



## United Church of God an International Association

### **eNews from Ministerial and Member Services**

Issue 322

April 26, 2018

### **Personal From the President...**

Dear fellow servants of God,

Bev and I returned from a most productive trip to Africa a week ago last Tuesday. We visited three countries that have more than 1000 people attending in 21 congregations. We spent valuable time during the Passover and Unleavened Bread season with our congregations and leaders. I was able to speak 14 times. I enjoyed sitting in on a South African National Council meeting chaired by Roy Demont a week ago Sunday. It helped me understand more about their work and their needs, both physical and spiritual.

My TravelArk blog contains a great deal of detail and hundreds of photos about our brethren and their lives. You can view this at <http://v2.travelark.org/travel-blog/victorkubik/23>

This past week we've had a lot of productive activity here at the home office.

The latest issue of the *United News* went to press yesterday and should arrive at your homes shortly.

The latest issue of the *Beyond Today* magazine is out. The lead articles revolve around the 70th anniversary of the modern nation of Israel. They cover both history and the spiritual meaning of Israel's relationship to God.

This week has once again been "BT WEEK" where we are producing three new television programs. All hands are on deck from editors, cameramen, teleprompter and other technicians.

Here are the programs produced:

- "Mideast Family Feud" by Darris McNeely
- "When Demons Are Real!" by Steve Myers
- "Hard Questions: Didn't Jesus Say Not to Judge?" by Gary Petty

We also discussed the opening night video for the Feast of Tabernacles and plan to do again what was highly acclaimed last year. For the president's annual webcast to the Church, I have invited the chairman of the Council of Elders to give a split sermon as

part of this webcast on the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles. The webcast will originate from Panama City Beach, Florida.

Last night on the *Beyond Today* Bible study webcast, Darris McNeely presented the fourth part in the series "The Judges," about Deborah.

This week we also held meetings to discuss our Video Recording Studio, which is under construction. One of the meetings was with our contractor, Scott Millay. We discussed the final appearance and colors of floors, carpets, countertops, ceilings, bathrooms and such. We will be finalizing and unifying the appearance of the new building with our current home office facility by repainting the exterior and updating the signage at our main entrance. We are looking at a late June or early July completion date. After that, the new set, lights, cameras and other technical fixtures will be installed. Production of *Beyond Today* programs using the new set will start after the Feast of Tabernacles.

This past Sunday, April 22, Ambassador Bible College conducted its annual Charity Auction. The proceeds, which were about \$5000, will go towards the LifeNets Developing Nations Scholarship Fund and for solar power at UCG facilities in Malawi, where power failures are constant. LifeNets currently provides scholarships for more than 100 United Church of God students around the world. Just this past week we added a new scholarship for higher education in the country of Benin.

There is a lot going on in our community of highly motivated and committed workers who literally LIVE the Mission of the Church. It's a joy to be working at the home office with such a dedicated team/family as well as with our faithful elders in the field ministry who serve our hundreds of congregations around the world.

We are now preparing ourselves for the Annual Meeting of the General Conference of Elders, with the International Meetings to be held a week from tomorrow.

### **The Holy Spirit is Like...**

Have you visited someplace utterly magnificent and breath-taking like Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, or Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe? I've been to those places and have tried to describe it to friends and family. Of course, words fail. Even photography fails. The magnificence of these places transcends our ability to convey it.



And so it is with the Bible. When the Bible describes the magnificence of God, the breath-taking depth of the acts of God, and what eternally lies in store for us, language breaks down. It doesn't matter whether one is using Greek, Hebrew, English, Spanish, Russian or whatever.

So, to try and make up for these gaps, we use what are called similes, metaphors or analogies. A simile, as you know, uses the words "like" or "as" to draw a comparison so we can better understand. Jesus used similes many times. As the Bible records, "And again He said, 'To what shall I *liken* the kingdom of God? It is *like* leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened'" (Luke 13:20-21).

As we approach the day of Pentecost and recall the mighty events that took place at the giving of the Holy Spirit, this understanding of the limitations of language helps put into perspective the real magnitude and power of what actually took place.

We know the story of Pentecost well. But limitations of language can inadvertently cause us to limit our perception of the *power* of our mighty God. When we read the second chapter of Acts this season, can we pause and reflect a little more deeply on what the apostles experienced and, by implication, what incredible power is available to us today?

As we read in Acts 2, the Holy Day "had fully come." The apostles and disciples had all been directly commanded by Jesus to come to Jerusalem and await the gift of the Comforter, the promised Holy Spirit of God.

The word "suddenly" in verse 2 denotes surprise--a startling and unexpected event engulfed the small group. In that startling event, "there came a sound from heaven, *as of* a mighty rushing wind and it filled the whole house" (verse 2). It wasn't just a "wind," it was something much more. But the Greek (and English translation) is incapable of fully describing what it was.

Then, in a one-time miracle, something fantastic that Luke, the author of Acts, could only describe as "divided tongues, *as of* fire" appeared and settled on each disciple. The New Living Translation puts the event this way: "Suddenly, there was a sound

from heaven *like* the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked *like* flames or tongues of fire first appeared and settled on each of them" (Acts 2:2-3, New Living Translation). The event was so incredible and splendid that it defies the ability of human language to fully describe it.

Of course, God had a purpose for this spectacular introduction of His Holy Spirit. There were as many as 600,000 to one million Jews in Jerusalem celebrating the high day. The noise like the "roaring of a mighty windstorm" attracted a very large crowd.

Assembling from many nations across the Roman Empire and Asia, they experienced firsthand the introduction of the mighty transformational power of God's Holy Spirit. And it is all carefully recorded for us.

What does this mean for us? We know from Jesus Himself that the Holy Spirit proceeds directly from God the Father (John 15:26). The presence of the Holy Spirit living within us confirms that we are indeed now the very children of God and destined to be raised to eternal life (Romans 8:9-11).

The power of the Holy Spirit living within us accomplishes many things. It puts us in tune with what God is thinking and doing (Ephesians 2:6). Our very thinking and daily actions are literally transformed by this incredible power through "the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2) as we yield and become more like God.

To make this a personal experience and to help us better understand and use the Holy Spirit in our lives, the Bible describes the Holy Spirit in certain ways. Let's review some of these and meditate and reflect on them as we approach the high day of Pentecost:

First, the Bible likens the Spirit of God to *human breath*. For the most part, human breath is unseen. But human breath is laden with life-giving oxygen, heat, balancing humidity and many other positive attributes. When we exercise briskly, we talk of the need to "catch our breath." So it is spiritually. As the book of Job records, "The *Spirit* of God has made me, and the *breath* of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:3). The Hebrew word "Spirit" is *ruach*, which is also translated "breath" elsewhere. We must daily spiritually breathe in God's Spirit to be renewed and strengthened.

Second, the Holy Spirit is often described to be *like the wind*. Like breath, wind is often invisible. But wind possesses real *power*. As the world saw in 2017, multiple hurricanes all but annihilated major parts of the Caribbean and the southern United States. As Jesus stated in John 3:7-8: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the spirit."

Thirdly, God's Spirit is described as having the attributes of *fire*. The Holy Spirit was part of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the desert (Exodus 40:34-38). Fire, of course, possesses its own power and fury. A small spark or flame can ignite a major conflagration. The Bible often speaks of a purifying spiritual fire. But a small and tended fire (like in a fireplace) can also provide warmth and feelings of safety and love.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is often described as having the attributes of *water*. When it is active in us, the Holy Spirit flows, permeates and cleanses us. Water also holds its

own form of energy. It imparts critical nourishment and strength. When we become dehydrated--either physically or spiritually--from a lack of water, we become feeble and weak.

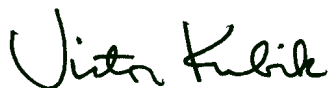
Fifth, the Holy Spirit is like *oil*. Oil provides critical elements for our bodies, including lubrication. Oil removes friction. It is a source of fuel and energy. Spiritual oil strengthens us and it--like the Holy Spirit--is something we must regularly replenish (Matthew 25:1-13).

Sixth, the Holy Spirit shines, penetrates and reveals like *light*. We are enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-19) and the active presence of the Spirit of God enables us to be a true light to this darkened world (Matthew 5:14-16).

Finally, the Holy Spirit acts in a fashion similar to God's and our *minds*. Paul eloquently showed how the Holy Spirit elevates our prayers in an incredibly powerful way (Romans 8:26). God's often uses the Holy Spirit to guide us, as He guided Elijah through a "still, small voice" in 1 Kings 19:11-13.

To fully understand the incredible full depth and personal meaning of these analogies and similes, we must take time to reflect and mediate on them. The message of Pentecost is a message of power--raw, crackling power--power that is available to all of us today. As we approach this incredible day, let us work to yield and more fully absorb what the power of the Holy Spirit means for you!

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Kubik". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victor" and last name "Kubik" clearly distinguishable.

Victor Kubik

## **From Ministerial and Member Services...**

### **Second Passover**

As a reminder, the second Passover day this year is on April 29, 2018. But it is observed the evening before on Saturday night, April 28. If the second Passover has not been addressed recently in your congregations, it would be good to have a sermonette or extended announcement to explain why we have the second Passover. This is one of those topics that we should address from time to time.

## **Inside United Podcast**



Vivien Botha, an elder in the Cape Town congregation, and his wife, Cathy, talk with Victor Kubik about how they stay hopeful in the face of pain and adversity, and how their struggles have helped them rebuild the church in Cape Town.

<http://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united/inside-united-podcast-episode-080>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

<http://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united>

## **Camp Pinecrest Staff Needs**

For 2018, Camp Pinecrest has had a most positive response in regard to the number of campers who have applied. As of April 24, 74 teens has applied to camp. To help serve those campers, we are in need of staff in three specific areas:

- A credentialed lifeguard
- Someone to assist in filming camp activities
- Additional Counselors and Assistant Counselors

If you want to be part of the team that serves the young people of the Church, please apply at: <http://uyc.ucg.org/camp/camp-pinecrest>

-- Gary Smith, Director, Camp Pinecrest

## **Camp Hye Sierra**

There is plenty of room for more campers and staff at Camp Hye Sierra, so apply now at [uyc.ucg.org](http://uyc.ucg.org). Hye Sierra is a beautiful camp located in the pines and regal redwoods of California's Sequoia National Park. In addition to our evening mix and mingle time, we offer two dances, kayaking, rock climbing, sports and other exciting activities. Come join us for your place in the Zone at Hye Sierra.

-- Jim Tuck, Director, Camp Hye Sierra

## Youth Instruction Study Guide Available

Pastors, congregation leaders, parents and members, the latest Family Study Guide, *Pentecost*, has been added to the [Family Study Guides](#) webpage (or here in the [Dropbox](#)).

In this Family Study Guide we review the unique ways that Pentecost is the third step in God's plan of salvation. We study into the New Testament Pentecost and identify the changes that were instilled during the New Testament Pentecost as described in Acts. Additionally there are family discussion questions and activities to help your children explain why Pentecost is important to Christians today.

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