

UNITED NEWS



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MAY-JUNE 2018

Four Church Buildings Dedicated in Malawi and Zambia

by Victor Kubik

My recent (March 19-April 17) journey to south-central Africa was highlighted by ribbon cutting and the dedication of four church buildings. Two were in Malawi (Blantyre and Lilongwe) and two in Zambia (Mufulira and Mufumbwe).

These church-owned buildings provide a consistent home for our weekly Sabbath services. Two will serve as festival sites as well as a venue for youth camp and other events such as training seminars. Financing was provided by international subsidies, Good Works, LifeNets and local tithes and offerings. Much of the labor was donated by our brethren.

Each of these buildings has a unique history of planning and construction. We first assessed need, location to our brethren's homes and availability of transport. Most of our brethren must use public transportation to come to services. The outcome has been most encouraging as the buildings provide a place for worship and a venue for church activities. Since the locations are in high-density population areas, the buildings are noticed and

become a notable part of our church identity where people can find literature about our beliefs and accessibility to our church leaders. This has been most encouraging to all of us!

At each of my dedication addresses I referred to Solomon's consecration of the original temple in Jerusalem in 1 Kings 8. In his prayer he first blessed the assembly of Israel, which is the living temple of God. Then he prayed for God to be present to answer the prayers of His people. Then he prayed that the temple would become a place of interest for the "foreigner," the outsider. It would be a place an outsider could be drawn to hear about and see the example and fruits of those obedient to God. Finally, Solomon gives the dedication and consecration of the building.

On this visit to our congregations and leaders in South Africa, Malawi and Zambia, we were most encouraged by the growth of our congregations and their leadership. In the past two years we have sent Darris McNeely and Steve Myers as teachers to do training seminars that are paying off in the development of servant



The congregation and new building at Mufumbwe, Zambia.

leaders. While many subjects were presented, most appreciated the teaching of the Bible and further explaining of our Fundamental Beliefs.

The building in Lilongwe, Malawi, was part of a broader LifeNets project that includes a line of storefronts called the LifeNets Business Center. It includes an Internet café, a grocery and a beauty salon.

These employ a number of our brethren.

In Mufumbwe, most of the people are within walking distance of the church. A valuable borehole for drinking water and irrigation was donated by another Sabbath-keeping church in Portland, Oregon. Before the hall was built, the con-

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Pentecost—a Spiritual Game-Changer

The Greatest Watershed Moment in Human History



Photo by Jonatan Pie/Unsplash

Watershed moments are moments in time from which the history of humankind changed course and would never be the same again. One of the most notable events in human history is the giving of the Holy Spirit.

by Benjamin Light

The record of human history has been awash with watershed moments.

They are referred to in this way because, just like in a watershed, rain that falls in the mountains can end up in one of two very different places. For example, rain that falls on the Rocky Mountains can result in drops of water that end up traveling eastward and south down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Other drops of water travel westward into the Columbia and on to the Pacific Ocean. Those drops may have come out of the same storm, but because of the slope on which they landed, the end result was very different.

Watershed moments are moments in time from which the history of humankind changed course and would never

be the same again. The invention of the steam engine, the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand, the invention of the printing press; all of these events would change human history in marked and measurable ways, taking it down a very different path than if that event had never occurred in the first place.

We can look at the record of history and see numerous places where humanity reached a fork in the road and ended up going down one fork, drastically changing the direction—sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse.

One event in human history that doesn't get much press truly represents one of the greatest watershed moments in human history—a time from which nothing

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BY THE NUMBERS

5,019

have registered for the Feast on the Feast website as of April 25. If you have not registered, please go to www.ucg.org/members/feast.

Four Church Buildings

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gregation met “under the mango tree” for several years at the orphanage run by a member, Joseph Kapatula.

Hopefully, next year there will be one more building to dedicate in Manyinga, Zamiba, about 60 miles west of Mufumbwe.

We are thankful to God that we have been able to see these four projects through.

Other highlights of this visit was spending time with our congregational leaders at their homes. We spent time with Jason and Monique Webster and Arthur and Gail Fisher in Johannesburg, South Africa; Brennan and Michala Hilgen in Lilongwe, Malawi; Gracious and Loney Mpilangwe in Blantyre, Malawi; Filius and Chowise Jere from Chipata, Zambia; Nawa and Felicia Talama in Lusaka, Zambia; Derrick and Cherry Pringle in Kitwe, Zambia; and finally Vivien and Cathy Botha in Cape Town, South Africa.

For more details on the Kubiks’ travels in Africa please see Mr. Kubik’s travel blog: <http://kubik.org/travelpod-blog-africa-march-april-2018/>. **UN**



Top: The Kubiks pose with the congregation in Mufulira, Zambia, outside their church building.

Bottom Left: Victor Kubik and Gracious Mpilangwe conduct the ribbon cutting ceremony at the new building in Blantyre, Malawi.

Bottom Right: Victor and Beverly Kubik pose with the congregation of Lilongwe, Malawi, at the dedication of their new church building.

Visit to Myanmar

by Josh Raudenbush

What an awesome experience it was serving at the Legacy Institute Youth Program in Myanmar! I left the cold, wet, early spring weather of Cincinnati and landed right into the middle of the hot, dusty dry season in MyanMarch

Just before the Holy Days, I served at the youth program in the village of Jawk Taing, teaching the book of Daniel in the morning and an English class in the afternoon. For my Daniel class, I taught about the events of Daniel’s life during the first seven chapters, with an emphasis on how he lived in the world but was not of it. Both Eager Mopalel, a Legacy graduate, and Seng Aung, the local pastor (also former Legacy student) were able to translate the class into Burmese for the students to understand it more clearly.

For my English class, I didn’t need a translator. I taught English grammar, focusing on pronunciation and teaching them new English vocabulary. Sometimes I threw in some games that got the class up and moving around all while learning about common English phrases and idioms. The class age ranged from 13 to 23, and I had around 15 students. It was great to see the older students occasionally translate and help the younger ones understand more difficult words. Finally, our days came to an end playing either volleyball or kickball. The kids especially loved kickball, which we played on a cattle pasture just outside the village.

The experience as a whole was amazing and a lot of fun. In addition to teaching classes, I was able to go on several day trips during my two-and-a-half-week stay. On one of those, we rented a short truck and drove up into the nearby mountains. Despite nearly everyone getting carsick from driving up the never-ending switchbacks, we all had fun and felt better after getting out and walking around at the top. Towards the end of my trip, we rented a short truck again and drove to a nearby elephant camp. A guide would sit on the elephant’s head and lead two or three people around on the elephant through the park. It was a treat for everyone because most of the students hadn’t gotten to do that before.

I include driving as a part of the experience. I wasn’t skilled enough to drive a motorcycle out on the main road, but I did get to drive around the dirt roads of the village. Seng Aung, or another Church member, Htoo Gay, would pick me up on the bike and take me from the hotel to Jawk Taing. Whether it was driving through a cloud of ash and smoke from a nearby government-controlled burn, or getting stuck in a herd of cattle, that road always provided something exciting.

For the last few days of the trip, Earl Roemer (elder from Anchorage, Alaska) and David Bensinger (from Boise, Idaho) flew in to help conduct Passover and give messages during the Days of Unleavened Bread and visit with the brethren.



Top: Youth who were part of the camp program in MyanMarch

Bottom: Josh Raudenbush with some of the younger children.

We enjoyed a meal together after services on the first day, eating some fresh, grass-fed beef from the cow Seng Aung and some of the others slaughtered Passover morning. Thus my trip came to a close. I flew back on Monday, April 2, from Yangon International Airport, and arrived home the next day. I made some new friendships during my time in Myanmar, more than I thought I would. The feedback I received from teaching was positive, but I believe I learned more from them than they did from me.

It was an incredible experience, but it

would not have been possible without God directing me to be in the right place at the right time to initially hear about the project, and also to all those who donated towards my expenses. **UN**



PETER EDDINGTON
Media and
Communications
Services Operation
Manager

Imagine the time when Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem. What was it like to learn directly from the Master? You would be on an emotional high and have spiritual peace, right?

Near the end of His human life, Jesus made a great promise. He promised His followers that He would leave them with His peace. He said: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

It might seem strange that someone could have real peace while anticipating the most difficult and horribly agonizing trial of His life. But Christ knew and understood the great purpose for which He had come to this earth—a purpose that superseded everything else. Without His sacrifice for our sins, there could be no salvation.

It's interesting that what is the most definitive discourse on peace in all of the Bible comes from Jesus Christ's suffering in great pain on the night before He died. He knew what He was about to face, yet still took time to comfort His disciples

Peace Be With You



How do we find the peace Christ promised—the peace that overcomes our natural frustrations and troubling anxieties?

The most definitive discourse on peace in all of the Bible comes from Jesus Christ's suffering in great pain on the night before He died.

with a message about peace.

After Jesus arose from the dead, the Gospel of John records three times Jesus declaring to His disciples, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19-26). These declarations

teach us that the resurrection enabled peace to be with us through the risen Christ living in us through the Holy Spirit.

How do we find the peace Christ promised—the peace that overcomes our natural frustrations and troubling anxieties? Even the disciples, after walking alongside Jesus for many years, struggled with peace and faith.

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From The COUNCIL



by Scott Ashley

In teaching about the Gospels at Ambassador Bible College, one concept I often stress is what it means to be a disciple. To a disciple, his rabbi was his master, teacher and lord—and we see Jesus referred to by all these terms in the Gospels.

We tend to view the rabbi-disciple relationship as like that of a teacher to his students. But it goes far deeper than that. A student wants to know what the teacher knows. But a disciple wants to become just like his rabbi/master/teacher in every way.

This is a far deeper commitment than a teacher-student relationship. This is why

What Does It Mean to Be a Disciple?



A disciple wants to become just like his master. Are you striving to be like your Master, Jesus Christ?

Jesus' disciples were always traveling with Him. They wanted to not just know what their Teacher knew, but to become just like Him in every way.

For this reason they literally accompanied their Master everywhere He went. They did this to see what their Rabbi did in every circumstance of life. How did He pray? How did He meditate? How did He teach? How did He study and understand God's Word? How did He apply that Word in everyday life?

It's no coincidence that in the Gospels we repeatedly see Jesus telling someone, "Follow Me." It was an invitation, but also a command: "Follow Me and be My disciple." To be a disciple meant to literally follow the Master wherever He went, to walk as He walked, to live as He lived, so that the disciple might become just like his Master in every way.

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The Good News

Learn, Love and Live by the Ten Commandments

■ This is an introduction to a series of articles focused on the Ten Commandments.

by Don Hooser

Question: What's the longest chapter in the entire Bible? Psalm 119 with 176 verses! Question: What is its subject? Love and reverence for God's laws and teachings!

This chapter also has the most complicated structure in the entire Bible, so this masterpiece required a huge amount of time and effort! The author worked long and hard to give top honors to the subject of God's perfect laws!

The whole Bible emphasizes how God wants all His people, including young children, to learn, love and live by His commandments.

The Number 10

The subject of the Ten Commandments is of supreme importance. Authors have written hundreds of books on the subject. On a scale of 1 to 10, the Ten Commandments are a perfect 10!

The number 10 is a very special number, and it occurs quite often in the Bible. People ordinarily have 10 fingers and 10 toes! The word *tithe* means tenth. The prefix *deca* means 10. The prefix *deci* means tenth. Those prefixes occur in many of our English words. Our decimal numeral system is based on the number 10. The Ten Commandments are often referred to as the Decalogue.

So the fact that the essential commandments of God, the practical and perfect principles for life, are 10 in number—no more and no less—is awesome.

Miracles Prove the Ten Commandments Are Super-important!

God used spectacular miracles to emphasize how important the Ten Commandments are! To begin with, God used 10 plagues and many, many other miracles to liberate the whole nation of Israel from Egypt!

Then God led them to Mt. Sinai, the site of the burning bush miracle (Exodus 3:1-12; 19:1-15). In the morning of what was later called the Feast of Pentecost, there were thunderings, lightnings, a thick cloud and an extremely loud sound of a trumpet (verse 16). Then God descended in blazing fire and smoke as the whole mountain quaked (verse 18). Moses went up the mountain and stayed in the presence of God for 40 days, miraculously

fasting from all food and water during that time (Exodus 24:18; 34:28).

Then God loudly announced all the Ten Commandments so all the Israelites could hear God speaking (Exodus 20:22; Deuteronomy 4:36; 5:4, 24-26).

God then wrote all the words on the front and back sides of two tablets of stone—with His finger! (Exodus 32:15). Probably all Ten Commandments were engraved on each stone. Since this covenant (a type of contract) was between God and Israel, one "copy" would belong to God and the other "copy" would belong to Israel.

When Moses came down from the presence of God, his face shone so brightly he had to put a veil over his face (Exodus 34:29-35).

Israel was later instructed to permanently keep those two "tablets of the covenant" inside the "ark of the covenant" (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:9; 10:1-5, 8).

These facts and miracles plus many more demonstrate how God views the Ten Commandments! To summarize, they are God's royal rules for relationships and lasting success and happiness!

The Ten Commandments Show Us How to Love!

The whole Bible is God's love story. Here is an acronym that explains this love: This Book Instructs Believers: Love Everybody! First of all, it's because God greatly loves us that He gave us His laws to guide and bless us and keep us out of trouble (Psalm 119:105). Then the first four of the Commandments sum up how we should love God, and the last six of the Commandments sum up how we should love other people!

We show love for God by not sinning, but what is "sin?" It is the breaking of God's laws! (Romans 7:7; 1 John 3:4).

When someone asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

God first revealed these two great commandments in "the Law and the Prophets," a phrase that means the Old Testament! Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

Notice the word "hang" in Matthew 22:40. I imagine you are familiar with mobiles. Imagine a wire labeled "Love" coming down from God that holds a wire



Photo by Sebastian Leon Prado/Unsplash

The Ten Commandments are God's royal rules for relationships and lasting success and happiness. God wants everyone to learn, love, and live by them.

cross piece. At one end of the cross piece, a wire hangs down that is labeled "Love God." At the other end, a wire hangs down labeled "Love People." Under "Love God," a cross piece has four wires hanging down that hold the first four of the Ten Commandments. Under "Love People," a cross piece has six wires hanging down that hold the last six of the Ten Commandments. Then hanging under each of the Ten Commandments is a whole bunch of other spiritual laws. This "mobile" is a good illustration of how God views His commandments.

False Religious Teachings Are Illogical!

God says His precious laws are blessings, not burdens, but because human nature tends to be stubborn and rebellious, many people come up with all kinds of excuses for not obeying God. Furthermore, Satan the devil hates God's laws, and he does all he can to deceive and destroy people.

Some people have the idea that the Ten Commandments were merely Ten Suggestions! Or that they were only temporary, just meant for Israel in the Old Testament. Or that God changed His mind and decided the Ten Commandments are unnecessary! Those are crazy ideas. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I the LORD do not change!"

What is logical—what makes sense? God created everything including the laws of science. Everything in our awesome universe—from a giant galaxy to a

tiny atom—"obeys" God's laws of physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, mathematics, etc. If laws are good for everything else, why would laws not be good for human beings?

Think of a parent saying the following to his child: "Because I am loving and merciful, I'm not going to give you any rules. I'll give you suggestions, but I won't make you do anything and I won't stop you from doing anything that is bad." That would be an awful parent! A wise and loving parent has rules and discipline, but is merciful and forgives when the child is truly sorry for disobeying. Likewise, our heavenly Father has the perfect balance of justice and mercy, of discipline and forgiveness (Hebrews 12:1-11).

Some people complain that God's Commandments are "restrictive," although there are only 10 of them! The million-plus federal laws and regulations of the United States are collectively way, way more restrictive! And if people would obey the Ten Commandments, we wouldn't need the countless other laws to try to stop bad behavior! Actually, the Bible calls the Ten Commandments God's "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12). People have the greatest freedoms—physically, mentally and spiritually—when they obey God.

Some people complain the Ten Commandments are "negative" because some say, "You shall not . . ." Actually, the commandments are very positive! "You shall

not steal” implies that you are free to choose and do zillions of good things that don’t involve stealing!

Some people think, “Jesus kept the Ten Commandments for us so we don’t have to keep them.” That’s ridiculous! Think of a policeman stopping me for running red lights. What if I say this: “Officer, my friend Joe has been stopping at all the red lights in my place so I don’t have to stop for them.” The policeman would think I’m nuts!

It’s true that forgiveness, eternal life and other blessings are gargantuan gifts from God so we cannot earn them by keeping God’s laws. (God offers us “grace,” of which a primary meaning is “gift” and “gifts.”) To illustrate, I can’t expect my city to give me a financial reward because I’ve been obeying the city laws. But if I refuse to obey the city laws, I’ll lose my freedom. I’ll go to jail. Likewise, obeying God won’t earn salvation, but if I kept stubbornly refusing to obey God’s laws, I would end up losing my opportunity for eternal life.

The New Testament Also Teaches Obedience to the Ten Commandments

Jesus Christ taught obedience to the Ten Commandments (Matthew 5:17-28; 19:17-19; 23:23; John 14:6, 15, 21; 15:10). He also came to earth to be our role model so we can “follow His steps” (Matthew 16:24; John 10:4; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21). We are to be followers and imitators of Christ.

John is known as the “apostle of love,” and he frequently emphasized the true love that includes obeying God’s commandments. For example, see 1 John 2:4-6; 3:3-8, 22, 24; 5:2-3; 2 John 6; 3 John 11.

Revelation 14:12 identifies the saints as “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” One of the last verses of the Bible, Revelation 22:14, says, “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life.”

The author of that longest psalm, Psalm 119, wrote: “Oh, how I love Your law!” and “I love Your commandments” (Psalm 119:97 and 127). What a great example for all of us to follow! May each of us become increasingly dedicated to learning, loving and living by God’s wonderful, wonderful Ten Commandments!

In this series the next article will explain the First Commandment of God. Look in the next *United News* for the next article in this installment. **UN**

Note to Parents Regarding Ten Commandments Series

With this issue of *United News*, we begin a series on the Ten Commandments. With the introductory article and a concluding article, we expect 12 installments. To accompany this series, we also highly recommend our United Church of God booklet, *The Ten Commandments*.

A primary goal is to word each article in ways that are especially clear and easy to understand so young people—teens and children—will find them interesting, memorable and motivational.

Many people have regarded the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy as the most important chapter in all the Old Testament. Why? Because it is mostly about the most valuable treasure you can bequeath to your children—passing the legacy of God’s precious truth to the next generation—about diligently teaching our children to learn, love and live by God’s Word and laws. They are the foundation of knowing right from wrong. They are the fundamentals of good character and godly wisdom. See Psalm 19:7-14; 111:10; Proverbs 4:1-13; Luke 2:52.

Your children are your disciples, and God clearly wants you to use the many opportunities each day—on the Sabbath and every day—to teach, model, clarify, apply, illustrate, remind and praise God’s commandments. This is learning by immersion—children being immersed in a family focused on God’s Word. Our ardent desire is to assist you as parents and other family members as you pursue this highest of high priorities.

Deuteronomy 6 follows perfectly after chapter 5 in which Moses repeated the Ten Commandments to remind them to “learn them and be careful to observe them” (Deuteronomy 6:1). And notice God’s passionate plea in verse 29: “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”

Deuteronomy is an awesome sermon in which God places great emphasis on parents—both fathers and mothers—teaching His commandments to their chil-

dren and grandchildren. See Deuteronomy 4:9-10, 40; 11:18-21, 26-28, 32; 12:28-32; 31:12-13; 32:45-47; and all of chapters 5 and 6. Children are like sponges. Childhood is the best time to learn and absorb anything. See Proverbs 22:6.

Exactly how parents use these articles depends on the age of each child and other factors. With a very young child, you can use each article as an outline to help you in explaining each commandment in your own words. When the child is a little older, you can read it word-for-word to the child and add your explanations. With a little older child, you can take turns reading it together and discuss it. With a teenager, you can urge him or her to read it, and hopefully you and your teen will spend some time discussing it. See also “The Rewards of Reading Together” at www.ucg.org/the-good-news/the-rewards-of-reading-together.

Memorizing scriptures is highly valuable for adults and children! See “Your Word I Have Hidden in My Heart” at www.ucg.org/beyond-today/your-word-i-have-hidden-in-my-heart. And family prayer is priceless for several reasons including the reinforcing of family Bible study. See “Teach Your Children How to Pray” at www.ucg.org/the-good-news/teach-your-children-how-to-pray.

Also, you may reference the Family Study Guides featured on the members’ site. These Family Study Guides just recently went through the Ten Commandments and can help further your discussions with your children. You can access the Family Study Guides here: www.ucg.org/members/family-study-guides.

Of course, we hope that all of our *United News* subscribers will want to read the articles to better comprehend, contemplate, cherish and commit to God’s holy commandments.

God says, “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10). God’s plan is to rely on parents to help engrave those laws on the hearts of their children. **UN**

Make Time for a Song

■ ...but just when I feel like I can’t breathe, I take time to sing!

by Tina Cason

I don’t know about you, but lately, the days are getting busier and busier. There is always so much to do, and so much that still needs to be done. In my day I’m busy nonstop from the time my feet hit the floor until I crash at the end of a late night. A whole week can fly by at the blink of an eye. This leaves me feeling drained and frazzled. But just when I feel like I can’t breathe, I take time to sing!

Sing? How can a song help me cope with the stresses of life? Well, when it’s a song for God, it helps to humble me and see that all of this “stuff” is just “stuff” and not worth letting it get to me. I have an

amazing, glorious Father who loves me, and nothing is more important than Him and Jesus Christ, and being a part of the family of God forever.

Singing to God: It’s Not Just for Sabbath

I’m sure most of us sing hymns to God on the Sabbath, but that can be robotic if we are not careful. God our Father would love to hear us sing to Him daily, with heartfelt praise. Do you think you can’t sing? Everyone can sing! God made you; He gave you a voice so you could sing and praise him. He makes no mistakes; your voice is perfect, just the way He made it to be. Does a parent of a little child tell the child “only sing to me if

Please see page 13



God gave us the gift of music and it’s there for us to praise Him.

Photo by Gabriel Gurrula/Unsplash

Visit to Nigeria and Ghana

by Paul Moody

On Monday, March 26, I embarked on a two-week trip to the West African countries of Nigeria and Ghana. The purpose was to spend the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread with the brethren throughout the region and to meet with Church leadership to discuss matters relevant to the function of the church in those areas.

The first stop on my journey was Lagos, Nigeria. With over 21 million people, Lagos is the most populous city on the African continent. Amidst all that buzz of activity, I found a faithful group of God's people preparing to keep His Holy Days. There were 44 of us gathered together to commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ through the observance of the Passover. It was an especially encouraging time, as there were two baptisms which also took place that same day.

While in Lagos I stayed at the home of Oludare Akinbo. He, along with his wife Tohung and their three children, have grown to be close friends. It was good to spend time with them and to catch up with the goings on of the three UCG congregations in Nigeria.

From Lagos, my travels took me 200 miles east to Benin City. Once there, I was

welcomed to the church hall for the Night to Be Much Observed meal with the brethren. It was a pleasant evening of spicy food and lively fellowship as we remembered God's great deliverance of His people, Israel, and considered how great of a spiritual deliverance we have received in our lives as well. I remained with the Benin City brethren through the observance of the First Day of Unleavened Bread. We spent the whole day together with worship services, a potluck meal and a leadership club meeting that evening.

Upon returning to Lagos, I departed Nigeria and flew to Accra, Ghana. There I met up with Henry Aikins, church office manager, and David Messelebe, pastor of the Accra congregation. We discussed planning for the upcoming youth camp and Feast of Tabernacles.

On April 4, Henry Aikins and I drove two hours west of Accra to the coastal region of Winneba. Winneba is a native name that means "windy bay." There we met with pastor Benjamin Agyapong and a number of the leaders from three outlying congregations, Winneba, Agona and Kwanyako. We used the opportunity to conduct a leadership workshop focusing on Christ-like servant leadership principles.

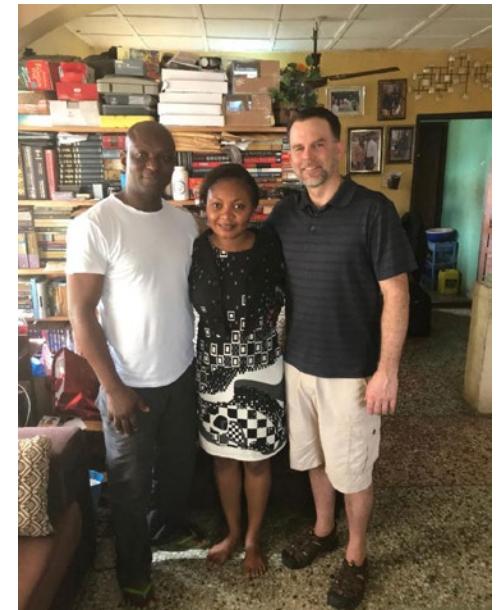


Top: Congregation in Accra, Ghana.

Bottom: Paul Moody and Oludare Akinbo with newly baptized member Eunice Oguntayo.

Visits on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread were split between the Winneba and Kwanyako congregations. Henry Aikins and I then returned to Accra for the weekly Sabbath. The trip concluded with a leadership workshop in Accra on Sunday.

When traveling through West Africa, one can not help but notice the friendly smiles and welcoming nature of the brethren who live there. They are very happy to receive visitors and greatly appreciate all those who would take the time to come see them. It was a great blessing to share God's Holy Days together. **UN**



Visits to Congregations of Cúcuta and Montería

by David & Cathy Salek

The Colombian cities of Cúcuta and Montería share several similarities despite their opposite geographical locations. The two cities are more than 500 miles apart. Cúcuta is in northeastern Colombia and borders Venezuela. Montería is in the northwest and it is closer to Panama. Both have an average temperature of 91 degrees, and we found that same warmth in our brethren in these two congregations.

My wife Cathy and I had not visited our family in Colombia since the Feast of Tabernacles in 2014 in Cartagena. We thank God that He allowed a trip there to become a reality for us. The initial idea was to visit our relatives in Bogotá and Montería, but once the plans were taking shape, we decided to lengthen the visit and accept the kind and reiterated invitations that the Martinez family from the Cúcuta congregation had extended to us for almost two years.

On Thursday, Feb. 8, we arrived in Cúcuta. An improvised quartet of Church brethren performing *vallenato* music gave us a warm and fun welcome.

The next day we enjoyed a ride with some of the brethren to a nearby town, which included a swimming pool, "bowling" games, and we ate delicious chicken sancocho (soup with green plantain, yuca, potato and corn) prepared by some of the sisters.

Sabbath was pleasant, since we were able to meet the whole congregation. There are 29 people, with nine baptized members, who came to praise God and learn from His Word in the usual White Room of the hotel Agora. We also stayed there. Services started with a translated recent *Beyond Today* program. Then we watched the video I brought with greetings from most of our brethren who work at the home office, including the president, two of the *BT* presenters, the managers and heads of departments and, of course Jelly, who stole the hearts of both children and adults.

Everyone was attentive and enjoyed the video knowing the people a little better who carry out the great work that God is performing in His Church. There were murmurs of joy at recognizing some of the brethren who have visited Colombia during previous Feasts. A split sermon was given by Oscar Sierra of the Santa Rosa del Sur congregation, who, along with his wife Marelvis, was visiting the brethren in Cúcuta. After services we enjoyed delicious fruits and richly decorated cheeses, which complemented the aromatic Colombian coffee provided by the brethren. In the midst of the camaraderie, talk, food, smiles and photographs, the love between the brethren was evident.

The hospitality and love from our brethren was evident by the invitations to



Congregation in Cúcuta, Colombia.

share meals with them. We were able to visit their homes, chat, listen to their comments, and know the spiritual, physical and economic challenges they face. Due to the uncontrolled influx of Venezuelans displaced by a terrible situation, the economic and civil situation of Cúcuta has elevated the problems of the city.

After four days in Cúcuta, we flew to Montería, where we enjoyed the company and love of family and brethren. Eight out of eleven people who were present for Sabbath services are part of my family; four of them were baptized members. Although five of brethren have visited the home office in Cincinnati, everyone was excited to receive the greetings from our brethren

through the video. My dad, Abraham Salek, presented the main message that day. After services, we enjoyed delicious snacks and the smooth Colombian coffee.

The rich culinary attentions was a memorable part of our seven days there. We were able to taste several typical dishes of the Sinu river region.

Do you want to know more about Colombia? Do you want to enjoy the love, hospitality, food and the Colombian landscape? Consider visiting our Colombian brethren during the next Feast of Tabernacles. I am sure that you will enjoy an unforgettable Feast with the wonderful brethren of Colombia! **UN**

Announcements



Avik Lane Knudson

Jan. 25, 2018



Lilaina Elizabeth Britt

March 12, 2018



Gary & Freda Hall

50th Wedding Anniversary



Oral E. Garvin

March 19, 1930-Feb. 12, 2018

Births

Avik Lane Knudson

Rheo and Courtney Knudson, of the Phoenix, Arizona, congregation, are thrilled to announce the birth of their second child, Avik Lane Knudson. He was born at home on Thursday, Jan. 25, at 11:30 a.m. and weighed 6 lbs., 14 oz., and was 20 in. long. Mom, Dad, big sister Kaia, and the whole extended family adore the new little cutie!



Dorothy (Dot) Lee Kearns Hill

June 27, 1928-March 22, 2018



Roger E. Kohler, Sr.

Aug. 27, 1937-March 21, 2018



Jolie Moskel

April 2, 1950-Jan. 27, 2018

Lilaina Elizabeth Britt

Steven and Danielle Britt are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Lilaina Elizabeth Britt, on March 12, 2018, at 11:42 p.m. She weighed 5 lbs., 9 oz. and measured 19 in. long. Her parents express their thanks to God for this miraculous blessing of life and the incredible joy and love that she has already filled them with.

all because of their courage and love for people both in and out of the Church. We hope they will have many more years of service to God and people in the years ahead, as well as a further blessed life of love together in the years ahead.

and friends often called on him to share his biblical knowledge and understanding. He was a pillar who will be greatly missed.

He retired in 1992 from the Hydro-Dyne Company in Massillon, Ohio, where he worked as a structural steel fabricator. He served in the U.S. Army from 1947 until he was discharged in 1953. He served his community as a Hospice volunteer. Oral was a skilled woodworker and beekeeper. He cultivated large vegetable gardens and orchards. He raised grapes and made wine. He also loved to travel with his wife and family. He possessed the abilities to repair virtually anything. He was the go-to guy for all his family and was quick to help build, fix and engineer any project they needed.

Dot's early life was not an easy one. At a very young age she was given up for adoption. However, she never dwelled upon, or complained about, the sorrows and hardships of the past. Dot grew up, married and had three children, plus grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Dot worked as a nurse, which was a good fit for her because she loved taking care of others.

Dorothy was a longtime member of the Church of God, beginning in 1966 until her health began to fail. To her brothers and sisters in Christ she was of course known as Dot. Her favorite Bible verse was: "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). She also loved singing her favorite song in the Church hymnal, "God Will See Us Through."

Anniversaries

Gary and Freda Hall

On Sept. 2, 2017, the Paducah, Kentucky, church celebrated Gary and Freda Hall's 50th wedding anniversary with an afternoon service, potluck and evening of remembrance. There were 35 in attendance for the special occasion, including friends and visitors from as far away as Florida and Arkansas. That evening even more came to share in the occasion giving testimony to the example of the Halls' marriage and those they have helped down through the years. Gary serves as a deacon, and the life they have shared with others has been an example to us

Obitaries

Oral E. Garvin

Oral E. Garvin, age 87, of Sherrodsville, Ohio, died unexpectedly in his sleep early Monday morning, Feb. 12, 2018. He was born March 19, 1930, in Yorkrun, Pennsylvania, and was the son of the late Oscar Evert and Pearl House Garvin. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two brothers.

He is survived by his wife Carol A. (Loudin) Garvin whom he married on March 26, 1976. Also surviving are two sons, Timothy Garvin of Olive Hill, Kentucky, and Sid (Kellie) Loudin of Barnesville, Ohio; a daughter, Sherry (Scott) Loudin Thouvenin of Canton, Ohio; seven grandchildren, Brandon (Jessica) Loudin, Amanda Hession, Natalie and Abigail Thouvenin, Keisha, Emily and Phillip Garvin; and eight great-grandchildren as well as two sisters.

He was a long-time active and faithful member of God's Church, attending the Cambridge, Ohio, congregation of UCG. He was baptized March 1, 1969, in Akron, Ohio. He diligently studied God's Word, he knew what he believed and why he believed it, and he was an example of strength in the truth for all who knew him. His focus was on the Kingdom of God. His family

Dorothy (Dot) Lee Kearns Hill

Dorothy (Dot) Lee Kearns Hill, age 89, of Asheboro, North Carolina, died Thursday, March 22, 2018, at the Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro, North Carolina.

Dot was born June 27, 1928, in Mecklenburg County. Dot was the daughter of the late Robert and Willie Kearns. In addition to her parents, Dot Hill was preceded in death by her husband, Vernon Hill; sister Juanita Wood; brother Sherman Kearns; grandson John Isaacs; and son-in-law Kenny Parker.

Dot spent many years suffering the devastating effects of Alzheimer's disease—a burden which she, her family and friends bore and which is now lifted. Dot is remembered by all as a very friendly woman with a big smile for everyone she came in contact with.

Roger E. Kohler, Sr.

Roger Kohler, Sr., died peacefully on Wednesday, March 21, 2018, from complications of Alzheimer's. He was 80 years of age, being born on Aug. 27, 1937. He was the beloved husband of Bonnie (George). He was also the dear father of Roger, Jr. (Trina), Randy (Rebecca), Georgette Retzer and Kari (Joe) Storm. Roger was loved by his six grandchildren, other relatives, and loved by many, many friends. He never met a stranger—every-one was a friend he just hadn't met yet.

Roger spent his life as a mechanic and loved to help all he knew. He was part of the volunteer crew that helped to build the Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, Feast

Please see page 6

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



Dick Stitt

Jan. 16, 1929-Jan. 6, 2018

continued from page 7

site in the 1970s. He served in the local congregations wherever he could until his health prevented it.

Roger now sleeps in the grave awaiting the call from Christ to rise in his spirit body. We look forward to seeing him at the resurrection!

Contributions in lieu of flowers can be sent to Roger Kohler Sr. Honorary Fund of the Alzheimer's fund at the website: www.alz.org.

Jolie Moskel

Jolie Moskel, of Lexington, South Carolina, passed away Saturday, Jan. 27, 2018, at her residence after a courageous battle with cancer. She was born on April 2, 1950, in Cleveland, Ohio. Jolie was a graduate of Delaware Hayes High School, Delaware, Ohio, in 1968 and from Ambassador College, Pasadena, California, in 1973, earning a degree in education.

She served in the early years of the Church alongside her husband, John, who pastored congregations in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Buffalo, New York, and Asheville, North Carolina. After raising her family and homeschooling her children for a short while, Jolie returned to school, attending Columbia International University, obtaining her master's degree in counseling in 2001. In 2002, Jolie opened up a counseling practice in Columbia, South Carolina, where she served as a therapist specializing in family counseling with an emphasis on veterans and their families.

Jolie was kind-hearted, passionate, intelligent, inquisitive and full of life, especially

when playing with her grandchildren. Jolie was an accomplished pianist and painter, and she enjoyed making jewelry and decorating her home. She enjoyed being outdoors and spending time in her garden. Jolie was well read and was constantly challenging herself to learn. She was dedicated to her family and leaves behind three sons: Jesse, Ben and Daniel and their families. She was preceded in death by her daughter Molly Rebecca Moskel. A memorial service was conducted on Feb. 18 by Dan Preston, pastor of the Columbia, South Carolina, congregation.

Dick Stitt

Medford, Oregon, elder Dick Stitt died peacefully at 1:30 p.m. Jan. 6 in his Medford home with his son Richard at his side. He had never fully recovered after suffering two strokes five weeks earlier. His death occurred at the precise time that the Medford church service was beginning, during which the song leader had chosen and was leading Mr. Stitt's favorite songs from our hymnal.

Dick Stitt was born in 1929 in Mans-

field, Ohio, and He lived a full life of 88 years and is survived by his son Richard A. Stitt, daughter Sue A. Jones, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife Rita Stitt and son David I. Stitt.

Dick was a very private person whose focus was on serving others. He spent the last 40 years of his life working as vice president at Larson's Home Furnishings. He was ordained as an elder in 1983 and served faithfully and lovingly in the Medford congregation of the United Church of God. He especially enjoyed being able to offer help to needy members.

Dick shared 68 years of of his 88 year life with his loving wife Rita. They were 16 and 17 years old when they married in 1946. Understandably, life became a real challenge for Dick after Rita's death three years ago, including the health issues that he suffered from, albeit in silence. So for Dick, death was not untimely but rather an end to his suffering. He entered into rest on the Sabbath and will be reunited with his beloved Rita in the next split second of his consciousness.

Orlando Church Has "Evening at the Fair" Social



Bible heroes and superheroes! Kids of all ages enjoyed an "Evening at the Fair" social after services on March 3. After sunset, the Orlando church hall was transformed into a county-fair type setting, complete with carnival booths with games, face painting, prizes and a cake walk. The children were invited to dress up in their favorite superhero or Bible "hero" costumes.

The special Sabbath began with a "Test Your Bible Knowledge" interactive Bible study, followed by Sabbath services, then a potluck. After sunset, very creative booths and backdrops were set up, and the evening began. Children (young and old) tried their hand at seven different booths, including a ball toss to earn points to save Queen Esther, fishing Jonah out of the whale, the David/Goliath slingshot game, an "identify that Bible character" game and other fun activities.



Prizes that were awarded were Bible "trading cards" that featured key facts about famous men and women from the Bible. The cards were created and laminated by a local church member.

The evening ended with a cake walk, with many of the congregation heading home with delicious treats.

Tammy Johnson

Local Church UPDATES

Northern Arizona Winter Social

On March 10, 2018, the Northern Arizona congregation hosted a winter social in Cottonwood, Arizona. Local brethren were joined by others from the Phoenix metro area and Show Low, and had one visitor from Richland, Washington. Included in the festivities were a potluck meal, fun show and a professional karaoke session. Attendees were encouraged to dress in costume after services—a costume that expressed their dream job. The most creative costumes were chosen, and the winners were James and Marlow Koller. Marlow dressed as a baker and James as a millennial king. They also dressed both of their service dogs: one as Darth Vader and one as Superman. Their prize? A delectable home-baked dessert made by James Loiselle. Second place went to Stephen Kennedy who came as a professional mattress tester, dressed in bed and all.

After the meal, the fun show began. Emceed by Joe Camerata—using his best Italian accent—aka the famous "Giuseppe Verdi." We were a small group of acts, but it was an action-packed evening just the same. We laughed at the joke telling of our young stand-up comedians Karson Koeller and Anna Frayer, and we enjoyed a beautiful Israeli dance performed by Laura Meidinger, her son Harrison, Sigi Calenius and Becky Smyda. We chuckled



through a humorous skit called "Raising Kids Bob's Way" with the Ferrier family, and laughed again at a skit called "Safety Sue and Wally in the Amazon" presented by Lorelei Nettles and her son Roger. We were also amused by two readings given by Sylvia Kennedy and Gerald Hoyer, and heard some catchy tunes from Fred Weed.

After the show, talented singer Karla Bonner hosted the karaoke portion of the evening. She started things out by showing us how it was done, though few of us compared to her abilities. Several of us tried our karaoke skills, but quickly learned that if you have not done karaoke before, it is a bit more difficult to follow than one would think. But it was fun to try, and everyone enjoyed the experience. A full evening of fellowship, laughter and fun was had by all!

Lorelei Nettles

Cincinnati Young Adult Weekend

The theme for the this year's Living 1835 Young Adult weekend in Cincinnati was "Desire What the Lord Requires," taken from Micah 6:8.

Friday night there were challenge questions presented by Troy Phelps. Afterwards, we were led in songs by a small group and then had delicious desserts brought in by volunteers!

The morning seminars started at 10:30. Brett Diggins spoke on doing justly and explained what justice is. He spoke on how sometimes sacrifice is required to do what is right and pointed out how we can not truly do justly without knowing God's law. Matt and Kristin Hernandez spoke on loving mercy and gave personal examples. A key point from their presentation was that sometimes mercy is all it takes for someone to change. Corbin Rose spoke on walking humbly with God. He explained what humility is. Humility is a paradox, not pair of ducks, between believing we are everything and believing we are nothing.

Before services we had lunch and fellowship. There were two split sermons at services. The first one was given by Scott Delamater, an elder serving in the Cincinnati East congregation. Mr. Delamater focused on the verbs from Micah 6:8—the actions God

wants us to do. Kevin Kenady from Bowling Green, Kentucky, gave the second split sermon and used the analogy of how life is like a canoe trip. Throughout the sermon he gave stories about canoe trips and in the end pointed everyone back to Micah 6:8.

After services we had time to fellowship and eat dinner before the evening's activities. At 8 p.m. we started playing Fear Factor, with Jason Nitzberg being the host. He, with the help of Julie Waterhouse and Emily Gunn, came up with a number of challenges for the contestants. Some people ate grasshoppers! Others ate baby food flavored like chicken noodle soup or macaroni and cheese. We also had six three-inch, hissing cockroaches that people had to pick up and move from one container to another. After Fear Factor we had card games, board games and corn hole.

Sunday morning we broke up into groups and did service projects in the community or helped serve members from the Cincinnati East congregation.

The closing seminar was presented by Jamie and Kayleen Schreiber. They presented a short film titled *Paper*, talking about the job requirements of being a Christian, taken from Micah 6:8 (you can find the video at www.ucg.org/ucg-films/



Top: Young adults at the Ronald McDonald House after they volunteered their time to make homemade slime with the kids staying there.

Bottom: Young adults dancing for people in a nursing home.

ucg-short-film/paper). After the film they asked questions to help us reflect on the weekend and asked us to come up with some short-term and long-term goals that we want to accomplish. Afterwards, Steve Myers gave closing comments about the weekend and talked about putting

everything we learned from the weekend into action.

It was a fast-paced, exciting weekend! This Living 1835 young adult weekend was one for the books! "Desire what the Lord requires!"

Cody Martin

Chicago Young Adult Weekend

The Chicago congregation hosted a young adult weekend in February where 45 joined together and deepened their bonds as Christian brothers and sisters.

Bill Bradford kicked off the weekend on Friday with a Bible study on "Being an Instrument of Value Set Apart for God's Use." On Saturday John May's Bible study focused on "Abraham and the Young Adult—How Do They Relate?" Randy D'Alessandro brought the messages together with his Sabbath sermon, "The Attributes of a Sanctified Young Person." On Sunday, over a brunch in the city, Bob Fahey spoke on creating a personal plan to be an instru-

ment of honor and facilitated the group to form an assessment that can be a guide in becoming useful for every good work.

A fun-filled evening on Saturday included a pizza-making challenge for everyone to display their creative talents, uniqueness and strengths with the final awards being presented by the Italian judges. Downtown Sunday adventures included brunch and a city scavenger hunt. The weekend was filled with spiritual messages, inspiration and tremendous relationship building.

Please stay tuned for our next Chicago young adult weekend.

Andrea Pacelli



Left: Young adults create their own pizza for a fun way to display their talents and enjoy fellowship.

Right: Young adults downtown Chicago on their scavenger hunt.

Treat Baskets for Houston, Texas, Seniors

The Houston, Texas, congregation completed one of our most beloved traditions—unleavened treat baskets for our seniors!

Kids, teens and young adults volunteer to get paired up with a senior individual or couple and make a treat basket for them. These are delivered at the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It's fun for young and old as it's a way to get to know others in the congregation better. The seniors love all the tasty treats in their baskets! This year we had 65 participants!

Erinn Webber



Everyone who was involved in making and receiving the unleavened bread baskets.

Women's Enrichment Weekend in Southwest Missouri



At the seventh annual Southwest Missouri Women's Enrichment Weekend, 45 women explored what it means to be a Proverbs 31 Woman (theme of the weekend) on Feb. 16-18.

Single, married, young or older, messages delved into how every woman can strive toward the character traits of the Proverbs 31 woman.

Keynote speaker Debbie McNeely took it a step further in her presentation and talked about how we can be a Proverbs 31 Church, caring for each and every member as part of the family of God and being a blanket of calm over not only our physical families but our Church as well. It was a theme carried throughout the entire course of the weekend.

Other speakers delved into the various ways in which women can be more like a Proverbs 31 woman, some giving personal examples of their struggle and journey in that pursuit.

This weekend served as not only several ladies' first visit to the Southwest Missouri Women's Enrichment Weekend, but also their first ever Women's Enrichment Weekend in general.

It seemed the general consensus was that the weekend provided a setting to not only learn about a Proverbs 31 woman but to put it into practice as well.

Women attendees, as well as women who couldn't actually make it to the weekend, donated two cars full of much-needed items to Freedom's Rest, a local domestic abuse shelter for women and children.

The donation drive helped each indi-

vidual fulfill Proverbs 31:20: "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hand to the needy."

The annual silent auction, consisting of the many handmade items and gifts each woman provided, raised \$1,500 to help fund a Women's Enrichment Weekend for our sisters in Zambia.

Roundtable discussions got everyone involved in digging deeper into understanding just what a Proverbs 31 woman looks like and how to be more like this precious scriptural example of what a godly woman is like.

Throughout the weekend great meals were shared—meals provided by several different congregations—laughs and tears let out, and sisterly bonds grew around the biblically-centered theme of Proverbs 31.

One guest commented in her survey that the weekend aided her in future study and growth.

"[I'm] more spiritually aware, more connected to several sisters in Christ, and aware of areas for additional growth," she wrote. "I have taken away several resources for study and reflection."

While the women enjoyed the weekend festivities in growing closer as sisters, the men shared an evening at a local member's farm, fellowshipping around a campfire and having a warm meal. The following day they enjoyed a late-morning brunch before both men and women wrapped up the weekend with a warm hug before departing back to each of their respective homes.

Amber Duran

Updates from Ministerial and Member Services

There have been several changes to the oversight of international areas over the past year. John Elliott has officially passed his role as senior pastor for East Africa to Monte Knudson, an elder who serves the congregation in Phoenix, Arizona. Mark Mickelson passed English-speaking West Africa to Paul Moody, pastor of congregations in Washington and Idaho. Earl

Roemer has passed the Philippines to David Dobson, pastor of congregations in Alabama and Tennessee.

On Feb. 27, 2018, two Canadian elders were recredentialed by the United Church of God. Ken Parker and Bob Trotter serve in the Barrie, Ontario, congregation.

Chris Rowland

Women's Enrichment Weekend in Canby, Oregon



Approximately 98 women from Oregon, Washington, California, Ohio, Kentucky and Texas attended the Women's Enrichment Weekend in Canby, Oregon, on Feb. 23-25. The theme of the weekend was "the gift of forbearance." Presentations, sermons on the Sabbath and group discussions/projects centered on forbearance.

Ladies shared their personal experiences in which they learned to exercise forbearance including: caring for children/relatives with disabilities, bearing with a mate who is not called, having forbearance as a mom or a teacher, forbearance

and love for other ladies in the Church with various backgrounds and personalities, forbearance of an accident, loss of a loved one and health problems.

The ladies enjoyed a silent auction that was anything but silent. There was a lot of happy chatter as ladies enjoyed looking at items for sale and good-naturedly trying to outbid one another. The amount raised was \$1,370 and was given to the Good Works Disaster Relief Fund. The Women's Enrichment Weekend was an enjoyable, unifying and spiritually-uplifting weekend.

Carmella Weis

Nashville Fundraiser for Camp Nacome



Variety and carnival fun characterized two evenings in the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation recently, where the brethren came together for entertainment to raise funds to support Camp Nacome. The camp is subsidized by home office funds, but additional local funds help buy new equipment, improve the campground, and meet other necessary needs.

On the first evening, world-famous variety show host Lynn Harrington* had the pleasure of introducing a *variety* of acts to rapturous, adoring and unending applause. From musical acts by preteens visiting from Bowling Green, Kentucky, to comedy sketches, to a performance by the king himself, Elvis Presley, the night was punctuated by regular breaks for guests to bid on a silent auction of a *variety* of goods donated by themselves.

The second evening had a potpourri of carnival activities for participants to enjoy after a group meal together. The climax of the evening was the now-permanent, forever-after-repeating annual tradition of a pie in the face for whomever of the three local humble servants received the most monetary donations in their favor for receiving the pie. Last year's winner, Tim Franke, escaped his toothsome moment on account of "catching a cold." He handily "won" again this year, and was pied twice. In solidarity with him—and for added entertainment value—the other two contenders, Gary Petty and Matt Puckett, took a pie in their respective faces, too. For the good of the children.

*World fame and the actual name of the host are a matter of contention to some.

Mitchell Moss

America: The Time Is Now!

Beyond Today Live Series Concludes

by Peter Eddington

During the first week of March the United Church of God held four more *Beyond Today Live* events in Southern California. As in the past, they carried the title *America: The Time Is Now!* The 80-minute presentations were delivered by Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty.

Campaigns were held in Los Angeles, San Diego, Ontario and Garden Grove. A total of 290 people attended, of which 52 were new guests. The following Sabbaths we were pleased to have some of them return for services.

We have now held 22 events (including the first *Why Were You Born?* campaign in Cincinnati). The total attendance for all 22 has been 2,011 people with 705 guests. These guests are readers and viewers who most likely would not have visited with us otherwise, and some are now attending with us on a regular basis and a few have been baptized.

There were 52,054 invitation letters



Gary Petty speaking at the BT live event in Ontario, California.

sent out three times to our *Beyond Today* readers in these 22 cities. We count the program as a success. Thousands of readers were reached with the gospel message and invited to see us. In addition, the local congregations were found to be very excited about the program, and it gave them a closer connection to the home office and the media team.

This 22nd event concludes our current personal appearance series as we continue to evaluate the most effective methods to reach our nation and the world with the gospel of the Kingdom of God. **UN**



Darris McNeely speaking in Garden Grove, California.

Photos by Peter Eddington



Upcoming Events

Troyer's Hollow Campout Weekend



Last year's group at the Troyer's Hollow weekend.

Mark your calendars for the Troyer's Hollow campout and young adult weekend for June 22-24! Nestled in the scenic hills of Amish Country near Charm, Ohio, Troyer's Hollow in the Doughty Valley has a long tradition within the local community and the Church as a relaxing retreat.

The North Canton and Cambridge congregations sponsor the weekend, that includes camping and Sabbath services. We have the entire property for two days, and one side on Sunday. This year we are blessed to have reserved a weekend which does not conflict with either Father's Day or Camp Cotubic.

Activities planned: Friday evening Bible study, Sabbath services, an afternoon potluck, young adult seminars, a nature walk, kettle popcorn over the fire, evening group

music for those who wish to bring instruments, and many campfire discussions. This year's theme for the young adult seminars is "How True Christians Relate to Authority—in the World and the Church."

Fees to cover property usage:

Campers: \$15 per camper / \$20 per family per night

Non-campers: \$5 per person / \$10 per family per day

Nearby hotels are available for those who do not wish to camp. Alcohol is prohibited on the property.

Details will be posted on the North Canton website. If you wish to come, or just have questions, please contact Mary Miller (mary@crawfordmfg.com, 330-204-6972) or Amanda Stiver (anstiver@gmail.com).

Mary Miller

Feast Focused Education Seminars to Bring Awareness and Encouragement

by Scott Hoefker, Coordinator of Focused Education

We are all busily making plans and preparations for the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. In the Focused Education arena we have also been making preparations for another series of educational seminars for the Feast this year. Over the last few years, more than 2,500 people have attended the various seminars offered at different Feast sites domestically and internationally. This year we will be offering some of the same presentations in different Feast sites, as well as new seminars with new presenters.

Here are a sampling of the locations with their presenters and topics: Gary Antion and Samantha Cook will give a presentation in Steamboat Springs, Colorado:

"Helping the Hurting: Translating Good Intentions Into Meaningful Actions!" Scott Hoefker plans to again bring a seminar on the topic of "Principles of a Sound Mind From God's Word" in Cartagena, Colombia. In Anchorage, Alaska, Randy and Kay Schreiber will bring a sampler of their presentation, "Marriage and Relationship Enrichment." Ben Light, in Glacier Country, Montana, will present "Living With Alcoholism."

We have planned for several educational presentations at United States sites and at least one international site. If you will be attending any of those sites, we hope you will make plans to attend these seminars and become more knowledgeable and inspired about some of the key issues of living an abundant life. Happy Feast planning to you all! **UN**

Blankets for Love

United Church of God in Flint, Michigan, partnered with Children's Miracle Network at Hurley Medical Center with a service project called Blankets for Love.

We put together fleece blankets to be given to children admitted to the hospital in dire circumstances. Over a month's time, our congregation had two preparation days, which included measuring and cutting beautiful designed fabric for the main event. Our project was a success! With donations and volunteers from the local congregation and the Davison Odd Fellows, we exceeded our goal of 25 blankets.

In total, Hurley Pediatric gladly accepted 39 blankets to express love and bring



Photos by Michael Rose

hope to children 0-18 years of age. In fact, it helped them restock the nearly empty cabinet and immediately gift to a few children that day! A worthwhile cause, bringing God's people together to love one another and be a light to the world.

Michelle Stimson

Honoring Retiring Ministry

Leroy and Laura Cole

Leroy and Laura Cole retired from the full time ministry on Dec. 30, 2017. For the past seven years the Coles served the brethren in the Bethlehem, York and Lewistown, Pennsylvania, congregations. They were honored for their over-50 years of service to God's people during a reception between services on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread on April 6, 2018.

Leroy and Laura Cole both attended Ambassador College, and upon Leroy's graduation in 1962 they moved to Australia and lived for the next 12 years. Mr. Cole was ordained by his two older brothers, Raymond and Wayne Cole, during the Feast in Blackheath, Australia. Together they served congregations in Ballarat, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. Both Leroy and Laura fell in love with this very special and unique country and God's people who live there.

In 1974 they moved back to Pasadena, California, where Mr. Cole spent a year taking post-graduate level classes. After this time they continued their service to God's people pastoring congregations in California, Montana, Colorado, Arizona and Pennsylvania.

Longtime friends and family shared these sentiments.

Roy and Norma Holladay: We have known Lee Cole since 1959 and Laura since 1960. We shared several years in Ambassador College with Lee and Laura and grew to love them dearly. Lee has always been a kind and thoughtful person. Laura has always been a very outgoing and loving. They made a perfect team when hired to serve in the ministry. They have always been known as a gentle and

thoughtful couple. They have set a stellar example everywhere they have served. We have counted them as dear friends over the years. We regret not being able to spend as much time with them. We never pastored near each other.

Their decades of full-time experience and faithful service will be missed. They are both known for their love for God and His Church.

Fred Kellers: Leroy and Laura Cole may be retiring but their service to God and His people will continue right on. They are both servants and they both love to serve. Wherever they decide to settle will be a blessed area indeed. May God bless them with strength to carry on His work.

Karen Walker: Leroy and Jean (Laura) are not just part of my family but wonderful loving people that have served God's people for so many wonderful years. I have always enjoyed their positive and "get it done" attitude they bring to any situation. They truly have servants' hearts!

Bill and Jenny Bradford: Jenny first met Leroy and Jeanie (Laura) Cole in March 1963 when she was called into the Church in Sydney, Australia. Jen worked in the Church office with Leroy.

Leroy served in various jobs in the Church there and was always friendly, kind and helpful and was known for his warm smile, and Jeanie was always enthusiastic to see you again.

When I (Jenny) came back to Australia with Bill in 1968 to serve in the ministry, we renewed our friendship with Leroy and Jeanie. Leroy was then pastor in Perth and eventually was transferred back to the U.S. Leroy and Jeanie were always bright and



positive. Their friendship was always very encouraging to us.

Leroy and Jeannie were excellent contributors to the Church in Australia in those early days. To this day, people who were in the Church at that time in Australia ask about Jeannie and Leroy. We wish them well in this new chapter in their retirement.

When reflecting back on their years in the ministry the Coles shared these thoughts:

Leroy Cole: What an amazing journey it has been. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve God and His people these past 52 years. The one thing that is obvious is that the people of God, though different, are the same. Whether in Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia or the United States members with the Spirit of God have the same love and values. God's Spirit truly is a Spirit of unity and oneness.

The greatest lesson we have learned in 52 years of ministry is "treat God's heritage with love and respect and you will receive lots of respect and honor in return." We

must never underestimate the true worth of God's children. God did not call and choose anything or anyone that is worthless.

Laura Cole: God has blessed us to have served His firstfruits in many different parts of the world. It is such a privilege to know the truth and to be a part of His family. Serving His family and becoming a part of their lives fulfills part of the purpose of why we were born. May our light and the light of His people shine brightly in this dark world—may His Kingdom come.

Leroy and Laura Cole have been married for 55 years and have three daughters, all born in Australia (Julie, Lynda and Lauretta), seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Their plans are to move back to Tennessee and build a small home on their 40-acre farm where they can grow a large garden, raise a few chickens and some grass-fed cows. They look forward to continue serving God's people and being part of the Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Nashville, Tennessee, congregations.

Lisa Fenchel

Pentecost

continued from page 1

would ever be the same again: the giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31.

Prior to this time, a select few were given God's Spirit. There are records of individuals throughout the Old Testament who received it, but by and large God dwelt *with* Israel in the tabernacle, or the temple—not within them.

When Christ spoke with His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, He told them throughout John 14, 15, 16 and 17 that He had to go, and that the Father would send a helper, the Holy Spirit—the very essence of God. He told His disciples that He and the Father would make their home with them, would abide in them, describing the drastic change that would take place in those who were to become children of God.

The events proceed as Christ stated they would. He was betrayed, crucified, resur-

rected, and then appeared to His disciples throughout the weeks leading up to the Day of Pentecost. On His final appearance to them, He said, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

In Acts 2, we can read the account of the sending of God's Spirit upon those gathered in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31. We read of the Spirit of God descending like the sound of a mighty wind, as divided tongues of flame rested on each of them. Those who received that Spirit had the ability to speak in the languages of other people and understand one another regardless of their nationality. Some mocked, but others understood what was going on.

Peter, in his now-famous sermon, connected this event to the prophesied pouring out of God's Spirit on mankind from Joel 2, and boldly stated that if those gathered would repent and be baptized, that they too would receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

God no longer only dwelled *with* His

people, He dwelled *in* His people.

For the first time in human history, mankind as a whole, regardless of their nationality, had access to the mind of God, and the understanding of those spiritual things.

Without the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we could not fully understand His plan for us, we could not make sense of our part in it, we could not overcome our sins, and we would not be able to grow in our love for our fellow man. The spirit of man is not capable of making these things happen: God's Holy Spirit is necessary in order to enable us to do them.

Because of our belief, our subsequent repentance and baptism, and our receipt of His Spirit, we have an incredible opportunity to become first fruits of God, to have part in the first resurrection and rule alongside Jesus Christ, serving mankind in the Millennium as a part of the Kingdom of God.

These things are not achieved of our own accord—they are a gift of God and represent an opportunity that He gives to those

He loves; an inheritance that He provides His children who allow themselves to be led by His Holy Spirit within them.

The giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost represents one of the greatest watershed moments in human history. On that day, the course of human history changed forever. God offered mankind the opportunity to be a part of His family; He offered mankind an opportunity to overcome their humanity and to become more like Him as time goes on. That level of change within us is impossible without the transformative power of God's Spirit working in our lives, and changing us at our core as we yield ourselves to it.

Are we yielding ourselves to it? Do we see fruit of that Spirit at work in our lives? Are we stirring it up appropriately?

As the Day of Pentecost approaches, let us consider the importance of this aspect of God's plan and reflect on the work of His Spirit in our lives. **UN**

Examine Yourself

by Kathy Sanny

My place of employment provides us a list of objectives each year that we are required to meet.

Throughout the year we keep our objectives in mind and try to keep a record of how we have met them. Here are some of the objectives that we are evaluated on:

- Was our work turned in on time?
- Was it accurate?
- Did we take care of internal and external customers in a courteous and timely manner?
- Did we help train others around us?
- Were we adaptable in the face of change?

In addition to our required objectives, we also have to set goals for self-improvement. These go above and beyond what is required, but show we are seeking to be a more valuable employee.

Examples of goals may be:

To get training in processes that make us more efficient. This may require seeking out others who are better trained than we are.

Read books on what others have done to become a more effective leader.

Take classes offered to train in public speaking and presentations for meetings.

When the time of year comes around to be evaluated on how well we did, we are each required to write our own evaluation. We must examine ourselves!

Our supervisors will then look over what we have written, and will either agree or give reasons why they feel we were lacking. For example: Maybe I was 100 percent on time with my milestones, but a couple of times something had to be reworked. Perhaps it was a year of many changes in expectations, and my adaptability was less than what was desired. I may have had the goal of gaining expertise in a specific area and did not spend enough time on it or gain much ground.

Sometimes a supervisor will actually rate us higher than we have rated ourselves on a point and say we have done very well.

Each person's pay increase is directly tied to how well they met these objectives and goals. If we only did what was required to meet milestones, we might end up with "needs improvement" and not much of a pay increase. We each must be able to show ways we went above and beyond to prove we are a profitable employee deserving of a higher percentage of pay.

Each year when I go through this evaluation process I determine that my employer will never have any doubt about my value to the company.

This year I started to think of the admonition to examine ourselves prior to Passover and saw parallels to what is required with my company.

In our lives as Christians we also have accomplishments and improvements to make.

Passover time is when we each look back on the past year and evaluate how we measure up to the objectives found in the Bible, and to assess goals we have set for ourselves. Examining ourselves should not be something we do just once in the year, but we should be looking at objectives and goals all year long.

Have we shown ourselves to be a profitable servant?

For example:

- Did we show love and profound respect to our God and King?
- Did we give honor to our parents?
- Did we practice love toward our fellow man?

These three items—love for God, parents, and neighbor—are basic requirements. Do I show "improvement needed," or have I gone above and beyond?

Maybe we worked on some of the harder ones, such as:

- Giving thanks and showing love to God even when things are rough.
- Finding ways to respect a parent who does not meet any of the criteria of a loving parent.
- Forgiveness to those who tres-

Him. We get busy and in a rush, and we forget to slow down and sing. We forget to share our gift, the gift He gave us, with Him. If you take the time each day to offer a song of praise to your Father, it helps bring a peace and calm into your life. It connects you with the Father. It helps make your prayer and bible study time more personal in my opinion.

Where to Start

If it feels strange to you to sing outside of church service, maybe you need a little inspiration.

Our family loves to go outside in God's creation and sing. Take your hymnal outside and sing. This past Feast we were blessed to be by the ocean, and we enjoyed



Photos by Priscilla du Preez/Unsplash

Start preparing now for next year's evaluation and ask God daily for help. Recognize that we are not able to do it all on our own, but we have someone better trained than we are who is more than willing to help.

passed against us.

- Did we set any goals for this past year?
- One goal might be fasting more often to seek God's will in our lives and to draw closer to Him.
- We might set the goal to pursue unqualified love toward our fellow man.
- Daily prayer, Bible study, meditation and thankfulness without fail could be what we set for ourselves.
- Some may set a goal to read all the way through the Bible.

If I sat down and wrote out what I have done over the past year, would I be able to say I have achieved my objectives and my goals? Would my Father in heaven agree?

We need to keep our objectives and goals in mind all year long. We need to be able to look back and see that we have made progress and set our hearts to be even more profitable in the year to come.

All is not lost if we have not lived up to expectations. We are not cast off and rejected. We have a High Priest who knows our frailty and that what we desire to do, we often do not. He knows that in weak times the things we do not want to do, those are the things we do (Romans 7:15).

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us because of His love for us. We now have an opportunity to once again show our love for Him by renewing our commitment and setting our hearts to become like Him.

Start preparing now for next year's evaluation and ask God daily for help. Recognize that we are not able to do it all on our own, but we have someone better trained than we are who is more than willing to help. Get excited about the training opportunities offered to us freely through study aids and articles on this website.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

We must determine now that when the evaluation time comes around next year, we will be able to see our areas of progress with the objectives and goals we met in our Christian work. **UN**

Make Time for a Song

continued from page 5

it's perfect"? Of course not! Parents love hearing those sweet little voices sing. So does our Father. Singing to God daily and not only just on the Sabbath will add so much to your prayer and Bible study time. It will deepen your relationship with your Father. You are singing to Him because you want to. Imagine how pleasing to God that is.

A Song in Your Heart

There is a song in your heart and I believe God put it there. He gave us the gift of music. It's there for us to praise

singing by the water. I am usually brought to tears when I sing outside. I feel so connected to God when I sing in the presence of His creation.

We can be inspired when we read over Psalms.

There are so many beautiful verses about singing to God and offering Him thanks and praise. Here are a couple of my favorites.

"Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and praise is becoming" (Psalm 147:1).

"Awake, my glory! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations" (Psalm 57:8-9).

Now there are several Bible-based, contemporary Christian songs that honor and glorify our Father. Our family loves finding good ones to sing along to, especially on Friday nights. We encourage the little ones to get out their instruments and play and sing along. It brings such joy to our family.

A Daily Offering

I would suggest that singing to God should be a daily offering. Like prayer and Bible study, it should come from your heart. God doesn't want a robotic offering that you do just because it's procedure. He wants your sincere love and praise. So when the stress of this life begins to bring you down, don't forget to make time for a song. **UN**

Peace Be With You

continued from page 3

Peace That Surpasses All Understanding

The real peace Christ offers is genuine and “surpasses all understanding.” Most people today don’t understand peace from a godly perspective. All we know is the negative aspect of peace—which is merely the absence of trouble. Some people say that peace is the absence of war!

But the biblical concept of peace does not focus on the absence of war or strife or trouble. Biblical peace is unrelated to the circumstances of life. One can be in the midst of great trials, yet still have godly peace.

Paul said he could be content in any circumstance. He showed us that peace even when in jail or being stoned. He remained confident in God’s direction over his life. He wrote: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

We need that peace. It may not make sense that such peace could exist in the midst of all the problems and troubles we go through. But this is divine, supernatural peace—a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be figured out on a carnal level.

Christ offers us, on an individual basis, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to embrace peace today—rather than waiting for the time when the Kingdom of God comes to this earth. As the first-fruits—the first to be called and chosen—we can have that peace.

Jesus’ disciples came to expect peace from Him, but can you imagine how it must have confounded His enemies? Those who didn’t know Him became irate. When Jesus appeared before Pilate, He was so calm, so sure and so at peace that Pilate became greatly irritated. He was furious that Jesus was standing before him without fear. Pilate said: “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You” (John 19:10)?

Then in perfect assurance Jesus replied, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). This is the kind of peace we need in this life. That’s the peace we receive through the power of the Holy Spirit. The source of peace is Christ!

In fact, Christ is seen throughout the New Testament as the giver of peace, and He is always with us all: “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

Finding the Peace Christ Promised

How do we find the peace Christ prom-

ised—the peace that overcomes our natural frustrations and troubling anxieties?

We find a key to discovering true peace in Psalms 119:165: “Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.”

Loving God’s law clearly implies obedience to it. We have to do something. We have to do His commandments. In contrast, “‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked’” (Isaiah 57:21). True peace comes as a result of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and then Him living in us as we follow His commandments.

Speaking of Christ’s sacrifice and peace, the apostle Paul wrote: “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:19-20).

A sinful person has to be reconciled to God, and has to continue in the faith. We have to keep His commandments. The blood of Christ allows us to come before God and to be at peace with God. Christ died for our sin, imputing His righteousness upon us. So Paul says we are no longer enemies but are at peace because we are reconciled.

This is our hope. We are filled with joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit in us after our conversion and baptism and the laying on of hands. “Now

may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

“Peace I Leave With You”

Jesus told His disciples: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you” (John 14:27). God’s peace is not like the peace of the world. The world’s peace is fleeting.

The only peace this world can know is shallow and unfulfilling. The fact is, apart from God, there is no real peace in this world. The peace of this world can be nothing more than a momentary time of tranquility.

However, the process of building righteous character into our lives through a dynamic relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ will ultimately bring us real spiritual peace. That peace is available today to you and me, and the fullness of this promise will be realized in the culmination of God’s plan. Jesus said: “My peace I give to you.”

As we have Jesus Christ living in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being filled with the peace of God—a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His subsequent resurrection makes this all possible for us. And we can rejoice in that.

Enjoy the peace that surpasses all understanding! **UN**

What Does It Mean to Be a Disciple?

continued from page 3

Although not among the original disciples, the apostle Paul well understood this relationship. He had trained under the famous rabbi Gamaliel until he was called to follow a far greater Rabbi who personally trained him. Paul knew we are to become like our perfect Rabbi in every way, which is why he described our goal as “reach[ing] unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and becom[ing] mature, *attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13, New International Version, emphasis added throughout).

Paul was clear as to his role model, and pointed Church members to that example: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV). As a disciple tried to live just as his master lived, Paul tried to live just as Jesus Christ lived. And by following these examples, members of the Church could see what they needed to do to transform their lives.

If we are to be such disciples, where do we begin? What steps can we take to become like Jesus Christ in every way? The path is the same as what Jesus’ own disciples did in the first century. Let’s look at three aspects.

1. A disciple must spend as much time as possible with his Master.

The goal of a disciple wasn’t just knowledge, but personal transformation. Jesus’ disciples followed Him everywhere, literally living with Him much of the time, as their hearts and minds were changed. He constantly challenged His disciples’ way of looking at God and at other human beings by His words and actions.

But it took time for these men to change—a lot of time. The changes that Christ worked in His disciples’ lives didn’t come instantly or easily. The Gospels record many examples of Jesus instantly healing people, but we see no examples in which He immediately cured an ugly habit or character defect for one of His followers. Instead, He simply continued to teach and gently correct them, giving them time to mature and change.

This is how God works in our lives. He continually teaches us, gently correcting us, giving us time to grow and overcome. The inner transformation to the new man or woman can only be achieved over time. That’s the way God works. It’s the way a disciple becomes more like his Master and Teacher every day. A disciple needs to spend much time with his Master to become more and more like Him.

How do we measure up in that regard? As disciples of our Rabbi, Jesus Christ, how much time do we spend with Him? In the Bible we’re given a whole book of His teachings, His thoughts and His truth. What are we doing with it? Are we daily

making it a part of our mind, our thinking, our character, or do we let all kinds of other things get in the way?

2. A disciple must be totally committed to his Master.

This leads to the second aspect of what it means to be a disciple, and that is that a disciple must be totally committed to his master.

In Luke 9:57-62 we read where Jesus told several individuals, “Follow Me.” But all came up with various excuses as to why they couldn’t. Jesus told them that to become disciples they needed to leave everything behind to show the depth of their commitment.

His way of life was to serve God through committing His life to teaching people about God. It was a challenging existence. The disciples would’ve shared this difficult life, but they also would have experienced great joy. After all, they were the disciples of an extraordinary Rabbi, learning from Him the deep things of God that no one else knew and that stunned those who heard those things.

This spending so much time together and the complete commitment of a disciple to his master produced a very strong bond. Jesus Christ’s disciples understood this as well. We see this from scriptures such as Mark 10:28, where Peter tells Jesus, “We have left all and followed You.” Peter’s words reflect the deep devotion and total commitment disciples felt for

their rabbis. This closeness and commitment was essential to becoming like the Master in every way.

3. A disciple must serve and obey his Master.

A third way a disciple can become like his Master is to serve and obey that Master. As Jesus told His followers in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” He clearly expects His disciples to serve and obey Him.

Disciples were to learn from serving their masters. They would learn humility, which was a requirement for proper growth. They would learn to submit to their master’s will. And they would open themselves to being guided and corrected by their Master. All of these were crucial to becoming just like their Master.

Start Becoming Like Him

We are to transform our lives so that we become like our Master and Rabbi, Jesus Christ. We are not just to learn from Him; we are to become like Him in every way.

Who or what do we want to shape our lives? Something is always shaping us. Will it be the culture and the world around us, or will it be our Master and Teacher, Jesus Christ?

Will you spend as much time with Him as possible, be totally committed to Him, and serve and obey Him in every way? This is what it means to be Jesus Christ’s disciple! **UN**

Trip to France and Benin Highlights Work in French-speaking Areas

by Jessica Hendrickson

Warm greetings from Benin and snowy greetings from the French Alps!

It has been a busy, productive and inspiring past few weeks. Tim and Maryse Pebworth and I have been traveling around France and Benin, celebrating the spring Holy Days with brethren, making preparations for the Feast of Tabernacles and working on the new French website and various other projects in between.

On March 29, 20 brethren from throughout France arrived in Bordeaux to keep the Passover, Night to Be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread together. The house we rented for lodging and services was filled with good conversations and good food. Everyone was grateful for the opportunity to come together, as most of the French brethren are spread out and on their own throughout the rest of the year.

The evening meal on the NTBMO was particularly special as we went around the table and each person shared the story of his or her baptism. On Friday and Sunday, Tim Pebworth gave three seminars about prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, which led to some very edifying

questions and discussions, and on Sunday morning, the French brethren held their annual meeting as required under the bylaws of the legally incorporated French Association. The meeting included the treasurer's report and a report from the president discussing issues related to the French brethren, the French work and possible Feast sites for 2019.

After a wonderful weekend with the brethren in France, Tim, Maryse and I traveled to Benin to keep the Last Day of Unleavened Bread and Sabbath with the brethren in Cotonou. We had the treat of hearing the children's choir sing on both occasions, and after services on Sabbath, the congregation shared a meal together.

We also had the chance to visit with one of the families in the church in their home in Porto-Novo, the capital of Benin. Michele Ogoudélé is a long-time deacon who suffered a stroke two years ago and is now cared for by his wife and daughter who take turns being with him during Sabbath services, giving the other the chance to be at church. During our visit, he was able to say a few words to us from his bed, and we shared stories of the history of the Church in Benin.



Top Left: Jessica Hendrickson with children in Benin. Top Right: Jessica with Jeanne Reverté (left) and Françoise Ybars (right) who are brethren in France. Bottom Right: Jessica with the Pebworths, the Mabouts and Pierre Ogoudélé.



Throughout the weekend, we had some very productive conversations with pastors Moïse Mabout and Kossi Fiaboé and other local brethren regarding the issues that brethren in Benin, Cameroon and Togo face. On Sunday before returning to France, I also had the opportunity to meet with a young man from the Cotonou congregation to help him fill out a LifeNets application for a scholarship to do a professional teaching program.

The hospitality and kindness we

received from the brethren in Benin was touching and it was inspiring for me to see in both France and Benin how unity through God's Spirit transcends our different cultures. [UN](#)

Portuguese Tour to Brazil and Angola

by Jorge de Campos

From mid-March and through the Days of Unleavened Bread I conducted a very successful doctrinal tour through Brazil and Angola. God blessed the trip with health, protection, interested prospective members and loyal brethren. A spirit of godly love prevailed throughout the trip. On March 15, 2018, I started in São Paulo, Brazil where I was joined with our local elder, Arlindo Filho, for the Brazilian leg of the trip.

On Friday, March 16, we met Sebastião Mendes de Freitas who keeps the Sabbath, the Holy Days, eats only clean food and wants to help in São Paulo in whatever way he can. He is also involved in the community, particularly in assisting people in the Brazilian Bible Society with organizing a translation of the Geneva Bible to Portuguese. Our meeting lasted for over three hours where we addressed many questions, such as the history of the Church.

The Sabbath and Sunday were filled with two Kingdom of God seminars and a member visit, Olímpio Alves, near Sumaré, São Paulo. The seminar theme throughout the trip was that the soon coming Government of God to rule on earth is our only hope, in whatever country we may live. The theme then continued with the need for us to be prepared to meet Christ and to rule with Him.

On Monday we traveled to Uberlândia and from there to Patos de Minas to visit with Giovane and Laura Macedo, who help God's work by translating into Por-

tuguese. We spent an enjoyable evening during the week in their home. From there we traveled to the southernmost state of Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul) to conduct further visit requests. We spent the whole day Friday meeting Arlindo Ornel and his family. He had many questions and expressed the desire to start anew, from zero.

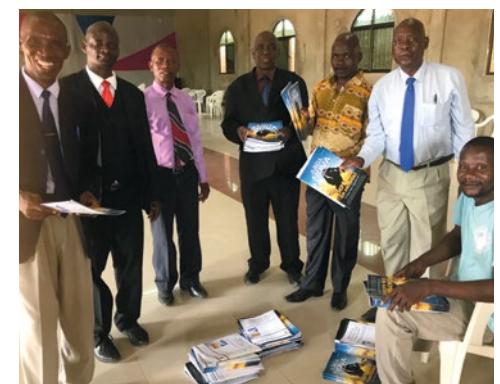
The second weekend (March 24-25) was filled with two seminars, one in Porto Alegre and one near Rio de Janeiro. We had very encouraging responses, not in quantity, but hopefully in quality. Time will tell if "the seed fell on good ground." Let's pray so. On Monday, Arlindo Filho and I travelled inland north of Rio to visit a very interested young man. We spent the whole day on Monday addressing his questions.

On Tuesday (March 27) we met with a leader of a theology school in Rio that showed interest in me presenting to a group of religious leaders in the region about the Kingdom of God. Let's see if it develops further. After that we proceeded to the north of Brazil to keep the Passover and the beginning of Unleavened Bread with the brethren in Maloca de Moscou. They were very excited and send greetings to all. We saw how some of them are making use of the deep water well and agricultural project we conducted a few years back. The diesel generator was useful for various days, as electricity failed for the weekend.

At the end of the visit I went to see a new venue for the Feast in Brazil, which God



Top: The group who attended the Kingdom of God Seminar in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Right: Members of the Church in Angola preparing to distribute the Boa Nova in Angola to various church regions.



clearly opened for us. It is a lovely venue and it will be booked exclusively for us. If anyone plans to go to the Feast in Brazil, please note that you need to book the flights first to Manaus and then separately an internal flight to Boa Vista. That way you will reduce the costs by as much as 50 percent. Please talk to me if you're interested.

After the visit in Brazil, I left Arlindo with the brethren in Maloca de Moscou, and I traveled to Luanda (Angola) via São Paulo. I met with 876 brethren for the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. There I conducted another Kingdom of God Bible Seminar, leadership training, a youth interactive Bible study and church Bible study. The brethren in Angola, of whom there are more than 5,000, send their love to all the brethren around the world. They are struggling with various health issues, and have various physical needs, which I

would like to address. I must underline that they have not asked for any physical help, only spiritual help and training.

During services on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, the national TV station and a local radio station came to services to interview me and report on the visit.

After these four weeks of travel I was most encouraged with what God is doing. Thank you for your prayers and please continue to pray for God's continued blessing on His work in the Portuguese language. Please also pray for additional disciples that may prove to be leaders to serve this great work of God. [UN](#)

What's New In MEDIA?
BEYOND
TODAY

Television Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
<i>How to Quit Porn</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Overcoming Pornography Addiction</i>	May 6-12
<i>Pentecost: Your Need for the Holy Spirit</i>	Gary Petty	<i>The Power of the Holy Spirit</i>	May 13-19
<i>Lord, Help Me Believe</i>	Gary Petty	<i>The Power of the Holy Spirit</i>	May 20-16
<i>Shocking Teachings of Jesus: The Dead Will Live Again</i>	Steve Myers	<i>What Happens After Death?</i>	May 27-June 2

Are you a graduating senior?
Do you know a senior who is?

Send in a bio and photograph to be featured in *United News*

We are going to feature the class of 2018 in the July-August *United News*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by **June 6**. Please keep it to 250 words maximum! Also include your phone number or e-mail address to use to confirm spellings, etc. (they will not be printed). Please send with a recent photo (conforming with biblical standards of modesty) of the graduate by **June 6**. Digital photos should be at least 800 pixels in their smallest dimension to print sharply. Send by e-mail to linda_merrick@ucg.org, or send by mail to United News, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. We may edit for clarity and/or length to meet the 250-word maximum length. Thanks and congratulations!

Here's what to include:

- Graduate's name
- Parents' names (if high school grad)
- Congregation
- School, work, internship, co-op or other accomplishments
- Interests, interesting facts about yourself, Church activities you're involved in, hobbies, unusual skills, etc.
- Plans after graduation
- Additional comments (favorite scripture, favorite quote, motto, advice, poetry, wisdom, etc.)



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 5-7:** *General Conference of Elders*
- May 20:** *Pentecost*
- June 3-6:** *Preteen Camp Nacome, Tennessee*
- June 10-13:** *Preteen Camp Piney Woods, Texas*
- June 10-17:** *Camp Cotubic, Ohio*
- June 17-20:** *Preteen Camp Colorado, Colorado*



www.ucg.org/members/feast