



United Church of God

an International Association

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

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Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

This past week we held two great conferences in Big Sandy, Texas, at our church building! The first was a Leadership Workshop billed: "for members with a spirit of service that could include serious minded older teens, young adults and seniors of either gender." Indeed, that diversity was there as 121 attendees ranging in age from 14 to 99 came for presentations all day Sunday, August 5, including "A Church Led by the God's Holy Spirit," "Becoming a Disciple, the Heart of Christianity," and "Reaching Out and Lighting the Way." There were plenty of interactions and discussion from the participants as well as question and answer sessions.



Victor Kubik welcomes attendees to the regional Leadership Workshop.

This conference focused on our being disciples who make other disciples. We looked to examples from the early New Testament church, such as what happened in Antioch, where the presence and actions of scattered, persecuted Christians

contributed to the growth of many who believed. We also discussed practical things we can do in our congregations to further the gospel.



Regional Pastor Mark Welch with some of the younger attendees of the Leadership Workshop.

We thank pastor Donald Ward and his wife, Wanda, along with many members of the East Texas congregation who cordially hosted these events. The congregation provided meals and housing for many of those who came. Bev and I were grateful to the Wards for inviting us to stay at their home for the duration of the conferences.



The East Texas congregation provided many delicious meals.

I thank our tireless Ministerial Education Team of Chris Rowland, Darris McNeely and Steve Myers along with regional pastor Mark Welch for providing the program for the ministerial conference in our South Central region. In addition, Minnesota pastor Brian Shaw gave a presentation "Pastoring Young Adults and Building Relationships." By video, Scott Hoefker spoke on "Resilience, Change and Focus in a Stressful World."



Darris McNeely addresses the South Central region ministers and wives.

In the session "Challenges and Solutions," the ministry brought forward a number of challenges that they face. As a group, we sought to give advice and collectively brought forward potential solutions for the challenges at hand. Some of the challenges noted were a lack of commitment by some members of our congregations, and beliefs in conspiracy theories, myths and practices that are not part of United Church of God teaching. Should we baptize someone who strongly espouses such theories?

The meetings provided a much-appreciated opportunity to connect and reconnect with one another socially and to discuss ministerial matters.

I'm grateful for our ministry who all give of themselves and sacrifice for their calling and mission. Our ministers want to serve their congregations and God to the best of their ability. I pointed out that the Apostle Paul was generous in his appreciation and prayers for the brethren whom God had called and who had found a new purpose in their lives. I quoted Paul's greeting to the Colossians:

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints" (Colossians 1:2-5).

On an anniversary of horror, hope prevails

Seventy-three years ago, on August 9 (as this is published), the second nuclear weapon deployed in combat exploded at 1,800 feet above the Japanese city of Nagasaki. Barely half a second later, 35,000 unsuspecting people died instantly. Two minutes after 11 a.m. local time, nuclear fire engulfed the city of 263,000. Together with the first nuclear bomb dropped in combat over Hiroshima (three days earlier), at least 100,000 people perished instantly in atomic-fueled concussion blasts and fireballs topping out at 10,800 degrees Fahrenheit (6,000

degrees Celsius). Hundreds of thousands suffered severe radiation exposure and burns, dying over time or dealing with excruciating pain and disability for the remainder of their lives.

From the deployment of these nuclear weapons, one thing was clear: these weapons were supremely powerful and any nation that had them would be thought to be supremely powerful. As a result, in the decade or so after Nagasaki, several nations raced to build their own nuclear weapons. Today, an astonishing total of more than 15,000 active nuclear weapons exist, controlled by Russia, the United States, France, China, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and Israel. Several other nations, like Iran and Saudi Arabia, are knocking on the nuclear door.

The two nuclear weapons ended the Pacific War with the surrender of Japan and rang down the final curtain on the six long years of World War II. Widespread testing of nuclear weapons in the 1950s and 60s by Russia (the Soviet Union), America, France and the United Kingdom further demonstrated the planetary life-ending potential of nuclear weapons, and a policy of mutually assured destruction has kept their use at bay for more than seven decades.

Mankind knows that widespread use of nuclear weapons would end civilization as we know it. So, while leaders of many nations hold the capacity to wage nuclear war (and have come perilously close to doing so on more than one occasion), so far no one has yet pulled the terrible trigger that would unleash unspeakable atomic apocalypse.

The level of horror spawned by nuclear weaponry can be difficult for us in the Church, enjoying a time of relative peace and prosperity 73 years later in the 21st century, to fully comprehend. I personally have come face-to-face with the consequences of nuclear energy run amok, particularly in our LifeNets work supporting children and families impacted by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine. Also, through LifeNets we have provided support for the victims of the 2011 earthquake in Japan that led to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, second only in scope to the terrible Chernobyl incident.

Dr. Yumi Yamamoto, a Japanese ophthalmologist and a representative of LifeNets, provided medical and optical services for victims of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami (and has also helped us in our relief efforts in the Philippines). Through her work, she developed relationships with Japanese citizens who lived during the time of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear blasts and who experienced the aftermath.



Sajio Ibaraki

She related to me the story of Sajio Ibaraki, a now-retired banker she knew who was in high school during the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks. Ironically, earlier incendiary aerial bombings from Allied forces had led Japanese to evacuate many students, children and elderly from larger Japanese cities, ultimately sparing thousands. On the day of the Hiroshima nuclear attack, the then-future bank clerk was enjoying a tranquil time of fishing with friends on the morning of a hot summer day. The sky was bright and clear.

Without warning, a bright flash consumed the sky. Startled, the group of friends wondered what it could be. Later they would learn that more than 70,000 lives were wiped out in that flash, as a nuclear blast flattened 4.7 square miles of Hiroshima, 62 miles away. The atomic bomb instantly annihilated upwards of 30% of the city's population, and another 70,000 people were severely injured.

The routine of life for thousands had been quiet and predictable. But in the next moment, life overflowed with radioactive horror, fire and painful death. It is a sobering thought to consider.

After graduating from high school, Mr. Ibaraki moved to a devastated Hiroshima that was being rebuilt. The remains of nuclear devastation--in both physical and human terms--could be clearly seen. During his banking career, he became friends with a woman who was also a student at the time of the Hiroshima attack. Unfortunately, unlike him, she was not fishing on a lake when the American plane dropped the bomb. She was in living in Hiroshima as nuclear fission ripped the city asunder.

She survived what she described as a "terrible explosion," but suffered intensely painful burns that left disfiguring scar tissue. Further, the banker told Dr. Yamamoto that he often wondered why the wife of his bank supervisor had always worn elegant and formal kimonos. He later learned that her legs were also badly burned in the nuclear attack and she also suffered disfiguring scars.



Shadow burned black into the stone in Hiroshima.

A silent reminder outside a bank building near ground zero in Hiroshima somberly reminds all of the horror of nuclear war. There, a shadow is burned black into the stone, etched by the vaporized body of an unsuspecting bank patron who was simply waiting for the bank to open on that fateful day.

The lesson that Mr. Ibaraki would have the world to learn? He is frightened some seven decades later, as national leaders again talk about the possible use of nuclear weapons. He told Dr. Yamamoto: "there are fewer people who really know how dreadful, how meaningless and stupid war is." He earnestly wants people to know that "There is no 'winner' in any [nuclear] war."

These stories are good for me to ponder as a minister of Jesus Christ. National leaders lust after nuclear weapons and nuclear energy because of the power they bring. The abuse of this hideous power will likely bring to pass a terrible time as Jesus described in Matthew 24: "then there will be great tribulation, such has not been since the beginning of the world" (Matthew 24:21).

At the same time, we can be encouraged and filled with hope when we deeply consider where that power came from. As we can learn from reading the first chapter of Colossians, our Creator God locked up that incomprehensible power in molecular structures when the earth and heavens were fashioned. A nuclear weapon simply (and crudely) releases the atomic power sealed there by God.

The prophet Jeremiah knew well that God is all-powerful, as he wrote: "The Lord made the earth by his power, and he preserves it by his wisdom. With his own

understanding he stretched out the heavens" (Jeremiah 10:12, New Living Translation). Living at a difficult time in Judah's history, Jeremiah was astonished at the scope of what God could do: "O Sovereign Lord! You have made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. *Nothing is too hard for you!*" (Jeremiah 32:17, NLT, emphasis added throughout).

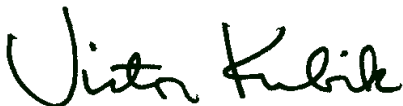
It is this same incredible power that gives us hope in a rapidly darkening age. God has the same power of free will that you and I have. He chooses what He does. Thank the Almighty that God's character is such that He *always* chooses to do good! We hold the unbreakable promise of hope that God will *always* act in our benefit.

Tragically, the same is not true of His creation. While much good exists on this planet, evil exists in abundance. Most national leaders don't use nuclear weapons because they understand the severe widespread consequences of their use. When leaders rattle their nuclear sabers, this is not done out of any sense of "good."

Remarkably, God promises to give us access to unlimited spiritual power (Acts 1:8). We now have the opportunity to learn how to wield this power for good, exercising our free will to literally "choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

On an anniversary of horror, hope yet prevails! Let us learn to receive and wield spiritual power that will change and fashion us to become more like our heavenly Father, becoming truly enlightened to understand "his incomparably great power for us who believe"! (Ephesians 1:19, New International Version). "Through [God's] mighty power at work within us," Paul declared that we will "accomplish *infinitely more* than we might ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20, NLT).

In Christ's service,

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

Victor Kubik

Northwest Region Young Adults Enrichment Weekend

The United Church of God congregations in Western Oregon would like to invite all young adults, ages 18-35 to join us for a weekend of enrichment and fellowship.

Located at the Aldersgate Retreat Center, near Salem, Oregon, the Northwest Young Adults Enrichment Weekend will be held over the Veteran's Day Weekend,

November 9th - 12th. It will include seminars, interactive workshops, bible studies, and other fun activities and fellowship that will help you to grow closer to God and to one another.

For additional information:

Flyer - www.tinyurl.com/2018NWYAWEEKENDFLYER

Registration - www.tinyurl.com/2018NWYAWEEKEND

If you have any questions, please contact Benjamin Light at ben_light@ucg.org.

Youth Instruction Update

For the past two years, the Family Study Guides have been covering God's Ten Commandments--showing us how to love God and love others.

The 2018-19 Youth Instruction studies will continue building our relationship with God and others with an in-depth review into the Fruit of God's Spirit. Each month we will discuss a specific Fruit of the Spirit by defining what it looks like, giving examples of how Jesus Christ and other Bible characters exhibited this fruit in their lives, and suggested discussions for practical and personal application in our own lives. Additionally, the Family Study Guides will contain discussions and activities to assist you as you teach your children God's way of life.

To begin the 2018-19 Youth Instructional year we have provided two Family Study Guides to introduce the important topic of the Fruit of the Spirit. One is an introductory overview lesson of the Fruit of the Spirit. The other connects the fruit of God's Spirit to the Holy Days and the plan of God. How you use them is up to you and your local congregation.

- God's Spirit in the Holy Days
- Fruit of the Holy Spirit Overview

The two Family Guides will be added to the UCG Family Education webpage ([Family Study Guides webpage](#) -and- in the [Family Guides Dropbox](#)). Please let us know if you have difficulty locating them.

Please remember that these lessons are NOT just "pre-teen Sabbath School" lessons--they are Biblical instruction for the whole family to learn from. In fact many of the activities in the Family Study Guides are specifically designed by teachers and parents of teens to help you address issues that your children deal with on a daily basis.

We hope that your family continues to find value in the UCG's Youth Instruction Family Study Guides and the Deuteronomy 6 Model. Have a wonderful Holy Day season.

-- Randy and Kay Schreiber, Youth Instruction Coordinators

UPDATE: WGN-America

Now that we have begun our new airtime for *Beyond Today* Television on WGN-America (WGN-A), we would like to give you a few more details.

God has greatly blessed our media efforts in this regard. Not only were we able to negotiate the new Sunday morning time (8:30 a.m. ET/PT) at a substantially lower cost than when we were on WGN-A a number of years ago, but we also received the Saturday morning (5 a.m. ET/PT) air time as a no cost bonus! Our agency tells us that no other organization has been offered this before.

With 82 million households receiving WGN-A, certainly there is a wide audience, and DVR recording by many viewers expands viewership even more.

We thank our great God for this exceptional blessing, and ask that we all continue to pray for our Father's blessing upon all our media efforts.

-- Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services

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