



Members and Elders Give Input Through UCG Survey

By Julie Brown

Once again, United Church of God, AIA has conducted a survey to solicit feedback from members, attendees and elders regarding UCG's progress and needs, and the services UCG provides. The survey is administered to support the Council's strategic planning process. Conducted in January of this year, over 3,000 people responded. Typically, surveys receive responses from under three percent of those surveyed. However, this survey represented 23 percent of all members worldwide. That so many continue to take time to give input demonstrates concern that is appreciated.

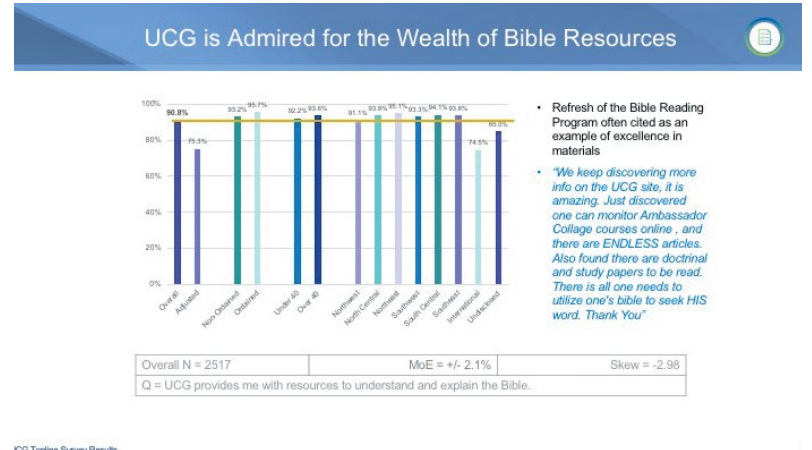
Keep in mind that the survey was administered before the current pandemic and economic crisis. With the suspension of services and current measures to modify services, these elements are not reflected in the results.

The survey was administered by a third-party and all responses were anonymous. It contained 50 open-ended questions. A team with backgrounds in research analyzed the answers and the results were presented to the Council of Elders and Administration in July. The entire survey had a margin of error of +/- 1.8 at a 99% confidence rate. All open-ended responses were read and categorized to determine the number of times specific ideas were expressed and the size of themes. The following is a summary of the data and comments received.

The majority of the survey respondents were adult baptized members. Of the responses, 18.4 percent were from ordained deacons and elders. The results were primarily from older membership with only 5.3 percent of the respondents being under the age of 25.



Victor Kubik



Left: Julie Brown presents an analysis of the results.
Right: A slide from the Congregational Survey presentation.

Overall Findings

In looking at the many ways local services are conducted, it is clear members are working to serve others on a regular basis. However, some believe they are unable to serve due to age, distance or being homebound. Members are also regularly mak-

ing use of online sermons and appreciate the degree to which the United Church of God supports one's ability to learn God's truth. For many, this is the sole connection to the Church.

While members do have high confidence in their understanding around fundamental beliefs and

truths, they continue to be hesitant in directly promoting UCG.

Across all groups, the quality of speaking and amount of manpower remains a concern consistent with results from prior years. Many are unwilling to

Please see next page

Ambassador Bible College Begins the 2020-2021 Academic Year

By Frank Dunkle

On Sunday, Aug. 23, the Ambassador Bible College faculty and staff gathered with incoming students for the annual ABC Welcome Picnic. To comply with local social distancing guidelines, the picnic was held outside. Students, faculty and staff enjoyed food, fellowship and icebreaker activities.

The next day, Monday, Aug. 24, everyone gathered for ABC orientation. This year, 20 students have entered the program ready to grow in grace, gain biblical knowledge, build godly character and embrace leadership opportunities over the course of the next nine months. Students were so-

cially distanced as they sat in the lecture hall and wore masks when socializing during breaks. Faculty and staff gave presentations introducing the ABC program.

President Victor Kubik addressed the students on the importance of not only learning the Bible, but of using that learning to serve others. Coordinator Frank Dunkle cited Malachi 3:6, telling students that while policies and guidelines can change, institutions sometimes change, God does not change. The Word of God is timeless and changeless. That is what they came to study and even if pandemic guidelines affect how classes are presented, the eternal truths of God's Word will continue to be the center of ABC. **UN**



Ariana Del Signore

ABC Coordinator Dr. Frank Dunkle addresses incoming students during orientation.

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How Should We Worship God?

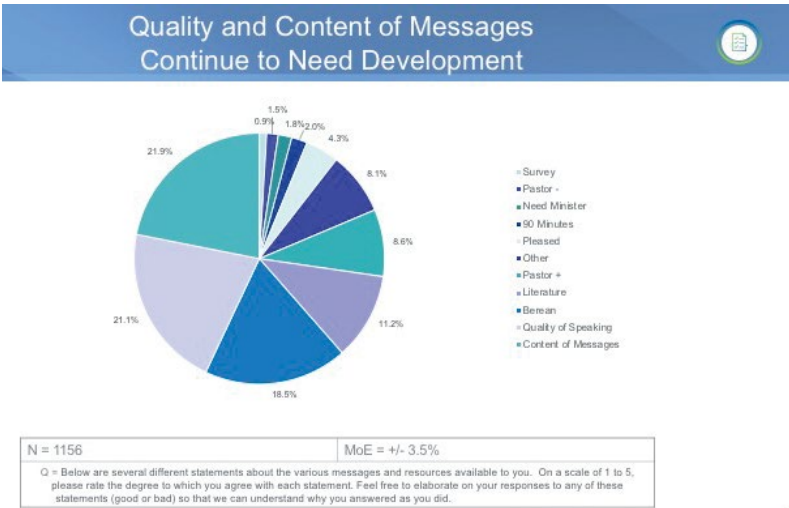
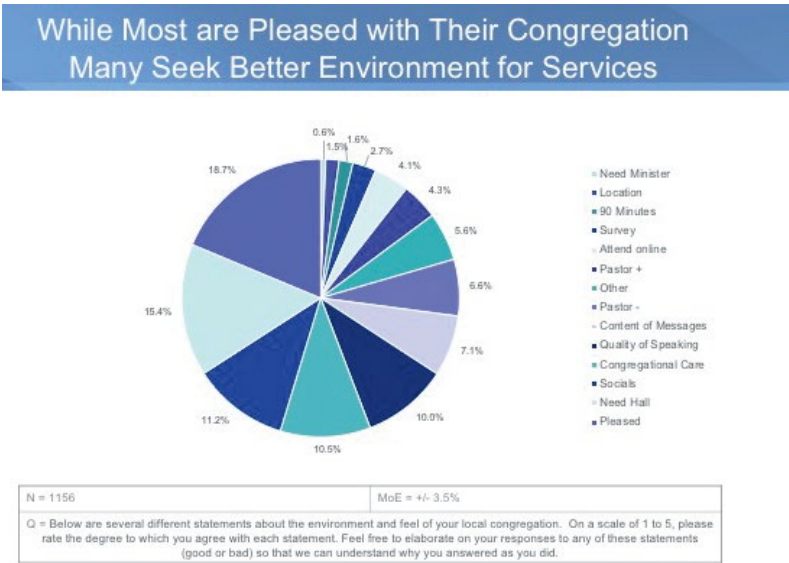
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The entire presentation can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/3lgqR9X>

recommend contact with UCG because they do not believe it is their role, or they have concerns over what the guest will experience at services. Specifically, that components from the home office (website, literature, *Beyond Today*) are polished, but the local halls or the congregation itself are not as welcoming. Most of all, respondents are consistently very positive about their local pastor (and wife) and the amount of work and service they provide to members. This is notably higher than in prior years.

Next Steps & Conclusion

While there were many positive comments, surveys by their nature highlight areas to explore and additional work to be done. This year, the biggest takeaways focus on five key aspects:

1. Invest in improving speaking at services. Whether sermonettes or sermons, develop programs around continuing to improve the content and delivery of messages.

"One of the greatest weaknesses of my congregation—and most congregations—is the quality and effectiveness of the weekly Sabbath messages. Training should be conducted or subsidized for all those given the responsibility to speak in order to help them develop the skills and tools to speak ef-

fectively and in line with basic princip[les] of learning and development, not just technically doctrinally correct messages. I believe this is key for the church to continue to grow, and to properly feed not only those veterans in the church but the newly converted."

2. Establish a consistent and minimum standard toward the quality of meeting halls. This is new this year, along with a desire to own meeting halls, but is perceived as being able to help local congregations thrive and grow.

3. Explore the balance of programs and resources devoted to Preaching the Gospel and Preparing a People. The respondents understand these are hard choices.

4. The engagement at services, whether that be rich, spiritual conversations or involving more of the membership in service. Especially beyond elements of speaking, there is a real desire for more members to reach out and check in on one another and make sure everyone feels included in fellowship and activities. Many desire an experience similar to this comment:

"We are a close-knit family. Eating a potluck meal together every week after services and prolonging the fellowshiping has truly contributed to our closeness. Some of us have formed special 'study-buddy' relationships which continually stirs up the

spirit within us, just as it should. I am so grateful to have been called by God and to be a part of this congregation I am with!"

5. There is deep admiration for the service and work pastors and their wives do for the members. There is a need to perhaps adjust expectation on how much can be done with smaller overall membership and concern they are spread too thin.

- "Although my pastor has more on his plate than most people could handle, I think he does an excellent job. However, I do worry that he is asked to do too much."
- "Our pastor is one of the most humble and serving people I have ever met! We are very, very blessed to have him and his wife with us!!"

The survey administration team would like to express its appreciation to all those who took the time to participate in the survey. Many of the insights and findings included actionable and helpful ideas and the data represents a statistically sound representation due to the efforts of those that contributed.

While one of the comments stated, "I feel overall that considering our budget and manpower situation, we are doing a superb job...it is an honor to be asked periodically as is the case here," it is just as important to recognize everyone who shared their thoughts. Thank you. **UN**

August Quarterly Council Meetings Held in Cincinnati



The Council of Elders, left to right: Len Martin, Jorge de Campos, Randy Stiver, Aaron Dean, Scott Ashley, John Miller, Dan Dowd, Darris McNeely. Not pictured: Bob Dick, John Elliott, Mario Seigle and Anthony Wasilkoff

During the week of Aug. 17, the Council of Elders held their quarterly meeting at the home office. Eight members were present in person, and four members who were unable to attend due to local travel restrictions attended virtually. Discussions included reports from each operation manager and committee chairman, a discussion on literature translation into Afrikaans, the 2021 GCE meeting and member survey feedback. More information about the meetings can be found at coe.ucg.org. **UN**

Treasurer's Report



Alex Woods/Unsplash

The Church's fiscal year ended June 30, 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. During the last four months of the fiscal year, much of the United States was under stay-at-home orders. Record layoffs occurred from businesses that were forced to close their doors if they were not considered “essential” and if employees could not do their jobs from their homes. Unemployment levels soared, the stock market began to recede and the nation plunged into economic recession.

It all happened so quickly. The coronavirus posed not only a threat to people's individual lives, but it was also impacting and threatening the economy in a way that could not be foreseen.

How long would this last? Would the economy be able to recover?

Those questions still remain, but the answer to coronavirus from the Church's standpoint is that “God will and has seen us through.” And He will continue to do so as we put our faith in Him.

Despite the coronavirus threat and the specter of an impending recession, the Church finished fiscal year 2020 in a very strong financial condition. God's blessing on His Church and the faithfulness of Church members and donors is the only explanation for the very high income that poured in during the pandemic months, from March through June. We learned a powerful lesson, and we are deeply thankful to God.

Numbers on the fiscal year 2020 will be released after the completion of the annual audit, which was conducted during the week of Aug. 17, 2020. It will be published in the Janu-

ary 2021 issue of *United News*. But I am happy to report that overall United States-United Church of God income for the year finished *six percent* above budget and the prior year.

The “good news” on the income was spread across all types and categories of the donations we receive:

- Spring Holy Day offerings—all of which had to be mailed in or donated online—exceeded budget, but fell just short of amounts in the prior year.

- First tithes and offerings, which we classify as “General Contributions,” exceeded the budget by more than seven percent.

- Contributions to the Assistance Fund exceeded the budget by more than 10 percent.

- Donations to the Festival Fund (“tithe of the tithe” to support the Feast of Tabernacles) exceeded budget by more than six percent.

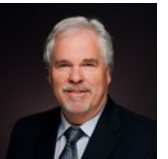
- Other categories including the Youth Camp Fund, Ambassador Bible College Fund, International Fund, Good Works, Stock and Estate Donations and even Interest Income (as we in-

vest cash on hand into non-risk bearing instruments) all surpassed budgeted expectations.

Besides income, there have been other blessings hidden in this pandemic period. Out of necessity, “business as usual” paused for a while, giving the administration time to review methods of operation and practices that have been in place for years. Keeping the commission Christ gave His Church in mind during this period, we have seen and will continue to see expense reductions in some areas.

With strong income and expense control that was “assisted” by the pandemic, the Church again ends its fiscal year in a strong cash position, with unrestricted cash balances in excess of \$8 million.

As part of our fiscal responsibility to God, His Church and His people, please join us in prayer, seeking God's will and asking Him to show us and teach us His will, in the use and proper stewardship of the tithes, offerings and other donations entrusted to us by Him through Church members and other donors. **UN**



Rick Shabi is the Treasurer for the United Church of God. Ordained an elder in 2000, he pastors congregations in Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida. He can be reached at rick_shabi@ucg.org.

Empathy in Times of Crisis

Trials and suffering can cause different reactions in people. Sometimes we may lash out in anger, feeling indignant at the injustice of what we are having to face. Other times, we may hunker down and wait it out. Ideally, we learn to trust in God's will and mercy, and remember that He never allows us more pain than we're able to bear. But how did Jesus Christ respond to suffering?

Despite the physical and emotional turmoil He experienced during His crucifixion, He still found the strength to look outside of Himself and help others. He showed love to a criminal on the last day of His physical life, assuring the thief next to Him, “You will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). If we are trying to build the character of Christ and put on His image, how do we respond in times of crisis?

Throughout the health crisis and civil divisions that have char-

acterized the last six months in the U.S. and abroad, we have seen spirits of empathy and generosity emerge. Many brethren—and those God hasn't called yet—have spent this time looking outside of themselves and reflecting the empathetic character of Jesus.

A LifeNets newsletter from late July called attention to this: “During the COVID-19 lockdown gripping the entire world, LifeNets has been able to do its work with as much vigor as ever. The support has been extraordinary as people in a time of trial also think of others in their trials.”

One of LifeNets' many current projects is the expansion of the Agua Viva school in Angola. Brethren run this local school, which teaches and employs others in their community. Education is not as accessible in Angola as it is in the U.S., and there are often many more potential students than room for them in schools.

These brethren saw a need and filled it, bringing jobs and education to their community—and outgrew their current building.

The ABC class of 2020 decided to support this project for their annual Charity Auction, which was made entirely virtual due to the lockdown in March. A link to donate online was posted and in the first day alone, over \$900 came through PayPal. At the time of this issue going to print, over \$21,400 has been raised for the school.

The Treasurer's Report above explains that despite the pandemic, from March till the end of the fiscal year in June, offerings, tithes and donations to UCG were even higher than budget.

In Zambia, a women's enrichment weekend was made possible by assistance from LifeNets and women in Branson, Missouri.

In Guatemala, after a strict lockdown with little forewarning, brethren were unable to

leave their homes to get food. Some were stranded away from home and others went multiple days without food. Almost overnight, members in New England raised about \$6,500 for the Gutemalan brethren.

The July-August 2020 issue of *United News* featured an article about Child of God Orphanage in Haiti. Since then, we have been contacted by multiple people asking how they can help.

There are many other individuals, congregations and organizations all over the world who have demonstrated exceptional empathy and generosity lately.

These are just a few highlights—there are many more brethren who are quietly finding needs in their community or elsewhere and attending to them. May we all continue to develop empathy, serve and be inspired by each other.

Ariana Del Signore

The prophet Jeremiah once complained to God that people were not responding to his message. The wicked, instead of getting their due, prospered. People seemed to flourish in their unrighteous behavior. Their behavior taunted Jeremiah and he felt ineffective and unappreciated. Jeremiah questioned God, wanting Him to act in support of his work. But God's response gives Jeremiah not only a new perspective but a challenge—one that demands a response.

"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5).

God is saying to Jeremiah, "If you think this is tough, you haven't seen anything yet. These people and the difficulty they present is nothing compared to bigger challenges coming. They are mere men. Soon, you will encounter a stampede of horses that could, if you aren't strong enough, trample you in the dirt. And if you have grown tired and fearful in a time of peace with no enemies at the gate, when the waters rise to flood level and threaten to sweep everything away, what will you do? You'll be swept under the waves and drown in the swift current. You won't stand a chance when it really gets tough."

We have been dealing with the impact of the global health crisis. What have you learned during this period? How have you handled the stress of the known and the unknown? Have you maintained a spiritual balance? Have you properly applied scripture to what has happened?

Walter Russell Mead, a professor in international rela-

tions at Bard College, writes a weekly column for the *Wall Street Journal*. He recently wrote that this health crisis has weakened the assumption that a modern, intricately connected global world could deal with most health crises and natural disasters, and keep society running smoothly with minimal interruption.

That assumption has changed. He writes, "The pandemic, which is mild as the great plagues of history go, demonstrates that the complexity of this global civilization has become a source of new vulnerabilities. And with the legitimacy of many institutions resting on their ability to solve problems quickly and effectively, COVID-19 challenges political leaders and institutions in ways that they cannot easily manage. The world needs to get used to that feeling. The pandemic's legacy will be crisis and chaos—and the trajectory of human civilization has shifted in ways that will test political leaders and economic policy makers more severely than anything since World War II."

Mead goes on to say, "COVID-19 is less a transient, random disturbance after which the world will return to stability than it is a *dress rehearsal for challenges to come. History is accelerating, and the leaders, values, institutions and ideas that guide society are going to be tested severely by the struggles ahead*" ("The Pandemic is a Dress Rehearsal," Walter Russell Mead, *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2020, emphasis added).

"History is accelerating" and this pandemic is a "dress rehearsal for challenges to come." That is sobering. God said to Jeremiah, "How will you contend with horses" if you have not kept up with weaker human footmen?

Gene Devine/Unsplash



"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?"

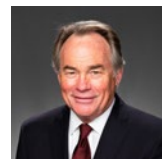
How have we done?

Did the weeks of shutdown bring on stress as you coped with staying home, perhaps a reduced income, fear of contagion and the uncertainty of what it meant? Has the disruption of church services and even this year's Feast of Tabernacles locations left you wondering *what next*?

In March I began working from home. Ambassador Bible College finished the remainder of the school year online, and I taught my classes virtually. Sabbath services from home presented an opportunity for my wife and I to "visit" congregations across the United States and Australia. Zoom, Facebook and other platforms have proven wonderful technologies to keep us connected. At first we managed well—but as the weeks turned into months, we gradually began to feel the stress of being disconnected from actually seeing and being with our brethren. In time this turned into a noticeable problem. We

felt the beginning struggles that come with prolonged isolation. The lifting of lockdown restrictions and return to services and other contact with family and friends were just the right tonic. For all of us, this shutdown and disruption has been an opportunity to develop resiliency. We will need it in times ahead.

Interest in Bible prophecy has been sharpened by this pandemic. Very early on, we said this was not the time of pestilence defined by the fourth horseman in Revelation 6. Certainly, it has been a serious health emergency, but we understand there were other pieces of the prophetic puzzle not yet in place. There will be larger disease pandemics in the future. To use Mr. Mead's phrase, this has been a "dress rehearsal."



Darris McNeely has served in the ministry for more than 43 years. He currently serves on the Council of Elders, teaches classes as a faculty member at Ambassador Bible College and is a host on Beyond Today. He can be reached at darris_mcneely@ucg.org.

Updates from Ministerial and Member Services

In August, Mr. Frank Fish was appointed pastor for the congregations in Los Angeles and Bakersfield, California. Mr. Fish and his wife, Valerie, have lived in the area for over 40 years, and Frank has served as an elder in the Los Angeles congregation for 20 years.

We would like to thank Robin and Susan Webber for their service to the Los Angeles and Bakersfield congregations over the past 10 years. Mr. Webber will continue to serve as pastor for the congregations in San Diego and Redlands, California, along with Las Vegas, Nevada.

Chris Rowland

Northwest Regional Ministerial Conference Online

On Monday, Aug. 3, we held a one-day online conference with pastors and elders from the Northwest region, webcast from Cincinnati. Ministers gathered together in small groups in pastors' homes in the Spokane, Portland and Seattle areas, so there was some opportunity to fellowship and spend time together in person. Others joined

from home. Links to selected recorded sessions from the last regional conference in the South-Central region were sent to elders and their wives in advance to watch prior to the one-day online conference.

The sessions were facilitated by home office personnel from their homes. Everyone had an opportunity to engage in an interactive

discussion about the recorded sessions. Steve Nutzman, the regional pastor, also facilitated an open discussion. We would have much preferred having the full conference in person, but everyone seemed grateful for the technology and the opportunity to see one another and conduct the one-day online conference.

Mark Welch

Beyond Today TV Program Generates New High Response



We are very pleased to report that we have surpassed the previous response record for a *Beyond Today* program. The *Beyond Today* television program, "Are You Prepared for the Ultimate Crisis?" (hosted by Daris McNeely), which aired the week of Aug. 2-8, produced 820 total responses.

Offering the booklet, *Are We*

Living in Time of the End?, this program also generated the lowest cost-per-response yet.

We are extremely grateful for your continuing gracious support. We also thank you for your prayers to our heavenly Father for His blessings as we strive to carry on His great work around the globe each day.

Peter Eddington

UCG.org Alexa Ranking at a High

We are pleased to report that UCG.org has broken into the top 10 list of worldwide Christian denomination websites again as reported by the Web-ranking company, Alexa. **We are currently ranked at #7.** This is the highest ranking we have ever seen. And UCG.org is currently ranked #22 of all Christian websites globally.

Elder's Wives Continue Enriching Online Zoom Sessions



Three presenters on the Zoom call during an online workshop.

Since the online GCE women's sessions were so well received, planning is under way to continue connecting the elders' wives in this way. What began as simply the online version of the annual GCE Women's Workshops has become a valued resource and opportunity for these women to continue connecting with and edifying one another beyond the GCE weekend.

On July 13, over 70 elder's wives from around the world took part in another online Zoom session with the purpose of making connections and get-

ting to know one another better. Barb Welch set the stage for the evening using the analogy of a quilt, "The family of God is like a giant patchwork quilt. God has stitched each of us together into a beautiful work of art. He knows the story of each little square in minute detail, and each story is precious."

Afterwards groups of 6-8 ladies were formed so that everyone had an opportunity to discuss and learn something new about the women in their group, fostering closer ties and friendships.

Lisa Fenchel

New Jelly Video Released in September: "Jelly Learns There's Nothing That God Can't Do."



Production on a new Jelly video is underway.

"Jelly Learns There's Nothing That God Can't Do" is planned for release in September 2020.

A new Jelly production is underway, recorded by the media team in July in the *Beyond Today* television studio sound stage.

Due to be released in September, the new production is titled, "Jelly Learns There's Nothing That God Can't Do." In this video Jelly asks: "What does God look like? How old is He? Does He sleep? Eat? Can God see me in the dark? Does

He like carrots, fruit roll-ups, chili-dogs, tacos and steamed broccoli? Because I don't like steamed broccoli!"

This will be the 12th Jelly video produced for our younger audience by the United Church of God.

You can view the first 11 online at ucg.org/members/kids-jelly. With the help of their friends, Jelly and Mr. Jonathan

make learning about God and the Bible fun for both kids and parents.

This latest production includes a song written by Mark Graham titled, "There's Nothing that God Can't Do," sung by Steve Myers and Jelly. Watch for the release of this latest Jelly episode in September!

Peter Eddington

A New Face at the Home Office



Duncan McClenagan was recently hired as a junior web developer for the United Church of God. Although he was born in Texas, he lived

most of his life near the village of Telkwa, British Columbia, Canada. He received his BSc in physics from the University of Northern British Columbia in 2017, his MSc in physics from McMaster University in 2019, and an Associate Diploma in Biblical Studies from Ambassador Bible College in 2020. In his spare time, Duncan enjoys playing the piano, chess and reading about American constitutional law.

Duncan's primary job role, at the moment, involves assisting

in a migration to a new version of the content management system which powers most of the websites for the United Church of God. Duncan is most excited by the opportunities this position gives him to both contribute his skills to an important cause, and expand his understanding of web development and the various technologies associated with it. He is enjoying his employment at the home office so far, and looks forward to continuing to work with such positive people. **UN**

Online Bible Discussions Keep Teens Connected

In lieu of UYC summer camp, the camp team wanted to provide some Christian Living instruction and online fellowship for teens. Six consecutive Friday night Bible discussions were held from late June through July, in two different time zones across the U.S.

Teens picked the time zone of their choice. Each teen camp director pre-recorded a 40-minute study for each week

based on the theme from Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember Your Creator in the Days of your Youth."

Teens logged on to uyc.ucg.org, entered the password and everyone viewed the video together. Then participants were divided according to their ages into Zoom chat rooms. A 30- to 40-minute interactive Q&A followed. Teens could participate and communicate with others during the discussion.

It was a pleasant surprise to see teens participate not only from the U.S., but also from Canada, the Caribbean and even India. The attendance each Friday night averaged around 120. These Zoom Bible discussions were a way to bring teens together during this unusual summer, and they also reminded us how much we look forward to attending camp in person next summer!

Steve Nutzman

Women's Enrichment Weekend Held in Isoka, Zambia



Left: Lucia Mulenga holds up a nearly finished doormat. Right: Edith Siame teaches the women how to make juice using a blender.

ISOKA, ZAMBIA—The theme of the weekend, “Becoming God’s Precious Jewels” from Zechariah 9:16 made for a joyous time. We were 22 in number, with seven people in attendance from Kalukanya and 15 from the central church in Isoka. I welcomed everyone and expressed my gratitude at the number of women who participated.

We had many activities with different facilitators, including how to make a wool doormat, which was facilitated by Lucia Mulenga. Women were taught how to make three different types of juices using various fruits.

The women also learned how to secure sweet potatoes in a hand-dug hole so they would not rot and go to waste. Other activities included cooking vegetables by adding pounded groundnuts called *fisashi*, facilitated by Gift Sinyenga. In addition, *chikanda* (called African polony) and many other foods were shared at the meals.

We were strengthened with many inspiring messages shared by Mwape Kabangula, Lucia Mulenga and myself. We also had a “Pastor’s Talk” where he emphasized tithing and gave an example of Ananias and Sapphira, who hid some of the money after they sold land. He also talked about God’s precious jewels. The pastor and Deacon P. Sinyenga also shared a message about business management. On the Sabbath we listened to a sermon on facing trials, tribulations and adversity.

In the afternoon the pastor and the deacon shared a message about financial management in the Bible. The time flew by quickly because we were busy throughout, despite the weather which was cold and windy!

We give our heartfelt thanks to God and to all those who helped us financially for the success of the women’s enrichment weekend in Isoka.

Edith Siame

Better Together: Cincinnati East Trip Replaces Canceled Teen Camps

CINCINNATI, OHIO—With United Youth Camps canceled due to local gathering restrictions in various states, our Cincinnati teens felt isolated and needed to get together. So in just three weeks we put together a camping trip and spent a week at the New River Gorge in West Virginia. This was initially a mistake; we had planned to go to a different gorge! But it ended up being a blessing because there were many activities available to us at the New River Gorge.

We organized our trip much like a regular teen camp—starting with Compass Check every day, followed by field games, team challenges, Christian living, campfire and discussions. The boys and girls were divided into two different cabins with multiple ages.

We stayed at Adventures on the Gorge, which was an amazing facility. The week was spent overcoming and doing things together. One activity onsite was a high ropes course that was color-coded: yellow, green, blue and black, with each color becoming more difficult to climb. It was quite a challenging experience high above the ground!

We were also able to white water raft down the New River. Listening and quick action were things we had to put into practice. Initially they walked us over to our rafts where our guides gave us instructions. Some of our teens were surprised that we were not actually getting “in” the boats, but rather sitting on the side! With great guides on each of the boats,



Campers spent the week together doing outdoor activities such as ziplining, white water rafting and hiking.

none of the teens fell out into the rapids. The river had some big “class 5” rapids—large, complex rapids that twisted and churned. It gave plenty of excitement and an adrenaline rush as our guide was able to steer us through the heart of it. At other times, we could relax, get out of our rafts and float down the swimming rapids.

Our theme for camp was “Better Together,” a topic that had been strong on the teens’ minds. We discussed how we are better together—with God, family, friends, church and others. We talked about those things every day. With multiple ages in attendance, it was like a family working together as everyone had to pitch in to prepare and serve meals for each



other. Some of the other activities were zip lining, kayaking, hiking, an amazing race and team building. Our goal was to tire out the teens before they tired us out!

Through this outdoor trip, the teens in our local congregation grew closer together as a group and our adults built special relationships with the teens, leaving all with memorable experiences.

Steve Myers

Troyers Hollow Campout Bonds Brethren After Months Spent Apart



Brethren gathered in the peaceful setting of Troyer’s Hollow to fellowship.

HOLMES COUNTY, OHIO—In June, 46 brethren gathered in tents, campers, hammocks and as day visitors to camp out in this remote hollow in Amish country. The Troyer’s Hollow campout is an annual favorite in the Northeast Ohio congregations, but the invite is extended to all who wish to join.

On Friday evening, attendees came together around a campfire by a stream for a Bible study

and spiritual discussion. For many it was their first opportunity to visit and fellowship with one another since the beginning of the pandemic in March.

Outdoor services were held midday Saturday, where light rain held off until the final hymn. Later, brethren gathered under the open pavilion to study and discuss moments in their lives when God had helped them “let go” of fears,

anxiety and other troubles in their spiritual walk.

It was a beautiful weekend spent in the wooded hillsides. All enjoyed God’s creation and fellowship with one another. Safe guidelines were followed, yet brethren enjoyed an experience that was far from spiritually distanced, and look forward to more campouts in the years ahead.

Amanda Miller

GN

The Good News

Maybe Next Year

How can we prepare ourselves now for the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ?

By Len Martin

The Feast of Tabernacles is probably the most anticipated event of the year for members of the Church. It also requires the most amount of planning and preparation, which adds to the anticipation. In addition to saving our second tithe all year as God commands us to do, we also decide which site to attend, how we will get there, where we will stay and what we will do.

In the midst of all your personal planning, have you ever paused to consider that right now, at this very minute as you are reading this article, somewhere a man we call the Festival Coordinator has much more on his mind than just his family? He's also thinking about you.

He is trying to figure out how to configure the meeting rooms to accommodate all the people, how many chairs are needed, how large of a stage, how many ushers will be needed, who can run the sound system or help park cars. He needs to arrange for a mother's room, anointing room and Bible study spaces. The list of things he is working on to make sure that you have an enjoyable Festival experience is quite long. In some cases, he began working on it just after the Feast of Tabernacles ended last year.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ over the earth after His second coming. All of the saints will reign with Him, so it seems it would be important that we consider how we might reign with Jesus Christ! Who is Jesus looking for to reign with Him? What qualities and skills?

On the evening of Passover, just before Jesus would be crucified, a dispute arose among His disciples over who would be greatest in the Kingdom of God. It's not

Who is Jesus looking for to reign with Him? What qualities and skills?

Shane Rounce/Unsplash



Serving at the Feast really is a team effort. So why not join the team!

only troubling to think that this is what was on the disciples' minds just before Jesus was to be betrayed and crucified, but it's also troubling to think that He had just washed their feet and instructed them to be humble servants. It seems they didn't fully understand His teaching. So, Jesus' reply to them was, "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves" (Luke 22:27).

The example Jesus set for His disciples and us is to be a servant. When was the last time you served at the Feast of Tabernacles? The Festival pictures the time when we will be serving with Jesus Christ. If we won't serve now, why would God think we would serve after Christ returns?

Now I know that we all have to be balanced. We don't want people to serve so much that they don't balance out their time to be with family and fellowship with other brethren. The best way to accomplish this is for as many people to volunteer as possible so the workload can be widely distributed. Many hands make light work, as the saying goes.

I also know that we are all at different stages of life. If you are single, or an adult with grown children, you

will have more time than parents with small children. Some years you won't be able to serve and that's perfectly understandable. I've been in those stages myself.

What is holding you back from serving?

The reason we should look for opportunities to serve, if we are able, is expressed well by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi, "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 2:3-4). The Feast of Tabernacles is the perfect opportunity to look out for the interests of others!

What is holding you back from serving? Sometimes people don't serve because they want the Feast to be a vacation from any type of responsibilities. But there are other reasons that hold people back. Sometimes people are nervous about serving at something they have never done before. Guess what? That means after you serve, you will have learned something new!

Maybe you're not sure what to sign up for or what department needs help. That's an easy problem to remedy. When you register, simply select all of the departments for

which you are willing to serve and the Festival Coordinator will assign you to the area that has the greatest need.

Also, please know that it would help a great deal if you register for the Feast as early as you can and select where you are willing to serve at the same time. Sometimes the Festival Coordinator is stressing because he only has a limited number of registered people willing to serve. Other times, after he has selected each department head and has all the manpower lists created, people show up at the Feast site and want to help. This can be confusing and disruptive, since all the planning is done, lists are made and manpower schedules have been distributed.

The Festival Coordinator has a great deal of planning that needs to be completed weeks and months in advance of arriving at the Festival location. You can be a great help to the brethren you will be serving and also to the Festival Coordinator who is working hard to put all the pieces together. It really is a team effort, so why not join the team!

Before you think, "maybe next year," why not make this the year that you serve! **GN**

How Should We Worship God?

Is there really a correct way to worship God? Does He tell us how?

By Craig Scott

A great way to answer this question is to quote Jesus Himself, who said “worship God in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Lots of information is packed into that short phrase. Let’s investigate more closely and see what we find.

One day, Jesus was traveling through a region in Judea known as Samaria. The region of Samaria roughly aligned with the region once occupied by the 10 northern tribes after they split away from the rest of Israel. The people who lived in this region of Samaria had a curious collection of beliefs and practices that kept some elements of the Jews’ practices, but were definitely not the same.

While the disciples were off running errands, Jesus sat down to rest at a public well and started a conversation with a Samaritan woman. Their conversation was mostly about the truth of who He was and what He had to offer spiritually. However, their conversation touched briefly on the subject of proper worship.

Read the whole chapter to get the context and then zoom in on these verses, John 4:19-24. The woman’s statement in verse 19 begs an answer: “Which way of worship is correct?” The summation of Jesus’ response is found in verses 23-24, “The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”

Worshipping God in spirit

To properly worship God we need the right mental approach. Respect toward God and submission to His will are a good start. To this let’s add the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, etc.

Look around you and you’ll see there are many who try to worship God in spirit... but do not do God’s will with regard to how He wants to be worshiped. That could be considered worshipping God in spirit but neglecting to worship Him in truth. God wants worship in both ways... in spirit, and in truth!

Worshipping God in truth

Truth can be defined as “that which conforms to reality, fact or actuality.” When considering how we interact with God the Creator, let’s add this quote from Jesus, “[God’s] word is truth” (John 17:17). God’s word of truth targets multiple levels of our lives. Such as:

Truth about our own self... which is transforming!

Truth about God’s plan of salvation and eternal life... which is motivating!

Truth about God’s will for us... meaning, what He wants us to do.

Remember that when Jesus spoke of Scripture as truth from God, He was referring to the writings of the Old Testament. The Gospels and epistles of the New Testament had not yet been written.

What does that word of truth tell us about worship?

The word of truth tells us to love God every moment of every day, with all our heart, mind and being (Deuteronomy 6:5). That same word of truth tells us God also wants us to express worship toward Him in a few simple, concrete ways. Remember, God wants worship in both spirit and in truth.

An important way to express worship toward God which is grounded in reality, fact and action is to obey the Fourth Commandment (Deuteronomy 5:12-15, see also Exodus 20:8-11).

Deuteronomy 5:14 tells us that God has appointed a time for focused worship. That time is the seventh day of each week. In this same verse we are also told to “do no work” on that day and thereby set it apart from the other days of the week. The seventh day is classified as holy, meaning it is time set apart for a special godly purpose. What might that holy purpose be?

A holy assembly for instruction

Leviticus 23:3 tells us that the special godly purpose is to facilitate a sacred (holy) assembly, meaning a gathering together of people for spiritual instruction.

The godly purpose of the seventh day assembly is not accomplished by merely gathering, drinking coffee, eating cookies and chatting about the week.

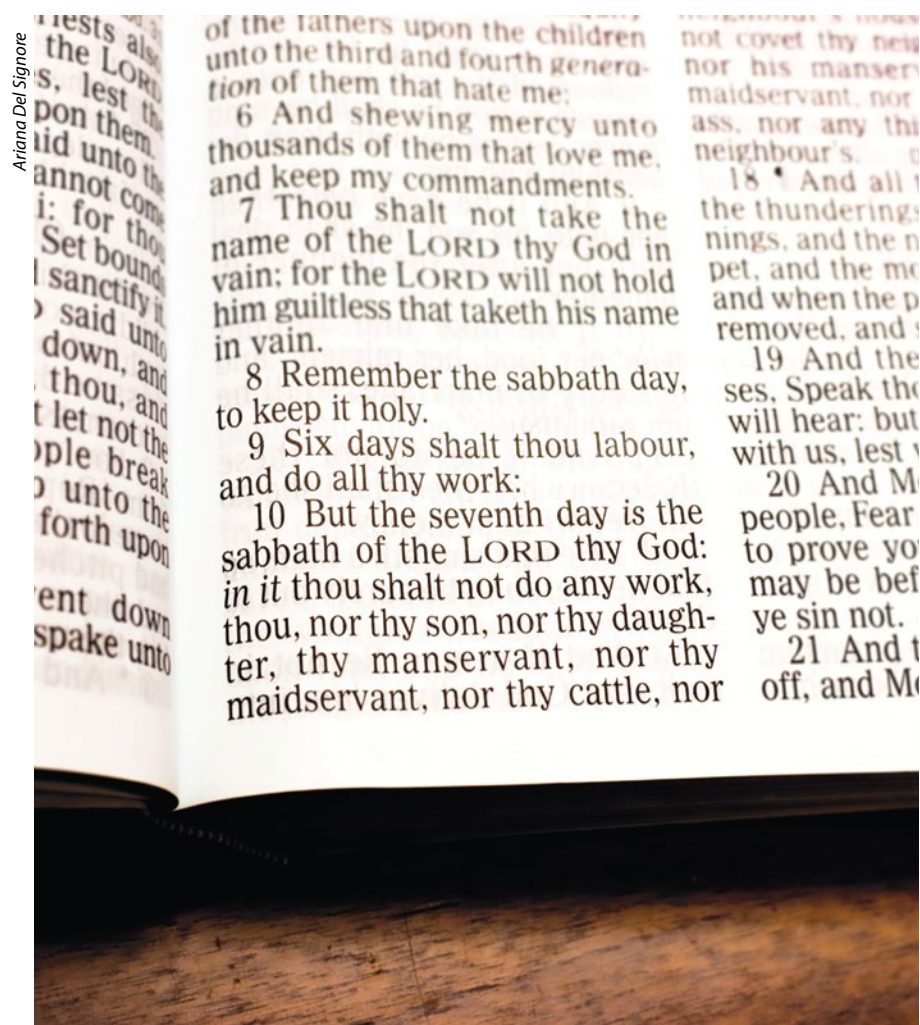
Dig a bit deeper and you’ll find the Hebrew word translated into English as meeting, assembly or convocation is transliterated *mikraw* (Strong’s H4744). The word means both the act of gathering but also of a public reading. In the case of God’s sacred assembly on the seventh day, that means a public reading of Scripture.

An important way God expects us to worship Him is by gathering together on the seventh day of each week to listen to what He has to say. To hear His word of truth read aloud, along with instruction about how it is to be understood and applied.

This expectation is carried forward into the New Covenant writings as well: When Paul gave instruction to Timothy about his job as a pastor he gave instructions to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture and the teaching of what it means. (See 1 Timothy 4:13.)

Paul referred to the Scriptures as a useful tool for instruction, direct from the lips of God, concerning personal conduct, correcting errors in thoughts or actions, and training in righteousness. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

To carry on this godly and holy purpose, the Sabbath remains a part of worship for followers of Christ as Hebrews 4:9 says. Note: the KJV and NKJV translations of



An important way God expects us to worship Him is by gathering together on the seventh day of each week to listen to what He has to say.

the Bible leave out the reference to the Sabbath in this verse translating it merely “a rest.” So, make sure you read it in some other translations, or if you want to stick to the King James Version, do a word study using a concordance and Bible dictionary. In this verse, the Greek word *sabbatismos* is used.

Finally, New Covenant believers are instructed not to give up assembling together for teaching, encouragement and instruction in righteousness (Hebrews 10:25).

Finding a group to gather with

God established a New Covenant assembly to continue on with this holy purpose every seventh day of the week—and that assembly is alive and well even in the 21st century. Christ has appointed teachers and pastors within the assembly to provide instruction. They get to know the members and provide spiritual instruction geared toward their specific needs and situations (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The United Church of God has congregations of people all over the U.S. and in many international areas. Visit our website at ucg.org/congregations to find a congregation near you. Otherwise, you can write or call using the contact information found on page three of this publication.

As an organization, the United Church of God devotes considerable financial resources and manpower toward providing local assemblies with trained ministers. We want people to hear the word of truth proclaimed each week. It’s important to us because it’s important to God.

Make it important to you as well! **GN**

When Feast Plans Don't Work Out

This year, many of our Feast plans are being upset by events we did not foresee coming. We must believe that God is working through all these circumstances.

By Andy Diemer

My wife and I were among a dozen brethren from our New England Church area planning for a Feast in Israel this year. We would all fly together from Boston-Logan Airport and join about 200 other UCG brethren in Tel Aviv. I was picturing meeting our dear friends from the local congregations at the Logan airport gate, all of us in high spirits. We would be expecting a spiritually enriching and joyful Feast in the land of the Bible. We would see archaeological sites rich with history and biblical significance: Caesarea, Megiddo, Mount Carmel, Capernaum, the Sea of Galilee, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives and more! But spending the Feast in Israel will not happen for us. Not this year.

Six months ago, none of us likely thought the pandemic would squash our plans. But as the summer days passed, virus case counts were spiking higher in Israel, the United States and other countries. On the evening of July 11, our Festival coordinator emailed the “disappointing, but probably not surprising news.” He announced the postponement of the 2020 UCG Feast in Israel. It was moving to 2021.

Our situation is not unique. The pandemic is disrupting Feast plans for many of us. Even as I write this in late July, my wife and I are not completely sure where we are going for the Feast this year. But just like everything that happens to us, we know God is working in this, for “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28).

When we keep the Feast in the way God commands, we go to the place where the Lord chooses, the place where He puts His name (Deuteronomy 12:5). For you this year, that place may be at home or at a Feast site where you had not originally planned to go. Still, God intends that we make His Feasts enriching physical and spiritual experiences. His Word tells us to “rejoice before the Lord your God” (verse 12) at the Feast. And though the pandemic may have upset your plans, rejoicing at the Feast depends on you! Though you are keeping the Feast at home, or at a Feast site where you had not originally planned to go, there is much to rejoice about! Even during this worldwide trial, we have so much to be thankful for.

We can be thankful for having life itself. We have time to apply ourselves to God’s Word. We have an opportunity to learn more about Him at His Feast. God still wants us to have a joyful Feast experience. Though the pandemic may have altered your Feast plans, you can still richly enjoy this time. You can create lifelong Feast

Kevin Delvecchio/Unsplash



You can create lifelong Feast memories with your family and brethren when you keep the Feast as God commands.

memories with your family and brethren when you keep the Feast as God commands.

He tells us to keep the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days and to “dwell in booths,” or temporary dwellings (Leviticus 23:41-42). This is because He wants us to understand that we are “strangers and pilgrims on this earth” (Hebrews 11:13). At this Feast, you can look at the current trouble in the world in this way. It is a temporary situation; this will change.

This great fall festival season pictures the time when God will mightily intervene in human events. This is the only hope for humanity, for when Jesus Christ returns, He will save man from his own destruction. How wonderful to understand the meaning of these Holy Days as we look now “for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13)!

Remember that the fall festival season also pictures a great harvest. God calls it “the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end” (Exodus 34:22). He is like the farmer who has planted and tended His fields. He is patiently waiting now to gather the increase of the earth.

Just as God waits in patient hope for the ingathering, so must we, even during the turbulent events of this age. As James the apostle wrote, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain” (James 5:7). The “precious fruit of the earth” are the people who will inherit immortality with God the

Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful to understand that this is us!

When the true, heavenly Feast of Ingathering begins, we will be “changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Rehearsing these days each year helps us to keep a vibrant hope in that coming glory. Only a few realize the significance of this Feast now, and God has blessed us with that understanding!

However our Feast plans are disrupted, if we are keeping the Feast at home, or wherever we may be going for the 2020 Feast, let us be physically and spiritually well prepared to joyfully observe God’s wonderful Fall Holy Days again.

Let us make determined plans with all diligence to keep this coming Feast. As he was traveling to the Feast, the apostle Paul said to the Ephesian brethren, “I must by all means keep this coming Feast in Jerusalem” (Acts 18:21). Let us have that same attitude and “by all means keep this coming Feast!”

This year, many of our Feast plans are upset by events we did not foresee. We must believe that God is working through all these circumstances. If we give the effort to rejoice before the Lord at the Feast, no matter how much the pandemic has disrupted our plans, He will bless us. He will help us to make our Feast a wonderful memory.

May we all be able to look back at the 2020 Feast and say, “That was the one of the best Feasts ever!” And may we all one day joyfully say, “Next year in Jerusalem!” **GN**

Celebrating the Feast at Home or Online?



See page 13 of this issue and visit the online Feast webpage below to access Festival resources:

ucg.org/members/feast/sites/2020/celebrating-the-feast-of-tabernacles-online.

Though the pandemic may have upset your plans, rejoicing at the Feast depends on you!

Beware of Contempt

Sometimes the issue is not disagreement between two people, but the attitude in which that disagreement is expressed and explored.

By Katherine Rowland

Matthew 5 records the words of Jesus teaching the multitudes. In explaining that He has come not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, He says, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘*Raca!*’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:21-22).

When we read this, it can seem a little confusing (*raca?*) or overly harsh (is calling someone a fool really that huge a problem?). Matthew Barclay’s commentary clarifies it a little. According to Barclay, the word *raca* was a contemptuous insult, indicating that the person spoken to was a brainless idiot, a person without any intelligence at all. The word translated “you fool!” was an even more terrible insult, meaning that the person spoken to was not just unintelligent, but evil, godless or without morals. Both terms show contempt for the other person—a *feeling that they are worthless*.

Christ’s teaching here clearly shows that it is not enough for Christians to just refrain from physically killing another person: we are not to treat them or speak to them in ways that indicate that we think that they are worthless or undeserving of life.

Christ continues after this passage to teach that “... if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23). It is important to note that He does not say “if you have something against your brother,” but if you “remember that your brother has something against you.” Clearly, we are to consider how our actions and our words affect others; it is so important to do this that it can affect our eternal life.

I thought of this passage as I was reading about what some have called our current “culture of contempt.” Arthur C. Brooks used the term in his *New York Times* article “Our Culture of Contempt” (March 2, 2019), pointing to the large number of angry, one-sided public voices and to social media as tending to reinforce the idea that one side of almost any argument is completely right and the other side is completely wrong. Brooks adds that the issue is not disagreement between two people, but the attitude in which that disagreement is expressed and explored. Over the last few years, contempt has become a focus as writers and public figures increasingly point to a “culture of contempt” in the United States. The idea of a “culture of contempt” is of a society where we move past disagreeing with others and start to think that a person who doesn’t agree with us is stupid, evil, or both.

When we treat someone with contempt, we act as though they are worth less than we are. We reject them as having no value. We use our words and actions to show that we think they are not worth respect.

Robin Worrall/Unsplash



*We are always going to have disagreements; we can’t control whether or not we agree on all issues.
But we can—and must—control how we treat one another.*

What effect does that have on us? What effect does it have on them? And what effect does it have on our society? Interestingly, contempt can damage both parties. In the article mentioned above, Brooks highlights studies showing that those who feel rejected are prone to anxiety and depression; those who treat others with contempt are damaged as well, because of the stress hormones released during the interaction. In her blog post “This One Thing is the Biggest Predictor of Divorce” (August 25, 2017), Eva Van Prooyen writes that in relationships marked by contempt, both partners are more inclined to become ill with infectious diseases than are people in happy relationships. When we think on a larger scale, it’s easy to see how attitudes of contempt can make working together almost impossible: how can we cooperate if one of us acts as though the other is worthless?

I don’t have to be on my social media accounts for more than a few minutes before I see people—even Christians—referring to public figures and to other people as “idiots” or worse. Sometimes, whole groups of people are mentioned, with phrases like “if you believe this, you’re stupid.” Clearly, this type of language and attitude should be far from those of us who follow Christ. If we believe that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), then we know that God loves all people. Every person we see is someone who God knows by name and cares about, not wanting any to perish, but instead wanting all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

How can we avoid treating others with contempt?

Remember that every person is more than their opinion on any one thing. Our modern ways of communicating make our world feel small, but it also makes it easy to only see one aspect of a person, instead of who they really are. Dr. John Gottman, who has done extensive study on what makes relationships work, writes in his book *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* that contempt causes us to, at least momentarily, forget the other person’s positive qualities. So when we disagree and are tempted to dismiss someone, we need to re-

member that what we are angry with is just one small part of who that person is.

Recognize that respect is not dependent on agreeing with someone. It is not a sin to disagree with someone; it is a sin to use that disagreement as a reason to treat a person without respect. As a married woman, I am told to respect my husband (Ephesians 5:33). There is no passage that tells me that I get to choose not to respect him when I disagree with him. Peter wrote that we are to “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17).

Choose humility. A key aspect of contempt is pride: thinking that we are better than someone else. Paul writes in Titus that we are to “be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men” (Titus 3:1-2). In Philippians, he writes, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3).

Think carefully about what you say. The Bible cautions that “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive” (Proverbs 17:27-28). In Matthew 12:34-36, Christ said, “... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” We ought to give careful consideration about how we speak of and to other people. How do those words reflect how we think of others? What patterns would people see in the words we speak?

We are always going to have disagreements; we can’t control whether or not we agree on all issues. But we can—and must—control how we treat one another. As Christians, we must follow Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32). **GN**

By Don Hooser

At times, I wish I were rich. When someone is in a major financial strain, I wish I could give him a big gift to solve his money problems. At least I am rich in having unlimited prayer time with which to petition our wealthy Creator.

There is another way I'm rich. My body continues to make a very precious product—blood. It makes enough that I can donate about a pint of it every eight weeks to help one, two or even three people to survive and thrive. Around the world there are always countless people who have a critical need for a blood transfusion.

I've been donating since the 1980's—many, many gallons altogether. It has never cost me a penny and never slowed me down, although they always tell me to take it easy for a day following a donation. I'm well-rewarded with the joy it gives me. Plus, I feel good about starving a few mosquitoes!

A unique way to serve

Chapter 58 of Isaiah is largely about fasting. To me, another major lesson of this chapter is that fasting also teaches us about the importance of sacrificing for others (Isaiah 58:6-10). Donating blood is an easy self-sacrifice. Rather than giving up some food for a while, a person is giving up a little of his or her blood for a while. It's one way to "love your neighbor as yourself."

My sources for this article were Carter BloodCare, American Red Cross and other Internet sites, and my personal experiences. Note that policies and procedures for donating blood vary from different countries and locales. This article is a brief summary of a big subject.

In most areas, anyone who is age 16 or older and weighs at least 110 pounds is eligible to donate. Many high schools and colleges have blood drives with high participation. This is a unique way to serve and do good if you have the health to do so (Galatians 6:9-10).

Our country always has a blood supply shortage. Consider that the average transfusion requires three pints. A victim of a car accident can require

100 pints! Yet only about three percent of people over age 16 donate each year. The need for donated blood is higher during summer, partly because of more accidents. However, donations have declined during 2020 because of people's fears about going anywhere. Blood banks and donation centers are extremely careful about cleanliness and procedures, so there is no legitimate reason to fear going to a donation center.

One pint of blood can help save three lives

Think of that! If you were to save someone's life in another way, such as from drowning, you would be thrilled and forever thankful that you were able to do that. Donating blood is less dramatic but you are helping one, two or three people to sustain or regain vitality and health, and sometimes you are preventing their deaths. It is truly life-saving. You give so someone will live. And if you continue to donate blood, you can be helping to save many lives over a period of time! It's a wonderful act of compassion, caring and charity.

Furthermore, ongoing research has given increasing evidence that people who regularly donate blood often experience better health in the long run. In addition to the physiological benefits, the happiness one feels from giving is obviously healthful (Acts 20:35).

When whole blood is donated, the processing facility separates the blood into its three main components: red cells, plasma and platelets. When a patient needs a transfusion, he usually needs only one of those components. Therefore, one donation often benefits three patients!

- Red blood cells are the only means by which the body can transport essential oxygen to all the cells of the body and remove the carbon dioxide. A minimum volume of these circulating red blood cells is essential to support life. "The life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life" (Leviticus 17:14, English Standard Version). Every day, countless people have major blood loss from injuries—plus, many diseases deplete the body's supply of red blood cells.

- Plasma is the liquid part of the blood and is the source of

gamma globulin, albumin and clotting factors. It is used to treat burn victims, clotting disorders and shock from trauma.

- Platelets are essential for normal blood clotting. They can be wiped out during treatment for cancer, leukemia, aplastic anemia and other diseases.

Some donors donate only plasma or only platelets. This is done with a process called apheresis by which an apheresis machine extracts the plasma or platelets from the blood and immediately transfuses the rest of the blood back into the donor. The body requires about eight weeks to replenish all lost red cells, but those donating plasma or platelets can donate much more frequently than that.

There is no substitute for human blood. However, sometimes a life is saved with a transfusion of a non-blood fluid, such as a saline solution. That is done when the primary emergency need is to increase the volume of fluid in the patient's circulatory system. But in most emergencies, a transfusion of one of the blood components is essential.

On a similar subject, you might also consider signing up to be an organ donor. After your death, some of your organs can greatly benefit others by giving them a significantly better quality of life.



Donating blood is a special way of showing love to someone else—and possibly saving their life.

What will you experience at the donation center?

At the donation center, you will answer about 30 questions with a yes-or-no answer to see if your blood is healthy and pure so it can be safely transfused into someone else. The center needs to know if you have had certain diseases, have engaged in any unhealthy activities, are taking certain medications, etc.

Then you receive a free miniature medical checkup. You will learn your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and the level of your hemoglobin (the protein in red blood cells that contains iron and transports the oxygen). A day or two later you can go to the center's website and learn your cholesterol level. If you don't already know your blood type, you will learn that as well.

There are many health factors that disqualify a volunteer from donating. Less than 38 percent of the population qualifies to give blood or platelets which is a major reason for the shortages of them. Therefore, if you are healthy enough to donate, please consider donating.

For donating whole blood, the total time at the clinic is about 45 minutes. Often a donation center gives each donor a little gift like a T-shirt. I heard about one donation center that advertised, "A

pint of beer for a pint of blood." Each donor received a coupon that could be redeemed at a particular restaurant after 24 hours.

Does donating cause any pain? My experience is that when the phlebotomist pricks my finger to get a drop of blood to test for my hemoglobin level, I feel a tiny pain for about one second. Then when the phlebotomist inserts the little needle into my arm, I generally feel a slight pain for about two seconds. Small, small sacrifice. I have greater pain getting out of bed in the morning!

Serving and sacrificing

It's inspiring to reflect on the following scriptures that have to do with generously serving others: Galatians 6:9-10; Luke 6:31-38; Luke 15:1-32; Matthew 5:7; John 15:12-13.

Nothing deserves to be compared with the sacrifice of suffering and death that Jesus Christ endured for each of us. However, a thought that usually comes to my mind when I'm going to donate blood is that Jesus shed His blood and bled to death to save my life—my eternal life! What an amazing self-sacrifice!

Reflecting on that is part of what inspires me to want to shed a pint of blood that could possibly save a life... Or two, or three. **UN**

12 Boundary Waters Adventure

You know how sometimes a major event seems to begin with a single phone call? About eight months or so ago, I received one of those phone calls. Matt Fenchel, the UCG elder who leads the young adult Challenger Program, called to ask if we could trade years for that program and Boundary Waters Adventure (BWA) because of some schedule conflicts for his staff.

I was pretty sure I could accommodate that. I checked with the BWA staff and all of them wanted to go in 2020—though some had previous commitments that prevented them. Still, there was enough of us, so the planning was on!

This past July 12-19 those plans came to fruition. Five staff members—Lewis and Lena VanAusdelle, Kevin Kenady, Aaron Booth and I—led a group of 13 young adults on a canoeing and camping adventure in the Boundary Waters of Northern Minnesota. Coming from around the country, participants ranged in age from 18 to 30.

What is the point of the trip? Well, while it is a lot of fun, and campers explore a beautiful, pristine landscape, those are not the main reasons. Challenger programs are designed to put young adult Church members into situations in which they can grow spiritually while overcoming difficulties. They can learn cooperation and trust through teamwork and interdependence. They can focus on the beauty and wonder of God's creation without the distractions of modern society.

Fortunately, the travel and



Top left: A group of campers take a break during one of their first hikes. Top right: Stopping for a few minutes of cliff jumping! Right: Two campers filter drinking water from the lake using a pump.



meeting restrictions caused by the current health crisis did not force a cancellation of BWA. As a young adult program, no minors were involved. Moreover, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness already has a permanent restriction limiting the size of groups entering to nine people. We avoided wearing face coverings and social distancing by having all participants monitor their health and limit contact for weeks in advance. The plan was for all to come into the program healthy—and there is no danger of contracting the virus out in the wilderness!

This year Church members Glenn and Sherry Erickson donated the use of a farmhouse near Lake Pelican in Orr, Minnesota, so our group could meet there

for orientation and training. The book, *Make Your Bed: Little Things that Can Change Your Life... and Maybe the World*, by retired Admiral William McRaven, provided a common reading to complete in advance, and the orientation began with an interactive Bible study discussing biblical principles reflected in the book. After instruction on canoeing technique and wilderness camping, the group paddled across Crane Lake as a tune up before dividing into two groups and entering the wilderness on Tuesday morning.

This year's group faced challenges from tough portages, a new beaver dam, and occasional rain and headwinds. Overcoming these challenges led to a great sense of accomplishment and confidence in the team's



ability to meet and surmount obstacles. On Friday, the groups met in Voyageurs National Park where we camped for the Sabbath. Outdoor services consisted of hymn singing and six sermonettes presented by young men in the program. Several of those commented on the benefit of the challenges faced and conquered.

The BWA gives new meaning to the old saying, "there's no tired like camp tired," but the fatigue was worth it. Challenger West is scheduled for next summer, and hopefully a new group of young adults will be ready to embark on a Boundary Waters Adventure in 2022.

Frank Dunkle

In Good Company

By Micah Gunn

There is an old story that Jewish rabbis used to tell their students regarding the building of the temple. They stated that when the temple was built, every stone was cut to fit perfectly and then shipped from the quarry to the hilltop building site.

The first stone to arrive was an odd shape and didn't fit the idea that the builders had in mind. After conversing among themselves and puzzling over this issue, they decided to roll the stone down the hill and allow it to be reclaimed by nature.

Years went by and the temple was finally close to completion. The builders wrote to the

quarry to tell them they were finally ready for the cornerstone. In confusion, the quarry wrote back saying that the cornerstone had been delivered already. It wasn't until this moment that the builders realized that the misshapen stone they thought had been sent by mistake was actually the most important one for the build. They just hadn't recognized it as such.

They ran down the hill, uncovered the growth that had set upon the stone, and made ready to place it into the temple. This teaching rarely goes beyond a simple instruction to be thorough in your work, but we know that the Chief Cornerstone, rejected once, is none

other than Jesus Christ Himself (1 Peter 2:4).

Now in 2020, we see Christ's assurance come to life when He stated that the world would hate those that follow Him (John 15:18-20). Less and less people are identifying as Christian and more people are becoming increasingly intolerant of those of us that are. Have you ever felt afraid of being rejected if you express your Christian beliefs in today's landscape? You are in good company.

Earlier this year, amid the throes of the coronavirus crisis in New York City, pop-up hospitals funded and run by Samaritan's Purse, a charitable organization lead by Franklin Graham

(son of famous evangelist, Billy Graham), faced heavy backlash when they continued their practice of requiring volunteers and workers for their organization to sign a Statement of Faith.

Among other things, their Statement of Faith outlines a belief in the biblical precedent for marriage between a man and a woman, as well as anti-abortion ideologies. In response to the criticism, Mr. Graham released a statement saying that they never discriminate on the patients that they treat—but Samaritan's Purse does operate under a belief in the Bible and Jesus Christ, and chooses like-minded people to further their ministry. The city of New York responded in

a statement wondering, "Was there going to be an approach that was truly consistent with the values of New York City?"

Samaritan's Purse was under scathing critique from the city and its residents while trying to do good. Jesus Christ was hated by the world for the truth that He preached to save them. This is nothing new—and we in God's Church have likely faced similar backlash for trying to peacefully adhere to our beliefs. Like this contemporary organization in New York City, we also might find ourselves harshly rejected for doing right (1 Peter 2:20-24)—but it should be a comfort to know that we are in good company. **UN**

Don't Forget to Support the Festival Tithe

The Feast of Tabernacles is the highlight of the year for many. It is a great blessing to be able to gather together at Feast sites around the world to picture the coming Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. A lot of planning goes into preparing the Feast every year. Those involved are happy to dedicate their time, effort and expertise, and the ministry looks

to God as they prepare messages for our spiritual food. But the Feast costs a lot of money. Hall rentals, equipment rentals, second tithe assistance for those who don't have adequate funds, printing expenses, activity expenses and more add up to a lot. We need your help in being able to provide the Feast venues and support that enhance

our celebration. Please consider sending a portion of your second tithe to help support the Feast. To donate, you can go to <https://donate.ucg.org> and click on Festival Fund. Or cut out the form on below and send it with your check to the home office. If you have any questions, please contact your pastor or the treasurer, Rick Shabi, at any time. **UN**

2020 Festival Fund

Please send this form along with your check to:
United Church of God, PO Box 541027 Cincinnati, OH 45254.

- Please indicate the amount you are sending in the space below.
- Include your personal identification number (PIN) from your latest *United News* or *Beyond Today* label.
- Make your check payable to United Church of God and label it "Festival Fund."
- Clip out and enclose the completed form, along with your check, in one of the labeled reply envelopes mailed to you from the home office.
- Affix postage and mail.

Your PIN: U _____

Donation Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Feast 2020 Travel Advisory

For the vast majority of members, this has been the most challenging year to plan for the Feast of Tabernacles. The same is true for church administration which has considered many options, suggestions and recommendations for operating the Feast during this health crisis. All input has been considered and appreciated, knowing we all want what is best and to be led by God's Holy Spirit.

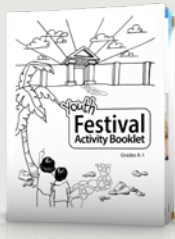
Each Feast site will abide by state and local regulations in arranging social gatherings—whether it be Church services, smaller Bible studies, luncheons or teen events, etc.

Please carefully read the arrangements at the site you will attend in terms of wearing masks and social distancing (some of that planning is not finalized). Be aware of interstate travel requirements for anybody leaving their state and returning home, too.

The Church advises all members to prayerfully consider their own individual situation and make decisions for yourself on whether to attend the Feast or any gathering at the Feast. It is a personal choice and the United Church of God is not pressuring anyone to attend the Feast and expose themselves to health risks.

The United Church of God recognizes your personal decision, and for those not attending live services, there will be daily live webcast services from the central and mountain time zones. **UN**

Youth Activity Booklets



Youth Activity Booklets are available again this year! You can download and print PDFs at: ucg.org/members/news/youth-festival-activity-booklets-available. Hardcopies may be available at your Feast site as well.

A Reflection on 15 Years of Feast Coordinating Blessings



Keeping things running smoothly for the week of the Feast of Tabernacles takes much detailed preparation and execution.

The fall Feast of Tabernacles is the most anticipated time of the year for God's Church. What goes into helping make the fall Feast experience the highlight of the year for God's people?

Let me share my story about how I became a Feast Coordinator. I had been in the ministry for seven years. Most of those years I served as a church pastor with plenty to do. One day my wife

asked me, "Jerry, why don't you ask if you can serve as a Feast Coordinator?" "No thank you." "Why not?" "Because I'm not ready for it." She pressed me; we both won.

We then invited the overall U.S. Festival Director and his wife to our house to see what they thought about my wife's suggestion. They sat on our couch and he began asking me

questions about Feast requirements and needs. Finally, he said, "Jerry, do you realize the logistics and strategies that go into coordinating a Feast?" I said I didn't, but I could learn.

He then asked me questions about the fundamental logistics of preparing for a Feast site including hall layout, chair setup, stage preparations, audio needs, restrooms, information tables, business office, security, volunteer Feast department heads, eight to 10 daily church services, special music, song leaders, the mothers' room and other important requirements not listed here. Additionally, he said that the coordinator must work with the local motel association and the managers of the Feast site facility.

At that point, I was ready to quit before I got started! However, I said I could do all those things and that I was a quick learner. He laughed and shared this warning: "You'd better be." After a few days

he assigned us the then smaller Jekyll Island, Georgia Feast site that seated "only" 5,000 people.

Long story short, I survived and went on to serve five more sites, three of which numbered over 12,000 attendees. There are interesting stories about those large sites that I don't have the space to share in this article, but over the years I learned even more serving over 12,000 members in eight days than smaller sites. Mary Ann and I served in Jekyll Island two years, Lake of the Ozarks for two years, Wisconsin Dells for one year and even downtown Detroit, Michigan for one year—a memorable assignment. Those assignments account for my first round of coordinating service.

In 2011, I was asked to coordinate the Panama City Beach, Florida site, UCG's largest Feast site. For the last nine years, this assignment has been a very productive opportunity to serve.

We've enjoyed the special relationships with Edgewater personnel. To help that Feast site run smoothly for eight days took detailed preparation and execution. There is an unwritten law that I discovered as it relates to coordinating Feast sites: if it appears to the attendees that anyone can do it, the coordinator has done his job well.

Our 15 years of Feast coordinator blessings came from happy Feastgoers who enjoyed their Feast experience and from the many volunteers who served the brethren with joy. My wife Mary Ann and our daughter Crystal Thomas were of inestimable value helping me to make the Feast go well at Panama City Beach; they deserve much kudos for their behind-the-scenes work. If you experience that the Feast is running well in your area, go to the Feast Coordinator and thank him and his wife for their service!

Jerold Aust

Keeping the Feast at Home or Not Attending In-Person Services?

If you are keeping the Feast at home, you can still register for the Feast to receive resources designed to help you have an inspiring and uplifting Feast of Tabernacles. We want you to feel as close to the other brethren keeping the Feast of Tabernacles as possible. Don't forget to use the hashtag #ucgfot to share the experience virtually with others who are keeping the Feast!

If you still plan to travel to a Feast site but will not be attending services at all, please still register under "Celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles Online." Some have decided to keep their housing reservations and just watch the webcast—if you fall into this category, please register here as well.

Visit www.ucg.org/members/feast/sites/2020/celebrating-the-feast-of-tabernacles-online, or click "Celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles Online" under the Feast sites page at feast.ucg.org.

Jonathan and Esther Magee manage this page to provide festival greetings from different sites that are shared throughout the Feast. They also provide links to webcast Feast services, recorded sermons and articles written with you in mind. You can email Jonathan Magee (jonathan_magee@ucg.org) with any questions.

Festival greetings and photos can be found on the Facebook page, "Celebrating the Feast Online 2020." If you have young children, you can download Festival youth instruction lesson plans at: <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/2020-festival-youth-instruction>.

Festival activity booklets can be downloaded at <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/youth-festival-activity-booklets-available>.

We hope you have a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles rejoicing in spirit with all of your brethren around the world!

Festival Webcast Information

There will be two webcast options for those who are unable to attend in-person services at the Feast of Tabernacles this year:

- **Panama City Beach, Florida (Central Time Zone)**
- **St. George, Utah (Mountain Time Zone)**

The Panama City Beach webcast usually offers Festival greetings before and after services to help those at home feel included in the Festival celebrations. You can access the daily webcast during the Feast at ucg.org/members/news/2020-feast-of-tabernacles-webcast-information.

Feast Plans Changed?

By now, everyone should have changed their registration already if you needed to switch to a new site. If you have not changed your online registration to reflect your current Feast plans, please do so immediately. It is important for coordinators to know how many people to expect at services and activities due to social distancing requirements. If you need to move your household's registration to a different site, you do not need to cancel and redo your registration. Here is how you can change locations:

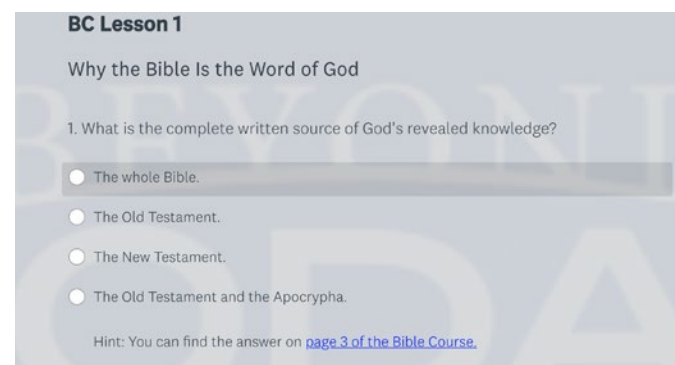
1. Log into the UCG.org account which was used to register your household.
2. Access your household's Feast registration in one of two ways:
3. Locate your confirmation email (subject line "UCG Festival Registration Complete" or "UCG Festival Registration Submitted") for 2020 and click the link in the email.
-OR-
Click on your name in the upper right corner. In the box that appears, click the "My Registrations" link. Locate your Feast registration for 2020 in the list on the right and click the "View" link.
4. Toward the middle of the page, click the "CHANGE SITES" link.
5. In the "Choose Site" dropdown menu, select your new site. The selected site will appear under the "New Site" header on the right and will indicate how many spaces are available at that site.
6. Scroll down under the site photos and click the "Change Sites" button. You'll be returned to your registration page, with your new site displaying at the top of the page.

Still Not Registered for a Feast Site?

If you haven't registered for the Feast of Tabernacles, please register at feast.ucg.org. If you registered but your Feast plans have changed, please change your registration to your intended Feast site using the instructions found above. Thank you!

Resource Spotlight

Online Tests Available for *Bible Study Course*



Online testing has been available for the Church's 12-lesson Bible Study Course for several months now.

The quizzes are at the end of each lesson and can be found on our website at <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-study-course-lesson-1/quiz-bible-study-course-lesson-1>.

As you click on each lesson, please scroll down to the bottom of the Table

of Contents and you will see the link to that lesson's quiz.

For example, the quiz for Bible Study Course Lesson 1 can be found at <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-study-course-lesson-1/quiz-bible-study-course-lesson-1>.

Since launching the quizzes in mid-May of this year, and without any publicizing of

them, 140 tests have been completed with an average score of about 84%. Each quiz takes about eight minutes to fill out.

This is a first step in finding ways to engage our online readers more with our *Bible Study Course*. Discussions are underway to enhance this experience with links to additional resources, videos and study materials. **UN**



Evelyn Ellen Eslinger

Aug. 26, 1925-Jun 27, 2020



John Eugene Reese

March 22, 1939-June 26, 2020-

Obituaries

Evelyn Ellen Eslinger

Evelyn Ellen (Price) Eslinger was born to Scott Lee and Gladys (Hill) Price on Aug. 26, 1925, in Werner, North Dakota. After experiencing some very harsh winters, the Price family decided to move to Missouri when Evelyn was four and they settled on a farm just north of Gainesville.

She met her husband-to-be, Royce Eslinger, while attending Gainesville High School. Much of their courtship was carried on through letters while he was serving in the Army during WWII. Just months after his return in 1946, they were married.

Royce and Evelyn had six children. When their second child was born with cerebral palsy,

they began an extensive study of the Bible and then set about to find a church that taught what they had learned. That led them to what was then called the Radio Church of God. They were baptized in August 1954 and were later among the founding members of the Springfield, Missouri congregation. They were able to see the fourth generation of their family attending the Church. Evelyn continued serving in the Church and worked at the information table during the Feast in 2019, though she was in a wheelchair and on oxygen.

Evelyn was a stay-at-home mom who always had a big garden, which meant much canning. She also taught herself to sew and made clothes for the family as they were growing up. She gave each of her children a homemade quilt when they

were married. Each grandchild received one of her quilts upon graduating from high school and each great-grandchild received a baby blanket.

While still a child, Evelyn, like so many others in the community, taught herself to play the guitar. She also learned to play the mandolin and the drums. Though none of her children played these instruments, some of her grandchildren do.

In addition to being a homemaker, Evelyn raised turkeys, ran the local Dairy Princess and worked as a nurse's aide. She was available to help many families when loved ones were dying and she was especially thankful to family who cared for her during her declining health, enabling her to stay in her own home.

Over the past few years, Evelyn suffered from Scleroderma, which attacked her lungs, leaving her dependent upon oxygen. As with all other challenges, she met this one with courage and a positive attitude, even when she lost her husband after 72 years of marriage. She loved and continued to inspire her family to the end.

Evelyn died on June 27—just two months shy of her 95th birthday, surrounded by many family members. Just the previous year, she had completed her last quilt.

Evelyn was predeceased by her husband, Royce; and children Louise, Calvin and Evelina. She is survived by three daughters:

Linda (Anthony) Wasilkoff, Ona (Raymond) Boyd and Glenda Eslinger; 12 grandchildren and a number of great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. She is remembered with love and leaves behind a lasting legacy.

John Eugene Reese

John Eugene Reese was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1939. He was the second oldest of four children born to Edward and Jessie Mae Reese. He is survived by his sister Terri Montgomery. He graduated from Chicago's Corpus Christi High School in 1956, and then served in the U.S. Air Force as an electronic technician.

Eugene was baptized on Aug. 7, 1966. He then settled in the San Francisco Bay Area, where he worked as an electronic technician at various Silicon Valley high-tech companies. During these years, he became a dedicated member of the San Francisco Bay Area Church. He was a great blessing to our congregation, an epitome of self-sacrifice for others. For over 50 years, Eugene faithfully provided transportation to-and-from Sabbath services for a car-full of brethren who needed rides. In addition, for years in Oakland he braved the morning weather to be the outdoor parking attendant before services. All these things were done even during his last decades of failing health.

Eugene had a brilliant mind. Over the years, brethren cherished scintillating fellowship

with him at Sabbath services. It was truly an "iron sharpens iron" experience.

Eugene zealously participated in the WCG Spokesman Club, graduating in 1970. Mr. Wayne Dunlap wrote: "Eugene Reese was a dear and faithful servant of God who offered an easy smile and warm greeting to all. As his Spokesman Club director, I recall his speeches being textbook in form and packed with meaningful substance. He was always prepared and passed each assignment on the first attempt. His evaluations of others' speeches were incisive and always helpful—but more importantly, they expressed deep kindness and love. Having known Eugene Reese for over half a century, I will remember his warm smile and humble, loving service to God and his church family. I look forward to seeing my brother Eugene's warm smile again—in a world more suited to his kind and gentle ways."

Mr. Jim Tuck (who was his pastor for nearly 15 years) expressed the following upon hearing of his death: "Joan and I really had and have a lot of love for Eugene, as he was always faithful through the years and was of such a loving heart. We know Eugene was a very important part of our church family in the entire San Francisco area. We will miss him greatly, but we know our good friend and brother will rise in the first resurrection!" **UN**

Class of 2020 Seniors



Jasmine Aust

Jasmine Aust

The daughter of Philip and Sarah Aust, Jasmine attends the Atlanta, Georgia congregation. She graduated from Kennesaw Mountain High School with honors, was a four-year chorus member in advanced mixed chamber choir and worked part-time at a school daycare. Her in-



Ethan Mercer

terests are singing, dancing, TikTok, skateboarding and playing the piano. Jasmine also loves analyzing films and watching movie reviews. She does special music at her local congregation and is an advocate for pineapple on pizza. After graduation, Jasmine plans on attending Kennesaw State University for media and journalism. Jasmine's favorite



Logan Wasilkoff

scripture is Psalm 51:8, and her favorite quote is by Kylo Ren: "You're nothing." Advice: "Appreciate every day, and recognize the beauty of the earth and the blessings God's given you."

Ethan Mercer

Ethan Mercer is graduating from Grimsby Secondary School. He is the son of Dave

and Tracy Mercer of the Hamilton, Ontario congregation. Ethan works part-time as a sorter for a shipping company and as a hockey timekeeper. He also does volunteer work with a hockey coach to help instruct younger players. Ethan enjoys playing all sports, especially hockey and soccer. Ethan has attended UCG winter camp and has also volunteered at the Feast as an usher.

After graduation, he plans to continue studies for a year as he determines whether to become a paramedic or go to university to study kinesiology. Ethan's favorite scripture is Ephesians 4:32.

Logan Wasilkoff

Logan Wasilkoff is graduating from Sir Allan MacNab High School. He attends the Hamil-

ton, Ontario congregation along with his parents and siblings.

During his high school years, Logan received honors including Outstanding Achievement Manufacturing Technologies, Outstanding Achievement Construction Technology, and a guitar and music award. He was on the junior football championship team and also played on the senior football team.

Logan's hobbies and interests include football, weight lifting, fishing and camping. He has also been an avid coin collector. He plays both the guitar and the banjo. His favorite song is "Livin' on a Prayer" by Bon Jovi.

After high school, Logan plans to enroll in the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Program at Mohawk College. Logan's favorite scripture is Revelation 21:4. **UN**

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Sept. 6-12 | Has God Given Up On America? Presented by Darris McNeely Literature offered: <i>The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy</i> |
| Sept. 13-19 | Enemies of Evolution Presented by Steve Myers Literature offered: <i>Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?</i> |
| Sept. 20-26 | What Motivates Your Citizenship? Presented by Gary Petty Literature offered: <i>Why Were You Born?</i> |
| Sept. 27-Oct. 3 | Is Satan Real? Presented by Steve Myers Literature offered: <i>Is There Really a Devil?</i> |
| Oct. 4-10 | The Handwriting on the Wall Presented by Darris McNeely Literature offered: <i>The Final Superpower</i> |
| Oct. 11-17 | The Mystery of Death Presented by Steve Myers Literature offered: <i>What Happens After Death?</i> |
| Oct. 18-24 | Jesus and Today's Cultural Christianity Presented by Gary Petty Literature offered: <i>Jesus Christ: The Real Story</i> |
| Oct. 25-31 | Is Baptism Necessary? Presented by Gary Petty Literature offered: <i>The Road to Eternal Life</i> |



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BY THE NUMBERS

7th

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Teaching Our Families How Money Works

One of the keys to generational financial success is sharing financial principles and information within the family. How can we help our children when it comes to money and understanding financial principles?

Start Having Conversations about Money

Many parents are reluctant to talk to their children about money. They may have grown up in an era where the subject was considered taboo or they do not feel qualified. However, starting age appropriate conversations about money with your children is one way we share our knowledge and set them up for financial success when they leave our home. Create opportunities to discuss concepts such as earning money through work, tithing, saving, investments, budgeting, paying down debt and giving. Share with them the values and biblical principles that help guide your financial decisions and spending habits.

“Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.” (Romans 4:4)

Parents can also learn about money together with their children. If there are questions you do not know the answer to, research the answer together. Be honest with your children when it comes to money. If you have regrets or wish you had made different financial choices when you were younger, share these lessons as well. If you are working with a financial professional, and they are willing, have them speak with your young adult children about how money works.

Family Budgets and Goals

Include your children in discussions surrounding family budgets and goals. By looking at a paystub together, topics like income tax, social security, life insurance and employee benefits can be discussed. This could lead to going online with your family to see how your health or retirement plan works.

“In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.” (Proverbs 21:20)

This also provides parents with the opportunity to discuss needs versus wants. Learning that we rarely get to fulfill all our wants is an important life lesson. Understanding why there are things you would like to buy, but cannot afford, is easier when our children are not sheltered from the larger family budget and family goals. Transparency with trust is the basic rule to opening up our financial lives to our families.

Credit Cards and Checking Accounts

Do not neglect teaching your children about other methods of payments such as checks and credit cards. To this end, sharing how you balance your checkbook register and manage credit card statements demonstrates basic math skills and budgeting.

“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.” (Proverbs 21:5)

Discuss the Concept of Compound Interest

Another basic money concept is the miracle called compound interest. A simple way to understand compound interest is to ask the question: How long will it take my money to double in value at an assumed rate of return? The answer is found by using a formula called The Rule of 72, which will tell you how many years it will take your money to double in value. The point here is to understand that time is an important factor in creating future wealth. The longer a person lets time and compound interest work, the better.

“In all labor there is profit. But idle chatter leads only to poverty. The crown of the wise is their riches, but the foolishness of fools is folly.” (Proverbs 14:23-24)

Children can begin to learn some principles of financial management if parents are willing to invest the time it takes to teach them. Whatever approach a family employs, the real value for young people lies in learning to manage income and seeing that work has its rewards. Using everyday experiences as a springboard for conversation can demonstrate how you make choices that are consistent with good values and sound money management.

Howard Marchbanks, CFP®