says: “A-1 was one of the best things that ever happened to me. To start an education program for a multi-million dollar corporation was a fantastic opportunity. God has blessed me. There is no other explanation. Everything fell into



Linda “Andi” Chapman holding her “Educator of the Year” award.

place with God’s help. I was at the right place at the right time.”

In addition to the RN behind her name, Andi has a whole string of certifications. She is a certified dementia practitioner and national trainer (CDP), a certified Alzheimer’s disease dementia care trainer (CAD-DCT), as well as an end of life palliative care trainer (EPECT), and she is in the process of receiving additional certifications.

Andi and her husband of 42 years, Chris Chapman, are members of the Freeland, Michigan, congregation. “Chris was so supportive of my career path. He helped me through it all,” says Andi.

Jeanne Umberfield

## news AT A GLANCE

### Updates From Ministerial and Member Services

In January, Lewis VanAusdle and his wife, Lena, relocated to the New York City area, where Mr. VanAusdle serves as an associate pastor for the congregations in New York City, northern New Jersey, and Hartford, Connecticut, assisting pastor Howard Davis.

Mr. VanAusdle is continuing his previous role as pastor for the congregation in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Chris Rowland

# Grumbling

by Lorelei Nettles

Have you got a grumbling problem? Maybe you’re tired of hearing about someone’s continual trial or get upset by how much someone talks. Perhaps someone is kind of bossy, complains too much or expects too much of others. It could even be that you are upset with the leadership of your congregation or the Church itself. There are many reasons we can become irritated with each other, but God says we need to stop complaining or face the consequences. “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the judge is standing at the door” (James 5:9).

We have all experienced situations unfold. A brother or sister is in need, but one will say, “I tried to help once, but my help was rejected.” They become unwilling to try to help again. Instead they grumble about it. Another will say: “I’m so tired of hearing all their complaints. They’re always sick with something or another.” As if the person can help having health issues. There are many scenarios that can play out and it is sometimes easy to grow impatient.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:13 it states, “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.” This scripture applies to many things, but especially in how we treat the brethren. As humans, we do tire

of things easily, but God has called us to more, and He repeatedly tells us to show our light by how we treat one another (John 13:34-35).

We are to continually look out for one another, to encourage and uplift, not only in prayer, but even more so in showing loving kindness to one another. Many of us, for the most part, only see one another once a week on the Sabbath. When we begin to grumble, we are carrying negative thoughts which are often passed along to others. Have you ever had someone tell you something about another person and wished you had never heard it? That usually happens because we don’t like how it skews our thinking about the person being spoken of. We may feel disappointed in them or we become disappointed in the person grumbling. If we never hear the negative, it is not in our brain to recall and therefore does not influence how we feel about others.

There are obviously situations that need to be addressed when someone is acting ungodly, but that is a different situation than grumbling about someone. Gaius was once commended in a letter where it is stated, “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers.” Generosity to each other should be part of who we are—generosity not only in what we do for others, but in



Photo by Kristina Flour/Unsplash

We must look out for each other and not grumble about doing good for our brothers and sisters.

our very words.

We all struggle with our thoughts and feelings about others, and we can learn from it. If we don’t like what we see in someone, we change that part of ourselves or make sure we do not act in a similar way. Unfortunately, we often express our feelings. Even the subtlest of words can influence or demean. James had this to say about the matter: “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who

have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:8-10).

We are all in different stages of our calling, and some need more time than others in making changes. Instead of grumbling, we can choose to keep it to ourselves or speak to the individual about the issue one-on-one. I am working at keeping my thoughts about others to myself and not being a grumbler. Won’t you join me? **UN**

# Honoring Retiring Ministry

## Mark and Michelle Mickelson

Mark and Michelle Mickelson retired from the full-time ministry on Dec. 30, 2017, after 39 years of service to the Church of God. The Spokane congregation honored the Mickelsons for their dedication and love to God and the brethren during a reception after Church services that day.

The Mickelsons have pastored congregations in seven states within the United States. They also cared for the brethren in seven countries throughout West and Central Africa for over 12 years (2004-2016), where Mark served as both assistant and then senior pastor. Mark was very involved with both the Challenger Camp for teens (as rock climbing director) and the Challenger program for young adults (as assistant director) for 15 years from 1997-2012. Mr. Mickelson currently serves on the Council of Elders.

### Longtime friends and co-workers shared these sentiments:

Rex Sexton: "Mark and I first met not long after he arrived at Ambassador College in Big Sandy in 1974. We were in the same Spokesman Club for a year and I remember his talks were always well thought out and of substance. After college we kept in touch occasionally, but more so during the formation of United. Mark knew his Bible well and would not compromise. He used his nearly professional mountain climber skills serving our young adults in the Challenger program. Mark has always been genuine—a good listener who always gave a straightforward and honest answer to a question."

David and Colleen Hofer: "Over the years of friendship with the Mickelsons, we have seen time again their love and service to God's people here and abroad. From Michelle's foundational involve-

ment in the Women's Enrichment Weekends, to Mark's relentless, dedicated, disciplined service and mentorship with the Challenger programs and oversight both in the U.S.A. and Africa. Their national and international care and concern for the brethren and the laboring in the Word over the years is exemplary."

Will and Sue Berg: "Through many years of sharing our commitments to gaining increased understanding of the Bible, along with seeing Mark's mountaineering accomplishments of bagging summits of major peaks in Western states, we have long regarded Mark as a man of resolute godly character, determination and perseverance. The life-threatening challenges he faced in Vietnam also contributed to these qualities. We appreciate knowing the decades of service and sacrifice of Mark and Michelle have blessed many lives in the U.S.A. and Africa, and the many they mentored are continuing their efforts."

### When we asked the Mickelsons what words of advice and insight they would like to share, their thoughts included:

Mark Mickelson: "I first attended services in 1973 and it was as great a blessing as I could imagine. It gave my life order and purpose and a hope that went beyond anything I had known. Some of the most fundamental lessons I learned over the years seem almost self-evident: The Church is its people, not its programs, and our focus must be on God's words, rather than on our own. What God says is true. What man says may or may not be true."

"One lesson I learned a little late and which I am sure I did not pass it on fully, is the responsibility each one of us has before God, apart from anything done by the



Church. When the gospel is the responsibility of someone else, somewhere else, there is little we will feel compelled to do. The reality is that each of us has the responsibility to contribute where we work and live as part of what God is doing.

"Michelle and I don't always remember the same things, but after my heart attack in 2012, I had to slow down, and Michelle and I were able to spend more time together. My memory is that Michelle said she liked this husband (the less busy one) better than the last one. Well, God is now freeing up my time, and I hope to use it well."

Michelle Mickelson: "I think we both feel that we have been most directly a part of the work since entering Ambassador College and that, at times, it has been bitter-sweet. We were married in June 1981, and we were both employed by the Church in Pasadena, California. Just like with baptism or marriage, we made a commitment to God that entailed every part of our life. We certainly didn't realize all it would

entail or what commitments it would take, but it was the commitment we made. During a long journey you go through many highs and lows, rejoicing during the highs and wondering if you will make it through the lows. Looking back we can see it was all worth it and feel blessed that God let us have that journey with Him. Being a part of God's family and serving His people has truly been a privilege that I cherish and thank God for."

Mark and Michelle Mickelson have been married for 36 years, and have three children: Brad Mickelson, Megan Smith and Derek Mickelson. In their retirement, in addition to spending more time with their children, they are looking forward to having downtime, with a cup of coffee on their back porch enjoying each other's company and God's creation. For Mark there will always be one more edition of the *Bible Topical Index* to produce, along with various studies. Life will still be full, but deadlines will be their own.

Lisa Fenchel

## God Is Listening

Continued from page 1

death apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ and His righteous way of life.

Before we were baptized into the Body of Christ, we were indeed slaves to sin (Romans 6:17). Those of us who have been baptized and freed from that bondage began by admitting our sins while realizing the truth of where they would lead—suffering, meaninglessness and death. When the full gravity our transgressions against God strikes us, we are "cut to the heart" and must turn back from our evil ways (Acts 2:37-38). Being set free from sin, we become "slaves of

God, [having] fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

### Sigh and Cry

It is important to realize that God's redemptive work is not yet complete. As we struggle to completely overcome sin and rely on God, we often fall short and feel inadequate. At those times, we must declare: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25). As long as we are alive, we are still pulled by the flesh as we strive to follow the Spirit of God, and we put our hope in the day when we will be completely transformed to spirit according to God's promise! As Paul put

it, "We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

However, just as God Himself is outwardly focused, our groaning before God does not end at our own salvation. We join in with the whole creation, which "groans and labors with birth pangs until now," waiting to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:22-23).

Being enlightened about the affliction that we ourselves suffered under sin and having been set free to serve God, we must empathize with the world, which continues to suffer an overflowing abundance of evil that will soon reach a boiling point.

Ezekiel 9:4 describes those who are spared from God's wrath as those "who sigh and cry over all the abominations."

In the upcoming Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, let's remember how God has heard us in our distress. Let's take to heart the commission to preach the gospel to the entire world—a warning message to anyone who will turn from sin, to urge them take hold of the same Lifeline extended to us, Jesus Christ! The message of hope for the Kingdom of God is desperately needed. May the God who hears bring it to pass—sooner rather than later.

"The LORD is near to all those who call upon Him . . . He will also hear their cry and save them" (Psalm 145:18-19). **UN**

# Report: Malawi Visit

by Steve Myers

The Malawi Leadership Seminar met from Dec. 20-24, 2017 in Blantyre, Malawi. We met in the beautiful church owned facility with about 40 in attendance in the nation's financial and commercial center.

Members came from the congregations in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu. Each day consisted of two morning sessions with lunch provided on-site for all who attended and then followed by two afternoon sessions.

Steve Myers presented the seminars with topics for Thursday's sessions included "Being a True Disciple", "What is a Servant?", "The Character of a Christian", and "Commitment". Each session had a short Q&A following.

On Friday morning sessions revolved around the topics of responsibility and choosing growth. In the afternoon, a round table discussion was held considering strengths and growth areas of each congregation. The congregations met separately and then combined and discussed the questions together. Everyone was engaged and openly discussed ways to continue to grow individually and collectively as God's people. We closed the day with a session on taking personal responsibility.

Sabbath began with morning services at 10 a.m. Special music was a highlight with several selections presented. After lunch that was provided for all the members, we divided men and women into discussion groups. Steve Myers led the men's discussion seminar on "Committed to the Cause", how to be like David's mighty men of 2 Samuel 23.

Kathe Myers led a discussion with the ladies at the same time on "Serving in Time of Need". It focused on how to be helpful, comforting, encouraging and supportive to others. Overcoming some of the cultural drawbacks were discussed and how to move to action to help others experiencing trials.

The final leadership session stressed moving forward to be submitted and committed to God by being intentional and deliberate in our actions as Christians. We discussed what it means to be a living sacrifice and how it looks in practice.

As the seminar ended it became very obvious that the spirit of God connects His people together, wherever they may be. God's people in Malawi are warm and friendly demonstrating that we truly are one body and that the fellowship of the spirit binds us all closely together. **UN**

## South Africa

Continued from page 2

able to go on one game drive during the week while the presenters alternated the same class at those times, as only half of the ABC attendees could go on the game drive at one time. Therefore the group was sent on two separate game drives on alternate days.

Question-and-answer sessions also formed part of the ABC presentations, allowing the attendees to ask questions on the specific topics of difficult scriptures to benefit all who attended.

As we had 10 Portuguese-speaking brethren at the ABC sampler, Jorge de Campos was translating the presentations in real time via a short-range FM transmitter for the Portuguese-speaking members. The same was done on the Sabbath for the sermons. As a result, Jorge de Campos spent 42 hours live translating the presentations, question-and-answer sessions and sermons during the week.

A Bible study was included on the Thursday evening by Darris McNeely as a request from the attendees wanting to have a better understanding of prophecy and current world events.

The mix of preteens and teens for the camp does create a challenge for the activities. However, the camp resulted in a huge success as those young and old were able to engage very well. The younger children challenged the older ones, while the older teens encouraged and helped the younger children.

The children truly showed what it is to be "childlike," to get along and to be able to enjoy everything. The variety of activities meant each child was able to express their characteristics, strengths and abilities. The children ranged in age from 1 year old to 19 years old.

With the time of the year that the camp is held it meant that on the night of Dec. 25 we had to *braai* our own meat and serve our own dinner. This turned into a good serving opportunity as we had an African-American *braai* with Darris McNeely and Neil Wallis, who did the *braai*. Dinner this evening was followed by marshmallows on the fire, which was something that our Por-

## Zambia

Continued from page 2

desire to have another. As a result of this discussion, Debbie has been able to advise a group of ladies here in America to direct their funds to Zambia to help hold a future women's weekend.

The Church-owned property has two wells and electricity to serve several buildings that include a caretaker's house, a storehouse for food and supplies and bath-houses. Members camped on the grounds,



Top: Families enjoying their time at camp.

Right: The baptism of Calvin Enslin.



tuguese visitors had not experienced before.

The Christian living sessions were held next to the leopard, caracal, meerkat and monkey enclosures. Before the Christian living session, we would get into detailed discussion. Interesting facts of each of the animals were discussed with the children as an appreciation of some of God's beautiful creation.

The Christian living sessions focused on three basic points. Session one focused on Luke 6:31: Treat others as you like to be treated, even if they are not treating you as you wish to be treated. The second session focused on 1 Thessalonians 5:18: In everything give thanks, as even the negative situations give us lessons to learn and grow from in which we can become stronger and learn. Session three focussed on 1 Corinthians 10:13: God is faithful to not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able to bear. As we learn in dance class or the progression of grades at school so God helps us through life to be able to graduate through the tests of life as we get stronger and more able.

Kathy de Campos planned and prepared the art classes, and with the help of Kathe Myers and Debbie McNeely graciously gave art classes for the campers. The campers completed four art projects—silhouette savannah scene, giraffe stationery holder, "alcohol paint" coasters and bead bracelets. All of which was beautifully displayed for their parents and other ABC attendees on the last day.

On the Friday evening at the end of the camp and sampler, everyone went up to the viewing deck that overlooks the watering holes. We enjoyed a drink and snack with fellowship and a view of the variety of God's

creation at the start of the weekly Sabbath.

On the Sabbath, the service and song leading were conducted by one of the senior boy campers, Jesse Schuller. The sermons were given by Darris McNeely and Steve Myers. Four visitors from Klerksdorp also joined us for services.

One highlight of the Sabbath fellowship and treats were two cakes prepared by Mariana Simons especially for the camp. The one cake had the Ten Commandments on it that was printed on rice paper in both English and Portuguese. The other cake had a wildlife scene on it with animals and two campers wearing the camper shirt colors of this camp. Definitely a lot of thought went into both.

Mariana had also been delegated the role of organizing biscuits and rusks for the duration of the camp. She did this so well that there was an excess of biscuits and rusks at the end of the camp, which were then donated to the various areas to take back for services the next Sabbath.

As an added highlight to the Sabbath, the baptism of Calvin Enslin occurred in the afternoon, with the elder from Gauteng, Arthur Fisher, conducting the baptism.

Feedback from those attending the camp has been positive with constructive suggestions for the next camp to be incorporated where possible. **UN**

and a cook was hired to provide meals during the conference.

God is calling new people into the Church in Zambia. There are member-initiated efforts to distribute *Beyond Today* magazines. A deacon has translated transcripts of *Beyond Today* television into a local dialect and placed them on the radio. Members called into the Church from these efforts attended our training sessions. It is clear that God is working in this remote area of the world. I was reminded of the scene from the book of Acts where

the apostle Paul began his ministry in the city of Corinth. God appeared to him in a night vision saying, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).

The fields of southern Africa appear to be white for harvest at this moment. We are fortunate to be able to help advance the work of the Church in this area. Pray for God's continued blessing on this part of His field. **UN**

# Forward

Continued from page 3

to overcome. But these challenges can be overcome by God's intervention and deliverance. I have seen this in my ministerial journey for the past half century over and over. And I expect God's powerful hand to continue not only to direct us, but to deliver us and give us victory and success.

We, too, have the Red Sea in front of us. We are an agency of God that is to fulfill this prophetic directive: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

Can we do it of ourselves and of our own strength? Of course not. But can God do it through us? Of course! But what must we do? We must "go forward, get moving!"

And that is what we are fully intent on doing. Our two major operations doing the work of God are our proclamation of the gospel through the tools of modern media, and the development of a dynamic ministry to serve the needs of our congregations. We must not be waiting around listening to discouraging voices telling us "what's the hurry?"

We are moving forward with the construction of a long-needed media production facility that will be producing a more compelling and diverse variety of proclamation products—ranging from podcasts, streaming radio and documentaries, to studio audience productions. We are moving forward with this and should have them up and running in the latter part of this year. It will be the convicting power of God's powerful Spirit that will open our "Red Sea." However, we must fully look to Him to do for us what He did for ancient Israel.

The other major area of our work is the development of our ministry to serve the needs of our congregations. Our long-time faithful ministry is aging and entering a phase where it cannot keep pace with the needs of new converts and supplying what a modern congregation needs. We need to move *forward* with growing new leadership. This includes the finding and hiring of new ministerial trainees and mentoring them to replace those who are retiring.

A lively and viable ministry is vital for the Church's growth and we are moving forward with that. God will help us find and place new ministers where they are needed. I see it happening right before my eyes. Once again it is God who is not only opening our "Red Sea," but is walking us through it.

Yes, the United Church of God is a forward-looking church in verb mode more than any other. Stay with us and pray with us to discern what direction and decisions to make—knowing that God is telling us to "keep moving" forward! **UN**

# Noah, Peter, Elijah and Paul

Continued from page 3

children then a church of 18,000 would have been born in one day—a church larger than the United Church of God.

But as the infomercial says, "But wait, there's more!" Acts 2:47 says more were *added daily*. Following what is called "Peter's Second Sermon" the census was now 5,000 just counting men (Acts 4:4). With our previous metric that's a church of 30,000, and it was still growing.

Between Pentecost and Stephen's death, growth in Jerusalem continued unabated. Acts 5:1 and Acts 6:1 tell us multitudes of men and women were being added, and the number of the disciples was "multiplying." The last growth indicator before Stephen's death and the scattering of the Church is in Acts 6:7 where it says, "And the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith" (emphasis added throughout).

What a difference between the work of Noah and Peter and his fellow apostles.

That brings us to Elijah—sandwiched between Noah and Peter. One of the great men of the Bible—doer of great miracles, honored in the Transfiguration vision along with Christ and Moses. He is so highly esteemed that twice his name is attached to the work of later men—John the Baptist and an "Elijah" yet to come.

His stature aside, there are few if any who have accomplished so little with so much, and Elijah knew it. His flight to a cave in the wilderness was his signal of defeat as he lamented that no one was left

## A Visitor's First Visit

Continued from page 4

**5) Show Empathy:** Giving up the holidays and adopting the Holy Days are difficult for a new member of God's family. Leaving the customs of Christmas behind is particularly hard to do since the adversary has intertwined it so effectively with friends, family, celebrations and joy. While sitting around the Christmas tree singing carols, it never occurred to me that it might be pagan. To me, I was celebrating the birth of our savior Jesus Christ. To throw out all the beauty, wonder and worship of Christ's entry into the world because it has been infiltrated with paganism is the same as the first church throwing out everything Jewish. The Scriptures tell the story of Christ's birth. They are part of the gospel for a reason, and this is what a new member cherishes when they remember Christmas, not the pagan elements. By contrast, the feasts are difficult to understand because they are traditionally considered Jewish holidays and Old Testament

in Israel. Even God's assurance of 7,000 who were faithful was of limited comfort to Elijah.

Paul's story is somewhat like Peter's but more closely parallels the modern history of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God between 1950 and the death of Herbert Armstrong in 1986. Paul's ministry was roughly 36 years in length with the first 19 years spent starting congregations throughout what is today modern Turkey. In the latter 16 years he started congregations in Greece and Italy and traveled as far as Spain by some accounts. His preaching bore varying results. In several areas the ground was fertile, and in a few he remained for some time working with those God was calling (Acts 18:8-11). Overall Paul had a very fruitful ministry, but even he preached in some cities where few would listen.

So here we have four great men of biblical history and a brief account of their accomplishments or lack thereof. But why bring this up? Because it clearly demonstrates there is no one experience, no one model, no single level of response to God's call.

I expect Noah would have been elated to have Paul's results. Elijah wouldn't have been sitting in a cave in the desert if his Mount Carmel confrontation with the priests of Baal had produced what Peter's Pentecost sermon had produced.

All of us desire the response levels of a Peter or Paul, but the choice isn't ours. We don't get to choose whether we will work Noah's field or Paul's; Elijah's field or Peter's. *All we get to choose is what we will do the work given to us.*

practices that do not apply to our times. It takes time to understand the multi-leveled meanings of the feasts and how they are a shadow of things to come. A new member looks to others around them to know how to observe them in the proper light. We should reflect that perfect attitude of love, joy and "rejoicing greatly" at the Feast of Tabernacles and introspection and service to each other at Passover

**6) Don't Focus on the Past:** We all know what it feels like to start a new relationship with someone and have them constantly talk about past failed relationships. UCG has had a challenging past, which does not present the best face for a new member of the family. Save the dirty laundry for another day. This is a time to celebrate and share the wonders of God's plan with this new person who is so eager to learn the truth. Talking about past splits only causes the visitor to wonder if the Church is a safe place to devote their time and their future.

**7) Share the Mission:** Share with them the truth of their amazing mission; that they are learning to be teachers and lead-

In the 23 years since United began no subject has generated more discussion and debate within the Council of Elders than how to preach the gospel and, whether it is said or not, how to get more response. Elijah didn't know the answer to that question. Neither did Noah. Paul reminded us that we may "plant" and "water," but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The story of Noah reminds us that there are times when despite the effort there isn't any increase.

There is a part of the history of these men's lives that flies under the radar so to speak when we look at their ministries. Even the productive ones were only productive to a point. We read Acts and are inspired by the fruit borne by the preaching of Peter and Paul, but do we stop to read the end of their stories—2 Timothy 3 and 4; 2 Peter 2 and 3, and can we add Jude?

If I were to define the end of their ministries with one word it would be beleaguered. All three accounts describe something quite different from the glory days of the founding of the Church in Jerusalem and its expansion into Asia and Europe. These accounts are about withstanding erosion and holding on to what God had given.

Results aside, all their stories—Noah's, Peter's, Elijah's, Paul's and ours, too, contain a common element. It's a commission—not a promise of results, but an assignment. From the time of Peter and Paul onward the marching orders are found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16—go to all the world, preach to everyone and, if disciples result, teach them the way of God.

And if we can take a final lesson from the end of the Olivet Prophecy, "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing." **UN**

ers in God's Kingdom—kings and priests. Unfortunately, most single women in UCG feel their only contribution is to listen, take notes and prepare food for potlucks. And if they can sing or play an instrument, they may be allowed to serve in that manner. But that just isn't the truth of our calling. The primary role of all people, men and women alike, is to learn as much as possible about God's Word and His ways to be able to teach those coming into the Church now and to bring survivors from the coming tribulation into the light of God's truth. This amazing job is our primary vocation. It is our calling. All other worldly pursuits and careers dim by comparison. There is great joy in sharing the truth with a new believer. It strengthens and refreshes our perspectives to teach someone else. And the Spirit is moved to joy as we share the Word with another.

God willing, there will be many visitors coming through our doors during the days and years to come. They will come in at the proper time. I hope and pray the Church will be ready for them. **UN**

# Kubiks/Seiglies Visit to Chile/Argentina January 2018

by Victor Kubik

From Jan. 17-30 my wife Bev and I, along with Mario and Caty Seiglie, visited Chile and Argentina on a most remarkable and informative trip. We visited our United Church of God congregation in Santiago, Chile, as well as a new group of Sabbath-keepers who have been keeping the festivals and wanted to be part of another Church that does. We have established a friendship with them and have been offering pastoral support to them for more than two years.

We first met with our Chilean brethren on the Sabbath of Jan. 20. I had wanted to visit them for many years. We have helped many young people here with educational scholarships through LifeNets, and it was good meeting them and seeing how they have fared.

We held a two-day ministerial and leadership conference on Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 22-23. On Monday the entire church was invited, and on Tuesday the meetings were for all our ministers in Latin America. Our ministry from Mexico, Bolivia and Chile were present. Our elders representing Guatemala and Colombia were connected via videoconferencing.

Elders were able to bring forward challenges in their ministries, and the entire group joined in and discussed solutions.

This was so enlightening and effective that I decided to use this in our U.S. conference in Portland, Oregon, a few weeks later.

We then traveled to neighboring Argentina, where we met with the Sabbath-keepers in Oberá in the northern Misiones Province of Argentina. On March 1, 2017, Don Ward, on behalf of the Council of Elders, wrote the following to them:

“After a recent presentation by Mario Seiglie, the senior pastor of the Spanish regions, concerning your request to have a close working relationship with the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA), the Council of Elders and the administration of UCGIA wish to convey our strong support for your request to serve your congregations in administrative and pastoral areas.

“Your story and spiritual journey to follow God’s Word in faithful obedience is truly inspiring and reminds us that our Heavenly Father calls those whom He will call, where He will call them, and when He will call them to follow Jesus Christ (John 6:44). It gives us cause to rejoice when we consider how great and loving our God truly is. It is one thing to take a stand, but it is clearly inspiring to see people remain standing for God’s ageless truths—including keeping the Sabbath



Elders who took part in the conferences that were held in Chile.

and all of God’s Feast days.

“In honor of your request, we will be sending pastors and ministers, including Jaime Gallardo and Jaime Diaz, to serve your spiritual needs. Please receive them in the spirit of brotherly love and respect. We have the utmost confidence in their stewardship as dedicated ministers of Jesus Christ and as bridge-builders between peoples who share common beliefs.”

On the Sabbath of Jan. 27 Mario Seiglie and I gave sermons as well as conducted a Bible study to the 75 in attendance. Many of the people are of German origin. Some in the group were Ukrainian.

A highlight was when Mario and I spoke on the radio on a regular evening three-hour radio program. The radio station is

You can read a detailed account of this trip on Mr. Kubik’s travel blog:

<http://v2.travelark.org/travel-blog/victorkubik/22>

owned and operated by one of the members and features United Church of God content. They have preached repeatedly about the Holy Days, and over a period of two years 14 families have started attending. Since they did not have a ministry, they asked for our pastors to baptize them, which they did.

We appreciated being able to visit here and discussed further what steps need to be taken for integration into the United Church of God. **UN**

## Divine Healing

Continued from page 4

word translated “sorrows” in the New King James Version can legitimately be translated as “pains,” and the Hebrew word translated in the NKJV as “grief” and “griefs” can be translated as “sickness” and “sicknesses.” Several Bible versions translate them that way. So both sets of meanings are intended.

In the Good News Bible, the first half of Isaiah 53:4 says, “But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne.” We all know that when God forgives someone’s sins, He is accepting Christ’s death in place of that person’s eternal death. Likewise, when God heals someone of a sickness, injury or some other health problem, He is accepting Christ’s excruciating suffering in place of that person’s physical suffering. What amazing love! The Father and the Son were willing for Jesus to suffer in our place as well as die in our place!

God loves all of us as His children, and when we ask for His healing, He is always deeply sympathetic. When He doesn’t heal right away or doesn’t heal us in this life, He is doing what He knows is best for us in the long run. For example, 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 tells us about God not granting the beloved apostle Paul’s request for healing and God’s reason for that.

God and Christ may have several reasons as to why Christ’s sacrifice needed to include horrible suffering, but making possible the gift of divine healing is certainly one of those reasons. It’s significant that Psalm 103:3 pairs forgiveness and healing. God is He who “forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.”

The Father and Son deserve our deepest gratitude for the enormous sacrifice Jesus made by dying in payment for our sins. And They deserve our deepest gratitude for Jesus’ suffering so that “by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24).

Understandably, a lack of respect and gratitude for Christ’s sacrifice can have serious consequences. That explains what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 11:30: “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [many have died]”

Comprehending 1 Corinthians 11 helps us all to better understand why God wants us to seek His healing when we are in need. And God has taught a process that is utterly simple—just contact an elder and ask him to anoint you for healing (James 5:14).

### Why Does God Offer Divine Healing?

God offers human beings the wonderful opportunity to have life after death—everlasting life in the Kingdom of God! That by itself is an indescribably generous gift! But God also provides for us in in this life in

### *Trusting God for healing strengthens our faith, fosters a more intimate relationship with God and helps us to grow spiritually.*

countless ways—including His gift of healing! He daily demonstrates His kindness toward all people, “the evil and the good” (Matthew 5:44-47). This should inspire everyone to love God! “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Beyond God’s love for everyone, He is joyfully committed to generously caring for the needs of His spiritual children! We are supremely blessed with how “the good Shepherd” offers us “life,” and life “more abundantly” (John 10:10-11).

And, generally, what gift of God gives us the greatest physical benefit? It is the gift of divine healing! Good health is a blessing, and our compassionate God has made our health a high priority. First of all, He has revealed the fundamentals of healthful living in His Word. Secondly, God is the author of true science by which we can learn additional valuable knowledge. And when we are sick or injured and God sees that we need His help, and we trustingly seek His help, He is there for us as our Healer. If He doesn’t heal us right away, He has good reasons for delaying. It is never because He doesn’t love us.

### The Passover

Our Creator designed us with an amazing and wonderful immune system by which our bodies automatically try to heal themselves, so when a physical remedy is helpful, it is because it is assisting the natural healing. In addition, God’s plan for humanity has always included His loving offer of divine healing—miraculous healing!

God wants us to remember, “I am the LORD, your healer” (Exodus 15:26, English Standard Version). Trusting God for healing strengthens our faith, fosters a more intimate relationship with God and helps us to grow spiritually. If we can’t trust God for healing, how can we trust Him to provide an even greater miracle—resurrecting us from the dead!

At the Passover and throughout the year, we must “discern the Lord’s body” and remember that God’s offer of divine healing is a critically important part of God’s plan (1 Corinthians 11:29). May each Passover remind us that Christ suffered and died that we might receive the gift of God’s grace, and that grace includes God’s offer of healing—the healing of our minds as well as our bodies—in addition to His forgiveness and redemption. God through Jesus Christ is Healer as well as Savior.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases!” (Psalms 103:2-3). **UN**

**Television Airing Schedule**

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
<i>Baptism: Let's Talk About Your Salvation</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The Road to Eternal Life</i>	Mar. 11-17
<i>The Beast and the False Prophet</i>	Steve Myers	<i>The Book of Revelation Unveiled</i>	Mar. 18-24
<i>Who Really Killed Christ?</i>	Gary Petty	<i>Jesus Christ: The Real Story</i>	Mar. 25-31
<i>Hard Questions: Does God Condemn Non-Christians?</i>	Gary Petty	<i>What Happens After Death?</i>	April 1-7
<i>Do I Have an Immortal Soul?</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?</i>	April 8-14
<i>God's Enduring Love for Israel</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The Middle East in Bible Prophecy</i>	April 15-21
<i>Who Are the Two Witnesses?</i>	Steve Myers	<i>The Book of Revelation Unveiled</i>	April 22-28
<i>The Moment You Die</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>What Happens After Death</i>	April 29-May 5

**Beyond Today Television**

*BT* Returns to the WGN America Television Network

We are pleased to announce that the *Beyond Today* television program produced by the United Church of God, will once again return, after a several year absence, to the WGN America television network beginning on Friday, April 6, 2018.

Since our previous association with WGN America, nearly 10 million households have been added to the network's viewership which now includes Alaska and Hawaii. Regarding overall demographics, Nielsen-measured viewership shows a balance of 45 percent men and 55 percent women.

*Beyond Today* programs will air every Friday morning across the United States at 8:30 a.m. ET, 7:30 a.m. CT, 8:30 a.m. MT (except satellite and single-feed cable), 8:30 a.m. PT and 8:30 a.m. in Alaska and Hawaii.

To find the WGN America channel locations in your area please visit [wgnamerica.com/channel-finder/](http://wgnamerica.com/channel-finder/) and enter your zip code. You will be shown the providers and channel number(s) on which you can watch WGN America in your area.

On March 31, 2018, *Beyond Today* will end programming on the WORD Network (on which we have aired programs since December 2011).

Besides watching *Beyond Today* on WGN America, all our programs can be viewed on-demand on dedicated *Beyond Today* television channels on Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV and Samsung smart TVs. You can also watch programs online at our website and on our YouTube channel. Please see our channel listing online for all viewing options.

Finally, we are very grateful to God for this "open door" (Colossians 4:3) to reach a large, new audience with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. *Beyond Today* presenters Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty, plus our entire home office media team, express their special thanks to you for your earnest prayers and your strong, unceasing support. **UN**

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- March 4:** *America: The Time is Now!*, Los Angeles, California
- March 6-7:** *America: The Time is Now!*, San Diego, California
- March 7-8:** *America: The Time is Now!*, San Bernardino, California
- March 11:** *America: The Time is Now!*, Garden Grove, California
- March 30:** Passover
- March 31-April 6:** Days of Unleavened Bread