



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,

Two big events occupied our attention this past week. One was our annual Festival Coordinators conference held online with seven of us assembling in my office. Charles Melear did a stellar job in organizing the agenda and keeping us focused during nearly eight hours of meetings. He writes the following:

The annual Feast Coordinators conference convened on February 4 and 5 via an Internet connection. 32 people were involved, including Feast coordinators from the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean, home office staff and volunteer support.

President Vic Kubik opened the conference with the main reasons for observing the Feast. He quoted from Deuteronomy 14 "that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always" and stated that this is the "why" of the Feast of Tabernacles. The planning and preparing of all the subsequent details stems from this vision.

The Operation Manager of Ministerial and Member Services, Mark Welch, greeted everyone and expressed how he is looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles aspect of his new responsibilities. He noted that at the Feast we are there to worship the coming King.



Some new ideas were discussed, but mostly it was determined to follow the principle of "if it isn't broken, then don't fix it." Nevertheless, some behind-the-scenes improvements will be implemented.

We discussed special music, budgets, youth education, membership surveys at each site, assigned articles for publications related to the Feast and better use of the websites for each Feast site.

Something that has been present at most sites, but this year at all U.S. sites, will be cards to sign for those not able to attend the Feast in person.

Beyond Today

Three more *Beyond Today* television episodes were recorded yesterday in our new video recording studio. The studio audience consisted of church members, ABC students and *Beyond Today* co-workers who were all very engaged during this two-hour recording session.



Beyond Today recording--a view from the audience

The new programs recorded were *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* by Steve Myers, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* by Darris McNeely, and *Why Were You Born?* by Gary Petty.

This Week's Podcast

My guest this week is our new Operation Manager, Mark Welch, who has been on the job in our office here for a month now. He discusses some of his thoughts about his new role and priorities in Ministerial and Member Services.

From Wretched to Righteous

If you as a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ were to take a spiritual inventory, where would you come out? When one considers the apostle Paul, the word "extraordinary" comes to mind. He came to God's service in a most unusual way. Before the astonishing miracle of his conversion, Paul was already well educated and well known, even as a young man. He describes himself as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews...concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5-6). He held the coveted title of *citizen* in the Roman world, a prized status. He sat at the feet of leading early rabbinic scholars in Jerusalem. He was highly educated to the point that he could easily cite Greek poets during his speech in Athens (Acts 17:28).

Paul wrote much of the New Testament. Through the mighty grace of God, Paul performed public miracles, healings and much more (Acts 19:11-12). In the service of God, he was physically beaten with rods three times, once nearly stoned to death, flogged five times, shipwrecked three times (once floating around in the Mediterranean Sea for more than 24 hours before being rescued) and basically in constant "peril" as he crisscrossed the Roman Empire preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

If ever there was a true disciple of Christ, or a true apostle (one sent forth), it was Paul of Tarsus. He firmly established a very high standard for us to emulate today (1 Corinthians 11:1).

But given all of those extraordinary bona fides, Paul wrote a most remarkable statement to the Romans: "I know that *nothing good dwells in me*, that is, in my flesh. For I have the *desire* to do what is right, but *not* the ability to carry it out" (Romans 7:18, English Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

How did this man of seeming extraordinary capacity describe himself? "*Wretched man that I am!* Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (verse 24, ESV). That word "wretched" (Greek *talaiporos*) means to be deeply miserable, distressed, beaten down from strain, full of trouble. Ironically, Christ's apostle to the Gentiles described himself as *full of misery* because he couldn't measure up to God's standards!

While powerfully noting that the solution to this misery lay with God through Jesus Christ, Paul left us with a remarkable and sobering conclusion: "I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh *I serve the law of sin*" (verse 25, ESV).

What?! How could this be? One of the most powerful New Testament men of God *a slave to sin*?

The answer to that leads us to my point: Despite all of his incredible achievements and accomplishments as a powerful Spirit-filled minister of God, Paul *still* had major issues that he needed to spiritually overcome, even sins and sinful traits hidden from public view. He was also painfully aware that he fell short of God's perfection and needed to show the fruit of God's Holy Spirit found in Galatians 5:22 such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

And if that's true of Paul, through whom God directly worked "unusual miracles" (Acts 19:11), what does that mean for you and me? Do we have hidden sins, spiritual challenges that we quietly grapple with, even though we may present an image of rock-solid spiritual success to those who cross our path?

As a long-time couple in the ministry of Jesus Christ, my wife Bev and I have experienced this ourselves. We are but human. We strive to follow the law of God as it lights a spiritual lamp to guide our spiritual journey through life (Psalm 119:105). But we fall short of the mark.

In our ministry, others--people who publicly seem to have it totally together, the seeming near-perfect example of a disciple of Christ--have related to us their struggles and the wayward thoughts of their minds. Not one of us is perfect.

The Bible reveals to us that when we come to the knowledge of the truth, we don't bring a lot to the table. Because of growing up and living in a world that "lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19, ESV), how we think comes from a place that the ancient prophet Jeremiah described as "deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV).

Consider that Job was such a person who appeared to have his life all together. He was wealthy, had a large family, and was careful about how he worshipped God. In chapter 42 of Job, we find that he discovered that he had overstepped his bounds and missed a critical spiritual mark. He, like Paul, found himself in a state of misery and wretchedness to the point where he admitted, "therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6, ESV).

The good news? God has no interest in us hating ourselves. That's not healthy. What God wants us to understand is that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), even after we become baptized members of the very Body of Christ!

How then do we survive? Our loving God stands ready and seeks to have a relationship with us! We overcome and become the very children of God through the awesome power and astounding favor of God's grace! As Paul thunders to us from across the ages, "*By grace* you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the *gift* of God" (Ephesians 2:8, New King James Version).

Grace in the Bible often represents the expression of God's power delivered through the Holy Spirit. The word *grace* appears more than 100 times in the New Testament and describes God's direct intervention with us in reconciliation and in the bestowing of marvelous favor! The application of God's grace spiritually bridges the gap between our efforts, our willingness to surrender, and the connection to God Himself through Jesus Christ.

The truth? God's grace transforms our wretchedness into His righteousness! Grace--the manifestation of God's power into our lives--brings us to obedience. It gives us the capacity to receive, experience and pass on the love of God Himself!

Paul wasn't good enough. And he knew it. Likewise, Job. Therefore, we can understand that *all* of us need God's grace. *None* of us are righteous or holy of our own accord. That's why we are directly instructed, "Let us then with confidence draw near to *the throne of grace*, that we may receive mercy and *find grace* to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, ESV).

Much of life is pure combat between the spiritual and the flesh--a battle for our minds. We are instructed to control our thoughts and grow in faith, but we can only do it imperfectly. To be victorious and clear the hurdle, we require the power of God's grace. Then, strengthened with spiritual favor, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and *take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5, ESV). This is grace in action!

Have you fallen short? Are you overwhelmed, feeling full of misery? The throne of grace awaits you! We all need grace. We *all* need God's favor. Seek it earnestly today!

Finally...



I would like to share our newest home office employee group photo that was taken on November 30, 2018.

In Christ's service,

Victor Kubik

SOS - Chipata, Zambia



The Kubiks visiting with Filius and Chosiwe Jere in Chipata in front of their church hall in April 2017.

On January 29, 2019, robbers broke into the Chipata, Zambia, United Church of God meeting hall building and property. The perpetrators stole furniture, chairs, and window coverings that the church ladies had lovingly sewn. They took the three solar panels powering the borehole pump that provided irrigation and clean drinking water to 200 area families. They tried to dig up and steal the submersible pump but failed. They caused a lot of damage to the equipment.

This happened when there was a heavy downpour of rain. Both the church hall and water infrastructure are in the midst of tall crops of maize (corn). Consequently, the caretaker, whose house is about 80 meters away, could neither hear nor see anything until morning. cursory investigations, however, indicated footprints of a group of five or more intruders. The police are investigating, but the congregation's location is very near the borders of Mozambique and Malawi and raiders regularly cross the porous border.

Both Good Works and LifeNets are stepping up to help the people in this devastated area. We will need to provide not only a solution for the loss of clean drinking water for 200 families but chairs, furnishings and window coverings for the church hall as well.

We have been so encouraged by the many contributions to LifeNets and Good Works. The Batavia, Ohio, Rotary Club made a very generous contribution to the Chipata people to rebuild and restore what has been damaged or stolen.

You can contribute to Good Works directly to this appeal at: <https://www.ucg.org/members/service-projects/chipata-vandalism-repairs>

For more background information, or to contribute though LifeNets, you can visit <http://lifenets.org/sos-chipata>

Our initial goal is for \$20,000. I want to thank everyone, particularly those who had not contributed before, for helping out so generously in this time of trial and suffering.

We plan to take additional security measures to dissuade thieves from returning. We plan to build a wall around the church building and the pump facility that will remain locked at night.

Many people have already offered their solace and prayers to the Chipata congregation and pastor Filius Jere who has responded bravely to the event. He and his wife, Chosiwe, went on a three-day prayer and fasting retreat that ended this past Tuesday. He vows to never get discouraged, give up on God or be a quitter. The church in Chipata accepts this as a temporary setback. These events have acted like a bond to knit them much closer together. They are so thankful for the outpouring of love from all over the world. Your love has made them feel more closely a part of a much bigger body of future citizens of the Kingdom of God. Filius reported that last Sabbath "Onward Christian Soldiers" was sung with more fervor than usual.

Good Works, LifeNets, and LifeNets Australia has helped our brethren here over the years with sewing machines, oxen, plows and boreholes.

-- Victor Kubik

Camp Video Coming in March

The following is a revised timeline for the camp video. The video will be aired in local congregations during the sermonette time on either March 23, March 30 or April 6. The video download will be available on March 22.

If You Are Ever In Cincinnati--Join Our LIVE *Beyond Today* Studio Audience!

It has worked very well having a LIVE studio audience for our new *Beyond Today* television recordings.

So, if you are ever passing through Cincinnati, please consider being a part of our studio audience! The recording time is 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.--usually on the first Wednesday of each month. If you would like to be a part of this special opportunity, please send an e-mail requesting such to medial@ucg.org. Refreshments are served after each session.

Please consider being a part of our studio audience if you visit Cincinnati!

-- Peter Eddington

Cookbook Pre-Ordering

This is just a reminder about pre-ordering for our Unleavened Bread Cookbook. The cost is \$12.00. We would like to clarify the process for pre-ordering:

1. Please pre-order cookbooks in your local congregations. Please sign the order form that has been provided with your name, e-mail, phone number, quantity and amount of your order; address is not necessary and the order form does not need to accompany the order.
2. Please send one check (if possible) made out to "ABC Student Fund" with the quantity of cookbooks to be sent, a representative's name and phone number and e-mail address to: ABC Unleavened Bread Cookbook, 555 TechneCenter Dr, Milford, OH 45150.
3. To ensure delivery of cookbooks to all areas before the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are asking for pre-orders to reach us by February 19.
4. Please address any questions to healthy.cookbook.2019@gmail.com

Thank you for your help and support!

-- ABC Class of 2019

Inside United Podcast

Mark Welch - Ministerial and Member Services

Mark Welch joins Victor Kubik to discuss his new role as Operation Manager for Ministerial and Member Services and his vision for the work moving forward.

<https://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united/inside-united-podcast-107-mark-welch-ministerial-and-member-services>

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