



## United Church of God *an International Association*

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 406

January 16, 2020

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### Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

#### **Volcano in the Philippines**

Last week, the Taal volcano erupted about 40 miles south of Manila. Nearly one million people live within 10 miles of the explosion. We had just concluded our ministerial training conference in Manila on December 27. Everyone we know in the ministry and Church is safe, to our knowledge. Senior pastor David Dobson and his wife, Denise, stayed on in the Philippines after the conference for their annual National Council meeting on January 5. They were not able to return home right away because the Manila airport was closed, but it reopened for a short time and they were able to get out just before the airport was once again shut down.



Taal Volcano (photo by [Exec8](#)).

#### **South Central Ministerial Conference**

Starting this Sunday evening, we will hold a ministerial conference in Pottsboro, Texas, and it will include ministers and wives from our South Central region: Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas,

Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana. I thoroughly appreciate these conferences to speak publicly and privately with our ministry.

### **BT Daily, Interviews and Podcasts**

We regularly produce short video and audio segments that can conveniently be listened to from our website or from podcast apps. They contain timely content of interest to the public and the Church.

- *Beyond Today* Interviews: <https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-television-program>
- BT Daily: <https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-daily>
- *Inside United* Podcast: <https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast>

We produce podcasts weekly. The last two were recorded remotely in Manila and Hong Kong.

### **Exercise living faith**

A few months ago, I taught the Book of James to our Ambassador Bible College class. The overriding theme of James is *faith*. James gives various examples of faith in belief and action starting with faith under trial (James 1:3) to when "the prayer of faith shall save the sick" when one is anointed (James 5:15).

In our study of the fruit of the spirit, we come now to faith, or faithfulness. This represents a critical point where our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ pivot and turn. Indeed, as Paul told the Corinthians and us today, "we walk by faith, *not* by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7, emphasis added throughout). We are reminded in the book of Hebrews that without faith it is *impossible* to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

That can be a major challenge. A thousand distractions can consume us in our daily lives. Left unrestrained, our minds can wander from spiritual reality, seeing and experiencing in the physical world seemingly dozens of reasons to mistrust God and doubt. We hit hard times or see troubling news and we become discouraged. Where is our faith?

While there is such a thing as human faith or human belief, the powerful faith spoken of here in Galatians by the apostle Paul represents a *spiritual gift*. This faith is the very faith of Jesus Christ Himself, who will freely give us this priceless gift if we but ask.

The Greek word translated *faith* here is *pistis*. It speaks of belief, trust and confidence. It is the word used in Luke's account where a woman is healed after touching the garment of Jesus. In this account, Jesus turns around to say: "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith [*pistis*] has made you well" (Matthew 9:22).

We all would like to receive more of that faith, that *pistis*, wouldn't we? The good news is that we can!

Here is the vital point of this column: faith is a dynamic spiritual gift that must be asked for, strengthened and *used*! There is a way to tell whether one has living faith or faith that is dead.

Dead faith is deceptive. Dead faith does not produce trust. Dead faith can masquerade as good intentions expressed with no intent of being acted upon, by acquiring biblical knowledge that is not applied or acted upon, or in the form of talking the talk, but never walking the walk. Jesus Himself warned of this dead faith, which is sometimes manifested in those who only desire to "appear" righteous (Matthew 6:1), calling them "hypocrites."

James, the brother of Jesus, offers a great deal of positive direction concerning faith and the application of *trust*. Concerning living faith, he thundered the famous statement, "faith without works is *dead*" (James 2:26). (Of course, what James did *not* say here is that one can somehow earn his or her salvation by works or acts of human righteousness.) Some other English translations make the intent plain: "faith *apart* from works is dead" reads the English Standard Version, relating the fact that living faith is accompanied by *deeds*. Living faith in action is visible, where people take the step of *trusting* in God to do what He says!

James tells us: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" (James 2:14, ESV). To illustrate, James asks an important question: "If a brother or a sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, *what good is that?*" (verse 16). His point? "faith by itself, if it does *not* have works, is *dead*" (verse 17).

I find that the book of James marvelously integrates true faith with practical applications. Human-generated faith or belief can get us started in the right direction, but in the long run it is insufficient. It must be replaced by the living faith of Jesus Christ given to us. The exercise of living faith enables us to trust in God. Once we can trust, we can have peace. "*Blessed* is the man who trusts in the LORD" (Jeremiah 17:7).

We will all face trials. But James shows that a strong spiritual faith not only enables us to endure a painful trial, but to become conquerors! Strong faith gives us the ability to face trials head on. Powerful faith gives the ability to move forward when things are uncomfortable. Through the application of living faith, we can choose to place our trust in God (as opposed to ourselves or others), confidently believing He will do what He says.

By exercising living faith, James tells us that when we read the Bible and see that we need a course correction, we get busy! We *obey* God because we want to and we know and trust that God knows what we need. We trust and act. As he writes: "don't just listen to God's word. *You must do what it says*" (James 1:22, New Living Translation).

Exercising living faith, the faith of Jesus Christ Himself, is more than just reading the Bible (although that is, of course, very important). It is more than studying and acquiring knowledge (although, again, that is very important). Exercising living faith is demonstrated by internally and spiritually motivated *obedience* to God, where we seek to obey *because we want to* (not because of perceived external threats), cheerfully putting into action what we read and understand.

The entire 11th chapter of Hebrews is an exciting and encouraging account of faithful people through the ages who did just that. They obeyed, even when they didn't totally understand.

They stood firm, even when promises didn't seem to be fulfilled. They suffered on occasion, even as it seemed contrary to what they knew would be their wonderful future. Simply put, they trusted in God and in His unbreakable promises. Spiritual faith, powerfully exercised, led them to victory!

This was all living life by faith, not by sight.

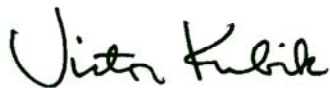
As we commit to exercising and using the living faith that we are given, we must also fully read and embrace the second half of the famous "faith" verse of Hebrews 11:6. Sometimes we can read the first half, correctly noting that without faith it is impossible to please God. When we are discouraged and our faith is being tested, even strained, only reading the first half can be inadvertently discouraging.

Here's the second important part of that verse. Read it slowly, drinking in its meaning: "whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he *rewards those who seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6, ESV).

As James notes, "*Every* good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (James 1:17, ESV). Those who seek God, believing that He exists, asking for and exercising living faith through active trust, will be rewarded with good and perfect gifts--now and in the life to come!

Today, when you ask that God would pour out His Spirit into you, ask also for the gift of faith and how to exercise it. If your life is uncomfortable, living spiritual faith will sustain you. Remember that you walk by faith, not by sight. And believe fully in the promise that as you seek God and exercise the faith that you receive, the promise of your reward will be fulfilled!

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

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From Ministerial and Member Services...



Kent and Kristy Foraker

At the beginning of January, Kent Foraker was appointed pastor of the congregations in Wichita, Salina and Meade, Kansas. Mr. Foraker and his wife, Kristy, had been assisting the previous pastor, Ed Dowd. Mr. Dowd will continue to pastor the Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, congregations.



Scott and Carrie McKeon

At the beginning of January, Scott McKeon was appointed pastor of the congregations in Phoenix Northwest and Northern Arizona. Mr. McKeon and his wife, Carrie, had been assisting the previous pastor, Jim Tuck. Mr. McKeon will also continue to assist pastor Randy Schreiber with the congregation in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Monte and Susie Knudson

Monte Knudson was appointed pastor of the congregations in Phoenix East and the Bible Study group in Show Low, Arizona, in addition to his responsibility as senior pastor for East Africa. Mr. Knudson and his wife, Susie, had been assisting the previous pastor, Jim Tuck.





The Tucks, Knudsons, McKeons and Schreibers after the new assignments were announced in Phoenix on January 4, 2020.

Jim Tuck will continue to pastor the Hawaii congregation in addition to his service as a regional pastor.

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## Attendee Survey Available through January 26

*U.S. pastors, please announce:*

In recent years, the Church has used a survey of its attendees to measure progress toward the goals and objectives stated in the Church's annual Strategic and Operation Plan.

The survey is designed for a part of the Plan called "Congregational Care" which is about our congregations. This year's anonymous survey is now available and is intended for people of all ages who are associated with the United Church of God.

Please respond to the survey at this link before January 26:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SZ2TZRS>

The results are intended to help us identify ways to improve our overall service to God, His Church and one another. Thank you again for your time, commitment, and devotion to God and to the United Church of God.

-- Mark Welch

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## Inside United Podcast



### **The McNeelys, Mary Ong, Rhea Maglasang, Terry Franke - Asia Tour Debrief**

At the end of their trip across Asia, Victor Kubik and Darris and Debra McNeely have a group discussion with some of the attendees: Mary Ong, Rhea Maglasang, and Terry Franke. Their conversation covers an array of topics from the Kingdom of God seminars to the current state of Hong Kong.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-145-the-mcneelys-mary-ong-rhea-maglasang-terry-franke-asia-tour-debrief>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

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

### **United Youth Camps Video**

Pastors and Elders: Please reserve the sermonette slot on one of these Sabbaths in order to play the 15-minute UYC video: March 28, April 4 or April 11. March 28 would be the preferred Sabbath, since it is the earliest date. Thank you.

-- Steve Nutzman

### **ABC Magnetic Calendars Still Available**

It is not too late to order magnetic calendar planners! Because of a mistake with the printer, we have more of the calendars than planned and will be happy to accept orders. As the official fundraiser for Ambassador Bible College, the charge is \$5 per calendar or three for \$10. There is an additional dollar fee for shipping, but orders for congregations that are sent to one address pay no shipping fee. Orders can be sent by e-mail to Steven Rowland at [tyadran@gmail.com](mailto:tyadran@gmail.com).

### **Job Opening - Web Developer**

The United Church of God has announced an opening for a Web Developer. The position will require the following:

- Custom programming and Web application development for Church websites.
- Testing, maintenance and troubleshooting of existing Church sites.

- Contributing ideas and efforts towards internal projects and working as part of a team to find solutions for various problems.
- Plus, other duties as assigned.

Required skills for this position include:

- A solid understanding of PHP, AJAX, HTML, Javascript, and CSS, or knowledge of other programming languages and a willingness to learn.
- Familiarity with source control systems such as Git.
- Ability to communicate technical ideas to business users and other teams (design, QA).
- Ability to both collaborate with team members and to work independently.
- Eager to embrace current and emerging Web technologies.

The following experience would give an applicant preference:

- Knowledge of SEO coding best practices.
- Proficient in Drupal, including custom module development, key contributed modules and core API.
- Two-plus years of Drupal hands-on development experience.
- Experience integrating open source and third-party applications into existing systems.

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) is preferred. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a resume of their education and/or experience.

Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God.

For an employment application or for more information, please contact [human\\_resources@ucg.org](mailto:human_resources@ucg.org).

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