



## 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,

#### **Initial Feast of Tabernacles Report**

This year there were over 60 Feast sites spread across the globe. A few sites have not yet submitted information, but we expect total attendance to come in close to 14,000 around the world.

During the Feast many sites send Feast greetings to other sites. New Zealand was the first to send a greeting and it set the pace for everybody. Feast Coordinator Daniel Porteous stated, "180ish of us are rejoicing together at this beautiful location where God has placed His name. We are learning God's way together and practicing God's way together."

Panama City Beach had the largest attendance at 1065, but some "satellite" sites gathered and watched the webcast live daily from Panama City Beach, Bend or Steamboat Springs. A special feature was providing a program for those unable to travel to the Feast. Members keeping the Feast at home could connect 30 minutes before services and hear special personal greetings or hear attendees discussing their Feast experiences live from Panama City Beach.

Around 30 people submit an official post-Feast report reviewing the Feast by categories with the intent of sharing and improving the experience. This large "Festival Team" includes all the Feast Coordinators from the U.S., Canada, Caribbean, the Council of Elders, U.S. regional pastors, some home office staff and Ministerial and Member Services. These reports are compiled and summarized into around ten categories. These are reviewed with management and serve as a basis of discussion for the annual Feast coordinator conference in February.

A final post-Feast summary will be ready in a couple of weeks with attendance from all sites and overviews. In the meantime, Gracious Mpilangwe, Feast coordinator from Blantyre, Malawi, summarized this year's Feast well for all sites: "It was a wonderful experience. We have become a big family doing things together and the Spirit of God is ever-present."

#### **Blessing of Little Children**

Last Sabbath, our ministry conducted the "Blessing of Little Children" ceremony in most of our congregations. We traditionally do this very special blessing the second Sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles. Years ago this was done at the Feast, but as the years went by so many children were brought forward that it was deemed necessary to change the time and location to the first convenient Sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles in the local congregations. As we ask for God's protection and blessing on our little ones, we also learn an important spiritual lesson.

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates the Kingdom of God. We have just returned home having our minds filled with many messages about the gospel of the coming Kingdom that is "at hand" for us personally (Mark 1:14-

15). The Feast of Tabernacles was always intended to be a convocation for the entire family, including our children: "And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household" (Deuteronomy 14:26).

It is significant that what Jesus said of little children describes the nature and character of those who will inherit God's Kingdom: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Mark 10:14-15).

Little children are faithful and dependent on their parents. They are teachable and humble. They naturally return parental love to their mothers and fathers. As people mature physically, these characteristics often wane. Jesus underscored these important values inherent in young children and declares emphatically that they are vital for entry into the Kingdom of God.

We travel to many areas of the world that vary in ethnicity, personality and gifts. No matter how diverse the people are who we visit, one thing is common: love and value for their children.

Yesterday we returned from India, where we visited various churches that included children. We also visited children in orphanages. Love, care and compassion for our vulnerable children are universal.

### **Return from India and Sri Lanka**

Our visit to Sri Lanka and India with David and Jolinda Schreiber was nothing short of amazing. It was a whirlwind of activity that included contact with a wide variety of people who ranged from those who have been baptized for more than 40 years to those new in the church to those who were hearing the gospel of the Kingdom of God for the first time in *Beyond Today* seminars. There are those, too, who wish to associate with us.

This part of the world is heavily populated. Sri Lanka is primarily Buddhist and India is mostly Hindu. In India only 2.8% of the population is considered Christian, but that still amounts to 30 million people.

I had heard so much about our work in these parts of the world through the years in bits and pieces, but it took visiting the people and being immersed in their land to fully understand the context, geography and history of their lives. What is wonderful is to see the same power of God's Spirit in the lives of these people as we do among all others who are converted and are transforming their lives.

I am so grateful for the seeds that have been persistently planted by David Schreiber and Ken Murray in recent years. While the seed is small, it does bear fruit. God's Word does its work: "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

I'd like to share one example of such a planting and germination. In Agra (where a United Church of God congregation is found), more than a decade ago a Hindu person gave George Samuel a copy of a *Good News* magazine that he had found. The person wasn't interested in the magazine, but thought that George might be. George found the *Good News* magazine enlightening and sent for more literature and subsequently a visit. After some time he was baptized, along with his wife, Shobha. Now, they hold weekly church services in their Agra home for about 12-20 people. I had the honor to meet them for the first time and hear their story of faith and stepping out as Christians in this Hindu culture. We are hoping that George can come to Ambassador Bible College for the second semester starting in January. We also visited with other members and heard their stories.



George and Shobha Samuel of Agra, India.

I have much more detail and photos about our recent journey at <http://v2.travelark.org/travel-blog/victorkubik/24>.

One of the highlights of our journey was a visit to the congregations in the state of Mizoram in far eastern India. Mizoram is nestled between Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. This area is almost completely Christian, as a result of British missionaries who came here in the 1890s. A grouping of three congregations has been in contact with the United Church of God for more than ten years. We visited all three of these congregations.

They call themselves the United Church of God. The Council of Elders wrote a letter to them in January of this year acknowledging that "United Church of God, Mizoram" has adopted the UCGIA Fundamental Beliefs, is keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and God's Feasts and, in most other ways, is showing a desire at a future date to become a part of UCGIA, rather than just a separate church of God that is working with us. For now, we will continue our close working relationship with the United Church of God, Mizoram, as we jointly preach the gospel in the state of Mizoram.




Members of the congregation in Kolasib, Mizoram.

Last Sabbath, David Schreiber and I each spoke at two Sabbath Services in Kolasib, Mizoram. Two publications in the Mizo language were released and dedicated by us. One was a translation of the *Fundamental Beliefs* of the United Church of God, and the other was a separate publication they had written about the Passover and observing it on the 14th day of Nisan.

On the day before the Sabbath, we visited the village of Mualkhang where we dedicated the foundation stone for the new church hall they are building. The Kolasib, Aizawl and Mualkhang congregations are under one pastor. They have not asked us for any financial support, ever. While in Mizoram, they paid for our expenses while staying there.

There is so much more to tell. You can read more about it at the link that I have provided above.

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

## **Winter Camp 2018**

It is time for campers to apply for Winter Camp 2018. We are looking forward to another great year of camp in Wisconsin as we enjoy winter fun, build friendships, and--most importantly--grow in our relationship with God. Each day we dive into God's Word with interactive Christian Living Classes. We also have all kinds of exciting indoor and outdoor activities during the day while we live in the Zone having fun and growing as friends and family.

We have an overabundance of staff, but we are still in need of a camp nurse.

We do still have openings for campers, so get those applications in soon at <https://uyc.ucg.org/camp/winter-camp>

-- Aaron Creech, Camp Director

## **80th Anniversary Celebration for Portland Congregation**

Everyone is invited to Portland, Oregon, for our 80th anniversary celebration on Sabbath, December 1, 2018. Mr. Herbert Armstrong first studied the Bible while living in the Portland area in the late 1920s, doing much of his study in the Portland public library. After moving to Eugene and beginning the *World Tomorrow* program and *Plain Truth* magazine in 1934, the Church slowly began to grow. A second congregation meeting regularly began in Portland in 1938 and has continued to our time.

After Sabbath services at 1 p.m., we will have a potluck meal, then a program featuring interviews with long-time members, memorabilia and entertainment.

-- Rex Sexton

## **Call for WFW Presenters**

The Winter Family Weekend in Cincinnati this year will take place December 21-25. As in previous years, we plan to offer educational seminars on the Sabbath of December 22. Our theme this year is "Iron that Sharpens Iron," which may sound familiar because it echoes the theme of the last annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders. Those who are interested in presenting one of this year's seminars should contact Frank Dunkle at [frank\\_dunkle@ucg.org](mailto:frank_dunkle@ucg.org) with a short summary of their idea. Presentations should last approximately 50 minutes, and may be directed toward general audiences or teens.

## **Sermon Disc Program Set #128 Available**

Sermons newly published for the Sermon Disc Program (SDP 128) are now available for download. You can access them, as well as archived SDP sermons at <https://www.ucg.org/sermon-disc-program>

The Sermon Disc Program is a service provided by the home office intended for shut-ins as well as for congregations needing video sermons when a live speaker is not available. If you have any questions, you can contact [chaz\\_leathers@ucg.org](mailto:chaz_leathers@ucg.org) or [rudy\\_rangel@ucg.org](mailto:rudy_rangel@ucg.org).

## Inside United Podcast



### Rohan De Silva - Radio and Religion in Sri Lanka

Rohan De Silva joins Victor Kubik to discuss his career as a mainstream radio host in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as well as the religious climate in his country.

<https://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united/inside-united-podcast-092-rohan-de-silva-radio-and-religion-in-sri-lanka>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

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

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