



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,

Count It All Joy

Today I'd like to share with you some of the positive outcomes and experiences of the past six months. We are all well-aware of the many trials that the world endures that also affect us. At the same time, we should remind ourselves of the blessings that God gives us. In one of our past hymnals we sang a refrain: "Count your blessings, name them one by one, count your blessings, see what God has done!" I'm going to do that now.

First, I'm thankful for waking up every morning and looking to another day of life, opportunity and doing good. God is our sustainer and gives us every breath. He is living in us and we in Him. That is a miracle and an awesome blessing.

I thank God for my wife, Beverly, my family, friends, coworkers and health. I'm thankful to understand the big picture of the times in which we live. While the world is hearing the ticking sound of the Doomsday Clock bringing the world closer to oblivion, we instead hear the ticking of the Kingdom Clock, heralding the coming Kingdom of God that will save this heartbroken world. We praise God by thanking Him. I often think of this passage in Hebrews 13:15: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

Thanksgiving for the people I work with

I work with remarkable and positive people who radiate energy to their fellow workers. I work with various teams in all aspects of the work, whether it be ABC, International, the ministry or media. The apostle Paul describes so well what we already have: "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being *like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*" (Philippians 2:1-4, emphasis added).

We celebrate each other's blessings and mutually encourage one another.

Some recent challenges have been with compliance for how many people can assemble at a particular Feast of Tabernacles site. We had to cancel some sites and are quickly finding others that comply with continually changing policies and regulations.

The COVID-19 lockdown was a jolt to all of us. But it is forcing us to do things differently. With continually advancing technology, we have been able to communicate amazingly well with one another. For example, we had to cancel our in-person General Conference of Elders meeting this past May, but that didn't stop us from holding some of the meetings effectively online.

During that conference, our ministerial wives conducted an online seminar that divided into smaller breakout rooms. As I was watching some of the meetings from the corner of my eye, I thought that this might also be a way to conduct some of our other sessions, namely ministerial training sessions.

One area of focus in coming ministerial training will be in speaking. This need was borne out in the Member Survey conducted earlier this year. Using web conferencing technology, we are planning to work with small groups of 10 or so ministers with a mentor who could help the group improve their speaking and preaching techniques.

What appeared as a rude halt to doing things the way we had always done them is now resulting in doing things differently and better.

Thanksgiving for our faithful brethren and ministry

Here's how Paul assessed the people that he served: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-4).

This is exactly my sentiment about our brethren and ministry. When COVID-19 struck, we feared that all the closed businesses, unemployment and economic havoc would negatively impact most of our brethren. However, generally, this is not the case. Overall, God has blessed our brethren and spared them from the worst of the hardships that have befallen others. In the last six months, our church income has remained healthy. The support for the Work of God has been extraordinary as people in a time of trial turn their thoughts to the needs of others.

During the lockdown, we have been able to do God's work with as much vigor as ever. We have produced new strong *Beyond Today* television programs and issues of the *BT* magazine without skipping a beat.

Our ministers have been innovative, resourceful and effective in caring for their congregations as they have paid particular attention to the vulnerable. While in-person church services were canceled, our ministry made sure that their congregations received Sabbath services via video conference, Facebook, telephone and other means. Our brethren have also networked with other online UCG church services, resulting in a healthy synergy. Many of our pastors write encouraging weekly newsletters to their churches. Unexpected necessities have produced innovative and resourceful inventions!

Staying at home has had its benefits as well. It has given us time to think, read, plan. I have kept in touch with people as much or more than ever before. I have not had to drive as much, and the time previously spent in a car has been put to more useful purposes. I've enjoyed working from home, although I look forward to being with my coworkers more in person again.

Changing the pace of life has been a blessing. Bev and I have talked more. We have picked up a tradition that we experienced while being with friends in Sweden. At certain times of day in Swedish society, everything stops--and people have a Fika. This is where coffee and cookies appear, and people talk to one another. We have implemented our daily Fika at 3 p.m. There's nothing like a Fika to talk over the affairs of the day.

I think of what Paul said about his ministry that had trials far greater than anything we've experienced and he could still say: "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13).

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

Dear Ministers and Members,

"Where God has Placed His Name" and "Temporary Dwellings"

We understand that preparing to observe the Feast of Tabernacles in 2020 is unlike any prior year, no matter how many Feasts you have observed.

We have done our best to provide designated Festival sites where God has chosen to place His name this year. Of course, God allows many things to affect the decisions given to His servants to make regarding the observance of His Holy Days and where God is placing His name.

We have seen sites cancelled and new sites spring up to take their place in order to adequately serve the needs of our brethren who desire to honor God on these days.

We believe these days are commanded for God's people. Please do your best to attend one of our designated Feast sites, if possible and prudent, for you and your family.

However, we do understand that everyone's circumstances are different in a variety of ways and we ought not judge anyone in their personal decisions in regard to how it is best for them to observe the Feast under the "present distress." These are decisions between the individual and God and we ought to believe that each person is doing their best to honor God and protect their health and their family members as they are being led to do so.

We might consider what the phrase means: "where God has placed His name." We should all understand that some people have not always been able to attend the Feast at a designated Feast site due to a variety of reasons, such as sickness, advanced age, finances, pregnancy, childbirth, very pressing family issues, etc.

In these cases, we have made Feast sermon recordings available to our members and they have observed the Feast as best they could by listening to these sermons, studying their Bibles, and meditating on the coming Kingdom of God and their role in preparing for and serving in the Kingdom. Our members made the best of a difficult situation and would have much preferred being able to join in the fellowship and observance of the Feast at a designated Feast site. Hopefully they were able to do so the following year.

We believe God was with them during the difficult times and their genuine observance was accepted by God. Their circumstances dictated where God "had placed His name" for them personally that given year.

God is always with His children through the power of His Holy Spirit dwelling within them. If circumstances sometimes dictate an extraordinary decision after prayer, meditation, and perhaps, fasting, always remember that God has promised to never leave or forsake us. He and His Son are with us in Spirit and God will place His name there with us, as long as we are truly striving to do our best to please Him.

Of course, we should always seek to be supportive of the decisions God has led His servants to make in sincere desire to best please God and to care for His people. Moreover, we should all strive to love our brethren and think well of them as they make decisions regarding this year's observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

We greatly appreciate your patience and cooperation this year. We are all doing our best to do "everything decently and in order." If you haven't yet registered for the Feast, please do so as quickly as it is feasible for you, as it will make our planning easier and more effective.

Some have wondered about the "temporary dwellings" aspect this year if they have decided to stay in their home area where there is a Feast site nearby.

It appears that will likely be the case for Barbara and me personally this year. A number of deaf brethren have now decided to attend the Feast in Cincinnati where we do have a designated Feast site. Since Barbara is an interpreter and she and I coordinate the deaf program, we will likely attend here. If so, we will stay in our home, which still seems very much like a "temporary dwelling" since we haven't been here long and aren't at all sure how long we will be living here!

Such decisions are personal ones that ought to be done in faith as we strive to keep God's laws in ways that we believe would be acceptable and pleasing to Him. Others ought not to set themselves up as judges to question sincere, faithful decisions. God is our ultimate Judge and we will answer to Him.

I listened to a fine message this week from Randy Schreiber entitled, "[Will You Be 'Where God Places His Name?'](#)" Randy goes into greater detail in his message. You may want to listen to this message if you have any questions regarding the meaning of the phrase, or are a bit uneasy about having to possibly stay at home for the first time ever during the Feast.

I also listened to another fine message this week by Doug Wendt titled, "[Developing a Proper Perspective.](#)" Doug encourages all of us to have a godly perspective concerning *all* people, realizing that God desires that *all* people will eventually come to accept Him as God. How we treat people in the meantime is very important!

If you listen to a message that especially moves you, motivates you, or educates you, I would appreciate you emailing me the title at mark_welch@ucg.org.

Wishing you all a very inspiring and peaceful Sabbath!

In God's love and service,



Mark Welch, Operation Manager for MMS

Feast of Tabernacles Update

We appreciate the response from members to update their Feast registration. We still ask pastors to be aware of the needs of their congregation and encourage those who haven't registered to do so. This provides a better picture for the pastor to work with. The verbal announcements for July 11 contained an attachment on how to run reports for the local congregation.

Masks at the Feast

We are aware that some won't attend services unless they are wearing masks--with the intention to avoid others who are not wearing masks. Overall, most Feast sites in the U.S. will attempt to have two sections to accommodate those preferences. That information for each site will become available over the coming weeks and can probably be found at the Feast webpage of the site you are attending.

UCG Live Streaming Working Again on Roku

During the month of July and early August the live webcast option on our UCG Roku app was not functioning. We are pleased to report that it is now working again. We know that many of our brethren appreciate using their Roku device to watch the live Cincinnati Sabbath service. We are sorry that it was not available for so many weeks. It took our developers working directly with Roku to resolve the issue.

-- Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services

Beyond Today TV to End on WGN-America

As you may recall, *Beyond Today* TV was given a greatly reduced rate for airtime on WGN-America this fiscal year. At that price, WGN-America had the ability to cancel our contract with two weeks notice if they found a buyer willing to pay more. We also had the first right of refusal.

WGN-A has now received a much higher offer for our time slot. And the new payment is simply way too high being offered by the other party, and so we are leaving our Sunday morning time slot due to trending inefficiencies in response.

Therefore, the last airing on WGN-America of *Beyond Today* will be Sunday, August 16. *Beyond Today* continues on Sunday mornings at 9 a.m EDT on Newsmax TV and online at newsmaxtv.com. To find the NewsMax TV channel locations in your area please visit www.newsmaxtv.com/findus.

You can also watch programs online at our website: www.ucg.org/beyond-today/television and from our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/BeyondTodayTV. Please see our channel listing online at www.ucg.org/beyond-today/station-listing.

Beyond Today TV apps are also available on Google Play for Android devices, Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung smart TVs, LG smart TVs, and Apple iOS devices. So, there are lots of opportunities for viewers to connect to our programming.

We are continuing to research and test other potential networks for *Beyond Today* to reach new half-hour audiences in these changing and troubling times. As research and negotiations proceed, we will keep you updated.

Thank you for your prayers for the ongoing success of all our media efforts to preach the gospel of God's Kingdom.

-- Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services

Inside United Podcast



Howard Marchbanks - Planned Giving

Howard Marchbanks has been a financial advisor for 25 years. He has been working for the United Church of God for the last year and stops by to discuss planned giving.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-170-howard-marchbanks-planned-giving>

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