



United Church of God *an International Association*

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 411

February 20, 2020

Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

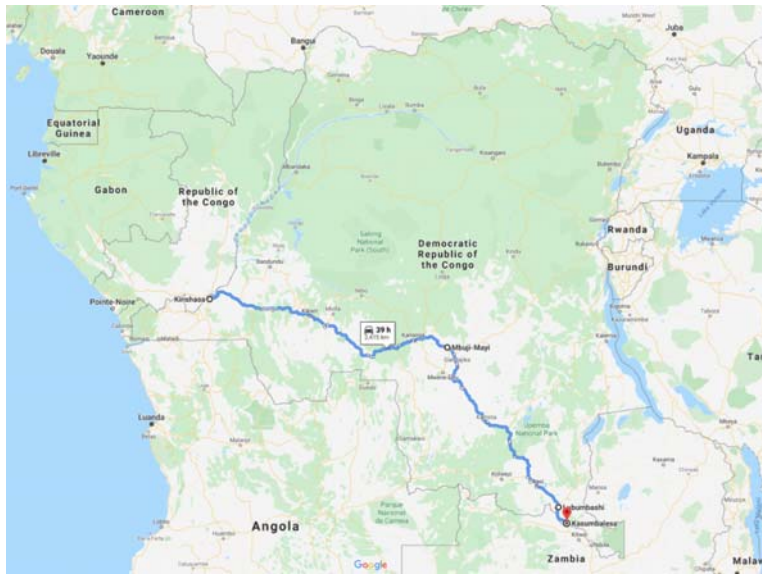
Vernon Hargrove memorial

This last week we traveled to Eugene, Oregon, where I had been asked to conduct the memorial for long-standing elder Vern Hargrove. He served in 18 congregations throughout his career. I first met him almost 55 years ago in December 1965, when he came to Minneapolis, Minnesota, as a guest speaker to our congregation. We have interacted numerous times throughout his career, particularly in the last years when he served as pastor of the Columbus, Ohio, congregation. He was preceded in death by his wife, DeLee, who died on December 10, 2015. Vernon was the last of nine siblings and survived by his two sons, Mike and David. The small family memorial was a solemn closing of a memorable chapter in the life of a beloved servant of God.

Tim Pebworth's upcoming visit to the Congo

Senior pastor for the French-speaking regions, Tim Pebworth, is leaving for the Democratic Republic of the Congo on February 27, where he will spend 15 days visiting brethren in Kinshasa, Mbuji-Mayi, Lubumbasi and Kasumbalesa (on the border with Zambia, near Kitwe) --about five congregations of our brethren. This is a very remote area. Tim was denied entry to the DRC the last time he flew there and was forced to return to France. A few of the brethren in this area have come over the border to Zambia for Holy Days in the past.

Tim plans to visit the LifeNets-sponsored school for orphans in Kasumbalesa, taking school supplies and money donated by local San Francisco Bay Area members. While very close to Zambia, he will not be able to cross the iron curtain-like border into Zambia due to visa restrictions where he could visit with Derrick and Cherry Pringle; however, he sent them a note letting them know that he will be in the region. They most likely will not come due to this being dangerous territory for foreigners.



Here is a map of the 1,000-mile route from the capital, Kinshasa, from which he will fly. Please pray for Tim Pebworth's safety on this journey to visit our brethren. You can read more about our interactions with this area of the Congo at www.lifenets.org/congo.

Who will be justified before God?

As we approach the Spring Holy Days, this time represents an excellent opportunity to review our lives, our motivation and how we conduct ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5). The apostle Paul reminds us that as long as we draw breath, we have a critical choice, to embrace and "let the [Holy] Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes" (Ephesians 4:23). Indeed, we are to "Put on your new nature, created to be like God--truly righteous and holy" (verses 24-25, New Living Translation).

That's a high path and calling! How do we do this?

Let us consider our thoughts and attitudes, for these reflect our character, and often lead to our actions and deeds.

Jesus Christ often used parables and stories to illuminate and underscore important points. The parable He told of the Pharisee and the tax collector is a well-known one, but it is appropriate to review and consider as we begin preparing ourselves for fresh spiritual growth.

The powerful account begins with an important note. Jesus had the miraculous supernatural ability to discern people's hearts and motivations. As Luke records, Jesus knew that the people he was talking to "trusted in themselves" (Luke 18:9). They believed with certainty that they were righteous. Worse, they were prejudiced against others whom they regarded as less righteous than themselves, even to the point where they "despised others."

Armed with this inside knowledge, Jesus delivered a parable that cuts straight to the heart. Luke records the story, beginning in verse 10: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'"

And what of the other person, a man of a reviled profession who was probably both feared and hated by the locals? The story continues in verse 13: "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'"

The Pharisee trusted in his own self-defined "righteousness." He stood in biased judgment of anyone whom he felt could not match his standard of behavior.

But what did our Savior say about the "unrighteous" tax collector?

"I tell you that this man, *rather than the other*, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:14, NLT, emphasis added throughout).

What points can we take away about the Pharisee, the tax collector and the people who were standing before Jesus listening to this parable?

- They trusted in *themselves*, which diminished their trust in God.
- At the time, the Pharisees were highly regarded by the community; tax collectors were regarded as very low in community standing.
- In this situation, the Pharisee's prayer didn't reach the ears of God. As the account notes, he prayed *with himself*, self-righteously listing all the undesirable aspects of society.
- Instead of praying for others and asking how he could be of service, the Pharisee focused on *his* "good" deeds--fasting and tithing. He drew attention to *himself* and what he regarded as superior behavior.
- In contrast, the tax collector was ashamed. His attitude was one of deep humility. He realized how inadequate he was.
- Beating his breast in anguish, he earnestly appealed to *God*, not himself.
- Understanding that he was not worthy, he asked for mercy, not an approving sanctimonious pat on the back from God.
- What happened? The acts of a transactional religion were found wanting. The tax collector was justified, and received God's *grace* and forgiveness!

How can we apply this lesson of humility? How can we rid ourselves of any self-righteousness?

Let's be honest: who are we sometimes most like in this parable?

Could we be like the Pharisee who praised himself for the good things he did? Do we sometimes "do" certain things that can make us feel smugly self-righteous? When we tithe, pray, vigorously put out the leaven in our home or make sure we don't eat anything unclean,

what's our attitude? Are these spiritual tools to help us grow? Or sometimes, could that be a claim to being righteous in and of itself? These are some tough questions.

For certain, when we obey God by doing what He says, including praying, tithing and other spiritual acts, these acts are good and expected. In another example involving the Jerusalem Pharisees, Jesus summed up the essentials: "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, *but you ignore the more important aspects of the law--justice, mercy, and faith.* You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things" (Matthew 23:23, NLT). Also, God's assessment of our good deeds is: "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

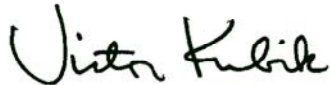
As we prepare for the upcoming Holy Day season, let us honestly ask: Are we more like the tax collector? Do we humbly recognize our need for the mercy of God and His steadfast love?

The tax collector honestly SAW himself as needing God.

The Pharisee was spiritually BLIND.

May we *all* be like the tax collector. But we have a loving God to gently guide us and give us grace. This season, let us seek Him with renewed vitality and zeal!

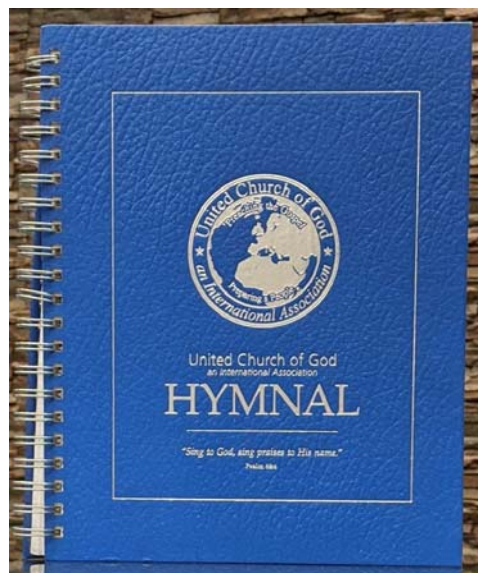
In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

Preorder Spiral-Bound Hymnals by April 6

Pastors, please announce:



Would you like to have your own personal spiral-bound copy of the UCG Hymnal (song leader/pianist version)? We are planning a reprint of these books and want to provide the opportunity for *anyone* to purchase one (or more). We are making this large size, hardcover, spiral-ring bound, original version (8.875 x 11.25 in.) available to everyone. It is especially helpful for song leaders, pianists and those who would benefit from larger-sized print or a hymnal that will lay flat.

We are making the hymnals available to everyone for the cost for printing and mailing. Orders must be placed (and payment received) before April 6, 2020. We will print and mail the hymnal directly to the address given on each order. We are hoping to have received and plan to mail the books by the beginning of June. The cost is \$13 per hymnal, which includes shipping to U.S. addresses.

Hymnals *must* be pre-ordered online at: <https://www.ucg.org/members/hymnal/blue-spiral-bound-hymnal>

-- Steve Myers

Inside United Podcast



Darris McNeely - Advancing the Gospel in Asia

While in Singapore, Darris McNeely and Victor Kubik discuss the purpose of their trip to Asia and future possibilities.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-150-darris-mcneely-advancing-the-gospel-in-asia>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

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

Nashville Young Adult Weekend Reminder

There are a few spots left for the Nashville young adult weekend, April 3-5, if there's anybody who wants to come and hasn't applied yet! Please apply as soon as possible.

Visit <https://nashvilleweekend.wixsite.com/home> and click "Apply." Once your application has been approved, you'll receive instructions for paying the fee, making hotel reservations, and other important information. There is also a Facebook group to help you find roommates if you need it.

We hope to see you there!

United Youth Camps Staff Needs

Campers and staff, online registration for the UYC program begins March 1 at uyc.ucg.org.

There are staff needs in the following areas:

Camp Pinecrest is looking to fill two assistant nurse positions for camp this summer. These nurses will assist our lead nurse and be trained to possibly fulfill the lead nursing role in future years. Requirements for this role are a degree and/or licensure as a physician, RN, LPN, EMT, paramedic, or someone currently in training/school for one of the above licenses. Please contact Mike Phelps at 513-256-7628 or mike_phelps@ucg.org if you may be interested or would like more information.

Life guard certification: There is always a need for additional life guards at several camps. UYC will pay up to \$200 toward certification costs for those who need to become certified. If you would like to become certified and are interested in the scholarship, please contact one of our teen camp directors personally.

Sermon Disc Program Set #140 (Spring Holy Days) Available

Sermons newly published for the Spring Holy Days edition of Sermon Disc Program (SDP 140) 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 or rudy_rangel@ucg.org.

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