



United Church of God *an International Association*

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 410

February 13, 2020

Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

We held our annual Feast of Tabernacles Coordinator Conference this past Tuesday and Wednesday online. About 39 people were connected at one time or other through this two-day conference. Charles Melear summarizes the high points of the meetings in the next article.



Feast Coordinator Conference

We held a farewell party for Tom Disher, our Senior Web Developer, on Monday. We have appreciated his high level of expertise in the development of our UCG and *Beyond Today* websites. Our website holds a huge amount of text, video and audio that serves as a resource not only for the United Church of God, but for many others who come to visit and download material. We will sincerely miss Tom and his wife, Heather, as well as their three children whom we have enjoyed seeing grow over the past ten years. I thank Tom not only for his skills but for his faithfulness to our mission.

As usual, at this time of year we in the administration work to develop the budget for the next fiscal year. It is an arduous and sometimes painful job to prioritize our needs in order to advance the mission of the Church. It is not easy, as we weigh all the requests with our limited resources. Special attention has been placed on our international subsidies, which continue to grow faster than our income. We are striving to move towards more self-sufficiency in international areas. Our budget will be examined by the Council of Elders in their upcoming meetings here at the home office.

Do Not Love the World; Love the World

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). The same author, John, also stated that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that all who believe in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life. How do we reconcile this?

The answer lies in verses 16 and 17: "For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

It's the lust of the eyes and flesh as well as pride and its subsequent evil that we are not to love. God loves the *people* in the world and has a plan to redeem them, but he does not love the sin.

What Christ said through John is both sobering and thought-provoking. Lust and pride are not compatible with the presence of God.

We are in a world which is so immersed in broadcasting pride and lust that we can become unaware of how fully it affects us. In Greek, the word for world is *kosmos*, of which one meaning is "society." The dark side of our society can become invisible to us. It's like the illustration about someone asking a fish "How's the water?" only to have the fish reply "Water? What water?" The fish was not aware that it was entirely engulfed by water and didn't even know it was there. This is how the world can seem to us.

The radiation of these broadcasts from the world's media into our society has been relentless. Even "redeeming" movies and television don't miss an opportunity to include a tinge of profanity and compromising sinful messages. We just get used to them.

I remember going to see the movie "Patton" in 1970 where the S-word was first used. Theatergoers gasped! How could one say such a word in public? Now, the F-word has become a standard and shameless part of vocabulary for both men and women.

The producers of mass entertainment know well that people increasingly crave realistic violence and explicit sex to season whatever subject is depicted. Otherwise, people won't be drawn to watch it. We have come to a point where we can unknowingly but willingly adapt to the spirit of the world. What we used to watch on television and movies long ago is considered puerile by today's jaded "mature" audiences. Even what I write here may be taken by some as naïve.

There is yet another destructive factor in what the world radiates. This radiation bombards our society with corrupt values that is geared to dislodge God and His truth from us. Sin begins to look normal while righteousness looks abnormal when people are hostile to and alienated from God. An almost irreversible consciousness-seared sense of right and wrong grows.

I could describe in greater detail many examples of this worldliness from entertainment, academia, business, politics and the arts. A recent example of this worldliness is the recent 2020 Super Bowl half-time entertainment. The show was viewed by a huge television audience of all ages--from little children to the aged. Merely a generation ago it would have been illegal

to show publicly all that was shown. This was televised for the entire family to view in their living rooms. Impressionable children watched vulgar body movements and sexual suggestions that left little to the imagination. There was some outcry from what's becoming a moral minority, but it is becoming a muffled voice as creators of this kind of content only look for how to take things to the next shocking level. Those who produced and acted in this family "entertainment" felt no shame when questioned after the show.

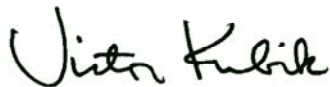
In John 17, Jesus Christ prayed earnestly for His disciples on the last evening before His horrific and painful death. He was going to leave His disciples behind in the environment of the world and asked for God's protection on them. He mentioned the word "world" 18 times in this chapter and many more times in other chapters. He prayed for His disciples of that time and for those who would believe through them--which includes us. Notice this heartfelt prayer in which you can sense Jesus' earnestness and pain:

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:14-21).

Understanding what the world is, and consequently identifying worldliness is crucial. If you are a friend of the world, you have a competing loyalty and are not a friend of God. That is how profound your choice is. One more reason not to love the world is because the world does not love you back. You may be drawn to the glitter, materialism and excitement of the world, but the world hates you. It tempts, tantalizes and attempts to trap you into its pleasures. But once it has your loyalty, it has no regard for you when you fall through addiction, disease, financial demise and all other types of failure. Loving the world is the ultimate in unrequited love. This is a good time of the year to examine how much of the world we allow into our homes and to what we may be exposing ourselves and our innocence.

We are called to love the people in the world, but not the sin of the world.

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

Personal from Ministerial and Member Services...



Vernon Hargrove

We received news that retired pastor Vernon Hargrove died this past Monday, at the age of 83. His son, Michael, reports about his father: "He died peacefully and with dignity. He was a good and loving father. He was eighth of nine siblings, and the last remaining." Vernon pastored 18 churches over a period of 47 years. Vernon will be buried at West Lawn Memorial in Eugene, Oregon, next to his wife, DeLee.

Over the last couple of weeks we have had two very faithful servants of God die--Herb Teitgen and Vernon Hargrove. Both men were dedicated to serving God and His people and, I am confident, sought to please God and to surrender to Him. Both Herb and Vernon have finished their race and there is a "crown of righteousness" awaiting them in God's Kingdom (2 Timothy 4:8)!



Ken and Dianne Skorseth

Ken Skorseth, along with his wife, Dianne, have agreed to serve the Fargo, Bismarck and Minot congregations in North Dakota. The Winnipeg congregation will be served from the Canadian office for the foreseeable future. I greatly appreciate both Ken's and Dianne's willingness to humbly serve our brethren in North Dakota (along with adjacent areas of Minnesota and South Dakota). Once again, God has provided for the care of His people.

Death of Vera Heberer



Vera Heberer

Vera Heberer, the wife of deceased elder Donald Heberer, died this past Sabbath at the age of 92. She was a mighty woman of God, a true pillar of God's Church who faithfully served the St. Louis church area for many years. Prayers for her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are appreciated. Her children's names are Don Heberer, Elise Gannon and Miriam Baricevic. Cards of condolence may be sent to Barry and Elise Gannon, 5252 Deer Ridge Trail, House Springs, MO 63051-2169. Messages may also be left for the family at the following website: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/saint-louis-mo/vera-heberer-9030734>

God's Protection

In the space of the past two weeks we have had thefts reported from two of our congregations that own church buildings. The pastor of our Terre Haute (Indiana) congregation, Nelson Arnold, reported that their two exterior air conditioning units were destroyed by thieves who took all of their copper components. The pastor of our Cleveland (Ohio) congregation, Greg Thomas, reported that they were notified by the county sheriff's office that their building was burglarized by thieves who threw a large rock through the window of a front door. Apparently they stole some minor items from the pastor's office, but the good news is that no expensive items appear to be missing.

The pastor of our Kansas City (Kansas) congregation, Joe Dobson, reported that he gave a Sabbath message about security procedures and God's protection at the end of January. That same evening, after our members left the rented church facility, another group came in for an event, and when that other group was leaving, the police detained them while they searched the entire building with their guns drawn and with K-9 dogs. Apparently, there had been a shooting a few blocks away and the footsteps led to an unlocked door at that building. Thankfully, everyone was safe and the suspect was not found to be in the building.

I wanted to share these incidents with you to show the need for us to continue to seek God's protection for His people, including His protection for our meeting halls so that they can be safe places where we can come together to worship Him without fear.

2020 Feast Coordinator Conference

As Mr. Kubik mentioned, we had a very productive Feast Coordinator meeting this week with the vast majority of coordinators for this coming Feast and from previous years. It is our goal to train more Feast Coordinators for the future and we are working to have an assistant coordinator at all major U.S. Feast sites this coming Feast. Charles wrote the following report:

"Around 40 people participated in the annual Feast Coordinator Conference on February 11 and 12 by Web conference. Participants included Feast coordinators and their assistants from the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean, home office staff and volunteer support.

"President Vic Kubik and MMS manager Mark Welch welcomed everyone and expressed their appreciation for the time involved in seeking to improve the Feast and serve the members with quality speaking, music and activities.

"Conference Planner Charles Melear also covered a number of pertinent topics. Additional presentations were made regarding special music, budgeting, local websites, speaking, manpower, greeting cards for those not able to attend the Feast, articles for the Festival Planning Brochure and youth education.

"Due to the high days both falling on the weekly Sabbath, there will be no national live webcast in 2020. Two new U.S. Feast sites for 2020 are Pewaukee, Wisconsin, replacing Wisconsin Dells for a two year contract and Daytona Beach, Florida, which will replace Jekyll Island for a two year contract.

"This year, a post Feast survey was sent to everyone registered for the Feast. Over 2,100 attendees responded. 78% responded that they were 'very satisfied' their Feast experience and 15% responded that they were 'somewhat satisfied.' And over 560 people provided specific comments for consideration.

"We recognize that the success of the Feast is based on hundreds of volunteers from our membership."

Observing God's annual Holy Days is a practice of the United Church of God based on instructions in God's word to keep--to observe--these days. We observe these days because God has instructed us to do so. Jesus Christ observed these days and so did His followers, long after His death and resurrection. The Bible also indicates that Christ's followers will observe these days during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ here on earth. It only makes good sense that His followers living today would keep these very important annual Holy Days.

I greatly appreciate all the dedicated service by Charles Melear and the many Feast Coordinators who serve God and His people. Moreover, I greatly appreciate all of you--our members and ministers who so willingly serve in so many capacities at all of God's annual Holy Days over many, many years. It is truly a labor of love as we all strive to please God and surrender to Him more fully!

In God's love and service,
Mark Welch, Operation Manager for MMS

Inside United Podcast



Gary Petty - The Mercy Effect

Gary Petty stops by to discuss his latest book, *The Mercy Effect*, with Victor Kubik. They get to the heart of what mercy is, why we all need it, and why we all need to give it. *The Mercy Effect* is [available on Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1601627000).

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-149-gary-petty-the-mercy-effect>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

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

Sri Lanka: A UCG Short Film



Watch the United Church of God's newest short film, "Sri Lanka: A Feast of Tabernacles Adventure" at www.ucg.org/ucg-films/ucg-short-film/sri-lanka-a-feast-of-tabernacles-adventure

[adventure](#). Enjoy this family adventure story about what it's like to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Sri Lanka.

View the entire short film series at www.ucg.org/ucg-films/ucg-short-film and catch up on previous subjects, too.

-- Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services

Elders Needed at Feast Sites in the Australian Region

A request is being made for elders who would be able to travel to the Australian region to speak at the Feast this year. In previous years, elders from the United States have served at Rockingham, Western Australia, and Penang, Malaysia. This year we are looking for at least two elders who would be able to transfer to an Australian Feast site for the entire Feast. UCG-Australia would cover the airfare expense for travel from the United States. Once at the Feast, the cost of food and travel is very affordable--\$1 USD currently exchanges for \$1.49 AUD. If you have interest in serving the brethren at an Australian Feast site, please contact Chris Rowland in Ministerial and Member Services.

-- UCG-A Festival Planning Team

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