



United Church of God

an International Association

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 339

August 23, 2018

Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

We are happy to announce the appointment of Mark Welch as Operation Manager for Ministerial and Member Services. The Council of Elders approved this choice on August 21 at their recent meetings at the home office. This position has not been filled since Roy Holladay was suddenly not able to continue in that position almost three years ago.



Mark and Barbara Welch

There were a number of qualified candidates for this important managerial position. It was truly challenging to make the final choice as we took into consideration factors such as current duties, recommendations of others and peer endorsement.

The position is not oversight of the ministry alone. In 2010 we added "Member Services" to indicate that we consider the membership's needs to be as important as the ministry's. Special attention will be given to children, teen and young adults.

An important part of this job will be the continual coordination of ministerial education as we provide training for our newer ministers, but also enrichment material for all our ministers through various delivery methods.

Mark Welch graduated from Ambassador College in 1978 and married Barbara Lemke the same year. He was ordained into the ministry in 1985. In 1989 he was hired full-time and sent to Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 1990 he was transferred to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and in 1995 back to Tulsa/Oklahoma City. Most recently, he has been pastor of the congregation in Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas, for the past four years. He has also served as regional pastor for the South Central region of the United States.

He has worked extensively in the United Youth Camps program and is the overall preteen camp coordinator. He has also served as a festival coordinator.

His wife, Barbara, is a wonderful complement to his ministry and serves as Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Coordinator for the Church.

Mark and Barbara Welch are noted for their humble service as team players. They love people of all ages in and out of the Church and are able to relate well to them.

All of these qualities are important to me and to the Church. I look forward to working with Mark and Barbara and ask for your prayers and support for them.

Council of Elders in Town



Rex Sexton addresses the Council of Elders

We welcomed the Council of Elders for meetings at the home office that were held this week from Monday through Thursday. You can view video recordings from many of the meetings at <http://coe.ucg.org/videos>

Vanuatu

Jenny Bradford, wife of pastor Bill Bradford of Brisbane, Australia, sends me reports of their visits to the French-speaking Vanuatu Island about 1200 miles northeast of Brisbane. Last week, she sent me an inspiring and interesting report via Facebook Messenger that I have posted on the Internet at <http://kubik.org/vanuatu-august-2018/>.

Checked Your Foundation Lately?

The visually stunning 3,878-foot-long Morandi bridge strikingly captured one's eye when it opened in 1967 after four years of construction across the Polcevera River in Genoa, Italy. It served as a major link to France and the European E80 superhighway for several decades. I personally witnessed it in January 1969, crossing the impressive structure as a student traveling with a senior Ambassador faculty member, whom I was assisting with photography for a book he was writing. I well remember being impressed at both its long span and splendid architecture.

On August 14, this magnificent-appearing bridge partially collapsed. A total of 43 people--including a young boy--plunged to their deaths 148 feet below or

were crushed by massive chunks of fractured concrete falling from the towers.



Morandi Bridge

While we pray for the families and friends of those who perished in the disaster, we are also grateful that none of the Italian members of the United Church of God were injured. I was informed by Carmelo Anastasi, the head of our Italian office, that one church member actually crossed the bridge--which at the time of its collapse was undergoing strengthening--a mere day before the catastrophe.

This fact gave me pause. Is there something here that we could learn from, particularly as we approach the fall Holy Day season?

I think it is important to consider that while the Morandi bridge was considered to be a state-of-the-art design and construction at the time of its completion, concern had been expressed about its condition. While the bridge was beautiful to the eye, one expert previously called the bridge "a failure of engineering."

This bridge, like most others built in the 20th century and onwards, uses reinforced concrete. As bridges are built, steel rods or beams are encased in concrete, improving the strength and weight-bearing capacity of the structure.

It sounds good, but there exists a fatal flaw if care is not taken. According to the British *Economist* magazine, "The difficulty is that concrete, or rather the steel used to reinforce it, can fail in a number of ways. Salt, ice and the pounding of

weather can cause tiny fractures in the concrete's surface. As these cracks creep inward, they let in water. This enlarges the cracks, which can cause the concrete to fall apart."

Of course, there well may exist other factors that contributed to the collapse. But the nearly invisible deterioration of the once-strong steel bears some close examination.

The fact that tiny, largely unseen cracks possibly led to the sudden and lethal collapse of a multi-million-dollar project can give us some spiritual reminders. Security cameras recorded the bridge's abrupt failure and can be seen online (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iP_LTnMFFjw). There is no warning. In the videos, cars and people can be seen going by. Suddenly, without advance notice, the screen fills with dust and debris. Within seconds, many tons of broken concrete and 43 people fatally fall to the ground.

What's the point? While the disaster happened suddenly, it was actually many years in the making.

What about us? Are we carefully watching for tiny cracks to appear in our spiritual lives? Are we letting resentments or personal hurts--justified or unjustified--linger, fester or grow without forgiveness? After a busy day packed with activity, it can be very easy to postpone a deep reading and study of God's Word. When it comes time to devote some quality time to prayer, to talking with our Father in heaven, one can easily rationalize that we'll innocently put it off. Tired from a day of work, we may neglect an opportunity to meditate on key spiritual principles that can help us improve our lives. We think: "I'll catch up in the morning."

Over time, we can inadvertently allow spiritual corrosion to creep in. It starts as a tiny event, so we're probably not aware of it.

The good news is that we can counter the effects of spiritual corrosion! Here are some thoughts that can help us commit and grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. First, Jesus instructs us on how to lay a strong spiritual foundation: "don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there was enough money to finish it?" (Luke 14:28, New Living Translation). Let's work to provide the time and the energy to reading the word, to meditate, to pray.

Second, we need action! We need to act on what we learn from the Bible, what we are encouraged to do from the teachings we hear in services, and what God reveals to us through study, meditation and prayer. As Jesus tells us: "Anyone

who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock" (Matthew 7:24, NLT).

Such a house, our Elder Brother explains to us, will withstand storms, floods and high winds, because "it is built on bedrock" (verse 25). But the person "who hears my teaching *and doesn't obey it* is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand" (verse 26). What's the outcome of that approach? When storms and tough times come, that house "will collapse with a mighty crash" (verse 27).

In the hours before the Morandi bridge collapsed, the structure was pummeled by unusually heavy rain and wind. Could such a time come upon us unawares? *Now* is the time to ask ourselves: "Have I checked my spiritual foundation recently?"

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

From Ministerial and Member Services...

Recent Re-credentialing



On August 20, 2018, Dennis O'Neill was re-credentialed by the United Church of God. He serves in the Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, congregation.

STAY CONNECTED:



Ministerial and Member Services Facebook Page

United Church of God E-mail Updates

United Church of God Members Website