
From: eNews from Ministerial and Member Services
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2020 4:33 PM
To: ron_barker@ucg.org
Subject: MMS eNews: We'll get through this together! and more...



United Church of God *an International Association*

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 415
March 19, 2020

Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

We'll get through this together!

What a week! Just a month ago, events related to the spread of the coronavirus seemed to be unfolding in painfully slow motion. One week ago, when I posted about the cancellation of Church services around the world, I wondered if we were acting prematurely. Now, every day brings new reports, new information and new challenges as the whole world is reacting to a common enemy. We, as a Church, went overnight from holding hundreds of Sabbath services to conducting a single continent-spanning service that was webcast from Cincinnati! Our international regions are doing the same within their areas.

As you have likely read or heard already, we had to make some tough decisions this week. For the first time in the history of our fellowship, we canceled the face-to-face component of the annual meeting for the General Conference of Elders. Church ministers will now conduct necessary procedures through the Internet or by mail. We also took other deliberate measures concerning the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, which will be conducted online and in homes. There will be no physical congregational meetings until further notice. We are also canceling other conferences through the summer.

We will report developments weekly in my update, on our UCG members page at <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/united-church-of-god-coronavirus-updates>, as well as reports announced on our weekly webcast Sabbath service from Cincinnati.

Following the public health guidelines issued at the state and federal level, we switched our in-person Ambassador Bible College to an online-only format, which means no further assembling of our wonderful students at the home office. It was heartbreaking for me to address our ABC students on Monday, telling them that we likely wouldn't be meeting again like this in person for the rest of the semester. Many at our home office now work remotely, and the remainder who need to work in the office exercise social distancing measures.

One overarching directive drives *all* of these decisions: the welfare and protection of *you*, our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and members of the family of God.

We devote considerable resources to proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God. But the other part of our mission as a fellowship is to prepare a people, which includes *doing whatever it takes* to protect, safeguard and nurture our wonderful members and families.

This, today, especially includes those of us aged 60 and over, whom medical professionals have found to be among the most vulnerable to this harmful virus.

None of these actions represent easy decisions. We sought experienced counsel before each one. We are blessed as a church to have experienced and skilled people--including highly qualified medical professionals--who can weigh in on important decisions and help us in a sound and objective way.

We have had access to and counsel from Dr. Daniel Berendt and Dr. Rick Berendt, seasoned medical physicians and Church elders who directly advised me, members of my staff and the Council of Elders. I recorded a podcast a few days ago about the COVID-19 crisis with Dr. Daniel Berendt, who made several insightful comments. I encourage you to listen to it at <https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-154-dan-berendt-coronavirus>.

In the podcast, Dr. Berendt discussed how public health administrators reflect biblical principles of quarantine, hygiene and crowd control. I would like to add that the Passover season that is nearly upon us eloquently demonstrates the principle of quarantining one's self and family away from harm. As we read in the Exodus account, just before the final plague on Egypt, Moses firmly instructed the Israelites: "None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning" (Exodus 12:22,

English Standard Version). Thus, they would be self-quarantined and protected from the death angel.

Also, during our Passover service, we traditionally read the words of Christ from His final instructions before He was tortured and crucified. We often read from the 13th chapter of John where Jesus tells His disciples--including *us* today--"A new commandment I give to you, *that you love one another*: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (verses 34-35, emphasis added throughout).

My point? While times are presently tough and confusing for many, events are unfortunately forecast to get worse in the United States and many areas of the world where the coronavirus has only recently arrived. However, this presents us with a unique opportunity.

During difficult and challenging situations, people's character is revealed. James, the brother of Jesus, tells us that it is very easy to curse others, to criticize, mock and belittle, and then turn right around and praise God with the same mouth that cursed. When we face trying times like we do today, this capacity can be magnified.

But also magnified is our capacity to do good! We are to be an example to this world, and we are to be caregivers for each other. In difficult times, caring people stand out.

Paul tells us to "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and *live a life of love*" (Ephesians 5:1, New International Version 1984 edition). God loved the world enough to send His Son to pay the ultimate price for us (John 3:16). What about us?

Over the coming weeks, especially as we observe the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, let us earnestly strive to fulfill the preserved and inspired words of Paul. Let us be seen as *helpers*. If we have to stand in line for supplies at a local grocery or are forced to do extra things that can seem irritating, let us strive to do so as cheerfully as we can. Let us take every necessary precaution to protect ourselves, but at the same time, let us look to be *servants*, humbly helping others where possible, and *especially* those of the household of God.

In this continuing and unfolding situation with the coronavirus, we must be certain to renew, establish and maintain a direct relationship with God our Father and Jesus Christ, our Savior and Elder Brother, from Whom we can draw strength and seek real refuge. We must fill our minds and speech with praise and thankfulness for God and His love for us! (Psalm 138)

Let us also remember the National Day of Prayer that occurred last weekend. As God Himself promises in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and *heal their land.*"

Please continue to take sensible precautions. God intimately knows our needs and our personal situations better than we think. As Luke recorded, Jesus said to His disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life" (Luke 12:22, English Standard Version).

Things may not get as bad as people fear. But they may grow worse. One thing is certain: we will get through this together! In the days ahead, "Let us therefore *come boldly* to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

In these times of sore trial, let us strive to praise God, cooperate with one another and serve with genuine humility. May God's grace be upon us all!

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

Personal from Ministerial and Member Services...

Lack of Faith or Acts of Love?

We are now living in unprecedented times. In the nearly 65 years I have lived here on this earth, nothing like this COVID-19 virus situation has occurred. It is somewhat surprising to me that, for the most part, the majority of people around the globe seem to be cooperating with many governmental directives on the federal, state, and local levels.

Clearly, these are not normal times. Many have questioned whether it is a lack of faith to comply with the many common-sense instructions on how to abate the spread of the virus so that it will be manageable by the various health care systems around the world.

Personally, I believe it is a willing sacrifice and an act of love to comply with these well-intentioned directives. Undoubtedly, these measures are causing a great deal of

angst on the part of many who have been affected financially, laid-off, or, perhaps, even terminated from employment.

It takes real faith to be obedient to the governing authorities at times like this, trusting that God will see us through any trial or hardship as we strive to practice real Christian love for one another.

It is a sacrifice to distance ourselves from one another, because most people thrive on human contact, on touch, and on personal, close communication.

The Bible is clear that there are times when it is prudent and best for human beings to quarantine themselves, lest they spread disease. Now is such a time according to those who are most aware of how disease spreads. So much is still unknown in regard to the COVID-19 virus. Exactly how does it spread? How deadly is it? We don't have definitive answers to these fundamental questions at this point. We do know that there is no vaccine anyone can choose to take at this point, even if we were inclined to do so.

Thankfully, God has built into the human body the ability to build up specific immunities against viruses and diseases such as COVID-19, but those specific immunities are not now present. Younger, stronger people are less likely to succumb to this disease, but even some relatively young, supposedly strong people have died--at least according to some sources. In addition, we know that older people and people with compromised immune systems and other health ailments are much more likely to die from this disease. What we do know about this disease has been frightening enough to health care officials to suggest, even implore, that we take these unprecedented measures. Moreover, governmental officials around the world are doing so.

It is only proper that we go above and beyond the call of duty to protect our fellowman from the spread of this dreaded disease. This has nothing to do with fear of the virus. If I get the virus, I will be anointed and will trust that God will see me through the trial, as I believe His promise to never leave or forsake me. If He allowed me to die from it, that is His will and I look forward to the resurrection to eternal life that awaits me as a true believer in Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

I have been a part of the Church of God since age 19 and my entire life has been based on faith in God and His promises. I suspect this trial will pass and life will go on for the vast majority of us. Nevertheless, I want to do my part now to yield to God and approach this in ways that would be pleasing to Him.

I believe we should love our fellowman and be willing to follow instructions and directives that are designed to protect us humanly--as long as they do not conflict with God's law.

I do not see complying with these directives as an affront to God, but as a test to see just how willing we are to sacrifice in order to show love to one another. Isn't that what the Passover season is all about?

We will all continue to observe the Sabbath, the Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed, and the annual Holy Days throughout this crisis. We will continue to worship God on a daily basis. We will continue to be faithful to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, our Savior. But, we may need to sacrifice personal contact with one another for a time.

I sent a letter to our ministry earlier this week advising them to send anointed cloths rather than anoint in person to minimize the spread of COVID-19 to you, brethren, and to our ministers. It is an act of love for both the ministry and the brethren to refrain from personal contact for a time. Our practice has been to send anointed cloths when it wasn't feasible to anoint in person. Now is such a time. Here is one of the paragraphs from my letter:

"Of course, we all realize that our faith is in God to whom we pray for intervention and healing. We follow the instructions in James 5:14 in faith, whether we anoint in person or with a cloth. God is our healer. It is not a lack of faith to choose to anoint with a cloth under the circumstances. And it is not a lack of faith on the member's part to request a cloth as opposed to a personal anointing. In fact, anointing with a cloth is using wisdom and being prudent so as to eliminate any possible risk of infection for the member being anointed and for the minister."

When we who have to make these hard decisions under God's direction and guidance are confident of God's will, we will go back to worshipping and fellowshiping up close and personal as we have in the past. As we deal with this "present distress," we are faithful that "this too shall pass." May that day come speedily!

Staying in Touch with One Another

I have been very pleased with the responses I have been getting from our ministry during these difficult times. They are truly dedicated to serving God and all of you in ways that, I believe, are pleasing to God. Please be patient as they strive to implement new webcasts, in some cases, and strive to communicate with you more effectively. Please reach out to one another, more than ever, and show your love and care by expressing it by phone and in other appropriate ways to all your local brethren. Please help your pastor to be made aware of any needs within the

congregation for yourself and others. We want to help supply any needs while taking reasonable measures to keep from spreading the virus. If you do need to have personal contact to serve the needs of others, please take proper precautions such as checking your temperature and having the other person(s) check their temperature beforehand.

Summer Camps

We hope to be able to continue with our planned teen and preteen summer camps. If things continue as they are now, that will not be possible. However, we plan to wait as long as practical before canceling any of our camps. Perhaps things will really ease up in a month. If not, we will do our best to cancel in a timely way.

Some of our camp facilities may take the decision away from us sooner than we are ready to do so. We will keep you informed as things develop.

Upcoming Dates and Plans

- **March 21, Sabbath:** Webcast from the home office at 2:30 p.m. EDT (we would like all members to tune in this Sabbath, if possible).
- **March 28 and following Sabbaths:** Webcast from the home office at 2:30 p.m. EDT. Local pastors will originate their own webcasts for their congregations (where technology allows), preferably at a time that does not conflict with the home office webcast for members wanting to connect to multiple services.
- **April 7, Passover:** Service at sunset, observed at home. Local pastors will originate their own webcasts (where technology allows). Members can either connect to a local webcast, watch the [video on the Members website](#), or follow [written instructions](#). The Cincinnati congregation will webcast a Passover service at 8:15 p.m. EDT, but for those living west of Cincinnati, the service may not be appropriate due to the timing of sunset.
- **April 8, Night to Be Much Observed:** Home gatherings.
- **April 9, First Day of Unleavened Bread:** One service webcast from the home office, at 2:30 p.m. EDT. Some local pastors will originate their own webcast (where technology allows).
- **April 15, Last Day of Unleavened Bread:** Two services webcast from the home office, at 9:30 a.m. EDT and 2:30 p.m. EDT. Some local pastors will originate their own webcast for either one or two services (where technology allows).

I have not yet heard of any of our members worldwide who have contracted the COVID-19 virus. Some few have been exposed due to working in the medical field. They have been tested and are awaiting results of the test to see if they are free of the virus. I invite you to read the report below from pastor Carmelo Anastasi from Italy, where they have had one of the worst problems with the virus thus far.

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

Death of Mary Carmichael



Mary Carmichael

Mary Carmichael died at her home on February 29, under hospice care. She was the wife of elder Carl Carmichael of the Coleman, Texas, congregation.

Mary was born January 11, 1932, in Bessemer, Alabama. She attended a women's college in Montevallo, Alabama, and married Carl D. Carmichael on November 22, 1952. Mary was a homemaker, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to four children, nine grandchildren and six great grandchildren with another on the way. She was baptized in Denver, Colorado, in February, 1970, and ordained a deaconess in 1978. She served as an elder's wife in Texas and Wyoming and remained faithful to the end.

Mary's husband, Carl, would like to thank all of those who so gracefully sent cards expressing their regrets and encouragement. Mary was truly a Proverbs 31 woman and a "crown to her husband" (Proverbs 12:4).

Inside United Podcast



Dan Berendt - Coronavirus

Dr. Dan Berendt from Edmonton, Alberta, joins Victor Kubik via Internet to discuss the current state of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and how we should respond to this crisis as a health menace, but also as an opportunity to help the vulnerable in our society.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-154-dan-berendt-coronavirus>

Listen to past episodes or read the transcripts:

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

Update From Italy

All the brethren in Italy are doing well so far, thank God. We are contacting Church members almost daily to encourage them and to be updated on their real status. Everything is fine, to date. Everyone will celebrate the Passover at home, but all of them will be able to follow the reading of the scriptures via the WebEx link, a technology that we have used here successfully for years every Sabbath.

But, the situation is difficult. Tens of thousands are infected in northern Italy and the rest of Europe and, for the first time in history, 60 million Italians are in almost total quarantine to combat the spread of the virus.

All factories, restaurants, hotels, cinemas, theaters and churches are closed. The streets and squares are completely empty. Everything seems spooky, especially in the

evening. We are all forced to stay at home and only one member of each family, if he or she has not been infected, can go out to buy basic necessities (food and medicine).

This experience is putting a strain on the mental and emotional state of many people. We are all like prisoners in our own homes, but it is for everyone's protection. Our Church members trust in God's protection and pray that this epidemic will end soon.

The methods adopted to combat this pandemic seem to mark the beginning of a new era, a sign of what will happen in the future. It has also awakened some from their spiritual lethargy so that they have turned to pray to God. Messages of prayers and thoughts that praise God arrive every day on my cell phone from our members and subscribers.

But most people continue to rely on their human strength, singing nationalistic songs: "We alone will defeat the coronavirus!" I am reminded of the Bible that says: "They did not repent of their ways" despite the plagues but, after the storm, they continued worse than before. And so they perpetuate the false idea that man can do everything. None of them say: "Let's repent and turn to the True God, the only one who truly saves."

As far as we are concerned, we do what is possible to avoid any contact, but what is fundamental is the protection from our God. His will be done. We, confined in our homes, continue to pray for everyone, awaiting that day when the eternal Kingdom of peace and justice will finally be inaugurated by our God.

Please, receive a big hug from all of us.

--Carmelo Anastasi

United Youth Camps Online Registration Now Open

Campers and staff--it's time to apply for preteen or teen camp. Although it is not completely clear whether all camps will be able to held this summer, you are still encouraged to apply now at uyc.ucg.org. We will provide updates to all applicants as things develop over the next several weeks.

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.

Southeast Formal in Atlanta: "An Evening in Paris"

This year, the Atlanta and Buford, Georgia, congregations had the pleasure of hosting the 2020 UCG Southeast Formal Dinner and Dance Weekend, March 7 and 8. Attendees traveled from various parts of the south and eastern U.S., including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas to participate in the events.



The weekend began with services on the Sabbath, where Dr. Philip Aust welcomed 185 brethren to services and provided announcements, including a preview of Saturday and Sunday's activities. The service continued with special music performed, first, by Jasmine Aust, and second, by Brian and Tarra Scott. The guest speaker, Mr. Jay Ledbetter, pastor of the Knoxville and Kingsport, Tennessee, and London, Kentucky congregations, gave a sermon titled "From Friendship to Relationship."



Formal events officially began at 6 p.m., with attendee introductions and a promenade of guests. This was followed by recognitions and a slide show of 2020 seniors. This year's seniors included Jasmine Aust, Sha'ved Downer, Spencer Ellithorpe, Madeline Garrett, Benjamin Lockhart, Brenden Merring, Madison Prickett and Tarra Scott. Following senior recognitions, 80 guests enjoyed a formal dinner.

The theme for the formal was an "Evening in Paris." Befitting the theme, French music was played during dinner. The banquet hall was decorated with Eiffel Towers and copies of famous paintings on display in Paris, such as the Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and Claude Monet's "Impression Sunrise." Seventy teens and young adults enjoyed the dance. Additionally, a Cupcake Celebration toast was made partway through the evening to honor the seniors and to encourage them to achieve their goals (Matthew 6:33).

Following Saturday's events, the weekend concluded with a skating party on Sunday. The activity was open to all family members. In all, 73 people took advantage of roller blading, roller skating, laser tag, the arcade, and an indoor playground for the younger ones. The event ended just after noon on Sunday. Everyone voiced appreciation for the weekend and noted their eagerness for next year's event.

The Atlanta and Buford congregations thank those who attended this year's SE Formal Weekend and made it a memorable event!

-- Philip and Sarah Aust

Sermon Disc Program Set #141 Available

Sermons newly published for the Sermon Disc Program (SDP 141) 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.

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.

Food Service Manager Job Opening

Ambassador Bible College is announcing a job opening for a Food Service Manager.

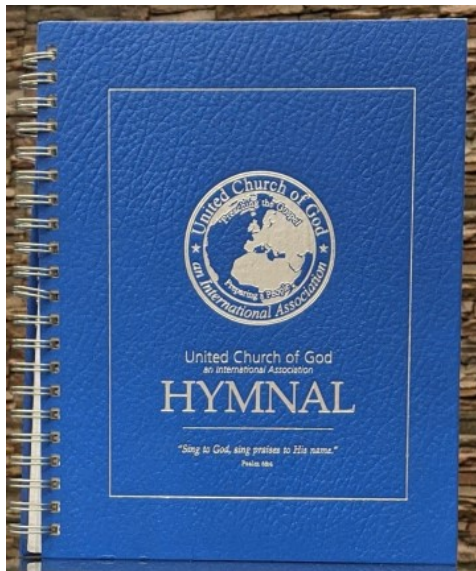
The Food Service Manager handles the daily affairs of the cafeteria for Ambassador Bible College, including the kitchen and general dining area. He or she coordinates all dining activities at the home office of the United Church of God during normal business hours and for special events. He or she orders all food and supplies, ensures the kitchen operates to department standards and health regulations, and supervises other kitchen workers.

A ServSafe certification and two years of experience with cooking and commercial kitchen operations is preferred. The candidate must be able to stand for long periods, frequently lift and/or move up to 35 pounds, be well-organized and able to pay attention to detail and accuracy. Potential employees must be baptized members of the United Church of God. This is a position scheduled throughout the 9-month ABC academic year.

The deadline for submission of an application is April 1, 2020. For more information about the position or to complete a job application, please contact human_resources@ucg.org

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

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