



United Church of God an International Association

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 441

September 17, 2020

Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

A vital key for having a great Feast

In my half-century of service as a minister of Jesus Christ, one critical focus has emerged as the key to having a great and memorable Feast. In my experience, the amount of available funds and the temporary dwelling that you live in for eight days are subordinate to this important element.

Allow me to share it with you: I write here of the godly attribute of *gratitude*.

The opposite of being grateful is being an ingrate, a person who lacks appreciation or permits a self-centered “what about me” attitude to get in the way of humbly giving thanks. Judgmental criticism can emerge here.

On the other hand, people who are grateful reflect what Paul wrote to the Philippians: “I have learned how to be *content* with *whatever* I have...I have learned the secret of living in *every situation*...For I can *do everything* through Christ, who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:11-13, New Living Translation, emphasis added throughout).

My wife Bev and I have experienced this firsthand, particularly in the Feasts we have observed in Africa. There in rural areas we slept under bed nets (to fend off malaria-carrying insects) in stifling heat, accompanied in some instances by visits from large African spiders and poisonous centipedes—Bev good-naturedly named one such large spider “Goliath” after he continued to take up a position in our room every evening.

Despite these unusual issues, we experienced great Feasts there, ones whose memories we cherish. We formed incredible relationships at those Feasts that remain today.

Many have similar experiences. I want to share this story from Aaron Dean, a Council of Elders member and our international advisor, who frequently has traveled to challenged areas of the world. Aaron and his wife, Michelle, once volunteered to serve at the first Feast of Tabernacles held in the remote southern delta region of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). Despite visa issues and facing daunting challenges (like nearby genocide conditions in areas of Myanmar), the Deans experienced a remarkable festival. They started by flying 12,000 miles to Bangkok, Thailand, then 1 hour to Yangon, Myanmar to begin their trek. He writes:

“We had a translator for the first Feast held in the southern delta region of Myanmar (Burma) in the village of Sakhangyi, but no elder.

“Sakhangyi is a village about a nine-hour car ride from Yangon, with increasingly minimal roads, deep into the delta region off the Indian Ocean. The government does not let foreigners stay in the village and held our passports each night. We stayed in a small, outdated hotel on the river with no restaurant and only cold water. It had air conditioning, but only a choice between ‘max’ (freezing), or ‘off’ (sweating).

“Each morning we took an open-air tuk-tuk [a large motorized tricycle] for a mile to the river. Then about an hour long-tail boat trip with an open diesel engine sitting on the wooden bottom, riding up the river to Sakhangyi. We walked to the temporary building, a 50 x 30-foot tarp-covered sand floor, open-sided bamboo structure with thatched roof overhead; built by the members and some village relatives in six days the week before.



Clockwise from top left: Tuk-tuk in Myanmar; Sakhangyi church from the stage; a home in Sakhangyi; inside the boat to Sakhangyi.

“After the sermonette, special music (almost everyone plays an instrument or sings) and giving the sermon each day, we walked to a member’s home about 200 yards from the building, where the members gave us the best that they had for lunch, usually chicken and rice with tea. We brought toys, balloons, and puzzles for the children.

“We then walked a quarter mile to meet the boat for the hour ride back, a couple of times in the midst of a monsoon downpour with the engine boy bailing water out the back. It reminded me of Paul’s being ‘in the deep’ (2 Corinthians 11:25). On arrival, we would ride the tuk-tuk to a restaurant on the river where no one spoke English, not even the shopkeepers. The menu was Sanskrit, so you couldn’t even phonetically pronounce anything. Our young member interpreter, Naw eh Sue, told us the clean food numbers, so we could point to them when ordering. Most were quite good, with us ordering family-style trying about six courses, with the local beer and ice cream to finish. Dinner for four was about \$8.

“The next day the routine was repeated, sometimes in rain and sometimes in humid sunshine. Michelle wore travel pants on the boat but took a skirt to change into, as the members dressed in their very best. Their concern for us was overwhelming, as was our love for them.

“The experience was more like Indiana Jones at times, but people make a place—and members were wonderful to us. Don’t think you need a luxury resort to enjoy the feast. Going to a more rugged site in a developing country can be an inspiring experience and make you want the Kingdom more than ever.”

The Deans set a great example of grateful service, focusing on worshiping God in whatever condition they found. Such is the power of spiritual gratitude.

As I wrote in my recent letter, this Feast will be different from ones in the past. I’m still thankful to go to a Feast even with the social distancing measures and inconveniences of this pandemic. Because of dramatically varied conditions, several of our traditional Feast sites have been canceled, and others are out of bounds to transfers. Church plans have changed several times in the past two months as Ministerial and Member Services has sought the best solutions.

I know that some people will not be able to go to the Feast at all, and others are anxious of being in a large crowd for eight days. Some will stay home to protect themselves. We respect that. As Paul tells us: “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3, English Standard Version).

Recently in the Ambassador Bible College classes that I teach, we have been studying practical lessons in being disciples of Jesus Christ, based on the book of James. We are learning that faith is more than an intellectual understanding of God’s existence. It is shown in works—in deeds. James writes: “Now someone may argue, ‘Some people have faith; others have good deeds.’ But I say, ‘How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds’” (James 2:18, NLT). The point? “We are shown to be right with God *by what we do*, not by faith alone... Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works” (verses 24, 26).

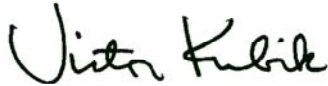
What are these *good works*? “Therefore *encourage* one another and *build* one another up,” says Paul to us in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (English Standard Version). James adds an important dimension here: “From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things *ought not to be so*... Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the *meekness* of wisdom” (James 3:10, 13, ESV).

In light of all this, as we come into this Holy Day season, I invite you to re-read chapters 13-15 of Romans. As Paul writes, “clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14, NLT).

In the days ahead, let us observe God’s Holy Day season in a spirit of gratitude, truly grateful that we have the opportunity to encourage and build one another up, showing our good works by putting off the old man or woman of self-centered focus (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The choice is ours. Let us be grateful and appreciative, fulfilling our Savior’s command that we actively show real love for one another!

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

Personal from Ministerial and Member Services...

Dear Ministers and Members,

Most Important Feast Ever?

I just finished listening to a sermon recommended to me by two of our members just this week. It was given last Sabbath, September 12, by Robin Webber, pastor in San Diego, Redlands and Las Vegas. As many of you know, Robin is a long-time pastor who was on the Council of Elders for many years and served as Chairman for a number of those years. Last Sabbath, Robin gave his first in-person sermon for about six weeks, as they were shut-down again in Southern California from another spike in the virus. He was certainly passionate, inspired, and motivated to be back in person!

Like the others who recommended this sermon, I was inspired and encouraged as I listened to "Walking in the Name of the LORD our God at the Feast." The link to this sermon is <https://www.ucg.org/sermons/walking-in-the-name-of-the-lord-our-god-at-the-feast>

I would highly recommend that you take the time to listen to this sermon prior to this year's Feast of Tabernacles. Robin mentions that this coming Feast could actually be the "most important Feast ever." He mentions several very important principles we all need to keep in mind this Feast!

One of the members who wrote to me about this sermon had this to say: "This is the most inspiring pre-Feast sermon that I can remember ever hearing!"

Wishing you all a very spiritually rewarding "double" Sabbath and Feast of Trumpets!

In God's love and service,



Mark Welch, Operation Manager for MMS

Feast of Tabernacles Update

The United Church of God purposefully observes the Bible instructions to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in locations God chooses. Due to the COVID-19 virus, unprecedented challenges face the Church around the world including even gathering for weekly Sabbath services. Over half the Feast sites around the world have been canceled this year.

Fortunately, a number of sites remain intact, but local health regulations require differing scenarios in terms of three major aspects:

- The number of people who can gather in a single room
- Social distancing
- The wearing of face coverings/masks

All Feast sites are complying with local regulations and the Church wants to provide in-person services where members can feel safe and healthy. However, every individual must evaluate their own comfort and safety level at in-person services or gathering around groups. Attending services in person is an individual choice and for those who choose not to attend in person in the United States there will be two daily live webcasts from the Central and Mountain time zones.

Some U.S. site locations don't require a face covering to be worn. Nevertheless, those sites will provide a section where anyone entering that section or room must wear a face covering. If there is a section or room where face coverings are not required, then obviously anyone wearing a face covering is welcome to visit in that area if they choose to do so.

A number of the Feast Coordinators at locations where face coverings are not required have provided further feedback. Those coordinators have the authorization to establish a face covering policy according to what fits their local needs as long as everyone's health is clearly considered. The website for your Feast site will continue to be updated with the latest details. Since local regulations could change at any time leading up to the Feast, we will post any updates that impact your site as changes are made. Regardless of the current requirements, everyone should bring face coverings to have available, in case the regulations change.

— Charles Melear

Inside United Podcast



Howard Marchbanks - Planning a Financial Legacy

Howard Marchbanks and Victor Kubik discuss practical ways to start arranging a financial legacy at any age for those we leave behind.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-175-howard-marchbanks-planning-a-financial-legacy>

Send us your questions, comments, or suggestions at podcast@ucg.org.

Listen to past episodes: <https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast>

U.S. Holy Day Offering Procedures

Due to the restrictions placed on meeting together at this time, some members will not be able to attend face-to-face meetings this year for the upcoming Holy Days. For those members in the United States, here are three ways that you can conveniently make your Holy Day offering, *if you will not be meeting in person*. Members in other countries should follow instructions from their own national offices.

Donate Online

Many members already use our website's online donation page at [donate.ucg.org](https://www.ucg.org/donate) to give their Holy Day offerings when they are not able to be at those services—as well as their regular tithes and offerings. About a week in advance of each upcoming Holy Day, the offering for that Holy Day will be added to the donation page; it will remain on the page for about a week after the Holy Day, so you will be able to make your offering online, if you prefer.

If you are new to online donations, we have produced a video that walks you through the process: <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/how-to-donate-online>

If you use the online option, please note the following:

- Please include your PIN (the number that begins with “U” on your green Holy Day offering envelopes, just above your name and address.) This greatly speeds up the processing here at the home office. When a PIN is omitted, it requires extra work on the part of the personnel here at the home office to ensure the donation is being credited to you.
- To optimize your offering, please use the “Online eCheck” option, which is the same as writing a check for your offering—because using your credit card for payment costs the Church around 3% of the donation amount to process.

Banking Bill Payment

Others may choose to use a “bill pay” service through their bank. Again, if you choose to pay this way, in the section for your “account number,” please list your PIN and then, in addition, please put one of these codes after your PIN: (H4=Trumpets, H5=Atonement, H6=Tabernacles, H7=Eighth Day). This will help us credit the correct fund for your donation receipt.

Sent by Mail

For those who choose to mail their Holy Day offerings, please use the green Holy Day offering envelopes which were mailed to you earlier. Please use a separate check and envelope for each Holy Day offering. You will then need to place these envelopes into another carrier envelope and mail to the following address:

United Church of God - HDO
P.O. Box 541027
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Thank you for your cooperation during these extraordinary times we find ourselves in this year.

— Ministerial and Member Services

Major Two-Part Print Advertising Campaign to Begin in October

During the month of October, 2020, the United Church of God will initiate the first phase of a major two-part print advertising campaign across the United States. Nearly 21 million *Beyond Today* magazine and booklets ads will be placed in coupon inserts in Sunday newspapers. Part two of this important effort will take place in January and February 2021, when an additional 96 million ads will reach U.S. households.

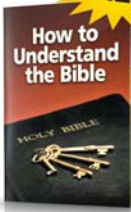

How to Understand the Bible

Discover **15 vital keys** that will help you **unlock your understanding** of the Holy Scriptures and **grow closer to God!**

Claim your free copy now and receive:

- A **FREE** copy of *How to Understand the Bible*.
- A **FREE** subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine, filled with articles to help you strengthen your family and make sense of world events.

YES!
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or, return this coupon to *Beyond Today*,
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Your literature is absolutely free! For faster delivery visit our website noted above.

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The ad to be used in October will feature the booklet “How to Understand the Bible,” which has performed as the best responding ad in previous print advertising campaigns. In designing and updating this ad we placed a stronger emphasis on encouraging people to visit the BTmagazine.org website to subscribe rather than mail the coupon. Since many people use the Internet, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting our website to order our free literature makes it more simple and convenient.

As always, your diligent prayers are sought for the success of this important effort as we strive to faithfully carry out Jesus Christ’s vital commission to “Go into all the world and proclaim

the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15, English Standard Version).

— Peter Eddington / John LaBissoniere, Media and Communications Services

Sermon Disc Set #146 Available

Sermons newly published for the Sermon Disc Program (SDP 146) are now available for download. You can access them, as well as archived SDP sermons at <https://www.ucg.org/sermon-disc-program>

The Sermon Disc Program is a service provided by the home office intended for shut-ins as well as for congregations needing video sermons when a live speaker is not available. If you have any questions, you can contact chaz_leathers@ucg.org or rudy_rangel@ucg.org.

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