



# United Church of God

*an International Association*

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

Issue 325

May 17, 2018

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

Dear fellow servants of God,

#### **O Jerusalem!**

Nearly two millennia ago, Jesus Christ cried out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37). I find this remarkable, as Jesus speaks here from the perspective of His prior role as the I AM of the Old Testament. He voices this cry from a unique view, living out complex emotions as He foresees the devastating disaster that will befall the city.



In these passages, Jesus eloquently lamented the looming fate of Jerusalem, which ironically means "City of Peace." At the time He cried out, Jerusalem was in the midst of an economic renaissance from the Temple and other rebuilding projects begun in Herod's time. Jesus spoke shortly before He delivered what we know today as the Olivet Prophecy, which foretold the destruction of Jerusalem.

How puzzled His disciples must have been back then, as they looked down from the Mount of Olives upon a bustling city of growth and magnificence, wondering how Jesus could make such a claim of impending disaster.

This story holds deep relevance for us, personally. Let's pick up the story at the beginning of Matthew 24. In verse 1, Jesus and His disciples leave the expansive Temple Mount--an immense facility greatly enlarged and improved from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The group passes through ornate colonnades and probably past the massive Herodian foundation blocks with their distinctive borders (some remain today). The disciples boast of the magnificent structures.

Then, as they begin trekking down across the Kidron Valley toward the Mount of Olives, Jesus shocks His disciples: "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, *that shall not be thrown down*" (Matthew 24:2, emphasis added throughout).

Given the sweeping vista of architectural beauty that stood before them, that must have been hard for the disciples to grasp. But it happened! Some three decades later, shortly after the final completion of the Temple rebuilding project, the Jews rebelled against the Roman occupation. Over the next four years, the Romans savagely retaliated, finally burning and razing the ornate Temple Mount and leaving it devastated, just as Jesus prophesied! The Romans ultimately plundered the immense wealth of the city and Temple, carrying it off and later using the Jewish treasure to erect the Colosseum in Rome.

Fast forward 2,000 years and what do you have? Jerusalem again dominates the talk of the world. In a symbolic move, the United States Embassy relocated some 40 miles from Tel Aviv, on May 14, to Jerusalem, on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the modern state of Israel. On the 15th, the Palestinians marked the 70th anniversary of what they call the *Nakba* ("catastrophe"), a day that the Palestinians mark in observance of the Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 war for Israeli independence.

Violence between Israeli forces and Palestinians erupted over the two days, with Palestinian riots resulting in 60 dead and more than 2,700 injured. Tension now coils to the highest levels seen in years in the Middle East. Thousands-of-years-old smoldering resentment and hatred has burst into flame.

Over its long history, Jerusalem has been attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, besieged 23 times and destroyed twice. What will happen next?

To answer that, let's return to the Mount of Olives of 2,000 years ago. Possibly intrigued by the shocking prophecy that Jesus had just relayed, the disciples privately asked Jesus: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

Christ goes on to list the cataclysmic events that would take place before His return. Ironically, as His disciples may have been aware, Christ would return in power to the same place where they were then sitting on the Mount of Olives! (Zechariah 14:4). Jesus, as we in the Church well know,

was very specific about the events to come. Following global spiritual deception, physical upheaval, and the proclaiming of the gospel, events will crescendo to total worldwide convulsion, a point where humanity would completely perish (Matthew 24:21-22) if God does not intervene.

Following a series of cosmic-level celestial events that have never before been experienced, a divine trumpet shall sound (Matthew 24:30-31) announcing the return of Jesus as the King of Kings!

We in the Church have this true hope! But those outside can only wonder. As I watch on television the violence in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza, I cringe and grieve at the terror and death. I grieve for the innocent families losing children. I hear justifying rhetoric from all sides. I see current political superpowers like the United States, Russia, Europe and others try to position themselves in an unsolvable mess.

When I further hear of rising nuclear instability in the Middle East, I wonder how close we may be to the precipice of what is described in Matthew 24. Jesus was plain when He stated that no one knows the time (Matthew 24:36), but He also admonished us today to be on guard and watch, as "the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44).

But I have another timely story about Jerusalem--an encouraging story that contrasts the violence we currently see on television.

Reflecting on and understanding the relevance of this encouraging story of Jerusalem represents an important part of our being on guard. The story centers on what we will be celebrating this coming Sunday--an event that will truly bring peace to the world, a peace that the city of Jerusalem was named for!

It was on this coming Sunday, the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, that the Holy Spirit was given to all who would receive it. The second chapter of Acts records the magnificent outpouring of the things that are absent from Jerusalem today. Paul makes plain what is evident in whom the Holy Spirit resides: "the fruit [outcomes] of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Without mankind receiving this Spirit, it will be

impossible to bring calm to Jerusalem, the Middle East and the world. But one day soon it will happen. And we can rejoice in this!

In his first sermon, the apostle Peter showed the way: we must all repent and change our lives and our minds, constantly yielding and surrendering our wills to be subject to the benevolent Will of God--a lifelong process (Acts 2:38-39). It is then that we can receive and benefit from the Holy Spirit.

The world is not ready for this now, but will be brought to the point where it will be!

In the interim, Jesus promises us that Spirit, which can impart to us the precious gift of peace now, and later to the world. As Jesus promised: "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. 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 14:26-27).

As we watch news from Jerusalem with dismay about the violence, let us also look with joy to a coming new Jerusalem of true peace, spiritually transformed from the physical place where the Holy Spirit was first made publicly available and where the New Testament Church started.

### **Ambassador Bible College Graduation**

The high point of this past week has been graduation day for Ambassador Bible College students on Sunday, May 13. The article below by Aaron Dean, along with a few photos, describe the events. Some of the students are staying through the summer, while most are returning to their respective homes. I thoroughly enjoyed this year's class as I got acquainted with them through the year. In the past few days I have made podcasts in our radio studio with a number of the students discussing what ABC was like, what they learned, and what they will be taking with them to their congregations, work and families.

I hope that our pastors will value returning students with service opportunities, as referenced in the Mission Statement of ABC: "The Mission of Ambassador Bible College, sponsored by the United Church



of God, aIA, is to diligently uphold and faithfully teach the truths of God, as found in the Bible, to equip disciples of Jesus Christ for a life of faithfulness and godly service."

I gave the baccalaureate, or farewell sermon on the Sabbath and pointed out that the experience of ABC is a planting of a tree that consists of new knowledge, increased skills, changed attitudes, values and behaviors--a transformation, a new person! As a result, we are taught to think differently as God described Caleb in Numbers 14:24: "But my servant Caleb *thinks differently and follows me completely...*"



The Ambassador Bible Center Chorale performs at Sabbath services preceding graduation.

In the sermon I emphasized outcomes shown by actions and the following scriptures:

"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14).

"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Matthew 13:23, NASB).

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalms 1:1-3).

It takes time for trees to bear fruit, but at ABC we certainly do plant them!

In my sermon, I *read* just a few of the many success stories of ABC students of the past 19 years as well as the aspirations of this year's class stated earlier in the year. I concluded with "...walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

### **Pentecost weekend**

Regional pastor Steve Myers and his wife, Kathe, will be visiting congregations and pastors in their region in Philadelphia, Columbia (Maryland), New York City and Bethlehem (Pennsylvania).

Media and Communications Services Operation Manager Peter Eddington will be traveling to Tucson, Arizona, and will spend time with Steve and Terri Buchanan as well as Ellis and Gwen La Ravia.

Portuguese senior pastor Jorge de Campos and his wife, Kathy, are traveling to Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Bev and I will be traveling to northeast Indiana where the Indianapolis and Ft. Wayne congregations will combine for Pentecost weekend. Gary and Barbara Antion will also be coming.

May God bless you this week with His encouraging and powerful Spirit. Let it fill us and flow from us as we positively affect those around us!

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vitor Kubik". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Victor Kubik

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

### **Death of Richard Hegna**



Dick Hegna

Mr. Richard "Dick" Hegna, age 84, an elder who served in the East Texas congregation, died on Sunday, May 13. Dick served in the U.S. Army, and was a member of the U.S. Army Band, touring across Europe before returning home. He worked for 30 years as a hearing aid specialist in Tyler, Texas. Dick was a volunteer with The East Texas Deaf and Hearing Association, Inc. and received accolades for outstanding service to his community.

Mr. Hegna served throughout his life in the area of music and with the youth. He loved to sing, could play any instrument, with clarinet and piano being his favorites and enjoyed teaching music. He is preceded in death by his loving wife of 37 years, Rosene, in 2005.

The family will receive friends on Friday, May 18, at Croley Funeral Home of Gladewater from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Funeral services will follow on Saturday, May 19, 2018 at 10:00 AM, at the funeral home, Dr. Don



Ward officiating. Private burial will be held at Gladewater Memorial Park in Gladewater, Texas.

The full obituary is available here: <http://m.croleyfh.net/obituaries/events?obituaryId=3089556>

Cards may be sent to his daughter: Karin Danapas, 15072 CR 343, Tyler, TX 75708

## **Ambassador Bible College Baccalaureate Weekend**

On May 10, the students had their traditional graduation banquet at Norlyn Manor in Batavia, where each student was given individual recognition for their part in the ABC year.



Ambassador Bible Center Class of 2018

Most family members came in on Friday and attended Cincinnati East PM services on the Sabbath for the graduation weekend sermon given by Victor Kubik. In his sermon, the president highlighted many of the

accomplishments of past graduates and how much they add to the Church. He hopes to give more opportunity for service to our graduates.

On Sunday, May 13, twenty-three students walked down the aisle to receive a diploma in Biblical Studies from Ambassador Bible College. After the welcome and invocation, Student Body President David Rains delivered the student discourse, recounting many fun and memorable moments that this year brought and how the students came here as individuals, but were now 'family.' He told of his grandfather's funeral with hundreds of people coming because of a lifelong legacy of good works. Even though David was only three years old when his grandfather died, he has always tried to live up to his grandfather's legacy. He spoke of the service activities including the charity auction, the choir's travel to outlying congregations to perform special music and their class trip to St. Louis, Missouri. He admonished the class of 2018 to expand on the legacy they have made at ABC and leave an even more lasting legacy into the future from what they have learned studying God's Word.

The graduation address was given by ABC coordinator Dr. Frank Dunkle. He recounted the many hours spent with the students and how they had advanced so far in nine months. He recounted how he used his son's action figures and castles on stage to reenact the battle of captivity of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Batman, Robin, Wonder Woman and other comic characters played the parts of the story and no one is likely to forget such a lively and entertaining teaching lesson as the 'war' relived on stage with their scriptural references. He acknowledged the various ways the faculty imparts knowledge, yet knowledge alone is not the purpose of ABC. Students must leave and put that knowledge to use; to be able to faithfully pass it on to others as Paul admonished Timothy to do in scripture.



Mr. Kubik with Council of Elders Service Award recipients  
Coleen Guintu and Nathan Berg.

The address was followed by the presentation of the Council of Elders Service Award given to Nathan Berg and Coleen Guintu and the Ambassador Award of Excellence given to David Rains and Kayla Weaner. They each received a crystal apple clock in recognition of their achievements. Then the graduate names were read and diplomas given as each student came to the stage. Student Danielle Britt (wife of ministerial trainee Steven Britt), instead of the traditional flowers, carried her baby across the stage. Little Lilaina was born during the 2nd semester of class but Danielle was able to attend via computer hook-up and make up assignments to receive her diploma.





Class of 2018 releases balloons after graduation.

After the recessional march to Pomp and Circumstance, the students did the traditional balloon release outside the office and took pictures. They then returned to the dining area for refreshments, cake and fellowship with family, friends, faculty and alumni. It was a beautiful sunny day for the event and we ask that you encourage your young adults, and others interested, to consider applying for the 2018-2019 year. As the graduates can attest, it is a challenging yet foundational opportunity to learn God's Word to become a true success in life.

-- Aaron Dean, ABC Dean of Students

## **Inside United Podcast**



Rex Sexton discusses his experience as director of Northwest Camp, the genesis of United Youth Camps, what campers can expect this summer, and more with Victor Kubik.

<http://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united/inside-united-podcast-episode-082>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

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

## ***Compass Check Magazine (for pastors)***

We depend on announcements to make sure our teen magazine, *Compass Check*, is made available to all U.S. teens from the ages of 12-18. Pastors, please announce in your congregations that if a teen would like to receive a subscription to *Compass Check*, they may send an e-mail to [compasscheck@ucg.org](mailto:compasscheck@ucg.org). We will need the name of the teen, mailing address, date of birth and what United congregation they attend. Past issues may be found at [www.ucg.org/members/compass-check](http://www.ucg.org/members/compass-check). Thank you.

--Steve Nutzman, *Compass Check* Editor

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