



## 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,

#### **A time of forgiveness, healing and favor**

The arctic weather outside was harsh, a mere seven degrees above zero (-14°C). In the Grand Foyer of the White House, protected from the frigid cold, President Ronald Reagan laid his left hand on a Bible to take his second oath of office on January 20, 1985. As would be in the public ceremony on the next day, a King James Bible was turned open to a remarkable verse, the official theme of both Reagan inaugurations: 2 Chronicles 7:14. That verse reads:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

This verse represents a powerful call and promise from God. If the people and leaders of a nation repent--change how they think, change how they act and surrender their lives to God--God promises to bring forgiveness, healing and remarkable favor!

As the 40th President of the United States, Ronald Reagan did not keep the seventh-day Sabbath nor the annual Holy Days. But he did hold God and the Bible in high esteem, frequently and openly calling for a return to biblical values.

As he remarked publicly in 1980, "You know, I'm told that throughout history, man has adopted about four billion laws. It's always seemed to me, however, that in all that time and with all those laws, we haven't improved by one iota on the Ten Commandments." Referring directly to the Bible, he added: "It is an incontrovertible fact that all the complex and horrendous questions confronting us at home and worldwide have their answer in that single book."

Thinking about today, it is good to remember the actions of another national leader, King Josiah, who also was a chief leader of a major nation. Reigning from about 640 to 609 B.C., Josiah came to power during a time when Judah had all but turned away from God.

Judah had watched the fall of their brothers in Israel, the northern Kingdom, including the details of the 10 tribes being enslaved and led into captivity in 722 B.C. That catastrophic fall should have served as a persuasive example to Judah. But it obviously didn't.

Josiah dedicated the early part of his reign to cleaning up and refocusing Judah on God and His revealed way of life (2 Kings 22:1-23:25).

Why was this needed? Dating even from the time of King Solomon, horrible and vile abominations had been built and conducted within the wall of the holy Temple of God in Jerusalem, the then-physical center of worship for God. After multiple decades of kings who "did evil in the eyes of the Lord," the temple was then home to male prostitutes, a despicable Asherah pole, priests who burned incense to foreign gods, and worse.

Josiah set about vigorously cleaning all of that out, both in Jerusalem and around the nation, including a nearby site built by King Solomon to the vile entity Molech, where Jewish infants were sacrificed alive (1 Kings 11:7).

Despite all this, the change brought by Josiah would be temporary. The prophet Jeremiah, who produced the longest and the possibly the most dramatic book of the Bible, stood in the marvelous main gate of the restored temple during that time. He warned that God would destroy it all--the people trusted in themselves and physical things, not God (Jeremiah 7:14).

The people must have thought Jeremiah was over the top, making incomprehensibly dramatic statements. The Bible records what happened: Josiah died, the nation again fell into apostasy, and *everything*--including the marvelous gold-engraved temple--was destroyed.

Today there are those who advocate the abortion of millions of unborn babies, who believe humans can self-define personal gender, sexual preference and definitions of sacred marriage. When we deliver biblical truth that warns of a repeat of God's judgment, such statements possibly appear equally incomprehensible.

What then is our personal responsibility?

In this time of global trial, are we taking this opportunity to reaffirm our faith, to perhaps even return to our first love of the truth (Revelation 2:4-5)? As has been recently published in *Beyond Today* and online, we as disciples of Jesus Christ must live in a state of positive repentance, of changing how we think and act to be more like God.

Consider this incredible truth: as members of the body of Christ, Jesus--the hope of glory--lives and acts within us (Colossians 1:27)! As spirit-filled disciples worshiping the living God, we *make up* the spiritual temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Here's a fair question: in this time of distracting tumult, are we cleaning out the idolatrous Asherah poles that much of this society tries to cunningly plant within us?

The good news is that God is all-powerful and full of love. He is here to help and sustain us (Psalm 37). He is quick to forgive. He wants us to succeed.

Can we now take this challenging time to become the city on the hill that Jesus spoke of (Matthew 5:14-16)? Can we now seek to transform ourselves (Romans 12:1-2) to be a light to the world?

Despite the multiple challenges we now face, we still comparatively have much to be thankful for. We still live in a time where forgiveness, healing and favor are available to us.

But how long will it last? U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a legal scholar who

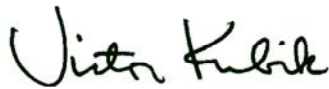
recognized God's role in the United States, once warned: "As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight when everything seems unchanged, and it is in such a twilight that we all must be most aware of change in the air--however slight--lest we become unwitting victims of darkness."

We in the Church of God are called by God's name. We can safely avoid becoming "unwitting victims of darkness" by individually and collectively embracing what God commands in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Can we rejoice in the fact that we are the living temple of God's Holy Spirit? Let us today clean up that temple by humbling ourselves, by devoting ourselves anew to earnest prayer and by actively seeking God. Then wherever we live, we can receive forgiveness, healing and favor!

As we approach the fall Festival season, let us write 2 Chronicles 7:14 on our hearts and renew our first love and faithfulness to the most high God!

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

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## Masks in Church Services

More and more state governments are issuing mandatory mask orders. This issue of being ordered to wear a mask in public is polarizing our nation. People are furious about their "rights" being taken away, about government overstepping its authority, and whether or not masks even work. These are certainly perilous times in which we now live. The apostle Paul listed 19 attributes of people in the last days and among that list are lovers of themselves, proud, unloving, headstrong and haughty (2 Timothy 3:1-5). These are many of the impulses and attitudes that we see in the world around us as people are warring over this matter, digging in their heels and demanding their "rights."

We must NOT allow the influences of this world to create polarization within the Church. Many pastors have shared issues that are "bubbling" in their local congregations over the mask issue. We might have very strong opinions about the efficacy of masks, or strong views about what is happening politically.

However, we must have peace at services on the Sabbath. Our pastors must make decisions based upon state and local conditions. When these mandates do not contradict scripture, they must be followed. Nothing in these "mask" orders contradicts God's law. For most Church members, having to wear a mask in order to meet together on the Sabbath is preferable to remaining at home. Right now, our adversary is stirring up strife and division in the world and in the Church! If we let THIS divide us, what will become of us when REAL persecution comes?

If you are attending services in an area where masks are required in public, then you must wear a mask. There are reasons why some cannot wear a mask, and it is recommended that those people stay at home and watch a webcast service. When coming to services with a mask, please do not wear masks with "statements" on them (the temptation to have a "Don't Tread on Me" statement will not help to unify the congregation). Let's keep the politics of all of this far away from church.

Also, please be extra-vigilant about NOT coming to services if you are sick. This should always be our "best practice." Sometimes when we are sick, we may take a dose of medicine. Although the medicine may help us "feel" better, we're still sick. We should always be considerate of others and stay home if

we are sick, rather than expose others.

We know these are very frustrating times, but we will get through this. We appreciate your patience and cooperation.

Sincerely,  
Len Martin, Chairman, Council of Elders  
Victor Kubik, President

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## Friday Night Teen Bible Discussion

We are going to have more interactive talk among the teens this Friday night during our live Bible Study program. Specific questions have been posted on the UYC site, so please take a look at them before the study begins.

The password remains the same, but if you need it then ask your pastor. The Bible Study video and Zoom discussion begin at 8 p.m. Eastern/7 p.m. Central or 7 p.m. Pacific/8 p.m. Mountain (pick your time). Log onto [uyc.ucg.org](http://uyc.ucg.org) at one of these two times this Friday evening July 24.

-- Teen Camp Directors

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## Inside United Podcast



### Gary Petty - The Mercy Effect, Part 4

Gary Petty and Victor Kubik discuss emotional traps, like anger, along the path of conflict resolution and how to avoid them in Part 4 of their discussion about Petty's book, *The Mercy Effect*.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-169-gary-petty-the-mercy-effect-part-4>

Send us your questions, comments, or suggestions at [podcast@ucg.org](mailto:podcast@ucg.org).

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